

South West Wales Tourism Forum

Minutes, Wednesday 27 January, 2021

Present

PE, Chair: Retreats Group	DB, Dŵr Cymru
AS, Vice Chair: Village Hotel	DB, CTA
JD, Clydey Cottages	TB, FBM
JP, PCNPA	MC, PCC
TF, The Grove	ME, Tourism Marketing Group
SC, TSB	PR, WATA
GG, SWWWT	SH, Swansea Council
KD, NPT CBC	HP, Carmarthenshire CC
MH, Dwr Cymru	GR, Glangwili Mansion
LW, MHPA	MS, Call of the Wild
AC, WTA	AW, NRW
HF, NBGW	JL, RLP
RR, Bluestone NP Resort	ET, Visit Pembrokeshire
JP, PCNPA	CE, Folly Farm
NB, LC	

Visit Wales

RH, DD Tourism Development and Major Events	
LvW, Head of Marketing	CC, Marketing Manager
RM, Head of Tourism Development	GR, Head of Quality Development Operations
JS, Tourism Research	JD, Regional Engagement Team

Welcome and introduction

PE welcomed Members and thanked them for their continuing support. She outlined the agenda and introduced the topics for discussion and re-iterated previous appeals for issues to consider at future meetings with current meetings appearing VW heavy possibly due to the current pandemic and requirement to share relevant information.

She reiterated her role in the C-19 Emergency Task Force Meetings and the regions continued representation there along with her commitment to bringing identified priorities including furlough, reduced VAT and rate relief to discussion.

RH gave an overview of the current situation with focus and priority position being delivery of funding, he commented that:

- 'alert levels' are now confirmed, being reviewed every three weeks (but can be changed within this time frame)
- next reviews will be 28 Jan, 18 Feb and 11 March
- the suggestion is that there will be tightening of restriction before any further relaxation with new strains being identified, as the R number reduces the situation will be reviewed but the chance of moving to level 3 is highly unlikely before the next review date
- the vaccine roll out plan hopes to get up to 50% of the population vaccinated by the spring, being very mindful of new strains and the fact that the under 50s will then still need to be vaccinated
- 'normality' for February half term week is increasingly unlikely

Funding Overview

Rhidian Morgan (RM) updated the group on the current situation with regard to funding and the support scheme

- just over 8200 applications already received with the value of applications over £57m
- applications peaked within the first few hours of the fund opening but have now tailed off with some applications proving ineligible i.e. some duplicates, non-tourism businesses etc.
- the current scheme covers the six week up to the end of January 2021 and we are currently looking at what can be done next continuing to lobby UK Government on national led schemes; VAT, furlough, delay repayments with all issues raised at a Wales level are being raised with UK Government
- he stated that the announcement on funding schemes (by UK Gov) last week and a pot of £227m for Wales was forthcoming may have been misleading as this was included in the previous £600m announced for Wales
- the support and hard work in delivery of funding by LA's with £99m already committed proves invaluable

Much discussion and queries followed including questions on whether the furlough scheme would be extended to end of April 2021 and the continued necessity to pay on-going costs against furloughed staff – all being pursued and commented on at UK level discussion

Recovery Planning

LVW began the session by covering the 3 current projects focussing on:

- Mental Health (which has come up at the Task Force meetings) with WG being asked to look at how we can deliver and target for the tourism sector, currently scoping and looking at identifying gaps not looking to deliver but to sign-post similarly to what has happened with the agriculture sector where WG have facilitated Mind Cymru to deliver a sector specific programme. Note, there are some services already available such as Hospitality Action.
- Looking at the logistics and a business case around a potential voucher / incentive scheme to help stimulate bookings as soon as it is safe to do so. Importantly, that includes looking at the influence that a voucher scheme can have in spreading benefit and managing visitors as well as just stimulating bookings, if market demand is already present e.g. encouraging people to areas or products where there is capacity
- Future planning – possibilities including workshop recovery sessions and a virtual roadshow later in the year

She finished by adding that the Addo campaign is now underpinning our communications and the ethos we will use for the rest of 2021 as well as us hoping to rejuvenate the Year of Outdoors

CC explained her current role covering Mari Stevens vacated role as Deputy Director for Marketing, she went on to give an overview of recovery planning actions

- First priorities were how VW can work with stakeholders on a recovery plan
- Short term (Jan – April) looking at The Corona Virus Control Plan, the alert level restrictions as they gradually fall and what support we can continue to provide, not just financially but scenario planning, comms messaging to stakeholders and communities and using the Addo messaging sensitively to ensure this happens

- Moving down into levels 3 and 2 we need to be ready to convey the correct messaging to visitors including that restrictions may be different from those in other home nations
- We need to assist the sector in getting messages out that our product is safe and re-build public confidence, we also want to discuss future interventions and how we continue to lobby UK Government for financial support
- In the short - medium term, to June, we will focus on how we stimulate and control demand in working with research colleagues and stakeholders to anticipate levels of demand as we start to open up
- In the medium - long term we will look at how we develop our local visitor economies again, re building confidence and tailoring recovery plans for sun sectors such as events, business tourism and the cruise market
- And, finally, look at working with the Task Force, key stakeholders and industry on how we focus on 'Priorities for the Visitor Economy 2020-2025' – via planning workshops as soon as possible
- Plans to use a virtual 72hr St David's Day event to boost consumer interest and as a way to look to our international markets
- Focus on and be aware of consumer sentiment coming out of the pandemic; projecting Wales as a place for wellbeing and doing good things, we know visitors are looking for sustainability, reducing their carbon foot print and wellbeing experiences

Discussion followed covering topics above including the continued research and experience regarding transfer of the virus outdoors (and evidence to that end), PR – positive and otherwise, the vaccine role out and the possible indication of requirement for quarantine and hotels participation with that. RH stated that detail was still awaited regarding the latter.

Visit Pembrokeshire, the new DMO

PE introduced ET the new CEO for Visit Pembrokeshire who gave a presentation on the background for and functions within the new Destination Management Organisation (DMO) - the first of its kind in Wales – focussing on:

- the background to its inception – issues covering a fragmented approach to tourism delivery, a perceived 'loss of ground' to the competition and the desire to position the County as one of the most attractive and high-profile destinations in Wales

She clarified the 'vision' as being to galvanise the sector, provide leadership and raise the profile of Pembrokeshire as a top 5 UK destination choice with targets including:

- 10% growth in tourism in real terms, addressing seasonality, business engagement and the desire to have Pembrokeshire become one of the top 5 UK destinations of choice

Strategic priorities have been identified and list as / for; a shared brand, attracting events and addressing seasonality, being seen as a responsible, sustainable choice and getting the basics right

The intention is to continue to offer business support to stakeholders and partners and to support recovery.

Statutory Registration

GR gave an overview of the current situation regarding statutory registration with the proposal having been around for some time key considerations being: to ensure a level playing field (re compliance and H&S as an example), the impact of 'second homes' and holiday letting, the continued discussion on what happens elsewhere in the UK Nations and the implications on

<p>both cost and resourcing in establishing a scheme with issues on enforcement requiring much wider discussion - consultation is ongoing.</p> <p>Some debate followed including the possibility of registration leading to a tourism tax (not currently on the agenda), the levelling of standards and a comprehensive 'database' offering positive outcomes in being able to engage with more stakeholders.</p> <p>Comment was also made re the issue of free grading coming into effect within the next financial year with a report at Ministerial level.</p>	
<p>Research</p> <p>JS gave an update on the pandemic and how it has impacted on the main tourism surveys, forthcoming publications and future work areas. Presentation available on request.</p>	
<p>AOB and Vice Chair closing remarks</p> <p>AS gave a brief summing up of the topics covered including; checking on the Task Force updates, the implications over continued furlough and impact of PAYE, insurance etc. Business survival and re-opening safely, using positive messaging and working together sharing detail with businesses within the Forum stakeholder and partnership circle and on further offering subjects for discussion</p> <p>PE along with LvW and CC suggested that the next meeting be a single item agenda 'recovery planning workshop' as early as beginning of February (detail and date to follow). She mentioned the 'new' format re providing written updates prior to meetings (useful due to ongoing time constraints) and her hope that members will engage with that going forward</p> <p>She went on to explain her intention to step down from Forum Chair (2yr position coming to end beg 2022) with consideration being given to time frame and likelihood of election (following previous round) starting at next meeting May for completion October 2021 and new Chair for first meeting 2022. PE, AS and JD to discuss action.</p>	
<p>Date of next meetings: 19 May and 6 October 2021</p>	