

## **Cross Party Group on Tourism Minutes - Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

### **Welcome and introduction from Suzy Davies MS, Chair**

- SD thanked the Members of the Senedd and their staff who were in attendance

### **Welcome from Andrew Campbell, Wales Tourism Alliance**

- AC thanked SD for her time as Chair of the CPG and the work she has done for the tourism sector at this time
- As a gesture of thanks AC offered SD honorary membership of the WTA

### **Outline of the challenges faced by the tourism sector, Adrian Walker, Wales Tourism Alliance**

- Hard lessons learnt during the pandemic
- Findings from a study with BEIS (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial strategy) early in 2020 highlighted that tourism regulation was under resourced.
- Health and Safety has gone from a necessary evil to an absolutely necessity
- Much has changed in the economic and social landscape
- Questions on transport and infrastructure have come into sharp focus
- Need to convince tourists to return to Wales
- Do we need to change our business models?
- We have a unique offer with our rural and coastal landscapes
- We need to be ready as soon as we have the opportunity to welcome visitors
- Still a need to highlight value of tourism to society and the Welsh economy
- Need a continued, dedicated tourism Minister in the next Welsh Government

### **Presentation from Welsh Government - Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Plan**

#### **Rob Holt, Visit Wales**

- Rob Holt thanked SD for her work with the Tourism CPG
- RH outlined the situation as it stands
  - Alert level 4
  - Vaccine roll out is good news
  - New variants of Covid-19 are presenting a challenge
- WG focus is to get financial support out to the sector
  - WG are working through the applications
- Meetings with all four UK tourism Ministers is happening and discussions on common areas of concern (Furlough, VAT etc.) are taking place

#### **Deputy Minister, Dafydd Elis-Thomas MS**

- Been a pleasure to be the Minister for Tourism
- Agrees on the need for there to be a tourism Minister round the cabinet table
- The role is about more than promoting the industry
- Working with the local population is key
- After DET's retirement he will continuing work in this area

Presentation from Claire Chappell, Deputy Director, Marketing (Visit Wales) (copy of the presentation is available on request)

- Focus: Recovery planning

- Recovery plans elsewhere in the UK have been or are due to be published:
  - England – 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021
  - Scotland – October 2020 (regularly reviewed)
- There will be a full recovery plan for Wales
  - Tourism will be part of this
- “Welcome to Wales” will be a launch pad for the sector = a clear sense of direction
- Partnership framework
- “Road map to Recovery” is hard to do due to the unpredictability of Covid-19
- A virtual summit was held as part of the engagement on how to approach the recovery
- Setting of shared objectives/ WG six point plan
- Need to lobby at a UK Government level
- Building the country back up
- Recognise the longer term factors in some areas need bespoke solutions

#### **Q&A session with members of the CPG, Welsh Government and the Deputy Minister**

**Q1: Jim Jones** (Vice Chair, WTA) – The sector needs a timeline/opening dates. Important that this is in-line with England as 80% of some Welsh tourism businesses get their trade from across the border.

Response:

- RH – Alert level plan is clear
- Decisions will be made based on the public health situation in Wales – can’t promise alignment
- Regular meeting with the four nations tourism Ministers continue
- DET: The timeline is completely decided by the public health situation. We can’t promise what we can’t deliver.

**Q2: Mark Bond** (Micro Tourism Businesses Wales) – There is no point opening if English people can’t come. The science is there which allows us to make predictions on Covid-19. The tourism sector needs to see these as predictions could help businesses to plan.

Response:

- DET: We can’t make policy on predictions
- RH: There is still a lot of unpredictability
- Recognised that they can’t give certainty
- CC: They can support with scenario planning

**Q3: Val Hawkins** (Mid Wales Tourism) – Pleased to see the importance of the sector being recognised. Concerns have been raised over the Minister for Housing and Local Government, Julie James, paper on Second Homes and implications for self-catering holiday accommodation. Also there has been confusion over the non-domestic rate grants in this area, with some businesses unable to access them.

Response:

- RH is working with the Minister on this
- Discussions on the need for a definition of ‘second homes’
- Community / Tourism balance needed
- WG will be looking to bring all stakeholders into the conversation
- There needs to be more research on numbers

- Statutory registration
  - Val raised concerns that this would need to be nationally held, and not with local authorities as there is often too much interpretation
  - RH: Both views exist

**Q4: Alistair Handyside** - How do we get all involved in the second homes discussion? There needs to be the right balance. So many self-catering businesses are not getting support from their local authority. Understands the grant funding is not fully spent?

Response:

- RH: The funding is coming from different places so it is not as simple as the money not being spent

**Q5: Darren Millar MS** – (a) Important for the Welsh tourism sector to open at the same time as the rest of the UK – we don't want a repeat of last year. (b) Discussions over school holiday dates changing in Wales – could throw up challenges for the tourism sector. (c) Clean Air Bill – suggestions of road pricing making coming to Wales more expensive for visitors.

Response:

- RH: The school holiday issue was raised at the South Wales Forum and comments have been fed into education colleagues
- DET: has a meeting on legislation this afternoon, but has not seen anything on the road pricing idea being taken forward

**Q6: Ashford Price** – WAVA members have raised the issue of numbers of staff leaving the sector. This has been impacted further by tourism businesses not being able to give them any reassurances this year.

Response:

- RH Looking at supporting mental health in the sector and understand that people are trying to look after their staff
- Working with representatives from the skills sector to look at filling the gaps as we move forward

Jason Thomas: Those looking for a road map will find page 16 of the WG's Control Plan helpful. There is too much risk in making decisions on the forecasts and predictions. Ultimately we won't give dates as there is no guarantee that we can stick to them.

**Q7: Shoko Doherty** – Inbound economy and international recovery. Are we looking at Covid-19 tests plus isolation for those arriving into the country as a way to open?

Response:

- DET: Please write to the Education Minister with the particular concerns of the international school sector
- CC: St David's Day celebrations will be focusing on international relations and Visit Wales will be working with Visit Britain on vaccination and which countries citizens can travel into Wales.

**Attendance List****Chair****Secretary****Suzy Davies MS****Mia Rees (Suzy Davies MS Office)****Members of the Senedd (and staff)**

Helen Mary Jones MS office  
 Janet Finch-Saunders MS office  
 Mandy Jones MS office

Darren Millar MS  
 Russ George MS  
 Sion Jones  
 Ryan Ellis  
 Clare Eno

**Tourism Businesses****Wales Tourism Alliance****Wales Tourism Alliance**

BH & HPA  
 The Camping and Caravanning Club  
 The Caravan and Motorhome Club  
 North Wales Tourism  
 Mid Wales Tourism  
 WOTGA  
 Retreats Hotel Group  
 The Next Tourism Generation project  
 Milford Waterfront  
 Micro Tourism Businesses Wales  
 WAVA  
 Brecon Beacons Holiday Cottages  
 Visit Pembrokeshire  
 Celtic English Academy  
 Tourism Marketing Group  
 The Professional Association of Self-Caterers UK  
 Bluestone  
 Guests

**Andrew Campbell (Chair)****Adrian Greason-Walker (Policy Advocate)**

Helen Charlesworth  
 Simon McGrath  
 Emma Mcquillan  
 Jim Jones  
 Val Hawkins  
 Fiona Peel  
 Paula Ellis  
 Louise Dixey  
 Lucy Wonnacott  
 Mark Bond  
 Ashford Price  
 Barbara Griffiths  
 Emma Thornton (CEO)  
 Shoko Doherty  
 Matthew Evans  
  
 Alistair Handyside  
 Abigail Wye  
 George Reid  
 Carl Shaw  
 Ryland Doyle  
 Simon Pickard

**Welsh Government**

Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and  
 Tourism  
 Visit Wales

Deputy Director, Marketing (Visit Wales)

Dafydd-Elis-Thomas MS  
 Rob Holt  
 Jason Thomas  
 Claire Chappell

Apologies received from: Jane Rees-Baynes (Chair, Visit Pembrokeshire), Dai Lloyd MS, Rhun ap Iorwerth MS, Mark Isherwood MS, and Llyr Gruffydd MS