

## Notes

### Fforwm Twristiaeth Rhanbarthol / Regional Tourism Forum

06.09.23

Neuadd Reichel, Prifysgol Bangor University

Attendees: Michael Bewick (Chair), Dr Linda Otsi (Bangor University) Andy Godber IOACC, Mike Thomas (IOACC), Anwen Jones (Chair DMP Gwynedd), Sian Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd), Clive Wolfendale (DMP Conwy), Jasmin Ryan (CCBC), Peter McDermott (DCC), Joe Bickerton (Wrexham CBC) Catherine Willaims (WATO), Eirlys Jones (NWT) ,Welsh Treasury - David Greenhough, Elin Morgan, Sarah Furminger, Julie Hanley, Welsh Revenue Authority – Neil Butt, Anthony Pritchard

Visit Wales – Steffan Roberts, Lucy von Weber, Kerry Thatcher, Andrew Forfar

Apologies: Nia Jones (ATA), Jo Smith (Chair DMP Flintshire), Ian Lebbon (Chair DMP Denbighshire), Richard Jones (FCC), Jim Jones (NWT)

1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>MB welcomed everyone to the Forum and noted the changing landscape that the industry is working in at this time. MB gave a vote of thanks to Rob Holt prior to his imminent retirement.</p>
2	<p>Round table update on the summer</p> <p>JB gave an update from the NE counties.</p> <p><b>FLINTSHIRE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Shared Prosperity Fund.</b> Two tourism related applications have received approval. LA project will provide improved connectivity to the coast and countryside incl. improving visibility of county boundary signs and network of tourist signs. Partner agency project will provide a grant key fund for tourism related businesses in Flintshire.</li><li>• <b>FCCs Brilliant Basics Round 3</b> application to develop and improve regionally recognised trails in Flintshire and associated infrastructure was successful.</li><li>• 64K secured from Cadwyn Clwyd by the Flintshire Tourism Association to support wider business support and marketing. A series of films, photography and blogs were produced around the 'Trails' theme and have been shared with the Visit Wales marketing team.</li><li>• <b>Flintshire Tourism Ambassador Scheme</b> launched its first six modules in July. 50 Ambassadors have completed the Silver Award to date.</li><li>• <b>The new Destination Management Plan 2023-2026</b> is scheduled to go to Chief Officer Team in October and then Cabinet in November.</li></ul> <p><b>DENBIGHSHIRE</b></p> <p><b>Shared Prosperity:</b></p>

- Twenty Denbighshire projects have been awarded funding through the SPF.
- Under the theme, Prosperous: Town Centre Improvements and Tourism, projects include:
  - Queens Market Rhyl fund
  - Rhyl promenade regeneration
  - Feasibility study fund
  - Town centre property improvement scheme
- Under the theme, Greener: Community Infrastructure projects include:
  - Bodelwyddan Country Park
  - Destination Management and Tourism Strategy; Additional Summer Resources
  - Green Gates Nature Reserve

#### **Brilliant Basics:**

- Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB (Denbighshire County Council) - £76,640: A Welcoming Loggerheads – access improvements to visitor facilities at Gallery, Mill and Tea Room including replacement seating, interpretation panels and wildlife activity feature.
- Denbighshire County Council - £44,000: Green Lane Car Park, Corwen – to deliver improvements to an existing toilet block to include a fully accessible dementia friendly toilet pod, install a cashless system to operate the doors to the toilets, and have Radar key enabled pods.

#### **Other Points:**

- Tourism Strategy Action Plan agreed June 2023
- Summer campaign to promote Rhyl and Prestatyn during the on-going sea flood defence work undertaken with new on-line Rhyl guide, social media campaign and visitor signage at key arrival points.

#### **WREXHAM**

- £38k from Brilliant Basics for new gateway highway signage
- 50% year on year increase on STEAM data, with 46% across NE Wales and 39% across Nth Wales
- Recent press visits from USA, Australia and Europe leading to articles in the Western Australian news, Nat Geographic and Lonely Planet
- Relaunch of the This is Wrexham Tourism Partnership – 60+ members with £64k Cadwyn Clwyd funding
- New 2023/2024 Wrexham County brochure released this summer with 10k print run and available online at [www.thisiswrexham.co.uk](http://www.thisiswrexham.co.uk)
- Ambassador scheme launched in June 2023 – aim of 1,000 ambassadors in first year
- Working on launch of Welcome to Wrexham documentary next week
- Tour of Britain Stage 2 start & finish this week
- About to launch our SPF scheme with dedicated business grant fund
- LUF continuing at Pontcysyllte with delivery date for all projects as April 2024
- Accommodation stock

SP gave an update from the NW counties

### **Ynys Mon update**

- **Destination Management Plan (DMP)** Has now been adopted by the County Council. Next steps will be creating an Action plan and delivery partnership.
- Brilliant Basics 3 application successful.
  - Work to start on next round of improvements at Beaumaris, Moelfre, Rhosneigr and Traeth Bychan. New facilities including shower facilities, new washrooms and improved appearance
- Smart Towns now operational in the 5 main towns on the island with town centre wifi and data available on patrwm.io
- Also includes other settlements including Traeth Bychan, Rhosneigr
- New visitanglesey website nearing completion
- Cruise ships (this benefits the whole region)
  - Very successful season with more vessels than ever
  - New partnership approach and coordinator appointed by Holyhead town council. Resources needed to safeguard this vital post for the region. This is working well
- Ambassadors
  - Supporting and working with Denbighshire and Artichoke on an Ambassador week to raise awareness and progress further
  - New silver modules now live and videos going up
- Digital App development
  - Stori mon and Dan y Môr apps now both launched earlier this year
  - Positive take up and marketing campaign undertaken
- Menai Suspension bridge restrictions still having an impact
  - Restrictions started this week until 2025 to replace hangers
- LUF progressing with projects in Holyhead
- North Anglesey
  - New directional signage and interpretation has been installed in Amlwch
- SPF Stage 2 applications have been approved (single LA and multi LA applications)
- Freeport development progressing
- Filming requests and activity been positive over summer

### **Gwynedd Update**

Over 200 registered on the **Gwynedd Ambassadors programme**. 9 modules now available since April 2023. Enabling ambassadors to reach gold level of attainment.

Working with Denbighshire on an Ambassadors week to be held in the Autumn.

**A New events fund scheme** announced for spring 2023 & for the summer-autumn 2023 period partially supported through SPF.

Several successful events have taken place in the area over the summer months including the National Eisteddfod held at Boduan on the outskirts of Pwllheli. Which welcomed over 150 thousand visitors to the area

**Smart towns programme** 18 towns throughout the county now with

community WIFI.

**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 year one action plan and monitoring outputs. Shared Prosperity bids presented to fund elements of the priorities identified.

The new strategy and sustainable visitor economy funding package will be launched on the 25 Sept 2023. [Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035 | Visit Snowdonia \(ymweldageryri.info\)](#)  
[Briefing Note 3 Summer 2023.pdf \(visitsnowdonia.info\)](#)

Wales Slate **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.

A successful partner training workshop was undertaken at the National Slate Museum, Llanberis at the end of June 2023.

#### **Brilliant Basics Visit Wales**

Two successful bids presented to draw down Brilliant Basics 2023 – 2024 Round 3 funding to upgrade coastal facilities at Dinas Dinlle and public toilets at key destinations namely Cricieth, Pwllheli, Llanberis and Aberdyfi

#### **Shared Prosperity Fund - Gwynedd**

The first call for UK Common Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) projects in North Wales closed on 24 February 2023. 114 applications were received from applicants wishing to operate in Gwynedd, requiring almost £51 million of Fund funding. Gwynedd's allocation is £24.42 million, so the demand for funding was significantly higher than what is available.

Several successful SPF bids have been submitted to regenerate the area and further develop key town centres. Including

The Business Development Funds, which are supported through the Shared Prosperity Fund: Gwynedd and the Shared Prosperity Fund: [Business Development Funds \(llyw.cymru\)](#) North Wales, are a plan to support Gwynedd businesses to recover and develop, stabilise and prepare for the future

[Town Centre Property Improvement Grant \(llyw.cymru\)](#)

The Town Centre Property Improvement Grant, supported by the Welsh Government Transforming Towns Programme and the Shared Prosperity Fund: Gwynedd and Cyngor Gwynedd has been established to support businesses in town centres and cities to develop and upgrade their properties. Two support options are available: Support for physical improvements to commercial property up to £25,000 and for larger projects, up to £250,000.

#### **Article 4 Direction Notice**

Cyngor Gwynedd have placed an Article 4 Direction notice for the Gwynedd Local Planning Authority Area (which is the area of Gwynedd located outside the Eryri

National Park). The Article 4 Direction (if confirmed) will mean that planning permission will be required to change the use of a residential house (main place of residence) to a use as a second home or short-term holiday accommodation from the 01 September 2024 onwards. Cyngor Gwynedd is holding an engagement period in relation to the proposal up until the 15 September 2023. It is possible to find out more information and submit comments by clicking on this link: [www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/article4](http://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/article4).

### **TRANSPORT: Barmouth Viaduct refurbishment**

Barmouth Viaduct will be closed from 02 September 2023 until 02/03 December 2023, including the closure of the footpath, for the final phase of the viaduct's refurbishment. More information about the closure can be found at [Barmouth Viaduct Autumn 2023 Closure](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/wales/restoring-barmouth-viaduct/)

<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/wales/restoring-barmouth-viaduct/>

Details about the rail replacement bus service, that will operate between Pwllheli and Machynlleth stations, will be available at: <https://tfw.wales/>

### **Conwy update**

- **Brilliant Basics** – 2 successful applications for projects. We were advised we could only take two projects forward to full application due to the fund being oversubscribed. One project will continue the replacement of 3 shelters along Llandudno Promenade and include some refurbishment to the Colonnades. The other project will conduct an audit of fingerpost signage in our four priority towns before removing out of date signage and installing new signage. It will also install destination signage in 4 or 5 priority towns.
- **Shared Prosperity Funding** – 2 successful applications for projects. One project will continue the replacement of the remaining 2 shelters along Llandudno Promenade and include refurbishment at Llandudno Colonnades. This will mean that this project, together with the Brilliant Basics project mentioned above, will see all seven shelters along Llandudno Promenade replaced. The other SPF project is to improve and futureproof the visitor economy and involves a number of initiatives such as winter tourism marketing campaigns, evening economy feasibility study and development of the Conwy Tourism Ambassador Programme.
- **Developed three key funds** via Shared Prosperity Funding including a Business Support Key Fund to provide opportunities for local businesses to access funding for projects. We also have a Community Regeneration Key Fund which should see projects coming through which support the tourism sector.
- **Destination Conwy Destination Management Plan** – revised plan for 2023-2029 due to be taken through democratic process this month.
- **Llandudno 10 Year Regeneration Plan** is also due to go through the democratic process this month.
- Working with Gwynedd and Eryri to become an official partner for the **Sustainable Visitor Economy Strategy 2035**. The signing of the MOU will be taken through our democratic process in the next few months.

- **Conwy Tourism Ambassador Programme** – working with other LAs on Wales Ambassador Week. Planning activity for this. Currently we have 552 bronze ambassadors, 445 silver ambassadors and 346 gold ambassadors.
- Jasmin Ryan was appointed to the role of Tourism and Regeneration Manager in July 2023. We are now in the process of recruiting someone to cover her previous role of Tourism and Regeneration Project Officer. Applications for the post closed on 04 September and we hope to be able to interview in the next couple of weeks.
- **Smart Towns** – looking at installing free Wi-Fi in a number of towns in Conwy County. Currently working with a number of Town Councils to identify support for free Wi-Fi in their respective towns before submitting a funding bid.
- Planning winter tourism campaign to target four of Visit Wales' audiences – couples, dog friendly, older travellers, solo travellers.
- Received STEAM figures for 2022 and encouraging to see that we are nearly back at 2019 levels. The number of staying visitors in Conwy has now reached 2019 levels.
- New Section Head of Marketing has been appointed. We will be working closely with them going forward.

#### **Cross Cutting all 3 Authorities - bidding/ or bids submitted**

- **Arfor 2 funding** – Gwynedd and Ynys Mon, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire £11 million to be made available for communities in four counties with the highest levels of Welsh speakers until March 2025  
<https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/business/funding/arfor/>  
**ARFOR 2** will promote **Llwyddo'n Lleol/Succeed Locally** and **Cymunedau Mentrus/Enterprising Communities Fund** to assist young entrepreneurs.  
 The **Cronfa Her/the ARFOR Challenge Fund** will develop and pilot activities to address the challenges facing the region
- **Levelling up Fund** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-levelling-up-and-community-investments>
- **Regional Bid Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-levelling-up-and-community-investments>

EJ from NWT added

#### **NWT Activity Update:**

- **Tourism Awards** – have finalised all the sponsorship for the event, 19 categories this year and have just confirmed the main act for the evening. The awards will take place on 23 November with closing date for the nominations 09 October.
- **MNW** – attended Meetings Show, London with Meet In Wales and M&I Forum Oslo, Norway in June – both good events for the MICE market. The M&I European flagship forums (Oslo in June and Lake Como in October) include appointments with 40 scheduled buyers on 1-2-1 basis over a 3-

day period, combined with unique networking experience providing the ultimate platform for doing high-quality with vetted event planners, event agencies, corporate planners' associations. Later in the year NWT will be at the Corporate Hospitality Show, Birmingham which is a one-day B2B exhibition for the meetings and events industry and is THE event for Event Planners, Agents, Venue Finders and PA/EAs.

- **Hiraethog Project** – successful with Clocaenog Windfarm funding to promote the Hiraethog area with podcast, brochure, PR, social activity, and itineraries etc. Podcast has already been produced and is going down well. We now have a family of 9 podcasts promoting various aspects of North Wales.
- **Beaver NWT** – A contract awarded by North Wales Wildlife Trust to produce and help promote an Online Tourism Toolkit to help support the tourism sector in Wales as part of the Dyfi Catchment Natural Restoration Project. Work as part of the project includes, podcast, PR activity, leaflet production, business engagement and production of a toolkit.
- **Champerty Delegation** – delegation of top skiers and officials as part of the twinning between Llandudno and Champerty were visiting the area last week and this week – the event has gone down well.
- **Japan** – delegation of 18 students coming over next week to do work experience. They are initially here studying English with the final week of their studies including hands on work experience. Businesses already agreed to engage in the programme include Waterloo Hotel, Plas Menai, Anglesey Sea Zoo and Welsh Mountain Zoo.
- Go North Wales is set to exhibit alongside Himeji City in Japan at the upcoming Castles expo in September. This exciting event will provide NWT with an incredible platform to showcase the remarkable Welsh castles and the extraordinary bond between Conwy, North Wales and Himeji. NWT will be sharing a stand with the team from Himeji City, where we will highlight the rich heritage and cultural exchanges between our two locations.
- Working on building our itineraries bank on our website – we have Build-Your-Own feature on the website but we've also created bespoke ones.
- **TXGB** – Working alongside VW in promoting the benefits of the TXGB platform.
- **Go North Wales QR Competition** – currently running monthly competitions via our QR code through printed flyers and on the windows of the old Marks and Spencer building in Llandudno. Passers-by can scan the QR code and will be taken to our website to enter their details for the competition. Going down well on our social channels.
- **M&S Window** – The whole of the shop frontage of the old M&S site in Llandudno has now been fully branded with Go North Wales visuals promoting the local area and further afield.
- **Working on various campaigns** - Great Days Out Campaign, Attractions Compendium, Year Planner and Dog Friendly campaign
- **Tourism and Hospitality Academy** – been collaborating with various organisations regarding running our Tourism & Hospitality Course which was initially developed as part of the WCVA funding.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Trade engagement</b> – working with WTA and PASC on a survey on how the 182 threshold is impacting their business. Over 1000 responses received to date.</li> <li>• <b>Season feedback</b> – businesses concerned with the impact of quieter July &amp; August than expected and on whether they can get through the winter period.</li> </ul>
3	<p>Update from VW</p> <p>SR updated on development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deputy M announced the intention to bring back the summit, awards and roadshows. Four roadshows will be taking place this autumn and details have been released. The NW Roadshow is on the 18 October in Llangollen. Registration details will be released shortly.</li> <li>• BB projects have been announced and thanks to LA colleagues for mentioning those earlier.</li> <li>• As part of the VEF we agreed to look at the structure and governance and we will discuss this further with member of the VEF later today. The current structure was fine for when the group was established during Covid but we now need to evolve.</li> <li>• We touched on the 20mph policy coming in very shortly on the 17 September. Just to flag we can put you in touch with transport colleagues who are leading on this. Assets are available for sharing on your social media platforms - PLEASE SEE NOTE BELOW</li> <li>• School reform policy we will update</li> <li>• SLS we will update as soon as possible</li> <li>• 182 – still early days so we need to capture- positive and negative feedback and we want to capture that</li> </ul> <p>LvW updated on the marketing activity – slides sent</p> <p>MB asked if VW had seen any negativity on the 20mph policy. LvW stated that on organic social media the response had been more positive than on paid for media. We are making sure people are aware of the changes.</p> <p>SR added that we are picking up comments but like other policy change like the no smoking ban things settle down in time. The change is about being greener and safer</p>
4	<p>Events strategy update</p> <p>RH gave an update on events and noted that an update on the strategy would be made at the future Roadshows in October. Key points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst WG budgets are being scrutinised, the long lead in time for events means that contracts for events 2023/2024 are not affected.</li> <li>• We have events in the diary up to 2030 including the Island Games (Ynys Mon) 2027. However, we are having re assess budgets post 2025.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events Wales recently launched two funds for the sector but these are currently on hold at the moment.</li> <li>• Feed back has been mixed on events this year, weather and cost of living crisis has not helped. Key for NW has been Gotwood, Focus Wales and the Llangollen Int Eisteddfod. Some suppliers have struggled.</li> <li>• Concerts such as the Harry Styles and Beyonce have had an effect as people make choices, choosing global headliners over local events</li> <li>• But we have a lot of events in the pipeline i.e. the 2028 Euros where a decision is imminent</li> <li>• We continue to work with the Events Advisory Group Chaired by Steve Hughson</li> <li>• Many issues that are felt in the tourist sector are the same of the events sector, school holiday reform, 20mph and statutory licensing etc</li> <li>• RH thanks MB for all his input over the last few years Chairing the NW Forum and feeding in to the VEF</li> </ul>
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p>Tourism Levy update and discussion NB from the Wales Revenue Authority (WRA) gave an update on the Tourism Levy – presentation circulated</p> <p>WRA was established in 2017 to administer devolved taxation. It's a non-government body based in Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil. They work closely with the Welsh Treasury Department.</p> <p>The focus to date has been to understand the tourism ecosystem and understand the opportunities and barriers to a future Levy system for Wales. There has been a series of interviews with a range of tourism business across Wales but there have been gaps, in particular large hotels and holiday parks – these will be picked up in the future.</p> <p>Key insights are a system that is easy and simple to use. WRA will continue to work with stakeholders over the next few years as the Levy evolves.</p> <p>CW asked if consideration had been given to introducing a Levy on day visitors. DG stated that whilst this was initially discussed it would be a challenge to implement.</p> <p>P McD asked if the Levy would be ring fenced for the issues relating to tourism – DG stated that this was received during the consultation process. A strong message that the Levy had to go back to the Tourism sector so that needs to be considered as we move forward.</p> <p>MB asked if the LAs had started discussions on how funds would be spent. IOACC stated that they would be discussing this with their DMP in due course.</p>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p>Bangor University New Tourism Degree – presentation circulated</p>

<p>Dr.Linda Otsi updated on the new Tourism Degree at Bangor university. Linda touched on the Tourism Levy situation in Italy and the imminent implantation of a day visitor tax in Venice. Linda is keen to make contact with Welsh businesses, looking for placements for students to come into business to take on a project that will help them. She is also looking for members of the industry to come in and speak with students about the industry.</p>
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