

Mid Wales Regional Committee MID 01-02(p.2)

Date: Friday 1 February 2002

Time: 10.30am to 1.00pm

Venue: Tabernacl, Museum of Modern Art, Wales, Machynlleth

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WELSH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MID WALES REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Submission by the Welsh Development Agency to the Regional Committee's meeting

on 1 February 2002 to address the impact of Foot and Mouth on Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

The Welsh Development Agency does not have a specific remit for tourism in Wales but a number of its activities are closely linked to the tourism industry particularly through Community Regeneration and support to businesses via Business Connect. It also works closely with the Wales Tourist Board at a national level and with a number of organisations at a Mid Wales regional level, including the Mid Wales Partnership, Mid Wales Tourism and the local authorities, to co-ordinate our activities and ensure that the benefits and the opportunities in the tourist sector are maximised.

The Agency itself does not have specific statistics to assess "*what effect the foot and mouth crisis has had on the tourist industry in Mid Wales*". At the Mid Wales Partnership's meeting held on 4 January 2002 (attended by a number of the area's Assembly Members), Professor Peter Midmore, University of Aberystwyth, advised that the number of jobs at risk from Foot and Mouth in Mid Wales was 520. These jobs were in Agriculture, Tourism and other Allied Industries. This figure, however, was challenged by Powys County Council who reported that returns from businesses in Powys alone suggested that 650 full time and 150 part time jobs had been lost and the real impact on the region must not be underestimated.

Feedback from the Agency's work in Community Regeneration in recent months suggests a total lack of business confidence from the tourism sector and a reluctance to make any significant new capital investments until there is clear evidence that visitor numbers will return to at least 2000 figures. There is also concern that

the events surrounding 11 September 2001 in the United States will see a significant reduction in overseas visitors to Wales, and the UK as a whole. The knock on effect for Mid Wales is that those areas of the UK that have traditionally attracted a substantial overseas market will react aggressively and target the domestic market to the detriment of Mid Wales.

The Foot and Mouth crisis has also made the retail sector throughout Mid Wales recognise the importance of tourism and visitor spend to their businesses. This is a sector of the Mid Wales economy that needs to be developed so that the maximum economic benefit can be derived.

COMMUNITY REGENERATION

In May 2000, the WDA's Mid Division introduced the Community Regeneration tool-kit which built on the experience of the Market Town Initiative and the Agency's Community Regeneration Policy. The tool-kit has enabled a flexible approach to work with community groups at a local level where the Community itself (i.e. all the stakeholders) are actively involved in leading the process and are central to the decision making process. Priorities can therefore be agreed and all possible resources are mobilised thus enhancing the level of commitment within the community. All the community partnerships with which the Agency is working in Mid Wales are actively pursuing community led tourism projects in recognition of their importance to the local economy. The Agency is also encouraging the networking of community groups to demonstrate that by working together their goals can more easily be achieved.

The additional resources made available to the Agency under the Rural Recovery Plan for Community Regeneration will be targeted at those rural communities which have been most affected by Foot and Mouth. It will enable the Agency to do more with those communities where it is already active and to introduce the process with new communities. It is envisaged that the Agency will be able to support community based regeneration projects in some 22 locations throughout Mid Wales.

PROMOTION AND MARKETING, COMMUNICATION, SHOWS AND EVENTS

The funds made available under the Rural Recovery Plan will not be used to provide compensation for income lost by shows and events which were cancelled as a result of Foot and Mouth. Priority will be given to supporting activity which helps promote social and economic regeneration. Funds will be available for innovative festivals and the joint marketing of events. Priority will also be given to events that will attract new visitors to Mid Wales and increase the confidence in the tourism sector.

The Agency has already, via Mid Wales Partnership, produced and distributed to Merseyside, West Midlands and the Bristol area 400,000 leaflets promoting activities last Autumn and this Winter. A Spring and Summer 2002 events directory will be produced and distributed early this Spring.

OTHER TOURISM RELATED ACTIVITIES

In addition to the above, the Agency's Mid Division will continue to work in partnership with WTB, Mid Wales Tourism and the local authorities on the following:

- WTB's Tourism Growth Area Initiatives – Central Powys, Brecon Beacons, Dyfi Valley, Ceredigion and Meirionnydd Centres of Excellence.
- Gwynedd County Council's Meirionnydd Coastal Initiative.
- Welsh National Cycle Route and other associated routes.
- Specialist advice through Business Connect.

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Welsh Development Agency

Mid Division