

South West Wales Tourism Forum

Minutes, Wednesday 6 October, 2021

Present

AS, Vice Chair: Village Hotel	TF, The Seren Collection
TT, Swansea Council	FK, Oakwood Theme Park
SH, Swansea Arena	HP, Carmarthenshire CC
SC, Tourism Swansea Bay	GR, Glangwili Mansion
AW, NRW	CB, Bluestone
MH, Dwr Cymru	PR, WATO/PCF
ME, Tourism Marketing Group	LW, Milford Haven Port Authority
KD, NPT Council	HB, PCNPA
MS, Call of the Wild	ZW, Folly Farm
RC, RLSP	HF, National Botanic Gardens
JD, Clydey Cottages	ET, Visit Pembrokeshire
	AC, University of Wales Trinity St David

Visit Wales

Steffan Roberts – Deputy Director – Tourism Development
Heledd Owen, Deputy Director - Marketing
Lucy Von Weber, Head of Marketing
Jen Velu, Tourism Research
Kerry Thatcher, Partnerships Manager
Sue Thomas, Head of Business Development & Cruise Wales
Jane Donald, Regional Engagement Team
Ceri Jones, SW Regional Engagement Manager

Welcome, Introductions and Opening Remarks AS welcomed members and thanked them for attending. He said that the industry is on the road to recovery and we look forward with optimism to 2022. He asked members for updates and to provide some reflections on the Summer.	
LA & Members updates Carmarthenshire Council - HP <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carmarthenshire Council had weekly hotspot meeting with teams across the LA to manage problem areas;• Grateful of the funding received through the Local Government Hardship fund – provided signage, litter pickers & boots on the ground in key visitor areas;• At the start of the pandemic they set up an Economy Recovery Group and key to this is maximising visitor spend in the local economy. One of the ways in which Carmarthenshire are doing this is focussing on increasing local spend from touring and camping sites;	

- Carmarthenshire are also signed up to the [Wales Ambassadors programme](#).

Swansea Council - TT

- Swansea have been working on their successful [“Happy Place” marketing campaign](#). They have to date received 2million page views so are delighted with results;
- They recently launched a capital business support fund for accommodation as part of the Councils recovery plan;
- Also as part of the recovery plan businesses can participate in their marketing campaigns for free;
- In comparison with last year they had few visitor management issues and were prepared.

Tourism Swansea Bay - SC

- From feedback provided from members of Tourism Swansea Bay there is ongoing staffing and supply chain issues. Many have cash-flow issues and this will increase now emergency funding available through government has come to an end. Some members only opening 3 days a week and staff costs have increased by 30%;
- Tourism Swansea Bay are opening a TIC three days a week. The kiosk will be located in the Mumbles;
- They are also working on an Ambassadors programme and currently have 40 ambassadors participating;
- SC also mentioned development of a bike lane on the Gower which has some opposition.

Neath Port Talbot Council - KD

- Key piece of work for NPT Council has been the new place brand and marketing campaign [‘Dramatic Heart of Wales’](#). Unfortunately the work had to be put on hold for 2 years due to the pandemic. Initial work around discovery clusters was funded as part of the RTEF. Engagement with the campaign has been going well and the series of videos showing the grit and beauty of NPT have been well received.
- NPT also received funding through the Hardship fund and as part of their Visitor Management Plan they piloted a Park & Ride service at Waterfall Country, due to the huge pressures experienced at Pontneddfechan. The number of users of the P&R was not as high as they would have liked, possibly due to the reluctance to use public transport.
- NPT looking at commissioning a new DM Plan in near future.

Visit Pembrokeshire - ET

- From a Visitor Management perspective Pembrokeshire was well prepared. They had a Visitor Welcome team of 40 individuals (funded through hardship fund and many volunteers).
- Visit Pembrokeshire also ran a behaviour campaign to encourage responsible behaviour in support of Addo messaging;
- They have also been busy preparing for their new brand launch. This has been a bottom up approach and will be an umbrella brand for the county. Visit Pembrokeshire have a launch event on the 14 October with 140 attending.

- As part of the branding work they need to reskin the website and have been undertaking an audit of the images and producing new content.
- The Visit Pembrokeshire Consumer database has 1500 signed up and they are looking to grow this and undertaking tactical marketing will be a key focus.
- A review of the DM plan will also be undertaken in Autumn looking at the impact of the pandemic.

AC

- Informed members that he has stepped down as Chair of WTA. Suzy Davies is the new Chair;
- UWTSD has appointed AC Professor of Practice;
- AC informed members of a recruitment event he and ET co-chaired as part of the Pembrokeshire Levelling Up fund. It was an interesting event which AC hopes will result in a positive move forward. A psychologist attended and they discussed what the industry can do to help the recruitment crisis taking into consideration people's attitudes and expectations;
- Another issue currently impacting businesses is the Fuel Crisis;
- Second homes also a contentious issue;
- AC emphasised the need for a collaborative approach to tourism.

Folly Farm – ZW

- Folly Farm have had a fantastic summer. Their spend per head has significantly increased;
- They are experiencing supplier issues with significant delays on their new lodges;
- They are under no illusion that part of the reason many businesses have performed well has been the VAT reduction and emphasised the need to lobby for the reduction to remain. Entry prices will have to go up next year.
- ZW said that she was interested to hear about the recruitment campaign. They have increased wages at Folly Farm;
- They anticipate that next season will be as busy.

Oakwood Theme Park – FK

- Agreed with all comments made by ZW;
- They have also had a great summer but could only open 6 days a week due to staff shortages;
- They continue to try and recruit and limit tickets due to Covid and also staff shortages;
- They are holding their Spectacular Halloween event over half term.

Visit Wales updates

Steffan Roberts – Deputy Director Tourism Development

- Following the decision taken in Senedd, Covid Passes will be required for large events and nightclubs. This will come into effect from Monday 11 October;
- 21 day review process will remain and we will have a challenging winter ahead. We are currently seeing cases rising and hospital admissions rising. The vaccination booster campaign has started and the First Minister has reinforced

the need to continue to work from home if possible and continue to do what we can to keep Wales safe;

- 21 day review will take place tomorrow and an announcement will be made on Friday. The updated [Control Plan](#) will also be published then.
- Funding – ERF currently on hold. Await guidance on how this will be taken forward.
- The UK Gov Comprehensive Spending Review will take place 27 October and mid Dec we should have confirmation of our capital budgets for the next 4 years and revenue for the next 3 years.
- Over the summer a number of projects have been successful in funding applications to the [Brilliant Basics Fund](#) which is a Wales wide fund supporting public, third sector and not for profit organisations to deliver basic small scale tourism infrastructure improvements. Please contact CJ if you would like further information.

Heledd Owen – Deputy Director, Marketing

- HO is the new Director of Marketing and is at the end of her first month in the post.
- HO has been Head of Marketing and Communications in Welsh Government for the past six years most recently heading up the new climate change portfolio.
- Great to attend the meeting, to meet you all and to hear about everything that's going on in the region.

Lucy Von Weber – Head of Marketing

- LvW presentation slides that provided progress on [Recovery Plan](#) to date and details on Autumn & Winter Campaign – contact REM for details.

Recruitment Campaign

Kerry Thatcher – Partnerships Manager

- KT provided an overview on the [Hospitality Recruitment Campaign](#) Visit Wales have been working on in partnership with Working Wales;
- The campaign highlights the career opportunities available in the sector through a series of case studies and the call to action is to join the 'Experience Makers';
- KT emphasised that the campaign is part of a wider campaign that will be rolled out over Autumn/ Winter and thanked everyone for their input;
- Further information on support available with skills & recruitment available on the [VW skills pages](#)

Action: If anyone would like to suggest best practice examples to include as part of the campaign work, please contact KT.

Swansea Arena

Sophie Humphreys – Conference and Events Manager

- SH presentation slides available via REM.

AOB

- AS wished to thank Paula Ellis on behalf of everyone for all her work as Chair of the South West forum over the past two years. We are all very grateful;
- AS wished George Reid who has been voted Chair for 2022/2023 the best in the role;
- CJ advised that we need to nominate and vote a Vice Chair and an email will be sent out in the next two weeks.
- Minutes of the meeting will be included on the VW Tourism Zone. For GDPR purposes if anyone would like details removed please email CJ or JD.

Date of next meeting: Next meeting end of Jan - exact date tbc