

## Lord Elis-Thomas keen to harness Swansea City of Culture energy

The strength of the bid, coupled with the numerous opportunities during 2018's Year of the Sea means this is a time of real opportunity for Swansea. The Minister was keen to make clear his commitment to continuing to work with partners from across the region to ensure the energy, confidence and passion which was so evident in the run up to the 2021 decision continues and bears fruit.

Lord Elis-Thomas said:

"From museums and galleries to beaches and foods, I've been fortunate enough today to sample a small cross section of the world class, diverse offering Swansea has to offer visitors from all over the world.

"After meeting business owners, councillors and members of the extremely talented Swansea 2021 bid team, I'm clearer than ever that the region has all the ingredients to be very optimistic about the coming years, both in further enhancing its unique offering and driving up visitor numbers. I've been very encouraged by initial talks today, ascertaining what their culture and tourism priorities are for the city.

"It is testament not only to the bid team but to the city as a whole that the drive, confidence and passion remains plain to see. This is a city ready to capitalise on the opportunities of the future and that is something I'm determined to support in any way I can.

"One such opportunity will be during next year's Year of the Sea, the third of our hugely successful themed year approach to promoting tourism in Wales. With such a unique coastal offering, internationally recognised beaches and landscapes and an increasingly diverse food and drink offering, there is much reason for optimism for the Swansea region during 2018 and beyond."

Cllr Rob Stewart, Swansea Council Leader, said:

"Despite being pipped at the post to the UK City of Culture 2021 title, we are confident that we had a credible bid, with feedback

from the judges confirming the quality and ability of all the shortlisted cities to deliver an outstanding year of culture.

“We are primed to deliver a truly transformational vision and programme for Wales to demonstrate how culture is a key means for lifting pride, ambition, profile and reputation for inward investment; galvanising the support of businesses and cross-sector working to tackle poverty, while increasing cohesion, connectivity and wellbeing.

“We always had a plan if we missed out on the UK City of Culture 2021 title, so the Minister’s visit has given the team the opportunity to discuss the next steps for culture in Swansea and Wales as we continue to be a city that celebrates and welcomes talent.

“Major projects like the digital indoor arena forming part of the Swansea Central development will also still be going ahead, with construction due to start late next year, and the Year of the Sea tourism theme in 2018 gives a major opportunity to further boost a thriving tourism industry that’s already worth more than £400 million a year to Swansea Bay’s economy.”