

# Visit Wales

## South West Wales Regional Forum

Minutes from Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2018  
Parc y Scarlets, Llanelli

### Present

George Reid (GR)	Carmarthenshire Tourism Association
Nia Ball (NiaB)	Carmarthenshire Tourism Association
Jacqui Davies (JDa)	Clydey Cottages
Tim Brace (TB)	FBM Holidays and Pembrokeshire Tourism Association
Zoe Wright (ZW)	Head of Marketing, Folly Farm
Kevin Davies	Gwesty'r Emlyn Hotel
Nic Beggs (NB)	General Manager, LC
Clare Stowell (CS)	Milford Waterfront
Huw Francis (HF)	National Botanic Garden of Wales
James Parkin (JP)	Director of Delivery and Discovery, PCNPA
Paula Ellis (PE)	Group General Manager, Retreats Group
Neil Kedward (NK)	The Grove and Seren Collection
Tom Beynon (TB)	Three Cliffs Bay Caravan Park
Stephen Crocker (SC)	Tourism Swansea Bay
Andrew Campbell (AC)	Chair, Wales Tourism Alliance
Adam Smith (AS)	Village Hotel Club
Gina Gavigan (GG)	WTSWW
Sarah Clifford (SC)	Cardiff Airport

Mike Cavanaugh (MC)	Pembrokeshire County Council
Alan Turner (AT)	Pembrokeshire County Council
Deina Hockenhill (DH)	Carmarthenshire County Council
Steven Hopkins (SH)	Swansea Council
Karleigh Davies (KD)	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Philip Abraham (PA)	Regional Engagement Manager, VW
Jane Donald (JD)	Regional Engagement Team, VW
Gerwyn Evans (GE)	Head of Programme Development, VW
Heledd Williams (HW)	Head of Business Events, VW
Lucy von Weber (LvW)	Head of Marketing, VW

### Apologies

Glenn Hewer	Bluestone Resorts Ltd
Vicky Martin	Dwr Cymru / Welsh Water
Emily Beaumont	National Trust
Hannah Worrall	Oakwood Theme Park
Jane Lewis	Regional Learning Partnership
Mark Bulson	Scamperholidays Ltd (apologies and resignation)
Matthew Evans	Tourism Marketing Group
Paul Renfro	WATO / POCG

## 1 Chair Introduction

**Nic Beggs** gave a brief introduction on agenda including investment and the positive comments following the recent roadshow. He introduced Tom Beynon from Three Cliffs Caravan Park, Lucy von Weber and Sarah Clifford from Cardiff Wales Airport.

He welcomed Lord **Elis Thomas AM, Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport and the Minister gave a brief speech on his background and portfolio and the place of Tourism within the Welsh Governments Prosperity for All Strategy and the new Economic Action Plan.**

The Minister outlined the importance of Tourism as an economic driver in Wales and its importance

for the economy of South West Wales in particular. The Minister gave examples of investment in the sector in South West Wales before opening the floor to forum members for questions.

Questions included:

- The current stance on the potential of a tourism tax

The Minister stated that there were no plans to introduce a Tourism Tax in current administration, a discussion followed around the rising costs facing Tourism businesses such as VAT and Business Rates and how charges are dealt with in competing destinations.

- Infrastructure and barriers to travelling the south west

The Minister was aware of the challenges of perception in terms of travel times facing businesses trying to attract visitors (particularly from the South East of England) to West Wales and was hopeful that the new rail franchise in Wales would help with this. It was noted that a vibrant Cardiff Airport would also aid in shortening travel times and open the area further to international visitors. The Minister stated that officials would continue to work with colleagues across Welsh Government on major infrastructure schemes where appropriate.

- Skills

Forum members stated that the lack of skilled staff (particularly Chef's) was a threat to the industry in South West Wales. The Minister was aware of feedback from the industry on this subject and a discussion took place about whether a hospitality school based model such as those in place in other European Destinations was the best approach to address the issue.

## 2 Visit Wales update

GE gave a synopsis on current investment and regeneration including the 3 current major, EU schemes finalised for the South West at Saundersfoot, Pendine and Lly-y-Fran. He mentioned the recent roadshows and the investment brochure which includes detail on the current funding schemes and product being delivered in the region. He mentioned the Tourism Amenity Investment Scheme (TAIS) and projects currently at panel (89 applications totalling approx. £9.2m with £2m available with 34 going forward) with an announcement on successful projects expected. He mentioned the next round of Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF) and Tourism Product Innovation Fund (TPIF) funding due to be announced before the end of October and the continuing opportunities within the TISS and MSBF.

He confirmed that Year of Discovery detail will be released shortly and that the decision on a theme for the 2020 'Year of' has yet to be released.

He mentioned the Wales Investment Conference on the 29<sup>th</sup> November and the 2019 Tourism Summit both invitation only events.

He reiterated the importance of being a recognised, foundational sector within the Economic Action Plan and confirmed that the question re lower business rates will be tabled as part of internal Welsh Government discussions.

## 3 Business and Events Tourism

**Heledd Williams, Head of Business Events** for the WG introduced her role and reiterated the WG commitment to Business Events with Wales currently underperforming in the sector. She discussed opportunities and support available and strongly suggested that operators (and the wider S W business community) re-engage with her and the website, checking and renewing their product offer.

<p>NB mentioned the new arena space being developed in Swansea and the regions interest in being involved going forward.</p> <p><b>Action: HW contact information and presentation available on request</b></p>	<p><b>HW / VW</b></p>
<p><b>4 Cardiff Airport</b></p> <p><b>Sarah Clifford, Head of Commercial and Sales at Cardiff Airport</b>, gave a presentation and overview of the current market position and the exciting developments and investment - both physical and operational – with 30% of passengers being visitors to Wales and an 8% growth in numbers over the past year and their aspiration for growth within the 2040 Masterplan.</p> <p>Comments included the growth in Chinese and Japanese visitors who are arriving via Cardiff (possibly relating to perceived levels of threat within other UK airports) and the connectivity to those markets – via translation of marketing and destination materials. GE mentioned possible opportunity for activity focussing on attracting international visitors to South West Wales via the next round of VW revenue funding.</p> <p><b>Action: SC presentation available on request</b></p>	<p><b>SC / VW</b></p>
<p><b>5 TA Regional Updates</b></p> <p><b>Andrew Campbell</b> gave an overview of activity on behalf of Pembrokeshire Tourism stating that membership remains static, business seemed to be following the national trend with the staycation market being better than previous years and there was a general feel that the industry had a 'good' year albeit it with a trading dip in August. AC mentioned that there were genuine industry concerns around Airbnb and the issues and effects on regulated businesses, and an issue relating to recent late cancellation of Cruises at Fishguard and the need for investment in the at port 'welcome' in the area. AC informed the Forum that PTA were involved in two current bids for Interreg funding and their tourism summit is scheduled for December 4<sup>th</sup> this year.</p> <p>TB added comment on the relationship to the LA and the DMP suggesting a will to revisit and further drive the partnership whilst recognising the resource issues on both sides.</p> <p>MC responded by stating that the LA is attempting to respond to challenges within an environment of cuts but that tourism is a recognised strength at Cabinet level with positive attempts to look for a sustainable model for ongoing Destination Management possibly via LEADER funding.</p> <p><b>Nia Ball</b>, on behalf of Carmarthenshire Tourism Association, described activity including their recent move to the NBGW. Their Awards (attended by 250) and their 10<sup>th</sup> Annual summit scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> October with the keynote speaker presenting in Wales for the first time – Kate Morrell from the Glamping Sector. The TPIF funded Hywl events are progressing well with 6 events and 1384 attendees recorded so far and the next phase, targeting travel trade business well on track. are. Businesses stating an increase in o/s visitors (some with a 50% German occupancy). Their membership, as other associations, remains static and they are looking at delivery of new product versus their possible shift in focus and priorities into delivery for their members - this being an ongoing discussion.</p> <p><b>Stephen Crocker</b>, representing Tourism Swansea Bay, reported their focus on membership with an NPT event gaining 10 new members with a supplier to buyer event planned for Autumn / Winter to incorporate Bridgend (who have recently lost their TA body) along with plans to attend BTTS at the NEC. SC raised the issue of online booking companies taking value from operators and how to influence / evaluate their usage prompting discussion following which it was suggested that Mari Stevens / Jon Munro be invited to discuss.</p> <p><b>Action: VW to raise the issue of booking companies internally</b></p>	<p><b>GE</b></p>
<p><b>6 AOB</b></p>	

<p>NB mentioned the Chair's agreement for future regional awards to mirror the national categories facilitating automatic transfer of regional winners into the Nationals with Peter Francombe working on date and details for 2020 event.</p>	
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<p>After discussion it was suggested that OTA's and the new Rail Franchise Operator be considered for invitation and presentation at the next meeting.</p>	
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<p>Next meeting date to be forwarded as diary meeting request to attempt to assist with notification of attend.</p>	
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**Date of next meeting: 7<sup>th</sup> Feb (provisional)**