

Meeting (20) of Tourism Group – 10:30am, Friday 7th August 2020

Participants:

Deputy Minister, CST	WG	Adrian Greason-Walker	WTA
Jason Thomas - Director	WG	Stephen Jones	WLGA
Rob Holt	WG	Paula Ellis	SW Forum Chair
Mari Stevens	WG	Phillipa George	SE Forum Chair
Lucy Von Weber	WG	Sean Taylor	UK TIC Rep
Rhidian Morgan	WG	Anthony Rosser	UK Hospitality C
David Stephens	WG	Dave Chapman	UK Hospitality C
Kerry Thatcher	WG	Michael Bewick	North Forum Chair
Ian Edwards	VB Board rep	Steve Hughson	MW Forum Chair
Andrew Campbell	WTA	Sharon Lusher	Chair WT&H Skills Partnership

Apologies; Mfir&WL Eluned Morgan MS

Version: Final

Main points of the Meeting

1. Update from the Deputy Minister and Jason Thomas

Deputy Minister thanks colleagues for the support on tourism during the last few months and the government colleagues over this difficult period. First Minister realised how essential tourism is with the host community and visiting community. Ensuring focus on tourism for the future.

Jason Thomas raised indoor hospitality, which opened on Monday with no significant issues but mixed compliance with guidelines, early days but must ensure compliance, additional powers for LA to enforce potential for mandatory data collection. Welsh Government have confirmed this morning swimming pools and gyms are opening on the 10th August. Other things this week; Eluned Morgan MS had a press conference on Tuesday, theme around making the point that operators and public need to adhere to the guidance and if they don't we will look at stricter measures to enforce that.

-FM and Ministers received a letter from the Gwynedd Council over tourism in Gwynedd with a call on WG to do more to manage this.

-Discussions on 2m and 1m, providing clarity. Ability to consider commercial viability as one reason to consider being able to go below 2m. Document shared on screen, hopefully closes this. Will need a slight tweak, lawyers have confirmed this and will be released to the industry in newsletter **(ACTION)**.

-Queries in regards to events and it's very difficult to predict a mass gathering before Christmas. Continue to work around guidance to make it happen moving ahead to the next review.

Anthony Rosser mentions the few words will make a sizable difference for the rest of the season to businesses and thanks very much. Understand wider with the 2m.

-**JT** said to be clear this is not, or nowhere near, a free pass to go below 2m you still have to follow the regulations and put full mitigations in place.

-**AR** discusses the importance to work with EHO to ensure that they are aware of this. EHO measured the premises and they were measuring tables rather than people. People is his interpretations so conflicting views between EHO and personal. Guidelines is specific to the 22 local authorities with their interpretations and more powers is a worry.

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Rob Holt mentions that there are many views out there and it's moving at such a fast pace, EHO has been clear on the regulations. Thanks Simon and Steve WLGA for discussions; need to work around the public and enforcement powers.

-Some of the strongest concerns from compliant businesses in the industry about other businesses. Improvement notice to engage and educate the establishment they have 48hrs to put improvements in place, after this, result is closure.

Ian Edwards needs clarity on breaking the law with the marquee in place with closed sides? Discusses that it makes no sense at all, horrible weather on that day so that's why the sides were down. Initially the same as dining indoors it's the same environment – doesn't get the science around it. Set up as a restaurant with social distancing of 2 meter apart, exactly as inside and it's not a group of people just having a beer.

-**RH** said essentially if your outdoors you're outdoors and you need the marquee with the sides up and for it to not become indoors.

-**JT** said you can have a gathering of 30 people outdoors but there are different rules indoor as you are limited to 2 households. There are anomalies on this and that's the position at the moment, we will feed this back as it's seen as an issue.

Michael Bewick asks when the new guidance will reach the EHO as they have different opinions on 2m and would be helpful to know when they reach the councils.

-**RH** needs to speak to Simon Wilkinson to confirm wording today and hospitality meeting next week. EHO had concerns around it, working with WLGA to get the message out next week. Haven't heard many issues with EHO, there isn't enough of them to go in with enforcement.

2. Update on Skills

RH introduces Sharon Lusher to discuss skills which was an important issue within the tourism sector before Covid-19 with the implications of Brexit and the issues around staffing.

David Chapman explains the document shared is a summary after 18 months, galvanised as many people behind it. Industries such as Careers Wales and Qualifications Wales looking at consistent criteria. Wales Tourism & Hospitality Skills Partnership was accepted, moving forward and industry lead. Would like to see something to enable the people we let go in hospitality to have a continuity in the industry as we will want them back, important to keep the relationship with these people.

Kerry Thatcher discusses the papers. Explains that the action plan is a priority with seasonality to be looked at, working in partnership across the sector not just VW. Looking at 2 year and a 10 year plan. Identify the priorities of skills, with contribution from the group to see if something has been missed out.

Sharon Lusher is delighted to be chairing this particular group. Listen to what you want from skills development and discusses how her role is to ensure it happens. Focus of the forum to get moving quickly with the flexible skills programme as a bid to pump money into the sector with training.

Paula discusses how 20 weeks ago in the first task force meeting the issue was brought up around staffing and is delighted by this update. Improving perception is pivotal to work in this industry, managers to change their style and educate employers - seen as slave labour need to change this. Usually around 5% annual turnover of colleagues, support this to

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manage more positives that people don't want to leave. Armed forces have a wonderful campaign, discussing the wonderful industry and the benefits. We should use a platform to advertise chefs, housekeeping and receptionists. The only positions easy to recruit is groundwork, maintenance, HR and marketing.

-Panel is public sector heavy, need more representatives from the industry to be on the panel. 50/50 balance from private and public with the opportunity to hear from good practice employers.

-Develop not reinvent and use as a platform on good branding to enable movement to be successful.

-**SL** mentions that Paula raised good points, useful to have a further conversation about how we can tackle these perceptions. Important to have a perception from early ages to have a good strong career and retain staff.

Andrew mentions his time as a former head of school, in St David's and highlighting the prices of universities with concerns of applications going into the industry. We need departments that deliver the products and address the skills shortages, plea if WG money available then consideration should be given to supporting university departments. They have the products need to be more creative with one year packages not just post and under-grad courses.

-High number of redundancies, important to sign post to pick up and train, it's a missed opportunity need some sort of messaging and funding along those lines to attract those people. Covid has taught us the need for creative thinking – this is top of the criteria.

-Issue on resilience and mental health, which is important. Stress management; to be a good manager need to manage stress, used an example of meditation classes.

-**KT** said will feed into the working Wales programme to consider this when advertising to people who have been made redundant.

-**RH** said the point about wellbeing and wellness is important in the wider thinking of society in winter. Lockdown like Melbourne, need to look at this wider scenario.

-**DM** said tourism and hospitality is the foundation of the economy and essential for functioning of society.

Ian mentions that Dave and himself spoke about this year ago and is massively important to the industry. Agree with Paula's discussion. We're going through a process of losing team members with a massive skills gap.

-Missing events and meetings part of training in the 8 priorities. Massive part of what we're doing in Wales. WG funding a lot on this, production event management sales 100% behind this and need more representatives. Incredible Director, which could input to the meetings, expand out to industry – this will help us and you.

SL thanks Ian, really appreciated the kind offer.

3. Feedback on indoor hospitality reopening & further updates.

DC said he has nothing negative to report, lack of press which means were doing it pretty well and very positive.

AR discusses its going fine, interesting that guests are approving the way Wales has been handling the journey. Giving comfort to visitors coming in and this could be extended.

-**JT** highlights the approach of the FM and Ministers of the visitors welcoming the Welsh approach on this, after pressure to follow England, this will help long term.

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Paula felt it's been positive but has concerns about spikes in the UK such as Preston, Belfast and Aberdeen. Threat to the tourism scene and economy of Wales. Refuse bookings from high risk areas. First time in 35 years in customer service having to forget everything to put the health of colleagues, guests and community first. Great concerns around when education re-starts, buoyant for the economy to survive the 3 winters to gather as much business we can in the short window. If hospitality is closed in Wales, it's going to be devastating and damaging.

-**JT** raised points around nervousness with local lockdown and the WG are planning extensively for that and keeping it at close review. Encouraging to hear indoor hospitality has gone well.

Adrian Greason-Walker discusses the survey with pretty much good feedback and positivity with the eat out help out scheme being very successful. Once the survey is closed will share the results, dissatisfaction in the community is not as bad as it used to be.

David Stephens discusses some of the headlines of going out and surveyed 800 business across Wales between sectors. Attractions running at half capacity and 1/3 not opened at all this year.

-Revenue position in summery most businesses have lost substantial this year. Half have lost 30 – 50% annual revenue, some even higher than that. Camping, caravanning and self-catering leading with bookings, similar to last year or even increase in bookings. Avoid generalisations of everything is fine, as some individual business are struggling to get bookings. Schemes have helped with redundancies 2/3 business have put staff on furlough. Report released next week at geographical levels.

IE echo what David Stephens said. Businesses that are doing well are in a false paradise – redundancies will come, tough months to generate any business especially with the corporate conference market not travelling, as they would be putting people at risk. This is the trend, business community wont travel until after Christmas until stability with the virus. Area of nervousness, make the most while the sun shines. September comes we will be struggling again. 70% occupancy for August, have to be cautions.

-Other market such as golfing are saying the opposite about the WG as they don't understand the rules with social distancing and bubbles. Had to provide a high number of complimentary rooms in August which is a major cost for us.

-**JT** emphasises that we understand there will be a call to support the industry in autumn and winter, Mari and Lucy looking at this.

DC discussed a London PR Agency that had 200 people working in central London now only coming in 1 day a week. Big shift going on in the industry.

-Raised the discussion on weddings after attended a meeting on Monday. Guidelines have been fed to the people leading on weddings with any hospitality that offers weddings to be able to open and CMO will look kindly to make moves up to 30 people on the 15th August.

-Important post October to concentrate on businesses who've been delayed longer such as events and weddings.

Mari Stevens updates on starting the budget planning for the next part of the year, future of the priority plan. Preparing proposals to secure additional funding. All of that is working in parallel, bid and plan for revenue areas of activity for marketing and public information. Useful tool Visit Scotland are using with a function to ask questions, need fundamental basic information for the public moving forward in Wales. Looking at the appropriate product to develop with pressures of local lockdown. Look at the demand for domestic travel. Support

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the private sector, strengthen our industry over the next few months with virtual events & webinars. Hoping to make a bid with multi layers and will present ideas to this group.

-**JT** return to this in early September and talk through the plans.

Steve Hughson gives an update on the report of 4 chairs of regional forums. Sits in with the strategic view. Concerns of large number gathering and recognise a visible minority. If this is allowed to continue, it will reduce further demands of restrictions and will have an influence on other parts - with events only starting its journey.

-Caravan site on the Royal Welsh showground with 80 caravans, have been awarded WG2G certificate.

Michael Bewick refer to the letter from Plaid Cymru in the press. Long conversation with Dyfrig Siencyn – difficult to find a solution. Messaging was discussed and how it is handled. Barmouth, Abersoch always gets pressure. Suggested reaching out to people who work in events for help – many are currently not working - as they are good at managing people.

-Important to influence the people who haven't been to Wales before.

MS will encourage people to visit new places, this was our strategy anyway moving people to new parts of Wales e.g. Mid Wales experiences and products. Projection to international travel, high spend markets that go on annual holidays if we could get one holiday a year we could push Wales and improve the product offer. Repeat market group as they can't go anywhere else, big strategic approach on this.

-**SH** discusses the alternative products, such as the 3 peaks – there are nicer places than Pen y Fan and Snowdon. Alternatives is a good way forward.

-**JT** totally agree with this, Cnicht is an example of a very under-publicised, yet great walk.

Phillipa George endorsed what's been said, very concerned about the amount of illegal campers stopping at beauty stops with nothing happening and no monitoring. 37 vehicles along the coastal road, dangerous with health and safety issue and is getting worse. Local authority involved, who is looking after this?

-**JT** mentions working with LA and predicted that this would happen and will take a hard line on this happening. Massive problem, not getting better, careful at the moment to protect Wales from this second wave this is the sort of things that won't help.

Stephen Jones discusses what's been said with LA and will feed this back to the colleagues and also regarding EHO to take a tougher line on hospitality on the minority that are not conforming with guidelines. LG could make a small contribution to skills partnership.

Last comments from JT to issue the text as soon as we can with 2m mitigations and we will reconvene the first Friday in September to see how things have gone following this break.

Closing remarks from the DM thanking all and hoping for a productive August.

Ffion Evans-Humphreys
10th August 2020.