



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

South East Wales Regional Tourism Forum

12 September 2023 (10am – 12.30pm)

Rock UK, Treharris, Merthyr Tydfil

Minutes

Attending

Chair – **Rachel Cilliers** (Rock UK), **Steffan Roberts**, **Julie Osmond**, **Manon Phillips**, **Claire Carew**, **Rebecca Rees** (Visit Wales), **Elin Morgan** (Welsh Government), **Lynfa Protheroe** (Merthyr Tydfil Council), **Antony Bolter** (Caerphilly Council), **Fiona Wilton** (Monmouthshire Cottages), **Nia Hollins** (Vale of Glamorgan Council), **Stephen Leeke** (Vale Resort), **Alice Brown** (Bridgend Council), **Nicola Edwards** (Monmouthshire Council), **Paul Rees** (College Cymoedd), **Sarah Higgs & Kerry Jennings** (Parkway Hotel), **Victoria Leyshon** (Transport for Wales), **Gareth Berry** (Cardiff Capital Region), **Hamish Munro** (Caerphilly Council), **Rhian Richards** (Cowshed), **Pascal Bidois** (CADW), **Anthony Pritchard & Sian Johnson** (WRA)

Dialling in **Emma Daly** (RPSB), **Caryl Jones** (Visit Wales), **Lynne Richards** (Newport Council), **Bethany Colley** (RCTCBC), **Martin Astley** (Bike Park Wales), **Paul Brandwood** (Royal Mint), **Paul Williams** (Celtic Manor), **Jo Nugent** (Angel Hotel), **Lyndsey Handley** (Merthyr Tydfil Council), **Julian Hitchcock** (Town and Country Collective), **Rebecca Clay** (Visit Dean Wye Tourism Association)

1. Welcome & Introduction from Chair

- 1.1 RC welcomed attendees to the meeting and noted thanks to the departing Chair FW for her service within the role. FW wished RC well in the new role and reflected on her time within the position. FW noted special thanks to Rob Holt who is retiring from Visit Wales in October. Rob has been in VW for a number of years and his presence will be greatly missed.

2. Update on the Caerphilly 2035 Placemaking Plan

- 2.1 Hamish Munro, Placemaking Programme Manager at Caerphilly Council and Rhian Richards from Cowshed gave an update on progress on the Caerphilly 2035 Placemaking Plan, since they last attended the Forum in February 2023. The Caerphilly 2035 Placemaking Plan includes a mixed-use leisure led development, a local traders' market, a modern leisure and wellbeing hub, and a transport interchange that will provide an enhanced gateway to the town. The proposed town centre location represents a significant development opportunity, with demand for an 80 bed lifestyle hotel with corporate and wedding-oriented facilities, unique food and beverage opportunities, extensive active streetscape uses and public

realm enhancements. Within the town there will be a new market called Ffos Caerffili. It's scheduled to open in November and will be a place that celebrates the spirit of small businesses and local traders. Built from shipping containers, Ffos Caerffili will be an eco-friendly, fresh, modern, multifunctional space. HM said the team were also interested in hearing from potential businesses wanting to get involved in the project and would come back to a future Forum meeting to update as progress was made.

3. Visit Wales update

Industry Engagement

- 3.1 Dates and venues are confirmed for the autumn roadshows and the booking link is now open. The roadshows are an opportunity for VW to get face-to-face engagement with the tourism sector after what has been a long break, with the last roadshows taking place in 2019. Each forum Chair has been invited to speak about the work of the forum and its members and there will be a guest speaker from each region.

Marketing

- 3.2 See the attached presentation.

Welsh Government

- 3.3 On 17 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.

School Reform

- 3.4 As previously shared, 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 will not be reduced, and the summer break will be no less than four weeks.
- 3.5 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 here. An Oral Statement will be made in the Autumn. No date for the start of the consultation other than autumn time/ early winter.

Statutory Licensing Scheme

- 3.6 To supplement the feedback from the formal consultation exercise and supplementary consultation events, a visitor/resident omnibus survey was undertaken in early September with headline results due towards the end of October. The Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism will provide an

update later in the year setting our proposals for how we intend to take the scheme forward.

Visitor Levy

- 3.7 Welsh Government is planning to give local authorities the ability to charge a visitor levy on overnight stays in their communities. This small contribution will be paid by visitors and invested in sustainable Tourism, helping to grow our economy and protect the environment.
- 3.8 Legislation for a visitor levy will be introduced into the Senedd (the Welsh Parliament) by the end of 2024. The Senedd will scrutinise and review the proposals, propose amendments, and decide whether or not to approve the legislation through a vote. We estimate that this decision will be made in 2025.
- 3.9 If the Senedd approves the legislation, local authorities may commence the process to introduce a levy. Local authorities would need to consult with their communities to inform their decision about using a levy. Once a local authority makes a decision to introduce a levy, there would be a notice period to ensure businesses and visitors are prepared. Through the above process, we estimate that the earliest a visitor levy will be in place in any part of Wales is 2027. Some local authorities may choose not to implement a visitor levy in their area. More information on the Legislative process: go to Guide to the Legislative Process (senedd.wales)

Event Wales

- 3.10 JO from Event Wales gave an update on the sector, which included working with EWIAG (the industry advisory group) on an implementation plan for the new events strategy, the ongoing pressures facing the industry and ongoing budget pressures. She also gave an update on business events and on a number of events that had been supported during the year, including the Tour of Britain which had ended in Caerphilly on the weekend. The forward look included the decision on the bid to host Euro 28 which is expected on 10 October. JO also gave an update on Rob Holt's retirement and thanked the group for their kind words to pass on to him.

4. Update on Tourism Attractor Destinations Programme (TAD) projects

- 4.1 The TAD programme was approved in March 2016 and includes a total ERDF amount of £27.7m towards an overall investment of £67m. The aims were to focus investment on a limited number of larger scale tourism projects in 12 tourism destinations that have the potential to become 'must visit' destinations, to raise the quality and perceptions of visitor destinations and attractions in Wales and to address issues such as seasonality and the provision of wet weather facilities. Three projects were supported in South East Wales; Porthcawl Waterside (Bridgend CBC), Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle (Torfaen CBC) and Summit Centre Adventure Welsh

Valleys - Rock UK (Merthyr Tydfil CBC). This programme of work had recently been completed.

5. Sector updates / AOB

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 At the start of the meeting the Chair asked attendees to give feedback from their sector. Hoteliers said bookings were up from last year which was positive and there was also feedback about how well the golf industry was performing. FW said that Bed & Breakfast bookings were down 30% and there were some forward bookings but these were down and last year's numbers and there was quite a few late bookings. Music venues were also facing additional challenges and some activity venues were seeing numbers back up to pre-pandemic levels.
- 5.3 RC 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.
- 5.4 RC 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.
- 5.5 The next meeting will take place in person online on 12 December.