

Rural Development Sub-Committee

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Wales Tourism Alliance

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Food Tourism: Strategic Action Plan (2008-2013);

A Consultation Response from the Wales Tourism Alliance

6th March, 2009.

"It is enormously encouraging to see Hybu Cig Cymru-Meat Promotion Wales, The British Hospitality Association and The Wales Tourism Alliance working so effectively in partnership to boost the agricultural and tourism economies of Welsh rural communities.

For some years now I have been trying to remind visitors of the merits of "eating the view" and, in doing so, of broadening and deepening their experience of the places which they are visiting. As we all know, Wales has so much to offer the visitor - whether spectacular views or delicious food - and I am certain that the "Unique/Unigryw" campaign will enhance the experience for the tourist by showcasing the best of Wales's lamb and beef while, at the same time, benefiting the maintenance of our priceless landscapes through enhanced marketing opportunities for our hard-pressed family farmers."

Message of Support to the Unique/Unigryw campaign from HRH The Prince Of Wales (22 May 2007).

Wales Tourism Alliance (WTA) strongly supported and co-organised the Unique/Unigryw campaign, an unprecedented, dual-industry, local food promotion. WTA linked up with Hybu Cig Cymru-Meat Promotion Wales (HCC) and The British Hospitality Association (BHA) to launch Unique/Unigryw campaign, which aimed to encourage the promotion of quality Welsh red meat products in hotels, restaurants, pubs, inns and diners across Wales. It was the first time the organisations that represent the two dominant Welsh industries have formally worked together.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Wales Tourism Alliance is a pan-Wales umbrella group with 18 member organisations resting within its general membership.

1.2 This membership of these affiliated organisations amounts to around 7,000 operators and means WTA contacts and representatives are now found in every part of Wales.

1.3 The WTA's structure has also grown to accommodate its established role as the Voice of the Industry. A seven-person Executive now represents all regions and the key sectors of the industry and each year a well-attended annual conference debates and decides on key policy issues affecting the industry.

1.4 WTA is now recognised by WAG and VisitWales- and the tourism industry's representative organisations in Wales- as "The Voice Of The Industry".

2. Food Tourism

2.1 Within the context of this consultation response, food tourism is defined (as within the WAG document) as:

" "any activity that results in the process of delivering and promoting a high quality, distinctive local and sustainable food related experience to consumers at a destination'.

2.2 WTA welcomes the stated intent of the action plan to:

'Support the competitiveness of Welsh tourism, hospitality, food and drink businesses in a way that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.'

2.3 WTA shares wholeheartedly the broader aspirations of WAG's action plan to deliver a number of vital high level outcomes it wishes to see it benefit both rural economy industries, namely:

-An increase in visitor numbers to Wales who are likely to return and become advocates for Wales;

-Actions to ensure more visitor spend stays in the local economy;

- Actions to ensure more visitors to Wales feel that they have experienced a distinctive Welsh experience and enjoyed and participated in the culture, music and food of Wales;
- An increase in demand for Welsh food and drink produce and measures to make the most of this increase in hospitality outlets;
- The minimizing of the impact of the tourism and food and drink industries on the environment.

3. Food Tourism Strategy: Core Recommendations

WTA is pleased to support:

- 3.1 The proposed Review of the True Taste Brand, to build on the marketing strengths that have accrued over many years of successful investment and activity and to unify the resources available to promote Welsh food at home and abroad;
- 3.2 The establishment and encouragement of better connections between producers, supplier and the hospitality sector;
- 3.3 Moves to identify, support and encourage those establishments that source local food or would like to source more local food than they currently stock;
- 3.4 The provision of hospitality establishments with information on the availability of local food, advice on developing menus and of using the availability of local food for promotional purposes;
- 3.5 The promotion and marketing of local producers and hospitality establishments;
- 3.6 A comprehensive and integrated strategy to bring together food producers, food markets and food events with tourism outlets across Wales;
- 3.7 The introduction of a generic support programme for the development of farmers' markets and other direct sales outlets;
- 3.8 The development of Food Festivals and all related events and the building of a joint industry presence at relevant events;
- 3.9 The building of the Welsh food offering- and the local tourism industry- into major events and festivals;
- 3.10 The championing of the importance of locally produced food in the delivery of the Visit Wales Sense of Place initiative and within the Cultural Tourism Strategy;
- 3.11 Measures attached to improving and widening the audience for the Wales Food and Drink Producer Directory;
- 3.12 The establishment of food tourism discussion/action learning groups on a regional/local level and the utilising of the existing framework and the integral successes achieved within the Farming Connect Discussion Group and Demonstration Farm programme where it is appropriate;
- 3.13 Measures to provide additional, and, where necessary, specialist training for front of house staff working in Welsh eating places
- 3.14 The Review and development of the food tourism content of Visit Wales and the FMDD True Taste web site;
- 3.15 The provision of information on quality local eating establishments and food tourism attractions/events to "all" interested parties including International Business Wales.

4. Additional Recommendations

- 4.1 WTA is very supportive of the Welsh Assembly Government's impetus for Food Tourism and indeed, would like to see this initiative extended and prioritised by the government;
- 4.2 Wales Tourism Alliance supports the development and Implementation of an annual Food Tourism Marketing Plan;
- 4.3 WTA would like to see a commitment to full funding of the agreed action plan by the Government. WTA's General Member Committee voiced concerns that, unless new money was forthcoming to fulfil the exciting potential of the action plan, the organisations vested with implementation may not be able to deliver the programme in full.
- 4.4 WTA supports all WAG moves to further support Welsh food producers, hospitality businesses and food outlets by the Welsh Assembly Government;
- 4.5 WTA believes the two industries concerned (agriculture and tourism) will be the backbone of Wales' future economy and the key to the survival and growth of many hundreds of small and medium sized communities throughout Wales.
- 4.6 If we are to deliver the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic priorities, it is essential that those involved in the industries - and those within WAG- seek to maximise co-operation across traditional industry and departmental boundaries.
- 4.7 With this in mind, WTA would like to see WAG support measures to enable the forging of better cross-industry links and the closest co-operation between internal WAG departments to enhance the successful development and implementation of this action plan
- 4.8 A high level of stakeholder support will be required if WAG and partners are to adequately deliver, monitor and evaluate the

activities within the action plan, WTA believes that it is vital that all interested parties have ownership.

4.9 WTA therefore recommends a "Supergroup" of the key industry players and support organizations, a new partnership that will genuinely represent the interests of both industries while also holding the development, promotion and marketing resources needed to make the plan a practical success.

4.10 WTA suggests that this "Supergroup" of representative organisations should be made up of the Welsh Assembly Government Agri-Food Partnership; Visit Wales; Hybu Cig Cymru; the Dairy Development Centre and Wales Tourism Alliance.

4.11 This group, with beneath it the widest range of stakeholder involvement, would offer full accountability and also be well placed to monitor, evaluate, renew and review construction and implementation of the action plan.

4.12 Following a recent Review of Cultural Tourism in Wales, an in-departmental steering group was set up to look at how the resources that were available to deliver the Cultural Tourism Action Plan could be best allocated with value and added value in mind. This process proved to be very effective. WTA would like to see the new proposed "Supergroup" operate in a similar style to use as efficiently as possible the new resources available under the plan.

5. Other Issues

The Action Plan provides a solid framework for the future but WTA would like to suggest some other areas for consideration and consolidation in an expanded set of actions.

5.1 Existing Food Tourism Support Activities.

5.1.1 There are already a number of support schemes that are in place to help both sectors; besides the WTA's own Unique/Unigryw campaign, there are local food initiatives. Mid Wales has a scheme involving Tourism Partnership Mid Wales in conjunction with a sub-group of the Mid Wales Agri-Food Partnership, which includes representatives from food and tourism organisations in the region and there are other local food initiatives in that area (<http://www.localfoodtalks.co.uk/>) and, of course, there are national initiatives such as Slow Food and SALSA. Some examples of these are further explained in the appendix to this reply.

5.1.2 There are also a number of cross over businesses in the two industries that bring extra dimensions to the strategy and must be incorporated in the wider action plan- for instance, Folly Farm near Tenby, which is a farm visitor attraction or the Farmstay sector where working farms also offer accommodation and dining.

5.1.3 There are other groups, bodies or organisations that are funded or partly funded by one or other industry or Government department- for example the Welsh Culinary Team- and these must be taken into consideration.

5.1.3 It is important that those participating in all projects linked to Food Tourism should be identified, included in activities and consolidated into the wider Action Plan.

5.2 Education, Training and Skills

5.2.1 WTA and TTFW- the tourism industry in Wales' well-respected training provider- already seek to bring hospitality industry skills to the fore and WTA reaffirms a strong commitment to maintaining and expanding hospitality industry skills resources.

5.2.2 We welcome any review of existing research regarding skills needs for the industry and to undertake additional research as appropriate to fill any gaps in knowledge and also regarding training requirements for immigrant workers employed in hospitality and catering industries.

5.2.3 WTA appreciates the very difficult economic times that we are enduring at present- our members across Wales are suffering along with those from other industries- but we would encourage the Welsh Assembly Government to aim to fully fund the actions within the broader strategy and those that stem from these reviews. WTA members have already voiced concerns over the amount of money available for the industry's skills issues.

5.2.4 Inspection and Recognition (page 20); if this is to go ahead, it must be integrated into the Visit Wales system and must again be resourced adequately.

5.2.4 WTA also supports the Government commitment to undertake additional research as appropriate to fill any gaps in knowledge;

5.2.5 In addition, we would welcome any efforts to strengthen local operators and industry links by encouraging local people to take positions within the industry and, in turn, anything that the WAG could do to help WTA to raise the status of the industry within the political process and within the employment pool of the people of Wales.

5.2.6 WTA is also keen to see the role of food in the curriculum expanded and also for there to be more interaction between industry professionals and the education process to help children understand the supply chain and the role of the farmer and other related local businesses.

5.3 Environment

5.3.1 Farmers are the custodians of the landscapes that the visitors to Wales enjoy. Sustainable tourism plays a strong part in Visit

Wales' work with the industry and green tourism is an area that is on the increase.

5.3.2 The future sustainability of farming, of the farming environment and of the tourism that takes place around it and how both industries must proceed with an eye to the sustainable, affordable and deliverable future is therefore another issue that should be considered within the action plan.

5.4 Widening The Brief

5.4.1 WTA believes that Food Tourism has the potential to offer huge added value benefits to both industries in Wales and to also help to meet other WAG ambitions such as Cultural Tourism targets, sense of place, sustainable tourism etc.

5.4.2 WTA would like to see WAG put in place the scoping of any similar food tourism initiatives in any other similar European countries or regions to see if the better practices could be shared, replicated or improved upon here in Wales.

5.4.3 WTA suggest the action plan also seeks out any areas of Food Tourism that have attracted European funding in other EU countries and investigate whether a successful application for an Interreg schemes may be appropriate for some planned activities.

5.4.2 There may also be scope to link up with other compatible initiatives in Wales- for instance, music or health/nutrition initiatives- with a view to bringing forward greater multiple gains for the existing commitment.

Appendix 1

Unique/Unigyw Campaign

A Project To Promote PGI Welsh Beef And Welsh Lamb To Foodservice Outlets.

1.1 Hybu Cig Cymru, BHA and WTA sought to maximise benefits for those communities in Wales where both the agricultural and tourism industries had a substantial, and often economically vital, presence.

1.2 A marketing programme was created that maximised the advantages of the taste and flavour of quality, locally sourced, PGI Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef and also provided an additional opportunity for tourist venues to add value to their menus by stressing their local supply credentials.

1.3 The campaign featured a bilingual slogan around the word "Unique" and will offer distinctive, effective but discreet restaurant badging including table top A cards (explaining PGI status and the value of the award), small external window sticker logos and meal flags printed with the campaign slogan to use in locally sourced products on the plate. Materials are available to view on request.

1.6 This was the first major agreement between the body that represents the red meat industry and the significant operators in the tourism industry in Wales and it was hoped it would open the door for future rural partnerships- and further development of the promotion of locally sourced farm products in the tourism industry for locals and visitors alike to both enjoy and appreciate.

Appendix 2

SALSA

SALSA is a non-profit making joint venture between the four main trade associations that represent the UK Food Chain - from farm to fork.

The National Farmers Union (NFU)

Represent farmers and farm diversification

The Food and Drink Federation (FDF)

Represent food and ingredient manufacturing

The British Hospitality Association (BHA)

Represent foodservice and catering

The British Retail Consortium (BRC)

Represent retail

The Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST) operate the SALSA throughout the UK and maintain this website. Scottish Food Quality Certification (SFQC) co-ordinate our auditing and mentoring resources in Scotland.

The scheme received initial funding from DEFRA and the Food Standards Agency in England and from Scottish Food & Drink and Highlands & Islands Enterprise in Scotland.

SALSA is overseen by a governance committee made up of independent parties with mutual interests in local sourcing including the four main partners, Food from Britain, DEFRA and the Food Standards Agency.



Slow Food UK has designed a strategy relevant to the most critical issues in today's challenging times of global food crisis. This includes tackling life-threatening child and adult obesity and the spread of genetically modified foods (GMOs). Our strategy provides for ways in which we can innovate, learn and find mechanisms -- in partnership with other like-minded organisations and individuals -- to address these issues while simultaneously scaling up our impact and success.

The Slow Food UK strategy is one that underlines capacity-building in that Slow Food UK follows the well-proven truism: don't give a man a fish; teach a man to fish. SFUK does not give and distribute good, clean and fair food to people. Through education and raising awareness, SFUK is determined to help its beneficiaries learn how to select good, clean and fair food and why. This requires increasing the capacity of our beneficiaries to make that selection through heightened awareness of the issues affecting their food choices and increasing their independence and confidence in making sound purchasing decisions.

Thus, our primary strategic aim is to raise awareness around good, clean and fair food, which entails that the food we eat in the UK should taste good; should be produced in a clean way that does not harm the environment, animal welfare or human health; and its producers should receive fair compensation for their work. All of our activities and efforts ultimately emanate from this core aim.

Our objective is to change the way people think about food and raise awareness around the food politics that surrounds the food we buy today. Indeed, we are currently working on some new key campaigns which address this objective. We are:

Innovating for Change by joining supporters of the anti-GMO movement and mapping the best way forward for SFUK to complement the goals and activities of these like-minded stakeholders;

Challenging policymakers by raising Awareness on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and providing strong support for producers hampered by misdirected policy law;

Moving Key Food Policy Issues to the Political Stage by engaging the UK's local councils, government bodies and tourism boards about the need to support Slow Food's manifesto for European Parliamentary candidates which raises a host of issues to which politicians can commit, such as support for small to medium scale agriculture and local economies, protection of traditional seeds and incentives for younger generations amongst other topics.

Documenting the Food Climate for future generations by gathering and presenting evidence which helps bolster the reasoning behind the necessity for education around what HACCP, GMOs and other related issues really mean to the end-consumer.