

Visit Wales - South East Wales Regional Tourism Forum

10 Nov 2020 – Virtual Meeting (online)

List of attendees representing the following organisations:
Heritage Tourism & Events Ltd (Chair)
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Bridgend County Borough Council
Monmouthshire County Council
The Royal Mint Experience
The Vale Resort
Town & County Collective
Rhondda Cynon Taff Council
Cardiff Hoteliers Association
Adventure Smart UK
Newport City Council
Merthyr Council
Vale of Glamorgan Council
The Lion, Treorchy/Treorchy Chamber of Trade
Holiday Inn, Newport
Celtic Manor
Cardiff City Council
Llechwen Hall Hotel & Spa
Parkway Hotel & Spa
Caerphilly County Borough Council
National Museums Wales
National Trust
Van Mansion B&B
Caerphilly Tourism Association
Casa Mia Restaurant
Under the Oak Glamping
Miskin Manor Hotel & Health Club
Monmouthshire Cottages
The Hide at St Donats
Visit Wales representatives

Chair Welcome & Introductions – Philippa George

The Chair welcomed all members and in particular new members to the forum allowing them the opportunity to introduce themselves to the group.

Member update – Karen Matthews, Cardiff Hoteliers

Vice Chair, KM provided members with an update of the Cardiff Hotelier group. A 76.1% reduction in performance compared with last year is an indication of the how the market has been severely effected. KM explained this downturn would continue alongside the English lockdown and restrictions across the festive period. August was a more positive month; the Eat Out to Help Out scheme boosted sales.

KM explained that although the furlough scheme has been a lifeline, some job roles (e.g., housekeeping) have been effected by reduced stamina, higher anxiety and increased costs in training and sanitation equipment. KM noted there is a positive outlook to remain trading.

Rob Holt – Tourism Policy & Finance Update

RH reflected on the pace of change and development since March 2020, and the level of detail require to enact these changes. RH assured members that their concerns and ideas are being fed directly to the Minister through the weekly COVID-19 Taskforce meetings, in which Forum Chairs present members' views.

RH explained Round Three of the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF) received £140m of applications, which due to the volume of applications closed after 27 hours. ERF 4 is being planned which will include an Expression of Interest (EOI) process to gauge the areas of support required. RH recommended members visit the Business Wales channels regularly for ERF updates.

In terms of the current regulations, RH explained these aim to reduce the contact between people and increase individual responsibility, these will be reviewed on the 19 November. PG agreed that individual responsibility will be pivotal in ensure compliance is maximised. Adrian Emmett warned of implications for time bound pub bookings which could create a pub crawl effect, RH explained discretion should be used in these cases.

Lucy Von Weber shared guidance links with members:

<https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk/page/WalesGuidance>

<https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk/page/webinars>

<https://llyw.cymru/rheoliadau-coronafeirws-canllawiau>

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance>

<https://gov.wales/restarting-public-transport-guidance-operators> (Public Transport)

Lucy Von Weber – Visit Wales Marketing

LvW presented a marketing update to members including:

- Updates to the Visit Wales website in terms of content and optimisation:
<https://www.visitwales.com/>
- *Addo* messages will continue to be promoted throughout the winter, with social activity also taking place over the next few weeks to inspire for the future.

- Some proactive PR will take place around 'I'm a Celebrity' – to promote Welsh experiences for visitors to enjoy in future. We have a good relationship with ITV and will support and promote on social.
- Online Media Centre being put in place – it will support IAC enquiries but will be there for the longer term.
- Reviewing opportunities to carry out a 'give the gift of experience' digital campaign in the lead up to Christmas – to encourage consumers to buy experiences in Wales rather than gifts, supporting the local tourism industry. A similar campaign was very successful in 2019. This is all subject to budget confirmation
- Supporting hospitality messages from stakeholders - we're producing digital assets and PR support to outline the new guidelines for the hospitality industry, to reassure the public that all measures have been taken to ensure a safe experience, and push messages about the need for consumers to act responsibly and follow the measures implemented by businesses
- We are continuing B2B engagement through workshops, digital comms and social, and undertaking virtual training sessions.
- Budget proposals for 2020/2021 are currently being prepared, and a bid will be made for appropriate campaign activity

Paula Warren enquired about campaign support to react to a Welsh-to-Welsh market, PW explained further her use of a media release-ready webpage she uses to help journalists. LvW thanked PW for her idea and suggested she shared this with members at a future meeting. LvW also explained the Media Centre offered such a facility: <https://assets.wales.com/>

Fiona Wilton noted mixed messages from Public Health Wales and the visitor industry, RH acknowledged meeting with friends or family has a wellbeing function, but also this needs to be done responsibly. LvW suggested email database marketing is a place in which to target messages which balance these messages and promote responsible travel.

LvW shared links to the newsletter bulletins with members:

Our newsletters/bulletins - available to view online here

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/tourism/coronavirus-covid-19-bulletins> @VisitWalesBiz

The direct link to subscribe to newsletters is:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWALES/subscriber/new>

Jo Starkey – Visit Wales Research

JS shared research updates and offered a caveat in being mindful of the rapidly changing environment (in terms of research data).

JS presented findings from the Business Barometer, Consumer Insights Tourism Tracker and Occupancy Annual Report (2019).

PG commented on the redundancy figures (resulting from COVID-19) and suggested the figure to be larger. JS explained the sample size and timing accounts for this however AR's point is valid and the use of research is contextual. JS added figures from today's (10/11/2020) ONS report showed 314,000 redundancies throughout the UK.

RH explained this data drives decision-making processes, particularly the consumer confidence work.

AOB - Chair

Amanda Rosenberg suggested that although the challenges of this year are testing everyone, there is opportunity in developing ideas and reflecting on positive initiatives. PG agreed with AR and reiterated the importance of this mindset.

Closing remarks - Chair

The Chair thanked all presenters for their contributions and all members for attending the meeting.

Date of next meeting: December 15, 10:30-12:30.