

Gower Walking Festival 2025 : evaluation report

1.0 Mission Statement

The Gower Walking Festival is an annual celebration of Gower, to encourage participants from all backgrounds to enjoy a unique landscape and a rich heritage. It aims to achieve this by offering an organised, diverse and sustainable programme of events, with minimum environmental impact, to educate, encourage and sometimes challenge all who take part.

2.0 Summary

The 2025 Gower Walking Festival was very successful.

It was launched at Southgate on Saturday 6th September 2025 by Lord Mayor of Swansea, Councillor Cheryl Philpott, who gave a short welcome speech ahead of the first walk - the 6-mile Southgate circular. The launch provided content for social media, eNews and a press release to promote the Festival.

The Festival ran for nine days from Saturday 6th September to Sunday 14th September 2025.

A total of 35 walks were planned.

4 walks were sold out:

- Bone Caves of Gower & the story of the Red Lady of Paviland (7 miles)
- Physical & historical influences on the landscape of North Gower from Dunvant (7 miles)
- Walk to the Worm (5 miles)
- Woods, lily pond, common & garden (7 miles)
- 170 miles walked across all walks.
- Average number of walkers per walk: 12

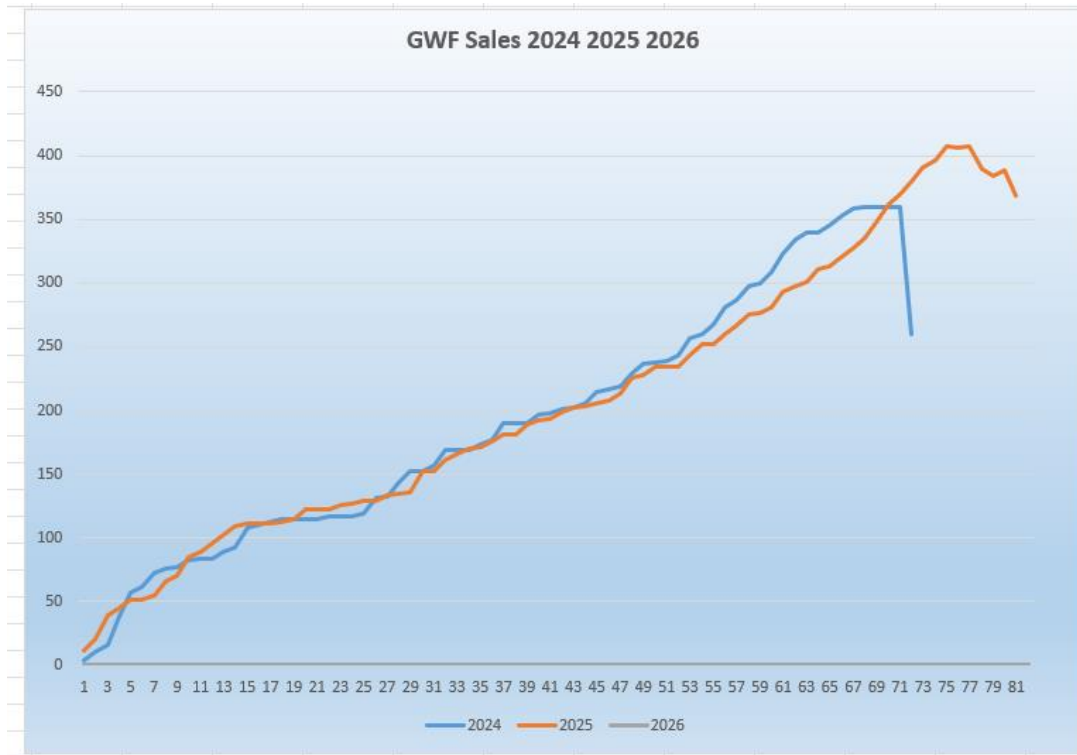
A total of 29 walks actually took place:

- 3 walks had to be cancelled due to poor weather (actual or forecast) - (Hidden Communities of Bishops Wood, Pub to Pub and the Bat Walk)
- 2 walks were cancelled due to low take up (Oystermouth Castle* & Lliw Reservoir) * NB. 2nd walk to same location.
- 1 walk cancelled due to illness of the walk leader (Discovering Oystermouth Cemetery)

Nearly 420 tickets were sold to a total of just under 200 people. In the end we had around 368 walkers after cancellations and refunds.

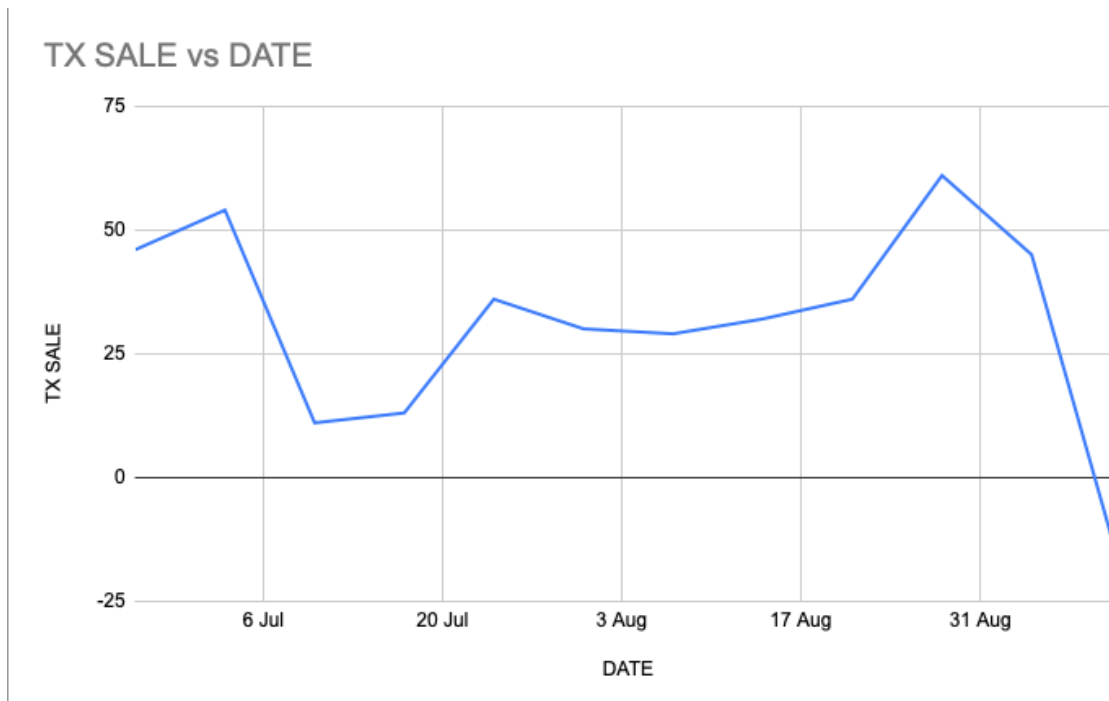
2.1 Ticket Sales

Ticket sales in 2025 were significantly up on 2024.



NB. Very bad weather in 2024 resulted in the cancellation of a number of walks, which have been deducted at the end, hence the sudden drop off in numbers.

Ticket sales by date over 2025



The graph above shows the initial uptick in sales at the start of the campaign in late June. when we announced that tickets were 'on sale' (via Enews, social media and press coverage). From the end of July to beginning of August, ticket sales are stable reflecting the ongoing marketing. Then, as expected, there is another increase immediately before the event starts.

2.2 The programme

The programme of walks was planned to provide variety across themes, length of walk and difficulty.

General themes included scenery, views, history, heritage, wildlife and nature.

There were also some specifically themed walks, including:

- From Swansea Literary Giants to Live Jazz
- Following the footsteps of Swansea Football Legends

In addition, we hosted the Forget Me Not Swansea Memory Walk, an awareness walk run in conjunction with Forget Me Not Dementia Day Clubs charity.

Walk lengths ranged from 1 mile to 11 miles. The majority (63%) of walks were 5 miles or less (22 walks). 29% were just 1 or 2 miles. Five walks (15%) were 8 miles or more.

Walk difficulty ranged from one boot (easy) to four boots (strenuous) - as detailed on the website. Just over half the walks were three boots (moderate). Only one was four boots.

The majority of the walks took place in the morning (including one very early start for the dawn chorus bird walk). Four walks took place in the afternoon and three in the evening.

Walks were all led by experienced volunteer walk leaders, each of whom had in depth knowledge of their walk topic.

2.3 Walk popularity

The top ten walks by attendance (more than 15 participants) were:

1. Woods, Lily Ponds, Common Ground and Gardens (25)
2. Physical and historical influences on the landscape North Gower from Dunvant (24)
3. Walk The Worm (22)
4. Forget Me Not Dementia (22)
5. From Literary Giants to Live Jazz (21)
6. Bone Caves (19)
7. Kilvey Hill Ecology (18)
8. Southgate Circular (17)
9. Mid Swansea Valley (17)
10. Landscape of North Gower (16)

The poorest attended walks (6 participants or less) were:

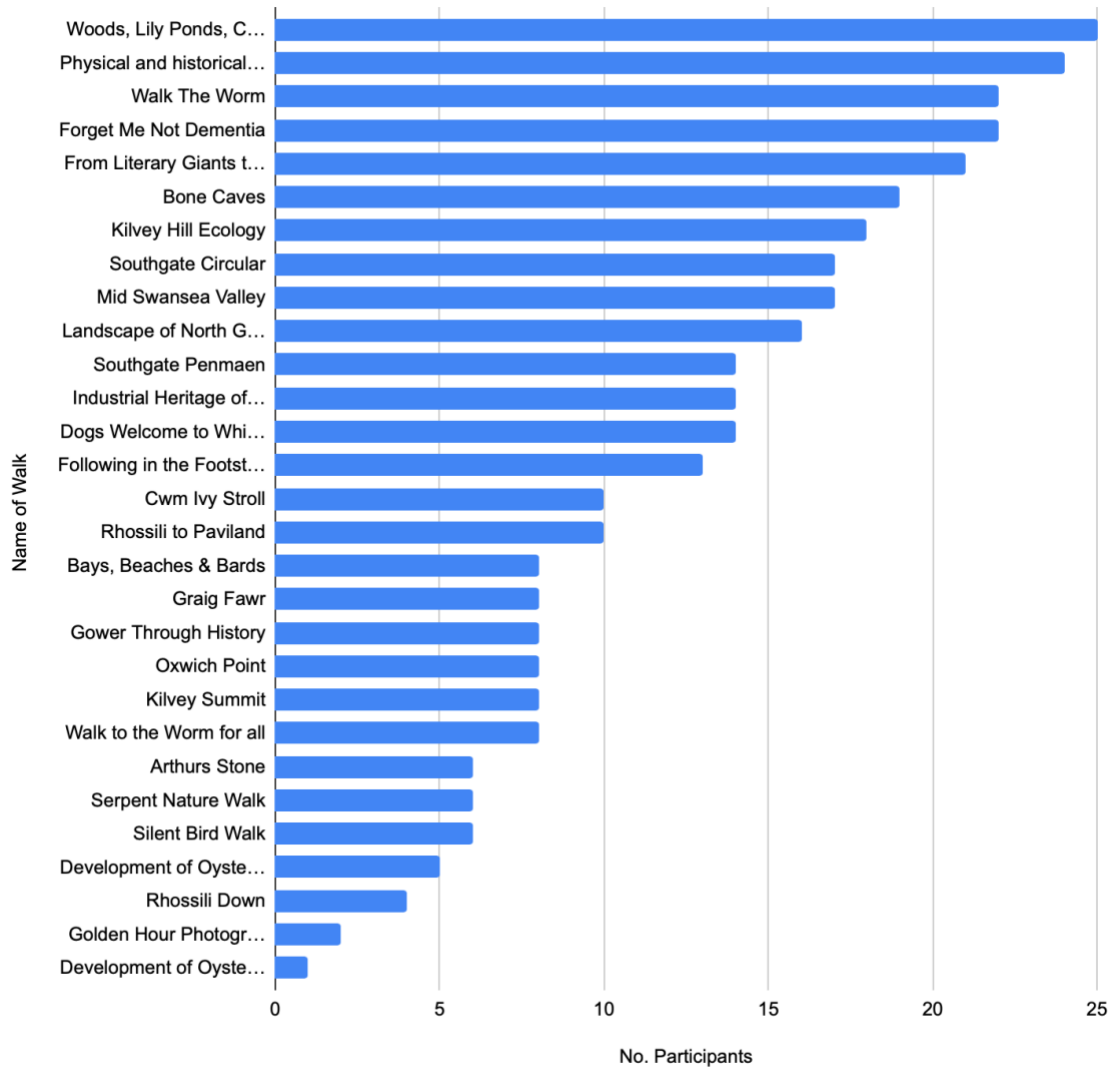
1. Arthurs Stone (6)
2. Serpent Nature Walk (6)
3. Silent Bird Walk (6)
4. Development of Oystermouth Castle (5)
5. Rhossili Down (4)
6. Golden Hour Photography (2)
7. Development of Oystermouth Castle (1)

NB. Some of the walks, such as the Silent Bird Walk were designed for fewer people.

Other walks:

1. Southgate Penmaen (14)
2. Industrial Heritage of Lower Clyne Valley (14)
3. Dogs Welcome to Whiteford Sands (14)
4. Following in the Footsteps of Swansea Football Legends (13)
5. Cwm Ivy Stroll (10)
6. Rhossili to Paviland (10)
7. Bays, Beaches & Bards (8)
8. Graig Fawr (8)
9. Gower Through History (8)
10. Oxwich Point (8)
11. Kilvey Summit (8)
12. Walk to the Worm for all (8)

Graph showing number of participants per walk



2.4 Walkers

From conversations with participants during walks, we understand that walkers came from

- Berwick on Tweed
- Birmingham
- Bristol
- Cardiff
- Carmarthen
- Cheltenham
- Llandeilo
- Milton Keynes
- Oxford
- Penarth
- Plymouth

- Pontyclun
- Reading
- Somerset
- Southampton
- Swindon
- Worthing
- Ynystawe

Also

- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Silver Springs, Maryland, USA

The customer feedback survey (37 responses) indicated that

- 62% of walkers came from the Swansea & Gower area
- 25% of participants were on holiday (up from 10% in 2024)
- 25% had previously attended the festival
- 54% of walkers were aged 65+ and 60% were female (both similar to 2024).

A copy of the feedback survey is in Appendix 1.

2.5 Photography competition

The Annual Photography Competition ran throughout the Festival and through to the 30th September 2025.

It attracted entries from 11 different people, who submitted a total of 24 photos (Festival participants were allowed to submit up two photos per walk).

The winner was Zara Quli, who won a free ticket for one person on up to 5 walks in the 2026 Gower Walking Festival. The winning photo is now the main photo on our website.

The quality of the entries was so good that the committee decided to award 3 runners up prizes:

- Victoria Adams for her photo of Pennard Castle
- Debra Nunan for her photo of Rhossili Beach with the rainbow
- Kevin Cocoran for his photo of the Worms Head walkers.

They each won a free ticket for one person on 1 walk in the 2026 festival.

3.0 Funders, sponsors & supporters

The support of the Gower Walking Festival's funders, sponsors and friends is invaluable to its success.

In 2025 we had one Gold Sponsor - The Gower Society which provided £500 sponsorship by way of a grant.

In addition we had three Bronze walk sponsors paying £100 each:

- Dynamic Rock - which sponsored the Middle Swansea Valley walk
- Fab Walks - which sponsored the Hidden Communities of Bishops Wood (which was cancelled) and Woods, Lily Pond, Common & Garden walks)
- Surfside Cafes - which sponsored Bays, Beaches & Bards.

Supporters (organisations which provided walk leaders) were:

- Bat Conservation Trust
- Bev Rogers Historian
- Bishopston & Pennard Walkers are Welcome
- The Clyne Community Project
- Friends of Oystermouth Castle
- Gower National Landscape
- Gower Unearthed
- Heneb
- National Trust
- Swansea Jazz Club/Swansea Jazz Festival
- The Story of Mumbles
- Wales Coast Path
- Wildspace

In addition, walks were led by the following individuals:

- John Ashley
- Dave Brayley
- Mike Clinch
- Richard Daugherty
- Lynne Esson
- Nigel Evans
- Griff Harries
- Nigel Robins
- Julia & Steve Robson
- Kathryn Thomas

Thanks are also due to

- Accent Design
- Dave Cottle, creative director of the Swansea International Jazz Festival
- Swansea Council
- Jim Young - who has now been appointed Gower Walking Festival's official poet in residence

4.0 Marketing

The core aims of the GWF 2025 marketing were to:

- raise public awareness of the Festival, both locally and across the UK
- encourage people to buy tickets for Festival walks

This was achieved via a multifaceted, integrated comms programme.

Key elements of the programme were:

1. Website gowerwalkingfestival.uk
2. Social media (Facebook, Instagram & X)
3. eNewsletters
4. Posters & promotional postcards
5. Media relations & media partnerships
6. The Gower Show
7. Swansea Council

4.1 Website

The website is the key resource for the public to get information about the Walking Festival, the walks programme and to buy tickets. The website was comprehensively updated and a new function allowing the walks programme to be searched for walks on which dogs were allowed was added.

The site went live with the 2025 walk programme and ticket sales on **27 June 2025**

The website showed an increase in users from 2024 vs 2025

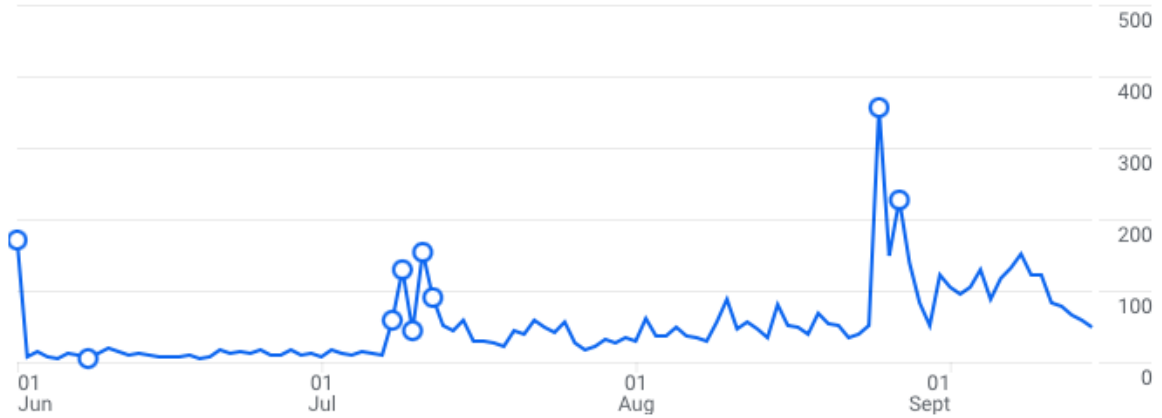
Website users in 2024 (period from 30/05/24 to 15/09/24)

Active users [?]

4.4K

New users [?]

4.3K



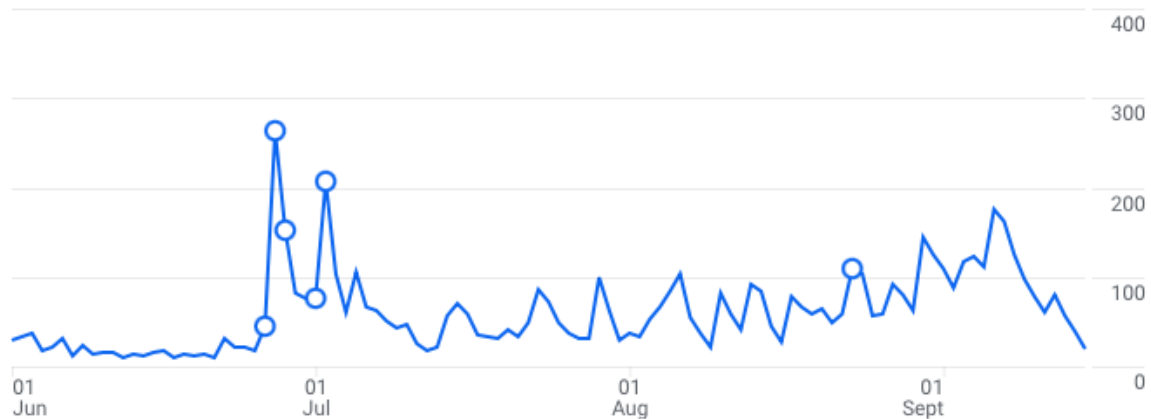
Website users in 2025 period from 30/0/25 to 15/09/25

Active users [?]

5K

New users [?]

4.9K



4.2 ENews

A total of 11 eNewsletters were issued in 2025 using MailChimp - with a mailing list of c1,300 subscribers. This is up from six in 2024.

The 2025 eNewsletters attracted significantly higher levels of engagement than those issued in 2024.

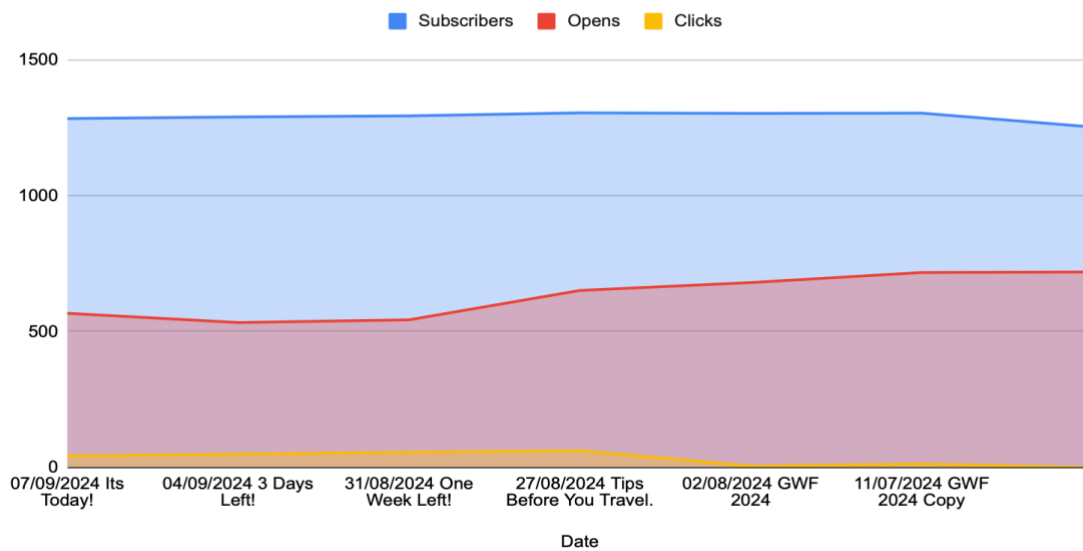
Response to Enews

The graphs below compare the response to the eNewsletters for 2024 and 2025.

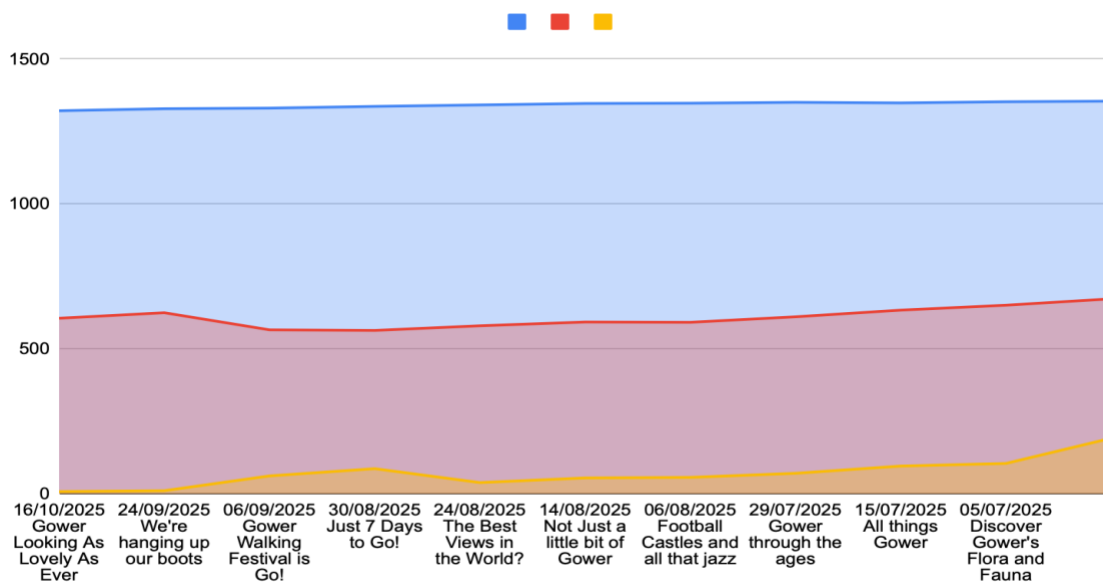
KEY TO GRAPHS:

	Subscribers
	Opens
	Clicks

E-news response 2024 Campaign



E-news response 2025 Campaign

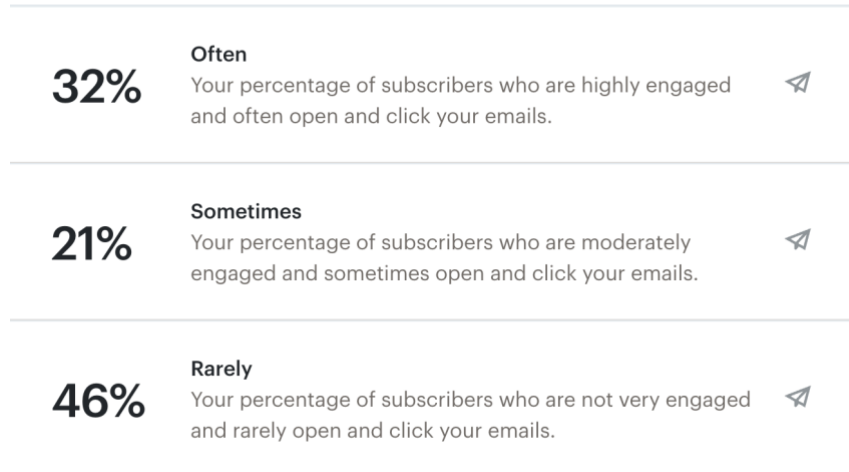


Over the period from 1 June to 30 September 2025, our average open rate for eNewsletters was 45.4%, the click rate was 5.8% and clicks per unique opens were 12.7%.

NB. The all sector benchmark is an open rate of 35.63% and a click rate of 2.62%, so our eNewsletters perform well.

Email marketing engagement

Your subscribers, broken down by how often they open and click your emails.



Unfortunately figures for 2024 are not available, but now that we have captured this year's data we will be able to provide year on year comparison in the 2026 report.

4.3 Social Media

Alongside eNews, social media is key to raising awareness of the Gower Walking Festival, driving traffic to the website and consequently achieving sales. This year social media and eNews activity were more integrated than previously, which had a beneficial effect.

Over the marketing period, we used three main social media channels

- Facebook - 3.6k followers (at 31st October 2025)
- X - 1.2K followers (at 31st October 2025)
- Instagram - 1.7k followers (at 31st October 2025).

We posted across these channels several times a week, increasing in frequency as we approached the Festival dates.

During the 2025 campaign period (30/05/25 to 03/10/05) there were circa 70 social media posts for each Facebook, Instagram & X = a total of 210. There were approximately 186 posts in 2024.

A table showing the eNews & Social Media Programme against ticket sales can be found in Appendix 2.

As well as actively promoting walks prior to and during the Festival, there was a concerted effort to engage with other pages that shared a love of Gower and/or walking with a cross-sharing of posts to gain exposure. Such pages included Visit Swansea and Enjoy Swansea, Gower & Mumbles as well as local businesses such as the Britannia Inn. Posts were also shared about sponsors. Such organisations were tagged where appropriate.

A key difference from 2024 to 2025, was the more personal and conversational style adopted this year, which had an impact on engagement. This is something we will build on in 2026.

We used a constant hashtag #gowerwalkingfestival in all our posts for consistency and to create a stronger brand, increasing accessibility for following across our social media platforms.

One tool used to increase exposure was to work with associated groups, targeting them with specific walks that would be of interest. Gower Walking Festival committee member Clive Scott played a huge part in this by sharing posts to 98 pages & groups that he is connected with. Such pages were home to various groups of enthusiasts such as walking, community groups, photography, local history and wildlife. Despite it being difficult to measure what the impact of sharing to specific groups had on sales, the effect it had on engagement was very positive and this activity certainly raised more awareness of the Festival to a wider audience.

We also set up a Gower Walking Festival LinkedIn account but encountered problems posting on it - to be resolved for 2026.

FACEBOOK

Facebook interaction 2024 - period from 01/06/2024 to 15/09/2024

Custom: 1 Jun-15 Sep

1,173 Interactions

+23,360.0% from previous 107 days



816
Reactions

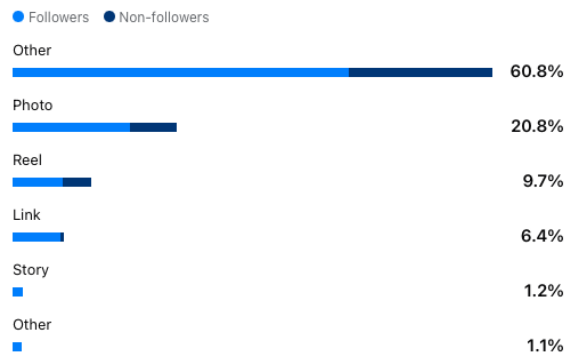
34
Comments

323
Shares

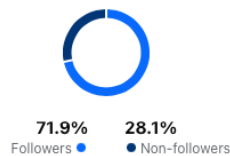
By interaction type



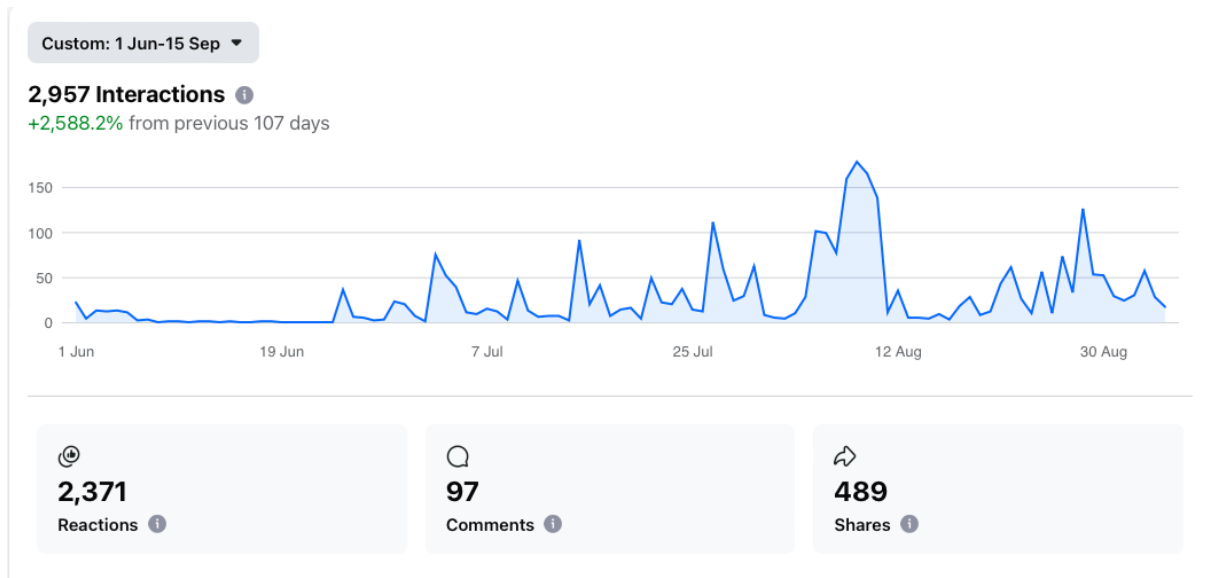
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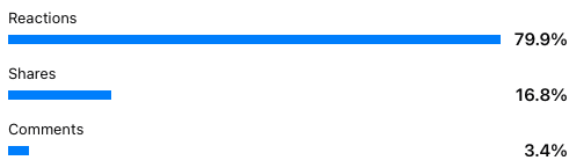
By followers vs non-followers



Facebook interaction 2025 - period from 01/06/2025 to 15/09/2025



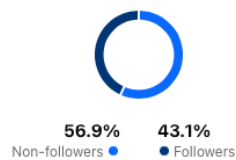
By interaction type ⓘ



By content type ⓘ



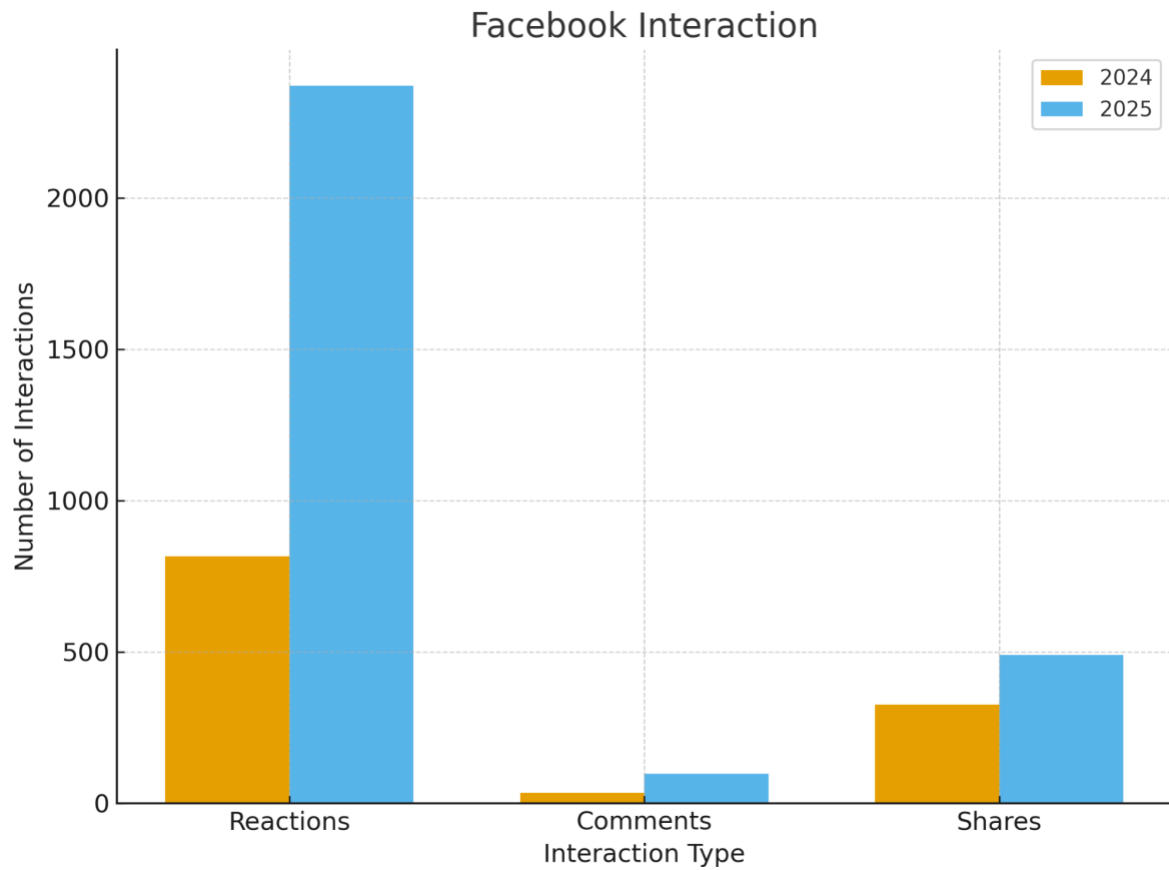
By followers vs non-followers ⓘ



Note the significant increases in interactions (up from 1,173 in 2024 to 2,957 in 2025), reactions (up from 816 to 2,371), comments (up from 34 to 97) and shares (up from 323 to 489).

Also, note the year on year increase in followers.

Facebook interaction 2025 - period from 01/06/2025 to 15/09/2025



INSTAGRAM

Despite some data being unavailable for 2024, the table below clearly shows year on year growth in the performance of Gower Walking Festival Instagram posts.

Instagram Interaction between 30/05 and 15/09	2024	2025
Views	n/a	17k
Reach	2.5k	3k
Interaction	n/a	522
Link Clicks	2	6
Profile Visits	294	231
Follows	n/a	67

X

Interaction and engagement data is not available from X.

4.4 Posters & promotional postcards

3,000 A6 cards and 100 A4 posters were printed.

These were primarily distributed via the network of local libraries & council buildings.

Members of the organising committee placed posters and postcards in locations across Swansea and Gower including:

- Bluebird Cafe (John)
- Clyne Farm
- Co-op in Killay x 2 (Linda)
- Co-op in Tycock (John)
- Co-op in Bishopston (Clive)
- Croeso Lounge, Mumbles (Linda)
- GO Outdoors (Chris)
- Gower College (Chris)
- Gower Heritage Centre (Clive)
- Guild Hall foyer (Terry)
- Hillend Caravan Park notice boards (Linda)
- Joiners Arms, Bishopston (Clive)
- King Arthur, Reynoldston (Linda)
- Lamplighter, Bishopston (Clive)
- Llandeilo (Terry)
- Mumbles ladies toilets (Linda)
- One Stop Shop (Lynne)
- Stores in Pontardawe (Lynne)
- Sainsbury's
- Sketty Market (Lynne)
- Swansea University - both campuses (Chris)
- Three Cliffs Cafe, Southgate (Clive/Chris)
- Vivian Hall, Blackpill (Linda)
- Zinco Lounge, Swansea (Linda)

4.5 Major Employers

In addition, committee members also organised for posters, postcards (and pdfs thereof) to be circulated internally at the following major employers:

- Admiral (Terry)
- Amazon (Terry)
- Carmarthen Council (Clive)
- DVLA (Terry)
- Neath Port Talbot Council (Clive)
- Swansea Council (John)
- Swansea University (Chris)
- Trinity St David's University (Chris)

4.6 Media Relations & Partnerships

Over the 2025 marketing period we issued 3 press releases to a wide-ranging media list of local, regional & national print & online media, specialist magazines:

- BOOT UP! This is Gower Calling - announcing launch of ticket sales (26/06/2025)
- BOOT UP! Gower Walking Festival is Go - announcing launch of Festival by Swansea Councillor, Lord Mayor Cheryl Philpott (06/09/2025)
- Booting up for Gower Walking Festival 2026 - announcing confirmed dates for 2026 (26/09/2025).

SWANSEA SCOOP

We agreed a “sponsorship” of £50 for a “feature spot” at the top of **Swansea Scoop’s** Swansea Summer Guide eNewsletter which was published on 23rd July (6,000 subscribers & 30,000+ social media followers). This included a link to our website which was the most popular of all in that eNewsletter with more than 50 clicks.

As part of the package, the story was shared on the Scoop Instagram on 25th July and received 1,200 views, 24 clicks to the Gower Walking Festival website and 14 taps through to the Gower Walking Festival profile

As a result of this collaboration, we also secured an editorial Q&A about the Walking Festival which was published on 9th August.

MEDIA COVERAGE

We achieved a variety of coverage across a range of print and online media, blogs etc:

Title	Media	Date
Over 30 Guided Walks to Discover at 2025 Gower Walking Festival	Wales 24/7 (online)	30/6/2025
Tickets for Gower Walking Festival now available	Tenby Observer (online)	01/07/2025
Gower Festival 9 days of walks around Gower and Swansea	All Events	17/07/2025
Gower Walking Festival	Wales Cottage Holidays blog	17/07/2025
Swansea Scoop Summer Events Guide (sponsored spot)	Swansea Scoop (online)	23/07/2025
Tickets on sale for this year's Gower Walking Festival	In Your Area (online)	23/07/2025
Best foot forward for spectacular scenery	South Wales Evening Post (print)	24/07/2025
Boot Up! This is Gower Calling	SA2 Mag (print & online)	30/07/2025
Gower Walking Festival 6th - 14th September 2025	Welsh Man Walking	Summer 2025
Gower Walking Festival (link to GWF website)	Wales Coast Path Latest News - Summer 2025	01/07/2025
Walking Boots Ready (Q&A)	Swansea Scoop	10/08/2025
Gower Power Welsh Walking Festival Celebrates 21st Anniversary	Trail Magazine (September issue)	28/08/2025
Gower Walking Festival 2025 : Celebrating 21 Years of Exploring the Peninsula	Gower Community Magazine (September issue)	01/09/2025
Big Food Fest, Swansea Jazz Fest, Gower Food & Walking Fests, Heart of the Valley Fest, Americana Fest	Swansea Scoop - What's on	05/09/2025
Two Festivals taking Place in Swansea	Wales Online	06/09/2025
Gower Walking Festival	Clyne Valley Community Project What's On	14/09/2025

Copies of coverage can be found in Appendix 3.

INFLUENCER VISIT

We also worked with Swansea Council tourism on a visit to the area by health & fitness influencer Jordan Foster (23.9k followers on Instagram). We hosted Jordan and her partner on the Arthur's Stone & the Sacred Mountain of Cefn Bryn walk as part of her trip and she posted a video about the walk on 12th September and included a photo on her grid.

4.7 The Gower Show

We had a display and table in the Gower National Landscape tent at the Gower Show on 4th August. A total of 119 people visited our table and expressed an interest in the festival.



4.8 Swansea Council

An informal collaboration with Swansea Council resulted in the promotion of the Festival via both tourism strand (Visit Swansea Bay) and communications to local residents (Enjoy Swansea).

In particular

- Gower Walking Festival page on [VisitSwanseaBay.com](https://www.visitswanseabay.com)
- Council liking & sharing our social media posts (and vice versa)
- Including the Festival in VisitSwanseaBay media relations
- Including the Festival in an influencer visit (see in 4.6 above)

