

**MINUTES**

**Date** 16<sup>h</sup> November 01  
**Time** 9.30am – 12.45pm  
**Venue** North East Wales Institute, Wrexham

**Attendance**

**Members**

**Constituency**

Alun Cairns	South Wales West
Chris Chapman	Cynon Valley
Glyn Davies	Mid and West Wales
Mike German	South Wales East
John Griffiths	Newport East
Christine Gwyther (Chair)	Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire
Alison Halford	Delyn
Tom Middlehurst	Alyn and Deeside
Janet Ryder	North Wales
Dafydd Wigley	Caernarfon

**Officials**

Emyr Roberts	EPD
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**In Attendance**

Philip Evans	Chair, Wales Tourist Board
Jonathan Jones	Chief Executive, WTB
Steve Webb	Director, Research and Corporate Planning WTB
Hywel Evans	Chief Executive, Menter a Busnes
J. Berwyn Rowlands	Chief Executive, Sgrin Media Agency for Wales
Hugh Edwin Jones	North Wales Film Commissioner

**Secretariat**

John Grimes	Clerk
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## Apologies

Apologies were received from Brian Hancock. Tom Middlehurst substituted for Ron Davies, Janet Ryder for Phil Williams and John Griffiths for Rhodri Morgan.

### Item 1: Chair's opening remarks.

1. The Chair welcomed members and visitors to the meeting which was the first formal EDC meeting that had been held in North Wales. She said she hoped that it would be possible to hold meetings outside Cardiff about twice a year.
2. Declarations of interest were made by Christine Gwyther and Dafydd Wigley.
3. Some concern was expressed about the absence of the Minister for Economic Development. The Chair reminded members that a full scrutiny of the Minister had taken place on Wednesday and that John Griffiths was present to take back the Committee's concerns to the Government. Some Members expressed regret that the meeting had opened on this note.

### Item 2.: Wales Tourist Board – Corporate Plan

1. Philip Evans introduced the discussion highlighting the events that in the past year had fundamentally changed the tourist industry. He thanked the Assembly for their support of the WTB, particularly with regard to the increase in funds over the past year.
2. He said that the overall downturn in tourism income was in the order of 15% and without the enthusiastic funding of the Assembly and the aggressive marketing stance taken by the WTB this would have been a lot worse. He identified some of the initiatives that had been used to combat the effects of foot and mouth and said that the WTB would possibly need flexibility with some of the funds. Whilst the majority of funds had been allocated, some spending may fall into next year.
3. He confirmed that the Regional Tourist Partnerships were in place and that Local Authorities, WTB and the industry were working together in all four regions. He added that capital investment projects were on target and that the WTB would utilise its Objective 1 funds in total. Costs were under control and they hoped to achieve their total marketing spend by the year-end.
4. He said that the WTB was not confident that it could achieve the 10% of GDP target if overall GDP was rising. He felt that an annual growth rate of 6 or 7%, contained within A Winning Wales, was more realistic. In conclusion he said that 'world class' products were necessary for the tourist industry in Wales to be successful and this was the message the WTB hoped to get across to providers.
5. In discussion members thanked the WTB for their continued hard work in what

had been a difficult year. They were pleased to see them working closely with the WTI and WDA and it appeared that the work carried out by the agencies had led to a very positive image of Wales abroad.

6. Whilst members welcomed the success of the Ryder Cup bid, some expressed concern that the benefits would not be spread across Wales. The WTB said that it was important not to dwell on any narrow North/South issues but to see the benefits available throughout Wales. They added that the Ryder Cup would raise the awareness of golfing facilities across Wales and they would be talking to smaller clubs to help them capitalise on this. While the courses to be used in the tournament had been selected by the PGA and were all in South Wales it was noted that the Open Seniors Competition, which was part of the Ryder Cup process, was being held at Harlech.
7. The WTB confirmed that their Destination Management System, which would allow bookings on-line, would be available in March next year and would revolutionise the Welsh 'product'. Members asked for a demonstration of the system once it was operational.
8. Concern was expressed that the figures for jobs did not distinguish between those created and those safeguarded and the WTB was asked to present figures in this way in the future. There was concern that the headline target to create 22,000 jobs was too ambitious but the WTB were confident that this would be achieved.
9. The Deputy Minister highlighted the recent changes in both activities and attitudes within the WTB and the need for flexibility in an ever-changing industry. He added that resources would always be subject to priorities but that funding for tourism had been substantial and well used.

### **Item 3: Welsh Language Review**

1. Hywel Evans introduced the discussion outlining the issues Menter a Busnes considered important when discussing the Welsh language and its effects on economic development. He said that it was important that language and economic development activities must be linked in a real way. To do this effectively it was necessary to work within all of the economic development agencies. It was necessary to see any work in this field as a long-term process. A step change was needed to move the language into the heart of their activities.
2. He added that Menter a Busnes' experience has been valuable but there was a need for further work in this field to be taken forward through the economic development agencies. Practical solutions needed to be presented as a source of added value rather than the integration of the language being seen as a cost. There was also a danger that language was treated as an equal opportunities problem rather than as an opportunity.
3. In discussion members said that the key issue was to make bilingualism easy and natural. Reference was made to the paper from Menter a Busnes and members said that it would be helpful in future submissions if a distinction was made

between jobs safeguarded and jobs created.

4. Some members felt that a great opportunity existed in Wales to develop translation facilities as a business sector, providing training and even exporting translation services in the future for other languages. Hywel Evans agreed that translation services offered great economic development opportunities but that a deliberate pro-active approach was required in this area.
5. He identified the potential of the language to tourism and said that the WTB had worked with them enthusiastically to develop this further.
6. Several members voiced concerns that intervention in the economic sector would stifle entrepreneurial spirit. Hywel Evans said that the question of balance in this area was important and it was necessary to know when to intervene and when to let go.
7. Hywel Evans outlined the three proposals they had suggested in their submission to the Culture Committee's review. He said that he felt the best option was the third one which proposed a separate mechanism funded jointly by the economic development agencies. There was strong support from Members not to create any new body to look at linguistic matters.
8. In summing up the discussion the Chair referred to the need to make a submission to the Culture Committee and suggested that the Clerk should provide a draft response which members could discuss at the next meeting. **[Action: Clerk]**

#### **Item 4: The film industry in Wales**

1. Berwyn Rowlands introduced the item by outlining Sgrin's work and said that whilst most of their discussions with the Assembly thus far had been with the Minister for Culture, the economic aspects of their work were as important as the cultural.
2. Hugh Edwin Jones said that the work of film commissioners provided a bridge between the cultural industries and local economies with SME's being the main beneficiaries of a film coming to an area.
3. Members questioned Sgrin's losses for last year and Berwyn Rowlands confirmed that the board were happy with this as it reflected their decision to ensure the success of some specific projects. It was seen as an investment and they expected to produce a profit in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2002. He also confirmed that funds from the WDA to support the regional partnerships would be split equally between the regions and would be used to support central functions including marketing.
4. On the subject of Objective 1 funding he said that they were currently working with Finance Wales and hoped to make a successful bid shortly. Hugh Edwin Jones said that the Film Commissions had found it difficult to find a niche for their

work within Objective 1 but they were continuing to work closely on this with the regional partnerships in North Wales.

5. Several members questioned how film companies could be attracted to North Wales. The presenters responded saying that if a production company's needs are not location specific then the likelihood is they will film in Cardiff or Swansea. To attract a production to North Wales there had to be incentives other than quality of life, scenery etc. They added that the creation of a long-term indigenous sector was probably more important. Hugh Edwin Jones said that the North Wales Film Commission were planning to have an office at NEWI where there was a wealth of talent and great support for the industry from the new Principal of the college. Sgrin were also launching a new film festival in Aberystwyth in March 2002 showcasing the talent available in Wales.
6. Members felt it was important to encourage the making of films that would be commercial and suitable for export, rather than concentrating on films that would only appeal to a Welsh audience. There was also comment that the availability of scripts was vital to the development of the industry and Berwyn Rowlands said that the establishment of the proposed Film Fund would mean that this area could be developed further, possibly with some lottery funding.

## **Committee Secretariat**