

South West Wales Regional Forum

Minutes from 5th December 2019, The Grove, Narberth

Present

George Reid (GR)	Carmarthenshire Tourism Association
Nic Beggs (NB), Chair	Area Manager, Freedom Leisure
Paula Ellis (PE)	Group General Manager, Retreats Group
Stephen Crocker (SC)	Tourism Swansea Bay
Andrew Campbell (AC)	Chair, Wales Tourism Alliance
Neil Kedward (NK)	The Grove, Narberth
Lucy Wonnacott (LW)	Milford Port Authority
Melissa Knight (MK)	Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water
Steve Hopkins (SH)	Swansea Council
Jacqui Davies (JDa)	Clydey Cottages
Zoe Wright (ZW)	Folly Farm
Paul Renfro (PR)	WATO / POCG
Huw Francis (HF)	National Botanic Gardens
Gina Gavigan (GG)	WTSWW
Rob Holt (RH)	Visit Wales
Lucy von Weber (LvW)	Visit Wales
Phil Abraham (PA)	Visit Wales
Jane Donald (JD)	Visit Wales
Mike Cavanagh (MC)	Pembrokeshire County Council
Huw Parsons (HP)	Carmarthenshire CC

Apologies Received

Adam Smith	Village Hotel Club
Tim Brace	FBM Holidays
James Parkin	Director of Delivery and Discovery, PCNPA
Dennis O' Connor	Pembrokeshire Tourism
Kevin Davies	Gwesty'r Emlyn Hotel
Jane Lewis	Regional Learning Partnership
Karleigh Davies	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

1 Chair Introduction

- Nic Beggs welcomed everyone to the Grove and updated members on the current state of the industry using the latest research information provided by Visit Wales. Nic stated that the February forum meeting would be his last as Chair and the election of a new Chair would be discussed as part of Forum business.

<p>The Role of the Forum – Further Discussion</p> <p>Forum Review – Members List</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member list was circulated from the previous forum. The list was then reviewed and actions were identified for follow up. • Possible new members or organisations that the forum felt would be useful to have involved were identified. • NB attached the list to the minutes for follow up by members to gather contact info and pass to the chair. <p>Forum Review – Term of reference</p> <p>The Chair had circulated the draft terms of reference in advance of the meeting. An active and progressive discussion was then held and terms were agreed by members. Final draft will be circulated by the Chair for sign off at the February meeting.</p> <p>Agenda Items</p> <p>Areas were then agreed for future focus, these were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Visit Britain – Concerns that this organisation was not achieving its aims and was very ineffective in supporting the Welsh visitor economy. Visit Wales to continue to raise members concerns with the aim to improve this organisations impact. 2) Connectivity – Broadband services still a major concern to some tourism businesses. 3) Transportation – Members continue to show concern that both rail and road travel requires improvement if Wales is to compete in the international market place. Visit Wales to support with inviting GWR and Transport for Wales to next forum for further discussion and influence to be applied. 4) Sustainable Tourism is a key growing concern to our industry and our customers. Lots of Green badges / organisations offering a review and associated badge. Green Key could be a possible future invite. 5) National Awards – May 2020 – agreed needs adding to next Agenda to discuss nominations from the regional to this award and the date relevance of the awards to ensure the marketing mileage. 	<p><i>Action : NB</i></p> <p><i>Action: Members</i></p> <p><i>Action: NB</i></p> <p><i>Action: Visit Wales & Members</i></p> <p><i>Action: Visit Wales & Members</i></p> <p><i>Action: Paula to share contacts with new Chair</i></p> <p><i>Action: Visit Wales, Peter Francombe to attend</i></p>
<p>New Chair and Vice Chair</p> <p>Applications for both these roles to be sent to Phil Abraham with covering note to why you may be suitable. Open to members but agreed we would consider non-members if relevant.</p>	<p><i>Action: All Members</i></p>
<p>.....</p> <p>Visit Wales Update – Rob Holt and Lucy von Weber</p> <p>RH</p> <p>Tourism Action Plan (TAP) due to launch 23rd January with Cabinet and Ministerial approval, work continuing on organisational design, budget and staffing / roles</p> <p>Skills Partnership Chair has been advertised, appointee will sit on UK Sectors Panel</p>	<p>.....</p>

Tourism tax will be reviewed Spring of 2020 – industry views are known and noted, logistics, resource, statutory legislation, permissive powers to LA's all to be considered as part of any consultation exercise

Infrastructure basics have been identified as crucial with TAIS securing additional monies and being rolled out over the whole of Wales, both MSBF and WTIF are operational and 'open for business'

A new Parador model for Wales is under consideration

Free grading is confirmed, however, detail and timescale are yet to be fixed, reviewing same in both England and Scotland. Positive outcome could be that staff will have more business support role, for example referring to broadband team whilst still offering advice on 'up-grading' and resource such as free Welsh translation

Airbnb and the self-regulation issue still ongoing, following extensive consultation there will now be an open session in Wales

During 2020 VW will be looking at a new model for free attendance at travel trade shows ie the stand space but there will be specific criteria for attend: product fit for market, book-ability, international focus etc

Stakeholder review to be undertaken with regard to Events, achieving balance between sport and culture being key, commitments already made up to 2025

LvW

Reiterated that all roadshow presentations are available on-line at the Tourism Zone

Marketing functions within VW are being designed in line with the new Tourism Action Plan to deliver against seasonality, spend per head and spread with campaign covering different corners of Wales at different times reacting to over-tourism ie on social media and recognising community concerns whilst still showing iconic product to attract domestic and international visitors

Campaign 'This is Wales' offers check in / digital opportunities which are experience led guiding visitors to 'other places'. Will underpin Year of Outdoors with 'feeling good has no season' message. Creative brief considers accessibility, wellbeing, visitor and community messages and environmental impact. Video on demand and tv advertising in hand with favourite places videos being shared currently.

RH

Recognising community engagement is important there could be consideration for one Forum meeting per annum to include an open session which could have sustainability and accessibility as key conversations

NB

Shared the detail as discussed in closed session giving brief overview covering revised member list (to be shared by Chair and reviewed in February), Terms of Reference (also to be addressed at Feb), National Awards with Peter Francombe to be invited to attend next meeting acknowledging Forums desire to discuss both transport and broadband issues - will pursue for future meetings (if no agenda capacity at next meeting, possibly for May/June)

Action: VW to extend invitations to Transport and Broadband colleagues for future meetings (as agenda allows either for February or May / June meeting)

VW / PA

Action: invite Peter Francombe to Feb. mtg

VW / PA

Further discussion covered:

The role of Visit Britain in supporting the industry in Wales and promoting Wales as a destination to visit. RH acknowledged that work needed to continue working with VB and he would continue to update the Forum on that work.

Research and the validity of IPS figures (particularly relating to proportion of responses and obvious identified inaccuracies), it was generally agreed that the lack of numbers taking part in IPS should be taken into account when analysing the results.

<p>And, the process for election of a new Chair with VW advising on how this had taken place in other areas. It was agreed that nominations for Chair would be forwarded to VW following the meeting.</p>	<p><i>Action: All Members</i></p>
<p>Tourism Association Updates</p> <p>Pembrokeshire Tourism (via note to Chair) A new website developed with positive feedback from both visitors and trade, member profiles being updated currently The vast majority of member's feedback shows good trading this season although business was erratic 8th Annual Awards held with winners in 16 categories: the names of winners have been forwarded to VW, Forum, CTA and TSB Dog Friendly Awards will launch January 2020 with the ceremony at end of April The annual S2B event is at Withybush Showground on 5th February (discounts available to early application for stand space) World Host Training is taking place Jan 2020 with a max of 12 attendees at 3 confirmed venues</p> <p>Tourism Swansea Bay (SC) The area awards evening was hugely successful with 590 attendees, SC thanked all partners for their help in delivery especially colleagues in Swansea Council Membership is growing at a steady rate and more events are planned to attract new members A recent event with Development Bank of Wales was very positive</p> <p>Carmarthenshire Tourism Association (GR) Congratulations offered to TSB and Council on award event Working hard on achieving representation / resolution for regional / National Award nominations with CTA award winners from 2018 being taken forward The 2019 AGM has taken place with new Directors being appointed and shift to Director led organisation with minimal office staff Sector meetings have taken place with issues being fed back directly to the Board There is a food product project beginning next year in association with CCC And, ongoing improvements to IT with systems being upgraded and continued business support</p>	
<p>Member updates</p> <p>MC MC updated the forum on progress towards a new destination management plan for Pembrokeshire and considerations around creating a new model of service delivery. With regard to the new DMP for Pembrokeshire the body of the document is all but finalised with work progressing on the design, imagery etc.</p> <p>NK Extremely positive year with 800 room nights extra and a 16% growth however, there was continued pressure on margins. On-going room refurbishments are taking place with an exciting new project about to begin next year following a 5yr funding journey. Restaurants doing well with Beach House achieving Michelin recognition.</p> <p>ZW</p>	

Day visits down but revenue and secondary spend up. On-line sales have doubled in last 2yrs to £2 million supported by major investment in web and IT services. Phase 1 of the new holiday accommodation project opening June 2020 with 42 caravan / camp space, fairground themed cabins and luxury lodges being developed with VW capital support. Moving to 'playground events' to gain commitment and forward booking from visitors. Major events secured for 2021 and 2022 (safari and dinosaur themed). Delighted with awards won which include; Day Out With The Kids 'Best Attraction in the UK for little Kids' and Pembrokeshire Tourism 'Best Visitor Attraction 2019'.

JDa

Business on par with last year with ongoing development following successful application from Micro Small Business Fund (acknowledged positively by repeat visitors). Year on Year forward bookings are up but number of days down i.e. more short breaks.

HP

Carmarthenshire CC are hoping to have STEAM figures available at February meeting and will provide details in due course. Two major Intereg funded projects are ongoing with Supplier to Buyer events scheduled for the 5th and 6th February. HP extended an invite to the Forum to hold its meeting at the venue on the 6th February

The TAD project at Pendine is progressing with 4* graded hostel and museum part of the development. Discussions re hotel option at Machynys are on-going.

HF

Increased visitors for fourth year in a row, good revenue return but secondary spend has dipped slightly. August numbers down but growth in early season and Sept. - Dec. Next yr will be 20th Anniversary with a range of celebratory events (some linking into the Regency restorations project). Business usage is up 100% with the Garden able to accommodate Business Events with up to 200 delegates.

SH

Research and visitor survey completed April to Oct with 1000 f2f and mail returns following on from this the LA is looking to carry out a trade survey in January. Phase 1 work has started on 3500 space arena in Swansea City Centre whilst discussions are on-going in relation to hotel development adjacent to the arena. Extremely positive 50th Anniversary events. Currently recruiting marketing partners.

GR

Concentrating on new build / refurbishment with fewer rooms. Overseas visitors have increased in 2019 with domestic visitors down.

LW

Waterfront Master Plan has been awarded outline planning permission re Hotel and multi-use events and conference venue (100 beds and 400 / 600 capacity venue). Developers on site from May with 1yr build plan.

Action: RH suggests inviting Heledd Williams to February meeting with Region expanding business event capability and capacity

PE

Group is suffering some seasonality issues with other operators in St David's shutting down during winter months. 2019 has seen an increase in overseas visitors, notably from the US. The development of a further 20 rooms at Twr y Felin is ongoing with over £3.5m investment. Commented on positive news and profile raising of Wales product through participation and winning of National Awards (Conde Naste and Best Small Hotel UK and Ireland along with Hotelier of the Year). Further commented on challenges in 'skills gap' and Green Key accreditation and suggested they be considered for discussion at future meetings.

HP, NB and VW to discuss Ffos Las invite

VW / PA

<p>GG 2019 excellent year for commercial business with increased visitor numbers to islands – and increase in German and Belgian visitors noted. Successful BBC Wildlife feature plus Land of the Wild filming for next year with bid won for further major spring feature for Green Planet. Delighted to have been successful in PT Awards.</p> <p>PR Representing approx. 45-50 business, reporting figures as being slightly raised with increase in foreign visitors (Germany, Holland and US). Events held concentrating on reducing impact on the environment and community also focus on Pembrokeshire Peninsula management issues and misconception on 'busy-ness' of businesses when region appears over-crowded. Continuing to strive towards right messages for time and place ie for wild / cold swimming. Adventure sector skills (and retention) is major issue.</p> <p>AC WTA continues involvement and representation in discussion on rates / costs alongside fair work and tourism tax (with limited resources).</p> <p>MK Llys y Fran (£3m TAD development) on course for opening Summer 2020 with new interpretation, coach parking, visitor centre (restaurant focusing on local food with view), Welcome Pavilion, mountain bike and pump tracks and outdoor activity centre along with campsite, playground, viewpoint and public wifi. Staff in place by May. Open Water Swim Policy in hand.</p>	
<p>AOB</p> <p>RH remarked on loss to Department and sector as Gerwyn Evans takes up new post as Deputy Director Creative Wales and conveyed thanks to Nic Beggs on his representation of area and robust conversation during office as Chair.</p>	
<p>Next Meeting: 6th Feb 2020- 9.30am start – Ffos Las Race Course (tbc)</p>	<p><i>Action: PA to pursue with HP</i></p>