

Fforwm Twristiaeth Rhanbarthol Gogledd Cymru

North Wales Regional Tourism Forum

Venue Cymru

15.06.2022
10:00 – 12:00

Notes

Michael Bewick	MB	Chair
Ceri Thomas	CT	CADW
Nigel Treacy	NT	Dst Conwy
Michael Thomas	MT	IOACC
Sam Reagan	SR	Dst Wrexham
Joe Bickerton	JB	WCBC
Sian P Jones	SPJ	Cyngor Gwynedd
Amandae Davies	AD	WCBC
Elen Edwards	EE	CCBC
Jo Smith	JS	Dst Flintshire
Richard Jones	RJ	FCC
Anwen Jones	AJ	Dst Gwynedd
Peter Mc Dermott	PM	DCC
Nia Jones	NJ	ATA Dst Anglesey
Catherine Williams	CW	WATO
Steffan Roberts	SR	VW
Caryl Jones	CJ	VW
Rhidian Morgan	RM	VW
Andrew Forfar	AF	VW

Apologies

Jim Jones	JJ	NWT
Helen Pye	HP	SNP
Ian Lebbon	IL	Dst Denbighshire
Jane Richardson	JR	CCBC

Welcome	<p>MB welcomed everyone to this the first face to face / hybrid meeting since 2020. He reflected on the past problematic two years but was mindful of the new issues which faced the sector. Demand is not as it was. In terms of policy the sector faces changes and wanted it noted that he and the Chairs of the other three regional Fora along with industry bodies believe it is important that the views of the Fora on these issues are clear for Ministers.</p> <p>Despite the challenges we have a strong brand and those visiting Wales don't face the same problems as those who travel abroad.</p>
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<p>Update from CADW</p>	<p>Ceri Thomas gave an update on the development and marketing activity in NW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing is an issue and some sites have had to undertake a review of opening hours/days • Overall visitor figures are close to pre pandemic • Online ticketing has worked well in term of visitor management and data collection • Work on the Kings Gate at Caernarfon Castle is near completion with a new visitor centre at Beaumaris • The marketing campaign over the summer is focused on families 'Finding Llywelyn missing coronet' • CADW have undertaken a re-brand • Currently working with Transport for Wales on a 2 for 1 promotion and this is being marketed in out of Wales hubs. • CADW are working with SKY VIP who have bought 9k tickets to deliver one of their campaigns. Great opportunities here to reach new markets • New self-catering accommodation will be opening at Porth Mawr in Caernarfon
<p>Update from VW</p>	<p>SR reported on the progress of the VW business plan for 2022-2023 and updated on various elements, including the £2.9m recently awarded to 18 Brilliant Basic projects across Wales and progress on skills campaign. We are bringing an end to the EU-funded TAD activity and lots of work to wrap that up following the exciting projects that have been developed.</p> <p>We have moved back to our strategic plan, Welcome to Wales 2020-2025, and we have now moved to a new set of challenges impacting the visitor economy sector: inflation, energy costs, etc and continue to see uncertainty. The positive is the uncertainty in the demand for overseas travel creating domestic demand.</p> <p>SR reminded the Forum the engagement structures and how the Forum through the Chair feed into the Visitor Economy Forum which is attended by the Chair and communicates directly to the Minister for Economy.</p> <p>SR wanted to update the Forum on wide Welsh Government policies that will be of interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tourism levy was part of the Labour manifesto and now forms part of the Programme for Government and the Cooperation Agreement with Plaid Cymru. Treasury colleagues have started the process of engaging with stakeholders, with full consultation starting in the Autumn. A number of other countries have a tourism levy and the levy is seen as a means to invest in local communities and is planned to be discretionary in LA areas. There is scope for the sector to help shape the policy and it is important the sector collates views and feed in. There is a genuine opportunity to shape policy and see positive actions in communities.

- We are exploring a statutory registration / licensing scheme for accommodation. Again, it forms part of the Plaid Cymru Cooperation Agreement. We commissioned a piece of work to start engagement with key stakeholders, explore options and give us a steer in terms of a way forward. A registration / licensing scheme would enable all accommodation to operate on a level playing field and give visitors assurances. It would also give much better oversight of the sector to inform decision-making and help in communicating with the sector. Work is at an early stage. Advice is currently being drafted to inform next steps. We are currently drafting options for Ministers before coming out again to stakeholders to seek views.
- Education colleagues are also looking at reforming the school year, which was also a Programme for Government commitment, and at this stage colleagues are gathering views and we want you to be aware of this activity. We expect a statement on this soon with a consultation anticipated towards the end of 2022.

NDR / Council tax premium activity concluded with an announcement from the Finance Minister recently with the Minister exploring exemptions where properties are restricted by planning conditions.

MB asked if there had been any work done on the potential impacts of the NDR thresholds and potential reduction in capacity. SR stated that there had been a lot of work undertaken when drafting the legislation including a published Regulatory Impact Assessment and we could provide links to that. Positive outcomes will encourage longer letting periods which will help extend the season however some operators may move to the private letting market. This is part of WG response to the housing crisis in some of our communities. SR pointed out that this was not a restriction to trade and those that did not hit the threshold would be liable to council tax and the premium is discretionary (up to 300%) in each LA.

On the subject of the Levy MB wanted to reiterate the views of the other Fora Chairs and tourism sectoral bodies that the Levy was flawed and that this was a bad time to introduce the policy following Covid challenges.

SR highlighted the consultation had not taken place and it was an opportunity for all to include their views, rather than oppose outright. It was important to note that the levy would not be introduced in the immediate aftermath of Covid and it would take a few years to establish.

NT thanked SR and added that view was negative in Conwy and the resounding feeling was it will not work. Need assurances that the levy was used to alleviate local issues and pressures. Concerns that we will lose visitors to other destinations

NJ echoed the views of the other private sector members. PM stated that WG would need to ensure the consultation on the Levy was communicated effectively.

Peter McDermott re consultation process on NDR. They feel that decision was taken on NDR despite the concerns provided as part of the consultation process. We need to learn lessons from this process in going forward with the consultation process on the levy.

SR responded by saying that we do the best we can in terms of engagement on the consultations. Share all information through our newsletter, stakeholder discussions but there are a number of challenges including consultation fatigue. Need to do the best we can collate views and feed in.

CJ gave an update on VW marketing

Croeso campaign

As part of our efforts to support the tourism and hospitality sector following the Covid-19 pandemic, we are running a burst of marketing activity, working title "**Croeso**", from this week.

As you'll be aware, we don't normally advertise on TV this time of year, so this is a departure for us and is in response to the unprecedented nature of the recovery following the pandemic. We are specifically promoting paid for products (such as boat trips and serviced accommodation) and also hospitality to boost support for businesses across the country.

We're on TV and Video on Demand in-Wales and in key regions in England from yesterday with a 30 second advert which showcases a range of experiences across Wales but with particular emphasis on city breaks (with Cardiff featuring as part of the film).

Croeso

EN: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcK8swBubhk>

CY: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUH7O4qnrFk>

*Shoulder season focus – as in 2021, we will be pushing Autumn breaks in major campaign activity from early August this year.

Flexible approach to messaging over next 12 weeks – Croeso and Addo

We're taking a flexible approach with our tactical marketing over the summer and will dial up activity as necessary i.e., based on insights from things like the next Business Barometer and Consumer Sentiment wave, as well as taking into account industry feedback on the performance of half term and forward bookings for this summer, e.g. feedback via today's forum is an important part of that picture.

Alongside the **Croeso** campaign we have **refreshed Addo** for 2022 and have shifted the focus from last year (which focussed on public health) with **Addo** now becoming a foundation initiative for us, capitalising on the "promise" aspect used by other countries such as Iceland, Norway and New Zealand. We're aiming to inspire visitors and the people of Wales to respect and protect our 'Bro' e.g., our local communities, our language and culture, promoting local produce and

our 'Byd' including the countryside code and wider sustainability messages.

We're also a partner in the National Parks 'Diolch' campaign, the campaign has a friendly tone of voice and focusses more on issues on the ground but is closely aligned with Addo.

Travel Trade/B2B

- With procurement completed, **TXGB** (Tourism Exchange Great Britain) will soon be available for Welsh businesses to use. Bringing visitors, particularly international, back and driving sales for Wales's tourism businesses has never been more important. Visit Wales has partnered with TXGB to give businesses better access to online sales channels, so that they can promote their offering cost-effectively and drive more direct bookings.
- (TXGB is a central [online marketplace that connects tourism businesses to a varied selection of domestic and international distributors](#). It offers operators the opportunity to diversify their distribution and gives distributors the ability to access a wide range of bookable tourism products, to include in their programmes.)
- **Travel Trade events** for the year will be confirmed this month following a [call out to partners/stakeholders](#) inviting Expressions of Interest.

#theexperiencemakers – Wales' Tourism and Hospitality skills and recruitment campaign

A further phase of the #experiencemakers tourism and hospitality skills and recruitment campaign, delivered in partnership with Working Wales will go live from 22 June onwards. A new 30 second advert aimed at highlighting the range of careers and opportunities available in the tourism and hospitality sector will run at cinemas across Wales and on TV on S4C and targeted advertising on ITV hub and All4. There will also be a further digital activity across the Working Wales social channels to promote careers in the sector.

The campaign has been developed in partnership with the industry-led Wales Tourism and Hospitality Skills partnership to support the sector by raising awareness of the high numbers of vacancies and of the variety of career opportunities available. Launched in 2021 activity so far has included digital campaigns, content creation, advertorials and targeted PR opportunities. Aimed at young people – school leavers, students, and those unsure about their future career as well as young adults who may be looking for flexible working around e.g. childcare and older adults looking for part-time work or a career change. The campaign has been welcomed and supported by the industry including UKHospitalityCymru and the Wales Tourism Alliance.

The cinema and TV advert will run from 22 June for a month in run up to the school holidays, boosted by digital directing users to the Working Wales website for more information and careers advice.

	<p>Further information and content and case studies can be found on the Working Wales website tourism and hospitality section</p> <p>Superfast Business Wales – digital training for Tourism businesses</p> <p>And finally, a recent collaboration with Superfast Broadband Wales (SFBW) means that, since April, Visit Wales is helping with additional promotion of SFBW’s free digital training for tourism businesses. Dealing with everything from social media to online booking and ecrm, working together ensures that businesses see all opportunities for making the most of grading and resources such as the assets site as well as using the latest insights to both attract and retain visitors. Have a look at one of the collaboration promo pieces being used here.</p>
<p>Update from Forum members – NEW and NW Wales</p>	<p>SPJ Reported back on behalf of the three NW Counties</p> <p>Anglesey Anecdotal feedback from trade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of people around but not spending • Season is slow with bookings • Wholesale costs of produce rising quicker than revenue coming in • Staff and recruitment • Concern over longer term with rising costs (survival mode) <p>Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ticketed events struggling and festivals (Gottwood at less than 50% capacity with high set up costs) even with WG support this is an issue • Menai raft race 21 rafts (usually 50) • However more events being held 2022 <p>Cruise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cruise buoyant 2022 with 43 cruise ships but concerns for 2023 and access to an alongside berth presents a risk to growth • Have just finalised 13 White badge guides training and they will be offering tours for cruise (hopefully progressing to green Badge in October) <p>Brilliant basics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with Visit Wales progressing on with scheme to update 4 coastal public conveniences to align with coastal path, cycling and 2 will have grey/black waste points for responsible discharge <p>Traffic management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.5 tonne weight limit now imposed on Menai bridge (could impact joint Gwynedd/Anglesey events in future) • New one-way traffic system in Benllech <p>Conwy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage for Wales Coast Path can be confusing. Ongoing scheme to re-sign coastal path. Lack of funding to be able to progress that but it’s very much still part of the plan.

- Rising energy costs – what support is there for businesses to help with this? Can businesses access grants to install solar panels, low energy lighting etc?
- EV Chargers – how can businesses get these at their premises? Is funding available? Want to be able to provide more across the county.
- Cycling – Encouraging cycling throughout the county but challenges arise when using public transport. Can only get a limited number of bikes on trains. Need to work closer with Transport for Wales to solve this.
- Over tourism – Destination Conwy working with Snowdonia National Park to obtain a heat map to show areas of concern for over tourism in Snowdonia National Park. We can then find creative ways to ease some of these issues.
- Traffic management – Great Orme is a problem area. Lack of signage for available parking spaces. Narrow streets to navigate.

Gwynedd

- Currently in receipt of two Brilliant Basics grants, piloting 6 Aires to help eliminate issues surrounding Camper vans and upgrading of Llyn Padarn car Park in Llanberis.
- Working with the National Park with the setting up of the new sustainable tourism principles and on parking enforcement and sustainable travel following the problems faced in 2021
- We are working to help tidy up our town centres with over £1m of funding and we are grateful for lottery funding to help build on the recent HS designation.
- We are also busy preparing business cases for UK government funding opportunities
- Rolled out a ambassador scheme

Transport

Impact of rising fuel costs on transport means that some public transport contract may not be fulfilled with subsequent impact on sustainable tourism plans

Wrexham

- Collectively with Denbighshire, Flintshire and Conwy they will be attending the Royal Welsh Show in July promoting the Wales Way itineraries that have been produced over the past few years
- Key for Wrexham has been the city status they gained
- They are looking at town centre footfall
- They are looking at £30m of levelling up funding to help regenerate the Trevor Basin to help cope with increasing visitor numbers, develop a tree top walk and glamping site. The aim to turn a few hours visit into a short stay destination
- Developing an ambassador programme
- Commissioned a new DMP plan to conclude early Autumn
- They continue to engage with the private sector through the 'This is Wrexham' business group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on the Football Museum of Wales is due to start in September • Also looking at the development of KOP stand at Wrexham FC • Skills and material costs on capital development still a problem • There is a Netflix documentary due to launch soon following the US investment at WFC <p>Denbighshire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking to develop new sustainable TICs • Looking at town centre signage • Meeting with private sectors to look at the issues surrounding motor home camping • We have just held a very successful Urdd eisteddfod in Denbigh welcoming 120k Eisteddfod • Have help our Tourism Forum with 80 participants <p>Flintshire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have secured the Brilliant Basic Fund to develop modular changing places at Wepre Park and Greenfield Park • Flintshire TA has been re launched and key for the LA to work with the private sector <p>CW added that the outdoor sector had seen demand capped due to lack of outdoor freelancers and lack of new instructors because of lack of course</p>
<p>Community Tourism 'A case study Siop Griffiths, Partneriaeth Ogwen and Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog'</p>	<p>BG gave a presentation on Community tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siop Griffiths is a social enterprise based in Penygroes, Dyffryn Nantlle an ex-slate community. • The building had been a pub with rooms and latterly an ironmonger shop but had laid empty since 2010. It was an iconic building that the community wanted saving and to be used as a community hub • The Community wanted it to have something to do with tourism • Penygroes is well located for tourism and is located close to; The Wales Coastal Path, Llwybyr Lllechi and is on the Pilgrims Path and Lon Eifion • The community is 85% Welsh speaking with strong links to culture and of course the new WHS • They raised £55k to buy the building and then faced the task of opening it up as a building for community benefit. They offer facilities for the community and derive income from the business to reinvest and currently employ 8 members of staff. • The café, Yr Orsaf, opened in 2019. The accommodation was due to open April 2020 in the height of the pandemic so was delayed until restrictions eased in July. The café and accommodation share the space with a learning hub, repair café and a help for wellbeing food scheme. • They are due to open a co working space in the future and hope this will also be of interest to visitors who may want to mix business with leisure • They are due to open up another 7 beds which will give them a total of 14.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to offer walks, bikes and develop that as an offer to visitors and locals • Talking to other B&Bs who can signpost visitors to their food offer, e-bike hire and other services. • They support community art • BG stated they are just a small part of a growing number of social enterprises also working in the tourism sector to derive income to deliver community schemes • They are looking to buy houses that come on to the market to rent back to local people. • Principles – to ensure advantages of tourism outweigh the negatives • They are a living wage employer and keep people employed 12 months of the year • They favour the tourism levy as it is our way of telling communities that tourism can re-invest in local initiatives and infrastructure <p>MB thanked Ben and asked if he felt the community valued tourism because they had a stake in the assets. BG stated they employ 8 people across the businesses and people see the benefit of the income from the café and the hotel delivering local benefits.</p>
Wrexham City of Culture	<p>Joe Bickerton and Amandae Davies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite coming runners up in the UK City of Culture WCB led a fantastic campaign led by Amandae Davies • It is now the challenge to build on the positivity and connect to all businesses across the county • Initially 20 areas entered the competition and as this was the Queens Jubilee year applicants did not have to be a city • They got down to the last eight and then had number of things they had to deliver over an eight-month period and then got shortlisted to the final four (Southampton, Durham, Bradford & Wrexham) • They felt extremely confident as this was not just a Wrexham bid but a Wales bid • We may come second but we have developed and delivered so much for our communities. • This was a gamble as most successful applicants have tried for the nomination several times so we will be trying again • Recommending a series of cultural events for the future with the intention of being successful in 2029 • Although runners up its definitely a positive story <p>MB thanked Amandae and Joe and congratulated them on their bid</p>
Future Fora	21 Sept and 14 December