

Visit Wales - Mid Wales Regional Tourism Forum

23 July 2020

Virtual (Online) Meeting

Attendees representing the following organisations:
Royal Welsh Agricultural Society
Mid North Powys Tourism Network
Mid Wales Tourism
Cambrian Training Company
BHA Wales Chair / Lake Vyrnwy
Brecon Beacons NPA
Cambrian Mountains Initiative
Wales Activity Tourism Organisation
Salop Leisure
Dyfi Biosphere
Natural Resources Wales
Ceredigion County Council
Brecon Beacons Tourism
Tynrhyd Retreat
Powys County Council
Penrhos Golf Club
RSPB
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
Transport for Wales
Visit Wales representatives

Welcome & Introductions – Steve Hughson

SH welcomed members and thanked them for their attendance; members' input has proven to be invaluable in feeding through to the weekly COVID-19 Taskforce meetings. He also stressed the importance of Event Wales meetings in reinstating the vital link between events and hospitality.

SH suggested that local communication is key; all members have their part to play in helping to promote responsible behaviour regarding COVID-19 regulations and non-compliance risks undoing the progress made in lifting restrictions.

Policy Update - Rob Holt

RH provided confirmation of current and proposed COVID-19 restrictions. **He emphasised that all dates provided would be advisory and based on the public health situation at the time.**

Although considerations are ongoing, currently the wearing of face masks, the "two metre rule" and the "two household rule" continue to apply.

Although the provisional date of the re-opening of accommodation with "shared facilities" is July 25, this would not apply to indoor dining areas in B&Bs, hotels, etc.; if conditions allow, the re-opening of this facility would follow on August 3.

RH continued to highlight the massive behaviour changes required to ensure the successful easing of restrictions and emphasised that the Test, Trace and Protect programme is key, and is aligned with WG's communications strategy. The Test, Trace and Protect webinar will be taking place on Friday 24 July; details had already been circulated to members, who were again encouraged to attend if possible.

Re-iterating SH's opening comments, RH emphasised that those businesses not following the regulations and guidance are providing conditions for the virus to thrive and therefore risk jeopardising the planned timeline regarding the lifting of restrictions. However, most businesses are adhering to the rules and members were asked to encourage businesses to engage with the "Eat out to Help out" scheme. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-more-information-about-the-eat-out-to-help-out-scheme?utm_source=7cbf240f-2ff4-4eb8-9ed3-7b948fb0e004&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

RH pointed to the Local Authority's place in monitoring compliance, with Powys and Ceredigion County Councils reporting no current issues. The continued re-opening would help to ease the current issue of congestion in some areas and provide visitors and local communities with more activities and experiences to do.

RH informed members that a meeting involving Visit Wales and wedding venue representatives would be held within the week and that the re-opening is being considered as a priority. This would have to be carried out in a cautious, timely manner and is currently limited by the number of households permitted to form an "extended family".

Discussion followed regarding Transport for Wales's (TfW) guidance; dialogue is ongoing at government level. This is an ever changing situation but for the time being the messaging around public transport remains the same: 'Please only travel if your

journey is essential'. Some members felt that this was not clear or visible enough to visitors and TfW agreed to communicate information to members to clarify the situation and asked for cooperation to help promote this message.

RH thanked industry bodies, local authorities and members for their support in helping to influence changing behaviours.

Rhidian Morgan – Visit Wales Finance Update

RH outlined the current funding opportunities following the repurposing of WG budgets. ERF3 is in development (no dates or criteria yet released), ERF2 has now closed and along with ERF1, their impact is being analysed. Targeting support has had some concerns, but initial feedback suggests that the funding packages in general have offered effective solutions.

RM highlighted the 34% funding support offered by Welsh Government, the highest in the UK. He added that regarding the number of applications, tourism and hospitality uptake is currently second only to construction. Funding support via The Wales Tourism Investment Fund and Development Bank for Wales was being looked at and ongoing lobbying of the UK Government continued to be done. A further job retention scheme seemed unlikely.

RM reminded members that the role of the WG in this area is to “fill the funding gaps”; this is challenging when feedback suggests that the banking sector is reluctant to offer support at this time.

The ongoing VAT issue is being discussed with HMRC and WG continue to lobby the UK Government; currently there are mixed views regarding this.

Lucy Von Weber, Visit Wales - Marketing / Recovery Planning

(Presentation to be shared with members)

LVW shared a presentation, including the key messages aimed at consumer appreciation of Test, Trace and Protect rules. Consumers are encouraged to check availability and book ahead and businesses to collect customer data (with assets available to assist these messages). LVW explained that user generated content is being increasingly shared and work is underway to engage with the Travel Trade.

LVW commented on the monitoring and sharing of parking availability at honeypot sites and the promotion of the Wales Coastal Path and CADW sites reopening. She thanked the forum for continuing to disseminate information to tourism networks.

SH thanked Visit Wales for contributing media content to the Virtual Royal Welsh Show, which received 45,000 page clicks in the first day; over the four days it attracted 50,000 individuals, from over 44 countries.

Val Hawkins, MWT-Behavioural Insights Research

VH explained MWT has completed the draft report for their behavioural insights research. The research comprises two elements, “new and returning” and “visitors and stakeholders”. VH requested that a stakeholder consultation be sent to members once it is ready.

Jo Corke - Research

JC shared research updates including Wave 4 of the Business Barometer, with Waves 5 & 6 following in September and October respectively. Modelling is underway in several areas including:

- whether businesses are open/ closed/ running at lower capacity
- staffing and redundancies
- revenue lost to date
- financial support received
- bookings for now and into the autumn compared to normal
- survival estimates
- needs other than financial
- participation in the eat out and good to go schemes

AOB

None reported.

Chair / Closing Remarks

SH asked members to indicate their preference for the frequency of future forum meetings. Members indicated a continuation of monthly meetings was preferable under the current circumstances. A provisional date of 27 August 2020 was suggested.

SH closed the meeting by thanking all members for their honest feedback; he reminded members to encourage their networks to sign up to the Visit Wales e-newsletter and to continue to communicate valuable information received through the Forum.

Date of next meeting:

TBC