

## Visit Wales - South East Wales Regional Tourism Forum

13 May 2021 – 1:30pm

Virtual Meeting (online)

<b>List of attendees representing the following organisations:</b>
Heritage Tourism & Events Ltd (Chair)
Llechwen Hall
Celtic Manor Resort
Aneurin Leisure
Caerphilly County Council
Monmouthshire Cottages
Newport Council
Penderyn Distillery
Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council
The Angel, Abergavenny
Bridgend County Council
Merthyr County Council
Blaenau-Gwent County Council
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
The Hide at St Donats
Rock UK
ZipWorld (Tower)
Vale of Glamorgan County Council
The Royal Mint
Wales Millennium Centre
Wye Valley AONB
Monmouthshire County Council
Town and Country Collective
The Vale Resort
RSPB
Welsh Government / Visit Wales representatives

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

PG welcomed all members and highlighted the importance of the imminent relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions on the 17 May.

PG introduced Steffan Roberts, Deputy Director of Tourism Development, and thanks him for attending the forum.

## **Steffan Roberts, Deputy Director of Tourism Development**

SR introduced himself as Deputy Director of Tourism Development and provided a brief summary of his career journey. SR highlighted the continued importance of the forum in moving forward, and is enthused about developing tourism with forum members.

SR announced the newly formed Welsh Government cabinet would be likely announced on the afternoon of Thursday 13 May. SR also pointed to the move to alert level 2, of which the final decisions will be announced at the press conference on the 14 May. Ahead of this review, SR confirmed the rule of six has been confirmed. SR also announced the first phase of the £200m resilience fund goes live on Monday 17 May, which offers grants of up to £25,000:

<https://gov.wales/further-support-welsh-businesses>

Beyond alert level 2, SR suggested given the right conditions over the forthcoming 21 day review period, a move to alter level 1 is possible. In preparations for further relaxations, SR explained Rob Holt and his team are currently piloting events: <https://gov.wales/wales-pilot-test-events-get-underway>

Antony Bolter raised a question about guidelines for indoor museum and listed building tours. SR pointed to the guidance of indoor hospitality: <https://gov.wales/culture-and-heritage-destinations-and-venues-guidance-phased-return>

AB also enquired about the use of public transport in terms of whether it should be encouraged or not. SR explained public transport is to be used by visitors and residents alike.

## **David Stephens – Tourism Research**

David presented the latest Tourism Research updates including:

- Forecasts which estimates international and domestic visitor revenue.
- Domestic staycations are forecasted to make a more rapid recovery compared to an inbound recovery which is forecast to take over four years.
- Public sentiment is looking more positive since the announcement of the easements. However, the scars will remain to businesses.
- Travel confidence has increased however but is still fragile, clear messaging and well managed experiences are a factor in this.
- Travel restrictions not the only concerns – the amount of activities and opportunities are also factors.
- Staycations are not surprisingly strong, also even when overseas travel is lifted, staycations are predicted to stay strong. The easing of quarantine might swing more positively to the

overseas demand. Value for money for families and younger travellers will be key – prices for UK destinations would be mindful of this.

- In terms of intentions, a 'wait and see approach' is prominent, particularly when we're concerned with autumn bookings

### **Huw Wilkinson, Regional Skills Partnership - Regional Skills Partnership Manager, Cardiff Capital Region**

HW introduced himself as Regional Skills Partnership Manager and thanked PG for the forum invitation. HW presented an overview of the Skills Partnership and explained the WG regional approach to skills delivery and the 4 key roles:

- Produce and analyse LMI to inform future priorities
- Review regional skills provision
- Act as a strategic body and represent regional interests
- Maximise availability of funds

HW shared the Cardiff Capital Regional Skills Partnership mission: 'to bring people together to promote strategic and collaborative decision making.' Kerry Thatcher asked how the Tourism and Skills partnership linked with the Regional Skills Partnership. HW explained the Cardiff Regional Skills Partnership is represented on the Wales Tourism and Hospitality Skills partnership. KT thanked HW for feeding into skills and recruitment issues and invited all members to visit the tourism, hospitality and events skills webpage: <https://businesswales.gov.wales/tourism/skills>

Paula Warren shared her experience of the Department for Work and Pensions 'Kick Start' placement. PW explained the time delay was up to 6 months to get a Kick Start employee, which will be beyond her peak trading period. PW wondered why Kick Start is not linked with skills partnerships. HW explained the DWP are represented on the Skills Partnership board, and there is an effective cluster group has links to people currently seeking employment. HW offered to follow this up with PW.

Julian Hitchcock highlighted his previously robust staffing levels have since been diminished. JH went further to describe the difficulties in recruitment.

PG thanked HW for his presentation

### **Claire Chappell, Visit Wales – Tourism Marketing update**

CC recently met with the UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), which aims to find synergies in recovery planning and tourism development. CC acknowledged the huge progress and efforts made by businesses towards re-opening. CC also suggested that a return to full international travel may not be possible for some time. To keep informed of changes CC reiterated the importance of being signed up to the newsletter:

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

Claire shared her presentation (shared to members), which includes:

- The Recovery Plan – of which the forum members' input created the plan, and now requires a task and finish group to select and execute interventions.
- Updated re-opening guidance – a new guidance film is helping businesses to comply. It continues to be crucial for businesses to conform to TTP guidelines in order to collect customer contact details.

- Links to the 'Keep Wales Safe' toolkit, which has practical resources to help employers keep their employees safe. Links to the Addo toolkit; an effective vehicle to help businesses keep customers safe.
- The Addo campaign continues to receive increasing support which is important as the opening of England's tourism sector will increase competition with Welsh destinations. This includes full television adverts from mid-May.
- A summary of the Visit Wales campaigns delivered in Wales (including video on demand adverts), which will be extended to the English market from mid-May:
- Examples of hospitality best practice – CC asked members to share exemplars of Addo and the hospitality guidelines. CC presented Gwynedd Council's example of using the Addo messages within their own advertising and messages. The Addo assets can be found on the toolkits webpage: <https://assets.wales.com/pages/toolkits>
- Group/coach visits and guided tours – guidance for these services have been updated (CC provided guidance links within the presentation: <https://gov.wales/restarting-public-transport-guidance-operators>).
- The 'Good to Go' scheme now has around 6000 registered businesses (adhering to regulations and promoting the industry guidelines).
- CC also reiterated the forthcoming dates for easing of restrictions.

JH asked about the time when venues will once again allow people to be entertained by music and gather more freely. CC acknowledged the frustrations and assured members that their concerns are fed directly through to Ministers. JH also commented on the timing around the decision to increase permitted indoor group sizes from four people to six; more time to plan would be appreciated.

PG sought clarity about accommodation bookings in which families and friends met to form larger groups. CC explained social distancing must be adhered to and that accommodation owners should provide guidance to visitors to remain in their bubbles as the current restrictions state (however, they can still attend a restaurant together or meet outdoors together, but must observe the relevant alert level restrictions – see below guidance).

Tourism and Hospitality Guidance -

<https://gov.wales/guidance-for-tourism-and-hospitality-businesses-coronavirus>

### **Members' updates & forum arrangements**

PG asked members to indicate when they wished to meet again; it was decided the next forum should take place in early July.

PG also reported that the Tourism Taskforce has concluded, and replaced by a Tourism Stakeholder group (in which the forum is represented by PG).

### **AOB - Chair**

PG reminded members that the role of Chair is still open for nominations and self-nominations. PG asked members to contact Alan Samuel for more information about the role.

Alyson Tippings noted the many changes within the Visit Wales team and requested an update of these. AT also requested information regarding a replacement for the Regional Engagement Manager's recently vacated role.

**Closing remarks - Chair**

On behalf of all members PG thanked Louisa Giles (in her absence) for her dedicated engagement and development work, after moving on to a new position within Welsh Government.

**Date of next meeting:** To be confirmed.