

**Monmouthshire Destination Management Partnership**  
**Microsoft Teams Meeting 2pm Tuesday, 29 September 2020**

**Minutes**

**1. Welcome and introductions**

Kim Water (KW) CEO Abergavenny Food Festival, Chair

Nicola Edwards (NE) Destination Manager, MCC

Kevin Ford (KF) Destination Marketing Officer, MCC

Rachael Geddes, Humble by Nature, Dean Wye Tourism Association

Jo Nugent (JN), The Angel Hotel, Abergavenny & District Tourism Association

Louisa Giles (LG), Regional Engagement Manager, Visit Wales

Tony Konieczny (TK) Mayor of Abergavenny, Abergavenny Town Council

Jane Lee (JL), Clerk, Abergavenny Town Council

Cath Fallon (CF) Head of Enterprise and Community Animation, MCC

Richard Tyler (RT) Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Ruth Waycott (RW) Wye Valley AONB

Matthew Lewis (ML), Environment & Culture Manager, MCC

James Woodcock (JW) Business Insights Manager, MCC

Aaron Reeks (AR) Caldicot Town Team

**2. Apologies for absence**

Cllr Vivien Richards, Tintern Community Council

Tracey Evans, Abergavenny & District Tourism Association

Dee Lovering, Monmouth Town Council

Francesca Bowen, Seven Hills Hideaway

**3. Welcome and introduction (KW) Chair**

KW welcomed everyone to the meeting and said how delighted he was to be chairing the Partnership as he is passionate about Monmouthshire and is keen to capitalise on opportunities for growing the visitor economy of the county.

## **Feedback on 2020 Virtual Abergavenny Food Festival (KW)**

KW very pleased with outcome. 10-20 viable events delivered via Zoom. 2000 sign ups, high quality engagement, £2k raised. All events free with the exception of tutored tastings. Some younger members of staff paid for delivering specific elements of the programme but generally this year's festival relied on volunteer contributions from staff, which is not sustainable long term. The debates worked particularly well online. Plans to extend virtual programme across the year.

## **4. Update from Abergavenny & District Tourism Association (JN)**

TA not met during lockdown. Businesses experiencing increasing numbers of cancellations & requests for refunds alongside reduced numbers of forward bookings since neighbouring local authority areas placed in lockdown. JN reported that Abergavenny town was very quiet on Tuesday despite being market day. ADTA looking forward to the reopening of Abergavenny TIC this week in its new location in Market Hall, which ADTA supported with a significant financial contribution to the refit.

## **5. Update from Dean Wye Tourism Association (RG)**

RG explained that the TA now had 250 members, and that 20% of these were based in Monmouthshire. The financial position of the TA is currently very challenging as their members have had to deal with Covid directly after the extreme flooding. They have a new website due to go live in the coming weeks which they hope will give them an improved digital presence. Self-catering on farm still very busy and activity businesses doing well. Members not seen massive benefit from reduced VAT as there have been increased costs in other areas re PPE, staffing, consumer regulation etc. Change in consumer attitudes re cancellations – customers now want their money back, rather than gift vouchers or a change of date. TA has secured £16,500 from Visit England and £8,000 from Forest of Dean DC to cover salaries and marketing activity to aid recovery. Opportunity to advertise Monmouthshire towns on new website. New 4-part series 'My little farm' coming soon to channel 5 prime time 9pm slot. Series includes promotion of Wye Valley Producers co-operative. TA keen to access Wales funding / support.

## **6. Update from Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (RT)**

Main projects continuing including GeoPark and Culture Scape (relating to intangible cultural heritage). RT explained that they don't want to promote the Brecon Beacons to day visitors (which deliver few benefits) at the moment as the landscape does not have the capacity for any more. Current promotions focused on Day to Stay campaign encouraging day visitors to stay the night.

## **7. Update from Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (RW)**

Still recovering from virtual Wye Valley River Festival last week. Steep learning curve and need to work out what's worked and what hasn't. One of the main benefits was the creation of a large amount of new content which provides legacy. Very challenging to deliver an outdoor arts environment digitally. Uncertain about future of festival. Keen to support

wider offer by encouraging festival vibe by promotion of local producers and click and collect service offered by Wye Valley Producers.

TK raised concern about the increasing amount of free digital content available online which made it difficult for event organisers to charge for content to be able to pay artists etc and make the events financially sustainable. KM responded that there was unlikely to be one solution to the problem but that they had included a donate button during the Abergavenny Food Festival events and that people had been incredibly generous. Needed to be a balance between what is given away free and what is paid for as it will impact on all future events and festivals.

## **8. Update from Visit Wales (LG)**

### **Research**

- Consumer Sentiment Tracker, Wave 14 - 31<sup>st</sup> August – 4<sup>th</sup> September, high-level results were covered and all subsequent survey results can be found on: <https://www.visitbritain.org/covid-19-consumer-sentiment-tracker>
- Business Barometer Survey started 16<sup>th</sup> September for two weeks with more information: <https://www.visitwales.com/coronavirus>

### **Marketing**

- Visit Wales Addo / Promise: <https://www.visitwales.com/promise>
- Visit Wales Newsletter sign up: [https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWALES/subscriber/new?topic\\_id=UKWALES\\_10](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWALES/subscriber/new?topic_id=UKWALES_10)

### **Business Support**

- The Welsh Government is making an additional £140m available to businesses to help them deal with the economic challenges of COVID-19 and the UK's impending exit from the EU. The third phase of the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF) will see wider support being provided to secure jobs and help businesses develop, as well as additional help for firms affected by local lockdowns. £80m has been made available to support businesses with projects that can help them transition to the economy of tomorrow. Of this, £20m will be ring fenced to support tourism and hospitality businesses who are facing particular challenges as they enter the winter months. Meanwhile an additional £60m will be allocated to support businesses impacted by local lockdown restrictions. This will be announced shortly and communicated in Visit Wales newsletter.
- ERF Phase 3 eligibility checker to be made available on Business Wales from 5<sup>th</sup> October.
- Wales Tourism Investment Fund is still open for applications: <https://businesswales.gov.wales/tourism/finance#guides-tabs--2>

## **9. Review of Destination Management Plan 2017-2020 NE**

NE presented slides 1-9 of [Destination Management Plan Review presentation](#) and explained that remaining slides contained detailed information on the progress on delivery of the action plan. Proposed process and timescale of DMP review agreed as below:

Light touch review this time around comprising:

- Online business / partner survey to assess satisfaction with existing priorities and to identify additional / alternative priorities and growth opportunities
- Update Plan in line with business / partner responses and 2020 Welcome to Wales Visitor Economy Strategy – increased emphasis on: environmental sustainability & well-being; on increasing yield; and on tackling seasonality
- Consult DP partners and elected members on updated draft DMP
- Secure MCC Cabinet approval for new DMP January 2021

KW asked what was being done to help distribute the benefits of tourism more evenly across the county. ML outlined the activity being delivered across the Gwent Levels under the Living Levels HLF funded landscape project to develop, enhance and promote the visitor experience in this area.

## **10.Visit Monmouthshire Marketing Update KF**

KF presented the [Visit Monmouthshire Marketing Update presentation](#) and advised the group that an email would be going out this week to businesses to ask for input into an autumn market towns campaign.

## **11.Update on Over the Bridge RTEF funded campaign - KC**

KC presented the [Over the Bridge to Wales Campaign Update presentation](#).

## **12.Update on Town Ambassador Programme – JL**

JL confirmed that Abergavenny Town Ambassador pilot had been considered a success. They have 9 active volunteers, 7 of whom are keen to continue volunteering in the TIC when the pilot ends. They are currently based outside the Town Hall under a gazebo and deal with a wide range of enquiries on local walks etc and have advised a number of people about the new route from town to the sugar loaf. Their role has been especially important while the TIC has been closed and the TC will look to rerun the programme in future years.

Cllr Vivien Richards (Tintern Community Council) provided an email update from Nadine Lewis (Volunteering for Wellbeing coordinator) as she was unable to attend the meeting. The pilot Ambassador programme was considered to have gone well and they had some really positive feedback from visitors. However they needed more volunteers for future seasons to cover all shifts. They aim to start recruitment for next season in January 2021 and hope to recruit up to 20 volunteers.

## **13.Update from Town Councils – Abergavenny Town Council JL**

JL highlighted the opportunity to develop a standardised video template to promote the wide range of things to see and do in the area to event attendees in the few minutes after they join virtual events and before the event starts. Although businesses were initially sceptical about the proposed physical changes re street furniture in Cross Street, most now see them as an improvement and want to keep them in the long term. JL explained that the Town Council have a column in the Abergavenny Chronicle and they were planning to promote the TIC reopening in next week's column. They are also planning to keep all the new town planters looking nice through the winter and are keen to return the food festival decorations to the Market Hall.

#### **14. Frequency of DMP meetings and future Agenda items**

It was agreed that KW would discuss these items with NE in the next few weeks as now he had chaired the first meeting he had a much better understanding of the Partnership. Date and time of next meeting to be circulated as soon as possible after that.