Visit Wales - South East Wales Regional Tourism Forum

15 Dec 2020 – 10:30 to 11:30

Virtual Meeting (online)

List of attendees representing the following organisations:
Heritage Tourism & Events Ltd (Chair)
Bridgend County Borough Council
Monmouthshire County Council
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Royal Mint Experience
Cardiff Hoteliers Association
Adventure Smart UK
Newport City Council
Merthyr Council
Vale of Glamorgan Council
The Lion, Treorchy / Treorchy Chamber of Trade
Celtic Manor
Cardiff City Council
Parkway Hotel & Spa
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Caerphilly Tourism Association
Aneurin Leisure
The Angel, Abergavenny
Wye Valley AONB
Valleys Regional Park
Monmouthshire Cottages
The Hide at St Donats
Zip World (Tower)
Visit Wales representatives

Chair Welcome & Introductions – Philippa George

The Chair welcomed all members to the forum and introduced new members representing Zip World, Valleys Regional Park, Playworks Childcare and Parkdean Resorts.

Member update – David Thomas, Zip World Tower

David introduced the Zip World Tower project to the group including the build progress, marketing plans, projections and proposed links with local businesses. Several members commented on the excitement around the addition of a quality attraction in South East Wales. Lucy Von Weber also commented on the positive Zip World messaging and social media activity. Phil Lewis offered to contact David to see where the synergies lies with the Valleys Regional Park project.
PG thanked David for his exciting presentation and for joining as a member of the forum.

Member update – Phil Lewis, Valleys Regional Park

Phil presented the progress of the Valleys Regional Park project, including news of how the European Social Fund has helped to progress the project. Phil emphasised the strong connection between wellbeing, communities and industry and looks forward to continue creating strong links with South East stakeholders. PG thanked Phil for his upbeat presentation and also for his joining the forum's membership. Alyson Tippings suggested meeting with Phil to discuss ways of working together. Adrian Emmett thanked both David and Phil for their presentations and also offered to contact both to discuss further partnership working. Alan Samuel will arrange to share presentation copies with members.

Rob Holt – Tourism Policy & Finance Update

RH commented on the continued pace of change, particularly in terms of guidance and regulations, and directed members to the newsletter which is a key source of reliable and timely industry information.

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

RH explained round three of the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF) received 400 applications, which is approaching completion. The Cultural Recovery Fund is still processing applications and aims to release funding quickly. ERF 4 is being planned to open in the new year (2021), 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.

Paula Warren enquired about the funding support post-Christmas break, RH advised all members keep checking the Business Wales website for updates (in addition to Visit Wales bulletins):
https://businesswales.gov.wales/coronavirus-advice/covid-19-support-business

Anthony Bolter enquired about any exemptions to restrictions for those providing social care respite (for well-being). RH directed members to the FAQs: https://gov.wales/alert-level-4-frequently-asked-questions

Fiona Wilton raised the issue of border accommodation business, in which people having their Welsh bookings cancelled, re-book with an English provider in close proximity. RH explained a four

nations approach is continually discussed, however currently, England is the outlier (and the onus remains with the customer).

LvW shared links to the new alert system and also pointed to details about travel restrictions : https://gov.wales/written-statement-coronavirus-control-plan-alert-levels-wales

Guidance excerpt:
"Are there restrictions on travel out of Wales, for example, to England?
Yes. There are restrictions in place for travel out of Wales. People living in Wales cannot travel to areas of England in tier three or areas of Scotland in level three or above. In these circumstances, travel out of Wales is only allowed under limited circumstances, such as for work or education. Travel to other parts of the UK is not limited in law. However, we continue to encourage everyone to think carefully about our own lives and what changes we can make to reduce our risk. This includes thinking carefully about travelling. The virus thrives wherever and whenever we are in close contact with others. *In particular, we strongly advise against travel which is not necessary to tier one or two areas in England, areas in Scotland in level two or Northern Ireland because of the risk of spreading the virus."*

Adrian Cole commented on the continued difficulty in forward planning throughout the pandemic and questioned the reason for relaxing some of the rules over Christmas. RH explained it is likely that people would meet regardless of restrictions and adjusting the rules attempts to bring some order to that behaviour. RH added that indeed future planning must be difficult for the industry and sees the new alert system as a way to add simplicity to the regulations and future planning.

In answer to a members question prior to the forum, AS provided a link to the Great Western Railway website, which explains how travellers can apply for a 12-month e-voucher if they are unable to use their advance ticket due to Covid travel restrictions:
https://www.gwr.com/help-and-support/refunds-and-compensation/unused-ticket-refunds

Lucy Von Weber – Visit Wales Marketing

LvW announced the planning of a Virtual Tourism Roadshow, due to take place around mid-January. The event will last around half a day; members can expect a diary marker soon. LvW introduced Mike Price, Visit Wales Media Engagement Manager.

Mike Price – Visit Wales Media Engagement Manager

MP provided an insight and update to the public relations and media work achieved and ongoing. MP described details of successful media campaigns including international publications and concluding with the Lodestars Wales Anthology – available in print only:
https://lodestarsanthology.co.uk/issue-14-wales
PG thanked MP for his much needed positive and uplifting presentation.

Jo Starkey – Visit Wales Research

JS was unable to attend the forum but shared a brief research update:

COVID-19 UK Tourism Consumer Tracker Survey
Visit Wales continues to collaborate with VisitBritain and VisitScotland in running a UK consumer tracker. The fortnightly UK findings, covering 20-27 November (Wave 20) can be found on the VisitBritain website.

The fieldwork for this wave was undertaken during the second lockdown in England. Key findings show the average national mood has declined slightly to 6.5/10. Confidence for taking a trip in December and January has remained relatively consistent since Wave 18, while confidence in the medium-term (February to June) has declined slightly. However, confidence for trips from July onwards is showing an improving trend.

COVID-19 International Tourism Consumer Tracker Survey
Visit Wales will be participating with VisitBritain and other partners to conduct a COVID-19 sentiment tracker covering international markets, covering similar topics to the UK consumer tracker. The first survey wave will run in mid-December with provisional results by Christmas and reporting early January. We will provide further details to the Forum in the New Year

AOB - Chair

No AOB was discussed.

Closing remarks - Chair

The Chair thanked all presenters and Visit Wales officials for their contributions, and all members for attending the meeting.

Date of next meeting: January 12 2021.