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Wales Official Tourist Guide Association (WOTGA) Train the Trainer programme



What are the projects aims?

The project aimed to create a team of qualified tourist guide trainers from among the members of WOTGA, all of whom would be experienced guides that hold either a Wales Blue (National Guide) Badge or a Wales Green (Area Guide) Badge.

Once qualified this team of trainers would be equipped to:

- produce the next generation of professional tourist guides for Wales who will fall under the WOTGA umbrella and benefit from the support network that WOTGA offers.
- run endorsement courses for qualified guides from other parts of the UK wanting to improve their knowledge of Wales and its history and culture

- quickly and flexibly respond to requests from Wales-based tourism organisations seeking to organise high quality short guiding skills programmes at a more local level

How were these aims achieved?

WOTGA is a centralised pan-Wales organisation which is uniquely placed to promote, support, and disseminate quality in tourist guiding in Wales. Welsh Government recognises it as having the capability and responsibility to develop quality standards and facilitate appropriate training for those wishing to work as professional tourist guides in Wales.

WOTGA has developed a modular Tourist Guide Training

framework based on the EU standard EN15565: Tourism services – Requirements for the provision of professional tourist guide training and qualifications programmes which had also been adopted by BSI. Originally written in 2008 it was re-approved without change in 2018. The European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (FEG) had been closely involved with the creation of EN15565, so WOTGA decided to contract FEG to provide the Train the Trainers programme using their team of International Trainers. The 'Train the Trainers' programme was carried out within the FEG framework which raised awareness of best practice in the tourism industry throughout Europe specifically.

- the standards required of Welsh tourist guides and the expectations of different international visitors e.g. types and

- depth of commentaries, methods of delivery
- innovative presentational ideas

All WOTGA members were invited to apply and, following a selection process, twelve course participants were recruited. The programme structure was as follows:

- The Art of Guiding; an interactive communication skills programme held in November 2018
- Train the Trainers programme held in December 2018

All twelve participants successfully completed these programmes, becoming Trainers in Accreditation. Once they had had the opportunity to put their newly acquired skills into practice each TIA was asked to create a portfolio of evidence to be submitted to FEG, and take part in a viva with as FEG International trainer. Successful completion of all stages of the programme qualifies a TIA to be a qualified FEG International Trainer.

An Indirect Output of the TPIF project was identified as WOTGA successfully delivering three Green Badge (Area Guide) training courses in North Wales, South East Wales and South West Wales.

Following a recruitment process, these three training courses started in December 2019 with a total of 30 students.

Due to the various Covid 19 restrictions, operating during 2020 and 2021 delivery of the courses was interrupted on several occasions, and the training period extended from four to twenty-two months, but WOTGA is delighted to report that all three were completed in September 2021. A few students dropped out for a variety of reasons, but it is to the trainers' great credit that 26 students successfully completed their training and are now qualified Wales Green Badge Guides.

Who was involved?

The project was overseen by WOTGA's Executive Committee and the Green Badge courses were delivered by its trainer team.

Throughout WOTGA has kept Visit Wales informed of its plans and achievements in delivering tourist guide training that both meets approved international standards and provides value for money to students. WOTGA appreciates the support and positive feedback it has received from Visit Wales.

WOTGA has worked closely throughout all stages of the programme with [FEG's training consultancy group](#).

How was the project funded?

WOTGA is a membership organisation and its income is principally derived from membership subscriptions.

It was able to provide a modest level of match funding and, in addition to the project funding, participants paid their own accommodation costs during the train the trainer programme which was residential. However, without TPIF funding support it is unlikely the project aims could have been achieved.

We believe that WOTGA's new approach to tourist guide training, which is the main outcome of the TPIF project, offers good value for money. We estimated that the cost of running a Blue Badge qualification through the Higher Education system would mean the basic cost of tuition fees would be circa £7,440.00 per student, an investment beyond the reach of many aspiring tourist guides. WOTGA courses can currently be provided at half that fee.

Where did you go for help and advice?

We are indebted to Louisa Giles, then Regional Engagement Manager at Visit Wales, who was our main point of contact for TPIF and provided us with valuable guidance throughout the duration of the project.

Our professional and cordial relationship with FEG and its trainers has also been essential to ensuring the train the trainer programme meets in full the international standard described earlier.

What has been the greatest achievement so far?

Despite all the personal and professional challenges thrown by the Covid 19 pandemic, WOTGA trainers have remained committed and although not all of them have had the opportunity to finalise their portfolios all but one of the participants on the 2018 course have confirmed that they aim to be fully qualified this year.

And the biggest challenge?

The impact of Covid 19 on the three Green Badge courses could have been catastrophic, but the trainers have been creative; they organised a range of webinars to keep participants engaged and informed during periods when meeting face to face was not permitted; practical training sessions and examinations have been re-arranged, often several times. Throughout the course, managers and trainers remained undaunted and finally the three Wales Green Badge programmes were successfully completed by twenty-six of the original thirty participants – they are now Wales Green Badge Guides.

A second challenge met by the training team was to address an ongoing issue. Blue Badge Guides from other parts of the UK frequently bring visitors into Wales as part of a UK tour, and WOTGA felt strongly that it was important for them to have a real understanding of the

culture and history of Wales from a Welsh perspective so they can share it with their clients. Two online endorsement course, 'Telling the Stories of South Wales' and 'Telling the Stories of North Wales' offered exclusively to Blue Badge linguist guides from other parts of the UK have run successfully and were well received by participants.

Any tips for those setting up a similar project?

In WOTGA's view, the key to the success of this project is that the funding has been used to create a resource that can be employed well into the future, for the benefit of the tourism sector in Wales. The demand for tourist guiding skills at all levels is evident from level of enquiries we are receiving for a variety of courses to be run by our newly qualified trainers, and this seems likely to continue. This means the investment of public sector funding represents good value for money – arguably the acid test for any project proposal.

What's next for your project?

The Blue Badge Dragon course will start in November, open to Wales Green Badge Guides who want to qualify to guide across Wales and Blue Badge Guides from other parts of the UK who want to add a Wales Blue Badge to their qualifications. Enquiries are already being received for the next Green Badge courses which are planned for the autumn of 2023.

WOTGA has won contracts from Anglesey Council for three training projects:

- Creation of their online Ambassador Programme
- Cruise Welcome
- Training seasonal beach warden

