

Cross-Party Group on Hospitality and Tourism

Tuesday 16th December 2025

12:15 – 13:30 in Conference Room B, Tŷ Hywel

Attendees in person:

- Dave Champan, UKHospitality
- Nicola Williamson, PASC
- Alistair Handyside, PASC
- Emily Church, CLA
- Emma Thornton, Visit Pembrokeshire
- George Reid, Chair SWWRTP
- Heledd Iwen, Visit Wales
- Lucy Von Weber, Visit Wales
- Russell George MS
- Xavier Turner, Member Support Staff
- Mark Isherwood MS

Attendees online:

- Emma Thornton
- Rowland Rees-Evans
- James Whitbread
- Fiona MacConnacher
- Ashford Price
- Ioan Bellin
- Roy Church
- Carl Shaw

Minutes:

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Chair, Sam Rowlands, welcomed members to the meeting. He noted that the group had not met for some time and confirmed that the meeting would focus on reviewing priorities and plans for the year ahead.

2. Presentation from Visit Wales

Lucy and Helen from Visit Wales delivered a presentation on the current tourism and hospitality landscape in Wales.

Key points included:

- An overview of the Wales Investment Summit and Visit Wales' working relationship with Visit Britain.
- Engagement activity, including international engagement events.
- The current operating context for tourism, noting that it has been a challenging year for domestic tourism. While Wales has performed better than Scotland, Scotland's particularly difficult year may result in increased competitive pressure going forward.

- It was stressed that pandemic-era figures are no longer comparable.
- The tourism market in Wales remains approximately 90% domestic and 10% international.
- The year has been difficult across the sector, highlighted by the recent administration of Visit Cornwall.
- The Business Barometer will be published again in the second January, providing feedback on sector performance and reflecting on the previous year.
- An overview of the 2025 marketing campaign, including The Croeso campaign, which was peer-reviewed internationally and ranked second.
- The Hwyl campaign, described as a significant leap of faith, reinforcing the importance of consumer testing.
- Changing booking behaviours were noted, with later bookings reducing reliance on the summer season and requiring reinvestment in new markets, such as dog tourism and initiatives like Wales by Trails.
- Their collaboration with Wrexham Football Club, including promotional campaigns such as free bucket hats.
- Annual joint working with Transport for Wales.
- Visit Wales advertising performed particularly well on YouTube.
- They are about to begin using Amazon Prime Video for advertising, allowing targeted ads based on viewer behaviour, location, and purchasing data.
- Development of Chill Cymru, described as a complementary campaign to Hwyl, aimed at the New Year market.
- It was confirmed that presentation slides would be circulated to CPG members.

3. Discussion and Actions

Members discussed the presentation and key issues facing the tourism and hospitality sector.

Points raised included:

The importance of addressing business rates pressures on the hospitality sector.

Actions:

- UK Hospitality to draft a letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance regarding business rates, with CPG members to review and verify before submission.
- Members were encouraged to actively work with Visit Wales and contribute to ongoing and future campaigns, members were urged to get in contact if they had ideas for questions for their barometer.
- Members expressed the value of holding another CPG meeting prior to the election to engage as many Members of the Senedd and stakeholders as possible on these issues, though if time does not permit due to the upcoming election, industry members will get together for their own meeting.