

Meeting (26) of Tourism Group – 10:30-12:30, Friday 23rd October 2020

Participants:

Minister MH,W & WL	WG	Sean Taylor	UK TIC Rep
Deputy Minister, CST	WG	Adrian Greason-Walker	WTA
Jason Thomas - Director	WG	Stephen Jones	WLGA
Mari Stevens	WG	Paula Ellis	SW Forum Chair
Rob Holt	WG	Ian Edwards	VB Board rep
Michael Theaker	SpAd	Steve Hughson	MW 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
Jo Starkey	WG	Anthony Rosser	UK Hospitality C
Phillip Abraham	WG	Peter Kellem	WG

Version - Final

Main points of the Meeting

1. Update from Mari Stevens:

Mari Stevens welcomes all and summarises the Firebreak. Busy week updating the regulations with colleagues on the legislation side in relation to funding and support. Trying to close as many parts of the sector to allow businesses to access the funding available from UKG and WG. MS discusses the position on funding with the £300m package, ERF, CRF and Freelance scheme.

2. Taskforce members raised the following points:

-Concerns around what happens at the end of the Firebreak. Need clarity on what happens. How to market, is it just for Wales or outside Wales? The public confidence and consumer confidence is zero, better off as long as there is a package to be closed and get the virus down.

DMfCST said there are tiers in Scotland and England but there are no tiers in Wales and that is the position. Beyond the FB period, almost devising a new form of regulations not necessarily imitating the other countries.

-Urges the WG to enable parts of the visitor economy to open in the safe areas. In remote areas, alternative jobs are far fewer than in-densely populated areas and are paying the price for the areas that don't adhere to the safety guidelines. Urge the FM to allow remote areas to open fully and successfully from 9th November.

MS said the concept of local lockdown is under review and may benefit rural areas as a result.

-Advised on the need to start test events again and open the event economy. Clarity is needed, not much difference between attractions such as Folly Farm and an event on the RW showground - the difference is minimal. Events should be recognised for the sector support, closed since March and continue to be closed. Concerns of the long-term vision of events in 2021 following Christmas. Can't afford to get the R number down to 0.8 to have Christmas and for it to increase to 1.5 in January.

Meeting (26) of Tourism Group – 10:30-12:30, Friday 23rd October 2020

-Questions around duplications of claims in relation to CRF & ERF 3. Gaps in ERF, distress calls from Micro businesses in difficulties. VAT to be extended and supportive of resurrecting the voucher scheme giving businesses, not just visitors the reason for being in business when the time is right.

Officials discuss state aid and the different funding. Businesses have different needs, so are able to claim under both schemes.

-Concerns around the curfew for it to be extended to 10:30/11:00pm – this would be vital for the economy of businesses.

-Comments raised around counties with low incident rate number. No point opening if the surrounding counties are in lockdown and if Manchester/Liverpool are in tier 3. Critical issues around access to employment support. It was noted from a LA briefing, that a micro lockdown approach was preferred.

JT explains that evidence shows that local restrictions haven't been particularly effective so considerations focussed on a national set of restrictions.

-Discussion around the 2m rule that's off the table, minutes from these meetings stating businesses under duress to go below 2m with mitigating circumstances in place. Had the legal argument clarification and now being trumpeted by the EHO. Guidance needs to be published for the industry and Wales to understand what this means.

-Lake Vyrnwy Hotel on average has 60% revenue from Shropshire and Ceredigion with 35% occupancy this year compared to over 80% last year and only 14% occupancy between now and Christmas. To stay open through Winter, routes to market need to be open. Isn't down to just the wages, it's the standing costs of businesses and LVH costs over £1,000 a day during lockdown.

JT explains the key discussion around post 9th November and shares a table from the TAG.

-Acknowledged concerns around saving jobs in the industry. Celtic Manor Resort has already made over 300 people redundant. Worry around the landscape coming out of the FB, will there be further localised lockdowns? Unity within the hospitality industry, Cardiff hoteliers are in dire straits just like SME. It was emphasised the importance of working with the industry and following England to ensure support from the specific tiers of UKG. Need to get the best from UKG as WG don't have the financial firepower. The Stakeholder noted that the Chancellor announcing his JSS funding in relation to the tier system in England causes confusion and that coordination would make a simpler process.

DfCST explains the funding position and said if there is spend in England on policy that is devolved in Wales, will get the funding and goes into the WG pot. Not hypothecated in relation to England, it does give us an additional means of funding if we have a clear statement of our own priorities.

-Requested to position tourism positively with all the protocols in place as a question of changing people's thinking and getting that message out there. Currently without tourism it gives communities a false sense of security.

Meeting (26) of Tourism Group – 10:30-12:30, Friday 23rd October 2020

-Fully supportive of having a restriction on travel. Other point to make is, keeping the restrictions too hard, illegal tourism activity experienced over the summer resurfaces.

-Discussion on the simplicity of messaging. Interested to know how the decisions are being taken and how robust the methodology? Big body of information in WG, some of it subjective to information. Worry that the methodology is too complex/difficult and people are worried at making the real decisions that will have implications.

-Concerns that DMO need additional support. Suggestion, would be to raise the possibility if businesses get grant money that they should become a member of the DMO? Relates to statutory registration, if you are receiving support there is the opportunity to raise this flag.

Officials discussed conversations that's undertaken with UK wide colleagues, who are putting a lot of funding into DMO. Need to re-visit this and a credit to Val Hawkins, MWT who has been phenomenal at answering the industry.

DMfCST mentions DMO has been discussed around the potential for funding previously. Significant point to take action as part of our organisation for delivery **(Action)**.

MfMH,W&WL summarises the reasons to act with the FB.

-The Minister discussed that WG are doing this on advice from the CMO and can't ape England as their approach has been pretty incoherent. The FB scheduled around half term was across WG with the importance to reduce the long-term effects on children.

-Issues around the Welsh culture with Christmas and how an erosion of people not following advice will likely peak during this period.

-FM strenuous efforts to ask the Chancellor to bring forward the new approach of funding wasn't responded positively.

-Minister discussed key issues on household/bubbles and travel restrictions.

-Concerns around mental health issues which is also a PH issue. Christmas can be a miserable time and does have MH issues. Sacrifices going on with the lockdown to save Christmas that many people find difficult.

MfMH,W&WL was interested on the mental health topic specifically for the sector, useful to get feedback on what is the best way to stand by the sector **(Action)**.

-The wealth creators, people driving the businesses, making the profit, paying the taxes, creating the employment are facing situations they have never faced before. Coming out of this, will look at this group to create the wealth in Wales again and specific support with a direct approach for significant investment is needed.

MfMH,W&WL explained that there is a support system for workers in place but not for the owners and is a space to look at **(Action)**.

-Emphasis on the need for a coordinated plan between 9th November and Easter. The underlying principles are clarity, confidence and support.

-Concerns that skills that has fallen off the agenda. Managed to set up a skills board with Sharon Lusher and need to use this. Finding a way of managing the illness through the winter to open and protect jobs, otherwise workers will be de-skilled and move to other industries.

Meeting (26) of Tourism Group – 10:30-12:30, Friday 23rd October 2020

MfMH,W&WL said there is opportunity for upskilling in the future with the digital approach to be considered.

3. Tourism Awards

Discussion undertaken on the prospects of a virtual ceremony and the DMfCST was happy for planning to go ahead. All in agreement that this could help and give inspiration through this difficult time. Official made the point that the awards could go out of date and the sensitivity of some businesses which are no longer with us. Suggestion by a member was to announce on the 1st of March when celebrating our national day as a great platform to offer PR to the finalist and winners.

Mari Stevens concludes the meeting and thanks everyone for attending.

4. Next meeting

30th October 2020.

Ffion Evans-Humphreys
29th October 2020.