



**Notes from the Online Accommodation Tourism Industry Meeting  
Thursday 18 June 2020**

**Present**

Fiona Errington, VisitWiltshire; Anthony Rawlings, Digital Visitor; Paula Portier, Rolleston Manor; Sara Buttle, Buttle Farm; Colin Shaw, Rose & Crown Hotel; Ruth Stevens, Rooms at The Lodge; Alison Bamwell, Rouselands Farm; Trish Bowles, Church Farm Country Cottages; Caron Cooper, Fosse Farmhouse; Nick Westington, Avalon Lodge; Jane Howes, Meadowbank House; Ali James, Cumberwell Country Cottages; Fiona Lockyer, Marshwood Farm; Carole Minto, Victoria Lodge; Kate Waldron, Park Farm Barn; Michael Roe, Lodge Farmhouse; Harriet Holloway, Cliffe Farm Dairy; Suzanne Candy, Olivemead Farm Holidays; Arron Howle, Peartree Apartments; Helen Laing, Widbrook Grange; Dale Naug, Grasmere House; Nigel Stanley, Pig Wig Cottages; Jane Singleton, Stonehenge B&B & Salisbury Cathedral Close B&B.

**Welcome**

Fiona welcomed everyone to our second Accommodation Industry Meeting since lockdown and introduced our guest speaker, Anthony Rawlings from Digital Visitor

**Guest Speaker – Anthony Rawlings, Digital Visitor**

**You can see the recording of Anthony's presentation; the link and the password are below;**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/5-pnN6n2yk5JbrfL73redY87N7rXX6a80SAe8\\_QEyUk0WcrbdouBxXyvZ8KPKIPX](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/5-pnN6n2yk5JbrfL73redY87N7rXX6a80SAe8_QEyUk0WcrbdouBxXyvZ8KPKIPX)

Password: 9Y\*9%^2@

Anthony started by introducing himself and who [Digital Visitor](#) are and what they do. And explained he will be highlighting some of the challenges and insights they are currently exploring with their clients. This will be followed by a Q&A.

Anthony started off by looking at where can you be proactive now?

The main concept worth highlighting is on 'flattening the visitor curve'. You can see Digital Visitor's article on this [here](#). Hoping that majority of tourism businesses will be able to on 4 July, but with significant restrictions on capacity. For some businesses this just won't be possible, only allowing 20-30% of people in. How can you make it profitable?

For those who can make ends meet with these numbers, the main thing to think about is how to maintain these numbers for the necessary length of time. If you can cope financially at a reduced capacity, you need this level of visitor all the time, not just at weekends and peak times.

How can we maintain peak capacity?

Attractions are looking at this down to the hour! Identifying how businesses can flatten the visitor curve is probably the biggest challenge facing tourism businesses over the coming months.

This comes down to much more effective marketing. How we market is going to change significantly. So far there has been a shift from more traditional methods to more digital methods. One of the advantages of this is that it can be easily turned off and on if things change. Think about your market and which channels you use

We also need to think about whom we are talking to; need to encourage them to visit, at times WE need them to visit. Tailor messaging for this. How can this be done;

- Look at the different types of audiences you are attracting
- Break the audiences down to 2/3 categories
- Think about specific messaging for each of these groups and the times you would like them to visit, e.g. retired people at quieter times etc – ‘hyper-targeted’

The next thing to think about is preparing for a second peak

How will businesses if they have to stay at a reduced capacity long term, or going in and out of restrictions? It’s really worth taking time to think about this now and plan for it.

Is there any way that you can diversify your revenue stream? Are there things you can do or products you can innovate to fill the gaps left by less bookings? Examples;

- craft experiences for individual groups, would mean you will have less people but higher revenue
- recipes from local restaurants
- produce from local providers

Here are the links to two more articles, which you may find useful?

[Raring to go! What should your tourism business be doing right now?](#)

[Visitor Attraction predictions for the near future](#)

Questions for Anthony;

*Have you had any examples from accommodation providers, showing diversification?*

One tactic being employed by a client is to not do much proactive marketing in July and not even opening until the end of the July, this way they can see what the appetite is like. Then they will see who visits in August and use the data to tweak the business model a little and understand how their customers feel. Current messaging is taking an ‘invitational approach’. Sending a nice message highlighting the changes and that it is safe and there is plenty of space. Then they will be activating serious marketing from September in an attempt to flatten the curve.

Highlight space is important if you have it. There is a significant opportunity for rural tourism businesses, which is positive for Wiltshire. There is a chance to show potential visitors who are reluctant to visit cities that they have the chance to be amongst nature, open space, fresh air. Great opportunity to capitalise on your setting.

Looking ahead, need to put usual autumn and winter marketing and messaging on 'steroids'. Prepared for a significant and 'pent up' demand. Take your usual messaging, and seriously increase. What's the core offering? It could be autumnal walks, seasonal food & drink, log fires and cosiness. There will be more demand at this time of year than usual.

Do you find a specific social media platform works better than any other?

Facebook. Its targeting capabilities are more advanced and it has the biggest audience and widest age range by far. Should always be your primary channel.

Would you recommend on doing a video for people of what to expect when they now visit?

Not recommended, unless you can do it professionally or to a high standard. People may associate the standard of these sorts of things with the standards at the business. It may be easier and just as effective to demonstrate this with a number of photos or a map of the premises.

Can also rely on statistics, and be anecdotal. For example; 'we have implemented a one way system around the premises which is reducing close contact between people by 60%'.

In regards to marketing there are two stages;

1<sup>st</sup> stage – inspire people to visit

2<sup>nd</sup> stage – how have you made it safe for them

Is the 30-40% capacity a recommendation dictated by social distancing? Are there any recommendations on how to approach shared areas like shower blocks?

The 30-40% capacity is not being dictated as the maximum capacity, but is what has been implemented by attractions across the board as the best capacity to work with the current restrictions. The only reason for it is to safely maintain social distance. It has been announced that the social distancing guidelines have now been reduced to 1m+ from 4 July.

It needs to be done on a case by case basis. If you can manage a greater capacity, and maintain the distance, go ahead.

No official guidance on shared areas as yet, but expected to be more information this week.

What are people planning on doing for deep cleaning sleeping areas? Is it possible to clean as normal and just leave a set amount of time between the guests?

We're hoping that the next set of guidance from DCMS will have more clarity on this and the VisitEngland 'Good to Go' certification should be out this week. During the application for this, you input what you are currently doing and it says if you have undertaken the right risk assessment for your property.

Can you give any advice for any treasury grants for changes that might be required in terms of structural changes in buildings?

Not aware of anything specifically for this, but the discretionary fund is available and worth looking into in detail. But we will be keeping everyone up to date on any changes to this.

## VisitWiltshire Update

### 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
- 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

### Update on Visitor Economy Working Group

- DCMS is producing the top line guidance on what businesses need to do in terms of undertaking a risk assessment of their business and implementing cleaning and social distancing regimes that allow them to operate safely
- The Industry is producing a series of detailed protocols for different business types across the sector which takes this top line guidance and tells businesses how to operationalise it
- VisitEngland is developing a system whereby businesses can, on lodging their risk assessment, get a Mark that can be used to show customers that they are operating in accordance with Government guidance

### Guidance for secure and safe reopening

- VisitBritain are releasing a series of webinars drawing on expert insight from within VisitBritain/VisitEngland and across the travel industry, offering practical advice for tourism businesses and valuable data-led insight from global teams. The programme will start with **Spotlight on Inbound and Domestic Research and Insights** on Tuesday 30 June. You can see the full programme [here](#).

## Marketing

- The main focus of our marketing is now moving away from virtual content and more towards encouraging visitors to plan a future trip to Wiltshire. See our dedicated page [here](#).
- VisitWiltshire have started to promote a message of responsible travel to potential visitors. We have set up a specific web page [here](#), which asks visitors to Find Space and Respect Wiltshire, Stay Safe and Protect Wiltshire and Enjoy Wiltshire. Partners are welcome to use the wording and copy, or adopt this approach in their content free of charge
- We are going to be putting together a series of blogs as places start to open up. We have published our first one on shopping this week
- We are also going to be running Competitions to keep Wiltshire at the front of people's minds and get them dreaming of a future visit. We are putting together a special "This Time Next Year" competition where we will be giving away a trip to Wiltshire in Summer/Autumn 2021, and will promote it across all our digital channels. If you would like to offer prizes please contact [Fiona](#) or [Helen](#).
- 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 running a number of Social Media virtual twitter campaigns. The last one was on Friday 12 June and themed around history and heritage. Partners can see the campaign and retweet by visiting our twitter [page](#)
- We are working with VE on the national certification scheme. Still awaiting government sign off, but should be going live June 25. You can see a PowerPoint to explain the scheme in more detail [here](#).
- VE have confirmed their main initial recovery will be a £4m domestic campaign and they're finalising it now, we will be pushing out content in line with this

## Great West Way

- This week Great West Way launched an advertising campaign targeting responsible travellers for the Great West Way®. You can see the press release [here](#). The adverts are being displayed on 4 digital screen sites in London. Promoting planning future trips, getting off the beaten track and the rural landscapes with messaging; 'Don't follow the herd' Be Curious, Be Responsible. The images include Wiltshire with North Wessex Downs and the Kennet & Avon Canal. Full details can be seen at [GreatWestWay.co.uk/responsibletravel](http://GreatWestWay.co.uk/responsibletravel).
- Monthly consumer newsletters are still being sent out

## Recovery Planning

VisitWiltshire are looking at 3 planning windows for recovery

- Immediate window; Easing. May to July –focusing on virtual journeys, social media and plan your visit
- July to December: Opening. Focus on reassurance and open spaces
- 2021 - looking ahead will depend how the next few months go
- 2020 Survival - 2021 Recovery - 2022 Growth

What you should be thinking about now;

- Review you web content and find new ways of telling your own business story.
- Look at images – do they need changing? Photos with crowds may not be best practice – review how people are interacting in the photos
- Check your product pages on Visit Wiltshire website for content and images. Update us with any operational changes
- Create new partnerships and engage with local suppliers.
- Focus on building your email lists – lead generation
- Work on a new piece of “big content” for your re-opening – needs to reassure visitors and build in flexibility to booking terms, social distancing and hygiene measures. Needs to welcome visitors and be inspirational. Messaging needs to be clear and simple.
- Think about videos – walking visitors through the new normal!
- Value / Pricing - is there anything you can include for added value? Encourage direct bookings and offer early bookings incentives. Manage demand
- Check your Google Local search maps are up to date – do you have new opening times or ways to book
- Audiences - Who are you talking to? Who is likely to travel? How can you appeal to the groups who are more likely to visit early on e.g. Families, Intergenerational groups and Millennials

### **Updates from Businesses**

Paula Portier, Rolleston Manor

- Have been going through the house and looking at how people arrive
- Identifying ways in which they can make cleaning easier, for example taking out individual shower gels and replacing with ones fixed to the wall
- Looking ahead and trying to anticipate what the guidelines are going to be
- Promoting ‘book direct’ and have taken part in the past the pillow campaign

Arron Howle, Peartree Apartments

- Has been open for critical workers. Has been manageable as they are self-contained apartments
- Hoping to accept normal bookings soon
- Have adapted housekeeping strategy
  - o Changed the expectations; more intense cleans, with less regular turn downs
  - o Staggering shift patterns
  - o Contactless check-in and check-out
  - o Have started putting the changes on website; <http://stayatpeartree.com/covid>  
<https://stayatpeartree.com/safeandclean/>

Fiona Lockyer, Marshwood Farm

- Being very cautious, as they don’t know where people will be coming from
- B&B will remain closed for now, but self-catering and Shepherds Hut can open earlier and easier

Trish Bowles, Church Farm Country Cottages

- Keeping shared facilities closed until further guidance on social distancing measures
- Have done risk assessment and staff are keen to return

Helen Laing, Widbrook Grange

- Trying to work out how they can offer the luxury of a hotel stay, within guidelines and economically

If there is anything we can help with or you have any queries or content please don't hesitate to get in touch.