



# CITY PROFILE

# SWANSEA

MARCH 2017





# CITY DESCRIPTION

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Province:** Swansea

**Country:** Wales, UK

**Area:** 380 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:** 241.300 inhab. (2014)

**Metropolitan area:** 462,000 inhab. (2011)

The City of Swansea is Wales' 2nd largest city after Cardiff, and the 25th largest city in the UK.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Mayor:** Rob Stewart

**Website:** [www.swansea.gov.bg](http://www.swansea.gov.bg)

## CONTEXT

Swansea lies within the historic county boundaries of Glamorgan and the medieval Welsh commote of Gwyr, and it was an important trading center in the medieval period as a result of an increase in maritime trade. Swansea still conserves remains from that period, such as the Swansea Castle. Other medieval records refer to a quay and ferry.

During its 19th century industrial heyday, Swansea was a key centre of the copper industry.

Wales can lay claim to be the world's first industrial nation. By the late nineteenth century, the south of Wales was internationally recognized as a centre for heavy industry, coal production and maritime trade. This concentration of industry and innovation left a rich legacy of published and archival resources that can be used to support a wide range of historical, economic and cultural research.

Swansea hosts six significant research libraries and archives that together constitute one of the finest research facilities for the industrial heritage of Wales.

Other archaeological finds are mostly confined to the Gower Peninsula, and include items from the Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age. The Romans also reached the area, as did the Norsemen, and Swansea is thought to have developed as a Viking trading post.

Regarding the Welsh language and culture, the Royal Institution of South Wales was founded in 1835 as the Swansea Literary and Philosophical Society and there are many Welsh-language chapels and churches in the area. 'Welsh-medium education' (i.e. elementary, primary, secondary or higher education delivered through the medium of Welsh) is a popular and growing choice for both English and Welsh-speaking parents.



# SWANSEA'S CULTURAL PROFILE

## MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE

After reaching the shortlist for the UK City of Culture in 2017, the Council believes it has the right partners and plans in place now and for the future to make an even stronger case for why Swansea should be the UK City of Culture in 2021.

The City Council considers that winning this title would give local people access to worldclass cultural activities on their doorsteps, including comedy, dance, film, opera, art, theatre performances and poetry, while also building a legacy for generations to come. The citizens' rights to a cultural and artistic life are key to the city policies, so this status would demonstrate that Swansea is committed to these rights now and in future.

## CULTURAL STRATEGY

Swansea is going through a period of major physical transformation, investing in the largest regeneration programme the city has seen since World War II. In this context, stakeholders are keen to see how culture can play a central role. Work towards the UK City of Culture 2017 candidature, though unsuccessful, provided a platform to look into the city's cultural assets and their potential from a strategic point of view. The current Pilot City experience and parallel work to create a new Cultural Development Framework (a cross-sector strategy framework) is an opportunity to join the dots, acknowledge gaps and weaknesses, and make the most of the city's many cultural strengths.

Creativity and digital innovation are at the heart of major plans to regenerate Swansea city centre in the near future, which supports the rationale for the 2021 bid and broader urban developments.

## STRATEGIC AIMS

Wales has introduced the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, which sits alongside the Environment (Wales) Act and Planning (Wales) Act. The Act describes seven goals to protect the interests of future generations in Wales. The city's cultural offer and aspiration to be UK City of Culture, meets all these goals to some extent. The goal most aligned to the offer is:

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language: A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.

The Council has five Corporate Priorities, which the city's strategies are designed to meet, including the Cultural Development Framework and participation in Pilot Cities. These are:

- A Vibrant and Viable City and Economy;
- Building Sustainable Communities;
- Tackling Poverty;
- Educational Attainment;
- Safeguarding.

The strategic priorities for culture in the city, which the Council has developed with its partners are:

- **Cultural Planning:** identifying the role of culture in development and regeneration;
- **Creative Economy:** exploring the distinctive strengths, opportunities and barriers for growing a strong and sustainable creative industries sector;
- **Culture, Community and Wellbeing — delivering the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act:** examining the role of culture in reducing poverty and supporting cohesive, prosperous, resilient and healthy communities;
- **Creative Education, Skills and Research:** establishing a coordinated knowledge landscape for the City and County;
- **Cultural Tourism:** identifying ways to coordinate the cultural offer to diversify and grow tourism and to maximise the potential of Swansea Bay as an urban and rural destination.

## CULTURAL INITIATIVES

Some examples from Swansea's cultural initiatives are hosting the British Science Festival; the International Dylan Thomas Prize; an artist led regeneration of the High Street; a range of arts and literature festivals, and the work of theatre companies at large. One of Swansea's most famous 'sons' is Dylan Thomas who was born in the city and who based much of his early work on his experience growing up there. "Do Not Go Gentle" is a new fringe festival in the Uplands area of the city where Dylan Thomas was born and lived for 23 years.

The Grand Theatre is the largest in the region hosting many West End Productions as well as several independent theatre companies who are based there. In the summer, outdoor Shakespeare performances are a regular feature at Oystermouth Castle, and Singleton Park is the venue for a number of parties and concerts, from dance music to outdoor BBC Proms in the Park. In addition, every summer they host an International Jazz Festival and every autumn, there is an International Arts Festival;, when international orchestras and soloists perform in unusual venues, such as empty department stores, as well as the Brangwyn Hall, a concert venue in Swansea praised for its acoustics for recitals, orchestral pieces and chamber music alike. Standing near Victoria Park on the coast road is the Patti Pavilion; this is used as a venue that stages live music and events.

There are many independent galleries and artist studios and digital workspaces, as well as a large number of live music venues. The Liberty Stadium, which is home to Swansea AFC, has a capacity of 30,000 when used as a music or event venue. Furthermore, there is the Great Hall and Taliesin Arts Centre, which are owned and managed by Swansea University. The venue hosts a broad programme of events including cinema screenings, an average of ten visiting exhibitions per year, and a variety of live performances, from dance and drama to jazz and world music. Taliesin Arts Centre also houses the Egypt Centre.

## CULTURAL AGENTS

Enabling citizen's broader and more active involvement in culture, Swansea counts on several public, private and civil cultural agents and facilities. Among them are a range of libraries, community buildings and museums; many Leisure Centres and Parks; West Glamorgan Archives; the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery - the public art gallery of the City and County of Swansea; and the Dylan Thomas Centre. The latter celebrates the life and work

of the author with its permanent exhibition 'Dylan Thomas – Man and Myth', and projects such as young writers, intergenerational project, Poets on the Hill, etc.

Also worth noting is the Mission Gallery, a unique art gallery also in the heart of the Maritime Quarter, which hosts a range of exhibitions from various art disciplines; and a craft space, with ranging works from local and international artists. Other significant venues and agents include the Taliesin Arts Centre; West Glam Youth Theatre, Volcano Theatre, the University of the Third Age (which provides peer-learning among retired people), the Palace Theatre and the Grand Theatre (which celebrated its centenary in 1997).

Also, Swansea Museum in Victoria Road is the City and County's Museum, the oldest in Wales-; which sits alongside the National Waterfront Museum, which is part of Amguedda Cymru (Museums Wales).

The Universities are also a great asset for Swansea, as is its artists' base and diverse social community.

All these actors are critical in city planning, as is their contribution to the debate and narrative around Swansea's sustainable cultural future.



## CONTACTS

For additional information about this exercise, please contact:



**Swansea**

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