

Meeting (19) of Tourism Group – 10:30am, Friday 31st July 2020

Participants:

Minister for International Relations and 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	Andrew Campbell	WTA
Mari Stevens	WG	Steve Hughson	MW Forum Chair
Jennifer Velu	WG	Anthony Rosser	UK Hospitality C
Michael Bewick	North Forum Chair	Dave Chapman	UK Hospitality C

Apologies; Ian Edwards, Phillipa George.

Version: Final

Main points of the Meeting

1. Update from the Deputy Minister and Jason Thomas

DM starts the meeting with the good news of Magnox decommissioning the site in Trawsfynydd which will create employment in the area.

Jason Thomas discusses the 53 million funding for culture that will have a positive impact for the wider economy. Broadly split throughout arts, council and others streams such as heritage and events. Another strand is freelance who seem to have fallen through the gaps in the crisis. Biggest funding the portfolio has ever had, designing the scheme through August and open for bids in September with institutions bidding in August.

-Indoor hospitality will resume on the 3rd of August and the three others discussed last week will commence on the 10th August. In the announcement today, outdoor gathering of up to 30 people will be allowed and children under the age of 11 are no longer required to social distance. Will be trailed with larger gatherings for indoor on the 15th August, nervous around this with spikes in England, medical adviser say greater chance of contracting the virus indoors.

-On the Minister for Economy's portfolio there is an Economic Recovery Advisory group and wants tourism input. *Andrew Campbell volunteers.*

Minister thanks everyone very much for opening responsibly, very clear things have picked up significantly. Overall, the public are honouring the social distancing messages. The Minister has been secret shopping in various places and pleasantly surprised it's going well. Need to acknowledge, some organisations are not behaving and don't want them to pull others down. FM is keen to strengthen enforcement in Local Government for establishments that don't comply with the rules as we need to protect the responsible people in the sector. Need the power of influence that isn't there at the moment.

-Culture package is important, strong links with representatives on this call.

-30 people to gather is a significant step, indoors still very tight and that's deliberate. Spikes on the continent and don't want that in Wales, will be looking at indoor easement in the next few weeks. Virus is at a low level in Wales, however, there are problems in Wrexham.

-Sector needs access to the new phase of the Economic Resilience Fund, need a share of this as it's brought forward. Problem for this sector has not gone away and will take a long time to recover.

DMfCST mentioned that we received 20% in the first round.

Mari Stevens noted around 14 million was secured.

Meeting (19) of Tourism Group – 10:30am, Friday 31st July 2020

JT discusses that the 3rd round will be for businesses who needs the support, strong case for our sector from that.

Andrew Campell reiterates Paula's message from last week regarding masks and said it would be really nice to see if they were mandatory in shops. England is better than Wales with this. Suggestion or ask for the FM to consider.

-Minister mentions on-going discussion in relation to masks in WG. Our Chief Scientific Officer is clear that there isn't a huge advantage at this point, but maybe at the second peak it might be something to consider introducing, physical reminder for people that things are getting worse. Not made a decision but something in the armoury when the second comes.

-Paula Ellis said she has been doing the same testing locations, and has been the only person wearing a masks. Discussing research from Asia, when people wear masks they are more aware. Important to look at those countries e.g. 2013 SARS and Hong Kong have only had 5 deaths with coronavirus. Guests at my properties should wear masks, and will ask them to leave if they don't, courtesy to wear masks in public areas. Close off all the third party bookings if we can't contact them with addresses etc. and if they come from high risk locations too.

-DET discusses advice received that people think by wearing the masks they are safe but it's down to the important issue of the distancing factor. Agrees and wears a mask and in the next discussion with FM will convey this. Important for JT to pass this to officials (**ACTION**).

-JT discusses that we need to be unanimous on the view for this to be pushed, would this be included within indoor hospitality. How will people have their food and beverages outdoors?

-PE said as a minimum when walking and in public areas to wear them, stationary location to take them off. People have forgotten and gone back to the way things were. In Asia they are fined outdoors and indoors.

-JT said this is the contradiction, when people are stationary virus is more effective.

-Minister ask if people would be required to wear masks on coastal paths?

-PE said yes everywhere outside, if in close proximity to another person masks to be worn. Can't offer the service that was once had, it won't be the same for another 36 months, people need to accept this and create a new service.

Anthony Rosser said as a business representative, will not support this aggressive mood. It wouldn't get the vote, but does understand the feeling around face masks and people are requested to wear masks at the establishment.

-Minister's first point, to increase enforcements; guidelines are still confusing. The line on local authorities may be able to put their own interpretation; as there are 22 local authorities and from 30 years' experience, there will be different approaches from councils.

Strengthening of powers commonality approach is fundamental.

-JT mentions the different views on face coverings and this is the problem. The Chair of Hospitality Cymru wouldn't support it and CMO is saying the same. We will feed back.

Michael Bewick said last week the 4 chairs discussed the issue of masks and the consensus view as a good signal was to mandate the use of facemask as some people think it's back to normal.

Dave Chapman discusses the struggle to get the public to adhere to social distancing. Divisive issue, bringing this in will lead to a breakdown of the public in supporting the wider issues e.g. 2m. Demonstrates a conflict, we want to encourage bringing people together. Personally would wear facemasks, not in a position to make that work we need to be getting the public behind us.

Meeting (19) of Tourism Group – 10:30am, Friday 31st July 2020

Rob Holt mentions the hospitality group which Dave sits on and put the guidelines together, EHO and license officers need additionally powers, new norm and chance to get this through the summer before the winter. Places such as Coffee 1 not adhering to TTP, and pubs adhering to the brewery guidelines. Lots of work on this, comms are looking at targeting 18 – 25 year olds to get a message to resonate to them. Powers to LA to engage and educate as we've been having calls from businesses about other businesses in particular not taking data and marquees in establishments. Grading team will look at the Good 2 Go to see if they are applying, need a robust system for people to comply indoors in the winter.

Minister thanks everyone very much for the incredible work that's been done keeping us aware of the situation. Keep feeding us and alerting us and will take this onwards with face masks. Very contradictory opinions so keep taking, all the best for the rest of the season.

Jennifer Velu is covering for Jo Corke and shares a power point on consumer feedback and trends. Discusses the UK COVID 19 Consumer Tracker report at week 8 with findings of fewer people going abroad with a trend in camping and self-catering accommodation. Publishing a report on Monday for 2019.

AC mentions that the WTA have a survey from the members and could be helpful(**ACTION**).

RH discusses the UK meetings that's been held this week, difficulties for cities with people not returning. 20% occupancy in London with attractions such as the London eye not opening. This could be a long-term issue and need to keep an eye.

Adrian Greason-Walker asks if PPE should be included in any future questionnaires on reaction to consumers on wearing PPE on holiday (**ACTION**).

2. Update/Questions from the sector

MB discusses that demand is very strong. Sean is busy with Zip World and needs more staff. 35% capacity of the tours in the Forest, something similar in the other attractions - not going over 50% in capacity.

PE said it's phenomenal, 45% up from last August. Christmas and the festive season nothing much booked with the second spike issue. Interest in October and November so hopefully extend the season and claw back loss revenue. DMO in Pembrokeshire yesterday, they are looking at an autumn campaign, same as Mari. Highest demand in lifetime for domestic tourism.

AR said due to the restrictions 60% occupancy in July. Phenomenal rates, but sub-optimally –message from across the hotel industry that's represented. Great to reduce the social distancing for full occupancy and will have a bonanza for the recovery. Can't run them to the level to make up for the devastation of the last 5 months.

-The sector that has had the most impact is the hotels that rely on coaches especially in Llandudno. The meeting market is also struggling, said goodbye to a conference of 20 years yesterday, not feasible to hold conferences.

- The guidelines doesn't say what's discussed in this meeting with 2m economic interpretation on guidelines. Not reflected with the LA or guidelines and puts financial pressure with the mitigations in place. We can only do what's written down and needs to be in plain writing.

Meeting (19) of Tourism Group – 10:30am, Friday 31st July 2020

-**JT** said you do have the legal flexibility to increase the capacity with mitigations in place with going below the 2m. Regulations in the law that you can go below 2m. If the guidance isn't reflecting this we will change it as it needs to be sustainable as it's in the language of the lawyers. Will endeavour to put this in the newsletter to be posted.

RH said working assumption remains 2m but there are circumstances to change this and a risk assessment needs to be put in place. We follow the UKH guidance and if your business is struggling financially the idea is to go below 2m where it's practical to put mitigation measures in place. If an EHO comes in and says differently, we would then need to have discussions. EHO have generally been supportive of opening and wanted to bring the date forward and if we are seeing issues we can raise it in the hospitality group.

-There are still major issues for the industry going forward, we are still in the rescue phase.

AR – Ken Skates MS issued a clarification guidance note. **DM** to issue something on Tourism and Hospitality?

-**DM** certainly will look at this with policy and interpretation **(ACTION)**.

Steve Hughson repeated the need for reinforcing and realising that we are still in a pandemic and need to educate the public.

-In regards to events, cancelled the Winter Fair unfortunately with the 2m in place which is a huge loss for Wales. Confusion as there are things you can do just not in events. Far from out of this and the public need reminding- need more comms.

-**JT** discusses how events will be in the next cycle of the 21 day review.

RH discusses comms, in a position where there are messages being tested with focus groups to see what resonates with people.

-With gatherings at the moment you can meet up to 30 people outside. Colleagues that lead on weddings are meeting with representative from the wedding industry on Monday.

-Looking at the visitor economy guidance - specific to sectors within sports, business, arts and culture events. This leads to cinemas, theatres and small business settings. Different levels of events from the Wales Millennium Centre to Motorpoint to Celtic Manor.

-Currently testing events in England with 30% capacity, difficult to see if they're economically viable. Ministers are always clear to not give dates, we are working towards the next 21 review on putting events on the agenda.

-**SH** confusion does exist and clarity is needed, events are being held in the NEC such as business innovation events with 500 trade stands - business events seems to be allowed in England. Outdoor markets are allowed, would having the stalls in the shed with open doors be OK? Seems it's fine on a high street, which is a little unfair.

-**MB** asks if the festive events in Llechwedd will be held at Christmas, is this retail or events?

-**JT** discusses we would need legal advice around this **(ACTION)**.

AC discusses that members confirm that self-catering are doing well, Airbnb have announced that Colwyn Bay is trending at number 1 in UK with Tenby number 2. Spend in attractions is up with B&B and hotels struggling, disappointed the CADW sites are not open. In regards to general points seems that the key thing is VW needs to focus on dispersal. Jammed in the coast but mid Wales is quiet, important to move people around.

-Need to be careful to not generalise young people and children as they do obey the rules and in some cases it's the very elderly people who don't wear masks. Careful about picking people out. In regards to mitigations agree with Anthony and Steve, which makes the argument more persuasive to bring the distance down to 1m.

Meeting (19) of Tourism Group – 10:30am, Friday 31st July 2020

-Final point statutory registration, keep pushing on this the time is right. Looking for Wales tourism week in September to lengthen the season.

-**JT** said this is a great point of demonising young people with the way the language comes out. Dispersal is a challenge and will be returning to visitor economy priorities.

Adrian Greason-Walker discusses that self-catering is doing well and demand is high but not all great news as some bookings are from the start of season, which means different rates. Having to leave the property for a few days is factored in to revenue. Few years back concerns about rates being raised when low capacity and the impact on customers in the long run. Pricing seems to be free for all, obviously people want to take advantage on revenue they've lost but equally so, could have a knock back. Wales is behind competitors such as Cornwall and Lake District. Prices have shot up there, so we could be thinking of rising our prices to compete. Important how we come out of this recovery and how we project our self to the public, this is a complex issue on pricing and is a bigger debate.

JT sees the predicament need to get revenue but then supply and demand.

-Back on the CADW point, they are opening in a phased return and all the sites will be open within the next week or so responsibly. Caernarfon will take more time due to the major development work.

AR points out an interesting aspect on the high price rate as customers understand the challenges and are sympathetic and insisting on paying the full rates, people are supporting.

DC said Cardiff is struggling with social distancing with 25% capacity in the city centre. This is a burst of good but lost 126 days from 9th of March. If we go to the school break with 33 days this is not a big come back, healthy start to what could be a dodgy end of year.

-Need support to see us to next Easter. Essential that we work and get ERF support and Westminster support. Perceptions from UKH money is coming from Westminster.

-Discusses the offer on getting guidelines across the industry for events and will attend a meeting on Monday.

-Rates review want to push on this, Ian not here so pushing on his behalf to get inside the rates review process. Strong lining from industry to make an impact.

Closing remarks from the **DM** thanking everyone and announces that tourism tax has been abandoned, would be helpful if this group could look at what an useful tourism tax would look like in the future.

1. **Next Meeting:** Friday 7th August 10:30am. Group asked to provide sector updates by 5pm on Thursday 6th August.

Ffion Evans-Humphreys
3rd August 2020