

## Meeting (10) of Tourism Group – 10:30, Friday, 29 May 2020

### Participants:

Deputy Minister, CST	WG	Stephen Jones	WLGA
Jason Thomas - Director	WG	Paula Ellis	SW Forum Chair
Rob Holt	WG	Phillipa George	SE Forum Chair
Lucy von Weber	WG	Sean Taylor	UK TIC Rep
Rhidian Morgan	WG	Anthony Rosser	UK Hospitality C
Jo Corke	WG	Dave Chapman	UK Hospitality C
Ian Edwards	VB Board rep	Michael Bewick	North Forum Chair
Andrew Campbell	WTA	Steve Hughson	MW Forum Chair

**Apologies:** Adrian Greason-Walker, WTA

**Version: DRAFT**

### Main points of meeting

#### 1. Deputy Minister points:

~The DM welcomed all to the meeting and provided feedback from his recent meeting with the UK/Devolved Administration Tourism Ministers. The relationship between the UK and the other nations in terms of tourism was collaborative with a good understanding of the needs and in particular the concerns of the sector across 4 Nations including long term support measures, 2m v 1m discussions and details of furlough changes. The understanding of the mutual concerns was deepening which helped to strengthen Wales's position.

#### 2. Updates:

~ **Jason Thomas** updated members on the media reports that morning regarding the First Ministers' announcement regarding the 21-day review. The media were trailing a change in messaging from "stay at home" to "stay local" (5-mile radius). The group pressed hard on what would be said around Tourism and JT stated that as opening accommodation without shared facilities was in the amber zone, it would not feature in today's announcement. It was important to carry on with preparation of guidance/protocols and continue to work together so that the industry could be ready to go when appropriate.

~JT provided feedback from the regional forums where there were strong calls for dates to be included in the roadmap. The WG position on not giving dates had not changed and all decisions would continue to be made on public health grounds. The Minister supported this. JT asked for comments on any concerns – these were as follows:

~**Stephen Jones** would need to leave the meeting early but wanted to say that LAs were supportive of the proposed guidance and working with the sector but many local communities remained extremely concerned about the return of any visitors. RH noted this had been reflected very strongly in his discussions with LA leaders and CEO's in the last week particularly in the western authorities which contain many of our key tourism hotspots. The strength of concerns in those areas must not be underestimated and urgent dialogue was required to facilitate the safe return of any Tourism this season. SJ's update would be circulated with the minutes.

~**Dave Chapman** said there was considerable concern that if Tourism in the other home nations were allowed to return sooner than Wales and did well then the Chancellor would not see the need for continued support for the sector. This would have a devastating impact on the sector and on employment across Wales given Tourism's role as a Foundation sector. He fully understood the community concerns but many of those communities would bear the brunt of the potential job losses and there would be wider community impacts where, for example, the tourism offer was the bedrock of some towns and villages.

~JT said that the next 3 weeks were critical and we would need to be prepared and have our guidance ready for when conditions were right to reopen.

~DC said that the latest survey results had confirmed that all of the sector was suffering – he made the point that if the 2M distance continued to be the ruling then hospitality could open at 30% capacity to keep people safe. If it changed to 1M then they could operate at 70-75%

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capacity which would make a world of difference to businesses. JT said that this type of analytical detail was most valuable and asked for a copy. The DM added that he understood that the ROI was looking at 1M distancing and the issue had been raised with UK Gvt but any decision had to be based on the science.

~**Ian Edwards** reflected the strong views that he was hearing from the industry in Wales that it was not acceptable to not have dates in the roadmap particularly as England were working to 4 July and Scotland looking at potentially 9 July he understood. IE shared the absolute desire to ensure a safe return when the science allowed but the industry needed hope and something to work to and if dates fell then so be it but businesses needed to plan, forecast and manage their business. Parity across the nations and within Wales. The DM noted that the R figure in Wales was hovering precariously between 0.7 and 0.9 in Wales so there was little room for manoeuvre at present. The group noted that but pointed out that it was similar in England but they had a target dated and it was reasonable to expect that we would be in-step with the other UK Nations.

~JT said that the recent forum meetings reflected this point of view and that these issues were known and understood and the significant reservations were noted.

~**Rob Holt** reiterated that it was vital that local communities and the tourism industry worked together and there were real concerns around the scenes from England and a managed recovery was vital. Another key message from the industry was that the worst thing that could happen was for Tourism to re-open and then have to close again because of a spike in the R rate, this would cost businesses more money and the almost inevitable loss of any summer season.

~IE understood this, but said that businesses were dying – without a summer season and/or longer term support most would not survive and he wanted the hospitality industry across Wales to survive – but currently it was in deep trouble.

~All members of the group supported the call for target dates and called on the DM and officials to feed the concerns in to WG.

~ **Michael Bewick** said that the feedback from N Wales agreed that the industry was cross about the “no dates” issue and was calling for these. MB also said that there was a feeling by some that LAs were not necessarily reflecting the views of grass-root communities where tourism was vital to the well-being of the community, they were instead responding to fear rather than with positive messaging. The balance was not right. MB also indicated significant views in North Wales from animal attractions in terms of funding. RH was aware of the concerns and was aware that a number of animal attractions across Wales had secured ERF. However further discussions were being held with veterinary health colleagues the following week.

~**Steve Hughson, Philippa George and Paula Ellis** all supported the call for dates from their Regional perspectives. Paula made clear that many in the industry in the S West had raised the issue with her at the Forum and outside it.

~**Anthony Rosser** agreed with the points others had made and referred to 7 hotels in Llandudno who were putting up the boards, with others considering similar action. AR believed these closures would happen right across Wales if there was no summer season and/or long term support at a UK and Wales level.

~ **Andrew Campbell** too supported IE's words and said that there was growing frustration amongst WTA members who also endorsed the need for dates. Members had also been asking for additional notice time, as some businesses needed more than three weeks. Businesses needed hope and confidence and the inclusion of dates would help with the mental health, direction and hope of business owners.

~AC went on to say that in engaging with communities, Wales Tourism Week, scheduled for the end of June, would present a good opportunity to allay community fears and as such he asked colleagues to help with messaging and support.

~**Sean Taylor** said that the tone of the discussion had changed today with survival being the key word. ST was aware of the all the caveats and what a tight rope we walked, but similar businesses in England were not suffering, in that they faced similar challenges with communities but would be open by 4 July. Highly likely that business would be lost to

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England. Around 400 of his employees could be made redundant if businesses did open in July or August. Businesses would need to rebuild from scratch if they did not. Wales was out of step. He emphasised the importance of staff in this context both in keeping them safe and of staff acting as advocates in the local community.

- **Dave Chapman** noted that many of his members were pressing for 6 weeks lead in not 3 weeks. RH said that a minimum 3 weeks notice was likely to be given and some businesses believed this would be enough but others might need to take longer.

- All agreed that the SD rules would be the key factor in whether businesses could open at all in terms of commercial viability.

~JT posed the question that if, at the next 3-week review period, it was signalled that the amber zone was in sight and self-catering and accommodation with non-shared facilities could prepare to reopen with social-distancing measures, bringing us in line with the other UK nations, would this address industry concerns? It was agreed that it would help as it would provide some additional confidence.

~the DM said he was hearing this loud and clear and the strength of feeling about this would be fed in. The DM said that he met the First Minister on a daily basis and he would provide him, MIRWL and others with a full update on the strength of feeling from the meeting. The group noted their faith in the DM that he would do this which is why the points had been made so robustly.

~ The importance of working with local community representatives of the next 3-6 weeks was noted and RH would brief Stephen Jones regarding the views and JT suggestion that that we invite some of the LA CEOs to a meeting to discuss engaging with communities.

### **Other points:**

~The WTA and Historic Housing Association had also written to the DM about some of these points. JT said that, similarly to golf courses, parks and gardens had not been ordered to close but that would be checked.

~AR raised the 5 mile rule which had been trailed in the media and how it would be applied. The nearest shop from Lake Vyrnwy was 9 miles away. The DM said that "local" in some areas of Wales was very different from the intended meaning. RH said that there would be guidance to accompany the new rules.

~**Steve Hughson** presented all of the points in the Mid Wales paper which had been circulated. He also asked whether VW could provide assistance with marketing toolkits for help with central messaging.

### **3. Protocols Guidance:**

~JT thanked all for helping with the guidance on which the UKH and WTA were taking the lead in developing and which had been circulated. Meetings between UKH, WTA and VW were ongoing and consultation with the industry would need to take place via the forums in the form of webinars.

~JT asked the group to consider the documents and identify any gaps ASAP. JT also said that cultural heritage colleagues were also developing guidance in this space and NRW were leading on outdoor guidance. The work had emphasised the cross cutting nature of and Tourism officials were doing all they could to feed into as much guidance as possible across the piece - e.g. zoos – but if anyone had any particular thoughts to let us know.

~DC said that drafting of the detailed guidance was progressing well – it needed overarching guidance from WG on public health and safe staff return, and the industry would inform itself on risk assessment. EHOs would implement the guidelines. The WLGA wanted them to be positive and provide an advisory role rather enforcing – there would be an expectation that the industry would act responsibly and follow best practice.

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~AC endorsed DC's comments and said that the self-catering guidance was almost completed and good feedback had been provided by VW. WTA was pleased to get to this point and to have made a good contribution.

~ The taskforces were up and running and Sean Taylor and Rob Holt were part of the one for the visitor economy. England was looking to publish its guidance on 13 June i.e. 3 weeks before the 4 July.

~RH gave an update on the "Good to go" standard (the Kitemark as was). RH had been in and out of meetings with the other "Visits" on this all week. Details of costs were awaited and hopefully there would be more detail next week to share with the industry.

~JT thanked all for the guidance and said that the closer it was to being ready would help make the case for the sector – we could say confidently that the industry was ready to go.

~ **Philippa George** gave a further update from the SE forum emphasising again the call for dates and noting it was also important to work with LAs on all the planning issues which needed to be addressed early. RH said discussions were ongoing with WLGA, planning etc re opening Holiday Parks longer. Closing roads for restaurants etc.

~**Paula Ellis** also emphasised the concerns in the S West around no dates in the plan. One of the key questions being raised with her was from businesses in considering whether they should apply for second phase ERF funding, she was receiving queries from people who had not heard the outcome of their first phase applications. RM said that Phase 1 would be completely resolved before phase 2 applications were due and businesses should apply regardless. PE asked for this clear separation to be made clear in the minutes and the next newsletter. RM said that some businesses had not yet come back to confirm acceptance. The Phase 2 ERF eligibility checker would go live on 8 June and full applications due on 29 June. RH added that the LA fund would close on 30 June. We continued to feed in on any gaps but not all could be plugged.

~PE asked for reassurance that the guidance, when received was something which they could use. PE also raised the misconception of allowing 72 hours between occupancy of self-catering accommodation – this was only the case when Covid-19 has been detected in a property, and not a day to day requirement. This needed to be flagged as a problem and better communicated.

~PE also asked for an update on the skills gap as many were changing occupation to join other industries. RH was hoping to set up a skills partnership meeting shortly.

~PE was also keen to know what support WG and others could offer for a St David's Day bank holiday to provide a PR platform to relaunch the 2021 season at the earliest opportunity.

~ PE emphasised how industrious the role of chair had become and asked that the Chairs be kept informed of any key communications with stakeholders in their area. The DM said that PE was a valued colleague and the Forums chairs' role were vital, and the feedback from the forums and the other stakeholders on the group was vital in informing decision making.

~In terms of ERF, AR made the point that the terms and conditions of the ERF grant were strict on maintaining jobs and this was a concern. The concern was understood by RM and there needed to be a balance, public funding needed to be safeguarded and a pragmatic approach to saving businesses in the medium to long term.

DM and JT thanked all for the challenging but constructive discussion, and for their continued input.

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4. **Next meeting: 5 June at 10:30am.** Members asked for written updates by 5pm on Thursday, 4 June.

Alyson Burke  
30 May 2020