



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

South East Wales Regional Tourism Forum

7 June 2023 (1pm – 3pm)

Online

Minutes

Attendees

Chair – **Fiona Wilton** (Monmouthshire Cottages), **Heledd Owen**, **Rob Holt**, **Claire Carew**, **David Stephens & Rebecca Rees** (Visit Wales), **Paul Brandwood** (Royal Mint), **Paul Donovan** (WATO) **Lynfa Protheroe & Lyndsey Handley** (Merthyr Tydfil Council), **Antony Bolter** (Caerphilly CBC), **Martin Astley** (Bike Park Wales), **Claire Hamer & Rhodri Davies** (Museums Wales), **Rachel Cilliers** (Rock UK), **Alice Brown & Robert Frowen** (Bridgend Council), **Lynne Richards** (Newport Council), **Julie Heaven** (Aneurin Leisure), **Kate Gardner** (National Trust), **Paul Rees & Will Keep** (Coleg Cymoedd), **Paul Williams** (Celtic Manor), **Nia Hollins** (Vale of Glamorgan Council), **Jo Nugent** (Angel Hotel), **Stephen Leeke** (Vale Hotel), **Sally Walters** (Dwr Cymru), **Emma Daly** (RSPB), **Paula Warren** (The Hide at St Donats), **Julian Hitchcock** (Town and Country Collective), **Alyson Tippings** (Blaenau Gwent CBC)

Guest presenters: **Lyn Williams & Ali Tyebkhan** (Rhydycar West), **Kevin Ford** (Monmouthshire Council), **Val Hawkins & Zoe Hawkins** (Mid Wales Tourism)

Apologies: **Kim Waters** (Abergavenny Food Festival), **Nicola Edwards** (Monmouthshire Council), **Phil Lewis** (Valleys Regional Park), **Karen Matthews** (Exi Cardiff), **Paula Baggot** (Cardiff Airport), **Tim Howell** (Parkdean Resorts), **Phil Sykes** (Aneurin Leisure), **Adrian Cole** (Caerphilly Tourism Association), **Beth Meade** (WMC), **Rebecca Clay** (Visit Dean Wye Tourism Association), **Stephen Davies** (Penderyn distillery), **Phil Sykes** (Aneurin Leisure), **Marion Mohammed** (Holiday Inn Cardiff), **Andy Rooney** (Zipworld), **Cara Chivers** (Cardiff Airport), **Amanda Rosenberg** (Miskin Manor), **Amy Doore** (RSPB), **Lizzie Smith-Jones** (National Trust), **Sarah Higgs** (Parkway Hotel), **Hugh Murray** (Porthcawl Surf), **Kevin Hire** (Chepstow Racecourse), **Kerry Jennings** (Parkway Hotel), **Nerys Royal** (RCTCBC)

1. Welcome & Introduction from Chair

- 1.1 FW welcomed attendees to the meeting. Last month attendees were notified that following her intention to step down as interim Chair a new Chair had now been confirmed and Rachel Cilliers of Rock UK would be taking up the role ahead of the September meeting. This would be FW's last Forum meeting as Chair. FW commented that since the last meeting in February she had been involved in meetings around the emerging legislation on Tourism Levy and the Statutory Licensing Scheme. HO offered thanks to departing Chair Fiona, who despite agreeing to do this on an interim basis, has been fantastic in nearly two years in the role. There are a number of issues facing the industry and FW has worked tirelessly behind the scenes in representing the industry and the region. Outside of chairing this Forum and representing the South East on the Visitor Economy

Forum, FW has regular liaison with accommodation providers and industry members in order to capture their views.

2. Overview of the Rhydyar West project

- 2.1 Ali Tyebkhan, CEO and Lyn Williams, Communications Manager at the Rhydyar West project ran through a presentation deck of the plans for the forthcoming development. The resort will include a conference centre, hotel offerings, and the largest and longest Indoor Snow Centre in the UK, one of the longest in the world at 400m. They are currently in the process of planning, which has a long-time frame due to the size of the project. Construction will commence in 2024, with the resort opening in 2026. The project has been fully funded by the shareholders from the early stages but they will be looking for partners during the final stages. The project doesn't require government funded but the public sector can invest on a commercial basis. FW queried whether there would be a website for local businesses to link into to showcase the local area. AT said there was plans for this. The team were also holding a public exhibition in Merthyr College on 21 June at 5pm and to make contact with the team should you wish to attend.

3. Visit Wales update

- 3.1 HO updated on the capital funding pot Brilliant Basics. Full applications had now been received and are being assessed and scored. Applicants will be informed of the outcome week commencing 26 June.
- 3.2 The Tourism Levy is currently at policy development stage and Welsh Treasury will meet with officials from Local Authorities in the coming weeks to discuss the practicalities of implementing the levy. The Bill will be introduced to the Senedd for scrutiny within this Senedd term. Scottish Government have recently introduced their legislation for a similar visitor levy in Scotland, it will also be discretionary for local authorities and would apply to people staying overnight in paid-for accommodation.
- 3.3 Recently, the Wales Revenue Authority (WRA) began conducting research on behalf of Welsh Ministers on the implementation of the Visitor Levy. The objective is to understand how accommodation providers currently operate and inform how the levy will work in practice. WRA are seeking input from accommodation providers and thanks were noted for those sharing views with the WRA. Following this, the research team will be sharing insights and recommendations. There might be need for subsequent user research to delve deeper into the details, and further down the line, to test prototypes with users. FW confirmed that she had taken part in this work, and it was important members, and those they represent engage with this work in order to help it develop. HO reiterated that the team want to gather as much feedback as possible to help shape this work.
- 3.4 *A report has been published which examines the views of Welsh residents and UK consumers of domestic holidays on whether they think visitors should contribute via a Levy, are willing to pay a Levy and whether they would still come if a Levy was introduced: [Visitor levy research: views of consumers and residents | GOV.WALES](#)*
- 3.5 *Tourism Levy: Consultation outcome: [Discretionary visitor levy for local authorities | GOV.WALES](#)*

- 3.6 HO ran through a slide deck on marketing activity. This included new content on the websites and audience toolkit, as well as a timeline of forthcoming activity. The slide deck will be shared after the meeting. Key pieces of research, recently published were shared:
- Tourism market demand reports (UK, Ireland) [Tourism market demand reports: January 2023 | GOV.WALES](#)
 - Visit Wales Re-contact Survey 23 (7000 people) – March [Visit Wales consumer re-contact survey | GOV.WALES](#)
 - Tourism Business Barometer – June [Tourism Barometer | GOV.WALES](#)
- 3.7 In September, [Welsh Government will introduce](#) a default **20mph speed limit** on restricted roads across Wales. [Assets are available](#) for sharing on your social media platforms.
- 3.8 The consultation on the **statutory licensing scheme** for all visitor accommodation providers in Wales closed in March 2023 with over 1,500 responses received. These responses are currently being independently analysed, with a final report due w/c 26 June 2023. The report will be published in July 2023.
- 3.9 Three independently facilitated stakeholder events were held in May 2023 to gather further detailed evidence and insight on the proposals and the delivery of certain elements of the scheme. A big thank you to the forum members that joined us in the meetings last week, to help shape the policy. A further meeting was held with Local Authority Public Protection leads on 1 June 2023 to discuss these elements as well as potential delivery model for the scheme.
- 3.10 The Welsh Government is committed to exploring **reform of the school year**. This work is a Programme for Government commitment and is being carried out in collaboration, as part of the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru. The current school year was designed for different times, therefore, the Welsh Government are looking at ways in which the school calendar could be improved. The Minister for Education and Welsh Language has committed to a formal consultation regarding the structure of the school year. The Minister also confirmed that the overall number of holiday weeks would not be reduced and the summer break will be no less than four weeks. It is important to note that the consultation has not yet begun and any decision following the consultation would have at least an 12- 18-month implementation period as we recognise concerns from various sectors about needing a suitably long lead in time.
- 3.11 As this work progresses we are continuing to develop the policy and evidence base. Currently we are undertaking research with staff, learners, their families and others on experiences of, and perceptions on, the current school calendar in Wales, and how it supports learning and wellbeing. While school year reform is an educational policy, we recognise that any changes to the school year structure could impact wider sectors, including tourism. Therefore, the Welsh Government is committed to reviewing all evidence, and listening to all views, before making any decisions. With this in mind, we would very much like to engage with you

during the consultation both directly and through our policy colleagues in the Welsh Government. Additional updates regarding school year reform can be found on the [webpage](#).

- 3.12 Industry Engagement - Since the pandemic we have entered into a new way of hybrid working and throughout the pandemic we maintained regular contact with the industry through webinars and our industry newsletter which we doubled in size to a database of 20,000. We also formed the Visitor Economy Forum (VEF) as a platform for our Minister to stay informed with the Fora Chairs and other key bodies. Moving forward we have recognised that we need an improved industry web-site as a one stop shop and one of our priorities for this year is to re-locate and update our tourism industry web-site. Our current pages sit on Business Wales but we'll be moving over to have an industry section on Visitwales.com and looking to have the first phase complete by the autumn.
- 3.13 In addition to our on-line presence we'll be returning to in-person events. This will include four regional roadshows in October 2023 and then 2025 so roadshows will be biennial. In 2024 we'll return to the National Tourism Awards and one national conference and then repeat the sequence in future years.
- 3.14 RH said the two new funds for the industry closed in May and they were now reviewing the applications. There was a big push on business events and the outcome of the bid for the Euros 2028 was expected in October. Events are under development as far as 2031.

4. Visit Wales Adventure Activity Assurance Scheme

- 4.1 PD provided an update on [Adventure Smart](#):
- Have been working with Visit Wales since Year of Adventure. The aim is to reduce the number of incidents in the Outdoors. Adventure Smart has 120 partners including VW. They work with VW on campaigns to ensure the use of appropriate imagery related to the Outdoors.
 - PD highlighted the free resources and assets available and how partners can get involved in the campaign and ensure that visitors have a better day when outdoors.
 - There are 3 questions which Adventure Smart remind you to ask yourself before you set off:
 - Am I confident I have the Knowledge & Skills for the day?
 - Do I know what the Weather will be like?
 - Do I have the right gear?
 - PD encouraged partners to use any of the free assets online and to please follow the Comms and Brand guidelines. A link to the toolkit with further information can be found [here](#)
 - You can also contact PD directly by [email](#)
- 4.2 PD provided an update on the [Visit Wales Activity Assurance Scheme](#):
- PD has been working with Glyn Roberts at Visit Wales to update the information available on the Tourism pages of Business Wales on the Activity Assurance Scheme.

- The VW Activity Assurance Scheme is required for the Adventure Activity businesses that wish to be listed on VisitWales.com and it offers two routes to becoming assured by Visit Wales, one that recognises a provider's current assurance status and; one that enables those providers without a current assured status, to become assured. The cost to route 2 is £275+ expenses.
- PD encouraged partners to take a look at the section of the website which has new, more friendly content inc faq's section and testimonials from those who are participating currently.

5. Visit Monmouthshire's experience with Tourism Exchange Great Britain (TXGB)

- 5.1 Visit Wales have licensed Tourism Exchange Great Britain (TXGB) to make the platform available to the tourism industry in Wales and the TXGB Cymru Wales platform is up and running. At the last meeting TXGB presented to the Forum and KF from Monmouth Council gave an overview of use of the platform from the perspective of both a provider and a facilitator. Other Local Authorities present said they didn't have capacity to run products on the service. PD noted that all bookable products should be accredited.

6. Sector updates / AOB

- 6.1 A number of sector updates have been received in written format and will be circulated after the meeting. The Chair asked for any Wales wide updates or further sector updates to be brought to the attention of the Forum.
- 6.2 PR gave an overview of a number of courses, relevant for the Forum, available with Coleg Cymoedd. These would be circulated after the meeting. **Action: RR**
- 6.3 At the February meeting FW asked Forum members, from Local Authorities in particular, to keep an eye on their self-catering members and to report back to the September and December meetings on the numbers closing, especially as a result of the 182 nights rule. Thoughts about the economic impact effect on each local area of this will be appreciated. Members were asked to prepare updates and this would be on the agenda at September's meeting. **Action: All**
- 6.4 FW concluded the meeting by thanking attendees for their input and reminding attendees they are advocates for their sector, so messages should be taken back from today and shared with colleagues and attendees should proactively bring forward thoughts from stakeholders. Messages from today will be taken forward to the VEF.
- 6.5 FW reminded all to make every effort to attend or to send a deputy if this was not possible and said attendance will be monitored moving forward in accordance with the TOR of the Forum.
- 6.6 The next meeting will take place in person on 12 September in Rock UK, Merthyr Tydfil.