

Legendary summer enjoyed by tourism in Wales

Record-breaking visitor figures were recorded at Cadw sites as well as the best ever figures being achieved for Amgueddfa Cymru sites.

Tourism businesses in Wales have enjoyed a successful summer. 40% received more visitors than last summer, which in itself was a much better summer than 2015 – and a similar proportion (39%) received the same level.

Figures from Cadw show record-breaking summer visitor figures, partly generated as a result of the Cadw Dragons' tour across its historic sites, which was part of Wales Year of Legends activity.

The figures show that more than half a million visitors explored Cadw sites during July and August this year – the highest number ever welcomed during the summer season and an increase of 8.2% compared with summer 2016.

This figure contributes to a total of more than 900,000 visitors welcomed since April 2017 – an increase of 12% against the same period last year. This means that annual visitors are on track to reach 1.5 million for the first time by the end of the year.

The success is in part attributed to Cadw's Live the Legends campaign which brought a family of Welsh Dragons to life in celebration of Wales's 2017 Year of Legends. As a whole, the Dragons' summer presence helped generate a 15% increase in family visitors versus July and August last year – from 87,333 in 2016 to 101,051 in 2017. The Dragon campaign also saw the launch of Little Dragons – an augmented reality smartphone game which allows visitors to 'snap' virtual dragons at seven castles across Wales and to date, has been played by nearly 18,000 users.

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales also welcomed a record 297,792 visitors to its seven museums in August – the best ever August visitor figure achieved by Amgueddfa Cymru up on August 2016 by 18.9%.

By individual museum, in August, St Fagans had an amazing 117,584 visitors – its second highest figure since 2002 when it had 126,808 visitors, and National Museum Cardiff had a record 76,614 visitors.

Across August and July, National Museum sites attracted half a million visitors (492,845), which is a 17% increase on the same period in 2016 and up by 6.3% on the last record summer in 2012.

Increase in visitors can be attributed to a number of developments including the Dinosaur Babies exhibition at National Museum Cardiff; the re-opening of the main building and new developments at St Fagans National Museum of History as well as the Dino on the Loose campaign.

In addition, a wide variety of reasons have been given for the busy summer

generally. The most frequent reasons reported in the Tourism Barometer were businesses' own marketing (23% of businesses with increased visitors) and more British people staying in the UK (16% of those reporting an increase).

Following a busy summer, 82% are feeling confident or fairly confident about the remainder of 2017.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

"It's extremely encouraging that these figures show that 2017 is really proving to be another successful year for tourism in Wales. We've seen two very successful years and we're looking to sustain that growth. Although there is much uncertainty, it's evident that the weaker pound has meant that more people are opting to holiday at home this year. I'm delighted that the industry is looking forward to the rest of the year with confidence.

"The figures for Cadw and Amgueddfa Cymru, also show that innovative ideas such as the touring dragons and Dino on the Loose can capture the imagination and spark a renewed interest in Welsh heritage – which has been fantastic to see during Wales' Year of Legends."

Accommodation occupancy figures over the 12 months ending July 2017 also point towards a busy summer with occupancy for hotels, B&Bs and guesthouses up one percentage point on 2016. Static caravan occupancy saw a rise of 7 percentage points to 84% when compared with the same period in 2016 while touring occupancy rates rose by 5 percentage points.

Latest tourism figures can be found on the following link: <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2017/170926-wales-tourism-business-barometer-wave-3-2017-en.pdf>.