

Meeting (41) of Tourism Group, 15:00 Tuesday 23rd March 2021

Participants:

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

Version: Final

Main points of the Meeting

1. Welcome and update.

Jason Thomas starts the meeting by discussing the pre-election period, which starts on Thursday 25th March. This will be the last meeting and reassures the group around future engagement and communication during this time. He continues by providing staff updates and notified that hospitality will be a specific responsibility within the Cabinet portfolio in Welsh Government (WG) for the first time moving forward.

-Confirms nothing is certain until the First Minister (FM) signs off in relation to self-contained accommodation, as there are concerns from health colleagues due to evidence from SAGE around transmissibility in hotels. Following this, JT explains that there is active consideration on consequential funding for next financial year.

-WG understand the need for a date in terms of outdoor hospitality and attractions. FM signalled that 22nd April is under consideration, working on the principle that you need minimum 3 weeks' notice.

Minister (MfMH,W&WL) discusses that the 27th is a very important date and underlines the caution with concerns around hotels. Spoke to FM and Health Minister and highlighted the issues and problems if WG were to change the approach. Minister reiterated the need for the industry to receive 3 weeks' notice and had spoken to the Economy Minister around the continuation of support packages if it's difficult to re-open. Minister thanks the Deputy Minister for the incredible work and contribution to tourism and Welsh politics.

2. Taskforce members raised the following points:

- Would like Tourism as a predominant role in Cabinet at Ministerial level moving forward. The pandemic has showed how important Tourism, Leisure and the sectors are, and this needs to be taken into consideration in the election.
- Tourism taskforce has a lot to offer and the group discusses the positive impact of the work between private sector and public sector and the positive collaboration. It was suggested to encapsulate this by creating a report of the useful work that's been done.

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- Reiteration that the sector are still in difficulty with trying to plan ahead and the need for 3 weeks to plan. Need to acknowledge all the businesses with employment, stock etc.

MfMH,W&WL suggests for the group to write to the FM directly underlining the importance of the sector to the economy of Wales as it's a decision for the WG (**Action – Group**). Minister mentions how valuable this group has been and discusses how useful the group could be within the role of shaping the future.

Deputy Minister (DMfCST) support this and has already expressed to the FM, however, he explains that this isn't for him to intervene. DM said that Tourism is the key economic activity and covers the whole of Wales uniting the nation and the FM has acknowledged this from attending the group meetings.

JT discusses the legacy the DMfCST leaves behind with Cadw and Creative Wales and will look at these as potential models for Visit Wales. JT discusses the report that the Stakeholders mentioned and if the Ministers are content to take this forward in the spirit of the partnership, should be something the group does together (**Action**).

- Delighted with the progress and forward thinking in the public announcement and decision to review the control plan with test events moving to level 3, alongside CRF 2 announcement is hugely positive.
- The challenge is long term, concern of mass gathering and events with no return to normality until 2022 with social distancing throughout the winter period and then a 3 wave. Need this clarified to help organisations and major events plan for the future, which demonstrates the need for CRF to continue after the 6 months it's calculated.

JT explains that CRF is restricted due to the consequential, derived on the fact that UK Government essentially saying everything will be back to normal by 21st June. He continues discussing that WG have gone further and announced £30m, clearly will need to consider beyond the 6-month period.

Rob Holt discusses conversations with leads from event research programmes in England. He explains that Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are in the same position for test events and England are testing for high profile events with up to 20,000 in Wembley Stadium. WG had agreement from UK Government (UKG) Minister for Tourism Nigel Huddleston to be part of the programmes as observers due to the various programme boards and scientists involved. Intention is to get through the pilots by April for the report on 21st of May, that links in to the vaccination certificate, social distancing review and international travel group. RH confirms that Public Health Wales are included in the arrangements.

- Disappointment is discussed if hotels aren't classified as self-contained accommodation. If medical advice is saying hotels need to change it's highlighted the important to share the findings with the industry, to understand the medical advice if the protocols aren't sufficient enough to change them and be part of the bigger picture.

JT explains that the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) advice around this will be published for the public to have access when finalised.

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- Members were concerned around clarification on outdoor hospitality and when decisions were going to be made, grateful for the clarity and post 1st April support. Blue Stone wanted to know what their guests could do post 27th March as some outdoor attractions are permitted to open.

JT confirms subject to the announcement, from Saturday outdoor spaces and historic attractions will open, such as historical gardens with Cadw and National Trust - which are free of charge.

Claire Chappell thanks the group for the input into the recovery plan that published yesterday. It's been the most clicked newsletter so far and the FM showed a hard copy in the Senedd. In terms of engagement, CC welcome thoughts on a role of a task and finish group and who would participate short term to pull together a practical action plan to share with the new administration to take forward (**Action – group**).

- Hotels opening has a substantial gain as a representation to the industry showing the intent of WG to get things open despite the criticism of roadmaps in England. Other Stakeholders mentioned that the industry can't complain if the 'roadmap' changes as it's been delivered.
- Llandudno hospitality members asked when self-contained will go to two households as it's not noticeably part of the timetable.
- Request as UK Hospitality has 600 escape rooms as members, to try get them open sooner rather than later as they are secure environments.
- There was discussion around Weddings on the position of viewing and for future funding. It was noted that weddings are moving to England and need to ensure the business element is being pushed in Wales around trading conditions as competitive advantage.
- Members made further points that this group has been phenomenal with easy access to Ministers and officials, don't usually get the one-to-one engagement with Government. Recognition from the group for the hard work and support.
- Acknowledge the financial support that's come from WG which has been a vast amount of money, never going to please everyone and never going to be enough. Have come a long way since the letter of asking for funding support since the 8th June. Grateful for the recognition and support of hospitality industry and the wide representation moving forward.
- Appeal for the DMfCST idea of ensuring the voucher scheme materialise with planning.

RH empathises with the group and explains the difficult position the stakeholders are in with the industry. He explained that DMfCST raised 'help out to eat out' and there are no plans to repeat at the moment. RH confirms that there is still a lot of work ongoing around the messaging and restrictions around travel from England to Wales between 27th March – 12th April. Aware this could be a problem, need to ensure people aren't taking bookings from England.

- Concerns on the long-term issues within 18 months - 2 years' time, could lose the market to overseas and need to take advantage on research. Suggestion in order to predict the business environment for the future, need to focus on the research and how we get that from consumers and make changes to the business model. WTA is content to assist, especially for the next administration – needs to be a priority in the Ministerial responsibilities (**Action**).

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3. Closing remarks

The meeting closes with kind words from the group thanking the Deputy Minister for the contribution as an iconic figure. Sitting through 40 meetings with the group is impressive beyond belief and everyone wishes him well for the future.

DMfCST said how inspirational the group has been and is a tribute to the strength and intelligence of Welsh business and is delighted to have been a service to you.

Ffion Evans-Humphreys
25th March 2021