

## Visit Wales - South East Wales Regional Tourism Forum

01 July 2020 – Virtual Meeting (online)

<b>List of attendees representing the following organisations:</b>
Heritage Tourism & Events Ltd (Chair)
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
The Great House, Llantwit
Bridgend County Borough Council
The Vale Resort
Monmouthshire County Council
Cardiff Hoteliers
Cardiff Council
The Royal Mint Experience
ICC Wales
Wales Activity Tourism Organisation
Town & County Collective
Rhondda Cynon Taff Council
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
Newport City Council
Vale of Glamorgan Council
RCT Council
National Trust
Parkway Hotel & Spa
Porthcawl Surf School
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Penderyn Whisky
Visit Wales representatives
<b>Apologies</b>
RSPB
Merthyr Tydfil Council
Severn hills Hideaway
Wales Millennium Centre
Celtic Manor

## **Chair Welcome & Introductions – Philippa George**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

## **Rob Holt – Tourism Policy**

RH thanked the Chair for representing the industry and the South East region at the VW COVID-19 weekly meetings.

RH gave members an update on the current situation regarding lifting of travel restrictions, accommodation without shared facilities, outdoor attractions and the work being carried out on indoor attractions, all subject to Public Health Guidance. There is a fast track review of hospitality, for outdoors in the first instance, which will follow a phased approach, alongside UK Government.

Industry Guidance is online: <https://gov.wales/tourism-and-hospitality-businesses-guidance-phased-reopening-html>

Good to Go - the UK-wide industry standard and consumer mark is available online: <https://goodtogo.visitbritain.com/your-business-good-to-go-wales>

VW are currently developing a Visitor Promise, which will include information about Track, Trace & Protect: <https://www.visitwales.com/promise>

SL stated that Wales is losing business to England and overseas countries well into August. The industry are unable to give guidance to visitors on opening dates for their visitor experience, which is making things difficult. RH stated that the FM announcement on 2 July should provide some answers and it is important that Wales be seen as a safer option than other UK regions.

## **Funding / Grant Support – Rhidian Morgan**

RM updated members on Phase 2 of the [Economic Resilience Fund](#) (ERF), which went live last week. RM advised businesses to apply ASAP with Phase 3 ERF likely to focus on business recovery, further details to follow.

RM updated members that officials are pressing UK Government for additional resources to support the industry. There are no plans to provide a sectorial approach within future funding schemes.

MSBF is continuing to proceed with projects in receipt of Award Letters. Pipeline projects have recently been progressed to application stage. However, the scheme is closed to any new applicants. RM stated it was encouraging to see the number of businesses who have recently taken up the offer to progress in these current circumstances, which demonstrates there still seems to be an appetite in the business sector.

## **Lucy Von Weber- Marketing**

LvW gave an update on the Visitor Promise work being undertaken. LvW also updated members on the communications move to 'Visit Wales – Safely'.

## **Research – Jo Corke**

**COVID-19 Consumer Sentiment Tracker**, run jointly with VisitBritain and VisitScotland to understand domestic intent to take overnight short breaks and holidays both within the UK and abroad, with particular focus around the current barriers and concerns around travel and how these will evolve over time. Weekly GB-level reports are published on Visit Britain's website (non-GSR). Week five is shown here (these were before the Wales, England and Scotland announcements): <https://www.visitbritain.org/covid-19-consumer-sentiment-tracker>. A monthly Wales focussed report will be published as a GSR report, and the first is planned for publication next week.

### **International consumer work**

We are partnering with VisitBritain, VisitScotland and London & Partners to commission consumer studies in around ten of the UK's main international markets over the next few months to understand current and evolving views in relation to travelling and visiting the UK.

### **COVID-19 impact work**

The team has been feeding economic and social impact evidence into various papers used in discussions around re-opening parts of the tourism sector, and is compiling a summary piece on the impact of COVID-19 on the visitor economy in Wales.

### **Domestic forecasts**

We are working with Visit Britain to develop forecasts on the impact of COVID-19 on the visitor numbers, taking into account the differences in the home nations in terms of lifting restrictions.

### **COVID-19 related redundancies within Tourism**

We intend to assess the redundancy impact within Tourism in the next Business Barometer, which we expect will take place in late July after some parts of the sector have re-opened. We are also working with regional networks to gain informal feedback on redundancies across Wales to feed into discussions internally. JC will send a note out to Fora next week but anything you have can go through the Regional Engagement Manager as well.

### **Research summary**

JC will be sending out research summary mid and end of July and then decide on regularity.

### **Community Engagement in Tourism**

Given concerns from some communities about the risks associated with re-opening tourism, we are asking local authorities and local partners to feed in any findings from community engagement that they undertake. This will be collated to inform internal discussions on re-opening and mitigating the impact of visitors on local communities. JC will send a note out to Fora next week but anything you have can go through the Regional Engagement Manager as well.

### **GB Tourism Survey and GB Day Visit Survey**

Planned to start back from early July in England and mid-July elsewhere. We are considering when to restart the **Occupancy survey**.

**Tourism Performance 2019 annual report** was published in June.

The official tourism statistics publication, a comprehensive report that includes 2019 Q4 and annual data from the main tourism surveys. It showed a really strong performance for the Wales tourism industry before the pandemic. <https://gov.wales/wales-tourism-performance-2019>

### **Members Update – Karen Matthews, Cardiff Hoteliers**

KM gave an update on members' experience of being open for essential workers throughout lockdown. With the majority of hotels open in Cardiff, there are still a few waiting until September to re-open. Open businesses are trading between 25-30% with essential workers. The city has many audit and compliance examples due to the number of different hotel chains. However, they are all working to the same values and find it useful to support and share information collaboratively during this difficult trading period. Business tourism and event management has been one of the biggest difficulties faced in having to reduce meeting room capacity and working with clients to suit their needs.

KM provided some examples of the work being undertaken by members to ensure guest safety; 'grab and go' breakfasts, fogging bedrooms, front facing staff wearing PPE, washing work uniform on site, reducing non-essential items in bedrooms, moving to guest digital apps, reduced housekeeping service to leave rooms longer after guests have checked out along with staff training on new ways of working amongst many other improvements to ensure safety and cleanliness is paramount.

Members' feedback found this information really useful to hear how businesses are working with new and innovative solutions to ensure the safety of their guests and staff.

### **Members Update – Hugh Murray – Porthcawl Surf School**

HM updated members on his collaborative work with outdoor activity providers across the country including Isle of Man, Newcastle, Cornwall, Bristol and Ireland on how sharing re-opening best practice has helped reassure businesses. HM updated members on re-opening concerns around their ability to manage demand. The outdoor activity providers have also seen a change in the types of visitors attending who would not have booked outdoor activities previously.

HM has been dealing with many business issues around tutor ratios and adhering to social distancing requirements, difficulties in coping with demand of enquires and being unable to take bookings. HM ensures he works alongside [Adventure Smart Wales](#) in providing consistent and correct messages to visitors.

HM updated members on his work as Technical Director for Surf Life Saving <https://www.slsgb.org.uk/> working with volunteer life guards.

### **Closing remarks – Philippa George**

The Chair offered members the opportunity to submit nominations for the position of SEWTF Vice Chair. The position would offer the opportunity to directly feed into senior WG Officials and attend weekly meetings with Deputy Minister to highlight the concerns and issues of their particular region and industry sub sector.

The Chair thanked members for attending the meeting.

**Date of next meeting:** Members will receive an email requesting their preference on meeting dates for July.