Notes from the Online Wiltshire Association of Visitor Attractions Meeting
Thursday 14 April 2020

Present;

Fiona Errington, VisitWiltshire; Billy Grimes, VisitWiltshire; Rick Henderson, REME; Katie Fairfax-Ross, The Merchant's House; Belinda Richardson, Marlborough; Nikki Rowe, Vintage Classics; Meryl Browning, St Thomas' Church; Jeremy Martin, Salisbury Racecourse; Simon Cox, Cholderton Rare Breeds Farm; Graham Marshallsay, Castle Combe Circuit; Fiona Spear, Wilton Shopping Village; Graham Snook, Crofton Beam Engines; Susie Brew, VisitPewsey/Wilton Windmill; Alana Wright, National Trust – Lacock; David Dawson, Wiltshire Museum; Emma Peters, English Heritage; Annabel Green, Wiltshire Music Centre

Introductions

Fiona welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined what will be covered.

Update on VisitWiltshire Activity/Great West Way

- The Government has released it's 'roadmap' for recovery this week. You can see the key tourism relevant points here. We were hoping for a bit more clarity, however it has highlighted some dates to aim for, for potential re-opening
- The Government is setting up five new Ministerial Taskforces that will look at how to support the restarting of the most impacted sectors of the economy – three of which are tourism related. Tourism as an entity has been assigned to the Recreation and Leisure Taskforce with the Tourism Industry Council being repurposed as the Visitor Economy Working Group of this taskforce. The Five Taskforces are:
  o Pubs and Restaurants (Department for Business, Energy and industrial Strategy)
  o Non-essential Retail (including salons) (Department for Business, Energy and industrial Strategy)
  o Recreation and Leisure, including tourism, culture and heritage, libraries, entertainment and sport (Department for Culture, Media and Sport)
  o Places of Worship (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government)
  o International Aviation, reflecting the unique challenges that sector is facing (Department for Transport)
  https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-roadmap-taskforces

- 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. You can see the latest newsletter here and if you aren't already subscribed, you can do so here.
- VisitEngland's have set up their Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions. You can complete the survey here
- VisitWiltshire are working with VisitEngland and an industry subgroup looking at introducing a new 'certification' scheme, the purpose of which is to reassure visitors that when they open, tourism businesses will offer an experience that's in-line with latest health and social distancing guidelines. VE are expecting to launch the new scheme in the next few weeks, we'll circulate details when we have them
- VisitWiltshire has set up and 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.
- 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 next Friday 22 May on Twitter, and will focus on outdoors, nature and wildlife content. If you have any virtual content (such as live cams or 360 tours) that fits this theme that you would like us to consider including, please contact Helen by **Wednesday 20 May**.
- 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 recently been in contact with our print distributors Pear, to discuss how we can adapt our distribution strategy in the coming months. If you have any post code analysis on your visitors that you are willing to share to help us, please contact Fiona
- If you have any issues or questions please don't hesitate to contact us. It's best to contact Billy in the first instance, and he will pass on through the relevant channels

Update from businesses

Each of the meetings attendees offered a brief update on their current status and their initial plans for recovery. Here are the key points the arose during the discussion;

Re-opening
- Most businesses are using the 4th July, as the marker for potential re-opening
- There has now been a move towards planning on being able to re-open whilst ensuring the hygiene and social distancing measures are followed and risk assessments are now being drawn up
- More clarity needed on who exactly can open and when
- There are plans to operate at a smaller capacity (10-30% in some cases) to ensure social distancing
- There is going to be a concerted effort to move to booking only or ticketed entry, or to run with reduced hours or open less days a week. If anybody wants additional

distribution for online ticketing, contact VisitWiltshire about our online shop – no set up fee
- Some businesses have been using the time for maintenance of refurbishments
- Foreseeable staffing issues in enforcing social distancing measures and the concerns about vulnerable volunteers remain
- Clarity needed for attractions that can count themselves as an open space but are privately owned. Are they allowed re-open at the same time as public spaces or not?
- The issue of toilets was raised by a number of people. No clear guidance on how to ensure cleanliness and safety. VisitWiltshire will endeavour to find more information on this
- There doesn't seem to be a consensus on pricing amongst the group. Some attractions are keeping prices the same, some are simplifying their tariffs and some are offering discounts or extended memberships as parts of the attraction will not be accessible
- Most businesses have received grants if entitled
- Travel Trade enquiries are still coming in, however they are awaiting guidance on transport regulations and there is a concern that there will be a reduced appetite for coach travel

Marketing
- Social Media still proving key and activity remaining high
- Moves to a more digital approach are continuing with virtual tours, online events and social media campaigns
- There doesn't seem to be much change in target audiences yet, as most are focusing on getting ready to re-open
- Difficulty in finding the right balance in messaging; want to encourage visitors, but conscious of risking overcrowding and upsetting locals

Looking Ahead
- VisitWiltshire is looking at marketing in three different phases
  - o Immediately – local and regional
  - o 6-12 months – national
  - o 12+ months – international
- However, this will be done with caution as there is a risk on measure being tightened again
- VisitWiltshire advised on looking at activity that generates either footfall or revenue
- Focus on lead generation to expand your mailing lists to those with specific interests or a more local audience
- Advised to use photos with no or few people in them if possible

Next Meeting

It was agreed that it would be useful to have another meeting before the potential re-opening of attractions in early July. We will be in touch with details closer to the time