

## Meeting (30) of Tourism Group – 10:30, Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Minister MH,W&WL	WG	Anthony Rosser	UK Hospitality C
Deputy Minister CST	WG	Adrian Greason-Walker	WTA
Jason Thomas - Director	WG	Stephen Jones	WLGA
Mari Stevens	WG	Dave Chapman	UK Hospitality C
Rob Holt	WG	Ian Edwards	VB Board rep
Michael Theaker	WG	Sean Taylor	UK TIC Rep
Lucy Von Weber	WG	Philippa George	SE Forum Chair
Rhidian Morgan	WG	Michael Bewick	North Forum Chair
Claire Chappell	WG	Andrew Campbell	WTA
Jo Starkey	WG	Steve Hughson	MW Forum Chair
Peter Kellam	WG	Tara Croxton	WG
Kelly Lovell	WG	Michael Price	WG

*Apologies – Paula Ellis*

Version: Final

### **Main points of meeting**

#### **1. Update and Welcome:**

Jason Thomas welcomes all and announces that this is the 30<sup>th</sup> Tourism Taskforce meeting. Discusses the challenging week with Ministers currently in Cabinet discussing potential options. The 4 Nations have worked together on a set of measures for Christmas. Other Nations have announced a tier system and Welsh Ministers are currently looking at Wales's position.

#### **2. Taskforce members raised the following questions;**

- Importance of communication with the database. Anthony Rosser discusses Lake Vyrnwy having to cancel their important piece of product around Black Friday. Last year it crashed the website with 300-400 rooms sold between January–March carrying them through the winter months. Clarity is needed, when to contact guests cancelling Christmas holidays? The current situation is putting 70 jobs at risks. AR shares thoughts on closing the hotel until March as there isn't simple business information to plan. Highlights that this is a direct statement of damage in the sector.

Official mentions that the WG recognise the impact of closing the Visitor Economy. If restrictions are in place, the industry need support packages to look and feel like ERF 1. Official asks the group for views on the Scottish tier 3 model.

- The group members highlighted the fact that the guidance notes must come out at the same time as other communications from Welsh Government. Important to discuss post-Christmas and have clear guidance around ERF funding to give businesses the opportunity to survive.
- Comments around border issues and how the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December needs to be clarified. England is guidance only and in Wales it's regulations which causes confusion.
- Sawday's have been cancelling bookings for their English clients staying in Wales – the public need clarity and coordination.

Lucy Von Weber mentions that Sawday's misinterpreted English guidance around the tiers which were to be reviewed on the 16<sup>th</sup> December and had nothing to do with Wales.

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Deputy Minister discusses the key issues around the financial package, stressing that it needs to be presented at the same time as regulations. WG are favouring the Scottish model. DM continues discussing regional difficulties and different level of the virus in Wales. The agreed view is to proceed on an all Wales basis, to provide WG with clear rationale as a devolved Government.

- Anger that the public have not had the health evidence to justify the actions. Hotels to open until 6pm have no profitability at all. Priority is protecting jobs until March. Businesses could lose 25–33% of their revenue by 16<sup>th</sup> December and the economic argument is there. Importance of bringing the industry back stronger with a quality product, high level and fully staffed.

Minister discusses the difficulties around providing more warnings with predicting the way the virus is behaving. Trying to respond to the request of modelling and give you that warning today. Minister said the industry has proved itself and has been able to persuade colleagues in Cabinet to allow some kind of opening, have looked at tiers and currently should be in tier 3 in Wales. The Minister discusses that there will be a substantial package in place and working through the detail on the weekend to give you assurance by Monday. Didn't have any other choice than to go down this route after looking at the rates and confirms that businesses will access financial support even if closed.

- Discussion around the desperation of businesses during this time and will be taking guests in from England to survive.

Official emphasises the difference between Wales and other parts of the UK and confirms that it's illegal to do so in Wales.

- Agreement from the group returning to system ERF 1 instead of ERF 3 otherwise ERF 4 would be a disaster. Highlight the importance of the group being consulted on the planning of future ERF.
- Feedback from members around Visit Wales inspiring with positive messages to maintain positivity for the future.

Official discusses the challenging position of the marketing team as they were planning to launch a campaign with positive news from the sector. This is now on hold until the time is right next year. VW have fantastic assets to share of Wales' profile.

- Discussions around Events sector which hasn't opened since March and the cross-border issue across the sectors. England announced test events of up to 4,000 people outdoors and 1,000 indoors.
- Need to have a discussion around the health position and the metrics that influence decisions around the tiers to influence thinking.

Official said that events have had specific CRF funding. The ability to bring guidance imminently is difficult until the final details of the restrictions are finalised.

- Discussion around the cases per 100,000, currently 200 per 100,000 across Wales and went into lockdown when the figures were 48 per 100,000. Newport is currently 300 per 100,000. WG jumped on the virus ahead of everyone else and one of the

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members mentioned how the Minister couldn't believe the response to stay in lockdown until the end of November in the last meeting. Celtic Manor Resort team have been following the science, possibly could have had a good December, not going to get that at all now and many businesses in the industry won't survive the other end of December.

- Frustration around the packages, CMR employs thousands of people with a massive supply chain and isn't getting support due to hitting state aid. Members highlight the importance of supporting small and big industries and asks the Minister when the new restrictions is going to come into play?

Minister understands the leading time and trying to give the industry a warning to prepare. Scientists are telling Ministers the sooner the better and trying to make sure we get the balance right. The Minister explains that the financial support won't be going down the development route and will be on the basis of ERF 1.

Official mentioned a UKG call with colleagues, and they also don't know what's going on. As frustrating as it is the Ministers are here and time is being invested which is invaluable, with the points going back to Cabinet.

- Discussions around Micro businesses with 5 businesses going for sale this week and highlights the importance of not forgetting the small self-employed or employed businesses. The Global Travel taskforce report has been published and the Chancellor announced that Visit Britain has a budget of £20m with a large chunk for Visit England and another £60m set aside for the Great campaign. Highlights the importance for the survival until April, needing to work out how much Wales will be allocated to come out of this fighting.

Official reassures budgets are currently being discussed within WG for next financial year. Not the fact WG isn't able to deliver this for Wales it just hasn't been announced.

- Suggestions with banded support structure financially around rateable value for utility costs and topping up employment. Hopefully, the financial packages will reflect each individual business.

Mari Stevens closes the meeting, thanks all for attending and reminds all of the CMO and Scientific Advisor discussion straight after this meeting with the Hospitality Group.

**Next meeting – 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020.**

Ffion Evans-Humphreys  
2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020