

**Visit Wales**  
**South West Wales Regional Forum**

Minutes from Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019  
National Botanic Garden, Carmarthenshire.

**Present**

George Reid (GR)	Carmarthenshire Tourism Association
Jacqui Davies (JDa)	Clydey Cottages
Zoe Wright (ZW)	Head of Marketing, Folly Farm
Nic Beggs (NB), Chair	Area Manager, Freedom Leisure
Paul Stone (PS)	Oakwood Theme Park
James Parkin (JP)	Director of Delivery and Discovery, PCNPA
Paula Ellis (PE)	Group General Manager, Retreats Group
Stephen Crocker (SC)	Tourism Swansea Bay
Andrew Campbell (AC)	Chair, Wales Tourism Alliance
Gina Gavigan (GG)	WTSWW
Neil Kedward (NK)	The Grove, Narberth
Adam Smith (AS)	Village Hotel Club
Paul Renfro (PR)	WATO / POCG
Sarah Owen (SO)	Carmarthenshire County Council
Karleigh Davies (KD)	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Kate Clark (KC)	Deputy Director Policy and Engagement, Culture Tourism & Sport
Philip Abraham (PA)	Regional Engagement Manager, VW
Gerwyn Evans (GE)	Head of Programme Development, VW
Lucy Von Weber (LvW)	Head of Marketing
Jon Munro (JM)	Digital Leadership Manager

**Apologies**

Mike Cavanagh	Pembrokeshire Council
Kevin Davies	Gwesty'r Emlyn Hotel
Huw Parsons	Carmarthenshire County Council
Frances Jenkins	Swansea Council
Tim Brace	FBM Holidays and Pembrokeshire Tourism
Emily Beaumont	National Trust
Clare Stowell	Milford Waterfront

## 1 Chair Introduction

- Nic Beggs welcomed everyone to the Forum and gave an update on the current feel good factor in the industry as set out by a positive set of figures released by Visit Wales for the Easter Break. GR said this was not mirrored in Carmarthenshire from businesses he had spoken to while AS of the Village Hotel said their leisure market was not as strong as last year especially weekend leisure. Businesses in Pembrokeshire felt the start to the year had been largely positive.
- NB recognised Nia Ball's contribution to the industry in SWW following her departure from CTA and sent the Best wishes of the Forum to Tim Brace who was taken unwell in Majorca.
- NB outlined to members of the Forum that he felt the recent Visit Wales Tourism summit was an excellent and well run event.

## 2 Visit Wales update Gerwyn Evans

- GE mentioned the main purpose of the summit was to launch conversation around the new VW strategy. An internal Welsh Government steering group is pulling all input together and the consultation period will end on 31st May. Following this a draft Action Plan will be presented to Forum members in September for their agreement.
- VW will then look to align its teams (staff resource) with the new strategy.
- GE reminded the forum members that 1 -2-1 meetings with him and KC were available today.

## 3 Marketing update Lucy Von Weber , Head of Marketing and Jon Munro, Digital Leadership Manager

- Lucy Von Weber (LvW) gave an outline of Visit Wales marketing campaigns across all channels and outlined that Visit Wales worked on a 'create once publish everywhere' basis at the moment with content being collated and edited to run on all Visit Wales platforms and paid media. Content is being created based on trends, digital insights and research with experimental, focussed back stories.
- LvW told Forum members that social media advertising spend now outstrips TV advertising spend and Instagram was the biggest growth medium for content at the moment, hence the #thisismywales campaign focusing on user generated content. Instagram has also recently seen its first direct booking posts which suggested further growth of the platform will take place. Lucy told Forum members that many on-line articles now gave the user details on how long it takes to read articles i.e. 1 min read or 2 min read suggesting that content now needs to be more engaging than ever
- It was outlined that London and Partners and Scotland are targeting the UK market this year on a level higher than before which Visit Wales was responding to.
- Forum members were informed that the new VisitWales.com website went live 6 weeks ago, and that the new website looks and feels better with a key difference being a much improved search function which is filter based.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jon Munro (JM) gave further details on the new website and product and experience searches which give expanded results not just product based but would also show results relating to articles and other content.</li> <li>• JM told members that feedback both positive and negative was welcome.</li> <li>• JM then outlined the new product information and business listings platform, soon to be launched, which would make it easier to manage business information and add higher quality images, social media links and videos. There is a potential to add a link to the business specific booking platform. This will help inform content VW produce and hopefully create more leads for businesses.</li> <li>• NB asked when new information added by businesses will go live, JM said it will go live instantly once the platform was launched and an email will be sent to businesses and support will be provided.</li> <li>• NK informed the forum that the business listing are not a major selling channel. JM and LVW agreed but said by creating better content which is used in articles this should create more leads for listed businesses.</li> <li>• SC asked if this would be disruptive to business, JM said no and the input of new information on listings was as straightforward as possible and referred to earlier comments on help and support.</li> <li>• SC asked if other TA's had been offered the opportunity to provide support to businesses. GE said that the data stewards were tendered, JM added that a support FAQ will be provided to key organisations and practical sessions for SWW businesses will take place in the autumn.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: JM to provide direct details on what businesses need to do for Forum members and TA's and we need to spread the word</b></p> <p><b>Action: JM and LVW to run practical sessions with the TAs in the Autumn on the new system.</b></p>	<p><b>JM</b></p> <p><b>JM / LvW</b></p>
<p><b>4 Visit Wales Research and Insights</b>  <b>Joanne Starkey, Head of Research and Insights</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JS presented on research and invites based on a request from the Forum.</li> <li>• JS mentioned that the quarterly report was not read by many people in the industry and this was an issue we needed to overcome. Jo provided handouts on the information VW can provide.</li> </ul> <p>4 main areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demand and market research - main sources IPS, GBTS and GBDVS but there is a time lag and this information can be very public sector based data. JS showed the Forum the huge amount of international profiles on visit Britain.</li> <li>2. Supply Side research – main sources - Wales Occupancy Survey, Wales Tourism Barometer (very quick data), Bed stock data this allows you to businesses to benchmark.</li> <li>3. Visitor experience monitoring every 3 years, more depth this year on planning and satisfaction.</li> <li>4. Planning and Performance - high level policy based and economic impact.</li> </ol>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JS also signposted the Forum members to the excellent information held on Visit Britain in respect of outside UK markets.</li> </ul> <p>A discussion followed the presentation with the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The industry was frustrated with the time lag for information to be produced.</li> <li>• Businesses required short and medium term trend information which could directly impact bookings.</li> <li>• It was agreed high level economic impact statistics were required for Destinations and Public Bodies.</li> <li>• Information was available but not read due to its format.</li> <li>• A monthly short report based on trends and key figures was the preferred method of communication of VW statistics for Forum members.</li> </ul> <p>NB thanked JS for coming to the Forum and it was agreed that JS would look at communication methods for statistics going forward and report back.</p> <p><b>Action: JS / PA to provide feedback to forum on potential new 'presentation' of statistics</b></p>	<p><b>JS / PA</b></p>
<p><b>The Role of the Forum – George Reid</b></p> <p>George Reid (GR) presented on a review of the Forum and outlined he felt there was a missed opportunity with the Forum and the industry needed to drive the Forum not Visit Wales.</p> <p>He stated the Tourism Summit was not as universally well received as VW thought and Forum members did not attend some Forum meetings as they felt it was not worthwhile. GR tabled a number of questions which Forum members discussed, the outcome of the discussion was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forum members generally felt that the meetings were beneficial and welcomed the opportunity to engage with VW</li> <li>• Members felt that the achievements and work of the Forum should be better communicated</li> <li>• It was noted that all members had the opportunity to influence the Agenda but currently no suggestions were being received</li> <li>• Where are we in regards to the partnership for growth 10% growth target?</li> <li>• It was felt that there was an opportunity for Forums to discuss less topics in more depth at each meeting to reach an outcome or Action</li> <li>• Destination and TA updates should be a key part of the Forum</li> <li>• Each Forum should end with a set of actions for both members and Visit Wales</li> </ul> <p>NB thanked GR and members for an open and frank discussion and agreed with many of the above points, he also stated he would re-visit the membership list with a view to refreshing members and potentially removing those who did not regularly attend. NB agreed to give thought to the Agenda and welcomed suggestions from members.</p> <p><b>Action: NB to update forum list, structure and Agenda items for a discussion at the September meeting</b></p> <p><b>Action: All members to feed suggestions regarding the running of the Forum to NB</b></p>	<p><b>NB</b></p> <p><b>NB</b></p>

**Action: the graph on the 10% target to be shared with the forum when it has been updated with full 2018 figures**

**JS / PA**

## **7 Tourism Association Updates**

### Pembrokeshire

- Andrew Campbell outlined that the WTA launch of Wales Tourism Week went well, and tabled the suggestion of a Tourism month for Wales in the near future
- AC said that a recent PT board meeting mirrored VW stats on a good season start, and as a Destination Pembrokeshire are commissioning a new feasibility study on a potential new Destination Management Organisation model
- Interreg projects are progressing well. Cruise season has started, but AC felt that Pembrokeshire is not maximising the economic impact
- PT figures suggest current membership is down on previous years
- James Parkin gave more detail on the proposed DMO feasibility study he will update at next forum
- PCNPA authority will be rolling out a new brand over the next few months and have been investing in some facilities like Carew Castle
- Car parking charges have gone up due to the impact of visitors on the environment, businesses seem ok with this, however, some communities are not happy with the changes

### Swansea

- Stephen Crocker outlined that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed between Swansea Council and Tourism Swansea Bay outlining roles and responsibilities of each organisation. GE stated this was the first of its kind in Wales and asked SC to share with Forum members
- TSB are starting to see growth in membership via running events and have employed planning consultants to help businesses and are building websites to increase member services
- TSB are Planning to launch an app

### Carmarthenshire

- GR gave an update on the structure of CTA going forward and how it is based only on member work and cost stability. CTA have been concentrating on their core business and sector groups
- There is a CTA tourism summit proposed for the winter
- Non-serviced accommodation down on bookings compared to last year
- Sarah Owen outlined Carmarthenshire's push towards becoming the 'cycling hub' for Wales and gave details of projects and work with VW which will help the Destination achieve this

### Neath Port Talbot

- Karleigh Davies updated the forum that the new NPT tourism team consisting of 2 members of staff is now in place
- A new branding exercise for the Destination has been undertaken and new website being developed

<b>Action: SC to share MOU with Forum Members</b>	<b>SC</b>
<p><b>8 AOB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following a discussion regarding Tourism Awards Peter Francombe stated that Local awards that feed into the National Awards <i>cannot</i> exclude non-members of TA's, Forum members agreed this</li> <li>• Gina Gavigan told the forum that there were record numbers of visitor going to Skomer Island on the back of the 'Land of the Wild' tv show. The Wildlife Trust will be launching a 30 days wild campaign in June</li> <li>• Zoe Wright said that Folly Farms footfall is up and they are seeing a huge increase in on line sales, the new food outlets were working well with spend per head also up. New developments opening in the summer</li> <li>• Paul Renfro told the group that 'Adventure Smart Wales' has now gone UK wide and reminded people of the info available. He also highlighted responsible and sustainable use of the environment for the 'Year of Outdoors'</li> <li>• Paul Stone said figures up at Oakwood on last year, with a new ride opening and a new season pass on sale</li> <li>• Jacqui Davies said there was a trend to much later bookings and shorter breaks in her businesses this year</li> <li>• NK stated his businesses had a good start to the year mirroring VW figures with spend per head up</li> </ul> <p>Nic Beggs thanked everyone for the attendance with the next meeting on <b>13<sup>th</sup> September at the LC, Swansea</b></p>	