



**Notes from the Online Wiltshire Accommodation Industry Meeting  
Tuesday 19 May 2020**

**Present**

Fiona Errington, VisitWiltshire; Billy Grimes, VisitWiltshire; Ian Hardwick, Eviivo (guest speaker); Janet Uttley, VisitBritain (guest speaker); Ruth Evans, Rooms at The Lodge; Kate Waldron, Park Farm Barn; Leanne James, Cumberwell Country Cottages; Ali James, Cumberwell Country Cottages; Marian James, Cumberwell Country Cottages; Arron Howle, Peartree Apartments; Becky Bowles, Church Farm Country Cottages; Trish Bowles, Church Farm Country Cottages; Clare Hammond, Woolley Grange; David Lane, Holiday Inn; Colin Shaw, Rose & Crown Hotel; Harriet Holloway, Cliffe Farm Dairy; James Edmondson, Log House Holiday; Jane Howes, Meadowbank House; Jen Edmondson, Bowood; Mark Bevan, Bishopstrow Hotel; Nick Westington, Avalon Lodge; Paula Portia, Rolleston Manor; Sara Buttle, Buttle Farm; Tracey Cook, Red Lion Hotel; Virginia Jones, Waterlake Cottage; Philip Alford, VisitWiltshire Board Member

**Introductions**

Fiona welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance. Highlighted that this was the first time we have held a pan-Wiltshire accommodation meeting, and thought using Zoom was a good opportunity to share best practise and ideas and status of the sector. **Please let us know if you have any thoughts on ideas for topics or speakers for future meetings.**

**Support**

- VisitWiltshire are currently sending out e-newsletters (minimum fortnightly) that are providing updates on government, tourism industry and local authority activity and their current marketing strategy and calls for content. You can see the latest newsletter [here](#) and if you aren't already subscribed, you can do so [here](#).
- VisitWiltshire has set up an [advice page](#) on the website, which details all the latest Government advice and support available, along with useful information and links from various tourism authorities.
- VisitWiltshire's [Twitter Biz](#) account is also a great place to stay up to date with the latest updates. If you don't follow the account already, please do.
- VisitBritain/VisitEngland have set up a [page](#) dedicated to the latest support available, from funding to looking after employees at this difficult time. It is reviewed and updated regularly
- We are always looking for new topics for our training courses and for guest speakers at future meetings. If there is anything you would like to find out more about, let [Billy](#) have your suggestions
- Thank you to everyone who completed our latest survey on the impact of the outbreak on businesses and the government support available. You can see a summary of the key findings [here](#). The surveys provide the basis of the lobbying VisitWiltshire is passing onto the

government, local and tourism authorities. There is currently a government inquiry into tourism recovery

- As the first plans for re-opening are now in place, can partners please check your product pages on the website and let us know of any amends that you'd like to make i.e. any changes to opening times, booking process, change any images, changing content to include safety/reassurance messaging. Please send any changes to [Billy](#) or [Helen](#).
- Although a number of the VisitWiltshire team are on furlough, please do get in touch with any issues, queries or updates. We are here to help and will happily pass on any enquiries to local authorities on your behalf. It's always best to contact [Billy](#) in the first instance

## Marketing

- We're looking for upcoming virtual events to feature on our website. If you're running online classes, festivals or virtual events, you can upload these using our normal [website event form](#) or simply let [Helen](#) know what you've got planned
- Our [Virtual Wiltshire](#) and [Open Businesses](#) pages are still live. If you have any relevant content for either of these pages please send them to [Helen](#).
- After the success of the [virtual trip along the Great West Way](#), we are planning a series of social media campaigns for Wiltshire to promote some of the "virtual visits" content our partners are offering online. The first of these is planned for Friday 22 May on Twitter, and will focus on outdoors, nature and wildlife content.
- VisitWiltshire are still sending out their monthly consumer newsletter, if you have anything you would like us to include (e.g. vouchers, offers, online events) then send them to [Helen](#)
- We have been putting together a number of blogs during the lockdown, including ideas and content from partners to inspire people to keep active and busy. If you have any content you think we would find useful, please do send it over to [Helen](#)

## Great West Way

- [A Virtual Great West Way](#) page has been set up. The page contains videos, virtual tours, and activities that people can watch and interact with during the lockdown
- Monthly consumer newsletters are still being sent out
- The latest addition of the Great West Way Travel Magazine is now available. You can download the Travel Magazine [here](#). It would be great for Ambassadors to link to it within their Great West Way content on their website and in their social posts to help distribute the magazine
- We ran the "Holiday from Home" social media campaign on Twitter on 6 May, inviting users to join us for a virtual journey along the Great West Way route. The journey included virtual garden visits, safari tours, rally driving, and horse-drawn carriage drives as well as visits to some of the vibrant cities and picturesque towns along the Way. [Take the tour for yourself here](#). We saw strong levels of engagement on the day and the campaign had an overall reach of over 100,000 people
- We are currently looking at adding more blogs to the Discover our Way section of the website. We are looking for Ambassadors to tell us about their experience of living and working on the Great West Way and help us showcase the route. [Have a look at some previous examples](#) and let [Helen](#) know if you would like to be considered for a blog post.

- Great West Way is still expecting to receive significant DEF funding and will play an important role in recovery

**Guest Speaker – Ian Hardwick from Eviivo**

**10 Tips for Coping with COVID. How to Make the Most of Your Time Now, and Prepare For the New Normal**

**1. Get on top of admin & maintenance tasks**

- Now is the time to do all those jobs you don't normally have time for
- Go round your property and make a note of all those small 5 minute jobs that need doing
- Look at signage, menus, decoration and t&c's

**2. Sleep in all of your beds**

- You can only notice certain things when you sleep in the bed and overnight in the room e.g. noises, lights, comfort etc
- You may notice those small things that will lead to complaints on review sites, but guests won't tell you whilst there
- May also be useful to use showers as well

**3. Take a good look at your website**

- Does it tell people what they need and want to know NOW and what you are doing to ensure their safety
- Make it clear how you are dealing with the current situation
- What people will look for when booking is now going to change
- Include 'household rules' – there is a belief that people will be happy to follow clear instructions and will actually feel more reassured
- Highlight any new procedures, for example;
  - i. Contactless check-in/check-out
  - ii. Breakfast; timed slots/in rooms/grab & go/pre-order
- Highlight the local situation by detailing what is open and what is closed or cancelled

**4. Show you are COVID clean**

- Cleanliness has become a more important aspect that people are looking for in reviews when booking
- It's all about re-assuring people and being clear what you are doing
- Think about offering hand sanitiser as an extra or in all rooms
- Install a longer buffer between bookings
- Linen – let people know are you cleaning linen to NHS/Care Home Standard, or if not, what other actions are you taking
- Only offer turn down service on request

**5. Update your photos**

- Photos with crowds may not be best practice – review how people are interacting in the photos
- Ask yourselves whether images are as inviting as they can be
- Use the current down time and sunny weather to get some new photos – variety is the key
- Most popular photo on sites is of a view from across the bed

## **6. Encourage direct online bookings**

- Make sure website captures them to book directly
- Offer some extras/packages to upsell
  - i. Make arrangements with local suppliers to provide food/drink/soaps etc to put in the room

## **7. Review your deposit and cancellation policies**

- Main thing is to be clear
- People will be increasingly looking for flexibility and reassurance that they can book safely now

## **8. Start pricing smart**

- Everyone should be looking at their pricing over the next 12 months
- Eviivo believe the summer season will extend in to the Autumn and October half-term will be busier than usual
- There is going to be a change in booking patterns with a surge in 'staycations' and more locals
- Consider offering an incentive for early bookings or longer stays
- Still offer single nights – but if it is going to create more work for you – raise the price
- You can encourage groups by offering exclusive use of the property, for example 'book 3 rooms and we won't let any more rooms out'

## **9. Engage with local suppliers**

- People like to see these sorts of relationships – demonstrates a sense of community
- Make them part of the story you tell
- Can use local produce to upsell or as bonus extras

## **10. Make a noise about being quiet**

- People's attitudes will be changing. Being off the beaten track or in a more isolated location could become more attractive
- More crowded and popular destinations (cities, Devon, Cornwall, Coastal locations) may become less desirable. Potentially opening up a bigger market for Wiltshire

Eviivo host free webinars every Wednesday at 4pm. You can see the upcoming topics and how to join [here](#).

Eviivo have also launched a new fundraising initiative, Stays for Heroes. People can donate to fund vouchers to send NHS staff and key workers to a B&B. As well as helping give key workers a break, they want to direct some bookings to B&B's. You can find out more and donate [here](#).

### **Guest Speaker –Janet Uttley from VisitBritain**

Speaking about the COVID safe Industry standard

- An industry standard certification is being developed by VisitBritain so tourism businesses can clearly demonstrate they are operating safely
- VisitBritain have been in consultation with as many membership organisations as possible to ensure the standard is wide reaching as it can be

- It will require businesses to go online and answer a series of questions and read a number of documents, including guidance from Public Health England and World Health Organisation
- The questions will identify, what area of the country you are from and the nature of your business and there will be a specialised helpdesk
- VisitBritain will do it's best to read all published guidance and cross reference
- Once you have completed the process, you will be issued with the industry standard
- The name and look of this standard has yet to be decided
- The standard will dovetail into a £4million national marketing campaign which everyone will be able to get involved via VisitWiltshire
- Businesses will have access to the branding at no cost to use in print, online and on signage
- The three main things they are hoping to achieve from the scheme are;
  - i. Provide reassurance to visitors
  - ii. Install confidence for you to operate safely
  - iii. Reassurance to locals that you are being safe and that tourism is not the enemy
- Have worked together with membership organisations such as; National Trust, English Heritage, ALVA, UK Hospitality, Camping & Caravanning, B&B Association, Natural England and Canal & River Trust
- Remaining mindful of when visitors first arrive they'll be very cautious, however once settled in they may become more careless. Staff need to give gentle reminders of the restrictions
- The timeline is fast paced
  - i. Currently in the procurement process and waiting for sign off for ministers
  - ii. Will then look into dovetailing into marketing campaign
  - iii. Currently looking at 4 July as benchmark for most businesses to re-open to some extent
  - iv. Currently hoping to go live in mid-June
- Before the launch, guidance will be published on how to use the branding and messaging correctly and effectively
- If there is a change in government guidance after the standard has been issued, all those signed up will be informed of the changes by VisitBritain through VisitWiltshire
- VisitBritain have never seen this level of collaboration between all areas of the industry which has helped broaden the sharing of knowledge
- The campaign will start with the domestic market and its success is reviewed, it may be rolled out to the international market
- Will be working alongside hotel/accommodation chains to ensure all guidance is cross referenced with VB referenced