

# Fforwm Twristiaeth Rhanbarthol De Orllewin Cymru South West Wales Tourism Forum

**Minutes, Wednesday 15 February 2023**

## **Forum Members present**

GR, Chair: Glangwili Mansion	HP, Carmarthenshire County Council
JP, Vice Chair, PCNPA	RR, Bluestone
CE, Carmarthenshire Tourism Association	LS, NBGW
RB, NPT DMP & Swansea Valley HC	MS, Call of the Wild
AC, University of Wales Trinity St Davids	ET, Visit Pembrokeshire
JD, Clydey Cottages	LW, MHPA
PE, Retreats Group	ZW, Folly Farm
TF, Seren Collection	MC, Pembrokeshire County Council
GG, WTSWW	KD, NPT Council
MH, Dwr Cymru	SH, Swansea Council
KH, Ffos Las Racecourse	HP, Carmarthenshire County Council
FK, Oakwood	DS, TXGB
TL, Wales Activity Tourism Organisation	

Steffan Roberts, WG  
Rhidian Morgan, WG  
Clare Dwight, WG  
Caryl Jones, WG  
Catrin Elis, WG  
Claire Carew, WG  
Sue Thomas, WG  
Jane Donald, WG  
Ceri Jones, WG

<b>Croeso / Welcome – GR (Chair)</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p>The Chair welcomed forum members to the meeting and extended a warm welcome to new members joining for the first time including LS on behalf of NBGW and KH on behalf of Ffos Las Racecourse. The Chair also welcomed PE who has returned as forum representative for the Retreats Group.</p>	
<p><b>Diweddariad ar brosiectau Ffyniant Bro a Chronfa Ffyniant Gyffredin / Update on Levelling Up projects</b></p> <p><b>HP provided an update on behalf of Carmarthenshire:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmarthenshire secured over £30million from the UK Government’s Levelling up Fund to invest in two major projects in the county.</li> <li>• The first of these projects being Carmarthen Hwb with a total project budget of £19.6million, £15.8million was secured to create a central “hub” bringing health and wellbeing into Carmarthen town, regenerating the now empty former Debenhams store in the St Catherine’s retail area. The Carmarthen HWB will include a tourist information and new museum space to house existing and new collections currently having to be stored.</li> <li>• The second project is the Tywi Valley Path - £16.7million was awarded to deliver further phases of Carmarthenshire's Tywi Valley Path, creating a 21km off-road</li> </ul>	

walking and cycling route linking Carmarthen to Llandeilo running alongside the River Tywi. As well as enhancing health opportunities for residents, the Tywi Valley Path aims to attract visitors and generate annual £4.5million local impact a year for the local economy. Some sections of the path are already complete, including a link between Abergwili and Whitemill at Bishops Palace Further information can be found [here](#) on the County Council website

- Shared Prosperity Fund - Carmarthenshire Council secured £36.68million from UK Government. Anchor projects have been developed with a final decision on 17 February. Once approved, the third party grants within each anchor will be opened for applications. The Anchors are:
  - Sustainable Communities Anchor
  - Supporting Business Anchor
  - Place Anchor
  - Rural Anchor
  - Standalone projects (Strategic projects that will address some of the challenges identified in the Investment Plan that are not covered by the anchor projects)

### **SH Provided an update on behalf of Swansea:**

- New Lower Swansea Valley project successful in securing £20m in the latest round of Levelling Up Funding.
- This will be a major new project to preserve Swansea's industrial heritage, breath more life into the River Tawe corridor and create jobs and investment. There are 3 elements to the project:
  - Restoration of heritage features at Hafod-Morfa Copperworks: several listed buildings regenerated for business use and private sector investment.
  - Improving links between River Tawe and Copperworks site and city centre by bus, rail and river
  - Upgrade and enhancement of Swansea Museum: improving access and visitor experience with increased and new exhibition and learning spaces. Repatriation of some of its collections currently stored at Copperworks site.
- Swansea is the regional lead authority for SPF so will administer funds for the region. The Investment Plan has been approved and the programme will end 31 March 2025
- Thematic anchor projects (in house) on key areas of work incorporating grant scheme. There will be targeted open calls as early as possible given the short length of the programme.
- There will be 6 anchor projects in Swansea:
  - Supporting Communities
  - Transforming County Place
  - Supporting Local Businesses
  - Employability
  - Rural
  - Culture & Tourism
- Timeline is as follows:
  - Dec 2022: Investment Plan approved.
  - Jan 2023: Communication of implementation approach to stakeholders, Phase 1 anchor projects consulted, recruitment.
  - Feb 2023: Phase 1 anchor projects formally approved and start delivery. Progress development of Phase 2 anchor projects.
  - Feb 2023: South West Wales UKSPF programme launch event with local publicity. Targeted open call for standalone projects.

- Dec 2024: End date for programme delivery
- Jan - March 2025: Programme closure - completion of final claims, progress reporting and evaluation

**KD provided an update on behalf of NPT:**

- NPT have been successful in securing UK Levelling Up Funding for Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor Visitor Attractor Project.
- £7.6m for Waterfall Country Visitor Infrastructure Scheme and £12m for the Gnoll Estate Country Park Heritage and Visitor Infrastructure Scheme.
- NPT have also secured £2.5m via Shared Prosperity Fund to deliver heritage, culture and tourism priorities which will be identified in the following new strategies;
  - Neath Port Talbot Culture Strategy
  - Neath Port Talbot DMP
  - Neath Port Talbot Heritage Strategy
  - Aberavon Seafront Masterplan
- Public, private and voluntary sector will be eligible and the grant criteria is currently being drawn up.
- NPT have also secured £250,000 via SPF for Destination Marketing Campaign 2023-2025. This work is currently out to tender.

**MC provided an update on behalf of Pembrokeshire County Council**

- MC updated forum Members on Pembrokeshire Levelling Up projects. £21m of funding secured as part of first round of LUF.
- £17.7m awarded for the regeneration of Haverfordwest. The project will improve links between the castle and the town, work to the castle to include an outdoor performance area and creation of a wet weather attraction within the jail. The attraction will focus on the heritage of the county.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> project is for a community and social care hub project at South Quay. The first phase of this work is a Henry Tudor visitor centre, library and café.
- MC emphasised that there are a number of financial pressures on these projects as with all capital projects in the current climate.
- MC also stated that the LUF has not been an easy process from their experience
- MC also highlighted the opportunities available through Pembrokeshire's Shared Prosperity Funding. Further information on the business support opportunities that will be available are outlined in the papers that recently went to their Cabinet. They are available [here](#)

**Diweddariad Croeso Cymru / Visit Wales Update**

**Visit Wales Development updated provided by SR:**

- SR thanked the NBGW for hosting the meeting.
- SR updated members that Dawn Bowden has now taken over responsibility for the tourism brief. She is very excited about the added responsibility (alongside her existing responsibilities for sport, heritage, culture and creative) and is very keen to meet stakeholders at the earliest opportunity. She will be meeting the four chairs of the regional partnerships shortly. DM will chair next VEF on 6 March.
- SR added that we are currently finalising business plan and looking to finalise funding priorities for next financial year with a £10.6m revenue and £5m capital

budget. Priorities will include supporting the sustainability of the sector, marketing programme, skills development, grading and cruise development in line with our strategy, [Welcome to Wales](#).

- One programme that we have launched early is Brilliant Basics for the next 2 years, with a £5m fund. We are looking to support small-scale infrastructure improvements in key destinations – the fund was launched last week. The fund is open to LAs and NPSs with maximum grant of £300k available.
- SR updated on the Statutory licensing scheme – The consultation started just before Christmas and will close on 17 March. We are keen for the sector to have their views on shaping the scheme and 300+ responses have been received so far. We will be looking to publish the consultation outcome shortly (date TBC) and will be presenting options on the way forward to Ministers. Further information on the consultation is available [here](#).
- The formal consultation on the Tourism Levy ended before Christmas and responses (1500+) are being analysed by Welsh Treasury. Consultation responses and next steps to be confirmed shortly (date TBC). The levy is a mechanism to invest in our communities with discretion for LAs in if and how it is being implemented locally.
- UK Gov Energy Relief Scheme – we know that energy costs are a major issue for the sector at the moment and will increase in April. The WG is doing all it can (business rate relief etc), but with the main levers with UKG we have been calling on them to look again at the sectors (tourism and hospitality) exempted from the higher relief available.

JD stated that clear and early comms is needed on the tourism levy to allow businesses time to plan.

HP added that LAs will also be doing their own consultation.

**Marketing update provided by CJ & CE. Both presentations shared with meeting papers.**

TF queried how we compare in terms of our social media with other similar destinations.

CE responded – Scotland have a very strong social presence. VW have a target for growth and separate KPIs for both paid and organic social activity.

**TXGB**

**CD and DS from TXGB provided a short introduction:**

- TXGB is a system which makes it possible to manage distribution in one place.
- TXGB launched in Australia and has a global network of partners.
- They have supported some great campaigns. They can also provide a wealth of data/analytics to measure the success of campaigns.
- TXGB allows for more bookability through linking live inventory to more booking channels.
- TXGB has been very well received by smaller businesses as it often creates additional opportunities for them and supplements/replaces their existing booking channels.
- TXGB can also support events and they are currently working on World Snooker Tour

- Val and Zoe Hawkins are the regional contacts on TXGB. And DS and James Berzins are the contacts at TXGB. For any further information please contact [visitwales@mwtcymru.co.uk](mailto:visitwales@mwtcymru.co.uk) or [support@txgb.co.uk](mailto:support@txgb.co.uk)

**Cruise Wales update provided by ST**

- Cruise significantly impacted by Covid however the picture is improving.
- Good news is that there will be 39 Cruise calls into SW this year – that will be 16,000 passengers + 7,000 crew. That relates to a potential day spend of min £1.6m
- They recently arranged a familiarisation visit for 12 major cruise lines and the visit included Cardiff, Milford and Swansea. As part of the visit, they arranged a Twmpath at Pembrokeshire Gin Distillery. They included visits to attractions including Folly Farm and had fantastic feedback.
- ST will attend Seatrade Global in March.
- ST added that things are looking very positive in terms of [future cruise calls](#).

GR commented that the Cruise Market offers huge potential and that the SW would benefit significantly from an alongside berth facility. He added that this should be considered as part of the proposed Blue Eden development at Swansea. SH added that the Blue Eden project is private sector led and is focussed on Hydrogen. Swansea are however supportive of the addition of a Cruise Terminal.

**AOB**

GR emphasised the great opportunity that TXGB provides businesses and encouraged forum members to contact Val Hawkins for further information.

GR commented that VW budgets are less than they have been in previous years and are significantly less than many competitor destinations.

A discussion was had on changes to self-catering policy and SH added that Swansea have seen an increase in second homes being sold and returning as housing stock.

GR added that he had recently attended a WAVA meeting and a discussion had been had on the WITF funding and whether the ratio of funding/loan could be changed to make the scheme more attractive for businesses to apply.

RM added that changes had been made to the fund over the past 12 months and they now have significantly more projects in the pipeline. He added that the 80 loan / 20 grant can be increased to 60 loan / 40 grant when businesses can demonstrate the need.

**Date of next meeting:** Thursday 8 June