

Meeting (9) of Tourism Group – 10:30, Friday, 22 May 2020

Participants:

Deputy Minister, CST	WG	Stephen Jones	WLGA
Minister for IR&WL	WG	Paula Ellis	SW Forum Chair
Jason Thomas - Director	WG	Phillipa George	SE Forum Chair
Rob Holt	WG	Sean Taylor	UK TIC Rep
Lucy von Weber	WG	Anthony Rosser	UK Hospitality C
Rhidian Morgan	WG	Dave Chapman	UK Hospitality C
Jo Corke	WG	Michael Bewick	North Forum Chair
Ian Edwards	VB Board rep	Steve Hughson	MW Forum Chair
Andrew Campbell	WTA		

Apologies: Adrian Greason-Walker, WTA

Version: FINAL

Main points of meeting

1. Minister and Deputy Minister points

- The DM welcomed the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language to the group. The DM felt that people were remaining positive and should be proud of how they had responded and how we were now looking at renewal.
- MIRWL was welcomed by the group and she thanked the group for all its invaluable efforts and how robustly the DM continually pressed the case for the tourism, hospitality and events with the First Minister and Cabinet and with the UK Govt. Whilst it was clear that people's health and keeping the R figure below 1 would continue to drive policy in Wales, the scale of the challenges for the sector and how this affects Wales as a whole was most definitely recognised in Government.
- MIRWL spoke about how to open tourism once it was safe to do so and how important it would be to engage with communities, especially those situated near honeypot sites. The group was reassured that notice would be given to move out of lockdown.
- It was noted that there were mixed views in the industry in Wales re opening including opening only when totally safe, for communities, staff, consumer, to do so. However there was an increasing strength of view from many in the sector that target dates for opening needed to be set, even if cancelled, in order to facilitate planning and give hope.
- The Ministers recognised the concerns and understood that the clock was ticking for businesses in the sector and WG would keep a close eye on the position but had to do what was best for Wales with public health the priority in line with the WG roadmap.
- The following issues were raised with the MIRWL:
 - AC mentioned the scenes in England at some sites being over-run. The Minister said that we would need to be alive to this when things were eased in Wales as we would not wish to see a rise in infection, a safe re-opening was key to long term consumer confidence in Wales as a destination. Car-parking needed to be properly managed, people needed to be guided to other sites and the season needed to be extended where possible.
 - SH underlined that impact on the events sector and how major events like the Royal Welsh Show might be postponed for 2 years. The Minister sympathised that it was a tragedy that a key event bringing in around £45million into Wales was not taking place and that going forward there would be tough decisions on future funding and not all events could be saved. There was also a need to adapt and be creative in an attempt not to lose the programme.
 - DC said that the tourism group was an excellent resource and would continue to be a supportive and forward looking group. Agreed it should be a health-led strategy and not to reopen until allowed and safety of staff, customers and community could be assured. DC was keen to explore the potential to extend the season. Any changes to school holidays would also need to be borne in mind.

Meeting (9) of Tourism Group – 10:30, Friday, 22 May 2020

-IE thanked both Ministers for the support provided to the industry and outlined how ICCW was still promoting Wales and mentioned large conventions in the pipeline. IE touched on an opportunity for a closed door golf event at CMR in the summer. IE would provide further detail.

-AR said that 3 weeks was not sufficient notice to reopen without proper time to plan, the industry required more notice. The Minister said that anything more than 3 weeks would be too far ahead to consider the R figure. The DM said that not everything would open at once, only when appropriate and depending on the location and shape of the activity. JT said that it would be open to businesses to take longer than the 3 weeks to reopen if that was better for them and ensured a safe opening.

-ST outlined the planning his businesses were undertaking to be ready but reiterated the point about commercial disadvantage i.e. of a like for like business across the border being allowed to operate. This would need to be balanced with community feeling and the need to avoid any local resentment of visitors – careful messaging was needed. ST said that the messaging would be through his staff to build confidence but would not reopen without the community being on board; however a level playing field with cross border businesses was wanted.

2. Updates

-**Jason Thomas** said that Ministers and the team had been feeding into the next 21-day review and the FM would make another announcement on 28 May. Guidance was being worked-up across the DM's CST portfolio, in Tourism this would be based on the UKH work. Most of the huge volume of ERF applications had now been processed and redeployed team members would be returning next week.

-**North Wales Region – Michael Bewick** –spoke to his update paper and reported that businesses were keen to know at what point they could reopen; wanted to be kept informed. The NW forum had been constructive.

-**South East Region – Philippa George** – spoke to her paper. Support for small businesses was still an issue. RH said the second wave of ERF would assist as announced by METNW in plenary. The reopening of some tourism businesses on 4 July had confused matters. Was supportive of the VW "Later" approach. Giving people long-term confidence was key.

-**South West Region – Paula Ellis** - spoke to her written update; most issues had already been covered but the Forum meeting had been useful; keen for new DMO funding; reopening dates were sought after, but some believed, erroneously, they could open 1 June regardless; kitemark/standard had been discussed and Outdoor Alliance had produced recovery guidance but there were big concerns in that sector regarding their futures. Bank holiday in the autumn mooted and need to make St David's day next year a bank holiday and a big relaunch of the sector, emerging from "third winter".

-**Mid Wales – Steve Hughson** –all of the points in the Mid Wales update paper were presented and SH also ran through some of the questions being posed to him which were under 3 main headings of financial support (i.e. support for charities), policy (will opening be scheduled according to type?) and marketing and research. SH's main concerns were however competitive cross-border advantage and the need for a clear comms plan.

- **UKH – Anthony Rosser** – said a decrease in social distancing, for example 2m- 1.5m as in some other countries, could make a world of difference and could mean swifter opening for some.

-**WTA – Andrew Campbell** – thanked the DM for attending the Cross Party Group meeting on 19 May, the feedback had been good but disappointed not more AM's present. JT said that one of the DM's regular meetings on this crisis was with Opposition Party Spokespeople and tourism, hospitality and events always formed part of the discussion.

Sean Taylor – Tourism Industry Council & Zipworld – of his 12 businesses 6 could feasibly open given their outdoor nature, working at 30% capacity to take account of social distancing. Questions around whether businesses would get compensation as owing to no confidence there were no visitors and no revenue; Next round of ERF was eagerly awaited.

Meeting (9) of Tourism Group – 10:30, Friday, 22 May 2020

JT said there would be more on the ERF in the next industry newsletter – please follow this link:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWALES/bulletins/28c5494> . DM added that tourism businesses had fared better from a more general fund rather than a specific tourism one. Further lobbying of the UKG was required in terms of longer term support for Tourism in order for Wales to get Barnett consequentials.

Ian Edwards –VisitBritain & CMR/ICCW – tourism was different to all other sectors and different in Wales because it penetrated everywhere. Was supportive of all the measures but a long-term plan was needed for the sector.

-RH asked the group for proposals for support for skills in the sector - this was something further to consider to make people better-trained in health and safety etc. A meeting of the skills partnership would be convened.

3. Sector guidance

RH said the guidance was being developed by the sector; WG was working with UKH and WTA and feeding in what needed to be taken into account in terms of Wales i.e. social distancing and other requirements, travel etc but the rest would be industry-led. DC said that 8 subsectors were covered in the guidance and useful meetings had been held with him, RH and AC and the guidance would evolve and be amended as we went along. However, this needed to be a good working document that carried reassurance and be recognised as a “go to” document. Once in good shape and endorsed by UKH, it would be boiler-plated for Wales. JT said that Unions in Wales would need to see/consider a draft and WG would help facilitate this. There were some gaps – glamping and self-catering but these were being addressed. The end of next week was looking possible for a current final draft. JT said we would return to the guidance at the next meeting as a substantive item.

4. **Next meeting: 29 May at 10:30am.** Members asked for written updates by 5pm on Thursday, 28 May.

Alyson Burke
22 May 2020