

**Notes**  
**Fforwm Twristiaeth Rhanbarthol / Regional Tourism Forum**  
**01.03.2023**  
**WG Offices Llandudno Junction**

<b>Attendees</b>	
<b>Michael Bewick</b>	<b>Chair</b>
<b>Sian P Jones</b>	<b>Cyngor Gwynedd</b>
<b>Nigle Treacy</b>	<b>Chair DMP Conwy</b>
<b>Jasmin Koffler</b>	<b>Conwy CBC</b>
<b>Ellen Edwards</b>	<b>Conwy CBC</b>
<b>Eirlys Jones</b>	<b>NWT</b>
<b>Ian Lebbon</b>	<b>Chair DMP Denbighshire</b>
<b>Sian Pritchard</b>	<b>Att of Snowdonia</b>
<b>Peter Mc Dermott</b>	<b>Denbighshire CC</b>
<b>Tudur Jones</b>	<b>IOACC</b>
<b>Ruth Wojtan</b>	<b>TfW</b>
<b>Stephen Jones</b>	<b>WLGA</b>
<b>James Berzins</b>	<b>TXGB</b>
<b>Claire Carew</b>	<b>VW</b>
<b>Caryl Jones</b>	<b>VW</b>
<b>Phil Nelson</b>	<b>VW</b>
<b>Apologies</b>	
<b>Sam Reagan</b>	<b>Chair DMP Wrexham</b>
<b>Jo Smith</b>	<b>Chair DMP Flintshire</b>
<b>Jo Bickerton</b>	<b>Wrexham CBC</b>
<b>Jim Jones</b>	<b>NWT</b>
<b>Mike Thomas</b>	<b>IOACC</b>
<b>Helen Pye</b>	<b>ENP</b>

### **1. Welcome**

MB welcomed everyone to the meeting. There is cautious optimism as we move out of the post pandemic environment but there are still pressures. Staffing issues seem to be easing and anecdotally visitor figures for January and February have been good. As businesses we need clarity around promotion and development, and we need to continue to work in partnership.

### **2. Update from the regions**

JK gave an update on behalf of northwest Wales

#### **Ynys Mon update**

- Ynys Mon Destination Management Plan 2023-2028. Progressing with plan with draft for consultation out end March 2023 and stakeholder engagement to follow. Corporate plan going to council in April for adoption with DMP to follow suit.
- £248,000 secured from Welsh Government to update a number of public conveniences through Brilliant Basics. Investment at Treaddur Bay, Benllech, Porth Swtan and Porth Dafarch. All works to be complete 24 March 2023.

- Bid being developed for Brilliant Basics 3 following similar model and key infrastructure at specific sites.
- Menai Suspension bridge restrictions still having an impact with further works scheduled and test traffic signals this month.
- CRF funding secured and completed:-
  - White badge guides trained to assist with Cruise in Holyhead and have been instrumental in the welcome for 2022.
  - Ambassador Wales online portal for Anglesey to go live early 2023 with 3 initial modules focusing on Place, Past and culture (launched 01 March)
  - New Augmented reality app to go live early 2023 focusing on our 5 main towns (Launched 01 March)
  - Undertaken a report to Anglesey icons, with a view of securing future funding for developing these assets.
- Smart towns
 

Patwrm system being rolled out within our towns with free Wi-Fi and greater intelligence. Fully operational within Llangefni and Beaumaris, nearing completion in Menai Bridge, other towns closely behind. Holyhead on course for start of cruise season.
- Cruise
  - 56 cruise ships scheduled for 2023
  - New partnership approach being developed to welcome
  - Cruise and events post advertised this week (being managed by Holyhead town council)
  - New directional signs now in place
  - Holyhead breakwater park visitor centre nearing completion (March 2023) and will have official opening
- Anglesey progressing and bid has been submitted for Freeport status jointly with Stena. Bid is aimed at creating up to 13,500 jobs and raising GVA up by £1billion. Bangor University, Msparc and Grwp Llandrillo are also playing a key part in ensuring education and support for research. Outcome of bid due March 2023.
- SPF (Shared prosperity fund) - Number of applications being developed and submitted
- LUF (Levelling Up Fund)
  - New look visitanglesey being developed along with newsletter functionality.
- Cross cutting – Supporting and sharing visit Wales Welsh (random acts of Welshness)
- Events
  - Number of high-profile events taking place including Gottwood, Always Aim High, Anglesey Circuit/Trac Mon and Sioe Mon
  - Number of opportunities currently being advertised within the Authority

### **Gwynedd update**

- Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable tourism strategy 2035 – The new strategy was approved by the Gwynedd Council Cabinet on the 14/02/2023 and by the Snowdonia National Park Authority board 07/02/2023.
  - Work in progress to set up new partnership and finalise the yr 1 action plan and monitoring outputs. Shared Prosperity bids presented (if successful) to fund elements of the priorities identified.
  - Aiming to launch before start of main season 2023. Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035 | Visit Snowdonia ([ymweldageryri.info](http://ymweldageryri.info))

- 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
- £150k of funding secured through Cadw for interpretation roll out across all main sites. Levelling Up Fund application for the designated area approved. A programme worth £27 million in projects across the slate valleys of Gwynedd. Opportunities to capitalise on the benefits to the local community and economy arising from the world heritage site designation.
- Two Brilliant Basics Visit Wales funded schemes - Investment in visitor infrastructure at Parc Padarn Llanberis and the Arosfan Scheme (Aires pilot) currently in development. The project at Parc Padarn will make improvements to the car park at the Glyn area including EV charging points, cycle shelters, outdoor equipment washing area and groundworks. 5 Aires (locations for motor homes to park overnight) will be rolled out at Council owned town centre car parks at Cricieth, Pwllheli, Caernarfon, Llanberis and Barmouth.
- Marketing, Gwynedd Ambassadors Programme and Events. Seen an increase of 7% in social media interaction during 2022/2023 and a 27% increase in Instagram followers.
- Over 200 registered on the Gwynedd Ambassadors programme. Over 100 reached bronze level. A further 5 modules will be going live early March 2023.
- 22 events supported through the Gwynedd Events support Programme – Work has started on planning for the 2023 Eisteddfod which is being held at Boduan on the outskirts of Pwllheli.
- Improve your hospitality Digital Platform scheme. Training on a wide range of relevant digital topics have taken place and a series of workshops have been undertaken Improving your Digital Platform (llyw.cymru) Cynllun gwella platfform digidol (llyw.cymru)
- The Prynu yn Lleol /Buy Local programme looks at opportunities to promote Gwynedd businesses and communities and to encourage residents and visitors to buy locally. Recent activity includes Christmas gifting, St Dwynwen and St Davids Day promotions.
- Smart towns programme 11 towns throughout the county now with community WIFI. A further 7 will be rolled out before the end of March 2023.
- Gwaith Gwynedd – conducting a number of jobs fairs in 2023 at Rheilffordd Ffestiniog Caernarfon /Msparc Bangor, Y ganolfan Porthmadog, Dolgellau and Tywyn. Some are specifically to support the hospitality sector. A Facebook jobs notice board has been set up and proven very successful.
- A £1.5 million Tidy towns programme being implemented across key resorts.
- Arfor funding - £11 million Arfor 2 programme to boost economic prosperity in Welsh speaking communities.
- Working towards presenting a number of bids for funding through numerous grant sources e.g. Shared prosperity fund.

### **Conwy update**

- Brilliant Basics Llandudno shelters – Structures for both shelters now completed. Just waiting on roof to be installed. Project will be completed by end of March 2023. Already received lots of positive feedback.
- Brilliant Basics signage project – designs for new signs in Llandudno and Conwy were signed off in December 2022. The new signage will be installed mid-March 2023.

Currently carrying out some work to the signage panel structures to make sure they look presentable for when the new signage is installed.

- Brilliant Basics 2023 – 2024/5 – currently working on a number of EOIs to submit in the next funding round.
- Destination Conwy – The Destination Conwy Partnership is currently working on revising our Destination Management Plan. They have prepared a new draft strategy which will be presented to the Leader of the council mid-March.
- Llandudno Colonnades study – the feasibility study on Llandudno Colonnades is now complete and has been shared with stakeholders. We have applied for funding to develop this project further.
- Signage for free Wi-Fi along Mostyn Street in Llandudno has now been installed.
- Llandudno 10 Year Regeneration Plan now finalised. Planning to take this through our democratic process. Agreed with Llandudno Regeneration Board to report on actions within the plan on a 6 monthly basis.
- A number of community place making plans have now been completed following CRF Funding. We are currently working with Town Councils to assist with implementing them.
- Feedback from local businesses is that visitors don't seem to be booking in advance anymore. More frequent last-minute bookings.
- Visitor accommodation consultation response in preparation.
- Early spring radio campaign on Smooth North West weekend sponsorship 5 weekends 25-02-2023 to 26-03-2023. Raise awareness, promote visits, drive bookings and traffic to [www.visitconwy.org.uk](http://www.visitconwy.org.uk). Key messages adventure, heritage, accommodation, local food and drink and Wales by trails.
- Spring newsletter to visitor database.
- Random Acts of Welshness campaign being picked up on our social media channels.
- Ambassador programme – 528 bronze, 425 silver, 330 gold.

PM gave an update on behalf of the north east Wales

### **Wrexham**

- Launch of the new Wrexham Visitor Info Centre / local food & drink deli scheduled for today (01 March)

Other priorities and activity include:

- **Placemaking activity and funding secured to re-establish a Wrexham County Tourism Ambassador Scheme by June 2022.**
- In addition, funding secured for a new 2023/2024 Wrexham County tourism brochure based on demand from new international visitors relating to the Welcome to Wrexham documentary and travel agencies.
- New 2023-2026 Destination Management Plan ready and adopted by Council
- £5.4m funding secured for development of new Football Museum for Wales (opening 2025-2026).
- £13m levelling-up projects underway in Dee Valley to improve visitor experience at the Pontcysyllte WHS (in partnership with DCC).

### **Flintshire**

- New Destination Management Plan 2023-2026 is being developed to be ready by June 2023.

- Brilliant Basics R2 – finishing touches are being made to the ‘Parks for All’ project at Greenfield Valley Heritage Park and Wepre Country Park which has seen the installation of ‘Changing Places’ facilities at both sites and improvements to existing toilets provision.
- First phase of Placemaking activity is underway in three of our seven towns – Buckley, Shotton and Holywell.
- A proposed new visitor centre at Flint Castle is moving to the design phase.

### **Denbighshire**

- DCC teams and Tourism Strategy Group working on updating actions for the Tourism Strategy Action Plan 2022-2027
- Commissioning feasibility study for proposed Rhyl Tourist Information Centre/Rhyl Museum co-relocation project
- Roof structure and cladding completed on Corwen Station as part of Clwyd South Levelling Up project (in partnership with Wrexham)
- Next Tourism Forum will be held on 21 March
- Just under £11m has been secured from the Levelling Up fund for projects within Ruthin and its rural communities (Clwyd West)

### **NWT Eirlys**

- Marketing Activity - producing Group Travel, Great Days Out, Meet North Wales, Bedroom Browser, Museum and Galleries brochure
- Recent exhibitions attending and have attended - Explore GB beginning of March, BTTS end March, Attending 2 M&I Forums to promote the Meetings and Incentive markets, The Meetings Show. Also looking to attend the Corporate Hospitality Show in October
- Working with Menter a Busnes/Cywain on joint meetings for tourism businesses end of March - Meet the Producer event - one in Northwest and one in North East.
- Annual conference will be taking place in June
- Go North Wales Awards took place in November – received 246 applications for 16 categories, link here: <https://youtu.be/B0gNAibV6tc>. Date for this year is 23 November – work already under way and have secured a number of sponsorships already
- Currently NWT are finalising itineraries for marketing the WHS Slate landscape. Just in the process of being translated.
- Also working on a project with Clocaenog Forest Wind Farm on promoting and marketing of the Hiraethog area which includes production of itineraries, production of brochure, podcast etc.
- With support from WCVA North Wales Tourism have been rolling out 4 day Tourism and Hospitality courses for long term unemployed, which have also included the training of 46 Ukrainians. We are hoping to roll these out with the support of DWP. On the back of that and with the Eurovision coming to Liverpool we are doing quite a bit of work on promoting on our social media the closeness of North Wales to Liverpool. Early stages but we are looking to host an evening on the 13 May to celebrate the Eurovision with live screening.
- North Wales Tourism have recently organised 20 workshops for businesses in Conwy on sustainability and extending the season with guest speakers from all over the world. These are now available to access on the trade website for all to view.

- Promotion the windows of the old Marks and Spencer building in Llandudno. As part of the promotion passers-by can scan a QR code on the window which is taken to the NWT website to enter their details for any competition we're running at the time.
- Submitted a regional marketing bid to the Shared Prosperity for North Wales.

MB asked for any comments from NT and IB as private sector members of the Forum.

NT that many would be approaching coming year with trepidation re current economic crisis. The reality is we are seeing steady numbers of visitors, but Easter will be a telling time. On the jobs front more people seem to be applying for jobs in the sector. We are looking to increase our hourly rate to above minimum wage to attract quality applicants.

MB agreed that businesses were under pressure and profits were being squeezed which was causing an issue in re investment.

IB was concerned about some holiday accommodation coming off the market with a noticeable reduction in bed stock. There was still an issue with late booking. IB was pleased to report that there was a launch of a community initiative in Corwen to re-open the Owain Glydwr Hotel taking place today St David's day.

### **3. Update from VW**

#### **Marketing**

CJ gave a presentation on marketing.

NT – engagement seems to be an issue – in Destination Conwy. Workshops could be the way forward. It is difficult to get people engaged. CC agreed that it was difficult to engage with stakeholders digitally. NT stated that in his view it was time to go back to old methods of engagement.

#### **Development**

CC gave an update from the development side of VW

- DM takes over tourism portfolio – Dawn Bowden has now taken over responsibility for the tourism brief. She is very excited about the added responsibility (alongside her existing responsibilities for sport, heritage, culture and creative) and is very keen to meet stakeholders at the earliest opportunity. She will be meeting the four chairs of the regional partnerships shortly. DM will chair next VEF on 06 March.
- Business plan 2023-2024 – we are looking to finalise funding priorities for next financial year with a £10.6m revenue and £5m capital budget. Priorities will include supporting the sustainability of the sector, marketing programme, skills development, grading and cruise development in line with our strategy, Welcome to Wales.
- Brilliant Basics – one programme that we have launched early is BB for the next 2 years, with a £5m fund. We are looking to support small-scale infrastructure improvements in key destinations – the fund was launched last week. The fund is open to LAs and NPSs with maximum grant of £300k available.
- Statutory licensing scheme – Consultation started just before Christmas and will close on 17 March. We are keen for the sector to have their views on shaping the scheme and 300+ responses have been received so far. We'll be looking to publish the consultation outcome shortly (date TBC) and will be presenting options on the way forward to Ministers.

- Tourism levy – the formal consultation ended before Christmas and responses (1500+) are being analysed by Welsh Treasury. Consultation responses and next steps to be confirmed shortly (date TBC). The levy is a mechanism to invest in our communities with discretion for LAs on if and how it is being implemented locally.
- UK Gov Energy Relief Scheme – we know that energy costs are a major issue for the sector at the moment and will increase in April. The WG is doing all it can (business rate relief etc), but with the main levers with UKG we have been calling on them to look again at the sectors (tourism and hospitality) exempted from the higher relief available.
- Wales Tourism Week – date for the diary is w/c 15 May with an event in the Senedd scheduled for Wednesday 17 May. WTA is leading activities.

## Research

PN gave an overview of research

- Consumer demand trackers will be released over the next few months.
- Int passenger survey has re started and this will give us a better insight of what is happening with here.
- Occupancy survey has re started with data soon to be released.
- VW have bought into data on short term lets from a company called 'Transparent' (Air BNB, Booking.com etc) if anyone wants to look at this data prior to publication please get in touch
- We are Launching a residents sentiment survey which is being piloted in Gwynedd .
- Tourism barometer being published in the next few weeks.
- Budgets are tight so looking at working with partners.

## 4. Levelling Up 2<sup>nd</sup> Round Projects

### Gwynedd - Llewyrch o'r Llechi Regeneration Programme

SPJ presented on the levelling up project being delivered in Gwynedd

### Anglesey

TJ updated on the activity taking place in Anglesey and key points include:-

- Total project costs of £22.5m (£17m of levelling up funding)
- Partners include The Ucheldre Centre, Church in Wales St Cybis Church, Holyhead Town Council Newry Beach.
- Aim of the activity is to reduce number of vacant and dilapidated buildings, increase footfall and spend in the town, reduce unemployment, increase access to arts and culture and leisure and diversify the town centre and improve the visitor experience.
- Challenges for Holyhead are limited tourism offer, underutilised and appreciated heritage assets, general dilapidation.
- See additional visit to St Cybis and surrounding areas, 75k additional people experienced the heritage offer, increased tourism spend, 65 additional FT jobs being created.
- Project manager now in place with assistant being appointed shortly.
- Further information can be found at :
  - [Levelling Up Fund: Holyhead bid \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/levelling-up-fund-holyhead-bid)

### Conwy

JK and EE briefed the Forum on the levelling up project for Conwy. Although three projects were submitted for consideration it was the transport/cycling activity that was approved.

## **Denbighshire**

Outline of the Denbighshire project was given by PMcD. Key points include: -

The bid is focused on Protecting Ruthin's Unique Heritage, Wellbeing & Rural Communities. Just under £11m has been secured from the Levelling Up fund for projects within Ruthin and its rural communities.

The application consists of 2 elements which each contain a number of independent but interrelated projects.

**Project 1:** Ruthin's Unique Heritage and Wellbeing: To improve connectivity for walking and cycling in and around Ruthin and complement investment in activities to boost its heritage and cultural value. The interventions proposed focus on public realm enhancements, widening the scope for hosting events and revitalising historical buildings and landmarks to support local identity, promote pride of place and boost the image of the town.

### **The projects to be delivered under Project 1 are:**

- St Peter's square public realm upgrades around the centre of Ruthin with a view to creating a more accessible space.
- Accessibility improvements to St Peter's Church and Cloisters improving its offer to both visitors and residents. (Third Party Project)
- Improvements to the Clock Tower in the Centre of Ruthin.
- Restoration and improved access to Ruthin Gaol.
- Restoration to Nant Clwyd-y-Dre – a Grade 1 listed heritage property in the centre of Ruthin.
- Public Realm upgrade to the park connecting to the heritage theme

**Project 2:** Rural Communities & Wellbeing: To improve the AONB sites of Loggerheads and Moel Famau to attract visitors and accommodate existing visitor demands. New community hubs will be delivered in the rural surrounding villages of Bryneglwys and Gwyddelwern, this will provide new spaces for residents who currently have a lack of opportunities for social engagement and access to services either locally or in Ruthin.

### **The projects to be delivered under Project 2 are:**

- Improved visitor facilities at Moel Famau Country Park. New cycle paths.
- Improvements to the visitor facilities at Loggerheads Country Park.
- Flood management works at Loggerheads Country Park.
- The repurposing of a derelict school building within Bryneglwys creating a much-needed community hub within the village. (Third Party Project)
- New Community hub facility within the village of Gwyddelwern (Third Party Project)

The Council is now actively working to move the projects forward by:

- Developing a Programme Management Framework for the Clwyd West funding to ensure that Denbighshire County Council is able to comply with the grant requirements, UK Government's Monitoring & Assurance Conditions, and audit requirements.
- Contacting the Third-Party projects to explain the next steps and support them to finalise their business cases and project documentation prior to issuing Third Party Funding Agreements.



- Project team requirements have already been identified to progress the Denbighshire County Council projects. The Council are now mobilising these teams and will shortly start to recruit the additional resources necessary to support the delivery of the projects.
- Project teams will then start to develop project plans and over the next couple of months will be in contact with key stakeholders to discuss the projects in more depth.

## 5. TXGB

- TXGB is a system which makes it possible to manage distribution in one place.
- TXGB launched in Australia and has a global network of partners.
- They have supported some great campaigns. They can also provide a wealth of data/analytics to measure the success of campaigns.
- TXGB allows for more bookability through linking live inventory to more booking channels.
- TXGB has been very well received by smaller businesses as it often creates additional opportunities for them and supplements/replaces their existing booking channels.
- TXGB can also support events and they are currently working on World Snooker Tour
- EJ at NWT is the regional contact on TXGB. James Berzins is the contact at TXGB. For any further information please contact [airlys.jones@gonorthwales.org.uk](mailto:airlys.jones@gonorthwales.org.uk) or [support@txgb.co.uk](mailto:support@txgb.co.uk)

## 6. Developing a Rail and Public Transport System that Better Serves the Economy of North Wales

SJ highlighted the link between tourism and transportation and the need for easy links into and around the region. RW from TfW presented on the NW Metro programme and the transformational investment on rail and bus transport in the regions both capital and soft developments.

SJ added the need to look at UK government to help with capital infrastructure development along the NW coast. SJ explained how he works with TfW through the Growth track 360 initiative a partnership of NW Business Leaders in NW & Cheshire and Merseyside along with the LAs – priorities include the upgrading of Chester Station, improving the NW Coast Mainline and increase the rail service on the Wrexham to Bidston line for links to Liverpool. The group also work on improving connectivity with Crew and Warrington to ensure links to HS2. Lobbying is taking place with Westminster for funding for capital projects.

SPJ asked if comms element of the PP slides could be shared with LAs as they would be useful on platforms. MB asked if there could be a set of briefing notes for partners.