

Mid Wales Regional Tourism Forum
01 December 2022 (1pm – 3.30pm)
Minutes

Attendees

Chair - **Steve Hughson, Nathan Richard, Rhidian Morgan, Heledd Owen, Rob Holt, Rebecca Rees** (Visit Wales), **Rob Bullen** (CAT), **Beverly Dimmock** (RSPB), **Julie Lewis** (Powys County Council), **Carol Williams, Christopher O'Brien** (Brecon Beacons National Park Authority), **Aled Davies, Jenn Jones** (Natural Resources Wales), **Val Hawkins** (Mid Wales Tourism), **Michael Booth** (Dwr Cymru), **Roland Rees-Evans** (Penrhos Park), **Kate Gardner** (National Trust), **Laura Williams** (Royal Welsh Agricultural Society), **Dafydd Wyn Morgan** (Cambrian Mountains Initiative), **Paul Donovan** (Escape Routes), **Gwenfair Owen** (Ceredigion County Council), **Aled Rees** (Cambria Tours), **Victoria Leyshon** (Transport for Wales), **Rhodri Llwyd Morgan** (Aberystwyth University)

Guest Presenters

Sioned Humphreys (Pembrokeshire Coast), **Eve Nicholson** (NRW), **Tom Agar, Juliette Allen** (Fourth Street), **Ed Ducker** (ITP World)

Apologies

Steffan Roberts [Rhidian Morgan standing in], **Lucy Von Weber, Suzanne Thomas** (Visit Wales), **Arwyn Watkins** (Cambrian Training), **Eileen Kinsman** (CAT), **Justin Baird-Murray** (Metropole Hotel), **Llion Pughe** (Best of Wales), **Aled Rhys Jones** [Laura Williams standing in] standing in (Royal Welsh Agricultural Society), **Sue Wright** (Pumlumon Tourism), **Peter James** (Welsh Government)

1. Welcome & Update from Chair

- 1.1 SH welcomed attendees and introduced NR as the REM taking over from RR. SH thanked RR for her help with the forum.
- 1.2 SH highlighted some of the issues currently affecting sector:
 - Cost of living and reduced income - SH referred to Visit Mid Wales Tourism's 'How's Business' poll which shows bookings are generally down when compared against pre-covid booking numbers
 - WG consultations – NDR and Tourism Levy which will place additional pressures on the sector. It is still very unclear how the Levy will operate and what additional responsibilities it will place on businesses already under pressure.
- 1.3 SH reported that, since the last meeting, there had been a number of events held on the Tourism Levy within this region - one organised by Welsh Government and two others organised by the four Fora chairs, UK Hospitality, WTA and others to support and add value to the consultation. SH had previously circulated a paper summarising the views expressed by attendees at the Chair led session and



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encouraged members to contribute their own views to the ongoing consultation by the closing date (13 December): [Discretionary visitor levy for local authorities | GOV.WALES](#)

- 1.4 The minutes from the previous meeting in September were circulated after the meeting. These are now finalised and have been added to the Tourism Zone on the [Business Wales website](#). There is one outstanding action which will be revisited in the next meeting in March. Members accepted the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.
- 1.5 SH concluded by congratulating Visit Wales and others including the Welsh Football Team for doing an excellent job in raising the profile of Wales, our language, culture and identity at the World Cup in Qatar.

2. The 10th Anniversary of the Wales Coast Path

- 2.1 Representatives from the Wales Coast Path shared the marketing/engagement activities that have been underway during the celebratory year. This was followed by a discussion on how tourism businesses could benefit from closer connections with the Wales Coast Path and National Trails (Offa's Dyke Path/Glyndwr's Way); to explore what resources and activities could be developed in partnership and the opportunities for stakeholders to use the 'Year of Trails' to promote their businesses. Suggestions were made around short videos that stakeholders could embed, circular routes and linking inland areas. EN said that a shorter video was being produced and would share this with the Forum and that more videos were available Wales Coast Path You Tube channel. **Action – NR to follow up.**
- 2.2 SH touched upon increasing the length of visit and opportunities for food and drink tourism. Walking the Coastal path and experiencing Dark Skies events lend themselves to increasing duration and consequently spend. S Humphreys mentioned Cadw's efforts to increase length of visits through their itineraries.
- 2.3 The issue of transport around the paths/trails was highlighted as a concern, both in terms of domestic and international travellers. The accessibility and accuracy of transport information needs improvement. Moving walkers and their luggage is a struggle.

3. Update on Growing Mid Wales Feasibility Study

- 3.1 Representatives from Fourth Street gave an update on the Growing Mid Wales Feasibility Study which they had previously introduced to the Forum. The report is expected to be signed off by the Growing Mid Wales Management group on 13 January and will be circulated thereafter. **Action – NR to follow up.**
- 3.2 The ensuing discussion included the extent to which local communities agree. TA said that they repeatedly experienced tension during consultation meetings with regards reducing pressure on certain geographical areas and/or during busy periods, resulting in the main objective being the notion of regenerative tourism.
- 3.3 SH said he recognised the growth deal as a useful piece of work but questioned the point at which projects will begin to be delivered and outcomes will start to be



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- apparent. He made the point that the project needs to move from repeated consultations and scoping to delivery of projects already agreed in Tier 1. JL stressed that this work was seen as providing evidence for future funding streams, highlighting the shared prosperity fund as an example. She said that tier 1 projects have been working their way through the business plan. This was always about wider opportunities for the sector and future funding streams. VH emphasised the pressures on sector. Investment will see big changes in the make-up of the sector over the next 5-10 years. Lots of brand, strategy and positioning work done at a national level. VH agreed that there needs to be some delivery but in the context of extremely difficult times with pressures on budgets, stressed the need to maximise every opportunity – business support, marketing. RM reinforced VH's point, saying there had been lots of interest in the WTIF-£50m funding.
- 3.4 TA said he hoped that structure of the action plans will allow for focus on business support and other key areas, not requiring enormous investment. Can be a phased approach as funding comes along and economic situation gets better.
- 3.5 SH asked JL to feedback to partnership that the forum would like to see an update on plans to deliver meaningful outcomes and noted that the private sector's ability to contribute had been reduced since the removal of the Economic Strategy Group. **Action.**

4. Visit Wales update

Events

- 4.1 RH reminded the group that the National Events Strategy was published in July. The Event Wales Industry Advisory Group, chaired by SH, have been working on an implementation plan with the events advisory group which will hopefully be published in January. A bid will soon go in for the 2028 Euros and it's hoped the legacy of this will carry across Wales. The final event for 2022 has been delivered and activity will recommence in the New Year. The team are looking to deliver as many events as possible with seasonal and geographical spread, particularly for 2024/25 at this stage and welcome ideas.
- 4.2 RH echoed an earlier point about people and skills shortages. SH gave examples of major events in the region and their links with tourism. SH has spoken to Michael Bewick, Chair of the North Wales Forum who shared plans for the North Wales Growth deal to support the creation of a new Skills Hub based around Coleg Llandrillo Menai and other colleges. This initiative could benefit the whole of Wales in addressing the skill gaps faced by the sector. SH highlighted the importance of the industry being specific when identifying shortages as this would drive and inform interventions.

Tourism Development

- 4.3 RM said the Minister made an oral statement on the Statutory Licensing scheme (previously described as Registration) on 15 November, no date has been set for the consultation but this is likely to go live next month. The Forum will be updated on progress.



- 4.4 Next month Visit Wales are running a pilot efficiency campaign Sustainable Tourism Wales until the end of the financial year. This will be based on the Tourism Zone and will focus on five themes: water, waste, energy, supply chains and travel. Marketing packs are also being developed and we're working in conjunction with Business News Wales as they have a large stakeholder database and platform. The campaign will also feature live events, podcasts and showcase examples from Businesses across Wales.
- 4.5 SH suggested himself and RM meet to discuss sustainable tourism as there was a potential cross over with the Event Wales Implementation Plan. **Action.**
- 4.6 RM said that Wales are now considering the third round of Brilliant Basics funding for FY 23-24. It's likely that the criteria will remain the same as last year but with an increased grant rate. There will be a pot of funding of £2.5m and EOIs will be requested in January from LAs and NPAs.
- 4.7 Another pot of funding available for businesses is the Wales Tourism Investment Fund (WTIF). This is a £50m fund delivered by the Development Bank of Wales. This is currently a mix of loan and grant. There is a strong pipeline of products coming through and this will have a positive impact on the marketplace. RM encouraged any potential projects to contact DBW.
- 4.8 RM added that Welsh Government understands the pressures businesses are facing with the rise in costs. We are listening to the concerns raised by the sector and will take into account from a policy perspective. The Visitor Economy Forum provides a direct route for the Fora Chairs to feed back to the Minister and Ministers are aware of the pressures the sector is facing. Welsh Government is reviewing its budget position following the Chancellor's Autumn statement.

Marketing

- 4.9 HO reminded members that the consultation period for the Visitor Levy closes on 13 December, following a series of events across Wales. SH re-iterated that everybody should respond if they can.
- 4.10 HO outlined the success of the recent World Cup marketing campaign and highlighted the value of working closely with partners, including FAW, the Urdd and Wales Arts International to capture the world's imagination. Target audience - USA and key European countries. Initial feedback is positive with most traffic ever through the Visit Wales website on the day of the Wales/USA match.
- 4.11 HO shared links to resources and gave taste of stats (to share). **Action – NR to follow up.**
- 4.12 HO informed the forum of the upcoming autumn/winter campaign going live. Year of Trails is a domestic campaign tailored to fit the audience and said that the 'Llwybrau graphic' can be used by stakeholders on own marketing.
- 4.13 SH challenged members to be 'trail makers' alongside the campaigns 'trail takers', to identify and promote trails within the region.



5. BBNPA Transport Project

- 5.1 SH introduced Ed Ducker from ITP World who gave a presentation on the BBNPA Transport Project.
- 5.2 ED responded to a question about reducing the honey pots and gave an example of the potential for creating a 'park and ride' from the south of the BBNP to the Storey Arms area, during peak season. ED pointed to public transport being too infrequent at the moment and said they would look at what has been successful in other rural areas and will develop a pilot. They are also looking at walking and cycling routes between settlements and will be drawing up a 5-year action plan that will tie in with Swansea Metro and South Wales Metro.
- 5.3 SH commented that lessons learned will be transferrable to other areas across Mid Wales, particularly the Cambrian Mountains.

6. Sector Updates.

- 6.1 SH thanked members for updates received and congratulated DWM on his recent award for his work on the CUPHAT Heritage tourism project. A number of sector updates were received and will be circulated in a separate document. SH asked that any additional updates be sent to NR for inclusion in the document.

7. Closing remarks / AOB

- 7.1 The next meeting will take place on **Wednesday 8 March 12:30 – 15:00**. International Pavilion at RWAS Showground, Llanelwedd provisionally booked for an in-person meeting. Members agreed on a hybrid meeting.
- 7.2 SH will attend the Visitor Economy Forum on behalf of the MWRF and will take points forward from today's meeting. If anybody would like any additional points raised, please send them to SH. SH gave cost of living, supply chain issues and skills as examples of issues that members might want to raise.
- 7.3 Finally, SH urged members to share the information and points raised, with wider stakeholders.