

## Mid Wales Regional Committee MID 01-02(p3)

**Date:** Friday 1 February 2002

**Time:** 10.30am to 1.00pm

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

Notes pre-Presentation to the National Assembly's Mid Wales Regional Committee – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2002

### 2001 Foot & Mouth crisis - Effect on Mid & West Coast Wales

- **Powys** Devastating! – vast majority of county countryside\*

closed - 83% respondents of MWT September business survey reported visitor numbers down.

\* *Promoting visits to towns generally had little success*

- **Ceredigion** Limited indirect benefit to coastal region - but significant restrictions prevented access to countryside – customer satisfaction affected. 47% respondents of MWT September business survey reported visitor numbers down.

- **Gwynedd** Caught between Powys and Ynys Mon/Anglesey – coastal stretch held up well, restrictions on access to countryside created some negative impact/uncertainty. 16% respondents of MWT September business survey reported visitor numbers down.

**Overall effect:-** Devastating effect of the blanket closure of public footpaths, plus confusing situation as restrictions were lifted,

resulted in substantial loss of revenue to individual businesses.

Loss of confidence in market which had hitherto been growing faster than the rest of the UK. (*independent research for Mid Wales Partnership previously indicated a 24.5% increase in Second Holidays taken in Mid Wales*)

**Support Mid Wales Tourism provided to WTB graded tourism trade businesses**

## **including MWT members –**

- a) Telephone support – sign-posting & practical advice in response to requests received from concerned businesses.
- b) ‘Monthly’ newsletters relating to the whole Mid & West Coast Wales region provided pastoral support and included marketing information, updates on attractions, footpaths, beaches availability as restrictions changed. Also included practical information on dealing with large number of booking cancellations. Circulated the WTB ‘Tourism Charter’ and NAW guidelines to all known tourism businesses within Mid & West Coast Wales. Highlighted all relevant help lines and website addresses.
- c) Daily contact via email and other sources with industry on situation
- d) Central information and booking facility for Mid, South & West Wales.
- e) Website – Public pages - info on what was open  
(also available to trade for their customer information)

- Trade section – financial and business advice with regular updates.  
*(Regular trawls of various information sources undertaken by MWT to sustain trade information)*

## **2) Immediate regional support to Wales Tourist Board (and National Assembly) by Mid Wales Tourism**

- a) Regional trade surveys and constant communication with businesses undertaken to inform WTB & NAW (via WTB)
- b) Briefing meetings directly with WTB Chairman & Mike German AM
- c) MWT facilitated (at extremely short notice) meeting for tourism businesses to give first hand evidence to Rhodri Morgan, Paul Murphy and Carwyn Jones at Welshpool.
- d) Provision of regional call centre for advice and visitor bookings
- e) Circulation of the WTB ‘Tourism Charter’ and NAW guidelines to all known tourism businesses within Mid & West Coast Wales.

## **3) Liaison with Mid Wales Authorities – Powys , Ceredigion & Meirionnydd area of Gwynedd, sectoral bodies and Rural Recovery groups**

On going co-operation, support and input at public, local and national meetings/ conferences

### **Revitalising the industry**

Mid Wales Tourism appreciates the support of the National Assembly financially through various financial schemes for the industry.

- 1) A further request for rate reduction for those businesses worst affected during 2002/03 i.e. Powys.
- 2) Regional marketing budget urgently required/requested for those areas.
- 3) Assistance to operators held back by low incomes to upgrade product quickly.
- 4) Improve perception of countryside access particularly in Powys.

### **The Role of Mid Wales Tourism**

Mid Wales Tourism is a not-for-profit membership organisation representing and supporting the tourism industry, including Local Authorities across the Mid Wales Region.

The vital role we play in the industry has been highlighted by the FMD crisis and we are proud of the way we have been able to support and advise both our members and the wider industry during this difficult period.

Despite this, the future of Mid Wales Tourism is uncertain. The organisation was set up in 1991 by the Wales Tourist Board and was provided with core funding to allow it to undertake a wide range of representational, liaison, marketing and development tasks for the WTB within the Mid Wales region. From 1 April 2002 this core funding will cease, threatening the future of the organisation and the 12 jobs it creates in the region.

The WTB has now set up a new organisation, the Regional Tourism Partnership, which we believe will be contracting out much of the WTB activity in the region. With its considerable expertise and experience, Mid Wales Tourism expects to win a number of these contracts and thus offset some of the loss of core funding.

We believe that there will be a gap of between 3 to 6 months before the new contracts are let, during which time tourism in the region will suffer a loss of service and the future of MWT will be threatened by the break in the cash flow. We need help from the NAW to avert this.

The Mid Wales tourism industry, weakened by FMD but resilient and forward looking, needs a strong regional membership organisation to ensure industry interests are recognised, to provide a range of much needed services, to implement regional marketing activity and to be there to provide

advice and support to the industry when the next crisis hits.

**Bob Morgan**

**Director of Marketing, Mid Wales Tourism**