

Mid Wales Regional Tourism Forum
1 September (1pm – 3.30pm)
Virtual
Minutes

Attending

Chair – **Steve Hughson** (Royal Welsh Agricultural Society), **Steffan Roberts**, **Rhidian Morgan**, **Lucy Von Weber**, **Rob Holt**, **Glyn Roberts & Rebecca Rees** (Visit Wales), **Aled Davies** (Natural Resources Wales), **Anthony Rosser** (BHA Wales Chair / Lake Vyrnwy), **Val Hawkins** (Mid Wales Tourism), **Michael Booth** (Elan Valley Visitor Centre), **Rob Bullen & Eileen Kinsman** (Eco Dyfi / Dyfi Biosphere / CAT), **Rowland Rees-Evans** (Penrhos Golf Club), **Laura Thomas** (Brecon Beacons Tourism), **Dafydd Wyn Morgan** (Cambrian Mountains Initiative), **Carol Williams** (Brecon Beacons National Park Authority), **Sue Wright** (Pentir Pumlumon), **Andrea Mansfield** (Powys County Council), **Victoria Leyshon** (Transport for Wales Rail), **Rose Tuite** (Cambrian Training Company), **Gwenfair Owen** (Ceredigion County Council), **Dylan Roberts** (Salop Caravans), **Aled Jones** (RWAS)

Declined

Julie Lewis (Powys County Council), **Rhodri Morgan** (Aberystwyth University), **Gareth Price** (Twristiaeth Ceredigion Tourism), **Zara Cottle** (CADW), **Arwyn Watkins** (Cambrian Training Company), **Paul Donovan** (Escape Routes), **Jenn Jones** (Natural Resources Wales), **Beverly Dimmock** (RSPB), **Llion Pughe** (Best of Wales), **Jenni Thomas** (Powys County Council), **Justin Baird Murray** (Metropole Hotel), **Peter James** (Welsh Government), **Claire Williams** (Ceredigion County Council), **Aled Rees** (Teithiau Cambria)

1. Welcome

- 1.1 SH welcomed attendees and commented on the outwardly positive outlook for events and the tourism / leisure and hospitality sectors in Wales, with many returning and showing signs of normality. However, post covid disorientation, made worse by the increased costs, supply chain, staffing and now the energy situation has presented real challenges. With the cost of living going up we needed to be mindful that the crisis hasn't gone away.
- 1.2 SH thanked RB for stepping in to Chair the last meeting.
- 1.3 SH explained that the four Fora chairs are now meeting regularly which provides an opportunity to discuss common issues in the sector and a chance to engage with the WTA, UK Hospitality and other stakeholders. Issues currently under discussion include the Terms of Reference (TOR), Non-domestic rates (NDR) and Tourism Levy. The four chairs have agreed to write to the Chief Executives of the Local Authorities to get clarification around two issues facing the sector – the 182 day NDR and Tourism Levy. Answers were requested on plans for implementing these changes. To date Ceredigion

Council has sent a holding response and Powys County Council has said they have not yet considered the Levy but would engage with the consultation when it is published. The Local Authorities referenced that the Valuation Agency Office will be responsible for identifying properties in their responses.

- 1.4 A further letter, drafted in conjunction with other agencies has also been written to Rebecca Evans, WG Finance Minister suggesting exemptions around the 182 NDR rate. This letter could be shared with members of the Forum on request.
- 1.5 In readiness for the Tourism Levy consultation, the policy team have arranged a series of events across Wales with a selected audience and the Minister. SH said as these are not considered open events the four Chairs have agreed to arrange workshops with the industry to gather views. The dates were 18 October in the South and 20 October in the North and further details would follow. Members of the Forum expressed thanks to SH for voicing the concerns of the industry.
- 1.6 SR said the consultation process has started very early to gather views and WG welcomes as many comments and views as possible to shape this policy. Something more formal will come out of the consultation and events.
- 1.7 A welcome was extended to two new members representing Pentir Pumlumon Tourism and Community Development - Tanya Frizwell and Sue Wright.
- 1.8 The minutes from the previous meeting have been circulated and as there were no amendments or outstanding actions these are now finalised and have been added to the website.

2. Cynefin – the Green Heart of Wales

- 2.1 Eileen Kinsman from the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) gave a presentation on CAT's future development plans. Cynefin is one of three tourism projects under consideration as part of the Mid Wales Growth Deal. The team were currently drafting their strategic business case. The project includes an iconic arrival experience and extending exhibition spaces. DWM commented that CAT was a great asset to Mid Wales and queried the consultation process. EK said the team have consulted with staff, supporters and the community. A Community event was held at CAT and there are also plans for a town centre market stall as the project develops.

3. Visit Wales update:

- Events
- Welsh Government

- Tourism Development
- Marketing

Events

- 3.1 RH said the new [Events Strategy](#) was launched in July and has been widely consulted upon prior to launch. It is now in the implementation stage and a steering group has been established, with Steve Hughson appointed as a Chair to steer the work. The first meeting of the Group took place on 12 September and events are being measured by their impact, seasonality, profile and growth. SH has requested a breakdown of events by Local Authority. The event programme is now fully committed in 2022/2023 with events in 2031 in the pipeline and committed to. Suggestions are always welcome but with a lead in of two / three years in advance.

Welsh Government

- 3.2 SR briefly updated the Forum on a number of ongoing Welsh Government policies. A decision has been taken on the NDR policy with further consideration around exemptions. The Reform of the School Year policy is due for consultation during this academic year and the Forum will be updated on progress. Ministers are aware of the cost-of-living crisis facing the Tourism and Hospitality sector. SR encouraged Forum members to feed through views to SH who would raise them with the Minister at the Visitor Economy Forum.
- 3.3 VH asked if there has been a collective assessment of the impact of these policies on the visitor economy? And SH queried if any work has taken place internally within WG to look at the cost-of-living crisis and impact. RM said nothing has been undertaken within the Tourism sector but was aware of some activity taking place in other departments.

Tourism Development

- 3.4 GR gave a presentation on the Statutory Licence scheme. The [Programme for Government 2021 to 2026](#) includes a commitment to 'consult on legislation permitting local authorities to raise a tourism levy'. Exploring and introducing a statutory licensing scheme for all holiday accommodation is seen as an important foundation in both of these areas based on the need to have accurate intelligence on all holiday providers to ensure the levy can be applied appropriately and the supply or oversupply of short-term lets in particular, can be managed accordingly.
- 3.5 Statutory Licensing is referred to within the Second Homes commitments. In July 2021, the Minister agreed to a procurement exercise to scope establishing a statutory licensing scheme for all holiday accommodation in line with the commitment in the Labour/Plaid agreement. Welsh Government (led by Visit Wales colleagues) commissioned Strategic Research and Insight (SRI), an independent Cardiff-based research agency, to undertake this work and engage with key stakeholders representing the public and private sectors to explore the benefits of such a scheme and key considerations in how a scheme could be taken forward and implemented.

- 3.6 The Closed consultation concluded there was a strong consensus in favour of the need to do something. Debate was mostly about *what* the scheme should look like rather than *whether* it is needed. The next steps will be to seek views from key stakeholders to inform the consultation late in 2022. The Statutory Licencing team will keep in touch with external stakeholders at key stages of the development, but if there is anything you need to know in the meantime, please contact [Glyn Roberts](#) or [Gwawr Price](#).
- 3.7 RM introduced a new pilot Resource Efficiency campaign that is under development with Business Wales for the Tourism sector. The pilot will run until the end of the FY via an online platform, focussing on five key areas; water, waste, energy, supply chains and travel. Ongoing discussions are taking place with Business Wales and the team are looking for champions working within these sectors to help support and get involved with the campaign. There will be no funding scheme supporting this, but it will signpost to support inventions for businesses who want to move forward. It was hoped the scheme will launch prior to the next Forum meeting in December. As this was a virtual campaign, there is no cap on numbers.

Marketing

- 3.8 LVW gave an update on some of the key pieces of activity taking place over the next few weeks. [Croeso](#) activity was still running from June to August and [Addo](#) also ran during the school holidays. There is a new Visit Wales advert out and LVW demo'd this to the Forum. Visit Wales are moving to all year-round advertising. Similar to last year, in October another online session will be held and LVW encouraged members to register. The audience identity kit will be presented and registration for the event on 13 October will be publicised in a bulletin on 23 September.
- 3.9 VW had produced an [information note](#) around the five key ways for engaging with the team.
- 3.10 Work has also taken place with the National Parks on a [Diolch campaign](#) and [Wales Coast Path](#) on promotion work around its ten year anniversary. Work is progressing on the World Cup.
- 3.11 Other key resources/information pieces include the latest [Consumer Insights](#) research, new content creation for the [website](#), the [travel trade programme](#) and PR activity such as working with [Rough guides](#).

4. Regenerative Tourism in Rural Wales project

- 4.1 DWM 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. At the last Forum, Rhys Jones from Aberystwyth University introduced the project and since then a stakeholder event has been held in Aberystwyth University. This work

stemmed from the Cambrian Mountains brand guidelines that were completed earlier this year. The team are working with stakeholders across the Cambrian mountains to gather intelligence, data and baseline information. There will be community consultation workshops within the Cambrian mountains.

5. Sector updates

- 5.1 Comments were made around the cost-of-living crisis and concerns for the future if businesses don't get help. This was going to be an incredibly difficult time for a few years. The cost-of-living crisis on top of the new WG policies make life very difficult for the sector. This is in addition to supply chain availability and issues with delivery. SH asked members to continue to feedback these concerns so they could be raised at the Visitor Economy Forum.
- 5.2 A number of sector updates were received and will be circulated in a separate document.

6. AOB

- 6.1 SH concluded the meeting by thanking attendees for their input and reminding attendees they were advocates for their sector, so messages should be taken back from today and to bring forward thoughts from stakeholders.
- 6.2 Last year, AB updated the Forum on the position from the sector, this item would be picked up again at the December meeting. **Action.**
- 6.3 SH thanked RR for her role as Mid Wales Regional Engagement Manager and wished her well as she moved to the South East region. No replacement was in post yet and so RR will cover until then.
- 6.4 SH was also leaving his role as CEX at the RWAS at the end of September and suggested the invite to the Forum was extended to his replacement. SH also stated that he would be happy to remain in the role of chair for as long as the forum wished. Members supported Steve's continued presence in the role as Chair.