

Meeting (22) of Tourism Group – 10:30-12:30 Friday 25th September 2020

Participants:

Deputy Minister, CST	WG	Adrian Greason-Walker	WTA
Jason Thomas - Director	WG	Stephen Jones	WLGA
Mari Stevens	WG	Paula Ellis	SW Forum Chair
Lucy Von Weber	WG	Philippa George	SE Forum Chair
Jo Corke	WG	Michael Bewick	North Forum Chair
Claire Chappell	WG	Andrew Campbell	WTA
Helen Butler	WG	Dave Chapman	UK Hospitality C
Ian Edwards	VB Board rep	Anthony Rosser	UK Hospitality C
		Steve Hughson	MW Forum Chair

Apologies; Minister for International Relations & Welsh Language & Rob Holt

Version: Final

Main points of the Meeting

1. Update from the Deputy Minister and Jason Thomas

Deputy Minister holds his respect for the civil servant John Walter Jones.

Jason Thomas starts the meeting by summing up the last week - been challenging for all of us.

-Further local lockdowns, 6 areas added to the list. Ultimately, the transmission has been rising, Ministers in difficult positions and had to take the decisions to put those areas in lockdown. These will be under constant review.

-On the back of all of these changes, long discussions around Hospitality in the early part of the week. PM brought together a meeting with the other FM's to try and get consistency put in place across the UK. Big discussion for WG to follow what England are doing by closing pubs at 10pm. FM has allowed drinking up time in the regulations, which would see places close at 10:20. Claire Chappell has been working on the FAQ which was circulated this morning. Still queries about airports and service stations – working with lawyers on answers to all these detailed questions.

-Provided an update on the cultural recovery fund. The events sector is the largest applicant of the fund so far, significant proportion. Start apprising those bids first week in October.

-Freelance fund will go live first week in October - 7 million fund.

-Updated on some internal changes to senior team.

Mari Stevens updates on the development of a potential Tourism fund.

-**DMfCST** is keen that we start a voucher scheme when appropriate, a way of subsidising the consumers to manage market from the other side. We do all the work to establish in context of Public Health and return to this.

-**MS** optimism to establish this when the right time comes. Member of the team looking into this and when ready we can go with it. Does everyone agree with this for the time being?

-**IE** agree with the Minister, keep the voucher on the cards but priority is hardship fund.

-**MS** says if we get approval with the fund; 100% grant at 10k for micro businesses up to 150k for larger businesses and scale up to 250k for even larger businesses on a case by case basis. ERF 3 in development to launch support for local businesses effected by lockdown and support £150,000 for 3 weeks of lockdown and business development support of 90% businesses development costs. Hospitality sector wants more support already invested as much as they can. Will be pots in the tourism sector, as long as we can secure the funding.

2. Updates from Group Members.

David Chapman first of all thanks Mari for the quick piece of work. Going back to the paper provided in June – industry thought I was jumping ahead, realised the process to persuade in the likely hood we would come to this position. No problem in changing the priority of funds.

-DM view is right, great idea and positive individual benefit for Wales. Celebrate and see it in place while DM is still here before May so we can establish it as a principle.

-Wedding venue in a terrible position, essential that we find hardship money for their sector to support. To prevent country buildings falling to disrepair or banks and exclusion from public use. We need to work with you on the hardship fund that all businesses get the help they can. 6 months from what PM said, crucial for thousands of jobs.

-Positive measures with the FM's 10.20 curfew is a helpful sign and definitely has economic assistance. However, hotels being able to serve internal post 10.20 would be a helpful measure and room service available.

-Looking to push the boundaries to make logical improvements to help improve businesses position. Tweak the guidance for facemasks behind in oppose to in front – staff issue of discomfort and not being necessary.

-Top of the agenda is bridging fund, MfE&T is receptive to this concept to keep the industry alive until March – not a bail out like TATA steel this is about 6 concentrated months. If we get this right we will save thousands of jobs but if we get it wrong all of the manifesto VW have been producing top quality services is going to be disappearing.

JT with the fund itself to be conscious of when we have provided funding, so far money is there to get people through. If we do get a tourism fund we need to work with you to put in place conditions to drive the industry forward. Should we only give money to businesses who agree to be accredited? Commitment at quality level? If you want WG support to sign up and commit to the high level of quality for the future. Committing to a bilingual offer? There is an opportunity to bring change and could fast track change.

-**DC** discusses we shouldn't prohibit the businesses that need it by putting extra conditions. Businesses have been closed off and need to be given support through the crisis. Not opposing this but not to create obstacles, they are desperate and need money quickly.

-**JT** opportunity for us, businesses who haven't been aligned with our brand, this is a chance to get more people up to the quality standards we want the whole industry to be. Will come back to this (**ACTION**).

Steve Hughson grateful for the positive recognition and contribution of events finally gathering momentum. Turn the recognition to action to protect the signature events in Wales. Hospitality sectors opened in a phased way, some events once a year like Eisteddfod & Royal Welsh that lost the opportunity for the year. Focus on the signature events and recognise the effect they make.

-Thanks officials on the turnaround of the FAQ – well received. What's not on the FAQ and needs clarity is the unnecessary travel which has been impacting bookings. Evidence from Mid Wales forum shows 40% bookings cancelled due to the travel restrictions.

-Appreciate support package by the Chancellor, Rebecca Evans MS made this point last night; there is continuous need for sector specific funding particularly as it effects those seasonal businesses and the events sector.

-Like to see more join up between the tourism, leisure, hospitality and events sector reflecting the importance. We need to get a holistic view of bringing events centre stage.

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-**JT** join up is interesting to get consistency, same people dealing with it on our side but you do raise an important question- bringing the groups together on a regular basis instead of duplicating meetings as well.

-**DMfCST** happy to endorse and will discuss it internally with better shared management working across WG.

-**JT** the unnecessary travel point - FM provided clarity in Wednesday's press conference as there where lot of queries over 24hrs before. FM wants people to use judgement, stay local if possible but it's not to stop people going on holiday as areas outside of local lockdown still have very heavy restrictions.

-**SH** fact that this question has been raised, further clarification needed. It doesn't appear in the FAQ which perhaps makes my point.

-**JT** Mari and Lucy listening to this message, please clarify the messages on this and continue to clarify that.

Andrew Campbell thanking you again DM, Jason and team for the hard work and efforts - we've gone back to the dark days of March and April. WTA meeting yesterday; clearly at the moment we have had information overload and difficult for people to work through that, suggest putting short videos out. As Steve said more information is needed, we're at the sharp end and should know what's going on.

-Mental health spoke about it before, challenging for staff on the front line different types of visitors and have to recognise they've been put under tremendous pressures. Mental health initiative, perhaps another conversation about this. Wider point – people are getting anxious about the announcement, I don't wish to be critical but would be nice when the FM is making his announcement to be more optimistic. Not making light of the sombre situation were in just to put a different spin on it by giving a little hope to people.

-Issue on blaming tourism –no correlation between the visitors and the increase in infections. Cornwall like Pembrokeshire have been busy and no correlation in spikes. If you want to deal with the situation maybe stop Universities and start them in January to try and get more logical approach – controversial when I say that but this impacts the businesses. Tourism is being affected and having a bad reputation.

-Last point, furlough- don't think it's enough but sector specific we would appreciate that.

-**DMfCST** appreciate the messages, trying with success recently within Government to establish the centrality of tourism in the Welsh economy.

-**JT** WG continue to press for sectoral support. Agrees with the idea for video content (**ACTION**).

Ian Edwards as an industry it's been a tough week – we should be looking at case studies and best practices as we are getting the blame. Celtic Manor in full lockdown as we were in March. Good example is the European Tour Event which was behind closed doors, players from France were effected with the virus. Had dinner with friends and then found out he was positive whilst he had been in the resort for 3 days. Once we found out did the testing as to who he had interacted with and no one else was effected so it shows if protocols are in place.

-Sector specific support keep pushing that. This time last year we opened ICC with 10,000 visitors and has been closed longer than it was open. WG gave 45m in to that and 45m of our cash and really is suffering. Steve mentioned one voice, we need to represent everything that happens in Wales, stand strong in government and industry and make sure we are leading going forward.

-What the Chancellor said has been well thought through from a government point of view, zombie businesses will go. Mari is doing a great job in funds but is critical to stop major

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business falling off the cliff. VB board meeting next Wednesday – really interesting to see what's coming out of that. Working hard on promoting UK staycasions.

-JT VB board massive pressure so will get you a briefing note before that as would be helpful (**ACTION**).

-One voice point; we did at the start, never done before get all the chairs, chief executives across the CST on one call. It was really useful but rather unwieldy as the size of the portfolio is incredible. Recognise duplication, what I would like to do is, take this on board and a mechanism that you can think of and come back to me with the best way of getting around this (**ACTION**).

-Case studies highlighting best practice anything we can do promote let's do it.

MS had contemplated putting a video out on Sunday for Tourism day but unless we have funding to support the sector looks like an anti-gesture so if we are able to secure will put content around that. Funding included money for PR in Wales.

Anthony Rosser reiterate Andrews comments. Phenomenal discussions short-term cancellation but market place seems to be there for us. People are confused with non-essential travel and still receive calls about this. Confusion over lockdown areas needs clarification. Regards to the funding, the concept at looking at businesses locally, national, regionally and prioritisation into those.

-Final bit is residential hotels with secure population, late duty manager last night bizarre situation everyone went to bed 10:20pm didn't have to take drinks off anyone with clinking bottles in the rooms. No challenge at all the public health point- if movement in this throughout the industry would be massive. Back to the Tony Blair days to design a café culture in UK and this led to the explosion night-time economy. Since about 1954 changed the licence act only residence after a certain time and it worked. One bit of movement massive win for the hospitality.

-JT comes back to the mental health questions in the industry, I've felt some of this myself seen it in others, journey throughout this crises of unbelievable amount of work. Shutters have come down again, energy levels have been strained, we will come to the end of this at some points and need to work together.

-FM isn't going to change his mind of drinking alcohol post 10:20pm as things stands. Will be looked at and continue to be looked at, will flag that up. Clarity of travel areas in lockdown areas in England –can't travel outside of those in Wales- great concerns and will be in the next 21 day review. Looking at it closely, less favourable opportunities in Wales.

-AR internal debate here, where travel restrictions imposed we won't accept booking from them.

Adrian Greason-Walker the unnecessary travel issue, lot of anger of loss of business. Discussions yesterday with caravan/motorhome/camping organisations, which are not happy of communication on lockdown areas. Trecco Bay had to tell 4,000 people to leave and close down the site. With the amount of infrastructure extremely expensive and difficult -the mental health issues of telling people to do that with communication not there on a local level. Don't know who should be telling them to close down the site and make that decision and then of course the re-opening which is expensive and difficult. Issues surrounding the caravan and camping sector – need to talk about this in the future.

-JT when these are announced-decisions are made quickly and we all have to react.

IE challenges was massive; we had 500 people on the Golf course, 500 in restaurant, 600 staying in hotel, everything had to close. Reservations team and sales team we had 4,000 people coming in that week 4,500 coming to play golf and 4,500 in to the restaurant huge

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task to deal and react especially with mental health. Staff being abused by the public face to face or on the phone – how do we get together to make it a nice journey for everyone, sounded like the siren going into WW3.

-Lucy Von Weber discusses the communication issue.

-IE possible to communicate this to PHW and Councils - phoned them and said can we keep people for the duration of their holidays and they said absolutely not - get them out.

-LVW comes down to retrospective authorities – will look in to it. Wasn't something from the regulations point of view can't see anything that forced it to closed. LA related.

-JT clear consensus and will feed all this back to colleagues on coordinating side of this. Shows the importance of communication as things are moving really fast and it needs common sense.

DMfCST said it should have been made clear in regulations—proper interpretation, implementation of the regulations by authorities but guidance is crucial which makes clear the circumstances. We will deal with this, appalling that the PH & LA officials carrying out there duty in a way of damaging the long term perception of the country.

-JT if Cardiff does go into a lockdown imminently, really important that there is a clear message to hotels.

Michael Bewick currently in Southern Spain, clearly last week has been difficult and reflecting on the fact of being away with the international markets for the future. Spain internal tourism has collapsed very little government support going to businesses small or large. Mediterranean destinations are going to suffer over the next couple of years. Need to take competitive advantage of the opportunity for the future – using funding to make sure we maintain our quality across the board.

3. Update on Tourism Tax.

JT have to get the industry through this pandemic ultimately, some promising signs out there for vaccination. Caveated to say quickest ever in history developed was 4 years.

-DM met with the FM, MfF, MfIR&WL and a whole cast of officials a week ago to update on discussions.

DMfCST first formal meeting when I became Minister made it clear I was opposed to tourism tax.

JT Ministers understand that having open broad discussion on possible taxation on the industry is not the right time. Agree that officials will continue to explore the possible merits of tourism taxation but in such a way to inform the next WG if they wish to progress with it. New administration will then have advice on what to do with this next 6 months.

-DC at early stages worth looking at the principles, underlying distress of the ability of LA not to displace any money they get from tourism tax. Spend nowhere near enough at the moment on tourism generally and have some obligations that are un-statutory such as paving, bins etc. To make the venue more attractive to the visitor economy could be easily displaced. In these hypothetical discussion – make sure they get the concept money dedicated to the industry and under industry control. If this is to ever happen inputted back to the businesses not the LA. Important we can't get this in any way, looking ahead to put the barriers up as early as possible.

-JT asked for some sensitivity around comms.

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4. AOB

JT thanks everyone for the constructive feedback. This was the 22nd meeting and it's been really challenging, as we've been faced with enormous pressure.

-AC suggests returning to weekly meetings.

-JT discusses that it does feel like we've entered the time of needing it weekly – happy to do that and have shorter meetings if everything is covered.

-DC getting a lot of pressure of the potential funding any indication on when it will be available to give a proper projection?

-JT Government gets the urgency and we are hopeful of some news in days not weeks.

DM & JT thanks all for the meeting.

28th September 2020

Ffion Evans-Humphreys