

Visit Wales – North Wales Regional Tourism Forum

7 October 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
NJ	ATA
CW	GUEST WATO
RL	NWEAB
SJ	WLGA
CG	SNP
AJ	SNP
HP	SNP
Visit Wales	
RH	Deputy Director, Tourism, Sports and Events
RM	Head of Tourism Development
LVW	Head of Marketing Tourism
DS	Senior Research and Insights Manager
CD	Senior Tourism B2B Marketing Manager
CC	Marketing Manager Product Experience Development
AF	Regional Engagement Manager, VW

Apologies

IL	DMP Denbighshire
AJ	DMP Gwynedd

1. Welcome

MB welcomed everyone and reflected on the challenges of the summer season and acknowledged the fact that those who work in the groups and events sector did not get the much needed economic boost. As a sector tourism and hospitality have demonstrated that they can operate safely. LAs and NP teams have worked hard to ensure businesses are informed of current status and that the public realm is tidy and welcoming to visitors.

MB went on to update the Forum on the recent visit from those assessing the WHS bid in Gwynedd. Today about next phase and thanked VW for

sourcing and ring fencing funds for the Tourism and Hospitality sector. However many businesses were facing the stark reality of possible closure. MB thanked and paid tribute to RH and invited him to give an update on his move into the Events sector.

RH stated that he wasn't going far and would be heading up events and hospitality with Mari Stevens bringing together tourism marketing and development. RH wanted to add to MBs positive statements and thanked the industry for the part it played in contributing to the guidance and how they applied it effectively, and how the LAs have worked closely with Government to help communicate the message. He also thanked MB for his continued input at the COVID-19 meetings and reported that on Friday a representative from the Chief Medical Office would be present. Unfortunately we are seeing a rapid increase in the number of cases and the fears of a second wave are becoming reality and that all the local lockdowns have been agreed with the LAs, Local Health Board's and the police and they will be kept under review. In terms of the new ERF funding we have been successful in ring fencing £20m specifically for the tourism and hospitality sector. A Local Lockdown fund is also being established.

The funding is for development activity such as refurbishment. It is 100% funding but subject to state aid rules. We realise this is going to be a tough winter for the sector and we recognise the risk to jobs.

MB asked if there would be consideration to businesses in non-lockdown areas who were experiencing difficulties as a result of loss of business from lockdown areas. RH stated that the question was being asked across all sectors and we simply didn't know at this time.

HP added that some of the SNP sites in non-lock downed Gwynedd had seen cancellations and wanted to ask if this was a pattern in other areas. The consensus was yes and LVW added that this was a combination of people in lockdown areas unable to move out of where they live and people getting nervous about if they should travel even if they live in a non-lockdown area. SJP confirmed a number of cancellations in Gwynedd.

CO reported on the losses in the groups/coach markets with just 7 tours since lockdown and are now paying back on future departures to end of October. CO thanked CD, CADW and NT for their effort in opening up in a COVID safe manner. The impact on group tourism to the regional sector is unbelievable.

2. Update from VW Marketing & Development

Research

MB invited DS to update on research to date. DS reported:

- VW were running regular survey for UK consumer with VE/VS since May

- Survey now fortnightly with updated questions – business tourism, day visits (half term), trip planning timescales.
- Publishing Wales specific profile reports covering visit intentions, visitation, visitor profile and trip profile by trip takers/intenders to Wales.
- Next [UK profile report](#) to be published end of this week October 9.
- Next [Wales profile](#) report covering September survey period to be published w/c 12 October.

The most recent findings from survey period [14-18th Sept](#). The findings indicate a deterioration in public mood and weakening of domestic travel intentions and that there has also been a notable dip in confidence to be able to take a domestic trip in the coming months. And there has been a fall in those intending to take a trip in September/October

DS added that a new international research would commence in October with VB partners. The Wales Tourism Business Barometer had completed five surveys with a further survey to be completed by the end of the year. A survey of the events sector is being planned.

Grants

RM gave an update on the ERF 3 grant which was launched on 6 October. The eligibility checker is now live with application process opening on w/c 26 October. RH urged members and their networks to apply. For the tourism and hospitality sector the intervention rate is 100%. The emphasis this time is on project based activity. JS asked about those businesses that did not pay VAT, RM stated that this was an issue but the criteria has been set so you have to be VAT registered or pay staff through PAYE.

SR asked about the level of detail required in the application regarding business planning, RH stated that we don't have the specifics at this time but added the amount of information required would vary depending on a Micro, SME or Large business. A member asked if multiple businesses could apply and the answer was yes as long as they could prove independence from each other. Another member asked if they applied to be a Ltd Company now, would they qualify to apply, RH advised that they would need to have been registered from the 30 March to be eligible.

Marketing

LVW and CD gave an update on marketing and the presentation is available on request.

LVW urged members and their networks to sign up to the VW newsletter for up to date information.

Discussion took place around upcoming seasonal events.

CD asked everyone to ensure they let VW know of any issues in the travel trade and groups market so these could be resolved.

JR added that we need to capitalise on the 'I'm a Celebrity...' filming and that the German programme was being filmed at Gwrych during January 2021 which could help with collateral for 2021/22. Conwy had also initiated a Stay local campaign in conjunction with NWT. JR also asked for support as and when Venue Cymru is released from being a Nightingale Hospital.

RH updated on the test events that had taken place and that the planned testing of larger and indoor business events were now being impeded by the sharp increase in COVID-19 cases and therefore a number of LAs were uncomfortable in taking those events any further. The guidance is still with PHW and will continue that activity when it is safe to do so.

3. SNP Parking and Transport Review

Catrin and Angela gave an update on the Higgitt report of Parking and Transport in Snowdonia, the presentation is available on request.

MB thanked Catrin and Angela for their presentation and asked about the wider transport plans for the region and how this fitted in. Angela confirmed that this would be part of those plans.

RH had to leave the meeting at this point but stated that he would be happy to come back and talk about events and thanked everyone for their input over the past six years. He felt the group was very important and helped inform discussions and decisions.

Members welcomed the plans and agreed that it was addressing issues which had been exacerbated during 2020.

4. NWEAB Growth deal update

JR stated that we were in a critical stage with the Growth Deal which included the 3 tourism elements; Tourism Skill hub at Llandrillo, the Food Hub at Glynllifon and the Carbon Neutral Farm at Llysfasi . A programme manager was now in place (Robyn Lovelock) to drive this forward. The financial model is now being finalised before governance is developed. The project will go the NWEAB on 23 October for final sign off, before sign off by partners and submission to Westminster by December

MB thanked JR for keeping us up to speed.

5. Terms of Reference / Membership

MB stated that the Chairs of the four Fora had recently met to discuss their roles and this had led to discussions on membership and objectives. All four Chairs agreed that the key issues were; membership (was it representative of each region) and also short, medium and long term objectives for each region which could be 'locked together' to create a set of national objectives. MB felt that the NW Forum represented a good

balance between the private and public sector and reminded the private sector members that under the TOR they could invite a private sector representative to these meetings as a guest.

If anyone has any feedback please feed in

6. Date of Next meeting

18 November 2020