



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## Mid Wales Regional Tourism Forum

14 June 2022 (1.30pm – 4.30pm)

In person / virtual

### Minutes

#### Attendees in person

Chair – **Rob Bullen** (Eco Dyfi / Dyfi Biosphere / CAT), **Rebecca Rees** (Visit Wales), **Dylan Roberts** (Salop Caravans), **Aled Davies** (Natural Resources Wales), **Val Hawkins** (Mid Wales Tourism), **Michael Booth** (Elan Valley Visitor Centre)

#### Dialling in

**Steffan Roberts**, **Lucy Von Weber & Rob Holt** (Visit Wales), **Rhodri Morgan** (Aberystwyth University), **Gwenfair Owen** (Ceredigion County Council), **Dafydd Wyn Morgan** (Cambrian Mountains Initiative), **Victoria Leyshon** (Transport for Wales Rail), **Carol Williams & Helen Roderick** (Brecon Beacons National Park Authority), **Rowland Rees-Evans** (Penrhos Golf Club), **Aled Rees** (Teithiau Cambria)

#### Apologies

**Steve Hughson** (Royal Welsh Agricultural Society), **Beverly Dimmock** (RSPB), **Julie Lewis** (Powys County Council), **Arwyn Watkins** (Cambrian Training Company), **Jenn Jones** (Natural Resources Wales), **Llion Pughe** (Best of Wales), **Paul Donovan** (Escape Routes), **Gareth Price** (Twristiaeth Ceredigion Tourism), **Andrea Mansfield** (Powys County Council), **Justin Baird Murray** (Metropole Hotel), **Anthony Rosser** (BHA Wales Chair / Lake Vyrnwy), **Peter James** (Welsh Government), **Laura Thomas** (Brecon Beacons Tourism)

Guest presenters: **Kate Gardner** (National Trust), **Rhys Jones** (Aberystwyth University), **Suzy Davies** (WTA), **Tom Agar** and **Juliette Allen** (Fourth Street)

## 1. Welcome

1.1 RB welcomed attendees to the first in person / hybrid meeting since lockdown. Since the last full meeting the Forum welcomed a new member from Transport for Wales – Victoria Leyshon. Victoria has recently joined TfW as the new Partnerships Marketing Manager and will be taking over the tourism focused work.

Congratulations were noted on the appointment of Dylan Roberts as director of the Mid Wales branch of the British Holiday and Home Parks Association.

Congratulations were also noted to Dafydd Wyn Morgan and the Dyfodol Cambrian Futures who won the Communities award at the 2022 Wales Rural Network Awards last week.

1.2 Following the last meeting the minutes had been circulated for comment and an amendment has been made to the dates on the event strategy noted. As no further amendments were received the minutes will be published.

## 2. Overview of the National Trust project: Pont ar Daf car park

2.1 Kate Gardner, Business Change Manager at the National Trust gave an update and overview of developments to improve the Pont ar Daf car park at the base of Penyfan. The Plan is to create 260 car spaces for visitors which include provision for

Electric vehicle charging points, disabled parking spaces and space for buses. The toilet block and facilities are also being upgraded. Construction started on site early May and is expected completion late December 2022. A number of sustainability measures are also being adopted as part of the project and discussions are taking place with Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and other partners around the future of sustainable transport.

### **3. Overview of the CUPHAT Ireland-Wales project**

3.1 Rhys Jones from Aberystwyth University updated the Forum on the CUPHAT project: Coastal Uplands, Heritage and Tourism. Its aim is to attract tourists to upland areas lying adjacent to popular coastal areas, working with the Cambrian Mountains and the Preseli Hills in Wales and the Wicklow and Blackstairs Mountains. The project is worth €3 million over a period of 20 months. As the project is developing the team are keen to keep this Forum updated on progress.

### **4. Visit Wales update:**

- Events
- Tourism Development
- Wider Welsh Government update (Statutory Licensing/Registration, Non-domestic rates, School Year reform and Tourism Tax)
- Marketing

#### **Events**

4.1 RH said the team were finalising the Events Strategy which had recently been presented to the Fora. It was to be formally launched on 13 July and the team would be working with the sector to deliver it. An implementation plan would be developed and produced by Christmas and a stakeholder group established with representatives from Local Government, Business, Culture and Industry. The horizon was looking positive for the sector with budgets fully allocated for both this and next Financial Year and events even supported as far as 2034. RH said WG were fully aware of the challenges this sector is facing from supplier doubt and volunteer / staff shortages.

#### **Marketing**

4.2 LVW gave an update on the Croeso campaign. As part of efforts to support the tourism and hospitality sector following the Covid-19 pandemic, Visit Wales (VW) are running a burst of marketing activity, working title "Croeso", from this week. VW don't normally advertise on TV at this time of year but this is in response to the unprecedented nature of the recovery following the pandemic. The campaign activity is specifically promoting paid for products (such as boat trips and serviced accommodation) and also hospitality to boost support for businesses across the country.

4.3 LVW shared key points from the [Domestic Tourism Sentiment Tracker | VisitBritain](#) survey.

4.4 With procurement completed, [TXGB](#) (Tourism Exchange Great Britain) will soon be available for Welsh businesses to use. Bringing visitors, particularly international, back and driving sales for Wales's tourism businesses has never been more

important. VW has partnered with TXGB to give businesses better access to online sales channels, so that they can promote their offering cost-effectively and drive more direct bookings.

4.5 Travel Trade events for the year will be confirmed this month following a [call out to partners/stakeholders](#) inviting Expressions of Interest.

4.6 A recent collaboration with Superfast Broadband Wales (SFBW) means that, since April, VW is helping with additional promotion of SFBW's free [digital training for tourism businesses](#).

### **Tourism Development**

4.7 SR said that the Business Plans presented to this Forum were now in progress with £2.9m recently awarded to 18 Brilliant Basics projects. SR explained that the four regional fora were followed by the Visitor Economy Forum (VEF) that the four chairs were members of. This meeting was chaired by the Minister of Economy and would be meeting next week. The chair would share feedback from these meetings and the perspective of the sector at the VEF. The dates of the next two meetings have been set.

### **Welsh Government**

4.8 Ongoing discussions are taking place with other policy areas leading on Tourism levy, reform of the School Year, non-domestic rates and statutory registration.

- Tourism Levy are continuing to engage with a representative group of accommodation providers (nominated by the WTA) to explore various design options and impacts. The consultation will launch in Autumn 2022 and will be supported by in-person and virtual engagement events led by Welsh Government. Further information about events will be provided at a later date.
- Reform of the School Year is a Programme for Government commitment and is being carried out in collaboration with the Plaid Cymru Senedd Group, as part of the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru. This is being taken forward through two distinct workstreams; one on the school day and one on the school year with prioritisation on the school year initially. The team working on this policy would like to arrange a webinar with the Fora.
- WG are looking at a statutory licensing/registration scheme for holiday accommodation. This is part of the Programme for Government and now part of the Plaid Cymru cooperation agreement. A scheme would enable all accommodation to operate on a level playing field and give visitors assurances. Options are currently being drafted for Ministers before further stakeholder views are sought.
- NDR / Council tax premium activity has concluded with a recent announcement from the Finance Minister around exploring exemptions where properties are restricted by planning conditions.

4.9 Rhodri M queried if WG has been consistent in its consultations about assessing impact on the Welsh language and if any themes were emerging on this question? SR confirmed this has been a major consideration across all these policies.

- 4.10 RR said that written updates had been received on Skills and Research and would be circulated with the minutes.

## 5. Role of the Wales Tourism Alliance

5.1 Suzy Davies, the new Chair of the Wales Tourism Alliance gave an overview of the role of the WTA. SD explained the WTA was a sector representative body, entirely funded by its members and acted on behalf of members responding to Welsh Government consultations such as the ones heard in the update from VW. WTA would respond to Senedd enquiries and would campaign when it was felt that WG needed to re-evaluate the policy. SD explained that there were often a range of views from members that needed to be considered, particularly around Tourism Levy. It's not always about arguing against an incoming policy but working with Government to ensure that Policy is fit for purpose.

5.2 SD said she was happy to come along to future meetings for further updates and shared the details for the [website](#) where you can find details on the representation work they do as well as consultation responses, press releases, info sharing, requests for info. Her contact email would be shared with the minutes.

## 6. Update on Growing Mid Wales Feasibility Study

6.1 Following the bespoke webinar on stage 1 of the Tourism Feasibility Study – Tom Agar and Juliette Allen from Fourth Street gave an update on work since the meeting on 18 May and feedback following the questionnaire responses. TA said that 96 survey responses were received from a wide range of stakeholders which was roughly split between Ceredigion and Powys with the majority from local tourism businesses but some larger organisations as well. TA gave a flavour of some of the responses received and the slides would be circulated after the meeting.

6.2 The next stage was to work on an Investment Action Plan and produce a Stage 2 report which would be shared with the steering group at the end of this month. As the next full meeting of the Forum was likely to be September, updates or another bespoke webinar would be planned in the interim to keep the Forum updated on this work.

## 7. Sector updates:

- **Mid Wales Tourism** - New regional area guides have been produced and were circulated in hard copy at the Forum. The team were working closely with their members to prepare policy responses for the Welsh Government and commented that the number currently being developed was very challenging. MWT are changing their online marketing platforms.
- **Salop Leisure** - Issues are still ongoing with supply chains which had increased significantly recently. Sales figures and forward bookings are also down. Comments were made around the implication for private caravan owners and Tourism Tax and collecting personal data.

Response from Head of Visitor levy Team: *All visitor accommodation will be in scope if being let on a commercialised basis for short-term lets. All subject to consultation process and no final decisions have been made. Longer term leases and rentals would not be considered in scope.*

DR explained the new planned changes for Welsh medium education in some areas would have an impact on non-Welsh speakers moving to the area for work. RhodriM said he was interested in hearing more about DR's concerns and suggested this could be covered in a discussion on skills in a future meeting.

- **Elan Valley – Dwr Cymru** - MB said that spend per head was up on budget. The team were working with the Cambrian Mountains to sell local produce in the facility and were always looking for new local suppliers to work with. Construction is starting in October to clear the old railway from Rhayader to Elan Valley that has been blocked for some time and there would be a 12 week programme of works.
- **NRW** - Hoping to have a new source of grant funding available by Mid July, which will be on the NRW website.
- **Aberystwyth University** - The presentation on the CUPAHT project gave a flavour of the type of work that Aberystwyth University had to the potential to undertake. Work was progressing on the Old College project and a contractor was now on site.
- **CAT** - The Outline Business Case is being prepared as part of the Mid Wales Growth Deal process, ready for submission in September. RB would like to update the Forum at the next meeting.

The full sector updates will be circulated in a separate document.

## 8. AOB

8.1 RB concluded the meeting by thanking attendees and those in the room for travelling to join. DR said it was disappointing there was such a poor turnout for the first in person meeting. RR said there had been a number of attendees cancel the day before or on the morning but given hindsight of this the attendees would have been notified and perhaps a complete virtual meeting would have been suggested. Meetings in person also carried a cost with refreshments being ordered for a higher number. Meeting invitations would be sent out for the next meetings shortly.

8.2 Members thanked RB for stepping into the Chair's position last minute.