

Fforwm Twristiaeth Rhanbarthol De Orllewin Cymru South West Wales Tourism Forum

Llys y Frân Visitor Centre

Minutes, Thursday 8 June 2023

Forum Member present online:

AD, WATO, Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum
MS, Call of the Wild
LS, National Botanic Garden of Wales
AP, Dan-yr-Ogof Showcaves (Observer)
SH, Swansea Council
GG, WTSWW
HP, Carmarthenshire County Council
KD, NPT Council
SR, CTA
ZW, Folly Farm
FK, Oakwood
SH, Visit Wales
HO, Visit Wales

Forum Members in person:

GR, Chair: Glangwili Mansion
AC, University of Wales Trinity St Davids
PE, Retreats Group
TF, Seren Collection
MH, Dŵr Cymru
PD, Wales Activity Tourism Organisation
RR, Bluestone
ET, Visit Pembrokeshire
LW, MHPA
SC, Tourism Swansea Bay
RC, WAVA
VH, Mid Wales Tourism
ZH, Mid Wales Tourism
MD, Saundersfoot Harbour

LvW, Visit Wales
JD, Visit Wales
CC, Visit Wales
CJ, Visit Wales

Croeso / Welcome– GR (Chair)	Action
<p>The Chair thanked those members in the room and noted it was great to see them in person. He also welcomed members joining online. The Chair noted that since the last forum meeting in February, quite a bit has taken place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fora Chairs met up with the Minister for Finance and Local Government, Rebecca Evans and Cefin Cambell AM, who is the Plaid Cymru nominated lead on matters relating to the co-operation agreement. This was a very short meeting which the Minister used to update on the Levy consultation outcomes, but in essence the Chair felt the meeting threw up more questions than answers. The Chair felt that the Minister was effectively trying to justify the introduction of the Levy based on a secondary survey of 2,500 people (1,000 in Wales and 1,500 in England) which was carried out between October and December 2022. This response identified 58% of those interviewed were in favour of the introduction of such a levy based on the funds raised being used to support local infrastructure etc. The Chair noted that the Welsh Government had not notified the sector that this secondary survey was being undertaken and that the minister failed to recognise that 78% of those completing the official consultation document (well over 1000 responses) had indicated their opposition to such a levy being introduced. • The Chair noted that Wales Tourism Week came and went with a reception held in the Senedd on Wednesday 17 May. He added that Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism Dawn Bowden reiterated the Welsh Government’s position 	

on the introduction of the Tourism Levy and Suzy Davies (Chair of the WTA) responded with an excellent speech outlining the industry's opposition to the introduction of this tax in the current economic climate.

- The Chair added that the Welsh Revenue Department have also been engaging with those in the sector who offered to co-operate and engage. He added that there was a distinct reluctance from operators in the field to engage despite several appeals and emails. From those the Chair has spoken to, they are questioning why the industry should assist in a tax that they don't want, and if the WG ignore the responses from the industry in the official consultation, why should they listen now.
- The Chair also updated that there have been three Welsh Government engagement meetings on the introduction of the Statutory Licencing Scheme for Accommodation which many forum members attended. He felt that the subject matter under discussion was limited and the outcomes unclear. He added that the only clear message was that the industry would welcome a simple, low-cost Registration Scheme as was initially proposed.
- The Chair informed members that the Regional Chairs met up last week with representatives of all the major players within the industry to discuss how they can better engage with the Welsh Government on the major issues affecting the Visitor Economy and have their voices heard, recognised, and respected. The group are intent on working closely with political leaders and officers to achieve outcomes that will both meet the political needs of the Senedd members without adversely affecting the financial stability, sustainability and viability of many businesses which will be adversely affected by the current pieces of legislation. The Group fears that current proposed and enacted legislation will further damage the GDP of Wales and push us further behind the UK in this respect.

Diweddariad Croeso Cymru / Visit Wales Update – HO, LvW & CC

- HO thanked GR for his opening remarks and introduced herself. HO is DD of Marketing for Visit Wales and working closely with Steffan Roberts who is DD of Development.
- HO added that she would provide an update on current WG policy areas impacting the sector as part of her wider update.
- HO informed members that the Brilliant Basics Fund has now closed for applications and the applications received are currently being assessed and scored. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application w/c 28 June.
- HO updated on the Visitor Levy:
 - This is currently at policy development stage. Welsh Treasury will meet with officials from local authorities in the coming weeks to discuss the practicalities of implementing the levy.
 - The intention is to introduce the bill 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.
 - 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. Many thanks for those who are helping the WRA.

- HO updated on the Statutory Licencing Scheme:
 - The consultation on the statutory licensing scheme for all visitor accommodation providers in Wales closed in March 2023 with over 1500 responses received.
 - These responses are being independently analysed, with a final report due w/c 26 June 2023.
 - The report will be published in July 2023.
 - Three 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.
 - 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.

HP asked for further information on who within the LAs they met with. HO said she would check with the team leading on the work and come back after the meeting.

HO

- HO updated on the WG work exploring the reform of 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 Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru
 - The Minister for Education and Welsh Language has committed to a formal consultation regarding the structure of the school year. The Minister has also confirmed that the overall number of holiday weeks would not be reduced, and the summer break will be no less than four weeks.
 - Important to note that the consultation has not yet begun and any decision following the consultation would have at least a 12-18month implementation period as we recognise concerns from various sectors about needing a suitably long lead in time.
 - Through exploring the reform of the school year, the WG are looking at ways in which the school calendar could help improve learner progression and attainment, address disadvantage, reduce educational inequalities, support learner and staff wellbeing and better align with modern life.

GR questioned how some decisions on Reform of School Year are already made prior to consultation starting such as the statement on summer holiday being no less than 4 weeks. HO responded to say that this statement had been made to give re-assurance and following the early-engagement events held by the policy team on this work.

TF asked where the views of the tourism sector will sit in terms of priority as this is an Educational policy? Will the views of those stakeholders be a higher priority? HO responded that the WG recognise that the policy could impact wider sectors and WG is committed to reviewing all evidence and listening to all views, before making any decisions. We would encourage all forum members to engage during the consultation directly and through our policy colleagues in the WG.

- CC updated on VW Industry Engagement:

- CC in new role as Head of Industry Engagement. Since the pandemic VW have maintained regular contact with the industry through online webinars and the industry newsletter the database for which has doubled in size to 20,000. We also formed the Visitor Economy Forum as a platform for our Minister to stay informed with Fora Chairs and other key bodies.
- Moving forward we recognise that we need an improved industry website as a one stop shop and one of our priorities for this year is to re-locate and update our tourism industry website. The current pages sit on Business Wales but will be moving over to have an industry section on VisitWales.com and looking to have the first phase complete by the Autumn.
- In addition, we will 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 will return to the National Tourism Awards and one national conference and then repeat the sequence in future years.
- Next steps will be to release dates for the in-person roadshows and we will come out to meet with partners soon to discuss the awards. If there are any dates you would like us to avoid, please can you let us know asap.

ALL

LvW added that there would be a key role for the fora members at the roadshows.

GR requested that the fora members are given the opportunity to input into the roadshows.

LvW then provided an update on VW research and marketing (slides shared following meeting).

AC asked if VW have any research on success of Llwybrau: Wales, by Trails Campaign and also on Cruise market. LvW said that VW did a considerable amount of research before deciding on Trails and there are a number of difference insights that provide an overall picture of how campaigns are performing – the re-contact survey, business barometer, and importantly discussions with Stakeholders. LvW suggested a follow up with Sue Thomas who leads on Cruise for Visit Wales.

RC commented that it was great to see the VW focus on key international markets including the US but asked what VW is doing to target international visitors from the Far East and China? LvW responded that we are working with Visit Britain in these markets, we consider all opportunities as they arise, however the key markets are USA, Germany and Ireland and these are the current focus.

Diweddariad ar brosiectau Cyrchfannau Denu Twristiaeth / Update on Tourism Attractor Destination projects

GR welcomed the three presenters and provided a short introduction to the TAD projects:

- The TAD programme is a £67million pound investment programme in key tourism destinations. It was awarded £27.7 ERDF and £9 million of Welsh Government match funding, and partner funding.

- The aim of the programme was to focus investment on a smaller number of larger scale tourism projects in 11 tourism destinations that have the potential to become 'must visit' iconic destinations.
- The programme was led by Visit Wales and the projects delivered by a variety of partners including Local Authorities, third and private sectors.
- The programme began in 2016 and will finish in June 2023
- Although it has been a challenging period, all the projects have managed to overcome huge barriers to complete their projects within the programme timescale and we are looking forward now to be able to promote them to visitors. VW are thankful to all partners for their efforts and cooperation.

- **MH provided an update on Llys y Frân (slides shared following meeting)**
 - In 2017 the site closed and underwent a £4million major investment backed with £1.7m ERDF funding through WG. The site re-opened 18 June 2021 and has attracted 250,000 visitors and are proud to have won the Visit Pembrokeshire Activity Provider of the Year in 2022.
 - The site is based on a pay and play day visitor attraction open all year round. They offer a whole range of activities on land and water.
 - They currently employ 19 full time staff and 32 seasonal.
 - They are focused on continually growing and developing the offering, future projects include a campsite, Forest school, additional activities including wind surfing, high ropes, adventure play.

- **HP provided an update on Pendine (Museum of Speed and Caban)**
 - In 2009 the LA worked with the community of Pendine to develop a masterplan that would transform the resort to a 12-month destination and secured TAD funding for the project.
 - The transformed Museum of Speed opened last week with a new outside play area and Caban opened in March and has seen high occupancy levels since then. HP noted that it interesting that they are seeing a high level of local usage – visitors within 30mins of Pendine.
 - HP also noted that staffing is an issue and there is a shortage of students to fill the roles they have to offer.
 - Events will be a big focus for Pendine.

LvW noted the gains in terms of accessibility we have seen through a number of the TAD projects.

- **MD provided an update on Saundersfoot Harbour**
 - Developing the project during the Covid Pandemic meant that there have been a number of challenges faced.
 - There had been little investment at Saundersfoot Harbour for several years and the regeneration of Saundersfoot was desperately needed. Despite this, the Harbour itself was functioning well and is the second largest in Wales.
 - They worked closely with the local community to develop their plans and had 94% approval from the community to progress.
 - There are a number of difference elements which have been developed as part of the project including the Marine Centre of Excellence, National Events Deck, Coastal Storm Centre, Coastal Schooner Centre and Ocean Square Heritage and Arts Centre.

PE commented how Saundersfoot has transformed to a fantastic Pembrokeshire visitor destination. Initially through the development of the St Brides Hotel and now the Harbour.

TF added that as a resident in the town the project has been transformational.

Cynllun Achredu Gweithgareddau Antur Croeso Cymru ac Adventure Smart / Visit Wales Adventure Activity Assurance Scheme and Adventure Smart - PD

- **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 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 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](#)

- **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 look at the section of the website which has new, more friendly content including a FAQ's section and testimonials from those who are participating currently.

TXGB – VH&ZH, Mid Wales Tourism (Slides shared following meeting)

- Mid Wales Tourism have been contracted by Visit Wales on TXGB Comms in the South West.
- VH provided case studies from businesses on board and outlined some of the reasons why businesses and destinations should get [involved with TXGB](#):
 - More opportunities to reach new customers.
 - You pay nothing until you get an online booking.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ You're in control – you opt-in/out of the websites you'd like to be on. ○ For each booking generated you pay TXGB 2.5% & VAT. ○ Be first in line to take advantage of online bookable opportunities on regional DMO websites, UK-based domestic distributors, or international OTAs in harder to-reach markets. ● For further information on TXGB please contact VH & ZH at visitwaleshelp@mwtcymru.co.uk / 01654702653 	
<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GR thanked all members for attending and apologised that the meeting had over run. He encouraged members to let him know if there are items they would like him to raise with the Minister at the Visitor Economy Meeting on Tuesday 13 June. ● The Tourism & Hospitality Skills Partnership would like feedback from industry on operational issues around recruitment, skills, and training. CJ & JD will email further information to members on this. 	
<p>Date of next meeting: TBC</p>	