

Meeting (14) of Tourism Group – 10:30, Friday, 26 June 2020

Participants:

Minister International Relations & Welsh Lang	WG	Adrian Greason-Walker	WTA
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: WTA; Rhidian Morgan, WG

Version: AGREED

Main points of meeting

1. Opening comments from Ministers and Jason Thomas:

The **Deputy Minister** thanked Paula Ellis, Andrew Campbell and Sean Taylor for their supportive comments about WG handling of the impact of the current public health crisis on Tourism on *Eye on Wales* earlier in the week.

Jason Thomas agreed the comments were deeply appreciated and he gave a synopsis of the what had happened over the last week which included a signal that holiday accommodation without shared facilities could open on 13 July; a rapid review had been announced on hospitality and the Minister IRWL was to lead on that; the definitions of outdoor and indoor attractions were being looked at; guidance was being finessed and finalised – everyone was working hard to get it all done.

The **Minister** thanked all for their hard work and hoped that colleagues had been given some comfort following the FM's announcement last Friday. Various pieces of work were ongoing: a way of allowing a return for tourer caravans was being worked through, and camping would also be considered. It was hoped that the guidance could issue later that day which would allow the sector a good opportunity to read it through and prepare. There were now detailed discussions taking place on a broad range of issues in terms the rapid review of hospitality – including around licensing, planning, enforcement. The Minister also explained more about the definitions of attractions and how, once evidence was assembled, the CMO would need to clarify what was possible and when.

2. Comments from the Sector

The **Minister** asked the group what had been the response to the FM's announcement last week? The responses were as follows:

-**Sean Taylor** – it had been a “massive” week for ZipWorld and other outdoor attractions, bringing people back from furlough, lots of calls, interviews and contacting existing customers to give them a 48hour notice of reopening bookings. 300 staff had undergone training and it had all been very positive including further engagement with the community to build confidence. ST was continuing in his role as joint chair of WAVA which had now settled into a worthwhile group all pulling in the same direction. ST asked whether the DM would consider meeting WAVA again – the DM agreed to this. There was a little divide between indoor and outdoor attractions; it was complicated but WAVA members were beginning to recognise that a slower, steady approach was sensible.

Meeting (14) of Tourism Group – 10:30, Friday, 26 June 2020

-JT said that clarity would be sought with DCMS as to what was opening in terms of attractions – the England regulations were more prescriptive than ours and the other home nations.

-Ian Edwards – Was pleased that part of the economy was to be reignited and whilst he understood there were complex issues such as bars taking over pavements etc. we needed to push on for the sake of competitive businesses and to protect jobs in the hospitality sector. As things currently stood hospitality businesses would lose a great many people. Bookings were trickling in and CMR was doing “Restaurant in your Room” but they were now becoming competitively disadvantaged as Wales was so far behind, England, Scotland the N. Ireland. Golf was back – but that was limited to two balls.

-JT said that WG did not think for a moment that it was “job done” – there was still much to do.

-Dave Chapman – was worried about lifting the travel restriction on 6 July which would allow people to go anywhere, but with no cafes, bars and restaurants for them to be able to use – instead they would bring their own food and drink and leave litter everywhere, be sat in places they shouldn’t be, littering and using inappropriate behaviour if public toilets weren’t available. If the hospitality sector could re-open all this would be policed, people would have somewhere to go and these problems would not exist.

-Anthony Rosser – said there was confusion as there was no commonality of opening dates between the UK nations. However 70% (404) of smaller hotels in Wales intended to open on a room service basis on 13 July, and 80% of businesses had already carried out their risk assessments. AR also reported problems of litter on beaches at Saundersfoot and Llandudno – supermarkets had run out of beer and there was no sanitation. The industry could “police” instances like this if it were open. AR referred to the scenes at Bournemouth where crowds were so dense that an emergency was declared. The hospitality sector could mitigate the coming problem for Wales.

-JT said that WG was acutely aware of the possibility of similar problems come 6 July if it was not managed properly. LAs too were understandably nervous, especially in the light of click and collect takeaways of beer and food. JT said that all this made it even more important that we got the rapid review right –it was complex but we were working apace.

-the DM gave an assurance that all that was being expressed would be told to the FM so that he could consider fully.

Paula Ellis – Paula Ellis – said that the independent hotels were disappointed and despite lobbying hard, they were not going to open unless they could open their bars and restaurants too. Most would continue with furlough until end of July and then open at the point where they would have to pay in more as employers.

-JT said that VW’s message was still “Visit Wales. Later” but was conscious that not all would see this. We would obviously need to start changing messaging soon in preparation for these date – perhaps “Visit Wales. Safely” – a brand message that others could use and working closely with the blue light services. JT also added that LAs would take a hard line on those flouting the law.

-Michael Bewick – was very happy with the FM’s announcement and glamping sales were going well. MB too had concerns around the week 6-13 July but was aware that WG and LAs were working to ensure that things worked as smoothly as possible with regards to toilets and car parks etc.

-There were also positive noises from the self-catering sector and people were getting on board with Good to Go/Barod Amdani. However, there was still some anger from indoor attractions and touring caravan parks.

Meeting (14) of Tourism Group – 10:30, Friday, 26 June 2020

-**Steve Hughson** – said that enforcement was a national issue – UK and Wales and should be co-ordinated across all 4 Police forces and they should form the response for the hotspots – with WG and the media backing-up the messaging. RH ran through the preparation around public amenities and arrangements being put in place with LAs and other authorities.

- **Andrew Campbell** – in the main people were happy with the FM's announcement and camping and indoor attraction people were now pushing their agendas. Whilst the phones were now ringing at the self-contained accommodation, some were not going to open despite having received ERF funding.

-AC reported that carrying out what was in the guidance was lots of extra work and some suggested that as it would be of direct benefit to the local economy then WG should pay for the cost of cleaning and materials etc. A shortage of cleaners was also reported.

- AC also said that with more people coming to Wales over the coming weeks we needed to continue to be mindful of communities.

-AC was asked by his members to lobby on reducing SD from 2m to 1m – he asked if we could say that this was forming part of the hospitality rapid review. The Minister confirmed that it was and ultimately the CMO would clarify the position before a final decision was made. The Minister said that it was a fine balance between health and the economy and we were constantly weighing, but health would always take precedence. Staggering the dates of lifting restrictions should help stop a resurgence but the Minister recognised that with no hospitality venues open, there could be issues which was why WG and VW were working with LAs, NPAs and the Police to make Wales a safe place to visit.

Adrian Greason-Walker was welcomed back to the group. He had had a mixed reaction from members about the FM's announcement – some from the s/c fraternity were pleased and some were not intending to open. AGW too had concerns about the 6th July given that there was still some negativity about visitors i.e. some of the signage was unwelcoming.

-AGW said that some of the private sector product e.g. walks in the Beacons National Park were cordoned off and access not permitted so there was still some work to be done.

Stephen Jones (WLGA) – said that the WLGA supported the FM's announcement and the Minister and Deputy Minister had worked well with LA leaders. LAs had been working hard in partnership with WG on guidance, the rapid review, public spaces systems etc. LAs would be pragmatic about enforcement but some areas were more uncomfortable than others and LAs would want WG to clarify regulations on hospitality where legal issues were complicated. SJ said it was worth this group or Ministers raising concerns around the 6th July – 13th July with LAs to ensure that the message was getting through and ensure they could help with public order issues with which they were used to dealing ordinarily. RH said there was a further meeting with LA Leaders later that day and it would be raised again along with the news of the rapid review.

Philippa George – remarked that much of what she was going to say had been covered by others. There had been a mixed reaction from the business community; not all would open, also more clarity on funding for B&Bs was requested.

-Illegal camping was not being policed; crowds were happening in Wales, not just at Bournemouth and the good work we had done was being undone. RH said he thought the phased approach to opening tourism would help negate some of these problems.

Ian Edwards – said that he would have to make a plea for opening hospitality. It was good that the 4 nations were talking and there was a rapid review but Wales was falling behind the others and was becoming competitively disadvantaged; although IE understood the health considerations- but he felt Wales was no different to the other home nations. People wanted to go out safely and all were waiting on WG to make an announcement. IE also said that Wales was behind the curve with Golf too.

Meeting (14) of Tourism Group – 10:30, Friday, 26 June 2020

-IE thought that “Good to Go” was excellent but when you went online to register, Wales was the only one of the 4 nations that directed you to come back to the site to register on 1 July and so there was a sense of being disadvantaged.

-IE reported how he had been invigorated by the last meeting of the VB Board – there was much activity on-going and WG was feeding in. There would be a cross-sector campaign encouraging people to enjoy the summer safely. This would run until 24 August and was a good step forward.

-Mari Stevens - said that WG was on board with the VB/UK Govt campaign which would showcase responsibly what Wales had to offer safely. In Wales, the “safely” message would be pushed with a community approach. And underpinning this would be a pledge or a visitor charter – this needed a lot more work but this was about visiting Wales, pointing at things to do safely, setting out things we would all reasonably promise to do including being respectful to the community. People could sign up to the pledge at the point of sale. It was not a panacea but would be a useful tool if the messages were clear. The following comments were made:

-SH liked the idea of the pledge – would give confidence and customers would feel safe but made a plea to keep images neutral so as not to attract people to any one site.

-AC said no-one had asked him about personal safety in accommodation but thought the pledge was a good idea.

- AR suggested there might be an incentive to get people to sign such as a prize (Penderyn hand sanitizer?!)

-SJ said Mari could feed this proposals through to Tim Peppin on the WLGA Officer Forum so that it gets onto the agenda. Ministers could also raise it at meetings with LA Leaders/WLGA.

IE also raised the plight of the business events sector where it was clear that it was unlikely that the market would come back this year – possibly March next year or even later. The sector would need financial help. SH agreed similarly on events in general.

Jo Corke gave a summary of the latest on-going research activity. It was suggested that Jo run a webinar on the findings of all the research we had commissioned ourselves and those we had partnered.

ST – made a plea for guidance on indoor attractions. Outdoor attractions would be the shop front for the sector from 6 July.

DC – asked whether the DM, JT and RH would attend and speak at a UKH webinar and they agreed.

The DM thanked all for their contributions and promised that he would feed back the points made to the FM.

3. **Next meeting:** Friday, 3 July 10:30am. Group asked to provide sector updates by 5pm on Thursday, 2 July. [Meeting subsequently changed to 9am, Thursday, 2 July 2020]

Alyson Burke
29 June 2020