

Visit Wales - Mid Wales Regional Tourism Forum

15 March 2021

Virtual (Online) Meeting

Attendees representing the following organisations:
Mid North Powys Tourism Network
Royal Welsh Agricultural Society
Mid Wales Tourism
Cambrian Training Company
BHA Wales Chair / Lake Vyrnwy
Cambrian Mountains Initiative
Dyfi Biosphere
Natural Resources Wales
Ceredigion County Council
Tynrhyd Retreat
Powys County Council
Penrhos Golf Club
RSPB
Salop Leisure
WATO / Adventure Smart UK
Cambria Tours
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
Brecon Beacons Tourism Association
Best of Wales
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
Aberystwyth University
Cambrian Rail Partnership
Welsh Government / Visit Wales representatives

Welcome & Introductions – Steve Hughson

SH welcomed members and announced sad news in the passing of Julian Burrell OBE; a past Chair of the Wales Tourism Alliance, a lifetime member of Mid Wales Tourism and stalwart of the industry. SH extended his thoughts to Julian's family, and invited members to pause and think of Julian. SH also noted if members wished to convey their condolences, Val Hawkins would share family contact details. VH added that Julian's contribution and commitment to Mid Wales Tourism and the industry as a whole, was extensive and he would be greatly missed.

SH thanked all involved in the nationwide vaccination effort, although caution was still necessary, a move towards lighter restrictions would be welcomed. SH also thanked all involved in the recovery workshops, which gathered a huge amount of data, and highlighted the importance of the Forum and individual contributions. SH asked members to continue to feed in their comments and concerns to HJ in order for him to raise at the weekly taskforce meetings. SH welcomed new members: Zara Cottle (CADW) and Jenn Jones (Natural Resources Wales). Lastly, SH thanked Welsh Government for the crucial financial support which had been an invaluable lifeline to many.

Paul Donovan – Adventure Smart UK

PD presented Adventure Smart UK's aims and updates; it is primarily a Safety campaign, particularly crucial during these difficult times, aiming to reduce the number of emergency callouts related to outdoor activities. PD directed members to the Adventure Smart UK website and encouraged all members to utilise the free resources and adopt the campaign messaging:

<https://www.adventuresmart.uk/>
<https://www.adventuresmart.uk/cy/home-cy/>
<https://www.adventuresmart.uk/toolkit/>

SH thanked PD for his presentation and reiterated the importance of the messaging around making Wales a safe destination. LvW also thanks PD for his presentation and the valuable collaboration between Adventure Smart UK and Visit Wales; and looked forward to this partnership being developed further.

Claire Chappell / Lucy Von Webber, Visit Wales – Welsh Government update & Recovery Planning

LvW drew members' attention to recent, relevant frequently asked questions and demonstrated the accuracy required in communicating guidance, which had unfortunately been misconstrued in some media channels. Claire Chappell added that the sensationalism portrayed in the media had been disappointing. Following link to Level 4 FAQs <https://gov.wales/alert-level-4-frequently-asked-questions>

LvW shared the Addo / Promise visuals and encouraged members to share the messaging with their networks. CC explained the Addo campaign aligns with Welsh Government's wider safety messaging, which aims to guide responsible and considerate behaviour. CC also explained the Addo messaging will be aligned with England's and will be a visible, substantial campaign.

CC shared the Recovery workshop feedback with members, firstly thanking all for their input, of which every single comment has been taken into consideration. CC shared the eight identified themes and explained further input from members is sought to add details to the interventions. Once the plans were approved, recovery toolkits would be shared with all stakeholders.

LvW shared a summary the Mid Region's recovery feedback, highlighting regional nuances but explaining similar feedback was found in all regions. Of the eight themes, Mid Wales priorities mirrored those of the North's. Skills, collaboration, innovation, reliance and interdependencies were the common factors rising from a total of over 800 responses. LvW noted overlaps in the themes and that some interventions couldn't happen until connected factors are resolved.

For example, CC explained lateral flow testing, one of many mitigating risk reducers, is not yet regulated, therefore aspects of recovery planning would be based on the robustness of such connected factors.

SH thanked both LvW and CC for their updates and welcomed a cautious, phased approach. SH felt the recovery plan had strength in its action focused approach and suggested that a general timeline would help businesses to plan ahead with more confidence.

RRE thanked LvW and CC for the recovery workshop update, and the evident volume of work behind it. RRE highlighted the themes of industry sustainability and resilience, which would come to the fore once the industry re-opened. AR added that finding balance would be a pivotal factor in industry recovery.

Claire Carew, Visit Wales - Finance

CC provided an update on WG's Sector Specific Funding (2nd round), which closed at 8pm on 12 March and would be ultimately fully subscribed. Applications would take up to six weeks to distribute the £30 million fund. The Non Domestic Rates (NDR) grants would again be issued automatically by the Local Authorities, CC urged businesses not already registered to do so by the 31st March.

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/coronavirus-advice/>

SH thanked CC and highlighted the importance this financial support is having in providing a lifeline to businesses. AR explained the financial support has made a real difference and thanked all the team.

Jo Starkey, Visit Wales - Research

JS provided the members with a short research update. The Regional Profiles and Wales Visitor survey (2019) along with the Tourism Barometer (Wave 6) survey would be published on Thursday.

JS also shared the Consumer tracker information. February Fieldwork showed the average mood of visitors was positive and stabilising, with the rollout of the vaccine increasing people's confidence. 42% predict normality to return between July and September.

https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/covid-19_consumer_weekly_tracker_wave_25_final.pdf

8-12 Feb fieldwork

The key findings:

- The average mood of U.K. adults was 6.5 out of 10; the same as the last wave and just below the average (6.6) since the research commenced in May 2020.
- There had been a further notable improvement in outlook, with the roll out of the vaccination, with the proportion feeling 'the worst has passed' significantly increasing for the second consecutive week to 29%.
- However, the proportion of U.K. adults anticipating life would return to something 'close to normal' by June this year, had slightly declined to 16% with 42% expecting 'normality' to return by July-September.

- The uncertainty meant that nearly half (45%) of all survey respondents expected to take fewer holidays or short breaks by the end of June, whilst half (48%) expect to take fewer overseas trips during this period.
- Confidence to take a UK trip by June remained at around a third (32%), increasing to one half confident they would be able to take an overnight UK trip in the summer.
- 'Restrictions on travel' remained the main reason for U.K. adults' reluctance to take an overnight trip this spring, followed by 'It's not responsible to travel'.
- Contrary to some media reports, a minority (11%) of adults claim to have already planned and 8% to have already booked their next domestic overnight trip.
- 13 per cent currently plan on taking an overnight trip in the U.K. this spring, rising to 27% during the summer months.
- 7% of spring trip intenders plan on visiting Wales, with 29% intending to visit South West England and 16% Scotland.
- Traditional seaside resorts and countryside or village were the most popular destination types for UK trip intenders during the spring.

8-12 March fieldwork to be published this Friday 19 March

<https://gov.wales/covid-19-uk-tourism-consumer-tracker-survey-wales-profile-december-2020-february-2021>

Kerry Thatcher, Visit Wales - Skills

KT provided members with a skills update: the industry-led Tourism and Hospitality Skills partnership has now met three times after operating for around 18 months. With an elected Chair and a purpose of identifying evidence based issues relating to recruiting, training and retraining, the partnership had successfully promoted the Kick Start and Flexible Skills programme to help businesses access opportunities enhance skills and grow team members.

KT explained the partnership was promoting the skills developments in a number of ways:

- 1) Updates featured in the industry newsletter
- 2) An updated skills tourism web page (<https://businesswales.gov.wales/tourism/skills>)
- 3) A recent breakout session to discover industry priorities (outcomes will be shared once collated).

SH thanked Kerry for her update.

AOB

SH raised the question of the format of future forum meetings and although ultimately hoped that quarterly meetings would return, felt that members had an important role in shaping the Recovery Plan moving forward and that the next meeting should be held in the near future. AW and AR agreed that the Recovery Plan was a priority and should be addressed as soon as feasible. CC explained that the plan was currently with Ministers, therefore meeting in around three weeks would be appropriate.

Chair / Closing Remarks

SH thanked all presenters for their contributions and members for their input. SH also reminded members of their roles in communicating information to their networks, the opportunity to feed into the weekly COVID Taskforce meetings and to subscribe to the VW newsletter <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWALES/subscriber/new>

Date of next meeting:

April 12, 11:30am, with Recovery Plan as the single agenda item.