

Meeting (12) of Tourism Group – 10:30, Friday, 12 June 2020

Participants:

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

Apologies: Adrian Greason-Walker, WTA; Jo Corke; Rhidian Morgan.

Version: AGREED

Main points of meeting

1. Deputy Minister points:

The DM welcomed all and told the group that he had met the FM that morning and the serious impact of the Coronavirus on the sector and the strength of feeling was understood by the First Minister and that he would be meeting the group next week (on 18 June).

2. Summary of the week:

Jason Thomas – It had been another busy and challenging week, where some feelings were running high and there were tensions but things were now more measured. JT reassured the group that the tourism economy was at the forefront of our minds and that we were acutely aware of the challenges they were facing. JT recapped on the events of the week from the First Minister's comments about the summer season being misreported in the Independent; strong reactions from various parties; meeting with the FM about tourism on Tuesday feeding into the review; Plenary statements by both the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language and the Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales which included tourism, hospitality and events and JT confirmed that the FM would be talking to the group next week about the next steps for the sector in terms of easing restrictions.

3. Preparing for easing lockdown

JT ran through various scenarios which might be the case following the next 21 day review which would be on 18 June. At whichever point the sector was signalled out of lockdown it would be those types of accommodations that were featured in the amber zone in the roadmap i.e. without shared facilities. Many processes would need to be actioned such as finalising guidance, protocols, definitions and the sector would need to put the social distancing measures etc in place and provide creative solutions to potential problems.

Ian Edwards asked about the definition of accommodation without shared facilities and there was a discussion about what this meant other than self-catering accommodation – it was thought that it could also cover hotel rooms with their own bathroom and either room service or takeaways. Caravans would also be likely to qualify if sites closed the shared facilities, particularly those indoors. But consideration would also need to be given to attractions, accommodation with shared facilities and bars and restaurants. There was also a discussion around the 5 mile travel restriction and the requirement for people to stay local and that if the industry was to reopen, even if only in-part, then easing the 5 mile travel restriction would also need to be looked at. JT asked for comments and the following were made:

~IE raised the need to change the language around community consent – needed to be more balanced, mentioning visitor charters and working with LAs for a safe transition. JT

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said that once given the go ahead, community engagement would ramp up and it was important that we worked together on community engagement.

~**Anthony Rosser's** comments were: definition of non-shared facilities needed otherwise there would be confusion; pointed out the importance of constructive dialogue from the sector; had had an excellent meeting with the WLGA and agreed IE's point on community consent; clarity was needed on the next stage. JT said that we would be looking at language and messaging and we would be asking the group's views on language. JT asked the group to consider a paragraph in industry-friendly language around the definition of accommodation without shared facilities so that it could be weaved into the messaging going forward. AR agreed to co-ordinate the input on this for the group. RH thought that Glyn Roberts could assist if AR needed assistance.

~**Andrew Campbell** felt there had been a mood change with communities, some were asking when would they be opening for tourism as they wanted to be open. AC also gave a summary of how the week's events had impacted on both WTA and him personally. Many in the group had also been subjected to aggressive and negative comments. AC also said that regrettably, if the FM was unable to deliver dates in his announcement on the 19th, the WTA would have to withdraw from the Group. This was based on the frustration and anger being expressed by many of his members who were understandably upset at what they believed to be no direction - and who were also concerned about future planning issue and being out of step with other home nation countries. AC said it had caused and was causing, immense stress.

Rob Holt shared a document on the screen setting out the sort of things which would need to be done if/once 3 weeks' notice was given to the sector, whenever that might be. These would include:

- WLGA/LA's on board to welcome it
- Guidance to be completed, also the Good to Go standard and "visitor charter"
- Detailed work on what we mean by accommodation without shared facilities
- Decision on how we are going to approach opening of attractions
- Protocols etc.
- Understand where WG is on opening pubs and restaurants
- Consider the extent to which we are going to support destinations, and businesses in terms of re-opening, financial support for destination management. Businesses to comply with SD measures?
- Consider the extent, tone, development, and timing of any marketing campaign, and some longer term planning.

There was a discussion around how VW was working with VB but that VW also needed separate campaign as opening dates were divergent. **Lucy von Weber** also said that in addition to the guidance, standard and charter mentioned above, the charter would embrace the spirit of the Tourism Action Plan, go back to the Brand, consider all the pledges and devise a Wales message. LVW would be able to speak more on this next week.

4. Other updates

Stephen Jones recapped on his week. IE said that he'd had a very positive meetings with LAs which had unblocked engagement. SJ said that JT's letter to the WLGA on the guidance had issued to the LAs the previous day. Responses coming back were positive. WGLA would be doing more engagement through its rural forums to encourage more positive debate – these communities needed certainty for survival and there was an eagerness to move in step with the other home nations. Close relationships would need to be forged in the coming weeks. SJ would be seeking more time with the WLGA tourism spokesperson to

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ensure appropriate and consistent messaging. JT added that all of us would need to consider comms going forward.

Sean Taylor had spent the week lobbying MPs, MSs and Councillors – talking about the protocols and giving confidence. Wanted to try to get politicians to depoliticise their views – the enemy was the virus – needed to work together. Had sympathy with others who had also been subject to personal attacks, but ST would continue to lobby and support DM and JT and his team.

Dave Chapman also reflected on the week as others had; much good work had been done despite some negativity; and UKHC was not deterred from carrying on, making the sector safe and taking the opportunities and improving and finessing them. The future seemed a little bleak for the industry financially, especially in view of the SD 2M restrictions once/if opened. UKHC was therefore developing an holistic, industry-led programme but it would need to be accompanied by proper, comprehensive funding for the sector for 2 years. DC was aware there was no further money and that this would need to be pursued through the Westminster Government – and look to continue business rate holidays and furlough arrangements for the sector. Revising the SD 2M restriction and increasing 5 mile radius within public health bounds would make a world of difference to the sector.

JT informed the group that hospitality in the broader sense within WG was increasingly resting with his Directorate given its lead on the visitor economy. DC welcomed this, it would help make a stronger foundational sector.

Paula Ellis – PE reported that some PCNPA car parks were opened due to the congestion from locals within 5 mile radius parking and blocking roads. This had sent incorrect messages that the Coast Path, beaches and the national park were open. This was evidence that if the restrictions were not lifted soon, the public would ignore guidance. She also called for details of how the science of the R number was calculated. i.e. if the industry could be provided with details of what the level the R needed to be to reopen various sectors of the industry, this would enable time for planning and marketing. PE also advised that good news was no news (the few negative situations from community were influencing lifting of restrictions). The majority in the community accept that they would need to open slowly and safely. Communication of the details of the COVID Secure Guidelines to the general public was required. PE reiterated that 'Dates' was the main concern throughout the region, and when restriction on Self-contained Accommodation without shared facilities were lifted, this would be no use if the 5 mile restriction was not lifted at the same time.

Philippa George – Endorsed the points already made, especially about information about the R number, the "challenging week" and also all that had been achieved. PG had heard a rumour that LAs had discretion over decisions on the ERF. RH explained that WG was in charge of the ERF but LAs were running a separate LA Fund. Link to the Phase 2 ERF Fund-checker here: <https://fundchecker.businesswales.gov.wales/>

Steve Hughson said that all our Comms and messaging going forward needed to be consistent. Work needed to be done around mental health – even if simply signposting help. There was a discussion around possible redundancies and how support was needed. And that going forward furlough needed to continue or something to replace it. There was a discussion around lobbying the UK Government for additional funding and pursuing Wales consequentials from any initiatives.

Michael Bewick – Echoed some of the comments made by others notably that the industry was calling for clear timescales. Some positivity around communities signalling they want to reopen; positive discussion with Gwynedd and Conwy LAs. 2M restriction a real problem and

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calls for it to be reviewed. Also a need for comprehensive financial support for the sector for the long term.

Anthony Rosser referenced the WLGA community engagement and how safety should be above all commercial concerns. If staff are safe and the community is safe then hopefully visitors will come back.

Jennifer Velu – Research. JV said the Q4 2019 stats had been publishing showing a positive buoyant sector before Covid-19 hit. There was also a demand-tracker with VB and Visit Scotland – timelines for trips etc; and the next business barometer due later this month would report on the impact of redundancies/economic impact on the sector.

JT thanked the group for its positive input and measured responses. The DM stated that he had a high regard for the group members and that they were essential to response for tourism and was grateful for all they did in supporting this. They were fully recognised as drivers for recovery and good representatives of the Sector in their specific areas. JT reiterated that the FM was keen to meet them.

Next meeting: Thursday, 18 June at 16:00am. Members asked for written updates by no later than 10am Thursday, 18 June.

Alyson Burke
12 June 2020