



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Mid Wales Regional Tourism Forum

1 March 2022 (2pm – 4.30pm)

Minutes

Attending

Chair – **Steve Hughson** (Royal Welsh Agricultural Society), **Steffan Roberts, Claire Carew, Lucy Von Weber, Rebecca Rees, Gwawr Price, Rob Holt** (Visit Wales), **Gwenfair Owen & Claire Williams** (Ceredigion County Council), **Wendy Abel & Julie Lewis** (Powys County Council), **Laura Thomas** (Brecon Beacons Tourism), **Rob Bullen** (Eco Dyfi / Dyfi Biosphere / CAT), **Rowland Rees-Evans** (Penrhos Golf Club), **Arwyn Watkins** (Cambrian Training Company), **Val Hawkins** (Mid Wales Tourism), **Llion Pughe** (Best of Wales), **Jenn Jones** (Natural Resources Wales), **Carol Williams** (Brecon Beacons National Park Authority), **Dafydd Wyn Morgan** (Cambrian Mountains Initiative), **Beverly Dimmock** (RSPB), **Anthony Rosser** (BHA Wales Chair / Lake Vyrnwy), **Dylan Roberts** (Salop Caravans)

Guest presenters: **Elin Morgan / David Greenhough** (Welsh Government – Welsh Treasury), **Helen Lucocq** (Brecon Beacons National Park Authority), **Kerry Thatcher & Phil Nelson** (Visit Wales)

Apologies **Justin Baird Murray** (Metropole Hotel), **Aled Davies** (Natural Resources Wales), **Gareth Price** (Twristiaeth Ceredigion Tourism), **Andrea Mansfield** (Powys County Council), **Rebecca Wilson** (Transport for Wales Rail), **Paul Donovan** (Escape Routes), **Aled Rees** (Teithiau Cambria), **Michael Booth** (Elan Valley Visitor Centre)

1. Welcome

1.1 SH welcomed members of the Forum. Condolences were given on the passing of Ian Rutherford who had contributed massively to Tourism in Mid Wales over the last 50 years and would be greatly missed.

2. Update on Growing Mid Wales

2.1 JL updated that Full Deal Agreement of the Mid Wales Growth Deal had been signed by the Welsh and UK Governments and the region's local authorities Ceredigion and Powys County Council on 11 January 2022.

2.2 The signing of the agreement means that the delivery framework of the Growth Deal is now in place to allow programme and project business cases to come forward. Early shortlisted projects/programmes are currently strengthening their Strategic Outline Cases and will move to Full Business Case with their projects prior to formal approval and allocation of funding by the Growing Mid Wales Board.

2.3 A [new Economic Advisory Group \(EAG\)](#) consisting of experienced business leaders is being established, to ensure there is continued advice and guidance to enable the Deal's potential to be maximised. New terms of reference for this group is in place, and recruitment to the EAG is underway. The membership of this group will need to be formally approved by Welsh Government prior to starting its work and will report directly into the Growing Mid Wales Board. There is an open call to self-nominate for the EAG and JL encouraged Forum members to engage. Private sector input is needed and the Terms of Reference reflect this.

Action: Circulate Terms of Reference for Mid Wales Growth Deal Economic Advisory Group (EAG)

- 2.4 The Regional Tourism Feasibility Study contractor, Fourth Street, was appointed in January 2022, and the first meeting of the steering group took place on 16 February. Val Hawkins and Dafydd Wyn Morgan participated as representatives of this Regional Forum.
- 2.5 The purpose of this work is to help move the Growth Deal forward as, during the pandemic, markets have changed and there could be new strengths and opportunities. It will look at the sustainability of the visitor economy going forward and a set of priorities for the Mid Wales region.
- 2.6 The contractor is currently working through the baseline assessment phase of the work and will be starting to schedule the key stakeholder consultations in the next few weeks. All members of the Regional Forum will be asked to feed into the consultation and an online survey will also capture the wider views of businesses, destinations and communities as part of the work.

3. Sector Updates

- 3.1 SH said five updates were received from stakeholders and these would be circulated after the meeting. He encouraged the Forum to provide an update as this was the opportunity to share your successes with the rest of the Forum. Acknowledgement was given to Dafydd Wyn Morgan for the success of the Cambrian Mountains Initiative, which was concluding its final work now. SH commended DWM for his hard work and dedication in moving this agenda forward over the last five years.

4. Visit Wales: Tourism Development / Marketing update

- 4.1 SR gave an update on the covid restrictions stating there has been a heightened situation over the last eighteen months but the outlook is looking more positive. The First Minister will be [publishing a transition Plan](#) for moving forward post-covid and at the end of this month, the legal restrictions will be removed.
- 4.2 The draft Visit Wales business plan for 2022 – 23 was presented and SR said the purpose of moving the Fora back from the original January slot was to engage with stakeholders on the budget and seek views. This is the first time that budget has been agreed beyond one year. The recovery plan ‘Let’s Shape the Future’ has also been updated and is being translated before it will be shared at the end of the month. The draft budget for 2022-23 included £5m capital and £11.9m revenue and there were areas of proposed spend highlighted within this including the second round of Brilliant Basics, funding for Strategic Capital Investment Products, Wales Tourism Investment Fund and funding to be developed around the Green / Decarbonisation agenda. In addition to the regular role the Regional Engagement Managers would become thematic leads for key policy areas highlighted in the Welcome to Wales Strategy such as Green Tourism, Outdoor adventure, Wales Coast Path and Hospitality.
- 4.3 AW said it was positive that we were moving past the recovery plan but there was a people shortage and not a skills shortage.

4.4 JL queried whether the capital fund included the micro small business fund? CC said the funding wouldn't be coming back in the same format but there were other options available.

4.5 AR said the hardship fund was game changing and rolled out across Mid Wales addressed the imbalance. SR said this was being delivered by Local Authorities. AR said it was disappointing that it has gone down this route.

4.6 LVW ran through the planned marketing activity for the coming months, including the events for St David's Day.

5. Visit Wales: Major events update

5.1 RH acknowledged that skills and people are still an issue within the Events sector. There is an improvement but there is still a consumer confidence issue and volunteer confidence in terms of event staff. Costs for the sector have also been increasing with average costs rising above 20%. However, there was a strong portfolio of events planned for 2022 with the budget already allocated. Demand is already being seen for events into 2023 but the delivery time to plan usually takes around four years. There was a new events strategy for 2022 – 2030 which considered the supply chain and working with Local Authorities as delivery bodies. An external contractor has been commissioned to undertake this.

6. Tourism Levy

6.1 Following the announcement of a new Local [Tourism Levy](#) the team were asked to give an overview of the forward work programme. DG explained this was delivery of discretionary tourism levy powers for Local Authorities and was part of the Programme for Government commitment, which enabled re-investment back into local infrastructure and services that make tourism a success. The team were currently consulting on design with input from stakeholders prior to formal consultation taking place in Autumn.

6.2 Feedback was welcomed from Forum members and comments were made around:

- With a number of LA's administering the levy there was potential for differing practices and duplication – a corporate steer was needed on this. This comment was echoed a number of times by other Forum members.
- Is this the right time for this. This sector had suffered most in the pandemic, was in a process of recovery, and on top of this would have something new to contend with;
- Industry had been bracing itself for this and have been wary but it appears this will be happening and we have to ready ourselves;
- Would this effect other parts of the industry like Air BnB. DG said discussions were taking place with groups like Air BnB who were well versed in collected this Levy across other countries;
- How are we able to ring-fence this money for tourism to ensure it is reinvested back into our industry;
- Wasn't this a tax against our neighbours who would perhaps go elsewhere;
- Was this joined up with the second homes consultation;
- The press coverage should be considered as this will cause reputational damage for the industry before the Levy has been adopted;

- Have day visitors been considered – DG said this had been debated and would be further clarified in the scope;
- Is this not a Tax as opposed to a Levy. It had been administered elsewhere in Europe but the imbalance between those countries and Wales was inequitable;
- Would there be an impact on motorhomes and wild camping. Could we see incidence of them parking where they shouldn't to avoid paying this.

SR said we were still at an early stage and had set out the initial thinking, there was also a statutory registration scheme for holiday lets. DG said there is a plan in place for early and long term evaluation of the Scheme. The team would be looking at the feedback pre and post consultation and the Economic Impact.

7. Future Beacons

- 7.1 HL gave a presentation on [Future Beacons: The Management Plan for the Brecon Beacons National Park 2022 – 2027](#) and said whilst the consultation will close on 4 March, the team were happy to take comments for another two weeks. The plan has been developed with stakeholders and centres around the policy goals; sustainable Tourism, busy places, historic environment, rights of way, dark skies and geopark.

Action: HL's contact details will be circulated to the Forum so they can make contact regarding the consultation.

8. Skills and Recruitment Update

- 8.1 KT gave an update on the [experience maker's skills campaign](#), created to encourage job seekers to consider a career in the hospitality sector. Campaign activity paused over Christmas but was continuing now and into next financial year. It's been developed in partnership with industry. Two new case studies have been added to the campaign page - Folly Farm and Bluestone, which join the case studies from Celtic Manor, The Grove, Adventure Parc Snowdonia and Dylans. Next filming will be taking place at Trewythen Hotel, Llanidloes with a focus on apprentices. In February, a set of How-to films were developed showcasing the skills and techniques that go into working in the hospitality and tourism industry and the team are working with social media influencers to share content. This will be followed by TV and Cinema Ads into next financial year.
- 8.2 The interview for the Wales T & H Skills partnership Chair will be taking place on 7 March.
- 8.3 Wales triumphed at the Michelin awards announced in February with local restaurants Ynyshir in Machynlleth going from 1 star to 2 stars, making it Wales' first ever 2 star restaurant. SY23 in Aberystwyth not only received its 1st star but also received a special award for Opening of the Year. Chapters in Hay-on-Wye was newly awarded a Michelin Green Star for excellence in sustainable gastronomy, while Pale Hall in Llandderfel retained its Green Star from last year. Value of Welshness research – 80% of those asked believe it is important that venues have a good range of welsh drinks and 80% want to see more welsh food and drink include in menus.
- 8.4 AW commended KT on this work and said he would bring it to the attention of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee's Inquiry into Tourism, Hospitality and Retail which he was giving evidence at.

9. Research Update

9.1 PN gave a presentation on Visit Wales Research Update Consumer Sentiment and Travel Intentions. It was noted that public sentiment and confidence is recovering but Welsh residents lagged behind the rest of the UK slightly. Confidence in the ability to take a UK short break or holiday has also improved year on year.

10. Closing remarks from Chair

10.1 SH concluded the meeting by reminding Forum members to share what they'd heard as the representatives for their sector and for Visit Wales to take back the thoughts from the Forum. SH said we were at a pivotal moment now and the future direction was looking more positive.