

Cross Party Group on Tourism Meeting and AGM

Thursday 22nd October 2020 at 1400 on Zoom

Agenda:

- Introduction, welcome and received apologies- Suzy Davies MS
- AGM – election of Chair and Secretary
- WTA Survey presentation – Adrian Greason-Walker
- The picture from Scotland – Marc Crothall
- The picture from England – Kurt Janson
- (Northern Ireland where unable to attend and sent their apologies)
- Discussion / Q&A – Chaired by Andrew Campbell

Attendance list:

Andrew Campbell	Wales Tourism Alliance
Adrian Greason-Walker	Wales Tourism Alliance
Helen Charlesworth	BH & HPA
Laura Thomas	Brecon Beacons Tourism Association
Emma Mcquillan	The Caravan & Motorhome Club
Emma Robinson	Historic Houses
Peter Cole	Tourism Society
Val Hawkins	Mid Wales Tourism
Fiona Peel	WOTGA
Paula Ellis	Retreats Hotel Group
Louise Dixey	Cardiff Metro University
Clare Stowell and Lucy Wonnacott	Milford Waterfront
Ashford Price	WAVA
Barbara Griffiths	Rep for Self-catering agencies
Mark Bond	
Sarah Heyworth	Micro Tourism Wales
Marc Crothall	Scottish Tourism Alliance
Kurt Janson	Tourism Alliance (UK)
Dafydd-Elis-Thomas MS	Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism
Rob Holt	Visit Wales
Mari Stevens	Welsh Government
Mark Isherwood MS	North Wales
Cathy Bevan (Huw Irranca-Davies MS)	Ogmore
Mike Bryan (Angela Burns MS)	Cardiff West and South Pembrokeshire
Rhun ap Iorwerth MS	Ynys Môn
Heledd Roberts (Rhun ap Iorwerth MS)	
Darren Millar MS	Clwyd West

Apologies received from:

- Dai Lloyd MS

- Simon McGrath
- Rowland Rees-Evans
- Llyr Gruffydd MS
- Helen Mary Jones MS
- Janet Finch-Saunders MS

Introduction and Welcome from Suzy Davies MS

Suzy welcomed everyone to the CPG on Tourism

AGM

Chair : Suzy Davies MS

Nominated by Darren Millar MS

Seconded by Dai Lloyd MS (received in writing before meeting)

Secretary: Mia Rees (Senior Advisor to Suzy Davies MS)

Nominated by Suzy Davies MS

Seconded by Darren Millar MS

Wales Tourism Alliance Survey – Adrian Greason-Walker

In a normal year visitors spend £6.3bn in Wales (ONS).

Adrian stressed that the results of the survey were now somewhat historic and were taken as a barometer back at the start of August 2020.

Of those businesses that responded 90% had re-opened. A slight majority of the respondents felt that the Welsh Government had got it right with the timing of the re-opening (53%). Only 8% stating they thought it was too quick. A majority of businesses 62% stated they were happy with the available protocols for re-opening, but there were those who had not found them easy to use or relevant.

Whilst 77% had engaged with the UK Government's 'Good to Go' scheme, only 40% said they thought it helpful to guests. 58% said their main form of communication prior to arrival was electronic. Less than 4% via the telephone and only 12% on arrival or via printed material placed in the property. Although about 20% of respondents said they used all three to cover all basis.

Of most concern to 49% of respondents was staying in business - Viability coupled to increasing overheads and related to that was concern for the UK economy and rising levels of debt (21% of respondents). Only one respondent was concerned about indirect taxes, such as VAT.

With regard to Community Support, somewhat surprisingly perhaps this did not return quite such a negative response as might have been anticipated. Only 8 respondents said that the local community had not been supportive.

And finally we asked how was everyone feeling. 25% stated they were either pessimistic or very pessimistic, meaning the majority were optimistic, very optimistic or neutral.

Full set of graphic results: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-YBS7HZPD/>

The picture from Scotland – Marc Crothall from the Scottish Tourism Alliance

“The Scottish position is fluid”

The Scottish Tourism Strategy was launched in March 2020

There is a Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Tourism

The First Minister sits on the Board of Scottish Tourism twice a year

Over 2,000 businesses have been effected

The loss of international presence is a big factor in Scottish Tourism

Rural Tourism has done OK but it is not ‘one picture’ across the whole country

Self-catering accommodation has done OK but the rule of 6 has effected this negatively

Pubs and Restaurants have closed as they can only operate outside

5 Tier system is being introduced

A third of the sector has remained shut

Scottish Tourism Response group produced a Task Force Report highlighting the need for the right level of support and focus on driving the economy

“Tourism is everyone’s business – without it everyone suffers”

The picture from England - Kurt Janson from Tourism Alliance (UK)

Focused on Westminster policy

Membership of the Tourism Alliance is made up of trade associations rather than individual businesses

Tourism Alliance was started in the wake of the Foot and Mouth crisis

They are part of the Visitor Economy Working Group which channels core messages through to the UK Government and feedback on Government Guidance on behalf of the industry

Rural and seaside tourism has done OK but City break tourism has really struggled

£50 million has been lost to the London economy – mostly from international tourists

Large parts of the sector have not re-opened e.g. those who host Conferences/events

Travel agents – only 5% are open

The key message to UK Government: Tourism jobs are viable

Coach/Tour operators have missed out on Government support

Eco-system of tourism is critical – it is not all about pubs and restaurants

Tourism Recovery plan:

- Wages
- Business Rates
- Rents
- Allowing businesses to generate revenue

Challenges for outside operations over the winter

Challenges of the continuing travel restrictions

There has been some positives in the way that many small businesses have supported each other in working together

Questions and discussion Chaired by Andrew Campbell

Perceptions of Wales

- Feeling from others was that there is a clear path in Wales
- Recognising transport and travel challenges

Scottish 5 Tier model

- Frustrations in Scotland of low R areas being in the same category as high R areas
- Time will tell if it brings clarity
- Critical that the industry is involved in the discussions

Micro Tourism Wales - Sarah Heyworth

- Doesn't feel there is a clear path
- Urgently needs to know what will happen next
- 90% of guests come from outside of Wales
- Micro Tourism is not contributing to the spread of the virus

Response from Welsh Government officials

- They are currently drawing up guidance and making sure funding opportunities are communicated
- ERF3 will be available shortly.
- Job Support Scheme
- Up to £10k for Micro businesses
- Are aware there are gaps but are looking at them and how to plug them

“The visitor economy is part of the bounce back”

Freelancers / Seasonal Workers e.g. Tour Guides – Fiona Peel

- Fallen through the gaps in support
- Support needed to re-start
 - The Deputy Minister responded that he would take up the issue.
 - He also mentioned that he would be interested in looking at an accreditation route for Tour guides – Fiona responded that all her guides will be trained to the European standard

Mark Bond – Self-catering Treehouses

- There is no such thing as “off-season” to the majority of the modern industry
- Why is tourism being pointed at as a vector for transmission when there is no evidence that that is the case?
 - The Deputy Minister agreed that tourism was an industry that operated all year round and that the new Strategy (launched January) looked at Wales as a year round destination

Small Businesses that couldn't apply for Rates Relief last time – Mark Isherwood MS

- Self-catering businesses often didn't meet the criteria
- Some local authorities were with-holding money/support last time - we don't want to see these issue this time

Messages from the Zoom Chat to note:

Fiona: Just to note that WOTGA - tourist guides association undertook their own 2 surveys and we have lost 98% of our business and practically no recovery over the summer due to COVID regulations about association and social distancing and there is no prospect of work until Easter at the earliest and only about 10% were able to apply for any financial support –

From Marc Crothall to Everyone: 02:22 PM

For more about the STA please have a look on our website www.scottishtourismalliance.co.uk
Demand, Investment, Business & Workforce Recovery - Each strand led by CEO VisitScotland Chair RBS Scotland Board, CEO Scottish Tourism Alliance - The Chair of the Task Force is Cabinet Sec Fergus Ewing

From RD to Everyone: 02:58 PM

The uncertainty for the future is causing massive problems for members of the Welsh Assoc of Visitor attractions. Stress and mental issues were mentioned in yesterday's meeting of the Wales Tourism Emergency Forum.

Laura Thomas: Brecon Beacons Tourism has shared a letter earlier this week with our thoughts and concerns. Our main ask was for continued clarity. The defined time period for this fire-break has been helpful in allowing employers/employees to accept it and prepare. Sheer uncertainty is what is weighing heavily on business owners and all of their employees. We ask Welsh Government to give real consideration to this when planning future actions as we emerge from the circuit breaker - by giving the industry as much notice to what the new plans will be moving forward.

Andrew Campbell drew the meetings attention to the on-going work needed to engage constructively with each other, across the UK and with Government at all levels.

Andrew Campbell and Suzy Davies gave thanks and closed the meeting.