



WALES COAST PATH CHALLENGE

DEEP DIVE OUTPUT

The Challenge: How can we connect communities and visitors along the Wales Coast Path?

A summary of the Problem PowWows facilitated in Swansea and Bangor plus six telephone interviews.

7th February Swansea

8th February Bangor

Summary: 2 Problem Pow Wows. 6 telephone interviews. 32 people engaged in total.

178 'raw' problems

9 themes

54 insights

We asked: "What are the barriers to more people using the Wales Coast Path?"

The GeoVation Challenge focused on the following 9 themes:

1. FACILITIES FOR ALL

2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS

3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4. ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

5. INFRASTRUCTURE

6. FUNDING AND POLICY MAKING

7. MAKING PLANS

8. MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS AND BRANDING

8. GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT



I. FACILITIES FOR ALL

1.1 Convenient conveniences

PROBLEM

How do we provide sufficient refreshment and toilet facilities along the path to ensure people's comfort is not compromised?

WHY IT MATTERS

People need to carefully plan their trips particularly when having to consider others such as children and the elderly. Having appropriate facilities available makes all the difference to the experience.

1.2 All weather picnics

PROBLEM

How do we make it more convenient for people to park?

WHY IT MATTERS

When there are no picnic facilities available: at best people make do by using their car or huddling under an umbrella; at worst they leave and don't comeback.

1.3 I can't park

PROBLEM

How do we best protect investments made by businesses to improve their environmental performance?

WHY IT MATTERS

Being able to park close to the Coast Path is really important for people when trying to make their trip as easy and enjoyable as possible.

1.4 Pounds for parking

PROBLEM

How do we deliver a consistent car park cost strategy along the Wales Coast Path?

WHY IT MATTERS

The cost of parking ranges from 50p to £3.50 per hour. In more expensive areas people park outside of the car park to avoid payment costs which can cause congestion.

1.5 Working 9 to 5

PROBLEM

How do we align facility opening times with the seasons?

WHY IT MATTERS

In some areas along the Wales Coast Path toilets and cafes are closed 'out of hours' in high season, even though plenty of people are still enjoying the path in the evening.

1.6 Fragmented experience

PROBLEM

How do we better join up the experience(s) that customers have across all their interactions along the Wales Coast Path?

WHY IT MATTERS

Customers' best experiences are the result of all touch points they encounter and reflect upon (people they meet, information they are presented with physical kit they use), working together seamlessly.

1.7 Attainable accommodation

PROBLEM

How do customers obtain suitable accommodation in areas where access is limited or the available accommodation is simply unknown?

WHY IT MATTERS

Wales.gov.uk (<https://bit.ly/ztoki6>) Hoteliers and bed and breakfasts in these areas will see their potential income hit, missing out on their cut of the 9.6 million overnight visitors to Wales, spending nearly £1.8 billion, during 2010.



2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS

2.1 What's in it for me?

PROBLEM

How can we make a strong case for Welsh businesses to invest in themselves in order to take advantage of the Coast Path?

WHY IT MATTERS

For any business to either start-up and / or grow there needs to be compelling evidence of ROI from the Coast Path.

2.2 Finding growth opportunities

PROBLEM

How can we stimulate local business growth off the back of genuine problems that need solving?

WHY IT MATTERS

In Q4 of 2011, the travel & tourism sector in the UK faced a 56 per cent rise in critical financial problems compared to Q4 2010. Begbies Traynor's Red Flag Alert (<https://bit.ly/z744TE>).

2.3 What potential?

PROBLEM

How can businesses better understand the number of potential people that could visit them?

WHY IT MATTERS

Wales attracted 890,000 international visitors spending £333 million during 2010 but this information is either not widely understood or contextualised for local businesses to exploit. Tourism in Wales, Welsh Government (<https://bit.ly/ztoki6>)

2.4 The season is too short

PROBLEM

How can the Wales Coast Path become unattractive destination outside of the main season?

WHY IT MATTERS

Currently the tourist season runs from March to October with a 3 month peak in the middle. This compromises the opportunity to maximise income throughout the year from a prime Welsh asset.

2.5 Sustaining a non-peak business

PROBLEM

How do we create, develop and sustain businesses that remain profitable throughout the year?

WHY IT MATTERS

Many of the current businesses can't make a year-long living solely from visitors to the path.

2.6 Season-proof activities

PROBLEM

How can we develop activities and reasons for people to use the path outside of the normal season?

WHY IT MATTERS

People need a variety of compelling reasons to visit the path no matter the time of year.



3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3.1 The path is just for tourists

PROBLEM

How can more be done for local communities to support and use the path?

WHY IT MATTERS

For the Wales Coast Path to be sustainable throughout the year, local communities need to feel connected to it.

3.2 Just for grown ups

PROBLEM

How can we engage and empower children to use, take more interest in and become proud of the Wales Coast Path?

WHY IT MATTERS

Evidence has shown that support in the earliest years of a child's life is the most effective way of improving life chances, breaking the cycles that can exist for some of our most disadvantaged and vulnerable children, and providing a chance to grow, succeed and achieve. Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011 – 2015, Welsh Government (<https://bit.ly/ADgvtc>)

3.3 Walking is boring, right?

PROBLEM

How could disinterested people, both local and tourists, be encouraged to walk the path?

WHY IT MATTERS

Some people think walking is simply boring and would prefer to use their time differently.

3.4 Obesity time-bomb

PROBLEM

How could more people take more interest in their health through walking?

WHY IT MATTERS

57% of Welsh adults, 22% of 13-year-old boys and 16% of girls are classed as either overweight or obese. By the year 2019, 85% of adults and children in Wales will be obese. Wales Online (<https://bit.ly/2xyKyj>)

3.5 Big message in a small pond

PROBLEM

How can communications make as big an impact at a local level as has happened successfully at an international level?

WHY IT MATTERS

Lonely Planet (<https://bit.ly/tKiNBo>) The Lonely Planet voted the Wales Coast Path as the greatest region on earth in the best-in-travel 2012 guide. What might the equivalent messaging be for locals?



4. ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

4.1 No signal blues

PROBLEM

How do we ensure that app and internet users have 100% broadband, WiFi and 3G coverage on allocations on and off the path?

WHY IT MATTERS

Mobithinking.com (<https://bit.ly/a2f9uO>) People rely heavily on their mobile for accessing information. There are now 1.2 billion mobile Web users worldwide and one in seven web searches are mobile.

4.2 Is there an app for that?

PROBLEM

How can Apps improve the Wales Coast Path experience?

WHY IT MATTERS

Mobithinking.com (<https://bit.ly/a2f9uO>) For many people apps are a way of life. Over 300,000 mobile apps have been developed in the last three years. Apple alone are close to having had 25bn apps downloaded.

4.3 Technologies working together

PROBLEM

How can we get a multitude of existing and emerging technologies along the path to work seamlessly together?

WHY IT MATTERS

Users of the path want a joined up experience and this will be hindered accessing and using different technologies along the path.

4.4 No hidden surprises

PROBLEM

How do we provide accessible information to help people to plan their walks based on their needs, abilities and expectations?

WHY IT MATTERS

People like to plan with confidence therefore their explicit requirements need to be catered for.

4.5 Accurate local data

PROBLEM

How do we engage locals to help upgrade and update data about the Wales Coast Path?

WHY IT MATTERS

Local people know specific facts about the area they live in (e.g. local history, attractions, amenities) that are not widely known about or, if on a database, may be out of date.

4.6 Information for all

PROBLEM

How do we smartly display and communicate information for a multitude of audiences and needs in a minimal amount of space?

WHY IT MATTERS

Wales.gov.uk (<https://bit.ly/ztoki6>) Wales attracted 890,000 international visitors spending £333million during 2010. Different language is one example of multiple information needs but, for example, there isn't enough space on signs to convey everything to everyone.

4.7 Information deficit

PROBLEM

How do we ensure that people have all the information they need to make their decisions that might lead to choosing to visit the Coast Path?

WHY IT MATTERS

A gap in information could make the difference between visitors choosing one area over another, resulting in a negative economic impact.

4.8 From road to path

PROBLEM

How do we ensure that signage from roads to paths contain relevant information concerning access?

WHY IT MATTERS

People travel to the Wales Coast Path via various modes of transport and need clear signage to know if access is suitable for them.

4.9 100% signage

PROBLEM

How do we ensure that there is a complete signage network that successfully covers all 870 miles of the Wales Coast Path?

WHY IT MATTERS

If the signage is poor and inconsistent, people are less likely find new areas to explore which impacts local businesses as well as the overall success if the path.



5. INFRASTRUCTURE

5.1 Quality of access paths

PROBLEM

How can we ensure that there is a good quality network of access roads and car parks for those travelling to the Coastal Path by car?

WHY IT MATTERS

If people can't get to the Coast Path easily they will not use it.

5.2 Victim of our own success

PROBLEM

How can we future-proof the Wales Coast Path to ensure that as success scales, so too does its capacity without undermining the experience?

WHY IT MATTERS

Success will mean more visitors which in turn means: busier paths; more litter; dog mess; accidents; more of a strain on local facilities such as toilets and cafés. And ultimately erosion of the path itself.

5.3 Out of reach

PROBLEM

How can we provide a joined-up public transport system across the Wales Coast Path?

WHY IT MATTERS

Some people do not have access to a car and therefore will need to rely on public transport to visit destinations along the path.

5.4 Consistent, lower costs

PROBLEM

How can we provide affordable transport and accommodation to meet the budget needs of everyone?

WHY IT MATTERS

Cost will become a barrier to people visiting the Coast Path if it's seen as too expensive.

5.5 Walkers and cyclists

PROBLEM

How can walkers and cyclists use the path without frustrating each other?

WHY IT MATTERS

Experiences for walkers can be affected by cyclists and likewise cyclists can be put off if routes are congested.

5.6 Footpath furniture

PROBLEM

How does footpath furniture, such as rest seats and gateways, get maintained?

WHY IT MATTERS

Ramblers Cymru (<https://bit.ly/y9eT5s>) Deteriorating or substandard furniture could cause accidents and affect health and safety of users. Examples recorded include missing or broken stiles and gates, damaged bridges, missing or broken signposts or waymarkers.

5.7 Relevant access

PROBLEM

How can the relevant access points to the path be clearer for people with access needs?

WHY IT MATTERS

Welsh Government (<https://bit.ly/xhsiQy>) As stated, “some sections of path will be suitable for people with disabilities, families with prams/buggies, those on horse back and cyclists.” But people need to know where.

5.8 One size fits all?

PROBLEM

How does the Coast Path accommodate a multitude of user needs and requirements: do we know what they are?

WHY IT MATTERS

Without a clear understanding of all those who will use the path, solutions could be developed that don't match the needs of the users.



6. FUNDING & POLICY MAKING

6.1 Funding time-bomb

PROBLEM

How can partnerships be developed and nurtured to source and secure funds for the long term maintenance and development of the path?

WHY IT MATTERS

Welsh Government (<https://bit.ly/yosGgk>) When the £3.9million has been spent on completing the Coast Path in 2012, a further 100,000visitors/users are expected which will create an on going need for further maintenance funds.

6.2 NIMBY to YIMBY

PROBLEM

How do the “not in my back yard” group become the “yes, in my back yard”?

WHY IT MATTERS

Pembrokeshire Coast (<https://bit.ly/yPP3VM>) Funding requirements are reduced if local communities take an active participatory role in taking care of the path and local area.

6.3 Conflicting policies

PROBLEM

How do 16 different local authorities and 2 national parks coordinate and deliver on different policy objectives?

WHY IT MATTERS

Different priorities (e.g. coastal flooding and rural and industrial issues) could lead to in consistencies for funding schemes.

6.4 Investment time and money

PROBLEM

How does investment in path maintenance lead to maximised revenue generation?

WHY IT MATTERS

Ramblers (<https://bit.ly/AB64Ph>) In South West Wales the 40 year old Pembrokeshire Coast National Trail has been shown to create £52 for every £1spent on maintenance. A long term sustainability model for the Wales Coast Path is required to enable positive policymaking and development. (CHANGE)



7. MAKING PLANS

7.1 Customised walks

PROBLEM

How can people plan walks based on ability, difficulty, length and time to complete?

WHY IT MATTERS

Easy planning and knowing how long a walk will take, with an idea of difficulty, could increase daily and repeat usage.

7.2 Walking the dog

PROBLEM

How can dog walkers and their families best use the path when dogs are banned from the beaches from May to September?

WHY IT MATTERS

BBC News (<https://bbc.in/zfUduA>) Alienating locals and visitors could negatively impact the economy e.g. "I won't be holidaying in Wales anymore because of the dog ban on beaches."

7.3 Coastal Path Newbies

PROBLEM

How can new walkers be confident they have all the geographical information to complete their chosen route?

WHY IT MATTERS

Making the Wales Coast Path a preferred choice for those going on a walking holiday or day trip for the first time will tap a new market and 'repeat business'.



8. MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS & BRANDING

8.1 Not just a path

PROBLEM

How does the path enable other activities for different demographics such as photography, writing, water sports and bird watching?

WHY IT MATTERS

Walking will not always be the main interest of potential users, so leading with other activities to particular demographic groups could increase visitors. Wales Coast Path Media Pack (<https://bit.ly/wuAENq>)

8.2 Storytelling

PROBLEM

How do the stories associated to the Coast Path get told and retold in a meaningful way?

WHY IT MATTERS

Walking Stories (<https://bit.ly/x1Troj>) People get inspired by good stories. There are many to tell ranging from the Coast Path itself to myths and legends of the surrounding areas.

8.3 Ownership

PROBLEM

How does every Welsh person become a stakeholder in the Coast Path?

WHY IT MATTERS

If the path is seen as “our path, Wales’ path and a community path,” it enables the opportunity to become regarded in the same way as Hadrian’s Wall or The Great Wall of China are.

8.4 What is the Coast Path?

PROBLEM

How does the population of Wales discover the Coast Path?

WHY IT MATTERS

Anecdotal evidence suggests that much of the Welsh population is unaware of the Coast Path.

8.5 Walk the talk

PROBLEM

How can marketing and promotional promises of be guaranteed once people chose to experience the Coast Path first hand?

WHY IT MATTERS

BBC News (<https://bbc.in/vPs38D>) If the Coast Path experience differs to the ‘great expectations’ marketing, the brand promise may be broken e.g. traveller community contesting route may lead to gaps in the ‘unbroken’ route around the coast.

8.6 More than the sum of the parts

PROBLEM

How does each section of the path have a consistent quality but their own USP to attract visitors?

WHY IT MATTERS

Individual characteristics and USP's will combine to create the overall experience. The Lonely Planet cited wildlife, great surf, castles and fantastic spots such as Barrafundle Bay and St David's.

8.7 Loops of interest

PROBLEM

How do the potential walking / cycling loops off the path that lead to areas of interest, get included too?

WHY IT MATTERS

BBC News (<https://bbc.in/9V6kBD>)The loops add an extra dimension to the Coast Path experience, often providing an opportunity for people to visit outstanding areas of interest, such as the Tre'r Ceiri Hill Fort.

8.8 Unknown access points

PROBLEM

How do the secret access points only known by locals become more visible?

WHY IT MATTERS

Ceredigion Coast Path (<https://bit.ly/xntP5E>)In particular areas there are some remote locations with access points that are hard to find that are real gems and real "finds" for visitors.



9. GEOGRAPHY & ENVIRONMENT

9.1 Rain or shine

PROBLEM

How can we exploit phrases such as “There’s no such thing as bad weather, just the wrong clothes” so the weather becomes an asset to the Coast Path?

WHY IT MATTERS

The Welsh Climate (<https://bit.ly/kQ1ZIS>) With increased access to weather information, risk of bad weather is often more of a deterrent than the actual weather itself.

9.2 Boring bits

PROBLEM

How do the less accessible and desirable, parts of the coast path, such as industrial areas, get communicated positively?

WHY IT MATTERS

Not all areas of the path are desirable therefore it is critical to manage expectations effectively to avoid a negative experience and bad word of mouth.

9.3 Waste

PROBLEM

How do waste, rubbish and dog fouling get controlled as user number increase?

WHY IT MATTERS

Gwynedd Council (<https://bit.ly/opMudA>) A filthy path delivers a bad experience. Encouraging responsible walking along the path will reduce waste, rubbish and fouling.

9.4 Consistent under foot

PROBLEM

How can the physical Coast Path offer a consistent walking experience for users?

WHY IT MATTERS

An inconsistent foot path could deter users if they go from high quality physical path to an unkempt muddy path that’s difficult to walk.