

**VISIT WALES**  
**North Wales Regional Tourism Forum**  
 3 July @ Venue Cymru

**Present**

Name		Organisation
1. Phil Scott	PS	Chair/ /DAP
2. Richard Jones	RJ	Flintshire County Council
3. Peter McDermott	PMcD	Denbighshire County Council
4. Sian Lloyd Roberts	SLR	Regional Skills Partnership
5. Jon Merrick	JM	Conwy County Council
6. Jim Jones	JJ	North Wales Tourism
7. Chris Owens	CO	Conwy DMP
8. Sam Regan	SR	Wrexham DMP
9. Jane Richardson	JR	Conwy County Council
10. Joe Bickerton	JB	Wrexham CBC
11. Michael Thomas	MT	Isle of Anglesey CC
12. Liz Grieves	LG	Denbighshire CC
13. Jo Smith	JS	Flintshire DMP
14. Sian Jones	SJ	Gwynedd Council
15. Awel Gruffydd	AG	SNPA
16. Catrin Elis	CE	Visit Wales
17. Gerwyn Evans	GE	Visit Wales
18. Andrew Forfar	AF	Visit Wales
19. Ceri Turner	CT	Visit Wales

**Apologies**

Ian Lebbon	Denbighshire DMP
Anwen Jones	Gwynedd DMP
Helen Pye	Snowdonia National Park Authority

**Notes**

<p><b>1. Welcome and Introduction</b></p> <p>PS welcomed the group to the meeting.</p> <p><b>2. Notes from last Meeting and Matters arising</b></p> <p>The notes were agreed. Matters arising from last meeting;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NWEAB to be covered by Jane Richardson.</li> <li>- Strategy review to be covered by Gerwyn Evans</li> <li>- LG noted that she would like further discussion on the development of a north Wales Strategy for tourism.</li> <li>- PS noted that agenda is VW heavy and invited members to suggest future agenda items</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Development update</b></p>	
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- GE said an exciting new visitor attraction for North Wales passed panel and will be announced in due course.
- Since the last meeting there has been some changes in the capital grant scheme. MSBF scheme is funded through EU, but it is currently closed as there is no more match funding available. WG/VW is in process of trying to secure additional funds internally to support pipeline projects.
- The new tourism investment fund - 80% commercial 20% grant is now open. VW understand the commercial element is difficult for small businesses.
- The new Action plan is in the process of being written. There was a good response from industry consultation with the biggest response (38%) from north Wales. Wavehill has been appointed to analyse the responses.
- VW is working hard to consult with and get support from colleagues across all departments in WG.
- The ambition is for the new action plan to be fully aligned with the Well-being and Future Generations Act. VW is working with the commissioner to do this.

#### **4. Partnership for Growth Strategy Review**

Some of the issues and themes that are being discussed as part of the new action plan are set out below

- Over tourism-and the fact that the younger generation are very aware of sustainability/environmental issues/health & well-being – should Wales position ourselves in this environment?
- Engagement with next generation should we consider a Youth summit?
- Climate change emergency Vs international visitors - do we target car travel? Carbon emissions? Social tourism agenda?
- Partnership for Growth was focused on geographical targeting. – should VW target by consumer behaviour instead?
- Air B&B - should VW work with them? Currently looking to Visit Scotland as they have similar issues.
- Same issues remaining from previous strategy - seasonality - - low wages sector - perceptions - skills. Fair working - real living wage can tourism sector cope with this?
- Tourism tax - Some LAs looking at introducing. Formal consultation needed with industry. Tourism Tax will not be within this assembly term but is still being considered.
- Quality Assurance scheme – should it be free of charge?

**Action:** A draft version of the Action plan will be presented at the next meeting in September (final Action plan will be officially launched in October)

A discussion followed with these key points from members

- Air B&B is a major issue in Gwynedd (and across UK). Although it provides opportunity – there are associated risks and impacts on the tourism industry which need to be managed.
- How much should VW be involved with Skills and training? Feedback from industry is that VW should not be leading.
- Perceptions of tourism as a career - There is good work being done in Anglesey through a pilot project that could be rolled out to other areas.
- How to tackle infrastructure issues e.g. transport/Cruise/car parks/toilets

- Tourism Sector Deal- VW welcome this announcement on the basis it secures greater profile for tourism and could lead to increased UK government support for tourism. However further work is now required on the detail of the deal and how it applies to Wales.

#### **5. Current Status of Destination Management Partnerships (DMPs)**

GE asked whether structures in regions were still working or whether change was needed.

- SJ – Gwynedd DMP is evolving and they are currently reviewing the structure. Success in investing £120 million over 190 projects over the course of the strategy. Issues and challenges - over tourism in some areas, air B&B impact, Skills shortage e.g. finding chefs.
- CO – DMP also being reviewed but the structure in place still works and is the only opportunity for Conwy tourism businesses and officers sit down together to discuss key issues.
- SR – Wrexham is in 3<sup>rd</sup> year as a private led organisation with 47 businesses signed up. They are now able to provide tangible evidence that what they are doing is delivering benefits for members. This will hopefully strengthen membership.
- JS – As a new chair she plans to increase membership and strengthen the partnership. Training in communication and skills will be the focus in the short term – to be delivered through a trial project.
- MT – the partnership has not met for a while. A review of strategy is underway and they are keen to align with VW. There is a need to re-engage and enthuse members in the light of the halt in Wylfa plans – which has taken over discussions in recent years.
- PMD - tourism ambassador scheme has had good buy- in. The larger forum meets twice per year and has a very good turnout. The focus of the last meeting was the 10 Qs which had a really good response from members.
- PS asked about WHS bid and whether it has implications for the industry. LG confirmed that Pontcysyllte would have key learning points from its designation as a WHS in terms of management and engagement in the wider community. Pontcysyllte is hosting the next international WHS conference
- SJ said that a young people ambassador programme was attached to the WHS project to increase engagement and an interpretation expert had been appointed.

**Action:** invite representative from WHS bid to present at future meeting

#### **6. Events Update**

- Eluned Morgan is now the responsible minister. There is a small events team that support approx. 20-40 events per year. They support a balance of sporting and cultural (but looking for more cultural) events. They always try to maintain an even geographical spread.
- The events industry is massively competitive internationally, and those with higher budgets often win the bids. However £4.88m has been awarded in support of north Wales events over the period of the scheme.
- The team regularly meet with LA's and are currently in discussions about events up to 2026. There is potential to increase Business events in Wales as well as cultural.

- There was a question around support for food festivals. RH said that they would consider a NW food festival for the whole region and would be open to discussion around this (along with food division colleagues)
- There was a question around measuring value of visitors to events. RH confirmed that the events team use the Sheffield Impact Model.
- VW is hoping to hold the tourism summit in North Wales in 2021

**Action:** circulate copy of events criteria and impact model.



Event Wales  
Assessment Committee

### **7. North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB)**

- JR took the notes from the last forum to the NWEAB. It was agreed that this Forum would formerly report through to the board. The minutes will be shared with the ambition board and JR will report back and feed key issues in.
- The next step for the growth deal is to sign heads of terms document, which is on track for end of July. This will be a binding commitment to secure the £240m.
- Projects have now been phased. The tourism academy is not in the 1st phase but they will be pushing to get this developed as soon as possible in the next wave. There will be opportunities for tourism projects, particularly under digital and transport themes. However has not been clarified yet. It may be worth considering having a session at a future meeting to discuss potential themes in order for the forum to be in a position to bid in for projects should the opportunity arise.
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**Action:** share forum minutes with secretariat of the NWEAB and discuss themes at future meeting.

### **8. North Wales Regional Skills Partnership - Sian Lloyd Roberts**

- The RSP is primarily an industry focused partnership, Jim Jones is the representative for the tourism sector. The main focus is to produce an annual plan identifying growth issues and shortages –by gathering information from industry. Recommendations are then made to FE and some work place providers.
- This year there has been a shift to develop a 3 year skills plan, a longer term strategic outlook which should be complete by August 2019.

#### **Summary of some key stats gathered to date;**

- *13%+ people employed in tourism in north Wales*
- *Apprenticeship opportunities have increased. FE courses in H&T decreased.*
- *Projections show a sustained need and demand for skills in the sector - demand for higher level occupations e.g. managers as well as continued demand for lower levels skills.*
- *Recurring themes - Recruitment/seasonality/perception of tourism as a career*
- *Lack of 'Work ready' skills is an issue. Specifically Customer service and communications*

- *Skills gaps and shortages according to 30% of respondents. Namely in leisure/customer service/trade*
- *69% employers – difficulty filling specific roles e.g. chefs/front of house reception food & beverage customer service and tourist guides.*
- *66% don't experience barriers to training.*
- *Apprenticeships - only 28% employ apprentices. BECAUSE – they don't understand the process and/or the frameworks don't meet their business needs.*
- *Brexit is a concern over increased costs and loss of staff.*

- The board will now shape the plan for the next 3 years. Any further comments please send to Sian.

- RH - thanked Jim for representing tourism on the RSP.

- VW is currently considering forming a skills board, to focus initially on 3 issues identified  
- profile/perceptions of tourism – influence on HE/ FE schools - chefs/front of house skill shortages.

## 9. Update Visit Wales Marketing

Catrin Ellis gave a Marketing update. Key points summarised below;

- Examples of some recent press coverage.
- Some additional funding has been secured to do some work in Ireland around Brexit
- Social media advertising spend now far outstrips TV advertising spend and Instagram is still the fastest growing medium for content, hence the #thisismywales campaign focused on user generated content.
- The new version of the [Visit Wales website](#) is live but it is still being developed. Apart from the style of the website, one of the main improvements is the product search function, which is filter based. <https://www.visitwales.com/faq-about-visitwalescom>
- To populate the product database we have also worked to improve the Product listings process - users will get an email to help support and improve their own listing in the coming weeks. MWT have been appointed to provide support to the industry to do this. <https://www.mwtcymru.co.uk/visit-wales-listings.html>

**Action** – Circulate a written update from CE

**Action** – circulate article in the Sunday times

## 10. Any Other Business

- JJ gave an update on the TPIF 'Adventure capital of Europe' project. NWT awarded 150k to lead on a collaborative project bringing key private sector organisations together. The project will complement the regional RTEF projects being delivered over the same period.
- It will be an Influencer focused digital campaign, mainly in North West – including - Manchester tram wrapping/Birmingham buses, visibility at Liverpool airport and Liverpool underground. Alongside this will be some radio advertising and social media.
- NWT also leading on a £50k TPIF Business and events project – to help support the industry in north Wales to enter this competitive market – the project has already

	<p>brought together businesses across n Wales to raise profile and to increase promotion at exhibitions etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jim updated on some work happening in Japan to celebrate the Rugby World cup and Japan’s links with Wales. As part of this campaign they are looking for events/projects in Wales – for example a school in Flintshire has created a Japanese garden to celebrate.</li> <li>- November 14 is the date for the NWT Awards at venue Cymru and the NWT conference will be at theatre Clwyd on November 28<sup>th</sup>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> include update on collaborative RTEF/TPIF projects as a standing item on the forum agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AF – VW head of research Jo Starkey has requested the opportunity to present at the next forum</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> invite Jo Starkey to present and circulate a link to a short film in the meantime for information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- JS - wants to make sure that North East Wales is represented in marketing campaigns and PR. Noting that there is opportunity to grow the food tourism sector in the area.</li> <li>- Phil Scott announced he is stepping down in his role as chair of the forum, so this will be his last meeting. He thanked everyone for their support over the years and gave his best wishes for the future.</li> <li>- RH thanked Phil for his hard work and for doing such a superb job as Chair of the forum.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> VW will write out to members for nominations with the view to having a new chair in place by 19 September meeting.</p>	
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