

Minutes from S.E. Forum meeting 9 February 2022

Attendees

Fiona Wilton - Chair	Alice Brown – Bridgend CBC
Edmond Ryan - Visit Wales	Nerys Royal – RCT CBC
Jane Donald - Visit Wales	Nia Hollins – VOG CBC
Lynsey Handley - MTCBC	David Stephens - Visit Wales
Julian Hitchcock - Town and Country Collective	Steffan Roberts – Visit Wales
Julie Heaven - Aneurin Leisure	Alyson Tippings – Blaenau Gwent CBC
Suzanne Thomas – Visit Wales	Claire Hamer - National Museum Wales
Nicola Edwards – Monmouthshire CBC	Lesley Beaumont - WG
Kerry Thatcher – Visit Wales	Gaynor Thomas – Cardiff CBC
Dan Johnson – Royal Mint Experience	Heledd Owen – Visit Wales
Lynne Richards – Newport CBC	Helen Butler – Visit Wales
Paul Williams – Celtic Manor	Stephen Leeke – The Vale Resort
Stephen Davies - Penderyn	Amy Doore - RSPB
Paula Warren – Hide.Wales	Rachel Cilliers Rock UK
Val Hawkins - mwtcymru	Martin Astley – Bike Park Wales
David Greenhough – Welsh Treasury	Lucy Von Weber - Visit Wales
Tom Cleaver - Welsh Treasury	Hugh Murray - Guest
Yasmin Reid-Linfoot - Welsh Treasury	Kevin Burt – Dwr Cymru
Elin Morgan – Welsh Treasury	

Chair Introduction

FW gave her best wishes to Philippa George to a speedy recovery from Covid and this was echoed by attendees.

FW asked for LA's to comment on the consultation for changes to planning rules and the 2nd homes consultation.

Apologies for absence

Philippa George – due to long Covid, Mari Lowe – Bridgend CBC, Natalie Isaac - Bar44 group, Tim Howel – Park Dean resorts, Kim Waters - Abergavenny Food festival, Antony Bolter – Caerphilly CBC, Ian Christopher – RCT CBC

Minutes of the last meeting

Lynne Richards asked for her name to be added to those present

The minutes were agreed.

Matters arising from the last minutes and not already on the agenda

None

Consultation – Property and land taxation

Regarding the Land Tax consultation it seems that LA's may have power to impose increases but are they also considering strategic decreases?

The Wales Tourism Alliance and a number of Self-Caterers met and believe that many of the issues intended to be resolved by this legislation would be better addressed by compulsory registration so can all members please look and comment urgently on the consultations. It affects all and not only self-caterers.

ER to send links out to members.

Property Registration to be an agenda item for next meeting.

Roundtable Updates

AT – Blaenau Gwent

NHS@75 - 2023 sees the 75th anniversary of the NHS and we have established a working party on delivering events and activities to celebrate this as Blaenau Gwent is the home of the NHS. Aneurin Bevan based his model for the NHS on the Tredegar Medical Aid Society. A small interpretation centre has been established in 10 The Circle, where The Tredegar Medical Aid Society had its offices. I have a meeting next week with Julie Osmund of Major events to discuss options.

DMP - The destination Partnership is working together well. We are currently on our third Destination Management Plan taking us from 2020-25. As with all things, Covid has had a major impact on its delivery and has changed the direction of some areas, none more than Business Tourism. The partnership meets quarterly to monitor progress, catch up on tourism news and developments. We have also started breaking out into working parties to deliver on certain elements e.g. NHS@75 and Blue Plaques.

Developing new Web Site with Town Centres - Historically my authority has not allowed stand-alone websites therefore there is no Visit Blaenau Gwent website however they have just agreed to develop a joint town centre/tourism website and app. We are at the development stage but hope to go live around early summer.

Parc Bryn Bach - The park has seen a whole suite of developments over the last year or so with a new bunkhouse, play area, wellbeing areas and gardens. The latest development is a wellbeing hub, constructed overlooking the lake where business users can work in a unique environment with full Wi-Fi and can enjoy the benefits of the on-site café. The construction has been delayed due to the location of a mineshaft that necessitated a slight site relocation.

The park is seeing its busiest year ever and is a magnet for new visitors for an ever increasing wider area, many of which are seeing the benefits of being outdoor on their mental health and well being.

Covid has resulted in the loss of a few tourism businesses but those who have survived are experiencing high levels of bookings with event regularly sell out, and restaurants and cafes buoyant. Walking trails seem to be almost as busy now as they are in summer months.

Alice Brown - Bridgend

Cosy Corner, the final element of the Porthcawl based TAD project PRIF is progressing. The site is adjacent to the harbour. Planning approval expected this week. RIBA stage 4 nearing completion. Aim to appoint construction contractor in March. The development will consist of a building with 5 lettable units and a large community space as well as public facilities; - Changing places facility, external landscaping and a sheltered dwell area.

Consultants have been appointed for our next Destination Management Plan. Final plan expected by end of June. In order to maximise the opportunities as we will be hosting part of A Dog's Trail with Snoopy from April, we are running a Dog friendly Campaign – Woof you were here! Including a toolkit for businesses, PR and Digital Marketing.

NH – VOG

12-15 new businesses currently going through planning. Launched website in April that links to VW via an API so updates automatically with products. Commissioned Black Diamond PR agency who are actively promoting outside of the Vale. Using 3 themes – Coast, Culture and Countryside and the 4 main regions of the Vale.

Filming in the area has gone through the roof and “all eyes are on Wales” at the moment! There is also an effort to support town centres using Transforming Towns Funding, reinforced through events and campaigns to promote these.

NE - Monmouthshire

New www.VisitMonmouthshire.com website went live in early January. Ongoing process of reviewing and refreshing content to target VW recovery segments. Working with AMA press agency to bring journalists into the area. Freelance journalist with commission for Best Magazine visited in late January, hosted by The Angel Hotel and The Whitebrook. Wendy visited several food and drink producers during her trip. Article due to run around St David's Day. Currently organising a group press trip in March.

Destination Survey closed and results being analysed and interpreted as first stage in Destination Plan review. Destination Partnership being reinstated to engage on the development of the new Destination Plan. (Our engagement with the industry during the pandemic was via Monmouthshire Business Resilience Forum when discussions revolved mainly around business support grants).

Wye Valley Villages Study report currently being finalised before going out to wider consultation.

Encouraging number of planning applications for tourism development being submitted but delays in the processing of these applications due to new stricter phosphate targets.

Southern Wales Marketing Consortium - 9 of the 10 South East Wales LA areas signed up to a collaborative marketing plan for 2022 with a reduced budget focusing on travel trade / group travel and consumer markets. Kim Colebrook re-appointed as part-time coordinator / campaign lead, one day a week for 12 months to deliver agreed activity. Support recently provided for 'coins, coal and cheers' fam trip. Currently working with VW re organisation of Coach Tourism Association AGM / fam trip.

NR – RCT

The Visit RCT Hub members are undertaking sub-group workshops with the Visit RCT Tourism Team to provide input into the Delivery Action Plan. The actions will provide a steer for the Tourism Strategy's delivery action plan.

Visit Rhondda Cynon Taf is currently preparing for work to begin on its new website in Mid-March. The current website will be completely re-written and re-designed, with more of a focus on the functionality of the site and content that appeals to our core audiences – family, outdoor adventurers, weekend explorers and adrenaline-seekers.

Accommodation research has taken place and a Peer-to-Peer report has been carried out to identify Airbnb and self-catering facilities. The accommodation list will identify the quality and accessibility of the offer in the area.

Cwm Clydach Countryside Park, Rhondda is undergoing work to have Country Park status and has a working group to assist with the delivery. Barry Sidings Countryside Park, Trehafod are in talks to have County Park status.

Green Tourism and sustainability research is underway to support the draft RCT Sustainability Strategy.

GT - Cardiff

Opening up continues to be relatively slow however change to Alert Level 0 combined with opening up of theatres, cinemas and nightclubs along with half term and Spring should help to generate more footfall and visitor stays.

Accommodation stats continue to improve. Cardiff hotels and hospitality dependent upon a weekend boost with 6 nations business can now breathe a sigh of relief that the rugby competition is going ahead.

Leisure market for attractions and activities – looking forward to a boost half term and Spring onwards including Easter. Business events sector still slow in a competitive market

Groups market starting to consider 2022/23 contracts for example Cardiff Castle.

Martin Astley – Bike Park Wales

Although changes with Covid rules through opening and closing they have generally been busy over the Winter period. The challenge from a planning perspective is that are the current easing of restrictions here to stay. They have introduced 2 new trails and their masterplan has been approved to expand the site with high end Glamping pods so are discussing with planning. They have also have had visits arranged by Visit Wales from both the Guardian and the Times newspapers.

Rachel Cilliers – Rock UK

Outdoor Education picked up in Autumn and they opened residential in September. Due to school cancellations due to Covid from Winter to March they will struggle. Scouts, Brownies and cubs have been slow to book also. However, at this time the forecast for Summer bookings look promising and day bookings are good at the moment.

LH – Merthyr Tydfil

With Destination Management being a core ambition within MTCBCs' Economic Recovery Plan, the team are in the process of reconfiguring the reporting structure, delivery model and identifying collaborative partners with the view to formulate and programme a three year Destination Management Action Plan.

Merthyr Tydfil's Destination Management Partnership are due to convene in April 2022 for the first time since Covid.

Engagement with the sector has remained ongoing with regular communication updates for Covid and industry news, access to our local tourism grant 'SETS', whilst the team has continued with marketing efforts and upgrades to our current Visit Merthyr platforms.

LR – Newport

We are currently looking at the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations for 2022 and the Newport Food Festival will be re-established in October 2022. With the Climate Change agenda we are considering the City Centre Greening proposals. The Living Levels has been very successful and we are looking at the legacy programme now.

Support is being given to the new Mercure Hotel - in recruitment via our Skills services. Open days have been created for local employment. Lastly, the

redevelopment of the Newport Market is now finishing and the venue will open shortly.

Visit Wales updates

Steffan Roberts, Heledd Owen, Lucy von Weber presented on 'Let's Shape the Future' Recovery Plan and the Visit Wales - draft Business Plan 2022-2023 (Copies of Slides to be circulated with the Minutes).

Steffan Roberts – Deputy Director Tourism Development:

- SR emphasised that it has been a challenging period for everyone. We have had the recovery plan steering us through the pandemic. We are currently at Alert Level 0 and the exit strategy will be released on Friday of this week
- This meeting and other Regional Fora meetings are an opportunity to share at an early stage the business plan for 2022-2023 and to listen and take on board feedback
- The Welsh Government draft budget has been announced.
- The new financial year is an opportunity to press the 'reset button' and bridge back to the Strategic plan
- For the first time in a long time we have also been provided with a 3 year budget (2022-2025) which allows us to look longer term
- Annual budget of £5m Capital and £10.7m Revenue funding confirmed for Tourism Development & Marketing
- Details on some of the Funding Streams being developed for this financial year were provided

Heledd Owen – Deputy Director, Marketing:

- Total annual revenue budget for the Wales Cymru Brand is £9.62m;
- The mission remains 'To inspire audiences around the world to choose Wales';
- HO provided an overview on the direction and marketing priorities in going forward;
- LvW provided details on the review undertaken of the recovery plan 'Let's Shape the Future'.

Tourism Levy Update – David Greenhough (Copies of presentation slides to be sent)

- Delivery of discretionary tourism levy powers for LAs included as part of the Programme for Government to enable re-investment back into local infrastructure and services;
- Consultation to take place this Autumn;

- The team would like to meet/engage with a range of partners. DG asked for any questions/queries to be emailed to TourismLevy@gov.wales

Wales Tourism Product database -Val Hawkins and Lesley Beaumont
Presentation – (presentation circulated)

New features for the searchable products on visitwales.com. There was an appeal that all members ask their networks to ensure that all listings are updated. There is assistance available if businesses do not know how to do this.

Research Update - David Stephens – (presentation circulated)

Skills update – due to time constraints this did not take place but an update is available from Kerry Thatcher

AOB

Forum Terms of Reference

- FW informed members that the 4 Regional Tourism Fora Chairs had recently met to update the Terms of Reference. The draft updated TOR being proposed by the Chairs had been circulated in advance of the meeting;
- Due to time constraints FW invited comments on the suggested amendments to the TOR to be emailed to her/ Edmond Ryan
- Following the 4 regional Fora the chairs will send a final collective draft version to Welsh Government for consideration
- FW will update forum Members on TOR at the next meeting.
- FW raised concerns regarding the recent engagement events on the Reform of the school year. Alyson Tippings has been involved in an early stage consultation. LvW stated that this is being led by Curriculum and Education and that contacts from Tourism had been invited in order to get feedback from the sector. FW said that the 4 Fora had not yet been consulted and recommended that all should read and comment on the proposals as soon as documents are available as there could be far reaching impacts on Tourism
- FW again highlighted the need for a new chair to come forward and offered a dual Chair approach if this was helpful to anyone.

- FW stated that she was attending The Economy Ministers Visitor Economy Working group and will feedback accordingly as this group had been most useful and influential during the pandemic.

Date of next meeting

FW ended the meeting by thanking members for all their contributions and put a diary marker in for the next meeting on the 18 May 2023.