

Visit Wales

South West Wales Regional Forum

Minutes from Thursday, 2nd February at Trefloyne Manor

Present

Glenn Hewer (GH)	Bluestone Resorts Ltd
Nia Ball (NBa)	Carmarthenshire Tourism Association
Jacqui Kedward (JK)	Chair, Carmarthenshire Tourism Association
Jacqui Davies (JDa)	Clydey Cottages
Tim Brace (TB)	FBM Holidays also representing Pembrokeshire Tourism Association
Zoe Wright (ZW)	Head of Marketing, Folly Farm
Nic Beggs (NB)	Group Sales Manager, Bay Leisure Ltd, LC
Jonathan Hughes (JH)	National Trust
Phil Verbinnen (VB)	Oakwood Theme Park
James Parkin (JP)	Director of Delivery and Discovery, PCNPA
Jane Lewis (JL)	Regional Learning Partnership
Paula Ellis (PE)	Retreats Group
Mark Bulson (MB)	Director, Scamperholidays Ltd
George Reid (GR)	South West Wales Tourism Advisory Board Member (interim Chair)
Stephen Crocker (SC)	Chairman, Tourism Swansea Bay
Andrew Campbell (AC)	University Wales Trinity St David
Gina Gavigan (GG)	Wildlife Trust South & West Wales
Huw Parsons (HP)	Marketing and Tourism Manager - CCC
Steven Hopkins (SH)	Tourism & Marketing Manager - CCS
Karleigh Davies (KD)	Business Development Officer - NPTCBC
Alan Turner (AT)	Tourism Marketing & Development Manager- PCC
Gerwyn Evans (GE)	Head of Programme Development, VW
Claire Carew (CC)	Marketing Manager Product Experience Development
Philip Abraham (PA)	Regional Engagement Manager, VW

Apologies

Sue Thomas	Cruise Wales Manager, VW
Mark Soanes	Call of the Wild
Tom Packham	Estates Business Manager, Dŵr Cymru
Kevin Davies	Gwesty'r Emllyn Hotel
Rebecca Stock	National Trust
Martin White	Head of Regeneration - PCC

1 Welcome and introduction from Chair

George Reid (GR) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to Trefloyne Manor and gave a brief overview of the agenda and presentation outlining that Jonathan Hughes (JH) would be giving a presentation on behalf of the National Trust in Rebecca Stocks absence.

GR explained that he was acting as interim Chair of the Forum while the process for electing a new chair was taking place and this matter would be discussed under any other business. GR thanked Zoe Wright for her previous work as Chair.

Minutes from the previous meeting of 27th September were agreed as a true reflection.

GR gave details of the mid term strategy review of the Partnership for Growth Tourism strategy and thanked SWW Forum members for their input, GR asked that the link the review be re circulated with the minutes of this meeting.

Action: Link to Strategy Review to be re-circulated

VW

2 Update from TAB Member

GR gave an update on the Tourism Advisory Board meeting of the 29th November 2016 and the 20th January 2017, with the main points being as follows:

The Board received an update on the latest financial position. The discussion focussed on DRCs, the sustainability of future budgets and the importance of ensuring budgets reflected the tourism strategy. Ian Edwards of the Celtic Manor gave a presentation about the plans for the Wales International Convention Centre. The discussion focussed on the competitive advantage that a Convention Centre would bring to Wales. The Board stressed the importance of the industry working together to maximise that competitive advantage.

Nigel Morgan provided the Board with an overview of social tourism, associated issues, and how it could be developed. The Board were supportive of the principle but identified possible practical barriers e.g. the ability for providers to supply accommodation at peak times and the implications of taking kids out of school at non peak times and noted what was already being delivered by third sector providers. Nigel Morgan would be hosting a round-table on social tourism and well-being at Swansea University School of Management this term, and agreed to report back to the Board after the event.

The Board discussed the success of the Year of Adventure campaign. The 2017 campaign was almost finalised. The TV campaign would start on 1 March. The Board also discussed future plans; the focus would remain on the "years of" theme. The Board asked for a paper setting out plans for 2019 onwards.

The Board was given a presentation on the main features of the "Routes of Wales" proposal – it would be called the Wales Way and would consist of two main routes – Coastal and Cambrian. The Board agreed that officials could work towards launching the strategy in 2017.

An overview of the recent review of TISS was given. The Board discussed some of the key pipeline projects outlined in the Board paper and agreed that consideration of these projects would be consistent with the aims set out in the tourism strategy. It was agreed that these projects could progress through the applications stage, taking account of the fact that final decisions would be subject to internal peer review and final approval by the Minister.

The board were updated with the latest figures from the International Passenger Survey, showing that Wales were on target for 1 million overseas visitors in 2016 for the first time since 2008.

GE added that this years marketing budget had been increased by £5m for 2017/18 and details of this would be circulated in due course. He also added that Claire Dwight from VW would be arranging to come to SWW in the near future to discuss Business Tourism opportunities with the trade.

GE Asked for ' Years of' suggestions from the Forum

ALL

'Routes of Wales' presentation at next Forum meeting

VW

3 VW Regional Engagement Update

Gerwyn Evans (GE) outlined some of the schemes currently being funded in the SWW Region including the new Wakeboarding Park in Pembrokeshire and visitor amenity improvements at Rhosilli working with the National Trust. He also stated that there was a healthy pipeline of projects in place and the 3 key ERDF destination schemes at Saundersfoot Harbour, Pendine and Llys-y-Fran were progressing through Business Planning stages.

He outlined that there would, hopefully, be a positive announcement regarding a small scale infrastructure fund via RDP very soon and that an extra £10m had been secured for Marketing, TISS and TPIF for this financial year.

Phil Abraham (PA) gave an update on current TPIF and RTEF projects in the region saying all were progressing according to profile and benefits of some PR activities had already been evident. Nia Ball

(NB) gave an overview of the Welsh Night Events project being undertaken by Carmarthenshire Tourism Association using VW TPIF funding mentioning that two 'pilot' nights were in place for February and March and there had already been interest from the travel trade and cruise sectors. Gina Gavigan (GG) gave an update of the TPIF funded Wild Wales Adventures and Legends project and stated that the launch of the event will be covered by ITV.

Finally PA reminded the group that RTEF/TPIF funds were open for applications for the financial years 2017-19 and gave a brief overview of the key points relating to each scheme asking members to ensure stakeholders were aware of these funding opportunities and that the closing date for applications was 24th February 2017.

All Forum members agreed that the 2 year 'funding' period was a positive development in terms of the fund.

Nic Beggs (NB) agreed with the positive news on funding but asked GE and PA if there was any opportunity for advanced payments to small businesses successful in applying due to the financial pressures created by the grants being paid on a defrayment basis only.

GE and PA stated they understood the issues in terms of 'defrayment' but these were internal Welsh Government regulations and not specific to Visit Wales schemes and that advance payment was acceptable for 3rd Sector organisations. NB asked GR if the matter of advanced payments could be raised at the next Board meeting and GR agreed.

4 VW Marketing Update

Claire Carew (CC) gave the Forum an overview/update on the following areas:

Year of Adventure, now that YOA has come to an end its time to reflect on the positive and lessons learnt, figures for the first 9 months of 2016 show that there has been a substantial increase of 12% in the number of overseas visitors coming to Wales and a 9% increase in the amount they spend during their visit.

The International Passenger Survey, published by the Office for National Statistics today, shows that Wales welcomed 856,000 overseas visitors in the first 9 months of 2016, an increase of 12% compared to the first 9 months of 2015 and the highest increase among the nations of the UK. The figures also show that while there has been a small increase in expenditure across the UK as a whole, Wales has recorded substantial increases of 9% compared with the first three quarters of 2015, which was itself a record breaking year.

CC mentioned that activity highlights during YOA included:

1) The 'In Wales' Epic campaign.

This achieved what we set out to do and create a real buzz on social media and see an increase in the use of our hashtag and social media followers.

2. The fact VW is about to hit the 1 million followers on social media

3. The European Championships 2016, during which VW had to react very quickly managing to secure secured and extra £500,000 of budget to deliver a campaign around Wales' success at the tournament which saw us run a German TV ad for the first time ever. Members of the Forum reported they had seen an increase in enquiries from German Visitors during 2016.

Year of Legends

CC indicated that the VW priorities for 2017 were:

1. Brand – the roll out of the new VW Brand

2. Digital First- All projects should concentrate on digital delivery where possible.

3. Content (not just on Visitwales.com but on partner platforms), and the need to create product led content which provides visitors with the ability to book. CC agreed to provide links to relevant Visit Britain web pages.

4. Internationalisation

5. UCLF - Trophy tour from 21st April. 5/6 venues around Wales. It was noted that plans are being put in place by the Football Association of Wales to create an accommodation website for visiting fans, and a discussion took place around how the region could best benefit from the final being in Cardiff.

What's on/ coming up

January

- Ambassadors announced – Cerys Matthews and Ewan Rheon (Game of Thrones)
- 25th - St Dwynwen's day – heightened on-line campaign (as detailed in VW e-newsletter)
- o A free downloadable St Dwynwens day card created by North wales artist Jonathan Edwards available on VW.com
- 25th a YOL Media briefing took place in the Senedd for in Wales Media

March

- March 1st - Launch our TV Ad in UK & Ireland (inc Wales)
- Do the Little Things – Gwnewch y Pethau Bychain – random acts of kindness during the month of March. We see this fitting with our national campaign as one of our core brand values of 'do good things' Share on social media . #findyourepic productnews@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Year of Sea

- Scoping / planning is underway with Market research being undertaken (Germany, USA, UK, Cruise).
- By Jan 2018 we'd like a content calendar filled with activity that's made up of events, new product and existing products that are presented in a contemporary way, CC requested that the Forum forward ideas on YOS to the Regional Team or the product news e-mail address.

General discussion took place around the opportunities presented by YOS and VW marketing, Jacqui Kedward (JK) asked that planning around future 'Years of' (2019 onwards) campaigns be provided as soon as possible to help with forward planning, GE suggested the industry should inform discussions by proposing future years 'themes'.

Steve Hopkins (SH) asked that if any changes are made to the markets VW are targeting these are also given to the industry in good time and this was agreed by CC.

Action: VW to provide links to Visit Britain web pages (as referred to in discussion)

CC / VW

5 Presentations

Jonathan Hughes (JH), National Trust, gave a presentation on current National Trust development projects in the region including – Freshwater West, Rhosilli and Colby Woodlands.

A general discussion took place around the presentation and Tim Brace (TB) asked JH if there was scope to open more areas of National Trust land up for multi uses including mountain biking and horse riding especially the Coastal Path. JH outlined this is under consideration but that there were a number of issues surrounded this with Health and Safety being a key priority.

GE requested that the National Trust provide a list of events taking place in the region and JH agreed to forward this information to the regional team.

Action: A list of events taking place in the region to be provided to Regional Engagement Team for dissemination

JH / VW

Sarah Owen (SO), Carmarthenshire County Council gave a presentation on a Celtic Routes – Ireland – Wales co-operation project proposal linked to converting the sizable "footfall" of potential visitors driving through Carmarthenshire with another final location in mind, into staying and paying visitors. The proposal was discussed by the Forum and SO agreed to keep members updated going forward.

Jane Lewis (JL), Regional Learning Partnership outlined that the RLP are seeking industry help to feed into the Regional Learning Plan which will ultimately shape the Welsh Governments funding proposals in terms of skills training for the industry. The partnership are in the process of setting up industry 'cluster' groups to gather information and JL agreed to provide details to Forum members on how they can get involved in the process.

It is crucial that the industry engage with this process and that all Forum members complete the questionnaire to ensure that the relevant support is provided.

UPDATE provided by JL

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you at your recent Forum meeting about the Regional Employment and Skills Plan that we are currently writing on behalf of the Welsh Government (WG). This is an important plan that influences how WG allocates its funding for skills during the next and future financial years. We have been tasked by WG to consult widely with the Industry in our region and, in order to obtain maximum input, by as wide a range of businesses and individuals across all sectors as possible, we have set up 6 sector cluster groups.

I spoke about the Tourism Clusters at the Forum meeting and, whilst I appreciate not everyone can be involved in the meetings, we are keen to ensure that we have the voice of the whole Tourism Industry. If you are able to join the meeting detailed below please could you email smnicholls@carmarthenshire.gov.uk to confirm attendance. If you are unable to attend please could I ask you to complete the survey - through the link below - and also pass on to your networks. Cluster group meeting date 5th May 2017, 10.00 am in Llety Cynin, St Clears.

Please click here <http://www.rlp.org.uk/business-survey-2017/> to complete the survey.

If you have any questions please contact Jane Lewis (JL) jelewis@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

6 Pembrokeshire - Going Forward

Alan Tuner (AT) outlined that at the last Forum meeting members has been made aware that there were 2 proposals being investigated for the delivery of Tourism Services in Pembrokeshire these being:

a Leisure and Tourism Trust and a
a Social Enterprise delivery model (trade led)

The current position is that neither of the proposals is being taken forward, for a number of reasons, and Tourism Services are being retained within the local authority with a commitment for a budget for the financial year 2017/18. A proposal within the Local Authority will be to having an Advisory Board in place made up of key industry players to attempt to raise the profile of Tourism within the organisation.

A discussion took place around the Pembrokeshire update with a number of members concerned with the fact that while the Welsh Government were increasing Tourism budgets and fully understanding the impact of Tourism on the economy this did not seem to be the case in Pembrokeshire where the sustainability and growth of Tourism was essential. Karleigh Davies (KD) told the forum that a reduction in Tourism in Neath Port Talbot had had a detrimental effect on the industry and it could take a number of years to re-dress the balance. Huw Parsons (HP) thanked AT and his team for the work they had continued to deliver within difficult circumstance and GE asked AT whether the local authority would be prepared to release a statement on the current position.

Action: Request to LA, PCC, to release statement on current position

AT

7 Regional Issues / AOB

Andrew Campbell (AC) mentioned that the University of Wales Trinity St David's would be interested in discussions around the provision of a hospitality school in Wales relating to the Partnership for Growth Strategy, Visit Wales will ensure AC and Forum members are keep up to date of developments in this area and, as already mentioned, will re-issue the strategy review document.

Steve Hopkins (SH) asked that the Forum members be updated with any information on future markets that VW were targeting this was agreed by CC.

James Parkin (JP) asked the current position in terms of marketing of the All Wales Coastal Path, GE outlined that discussions were taking place with the Natural Resources Wales who have responsibility.

<p>A discussion took place around the merits of VW having responsibility for the Coastal Path brand as it was felt by members that it was an asset which Wales as a whole does not take advantage of in terms of marketing, GE agreed to give an update at the next forum meeting.</p> <p>Details were given of the Pan-Wales tourism summit being held in Llandrindod Wells on the 18th May, Mark Bulson (MB) suggested this was an ideal opportunity to invite stakeholders from the finance and commerce sector to create closer links with Tourism and GE said he would explore this with colleagues.</p> <p>The majority of Forum members raised the issue of the new Business Rates assessment and the potentially large business rate increases facing tourism operators with many faced with potential closure due to the rise. Paula Ellis (PE) mentioned that businesses in St Davids had met the Valuation Office regarding the issue and the only advice given was to appeal. Members felt this was also an issue as the appeal system was flawed and many felt this was one of the most serious issues facing the industry in years. GR agreed to raise the issue at the next TAB meeting. GR</p> <p>Action: GE to update on All Wales Coastal Path at next meeting</p> <p>Action: GR to raise Business Rates discussion at next TAB meeting</p>	<p>GE / VW</p> <p>GR</p>
<p>8 Chair, closing remarks</p> <p>GR thanked members for their attendance and reminded them that they would, shortly, be receiving an invitation to the Tourism Summit on the 18th May. The next meeting dates will be circulated as soon as they are available (likely to be June / October)</p>	