

## NW Regional Tourism Forum Notes

08.09.2022

Attendees	
Michael Bewick (MB)	Chair
Helen Pye (HP)	SNP
Sam Reagan (SR)	Vice Chair and Chair DMP Wrexham
Catherine Williams (CW)	WATO
Anwen Jones (AW)	Chair DMP Gwynedd
Sian P Jones	Cyngor Gwynedd
Tansy Rogerson	Rep DMP Conwy
Jasmine Koffler	CCBC
Mike ?	WCBC
Ian Lebbon	Chair DMP Denbighshire
Peter McDermott	DCC
Eirlys Jones	NWT
Richard Jones	FCC
Heledd Owen	WG
Glyn Roberts	WG
Gwawr Price	WG
Elin Morgan	WG
Martyn Gunter	WG
Claire Carew WG	WG
Claire Habberfield	WG
Andrew Forfar	WG

Sean Taylor Zip World	Guest
Glen Evans Waterloo Hotel	Guest
Mair Saunders Nant G	Guest
Amy Coleman Rhug Farm Estate	Guest

Apologies	
Nigel Treacy	Chair DMP Conwy
Jane Richardson	CCBC
Jo Smith	Chair DMP Flintshire
Gwenllian Owen	IOACC
Nia Jones	Anglesey TA

<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p>MB welcomed everyone the forum and re iterated the aims of the Forum and welcomed guests.</p> <p>MB reflected on a recent visit to Venice and the issues of sustainability and over tourism and how we are all working together here to get it right.</p> <p>Despite reports of a good season the concern is now focused on the financial pressures going forward.</p>
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	<p>News on support from Westminster was welcomed but there is a need to position Wales as the first choice for the domestic market as we move towards 2023.</p> <p>MB informed the Forum that the 4 fora chairs had written to the CEOs of each of their respective LA's looking for clarity on the implementation of NDR and their preparation for the tourism Levy and fed back on their responses.</p>
2.	<p><b>Update from the regions</b></p> <p>JK gave an update from NW Wales</p> <p><b>Gwynedd</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In partnership with Superfast Business Wales a package of support to improve the digital platform of the hospitality sector in Gwynedd has just been launched <a href="#">Cynllun gwella plattform digidol (llyw.cymru)</a></li> <li>• 22 events supported through the Gwynedd Events support Programme – Red bull Hardline, Dinas Mawddwy being held this weekend. Work has started on planning for the 2023 Eisteddfod which is being held at Boduan on the outskirts of Pwllheli.</li> <li>• Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable tourism strategy 2035 – a task and finish group has been set up with key industry and community partners to review the new strategy, work programme, Research &amp; governance and roll out. The work is nearing completion and will be ratified by end of February 2023. <a href="#">Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035   Visit Snowdonia (ymweldageryri.info)</a></li> <li>• Smart towns programme 11 towns throughout the county now with community WIFI</li> <li>• Gwynedd Ambassador scheme launched. 120 enrolled to date <a href="https://www.ambassador.wales/ambassador-courses/gwynedd-ambassador-course/">https://www.ambassador.wales/ambassador-courses/gwynedd-ambassador-course/</a></li> <li>• Gwaith Gwynedd – conducted a number of hospitality jobs fairs. A Facebook jobs notice board has been set up and proven very successful</li> <li>• A £1.5 million tidy towns programme being implemented across key resorts</li> <li>• Wales Slate our Designation, our pride, our future a 5 yr Heritage Lottery funded project if successful after year one a £1.2 million programme of activities and investments will be implemented</li> </ul> <p><b>Isle of Anglesey</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A busy season experienced again this year, although there is a suggestion that there were less people around.</li> <li>• Recruitment of staff for hospitality and tourism and other businesses</li> <li>• A total of 43 Cruise Liners visiting between March and October – 3-4 now left to go before end of October. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Apparent that more independent passengers have used the tenders to come ashore and visiting the local surrounds</li> <li>○ Arrangements in the Marina for welcoming passengers ashore.</li> <li>○ New Holyhead Cruise Partnership developed in order to improve the “welcome” that passengers experience.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Wild camping and motorhomes/campervans parking at beauty spots etc an issue again this year.</li> <li>• Parking at prime locations was commented on regularly.</li> </ul>

- On-going discussion with KWT around Blue Flags (Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy)
- Dogs on “Dog Ban” Beaches has been a problem that’s been raised regularly this year.
- Infrastructure improvements will be carried out over the winter months to improve facilities at 4 coastal public toilets (Brilliant Basics) and other Capital works planned.
- Complaints received about Jet Skis and Powerboats around the coast.
- Beach wardens kept busy throughout the season with general day to day work and ensuring safety on the beaches
- Good support from Coastguard and RNLI throughout the season – good collaborative work.

### **Conwy**

- Worked with Mace Consult Ltd to produce a 10 Year Regeneration Plan for Llandudno. This Plan will lead the continuing and sustainable regeneration of the area to 2032 and beyond. It aims to ensure Llandudno remains successful, resilient and adaptable to future change and opportunity, so that it continues to be a desirable place to live, invest, do business, and visit.
- Llandudno chosen as a pilot town for Smart Towns agenda. Digital Place Plan has been produced. Some infrastructure has been installed e.g. Cisco Meraki units on Mostyn Street.
- Wild camping has also been an issue throughout Conwy County. We are currently conducting a Motorhome Study to see how we can improve provision for motorhomes and hopefully reduce the impact of wild camping.
- Work on Brilliant Basics project to refurbish Llandudno Shelters on the Promenade is due to start in October.
- Tender live for Brilliant Basics signage project which is looking at improving signage in Llandudno and Conwy. This includes improving the Llandudno Town Trail signage which will hopefully help more visitors experience Llandudno on foot.
- Conwy Tourism Ambassador Programme – new modules launched to tackle issues around visitor safety (on the sea and in the mountains) and also promote tourism and hospitality as a career choice.
- Destination Conwy Management and Action Plan will be revised as some of the actions are now outdated. Destination Conwy will lead on this with support from CCBC.
- Some attractions within Conwy County back to 2019 visitor levels e.g. Tramway.

### **SNP**

- HP stated that the park had seen visitor numbers back at 2019 levels with an assumption that numbers would level out by 2023.
- HP also reported that ongoing work with TfW on park and ride facilities had gone well where facilities were in place. The key is a regular bus service, and we continue to work with TfW to achieve this and with the LA to look at parking restrictions to ensure visitor management is well planned and joined up
- The Park was also pleased to say that over 900 ambassadors had now been trained
- Snowdon App is the No 1 walking App in the UK

- A discussion took place on revenue and subsidies for the implementation of sustainable systems of transport.
- SPJ May June July coastal area quieter than 2021 – August figures gone up issue around parking and litter was still a problem.

RJ updated on behalf of NE Wales

### **DCC**

- Continue to get feedback from tourism groups (CRTG) about changes to second homes/self-catering and council tax.
- Royal Welsh: received very positive feedback from the Royal Welsh about our presence as feature county (Clwyd: Denbighshire; Flintshire; Wrexham; Conwy) at this year's show (18 to 21 of July). Supported by our local businesses who provided over 20 prizes to Show attendees and with very positive teamwork from the four local authorities. North Wales Way was used as the theme to link all four of the counties.
- DCC have been running a social media campaign to encourage visitors to visit our towns throughout the summer. With pressure on countryside sites we have promoted alternative opportunities to visitors.
- There have been issues at some of our countryside sites around parking and litter.
- Denbighshire Tourism Forum takes place on the 05/10/2022 with a presentation from DCC Chief Executive, Graham Boase.

### **WCBC**

- Fully relaunched the new City Centre Visitor Information Centre as of September 2022 – 6 days a week offering local food & drink. Currently recruiting for manager, 2 x assistants and casual staff.
- Finalising new 2022-25 DMP with TEAM Tourism. A copy going to Executive Board later this autumn. Priorities will focus upon events, hospitality support and key hubs including the WHS and city centre.
- Month of events celebrating culture in Wrexham through September including the Wrexham Feast food festival on 24/25<sup>th</sup> Sept and the Knife Angel installation arriving in October.
- Levelling-up work (totalling £13m) starting to improve visitor experience at the Trevor Basin and further along the Dee Valley at Corwen station.
- Consultation ongoing on designs for the new football museum of Wales opening on Regent St in 2025.
- WCBC fully committed to another 2029 UK City of Culture bid, with our own year of events in 2023, 25 and 27 in the lead-up to 2029. A new Culture trust to be formed this winter and the recruitment of dedicated staff to lead on culture & events in Wrexham.

### **FCC**

- Flintshire Tourism Ambassador Scheme. Six modules completed in draft form. Target date for launch of the scheme is the end of November 2022.
- Shared Prosperity Fund. Awaiting outcome of the submitted investment strategy.
- Our 'Parks for All' project at Greenfield Valley Heritage Park & Wepre Country Park (which has received Brilliant Basics Funds) is progressing well. The project will provide 'changing places' modular units at both sites as well updating and increasing capacity of existing toilet block at Wepre Country Park.

- Work has started on updating the Destination Management Plan which will cover the period 2022-2025. Provisional timetable for this work is around three to six months.
- Clwydian Range Tourism Group are hosting a 'Sustainable Rural Tourism' conference on 28 September with guest speaker Richard Hammond (writer, filmmaker & founder of the Green Traveller). Richard will talk about sustaining rural tourism in protected landscapes; giving a UK and international perspective. Also, 'ask the expert' sessions on energy efficiency, increasing diversity in your garden/grounds and the circular economy.
- Flintshire and Wrexham are updating their bed stock data with Beaufort Research this autumn. It will be useful to have an updated bed stock database ahead of the 2022 STEAM returns in the New Year.
- Plans underway with Cadw for development of a new visitor centre building at Flint Castle.

EJ gave an update for NWT

- We have just recently twinned Llandudno with Champéry and our working with the Regions tourism bodies to promote each other's area and look at hospitality and sporting exchanges. Have been working with a number of local businesses on this project.
- Jim is off to Japan next week to one of the biggest expos in the world, to reignite the outbound travel trade.
- Working on Meet North Wales and will be going to IBTM Barcelona at the end of November having attended IMEX Frankfurt earlier in the year.
- NWT have been working with Conwy to bring the Welsh Snooker Championships 2023 to North Wales. Previously it has been hosted in Newport and Cardiff.
- Working in developing a number of itineraries – themed ones and also working with Avanti Trains on places that you can walk to from the stations.
- Organise itineraries for press visit and journalists.
- Been working with Visit Wales, with our staff meeting the cruise ships at Holyhead providing meet and greet and information.
- Been working on developing our experiences packages.
- Currently working on reigniting our Travel Trade campaign.
- Also working on our Bedroom Browser (attractions compendium) and Winter Opening Hanging Card and Great Days Out campaigns.
- We ran a training programme for 30 Ukrainians as part of our project with the WCVA Active Inclusion and also been working with the Department of Work and Pensions to run the Academy training programme for long term unemployed, focussing on the hospitality & tourism sector.
- Carrying out our work in supporting the WTA on the Self-Catering threshold and forthcoming Tourism Tax consultation.
- Awards coming up, 16 categories this year, nominations close on 10 October - all sponsors secured which is good to see it come in so early. Taking place on the 24 of November at Venue Cymru.

### **WATO**

CW echoed all comments on the levels of visitors this year. Less people than 2020 but more than 2019

3. **Update from VW**  
HO lead on an update from VW.

- Very busy summer period and fresh from 'Clash at the Castle', partnership activity with WWE wrestling which was broadcast in the US and in 42 countries worldwide.
- HO updated on some of the key pieces of activity taking place over the next few weeks. Croeso activity was still running from June to August and Addo also ran during the school holidays. There is a new Visit Wales Advertorial out and this was shown to the Forum. Visit Wales are moving to all year round advertising. Similar to last year, in October another online session would be held and HO encouraged members to register. The audience identity kit would be presented and the exact date of this would be confirmed in next week's Industry newsletter. Info on the YO theme and campaign and the World Cup activity would be included
- Other key pieces of work include the publication of the Consumer Insights – latest research, new content creation for the website, the travel trade programme.

CW wanted to remind VW to only include imagery that was safe for outdoor activity. HO would take this on board.

EM from the treasury department updated on the Levy consultation

- Consultation going live on 13 September with key events across the regions. In NW the event will take place at Portmeirion on 23.09.22.
- There will be other ways to feed in. The formal consultation process is the best way to submit feedback with findings being reported in Spring 2023. Any specific questions please contact EM directly [elin.morgan001@gov.wales](mailto:elin.morgan001@gov.wales)

ST wanted to know if the enhanced population grant would be scrapped. EM was not anticipating this.

GE stated that the sector had engaged with the process to date but wanted assurance that their views were being taken on board. EM assured that every single response would be taken into account. MB was worried that this was a critical point for the process with a fear that there was 'consultation fatigue' and worried that stakeholders would disengage. EM ensure the Forum that she would take these concerns back.

MB announced that the WTA and Welsh Hospitality were planning separate consultation events to bring in wider private sector input and these would be fed into WG. EM added that the Treasury Dept. were happy to set up bespoke meetings.

GR presented on Statutory Licensing (presentation circulated)

### **Background to Statutory Licence:**

The [Programme for Government 2021 to 2026](#) includes a commitment to 'consult on legislation permitting local authorities to raise a tourism levy'. Exploring and introducing a statutory registration / licensing scheme for all holiday accommodation is seen as an important foundation in both of these areas based on the need to have accurate intelligence on all holiday providers to ensure the levy can be applied appropriately and the supply or oversupply of short-term lets in particular, can be managed accordingly.

The [Cooperation Agreement](#) outlines how the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru will work together over the next three years on policies where there is a common interest. Statutory Licensing is referred to within the Second Homes commitments - (Page4) - **Second homes** – Take immediate and radical action to address the proliferation of second homes and unaffordable housing, using the planning, property and taxation systems. Actions being planned include a cap on the number of second and holiday homes; measures to bring more homes into common ownership; a statutory licensing scheme for holiday lets; greater powers for local authorities to charge council tax premiums and increasing taxes on second homes. We will explore local authority mortgages.

In July 2021, the Minister agreed to a procurement exercise to scope establishing a statutory registration and / or licensing scheme for all holiday accommodation in line with the commitment in the Labour/Plaid agreement. Welsh Government (led by Visit Wales colleagues) commissioned Strategic Research and Insight (SRI), an independent Cardiff-based research agency, to undertake this work and engage with key stakeholders representing the public and private sectors to explore the benefits of such a scheme and key considerations in how a scheme could be taken forward and implemented.

The Closed consultation concluded that there was a strong consensus in favour of the need to do something. Debate was mostly about *what* the scheme should look like rather than *whether* it is needed. The benefits of a scheme have been identified as:

- **Intelligence** - A statutory scheme would give a comprehensive database, which is not currently available, of exactly who is operating in the industry.
- **An important foundation for other policy areas** – Establishing a statutory register is considered an important foundation for policy areas, such as developing a tourism levy and the work on second homes.
- **A platform for communication** – Establishing a database of registered businesses would give the Welsh Government and other partners (e.g. local authorities) a mechanism to communicate on issues relating to regulation, providing advice on best practice or meeting certain standards and advising on other support that is available.
- **Level playing field** - The discussion around a level playing field has been about for years. There is a general perception that certain informal/amateur parts of the sector do not meet or comply with their statutory obligations, whereas ‘bona-fide’ businesses do. A statutory scheme could provide the platform to address this.
- **Health and Safety and other protections** - One of the key benefits of any scheme is considered the safety of guests and providing an added level of protection. Despite accommodation providers being required to meet a number of statutory obligations in respect of safety, there is currently no statutory scheme to capture such detail to protect guests and for information to be readily available.
- **Consumer confidence** – Having a national statutory register and / or licensing scheme whereby businesses must meet a certain threshold of requirements conveys a very clear message to consumers that the sector in Wales is well managed, safe and legal.

The next steps will be to seek views from key stakeholders to inform consultation late in 2022

The Statutory Licencing team will keep in touch with external stakeholders at key stages of the development, but if there is anything you need to know in the meantime, please contact [Glyn.Roberts@gov.wales](mailto:Glyn.Roberts@gov.wales) or [Gwawr.Price3@gov.wales](mailto:Gwawr.Price3@gov.wales)

CC introduced a new pilot Resource Efficiency campaign that was under development with Business Wales for the Tourism sector. The pilot will run until the end of the FY via an online platform, focussing on five key areas; water, waste, energy, supply chains and travel. Ongoing discussions were taking place with Business Wales and the team are looking for champions working within these sectors to help support and get involved with the campaign. There will be no funding scheme supporting this, but it will signpost to support inventions for businesses who want to move forward.

CC also stated that VW was looking to launch a future round of the Brilliant Basics small infrastructure programme in the near future

#### 4. **Reform of the school Year**

Martyn Gunter updated the forum re the Reform of the School year which was set out in the Labour manifesto and now part of the cooperation agreement with Plaid Cymru. The team are looking at a) the school day and b) the structure of the school year. MG ran through the current timings of the school year: 13 weeks of holidays, circa one week of staff training and 38 weeks of learning and three unequal terms across the calendar year. MG reminded the group that the school year was not aligned across the UK and in Scotland was very different to England & Wales. The aim is to consider whether we can design a more equitable, modern calendar that mitigates the effects of disadvantage, improves learner progression and attainment, supports the wellbeing of learners and the educational workforce and better aligns with modern life – all things that our wider educational reforms are seeking to achieve.

Key milestones: 30<sup>th</sup> June Minister of Education issued a written statement setting out the consultation process and the research by Beaufort who had looked at the school year here in Wales. Over 13k stakeholders had participated in the independent research including tourism and hospitality stakeholders – the report concluded that there was openness to looking at re-structuring the school year. The Minister has confirmed that there will be no change to the number of holidays and that WG would continue to engage with stakeholders to gather evidence before any decisions were taken and that a formal consultation process would take place this academic year.

#### Q&A

Main comments from the Fora included

- Encouraged that there was going to be a nuanced approach to potential changes.
- Feeling that a fixed Easter could be a benefit to the sector particularly if it was later in the month. MG stated that they were aware of this and that last term leading up to formal examinations needed to be taken into account.

- Has the issue of families who live on the border been considered with potentially children in schools in both England and Wales. MG stated that they were conscious but there is disparity now with schools on either side of the border having different term times.
- One member of the Forum stated that a longer half term in October could be beneficial for students, staff and the sector
- GM added that the intention was not to look at a much shorter summer break and that he would take all comments into consideration

5.

### **Skills & recruitment**

KT led a discussion on Skills and recruitment in the sector reflecting on what VW have heard from the industry

The discussion focused on the following main questions

- What can industry do to continue to raise the profile of jobs/careers in the sector?
- What can be done to ensure staff working in the sector are respected?
- What else can WG do?
- What changes did you have to make to manage with fewer staff?
- How did customers respond to any changes you had to make?
- How did that affect your business?
- Will you retain any of those changes even if you manage 100% staffing?

A discussion on main issues took place with the following feedback

- Since pandemic, working with 1/3 less staff, recruitment a huge issue – not with students who were plentiful in the season but once they go back to education it is a struggle to find staff.
- Trying to recruit older staff – but they don't always want to work weekends.
- Having to close departments/sections of the business and struggling at weekends.
- Difficult for visitors to understand the struggles of the hospitality sector. Leading to poor online reviews.
- Businesses having to go cashless due to banks closing, not enough staff to handle cash etc. again a knock-on effect for customers who don't understand.
- Perception of working in the sector still poor – still need to promote sector as a career of choice.
- There have been some coming into the sector from social care.
- Businesses changing opening times and the menu offer – less choice in restaurants etc.
- Recruiting earlier to ensure staff are in place for the 2023 season and looking at bonus schemes and retention schemes to retain staff over the winter.
- Trying to pay annualised hours to some of the staff to keep them which helps reduce the cost of re-training.
- Issues of wage inflation (example 11%) - need to look at business rates for the sector to help. Reluctance to raise prices to customers but will need to at some point.
- Need to work with UK Gov re bringing in overseas workers.

- Still an issue of underage children working in the sector which does not help the image for parents.
- Issue of poor unskilled staff coming from agencies to fill posts.
- Happy with the work to date that VW are doing on the experience makers campaign etc.
- Cyngor Gwynedd currently working actively to promote the sector through Gwaith Gwynedd.
- Where previously posts advertised as Welsh speakers needed – taking on non-Welsh speakers who agree to learn.
- Need for more outdoor activity instructors.

KT asked that members send her feedback directly to her at [Kerry.Thatcher@gov.wales](mailto:Kerry.Thatcher@gov.wales)

**Next Forum** Nov 30