



## **Wales Tourism Alliance Consultation Response**

**'Inquiry into the implications of Brexit for Welsh and Irish ports  
additional questions'**

Response to:

External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee:  
The National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Company No: 4449548

30/08/2018

## 1. The Wales Tourism Alliance

The Wales Tourism Alliance (WTA) is the recognised over-arching representative organisation for the tourism industry in Wales, liaising with and coordinating the views of all concerned and informing and working with Government at Westminster, Cardiff and at Local Authority levels.

The WTA also acts as an intermediary between Government and all involved in tourism, disseminating information to the industry via our member organisations and we work with colleagues in organisations in other parts of the UK.

The membership of the WTA includes sectoral, national, regional and local representative bodies comprising accommodation (hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfast establishments, holiday home parks, touring caravan and camping sites, hostels and self-catering cottages), attractions, activities, training and skills, tourism guides and transport.

The Wales Tourism Alliance is a pan-Wales umbrella group with member organisations resting within its general membership. This amounts to around 6000 working operators and means WTA contacts and representatives are now found in every part of Wales. A full list of our current members can be found at [www.wta.org.uk](http://www.wta.org.uk)

The WTA therefore works with and on behalf of operators ranging from major players to the micro-businesses that make up so much of the tourism industry.

## 2. WTA Response to the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee: inquiry into the implications of Brexit for Welsh and Irish ports additional questions

***-the preparedness of Welsh ports for the UK's departure from the EU and any observations you may have on the current state of play (when compared with the time of the Committee's original report publication);***

Firstly, we have a great deal of concern in relation to the debate in and between Govt. that there is now a high chance of a no deal Brexit scenario. There are obvious negative implications for Wales particularly given our location and the likely priority we will be given in the UK. The current situation is shaping up to be the 'perfect storm'.

The '24 No Deal Brexit Papers' for the main part are not tourism or indeed port related. Granted there are a number of papers that have tourism-related implications. These include Trading with the EU, but it is not inspiring reading.

We are concerned that there is now not enough time available for detailed analysis and planning and that there has been little or no reassurance from Welsh Government as to the negotiation/discussions going on with Westminster. The Welsh Government **appears** to be in a 'passive aggressive' mode with Westminster taking a 'not of our making stance'. This may not be the case of course and we hope it is not, but there needs to be a more open transparent demonstration as to the negotiations that are, perhaps, taking place? If indeed there is actually little or no negotiation going on, this is worrying, it may serve well in the party political world, but in actuality the voter will seek to punish politicians, of whatever party, if Brexit damages the

Welsh economy and it is found that negotiation was not occurring to at least minimize impact. We would like re-assurance that this is not the case?

One large area of concern out of many is the Irish market. It is one of our most important markets for inbound tourism. Incidentally, overseas spend is 17% down, 2017 figures over 2016. The Irish border question has in no way been resolved, again there appears to be no real moves to solve this question either from Westminster; Cardiff or indeed Brussels.

At the time of writing, (August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018) we don't believe Wales is at all prepared. There has been a singular lack on information and direction given by WG, which we believe has caused much widespread frustration.

**- the proposals for new UK-EU customs arrangements;**

What proposals? A no deal, hard border option would be the worst possible option. Seamless travel - "no change, no delays, no inconvenience" is the best and preferred option. However, again the lack of information about customs arrangements is giving rise to conjecture. It would be helpful, particularly in terms of WG demonstrating some form of leadership, to disseminate information to transport operators through the provision of updates/ bulletins etc. Action is needed to allay fears and to provide reassurance.

We reiterate, the Customs Union and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) pose risks for Welsh Ports and the tourism industry across Wales. It is not clear as to how the cruise ship market could be affected. Currently customs procedures are carried out at the cruise ship's first port of call (for example Southampton) with no further need for checks for ships undertaking "Round UK" tours. If border policies change, then additional checks will be needed with subsequent resource implications for all UK ports.

Again we continue to have an over-riding concern the lack of time available for detailed analysis of the issues and the negotiations that are required. These issues are complex and will require a great deal of examination and agreement between the UK and the EU. The resource implications are daunting. A tight detailed timetable needs to be agreed and qualified, experienced personnel need to be in place. The industry needs the re-assurance that Government can deliver.

**- how the Welsh Government is leading efforts to prepare Welsh ports for the UK's departure from the EU, including contingency planning.**

We continue to have concerns about Border Control, the recommendation we previously made about "Wales taking the lead" does not seem to have been acted upon. No action that we are aware of has been taken. It would seem that no lead has been given.

In Fishguard for example, no action or communication has been received from Cardiff. The WTA spoke with representatives from the port of Fishguard, who would appreciate clarification from Welsh Government on planning arrangements made to cover all possible negotiated outcomes. A comment was made that WG has NOT been in contact with the port and neither has the local authority, whose services may also be affected by new measures introduced at the port.

It is also unclear as to whether the Welsh Government has consulted with local authorities on the issue?

***- any other issues that you would wish to bring to the attention of the External Affairs Committee.***

In terms of tourism it has to be said that all Welsh ports differ. Again by example Fishguard has a far greater dependency upon tourist visitors than Holyhead. In respect of this particular consultation, it might be helpful to suggest classifying all ports in terms of usage and function and then carry out individual impact assessments -or action plans.

Tourists are already asking questions about travel arrangements for next year. People do book holidays in advance! Without any meaningful information available, it is not being alarmist to conclude that passenger volumes may fall which will impact upon all industry sectors. We could still maximise the exchange rate boost. In our 2017 Consultation Response we had anticipated there would be a boost overseas visitors to Wales, sadly the forecast made in light of the most recent IPS figures for last year has shown it actually reversed in terms of spending 17% down on the previous year. This heightens our concern that more has to be done in terms of investment and the need for Welsh Government to ensure, as a matter of priority, that arrangements at Welsh ports are in place to enable visitors and trade to flow freely.

Currently foot passengers can simply turn up to a ferry port, buy a ticket and depart with no need to produce a passport. Although this segment is relatively small, it is significant. Border checks or the tightening of borders may impact upon the spontaneity of travel movements, which would be regretful.

**Future Involvement of the Tourism Industry in Wales in This Process**

We would like to be part of any future consultation affecting policy on this important issue as it is certain that such future and further activity will impact on the tourism industry and the tourism/visitor economy in general.

***Adrian Greason-Walker  
Wales Tourism Alliance***

***30<sup>th</sup> August 2018***