



Caswell Bay: an accessible destination

Food & Tourism

MAKING ONE OF WALES' MOST POPULAR BEACHES EVEN MORE WELCOMING

Caswell Bay is a popular blue flag tourist beach situated on the Gower Peninsula that attracts families, holiday makers and surfers alike.

Being a popular surfing spot, the beach is regularly frequented by surfers of all abilities and home to Surfability UK CIC – the UK's first fully inclusive and adaptive surf school. Using specialist equipment, the surf school provides surfing experiences for a wide range of people with disabilities, including those who cannot sit up unaided and wheelchair users.

With research showing that an estimated 250,000 disabled visitors are severely restricted in their choices of destinations and activities across the UK, Swansea Council decided to develop the beach to be more accessible, inclusive and accommodating for those with physical and learning disabilities.

After discussions with end users, Swansea Council decided that to create a truly accessible destination for visitors with severe disabilities, the beach needed a new high quality changing facility complete with hoist, shower and changing bed as well as investment in specialist beach equipment such as floating beach wheelchairs.

The council worked with Caswell-based community interest company Surfability UK and other local tourism businesses such as the Bramwood Accessible Holiday Home to deliver this project. Surfability founder Ben Clifford says the changing places facility is an important step in making Welsh beaches accessible for everyone.

“This summer surfability has provided surfing lessons for more than 40 wheelchair users as well as others who need lots of assistance with changing. Access to outdoor spaces should be for everyone and this facility is an important step towards making the beach inclusive.”

Ben Clifford, Surfability UK

BENEFITS OF THE FUNDING

Once Swansea Council secured funding of £68,000 from the Welsh Government's Tourism Amenity Investment Support (TAIS) fund, through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020, funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government, they appointed one of the UK's leading disabled adaptations companies specialising in the design and installation of modular 'Changing Places' units.



The new facilities consist of a self-contained unit, complete with hoist, shower and changing bed and it is the first Changing Places facility on Gower. Through TAIS, Swansea Council were also able to purchase Mobi-chairs, a high quality floating beach wheelchair, designed to go on the beach as well as in the water. These chairs allow disabled visitors to access the water easily and free of charge, although they need to be pre-booked with Swansea Council.

The project has made a difference to thousands of residents and visitors with severe disabilities, who now have to access and enjoy the waters at Caswell Bay and have a dignified experience when changing and washing in a facility which is fit for purpose and meets their complex needs and requirements. The facility is the first of its kind on Gower and Swansea Council hopes that the project will improve the experience of visitors and act as a model for other parts of Wales to replicate.

The total project cost was £85,000, including the £68,000 received from the Welsh Government and £17,000 of match funding from Swansea Council.

THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT...

Based on the success of this project, Swansea Council has applied for Brilliant Basics Fund and has successfully secured additional funding to install two more Changing Places units at key visitor points on the Gower Peninsula, which should be operational by summer 2023.

"We can't tell you how much having the Changing Place in Caswell has made our lives so much easier and less stressful, we are now able to stay for the whole day without worrying how we are going to change Kai, taking away all our anxieties as parents of an adult with additional needs it one less thing off our long list. Also for Kai who is now nearly 20, it gives him his dignity to access a toilet and changing facilities like everyone else. Thank you."

Feedback received from families using the new Changing Places

