

Nodiadau / Notes

Fforwm Twristiaeth Rhanbarthol / Regional Tourism Forum

09.06.23

Lleoliad/Location: ONLINE

10:30 – 12:30

Present:

Members: Michael Bewick (MB) Sian P Jones (SPJ) , Michael Thomas (MT), Eirlys Jones (EJ), Ioan Gwwilym (IG), Sam Reagan (SR), Elen Edwards (EE), Nigel Treacy (NT), Richard Jones (RJ), Joe Bickerton (JB) Jasmin Ryan (JR)

Guests: Adrian Jones (AJ) Louise Jowett (LJ), Robyn Lovelock (RL), Darryl Shaw (DS), Paul Donavan WATO (PD)

VW: Steffan Roberts (SR), Lucy Von Weber (LvW) Andrew Forfar (AF) Phil Nelson (PN) Shannon

Apologies: Jo Smith, Jim Jones, Berin Jones, Claire Carew

1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>MB welcomed members and guests to the Forum. MB notes that discussions were taking place around registration and positive conversations were also taking place on how the shape of the tourism levy can deliver investment for the sector. MB invited any comments that he could share with the Visitor Economy Forum.</p>
2.	<p>Update from the regions</p> <p>PD gave an update from NE Wales</p> <p>Wrexham:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New brochure and County / city centre maps launching 26 June.• Wrexham Tourism Ambassador Scheme (part of the wider Nth Wales ambassador scheme) launching first bronze modules on 26 June.• £64,000 secured from Cadwyn Clwyd by the This is Wrexham Tourism Partnership to support wider business support / marketing this summer.• Preparations under way for a UK City of Culture 2029 bid with an interim board appointed.• Interest continues with international press trips from abroad scheduled this summer, working in partnership with Lucy and her team at Visit Wales. <p>Flintshire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared Prosperity Fund. Two tourism related applications submitted – one by the Local Authority and another by a Partner Agency. LA project is to provide people

with improved connectivity to our coast and countryside incl. improving visibility of county boundary signs and network of tourist signs. Partner agency application seeks funding to deliver a grant programme / key fund which will be available to tourism related businesses in Flintshire. These bids have not yet been determined by the County Council as the assessment process is still underway (outcome should be known by end of July).

- FCC has submitted a Brilliant Basics Round 3 application to develop and improve regionally recognised trails in Flintshire and associated infrastructure. Awaiting outcome of the application.
- £64K secured from Cadwyn Clwyd by the Flintshire Tourism Association to support wider business support and marketing this summer.
- Flintshire and Wrexham Bedstock Survey completed.
- Flintshire Tourism Ambassador Scheme launching first six modules this month.

Denbighshire:

- Official opening of Corwen Station 02/06/23 as part of Levelling Up Round One Clwyd South
- Opening of Tourist Information Point in Corwen
- £10.95m from the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund (Round 2 Clwyd West) to support the development of 10 projects which are intended to protect Ruthin's unique heritage, support rural communities and well-being. This includes:
- St Peter's Square Ruthin - Denbighshire County Council will be delivering this project. A scheme of public realm improvements to improve pedestrian and traffic flows around the square and to facilitate a more flexible central events space. Project Team currently being established. Consultation will be required for this project – anticipated Autumn 2023. Expected delivery date: March 2025. Further information can be found here <https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/community-and-living/community-development/levelling-up-fund/luf-successful-project-bids-round-2.aspx> about this and all of the other projects
- Campaign to promote Rhyl over the peak summer period in the light of possible disruptions caused by current flood defence work - Rhyl is open for business
- Continued expansion of the Wales Ambassador Scheme (see Wrexham above)
- Destination Partnership 08/03/23, Tourism Forum (80+ businesses) 21/03/23, DM sub-group 20/03/23, DCC Tourism Strategy Group 31/03/23 maintains coordinated approach to tourism across county.
- New series of visitor maps launched including attractions with very positive feedback from the trade and VW. Llangollen Railway plan to use attractions map to create visitor signs at their stations in Corwen and Llangollen. Maps are available on-line and attractions maps are available in print as well.
- New Discover Denbighshire by Trails printed brochure launched in April 2023
- Learning journey 7/6/23 (includes Llangollen Railway) with Flintshire County Council
- Wales by Trails: 3 films completed so far – Dark Skies, Winter and breath-taking trails.

MT gave an update from NW Wales

Conwy update

- Two shelters along Llandudno Promenade have recently been replaced via Brilliant Basics Funding. A press release has been published and we are now submitting further bids to replace the remaining shelters.

- New signage has been installed for the Llandudno Town Trail. This is a heritage trail which encourages visitors to engage with the town's heritage. We are in the process of applying for funding to be able to develop a leaflet to go alongside this.
- Destination Conwy is currently in the process of revising the Destination Management Plan. A final draft has been shared and is booked in to go through our democratic process in September.
- The Llandudno 10 Year Regeneration Plan will also go through the democratic process in September.
- Wales Food and Drink Awards were held in Venue Cymru last month. There were x3 Conwy winners and a number of North Wales winners.
- Conwy Tourism Ambassador Programme – currently have 340 gold ambassadors, 437 silver ambassadors and 541 bronze ambassadors.
- A number of SPF bids have been submitted in order to regenerate the area. Deadline for submission is today – waiting to hear outcome.
- X2 Brilliant Basics applications have been submitted – waiting to hear outcome.
- The installation of Cisco Meraki access points in Llandudno has now been completed and we have seamless coverage from Broadway Boulevard up to the Empire Hotel. Signs advertising the free WiFi have been installed throughout the area.
- The old M&S Building in Llandudno has secured £250,000 Transforming Towns funding to remove asbestos from the building.
- Attended the statutory licensing stakeholder consultation event last month in The Hilton in Dolgarrog.
- 980 new social media followers across Visit Conwy Social Media channels (Jan 2023 – May 2023)
- Website views for January to May 2023 are up by nearly 8,000 views for the same period last year. Total website views for Jan to May 2023 is 408,831.
- New destination video created and is displayed at the Victoria Centre and the Visit Conwy website.
- July Visit Conwy newsletter planned, with subscribers currently at just under 14,000.
- Fflecsi bus service working really well in Conwy. Was used as a pilot and now used by lots of people, particularly in rural areas.

Gwynedd update

- Marketing, Gwynedd Ambassadors Programme and Events
- Seen an increase of 7% in social media interaction during 2022/23 and a 37% increase in Instagram followers.
- Over 200 registered on the Gwynedd Ambassadors programme. 9 modules now available since April 2023. Enabling ambassadors to reach gold level of attainment.
- 22 events supported through the Gwynedd Events support Programme 22/23 – approx. £5.8m value to the local economy with over 99,500 attending the events.
- A New events funding scheme announced for 2023 supported through SPF.
- A number of successful events already taken place e.g. Gŵyl Fwyd in Caernarfon and competitors from 63 nations competed in the Ultra Trail Snowdonia part of the UTMB World Series.
- Work is well on its way to welcome the Eisteddfod to the Llyn and Eifonydd area in August. The event will be held at Boduan on the outskirts of Pwllheli

- Smart towns programme 18 towns throughout the county now with community WIFI.
- Business Support, Gwaith Gwynedd & SPF and Arfor 2 funding packages
- Gwaith Gwynedd conducting a number of jobs fairs in 2023 at Rheilffordd Ffestiniog Caernarfon /M sparc 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.
- Business support
- Business drop-in sessions arranged and a Gwynedd Business day held in May 2023.
- Shared Prosperity Fund
- A number of SPF bids submitted to regenerate the area and further develop key town centres. (Awaiting confirmation on outcome)
- A new Gwynedd Business support package will be announced shortly funded through the SPF programme. Funding available until December 2024.
- ARFOR 2 ARFOR 2 is a £11 million programme from the Welsh Government, supporting various work streams across Gwynedd, Ynys Môn, Ceredigion, and Carmarthenshire until March 2025.
- ARFOR 2 will promote Llwyddo'n Lleol (Succeed Locally) and Cymunedau Mentrus (Enterprising Communities Fund) to assist young entrepreneurs and Welsh-speaking spaces.
- The Cronfa Her (the ARFOR Challenge Fund) will develop and pilot activities to address the challenges facing the region
- A new Tourism management course will be offered through Bangor University from Sept 23.
- Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable tourism strategy 2035 – The new strategy was approved by the Gwynedd Council Cabinet on the 14/2/23 and by the Snowdonia National Park Authority board 7/2/23.
- 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
- The new strategy and sustainable visitor economy funding package will be launched after the main summer holiday period at the end of Sept 2023. Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035 | Visit Snowdonia (ymweldageryri.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 partner training workshop being undertaken at the National Slate Museum at the end of June 2023.
- Brilliant Basics Visit Wales - Two schemes funded in round 2 - Investment in visitor infrastructure at Parc Padarn Llanberis and the Arosfan Scheme (Aires pilot) currently being finalised.
- 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.

- 4 Aires (locations for motor homes to park overnight) will be rolled out at Council owned town centre car parks at Criccieth, Pwllheli, Caernarfon, Llanberis.
- Two bids presented for consideration for Brilliant Basics 2023 – 2024 round 3 of funding to upgrade coastal facilities and public toilets at key destinations.
- New bus Services announced for the Sherpa area, Llyn (Fflecsi) and Ogwen
- Sherpa'r Wyddfa | Snowdon Sherpa | a network of connecting buses to get you around Eryri National Park | Snowdonia National Park (sherparwyddfa.wales)
- Home - Transport For Wales (fflecsi.wales) Ffeil (llyw.cymru)

Ynys Mon update

- Destination Management Plan (DMP) Consultation period ends at 1700 today (09 June) the draft report has been through the Authorities processes and the next steps will be developing a detailed action plan and partnership. This coincides and aligns with a new Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Plan (AONB) also out for consultation. These 2 plans will dovetail, aligning with the corporate plan to ensure synergies and have sustainability at their core
- Phase 1 Brilliant Basics completed on time and to budget. New facilities in Trearddur Bay, Porth Dafarch, Porth Swtan and Benllech including shower facilities, new washrooms and improved appearance
- Smart Towns now in 5 main towns on the island with town centre wifi and data available on patrwm.io
- Digital
 - New visitanglesey website nearing completion due to launch in Summer
 - New newsletter being rolled out for summer
 - Cruise ships (this benefits the whole region)
 - New partnership approach and coordinator appointed by Holyhead town council. Resources needed to safeguard this vital post for the region
 - Visitor welcome now moved to within the terminal building
 - 1st Cunard vessel visited 4th June with Minister, council leader and Mayor welcoming the captain and vessel
 - 44 vessels now arriving in 2023
- Tourism Attractor Destination
 - Project coming to a close with a number of key improvements
 - New visitor centre breakwater park
 - New signage and interpretation throughout Holyhead
 - Demolition of eyesore buildings
- Events
 - A number of new high profile events taking place, along with changes to locations and set ups
 - The Authority has shown its support for the Urdd Eisteddfod on Anglesey in 2026 and Island Games in 2027
 - Welsh Government is Supporting Gottwood festival happening this weekend
- Ambassadors (CRF)
 - Launched earlier this year
 - 40 people have now completed Bronze level
- Stori Mon App (CRF)
 - Launched earlier this year
 - Positive take up and marketing campaign undertaken

- Menai Suspension bridge restrictions still having an impact with further works scheduled and test traffic signals this week.

•LUF progressing with projects in Holyhead

- North Anglesey
- New directional signage and interpretation being installed in Amlwch (imminent)
- Funding secured for footfall counters within the region (will support usage stats at washrooms and facilities)

New Funding Applications:

- Application submitted for Brilliant basics 3 for 4 additional toilets (Beaumaris, Rhosenigr, Traeth Bychan and Moelfre)
- SPF Stage 2 applications have been invited (single LA and multi LA applications) clearly noted that all project proposals need to bring the costs down – submissions due in later this month. Award decision expected around August.

MB noted that there was a lot happening in the region and was pleased to hear that the ambassador schemes were developing.

PD from WATO gave an update on Adventure Smart and the Adventure Activities Assurance scheme. PD update on the business toolkit and assets that has been developed through Adventure Smart please see link here <https://www.adventuresmart.uk/toolkit/> designed with tourism hospitality businesses in mind to give businesses confidence in having conversations with guests about how to keep safe in the outdoors. PD encouraged businesses to use the assets in line with the guidelines in their marketing. If anyone (business or LA) wants to become a partner, please contact PD or Emma Edwards Jones at Snowdonia Active

Since 2013 WATO has worked closely with VW on the Adventure Activities Assurance Scheme and this has recently been updated and the full information can be found here <https://businesswales.gov.wales/tourism/aaas-homepage>

MB noted that many of his guests were looking for outdoor/adventure experiences. He went on to ask about influencers whose messages were all about self-led adventures and it was agreed that this is an important initiative to ensure they produce safe content.

EJ from NWT stated that things were uncertain, challenging. Some members were doing well but others were struggling. The policy changes were causing uncertainty with stakeholders.

As time was running short an update from Eryri National Park is included as an Appendix.

3. **Update from VW**

LVW gave update on VW marketing (PDF circulated)

Main points covered include: -

- Research
- Sentiment tracker
- Travel Trade
- Marketing and Llwybrau Campaign
- Stakeholder assets

SR gave an update on VW development.

Tourism Tax

- This is currently at policy development stage. Welsh Treasury will meet with officials from local authorities in the coming weeks to discuss the practicalities of implementing the levy.
- As you know, the Government intends to introduce the bill to the Senedd for scrutiny within this Senedd term.
- Scottish Government have recently introduced their legislation for a similar visitor levy in Scotland, it will also be discretionary for local authorities and would apply to people staying overnight in paid-for accommodation.
- Recently, the Wales Revenue Authority (WRA) began conducting research on behalf of Welsh Ministers on the implementation of the Visitor Levy. The objective is to understand how accommodation providers currently operate and inform how the levy will work in practice. Many thanks for those who are helping the WRA. Following this the research team will be sharing insights and recommendations. There might be need for subsequent user research to delve deeper into the details, and further down the line, to test prototypes with users.

20mph

On 17 September 2023, the Welsh Government will introduce a default 20mph speed limit on restricted roads across Wales <https://www.gov.wales/introducing-default-20mph-speed-limits>

Statutory Licensing

- The consultation on the statutory licensing scheme for all visitor accommodation providers in Wales closed in March 2023 with over 1,500 responses received.
- These responses are currently being independently analysed, with a final report due w/c 26 June 2023.
- The report will be published in July 2023.
- Three independently facilitated stakeholder events were held in May 2023 to gather further detailed evidence and insight on the proposals and the delivery of certain elements of the scheme. A big thank you to the forum members that joined the meetings last week, to help shape the policy
- A further meeting was held with Local Authority Public Protection leads on 01 June 2023 to discuss these elements as well as potential delivery model for the scheme.

School Reform

The Welsh Government is committed to exploring reform of the school year.

This work is a Programme for Government commitment and is being carried out in collaboration, as part of the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru.

The current school year was designed for different times, therefore, the Welsh Government are looking at ways in which the school calendar could help improve learner progression and attainment, address disadvantage, reduce educational inequalities, support learner and staff wellbeing, and better align with modern life.

As previously shared, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language has committed to a formal consultation regarding the structure of the school year. The Minister also confirmed that the overall number of holiday weeks would not be reduced and the summer break will be no less than four weeks.

It is important to note that the consultation has not yet begun and any decision following the consultation would have at least a 12-18-month implementation period as we recognise concerns from various sectors about needing a suitably long lead in time.

As this work progresses we are continuing to develop the policy and evidence base. Currently we are undertaking research with staff, learners, their families and others on experiences of, and perceptions on, the current school calendar in Wales, and how it supports learning and wellbeing.

While school year reform is an educational policy, we recognise that any changes to the school year structure could impact wider sectors, including tourism. Therefore, the Welsh Government is committed to reviewing all evidence, and listening to all views, before making any decisions. With this in mind, we would very much like to engage with you during the consultation both directly and through our policy colleagues in the Welsh Government.

Additional updates regarding school year reform can be found on the webpage: <https://www.gov.wales/reform-school-year>

Industry Engagement

Since the pandemic we have entered into a new way of hybrid working and throughout the pandemic we maintained regular contact with the industry through webinars and our industry newsletter which we doubled in size to a database of 20,000. We also formed the Visitor Economy Forum as a platform for our Minister to stay informed with the Fora Chairs and other key bodies. Moving forward we have recognised that we need an improved industry web-site as a one stop shop and one of our priorities for this year is to re-locate and update our tourism industry web-site. Our current pages sit on Business Wales, but we'll be moving over to have an industry section on Visitwales.com and looking to have the first phase complete by the autumn.

In addition to our on-line presence, we'll be returning to in-person events. This will include four regional roadshows in October 2023 and then 2025 so roadshows will be biennial. In 2024 we will return to the National Tourism Awards and one national conference and then repeat the sequence in future years.

Next steps will be to release dates for the in-person roadshows in October and myself and a small team will meet with the partners / LA's re: coordinating the awards.

A discussion took place around the 20MPH

It was noted that the industry was concerned and anxious around issues such as; 'fit and proper person tests and licensing -v- registration when talking about statutory licensing. SR stated that WG were currently analysing the consultation process we are not at a stage to say what the scheme will look like. Some of the questions explored during the consultation

	<p>such as the fit and proper person test were there to stimulate discussion and something we need to explore.</p> <p>NT noted that there was a lot of mixed feelings about the 20 mph policy coming into force and wanted to know if WG were going to be communicating the positive greener and safety benefits to visitors who may be put off visiting, greener etc. LvW - VW would be communicating through the Newsletter to stakeholders. Transport colleagues were preparing material and that will also be shared at the right time.</p>
4	<p>Update from The Ambition Board - Robyn Lovelock</p> <p>RB gave a comprehensive update on the Growth Deal. Which – see PP circulated</p> <p>RL added that they were looking to launch an £11m call for projects from businesses that were ready to go on de carbonisation activity and more information would be released in due course.</p> <p>MB asked when the Tourism Talent Network would see its first cohort graduating into the industry. Still on track for project approval for end of the year early 2024. Currently working hard to move things forward with individual partners.</p>
5..	<p>Zip World Strategic Growth & International Visitor Levy Perspectives - Adrian Jones</p> <p>See PP circulated.</p> <p>LvW was excited to hear about the direction of ZW and the way in which the company was taking forward short break and hotel development. A future meeting with VW colleagues would be good.</p> <p>MB echoed this and welcomed the open approach to data that ZW were instigating.</p>
6.	<p>Sustainability in the accommodation sector: Case study from the Llandudno Bay Hotel (Eventbrite Hotels) - Darryl Shaw</p> <p>See PP circulated.</p> <p>An inspiring presentation on sustainability and how Eventbrite Hotels are taking on the challenges of rising utility costs and facing the challenges.</p>

APPENDIX

Update from ENP received following the Forum.

- We're in full swing with our 2023 visitor season campaign. We've provided our Eryri Ambassadors with custom graphics with their logo on them and accompanying text to post on their channels on 20 different topics such as wild camping, shopping locally, public transport and so on. (Starting to throw ideas around about next year already with Gwynedd council on our Visitor Economy partnership).
- We're running a Vlog competition on sustainable tourism with Patagonia vouchers to be won any sharing of this would be appreciated if relevant – <https://snowdonia.gov.wales/visit/plan-your-visit/2023-eryri-vlog-competition/>
- We've got a new Visiting Guides section on our website on sustainability with articles such as how to visit Yr Wyddfa by public transport etc - <https://snowdonia.gov.wales/visit/plan-your-visit/guides/>
- We've got an exciting campaign as part of our Plastic Free Yr Wyddfa Project coming up at the end of the month where we dressed social influencers as Mabinogion characters interacting with pieces of litter. So we're going to go full on with this one with new Instagram channels for the characters, press release, social media and a music video! Bit different but will update more in the next meeting.
- Fly camping seems to be a bit of an increasing problem in some areas at the moment so looking to put out some content around that issue.
- Parking issues around the Ogwen valley have seemed to calm down since Easter, although there are double yellows going down at Nant Gwynant over the summer as well which is a problematic area in terms of parking capacity, we're anticipating some backlash and negative press here.
- We have campervan leaflets and dispensers going in at various sites this week with do's and don'ts a map of official campsite and QR codes for more information on our website.
- EV Charging in 4 national park authority car parks (Morfa Mawddach, Penmaenpool, Ysgwrn and Cwellyn)
- Full Staff capacity in all Tourist Information Centres (Betws y Coed, Aberdyfi & Beddgelert) for the first time since pre-covid
- And our Wyddfa Volunteer Wardens have been shortlisted for the 'Changemaker Award' by the Campaign for National Parks so when that's published any support in promoting them would be great as well!