



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Mid Wales Regional Tourism Forum

09 August 2021

3 – 4pm

Minutes

Attendees

Chair – **Steve Hughson** (Royal Welsh Agricultural Society), **Steffan Roberts**, **Rebecca Rees**, **Suzanne Thomas**, **Kerry Thatcher** (Visit Wales, Welsh Government), **Carol Williams** (Brecon Beacons National Park Authority), **Dafydd Wyn Morgan** (Cambrian Mountains Initiative), **Rob Bullen** (Eco Dyfi / Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere / CAT), **Julie Lewis & Wendy Abel** (Powys County Council), **Jenn Jones & Aled Davies** (Natural Resources Wales), **Michael Booth** (Elan Valley Visitor Centre), **Anthony Rosser** (BHA Wales Chair / Lake Vyrnwy), **Val Hawkins** (Mid Wales Tourism), **Arwyn Watkins** (Cambrian Training Company), **Ann Watkin** (WG – Business & Regions)

Apologies

Andrea Mansfield (Powys County Council), **Rowland Rees-Evans** (Penrhos Golf Club), **Dylan Roberts** (Salop Caravans), **Rebecca Wilson** (Transport for Wales Rail), **Justin Baird Murray** (Metropole Hotel), **Llion Pughe** (Best of Wales), **Gareth Price** (Twristiaeth Ceredigion Tourism), **Laura Thomas** (Brecon Beacons Tourism), **Beverly Dimmock** (RSPB), **AnnEleri Thomas** (Ceredigion County Council)

1. Welcome & Update from Chair

- 1.1 SH welcomed the group and acknowledged the positive steps towards some degree of normality for the industry, with all venues now allowed to open. Not all restrictions had eased and social distancing was still in place, despite what seemed to be contradictory messages coming from media outlets. It was now for businesses to abide by the law through their risk assessments. Feedback received from the industry had been positive and SH questioned what was next? As the current Level zero still had some restrictions the chair reported that he was pushing for clarity on a move to a level below zero where restrictions would be removed altogether, or whether level zero was the 'new normal'. The First Minister had indicated a six week timeframe for the current restrictions so it would be good for the next Forum to meet after this date. At the next meeting it would also be good to hear an update from the Welsh Government's established Visitor Economy Taskforce meeting.
- 1.2 Alan Samuel, Industry Assistant for the Mid Wales Region had been successful in gaining a priority post with the Test Trace and Protect (TTP) team and SH noted thanks to Alan, acknowledged how crucial he was at engaging with the industry during the early stages of the pandemic.
- 1.3 No amendments were made to the minutes from the last meeting.

2. Sector updates

- 2.1 Members had submitted a written update prior to the meeting that was shared on screen and would be circulated with the minutes following the meeting. SH also asked for key issues for those that hadn't submitted an update:

- Brecon Beacons National Park drew attention to the planned Dark Skies Virtual Festival that was taking place over three days (24, 25, 26 September) to introduce beginners to the wonders of the night sky and basic stargazing against a backdrop of the beautiful Brecon Beacons Dark Sky Reserve. The aim was to establish Brecon Beacons as a dark sky area and this linked to the Cambrian Mountains. Further details on the [website](#).
- Cambrian Mountains Initiative were pleased to see their dedicated page on the [Visit Wales website](#). The project was in the process of launching local produce linked to the Dark Skies agenda such as branded Dark Skies Preserve, Dark Skies Chocolate and Dark Skies Rum. Nearing completion was the brand guidelines, strategy and action plan and DWM noted thanks to everyone that had contributed to this process.
- The Dyfi Biosphere Tourism Association was working with Summit 2 Sea and Nearly Wild to establish a digital networking/consultation event for tourism businesses within the geographical areas of the Biosphere, Summit 2 Sea and the Cambrian Mountains. The outcome from which would hopefully be a strengthening of network and to inform project direction. Invitations will be issued shortly.
- RWAS had another successful virtual show and the plan was to host an equine event on 18 and 19 September followed by the return of the Winter Fair on 30 November and 1 December.
- Mid Wales Tourism were hosting their next regional conference on 9 November at the Metropole Hotel. MWT had been holding virtual monthly meetings with themed agendas. The website had been updated and recorded 1 million page views on accommodation in July, by comparison to July 2019 this had tripled. VH noted thanks to colleagues for their input to the Destination pages.
- AR said the Lake Vyrnwy visitor experience had been transformed by the support received from the WLGA around marketing, red signs and parking. There was also a significant number of new guests arriving in Mid Wales to take advantage of what the area had to offer. AR said that sub optimal training for staffing was showing its impact. There was opportunity to engage with school leavers and children on return to school in September. There needed to be call to action – particularly around results time.
- ArW said a letter had been drafted to the Minister as the Global Chef's Challenge had to be cancelled due to the number of foreign competitors due to attend. Other countries are not in the same position that the UK is in terms of vaccines. ArW had met with the vice chair of the conservatives to discuss non-devolved matters but had raised the issue of bringing kick-start out of the public sector and into the private sector. He had also pushed them to review immigration policy but they said they would not move on this until furlough had ended.

The Chair thanked everyone for their updates and reminded members that we would aim to return to a more normal structure in future meetings where all representatives submit updates before the meeting.

3. Update from Visit Wales

- 3.1 SR highlighted the value of the feedback received from this Forum and this was appreciated. From [Saturday 7 August](#) we had moved to [Alert Level zero](#) which was an important stage in our response to the crisis, but emphasised we were not back to normality. Welsh Government had published a revised control [plan](#) back in July. Cases remain stable with, to date, around 82% of adults fully vaccinated. A positive step was that all businesses can now reopen and we were moving from regulation to risk assessments with businesses required to take reasonable measures for bespoke circumstances. Businesses were required to take a number of steps including; undertaking risk assessments, informing staff and customers of the risk assessments and taking reasonable steps to minimise risk – e.g. from table service, improving ventilation and collecting contact details. There was a full list in the core guidance. Face coverings are still required in indoor public places, with the exception of hospitality setting where food and drink is being consumed. The need to self-isolate for double vaccinated adults also now removed. The FM indicated in his announcement that no change would be anticipated within the next six weeks to ensure the impact of change could be seen and there was no indication of future direction. Summary [action cards](#) were being prepared to support the changes and core guidance.
- 3.2 Funding is to be kept under review. The [Economic Resilience Fund \(ERF\)](#) was still in place until the end of the month. There was a Business Development and Recovery Fund planned to offer support to businesses to prosper post Covid - no detail was available on this yet. The Cultural Recovery Fund (CRF) continues until the end of September but there are no plans to extend this.
- 3.3 Staff / recruitment challenge is still a top priority and a [new skills campaign](#) is launching on 10 August. KT explained the first iteration of this campaign was looking at the immediate issues with recruitment and there would be a further progression of this campaign continuing through the summer into autumn. Visit Wales officials have been working with colleagues in the Skills branch and Careers Wales to provide one central place for information about vacancies and types of roles available. KT give an overview of the website demonstrating the different types of content available on the site – from help drafting CVs to pages targeting those who have just received results. Case studies will be added in due course. There was a specific page for the tourism and hospitality sector and this was the first sector specific content to feature on the site.

4. Growing Mid Wales

- 4.1 JL gave an update on the Growing Mid Wales Regional Tourism Feasibility Study which is being progressed to support the Mid Wales Growth Deal. The Mid Wales Growth Deal is a £110m investment commitment from UK and Welsh Government over a 10 year period to provide key capital interventions to support economic growth in eight prioritised work streams. Funding of £40,000 is now

secured to complete a Tourism Study to develop a future vision to grow the visitor economy in Mid Wales.

- 4.2 JL said that stakeholder engagement was key to this process and this Forum would be involved within the work. Two representatives are sought from this Forum to sit on a steering group for the project. Due to the quick pace of this work it was likely nominations would be sought prior to the September Forum.
- 4.3 SH said we needed to ensure this work was distinctive from the AECOM report (which helped develop the wider Growth deal case) and the Forum would be key to shaping this. ArW thought skills and people should be at the centre of this work and not considered as an afterthought. AR agreed that having those working within the industry rather than academics would help guide the work.

Action: An email will be circulated to the group to seek nominations for the Growing Mid Wales Steering Group. Nominations to be returned to the Chair for final approval.

5. Closing remarks from Chair and date of next meeting

- 5.1 SH thanked attendees for their input and suggested 30 September for the next meeting. Future agenda items are sought from Forum members and following an email circulated regarding the Disabled People's champions in Welsh Government it was felt this could be a good item for a future meeting. SH also noted thanks to Welsh Government and Local Government in the pace achieved to ensure grants were available to the Tourism industry. This, in addition to the vaccination programme, should be considered a success.
- 5.2 The Chair reminded members that the forum facilitated two way communications between Welsh Government and the sectors each members represent. It was important that all members shared the information received and continued to feed back issues of concern through the Chair to the Visitor Economy Stakeholder Group.