

Visit Wales – North Wales Regional Tourism Forum

19 June 2020 – Virtual (online) Meeting

Present	
	Representing
MB	Chair Tourism Forum
SPJ	Cyngor Gwynedd
MT	IOACC
JM	CCBC
JR	CCBC/NWEF
CO	Chair DMP Conwy
PM	Denbighshire CC
IL	Chair Destination Denbighshire
RJ	Flintshire CC
JS	Chair Destination Flintshire
SR	Chair Destination Wrexham
JB	Wrexham CBC
CF	NWT
SJ	WLGA
VR	Joint Chair ATA
EEJ	GUEST WATO
JE	Guest of MB
AJ	Chair Destination Gwynedd
Visit Wales	
RH	Deputy Director, Tourism Development
RM	Head of Tourism Development
LVW	Head of Marketing Tourism
JC	Head of Research & Insights
AF	Regional Engagement Manager
AS	Regional Engagement Assistant
HJ	Regional Engagement Manager Mid Wales

Apologies

NJ	ATA
----	-----

Welcome

MB welcomed everyone and updated on the COVID 19 Task Force meeting held yesterday with the FM. The FM had been well briefed about the tourism economy and was ensuring that the economy, community and health were all being considered as we move to re-open. MB asked that members of the Forum feedback information to their representative groups. MB added that the Forum acknowledges the continuing difficulties faced by businesses and individuals involved in the sector and that we are determined, as a group to ensure that tourism in North Wales is supported so that it can flourish again once the public health emergency is under control.

VW Update

RH updated the Forum following the FM statement. This is phase one and subject to the public health position. There is a lot more work to do regarding definitions and getting the guidance ready and ensuring there are no wider issues with communities.

Key dates are 13 July when accommodation without shared facilities can open (subject to a review on 9 July), self-catering for single families or hotels who can offer en-suite facilities and where applicable room service (no bars/restaurants or communal areas). There will be a review of the hospitality sector. There are issues with the caravan and camping sector. Lifting of the 5 Mile travel restriction will mean outdoor attractions (which were never closed) can open and indoor attractions will be considered in the next phase of opening up.

We are now looking at a Visitor Charter and the 'Good to Go' standard. We have several issues that need addressing and include; vulnerable groups, lobbying UK Gov re extension of Furlough scheme, the skills agenda, events and how do we deal with a potential second wave and possible local downs.

JR asked for clarity on the caravan and camping sector re opening and was the Visitor Charter being developed solely by VW or in partnership with the sector. RH clarified that the Visitor Charter would be developed with the newly established group of all the LAs and NPs in Wales. LVW added the work would have to be collaborative and would be based around our brand values and would be uniquely Welsh based on the St David message of doing the "Little Things", timescale was over the next three weeks

With respect to the question on caravan & camping RH stated that shared facilities was the issue and the cleaning of shared toilets and showers was not easily monitored at camp sites and acknowledged that this was a complex situation. The problem would be enforcement of people arriving with caravans or in motor homes once the 5 mile travel restriction was lifted.

SPJ asked when the Good to Go scheme would be live and RH advised that a Webinar would be taking place week commencing 22 June and that it would be bi lingual.

CO was concerned re the groups market and the long lead in times needed for re-opening does VW have any dates. RH stated that whilst accommodation with non-shared facilities would open on the 13 July (subject to a review on 9 July) the issue on groups (from different households) was a problem but we do not have an answer at this time and we are aware of your concerns and through the consultation process we have undertaken over the past few weeks, we can feed these to Ministers.

IL asked about future planning for events that plan 12 months ahead. RH said that an events group was established and invited IL to attend. But the reality that indoor mass gatherings were not going to be happening any time soon, but events were planning for 2021 and some looking at virtual delivery

for Autumn 2020. RH and LVW added that a review of county shows was taking place by Aled Jones who is looking at the economic impact of COVID-19 on these events.

RH reminded everyone that the ERF was re-opening the end of the month and encouraged everyone to look at the eligibility checker.

VW Marketing Update

LVW up dated on the guidance and we are looking at publishing week commencing 22 July and thanked everyone who had inputted. It has been checked by several unions, HSE and legal teams at WG. It will help the sector through a maze of information and be very accessible.

LVW was hoping to get back to the 'Check in' and 'Year of Outdoors' messaging as soon as possible.

The VW website will be the channel for the Visitor Charter and we are collating good stories and would welcome and stories. We are anticipating hyper local travel, local travel, in Wales and then domestic travel and content needs to reflect that. We are encouraging people to use this time to maximise their product database messaging.

CO reminded the group that we need to ensure that local negative messaging need to be positive and what can be done to change attitudes.

LVW added that the best people to ensure local communities are local businesses and the charter being developed will also help. Since the FM announcement at lunchtime national press were leading on 'Wales Welcomes back' messages.

RH we still need visitors to be welcomed and we are in discussion with LAs who have better access into local communities to enable this.

JC gave an update on the consumer survey in conjunction with VisitEngland & VisitScotland which is now in week 5. There is more confidence in UK visitors taking a short break this summer but aware that people are following Government. guidance and we will track changes as guidance changes. We will analyse this data and work with marketing colleague's moving forward. We will shortly be going back out to business with the barometer survey to assess how people are planning on re-opening, obstacles and to better understand the ongoing economic situation, including data on real time redundancies. Any information on redundancies that members can share would be welcomed.

And we would like to collate any information which is being collected by the industry or local authorities on community views, concerns and hopes as we see changes and the first wave of visitors return. We would welcome any information that members can feed in on that front.

<p>MB added that real time data on redundancies would help and inform the sector and government.</p>	
<p>DMP update from each Partnership (max 5 minutes each)</p> <p>SPJ gave an update from Gwynedd and the escalation of industry concerns of the three winter scenario and their eagerness to get the guidance for re-opening safely. Clarity of messaging going forward and helping industry is key. Been busy with working on the business grants and opening up public spaces. We have also been working on a campaign to reassure business and communities to assure stakeholders.</p> <p>MT – like Gwynedd IOACC working on the business grants and currently revising DM plan .Concern re outbreak in Llangefni. RH highlighted that this showed the balance needed between community, business and health – RH added that it was a balance between community, health and the economy.</p> <p>JR – Conwy looking at public space and how we open those up, toilets TICs etc. We are also looking at videos to reassure visitors and business as we re-open our destinations. JR also gave an updated on the recent research they had undertaken. People wanting to visit outdoor attractions but not indoor attractions.</p> <p>MB commented that it would be a challenge to manage the public realm and RH added that there were on-going discussions with LAs on how local byelaws could be adapted to ease restrictions on outdoor eating and drinking etc.</p> <p>MB asked the LAs what was being done regarding informal negative signage before we re- open. SPJ stated that a newly set up regeneration board were looking at the issue.</p> <p>PM in Denbighshire stated that there was still pressure on clarity of messaging re dates and who can operate. Denbighshire are looking at town centres and public realm amenities re-opening.</p> <p>MB noted that whilst the news was very fresh from the FM was there any initial feedback from forum members.</p> <p>JE said it was positive news but for some business but will still be problematic for indoor facilities, hospitality etc. And for those that have outdoor facilities reduced capacity may make it unviable for some. RH understood and re iterated it is all about public health and we need to go through this staged approach.</p> <p>RH - we need to use this next period to gather evidence for the next steps re indoor attractions, group travel & events and that hospitality would be reviewed</p>	

JB updated on the activity in Wrexham and the situation was similar to other areas of NW. The question they are now facing is around accommodation with shared facilities and the hospitality sector. They are reshaping their website to align with national messaging.

The question of closed car parks was debated, an issue for LAs JR stated that they had remained closed because of the essential travel only guidance but this was being reviewed following today's news.

RH had to leave at this point to attend another meeting but thanked the forum for their input in the recent consultation on the guidance document.

JS from Flintshire added that work in the county was now revolving around opening town centres. She was concerned about 2m signage changing to 1m. JS also asked about the Year of Outdoors moving forwards. LVW confirmed that the YOO will have a lot of relevance going forward.

AG from the SNP stated that they were looking at a phased opening of car parks and footpaths and small localised tweaks so local communities can benefit under the 5 mile rule. International recognised sites would be the last to re-open. SNP have learnt a lot from the English National Parks as they reopened. SNP are developing welcome back guidance and asking visitors to help by pledging to be kind, discover the authentic and tread lightly.

Signed up to a pan European piece of research with Cambridge University looking at communities and living in the national park with circa 600 responders within a week of launching.

CF stated that NWT had been receiving positive messages following the FM announcement.

NWEAB "NW Think Piece"

JR updated on the timing of the NW Growth Deal which was still on track to be signed off by December, however they were cognisant of the fact that the deal needs to be adapted in line with the current situation. To that end the NWEAB are commissioning a piece of evidence based research to identify; what the role of tourism is post COVID-19, where it's going etc. and the economic and cultural value, where we have capacity for development in line with the VW Action Plan and it will look at community confidence and capacity and how we address this post COVID-19. It will look at value verses volume. A progress report will be available by 6 July with a final report due 3 August. We can then prepare themes for the future and these will include decarbonisation, landscape & culture, adaptation for future business operations and innovation.

JR stated that the professors Annette and Morgan could present on 14 July at the next meeting and JC would be happy to help with national data that VW hold.

AOB

There were no other matters arising

Next meeting

14 July 13:30 – 15:30