

Visit Wales - South West Wales Regional Tourism Forum

23 July 2020 – Virtual (online) Meeting

Attendees

Paula Ellis – Chair
Adam Smith – Vice Chair
Jacqui Davies – Clydey Cottages
Tim Brace – FBM
James Parkin – PCNPA
Neil Kedward – Seren Collection
Matthew Evans – Event Wales
Andrew Campbell – WTA
Gina Gavigan- Wildlife Trust
Steve Hopkins – Swansea Council
Karleigh Davies – NPT CBC
Mark Hillary – Dwr Cymru
Simon John – Cawdor Collection
Andrea Winterton – NRW
Mark Soanes – Call of the Wild
Melissa Knight – Dwr Cymru
Zoe Wright – Folly Farm
Jayne Rees Baines – PTA
David Beany – CTA
Stephen Crocker – TSB
Paul Renfro – WATA
Mike Cavanagh – Pembrokeshire CC
Francis Jenkins – Swansea Council
Huw Parsons – Carmarthenshire CC
George Reid – Glangwilli Mansion
Lucy Wonnacott – MHPA
Huw Pendleton – Celtic Holiday Parks

Visit Wales

Rob Holt – Deputy Director, Culture Sport and Tourism
Rhidian Morgan – Head of Tourism
Lucy Von Weber – Head of Marketing
Joanne Corke – Head of Research and Insights
Phil Abraham – Regional Engagement Manger

Apologies

Rebecca Rigby – Bluestone
Jane Donald – Regional Engagement – Visit Wales

Welcome & Introductions – Paula Ellis Chair.

Paula Ellis opened the meeting by reminding members that the Forum was only scheduled for one hour and welcomed Andrea Winterton from Natural Resources Wales to the group. PE noted that the first step in re-opening the industry had been largely positive in terms of booking volumes and numbers of visitors, however, there were concerns from the industry of the lack of social distancing from many visitors from outside of Wales and some operators either not understanding or not abiding by guidance provided by the Welsh Government in terms of TTP. As Chair of the Forum PE called on all members to ensure information from the Forum was shared by members and hoped that the next stages in re-opening the industry would provide opportunities for more businesses to trade and also allow natural spread of visitors throughout the region.

Visit Wales Update

Rob Holt

RH updated the forum members on the current planned phased easing of lockdown measures with camping and accommodation with shared facilities opening on the 25

July. The proposed opening date for indoor hospitality remains as the 3 August dependent on the public health position of the country. RH stated this was the biggest cultural change in hospitality consumption since the introduction of the smoking ban, and communication of messaging around TTP and social distancing both to visitors and businesses is particularly difficult. RH assured forum members Visit Wales is working with all sectors on communication including police, public health officials, local authorities and other stakeholders.

Following a question from Neil Kedward on the potential to bring the 3 August date forward, RH outlined this was not an option and the opening of shared facilities needs to take place first. RH accepted customers need education and LvW stated that Visit Wales are looking at a communications strategy for this area, all members agreed this was essential. Finally RH reminded members there is TTP webinar tomorrow for questions on this specific area along with daily HMRC webinars on a number of subjects including VAT reductions.

Huw Pendleton asked whether there were plans to reduce the 2m social distancing law to 1m, RH replied that it was always under review but 2m remains at present.

George Reid asked about outside licensed areas for premises wishing to extend into the public realm and RH suggested this was a matter for Local Planning authorities, however, licensing regulations for outdoor spaces within business boundaries has been relaxed by the UK Government.

Adam Smith asked whether there will be guidance for customers for indoor hospitality, RH and LvW re-iterated that Visit Wales is looking at messaging as part of current work streams and understood the importance of getting it right.

Following the Visit Wales update and due to the shorter meeting time Lucy Von Weber (VW Head of Marketing) and Joanne Corke (Head of Research and Insights) gave members updates on marketing and research via links in the meeting chat function, while Rhidian Morgan (Head of Tourism) gave a brief overview of recent funding and outlined that a further phase of ERF was planned but no dates or details were available yet.

Members updates:

The general feedback from members was that booking levels were incredibly strong for late July/August and into September and the key for the industry was 'stretching' the season for as long as possible. Hotels were seeing room rates exceed last season while some attractions said they were sold out up to a week in advance at the moment. The adventure sector was seeing strong booking levels however, this was tempered by the need for smaller groups due to social distancing guidance.

Any other businesses

There was no AOB.

Chair / Closing Remarks

In closing the meeting PE thanks the members for the feedback which was positive and constructive and reminded members that although the industry was a long way from recovery we never could have imagined being in the position we are in a few months ago. Members were urged to remind networks of responsibilities in terms of

<p>re-opening to ensure no public health issues relate back to the way the industry has operated.</p> <p>PE listed the key points from the meeting as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stronger messages required from WG to remind customers of their responsibilities in terms of social distancing.• Only essential public transport use does not encourage sustainable travel to Wales for holidays.• The industry will require support when the season ends. <p>RH assured PE these points will be looked at by VW.</p> <p>Finally PE told members that we would now be returning to the normal cycle of meeting with the next Forum planned for October. If members felt there was a need to meet before then this could be arranged at short notice.</p>	
<p><u>Date of next meeting:</u> 14 October</p>	