

Visit Wales – North Wales Regional Tourism Forum

12 May 2021 – Virtual (online) Meeting

Present	Representing
MB	Chair Tourism Forum
SPJ	Cyngor Gwynedd
MT	IOACC
JM	CCBC
IL	Chair Denbighshire DMP
CO	Chair DMP Conwy
PM	Denbighshire CC
RJ	Flintshire CC
SR	Chair DMP Wrexham
JB	Wrexham CBC
VR	ATA
NJ	ATA
IL	Chair Destination Denbighshire
JJ	NWT
JJ	Guest of MB
MS	Guest of MB
GE	Guest of MB
SR	DD Tourism Development
CP	DD Tourism Marketing
RM	Head of Tourism Development VW
ST	Head of Cruise Wales
CD	Senior Tourism B2B Manager
AF	Regional Engagement Manager, VW
KT	Partnerships Manager
BM	Research & Insights

Apologies

LVW	Head of Marketing Tourism VW
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Welcome

MB welcomed everyone to the meeting and stressed that we all need to work towards assisting VW in recovery planning and to identify any gaps where support may be needed moving forwards. MB is eager to return to where we were in early part of 2020 and start look at regional identity and sustainability. He was also looking forward to the announcement on the WHS bid for the Slate Communities later this year.

MB went on to welcome Steffan Roberts as the new Deputy Director of Tourism Development and todays guests; Jen (Welsh Mountain Zoo), Mair Saunders (Nant Gwrtheyrn) and Glen Evan (Waterloo and Royal Oak Hotels, Betws-y-Coed).

	<p>Update from VW</p> <p>SR said that he was delighted to join the Forum and looked forward to meeting members face to face in the future. SR went on to introduce himself and his past roles within WG and the WDA. SR updated the group on the next steps with setting up a new cabinet and as soon as a new Tourism Minister was announced they would be briefed by the VW team. The 21 day review was taking place this week and we are expecting the First Minister to announce the movement to Alert Level 2 on 17 May. Also, rule of six for indoor hospitality and the new funding package would also be confirmed at this time. SR added that we would also be looking further options to support businesses through this recovery period. A series of pilot events had now been announced. SR asked that aforementioned was kept in confidence until the formal announcements on 14 May.</p> <p>JJ asked about the VW structure with new appointments, SR confirmed that he was taking over for Rob Holt as Deputy Director of Tourism Development and CC added that she was currently interim DD role of Tourism Marketing and that this post was now being advertised. Both roles sitting under the Director of Culture Sport and Tourism Jason Thomas. JJ added he was disappointed that not many test events were taking place north of Brecon and asked about plans for NW. SR advised that there had been test events (albeit in 2020) in north Wales – Theatre Clwyd and Trac Mon.</p> <p>CC gave an on screen presentation updating the Forum.</p> <p>Recovery Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery – published plan in March but we have held back so we can consult new ministers and look at a task and finish group to drive this forward in conjunction with the sector. We are also engaging with DCMS with recovery planning their plan is due to be published next week. International travel - need info on inbound travel • Guidance – new film to help stakeholders navigate as we move to lower Alert levels this week. We have developed so many tools for the industry and we urge you share these tools with your networks • Please help us re enforce the Addo messaging and we are grateful that Gwynedd has done this • The Addo consumer campaign is now regularly on video-on-demand and buses and is about safety and that Wales is a safe place to visit • As we fully start to reopen we will commence TV advertising and then return to a more normal calendar of marketing activity • Day visits to outdoor attractions are of course now possible and multi day visits can proceed from the 17 May depending on announcements by the FM on Friday • With respect to groups; gatherings such as for organised activities like guided tours could take place 30 outdoors, 15 indoors and when we move to alert level 2 this will increase to 50 outdoors and 30 indoors (excluding children and carers) or where it is not an organised activity (where a risk assessment has taken place) then group visits indoors are
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- only permissible with members of the same household, support bubble or (when permitted) extended household – or up to 6 people from 6 different households - provided their entry indoors is staggered so as not to create a gathering of more than one household or group of 6 indoors.
- For both of the above, all reasonable measures must be taken to ensure physical and social distancing between households, support bubbles or extended households. Younger children do not need to rigidly follow the advice to stay 2 metres apart.

RM gave an update on the SSF fund which is now coming to a conclusion. With respect to next round it is subject to Ministerial advice but all information will be on the Business Wales website and will be announced through the VW Newsletter. RM wanted to remind stakeholder of the return to VAT levels up to 12.5% and then 20% and need to be planned into operations. We still see a number of enquiries re new developments but banks still think the sector a high risk. Good to see the Hilton at Adventure Park Snowdonia opening.

GE that the restrictions and 2m rule will still impact on recovery. CC added that this is being discussed with Ministers and public health colleagues and wanted to assure the Forum that the issue is understood. SR added that this topic was very much alive. CC added that as long as mitigations are in place there were exemptions to the 2m rule. GE added that there were inconsistencies with LAs and the enforcement.

SPJ added that there was still confusion re outdoor hospitality, ventilation, staff wearing masks and recording data of guests. Clarity on regs in Wales and England. Industry still need clarity. CC agreed similar issue in south Wales but we have produced assets and use influencers, we need partners to use these assets, On ventilation we are producing easily digestible information for the industry.

Skills update

KT updated on the skills agenda. Skills are a key focus in recovery plan. VW does not have a skills remit but we work closely with the skills division at WG to ensure that they are aware of the issues affecting by the sector and its importance to the Welsh economy. The role is to signpost, working closely with partners such as industry reps, Jobcentre Plus, Careers Wales, Regional Skills Partnerships and others. We also welcome feedback from industry re training and recruitment needs and issues.

VW also host skills information on the Tourism Zone
<https://businesswales.gov.wales/tourism/other-useful-links#guides-tabs--1>

Members are encouraged to visit the page for information on e.g. Business Wales Skills Gateway and other support available to businesses.

	<p>KT updated the Forum on the industry led Wales T & H Skills Partnership, founded in 2019 and Chaired by Sharon Lusher. Chairs of the four Regional Fora have been invited to the next meeting.</p> <p>JJ stated that NWT members had been reporting issues associated with Brexit, Furlough, chef shortages, bartenders, and staff moving out of the sector. MB added that the issues were discussed at the Stakeholder Meeting on 11 May.</p> <p>GE wanted to stress that the issues were immediate.</p>
	<p>Research</p> <p>BM gave a comprehensive presentation on the latest Tourism research and trends</p> <p>Links to latest VW and VB Tourism stats:</p> <p>https://gov.wales/tourism-barometer</p> <p>https://gov.wales/wales-tourism-accommodation-occupancy-surveys</p> <p>https://www.visitbritain.org/official-statistics</p>
	<p>Adventure Smart</p> <p>EED gave a pertinent presentation on the Adventure Smart initiative as the sector starts to re- open.</p> <p>The initiative sits well and complements the ADDO messaging being rolled out by VW.</p> <p>EEJ encouraged members and their networks to use the #beadventuresmart in social media activity. And invited anyone to contact her for further information.</p>
	<p>RTEF & TPIF Update</p> <p>JJ TPIF - Regional Marketing</p> <p>JJ gave an update on the activity being undertaken by NWT. Things have been on hold, currently tram wraps in Manchester, out of home campaign with static sheets at supermarkets in the NW, DAX campaign targeting NW and WM – using radio over the next 3 months and a series of themed podcasts working with businesses. Working with AVANTI rail who are now on board as a strategic partner</p> <p>SPJ RTEF - The Wales Way</p> <p>SPJ updated on the work with The Wales Way. Activity is now close to completion. Assets have been developed to use off and on line promoting, culture, the outdoors, landscapes and adventure across all areas of the routes. Exhibitions took place pre-Covid, with further activity about to commence working with businesses. A suite of digital assets also developed to complement and support ADDO</p>

EEJ TPIF – Curious Cymru Experiences

Update on the development of experiences for Air BNB. There were originally less than 10 Welsh experiences listed on Air BNB. The project has now developed over 50 new experiences i.e. bee-keeping, Nordic walking, historic cycle tours, gin adventures, mindful walks, Bush craft, husky trekking, etc. There has been business development activity, social media content development. Going forward the intention is to work these products outside of Air BNB and develop longevity

MT RTEF - Cruise Wales

RTEF project we have just completed the cruise ship project and working with Welsh Gov on reopening cruise from June onward (restrictions permitting) but this is the pan-Wales videos for use by cruise wales

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYNjEnL7Sak>

MB invited guests to speak

Mair Saunders - highlighted the issues that are effecting the wedding industry. Skills on the Llyn are an issue and finding welsh speaking staff continues to be a problem.

Jen Jesse WMZ – interested to know about social distancing form 21 June. Problem will be when restrictions ease in England. The zoo is primarily outdoors so looking forward to opening on 17 May.

CC – re weddings and numbers and forward notice this is being discussed with Cabinet

MB thanked everyone for their attendance and wished everyone best wishes as they now start to re-open

Regional Updates

Conwy

- Tourist Information Centres open, footfall down 40% and income down similarly, will pick up as the staying visitor numbers increase. Currently visitors not wanting to travel from resort
- Undertaken a visitor survey online to our visitor database. Aim to establish their expectations for their future trips to Conwy. This is a repeat of what we did 12 months ago, so hopefully some trends might show. We had 400 respondents, 12 months ago we had 1400!!
- We are currently undertaking a business survey across the county, including tourism and hospitality businesses. Aim to identify support needs for businesses in 3 areas: 1) Financial position of business 2) digital presence, connectivity issues and 3) Recruitment and skills issues
- Conwy Tourism Ambassador Programme - we launched this on the 18 March. We have 167 Bronze awards, 118 Silver, the Gold award

- (additional modules) will go live at the end of May/early June. Filming held up due to Covid. Many businesses have incorporated the programme into their staff induction process.
- A lot of effort is going into making the Destination safe and ready for visitors, additions resource has been put into litter picking and toilet management/cleaning
 - We still have a good pipeline of private sector interest in developing attractions, accommodation and acquiring existing businesses. All very positive
 - The 3 ex Whisper hotels in Llandudno have been sold to a new investor
 - Destination Conwy meeting 11 May, the trade feedback difficulties with recruitment, particularly the accommodation sector. We are going to run a recruitment marketing campaign for the sector to support businesses
 - Concern was raised at the proposed new wind farm off Llandudno Awl Y Mor, and opposition to it grows. The wind turbines could be more than 300 metres high, the view from Llandudno will be saturated with turbines
 - Announcement today of another Discretionary grant for tourism sector which LA's will be administering
 - We are currently marketing Conwy on Smooth Radio in N West and Midlands

Denbighshire

Plan to welcome visitors safely to Denbighshire

Denbighshire County Council has produced a plan to ensure the county can welcome visitors safely as lockdown restrictions continue to ease.

Denbighshire's Destination Management Plan has been developed in partnership with tourism businesses across the county and seeks to coordinate activity over the coming months to ensure a positive experience for visitors, residents and business.

Cllr Hugh Evans OBE, Leader of the Council, said: "We have worked in partnership with tourism businesses to produce a plan that ensures key sites and facilities are ready to welcome visitors and that local residents will feel safe and well-informed.

"Tourism contributes £552million a year to Denbighshire's economy and we want people to come to Denbighshire this summer and return again year after year, so it is important we make the county safe and welcoming to visitors while giving residents confidence that they remain safe"

"To do this we will build on the work we have already undertaken and continue to encourage responsible visitor and resident behaviour, recruit more Tourism Ambassadors and actively engage with existing Ambassadors to encourage visitors and residents to visit sites across the county to help alleviate busy periods at our honeypot sites.

"The Council and its partners will play a key role in supporting the tourism industry, work with it and enable it to re-establish itself over the coming years. It's very important we continue to work closely together to ensure our sites and facilities are safe and suitable for residents and visitors as we move through 2021."

Activity across the authority will be coordinated within its Business Recovery Group which has representation from all relevant Council services as well as from North Wales Police and the private sector.

Actions within the Destination Management plan include:

- Engagement with businesses, communities and with residents and visitors
- Ensuring that Denbighshire's facilities, sites and attractions are ready for residents and visitors as the tourism industry gradually moves back to full capacity
- Promoting messages about responsible visits and developing sustainable tourism

The Tourism Strategy Group will monitor delivery and be ready to identify any issues that need to be addressed to ensure that Denbighshire has the most successful tourism season possible.

Work has taken place at sites across Denbighshire, including Moel Famau and Loggerheads country parks, to ensure measures are in place to keep visitors safe.

These include improvements to the car parks at Moel Famau and the upgrading of paths at Loggerheads and works at Horseshoe Falls to improve access.

Ian Lebon, Chair of Denbighshire Destination Management Partnership, said: "The Denbighshire Destination Management Partnership is pleased to have been closely involved with the county council in the production of the Destination Management Plan.

"We recognise and very much appreciate the importance that the council places upon the tourism industry within the local economy for residents and visitors as well as those working within the sector. Denbighshire has a proud and successful history of attracting and welcoming visitors to our wealth of attractions. We look forward to continuing to work closely in partnership with the council in maintaining and building on that success in the future."

Anglesey

Update from Anglesey

- Monthly updates with our Tourism Association. These are led by the council leader and portfolio holder.

- Anglesey County Council has produced an internal visitor management plan with actions on how we will welcome back visitors safely, and deploy resources more effectively to where needed. This focuses on:
 - Staff resources including new branded clothing
 - Infrastructure (evaluating where bins, PC, and new signage on rediscovering Anglesey safely)
 - Communications
 - Research and data intelligence
- Ensuring that Anglesey's facilities, sites and attractions are ready for residents and visitors as the tourism industry gradually moves back to full capacity including sanitizing stations, signage and information
- Promoting messages about responsible visits and developing sustainable tourism – utilising ADDO wherever possible
- Working closely with Cruise Wales on the possibility of welcoming back cruise ships from 8 June
- Improvements to some car parking areas including new surfacing in Benllech and Pay by Phone
- New highway enforcement (double yellow lines) being rolled out to reduce anti-social and dangerous parking at key areas (Traeth Bychan, Lligwy, Rhosneigr, Beuamris and Llanddwyn)
- Sanitizing units procured for key countryside sites and slipways where there is a manned presence
- Ventilate campaign rolled out across the island businesses and schools advising on need to ventilate (CO₂ devices procured for schools and some large businesses to measure air quality)
- Completed the RTEF 'On the crest of a wave' project with new images, video and marketing assets for Cruise Wales to promote the region as a cruise destination
- Code of conduct being developed for the Menai Strait in partnership with operators and Caernarfon Harbour Trust
- Lots of media attention around wild camping especially around Llanddona – Highlighting the roles and responsibilities and community tensions as areas are often a community resource

	Date of Next meeting TBC
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