

Meeting (32) of Tourism Group – 13:00–14:00 Wednesday 16th December 2020

Participants:

Deputy Minister, CST	WG	Adrian Greason-Walker	WTA
Jason Thomas - Director	WG	Dave Chapman	UK Hospitality C
Mitchel Theaker	WG	Paula Ellis	SW Forum Chair
Rob Holt	WG	Ian Edwards	VB Board rep
Rhidian Morgan	WG	Steve Hughson	MW Forum Chair
Lucy Von Weber	WG	Philippa George	SE Forum Chair
Claire Chappell	WG	Michael Bewick	North Forum Chair
Tara Croxton	WG	Andrew Campbell	WTA

Apologies; Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and Welsh Language.

Anthony Rosser, Stephen Jones and Sean Taylor.

Version: Final

Main points of the Meeting

Jason Thomas discusses the lunchtime announcement by the First Minister. He confirms Tier 4 from the 28th December with no end date and will be defined on the metrics of the tiers.

Rob Holt expresses how complicated it is around the regulations, currently in talks with lawyers to confirm decisions around the restrictions with accommodation.

Deputy Minister noticed in the wording of the statement the importance of an orderly lockdown, making guests leave from accommodation they have booked wouldn't be orderly.

JT said the FM has given notice the lockdown is coming, most people have been anticipating this anyway and now it's confirmed.

Taskforce members raised the following points:

-Concerns around the 2 households and 3 households issue within domestic setting. 2 households is advisory and 3 households is law. Do they have to leave the same as accommodation or are both settings allowed to stay until the 28th?

Official explains the difference between guidance and regulations – wait for the statement from FM later today to confirm this.

-Importance of the messaging; Tier 4 situation from Christmas day and looking at the time scale, effectively closed down until February running into half term. The group discuss the messaging, trying to get the mind-set of a very bleak time for a longer period.

Official discusses the timeline of the restrictions leading into the Firebreak, and hopefully the vaccine would have continued exponential growth. Control plan does say we will only move down one tier at a time with the need to ensure everything is stabilised before moving down.

-Concerns to not open up too early, set to fail as the example of December. Follow the science, keep us closed to give the opportunity at February half term. This sector is one of the most impacted industry in Wales. Hotel industry need answer really quick – 30 calls waiting to be answered based on what the WG have said, will take 1000 calls today for questions we don't have the answers to. What does it mean for people staying until the 27th

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December, essentially can stay if visiting family or friends - how do we cater for them? On the other side, people asking if they can stay before going into lockdown. Request for the industry to know how we are going to manage that.

Official discusses the working assumption, but tells the group to not do anything commercial on the back of the assumption. Better to wait until something formal is released and will get this to the group as soon as we can.

-Preliminary projections on when the restrictions are likely to cease? Whether possible to have lower tiers in rural areas down the line?

-Communication with the industry and minutes from these meetings discussed. Understand the sensitivity of the issues discussed however, the members of the group are representing the industry and they want to know what's discussed. Concerns by accusation of not contributing important issues to the minutes.

Official discusses the tiers and the control plan does allow a targeted approach. Discusses the sensitivity of the meeting notes and will provide less detail to make it quicker for them to be published.

Official asks for levels of bookings from the 23th – 27th December period to feed into discussions **(Action)**.

-Concerns of being fixated on the Christmas period and the need to look forward with events and hospitality for Easter. The predicted analysis is essential for the summer signature events, without test events until March/April is catastrophic. Protect our events to support the hospitality industry. Commercially have to make decisions in January or February for the summer events. Sector specific support will be required for events and others post 1st April and CRF 2 needs to be thought about now.

Official discusses the presentation of the rollout by Dr Richardson. Data will continue, have already vaccinated 7,500 people in Wales already. Need to see the impact of this, with more data for predictive analysis, to then see the result of the impact on restrictions.

Official discusses that in plenary yesterday a commitment was made to Plaid that the CMO and PH colleagues would come to the industry meetings in January.

Official discusses the UK level Tourism Industry Council meeting with key industry stakeholders that shared the outline strawman of UK tourism recovery plan. This covered short to medium term, with points predicting coming out of the alert levels. Interesting to see they are thinking ahead and Visit Wales intend to dedicate and set up work teams to mirror the UK plan in the New Year.

Official said the control plan will prevent the emergence of tier 4 too quickly, metrics will stop this being triggered, strongly believe the control plan will prevent this from happening.

-Concerns for Weddings and keep pushing for support. Financial support to be topped up, to get businesses through to Easter. Lockdown is going to be very damaging on top of everything else this year.

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-Discussion on the planning process, it would be helpful if the FM looks at the 3 week reviews, currently trapped within a difficult timetable. Flexibility under the terms of the tier system, need to try and get back to an August position, don't want to go back to struggling with the 10pm curfew – could set back the recovery. Formal requested for medical information from the decision to close down hospitality - important not to damage reputation between Government and industry. Hostility around how people behave under the influence of alcohol indulging in supermarkets compared to the 2hr restriction within hospitality in a sensible licenced way.

Official confirms the note for continued concern for more evidence based information. Opportunity to reevaluate what's in tier 2 and return to that. Discussion around the financial implications of tier 4, £380m won't get the industry through to March and understand there is a big ask out there. 21-day review point – Ministers will be reviewing the tiers every week so wouldn't be fixated on the review moving forward. All regulations that underpin the 4 tiers will be laid out this week and all Ministers will just have to decide to move or not.

Official discusses Weddings and the difficulties with tier 2 & tier 3 with the need to return to this. Will continue to make the argument for between 30-50 people and around the viewing process.

-The group welcome clarity on tiers and asks if there is a way of linking the financial support?

Officials said that there is a point to link the two, hope to join up the funding element to the restrictions element.

-Concern of the extension of 80% furlough payments after 21st of Jan. Hoping we have an announcement from the Chancellor soon to help us plan extended closure or more redundancies.

Official stated WG have started the lobbying of UKG in regards to the end of March. Also internally lobbying on business rates too. Lobbying of Treasury through MP's at UK level is very important in terms of VAT.

Jason Thomas thanks all for the continuing efforts on the 32 and last meeting of the year. Proposing to arrange the next meeting for early January 2021.

Wishes a Merry Christmas to all.

Ffion Evans-Humphreys
18th December 2020