



Notes from the Online Wiltshire Association of Visitor Attractions Meeting Tuesday 11 May 2021

Present;

Fiona Errington, VisitWiltshire; Billy Grimes, VisitWiltshire; James Rodliff, Stonehenge; Jane Thomas, Stonehenge; Rick Henderson, REME Museum; Hedge Haiden, Salisbury Escape Room; Maisie Anderson, Salisbury Escape Room; Charlie Usher, The Merchants House; Fiona Spear, The Guild; Christina Gane, Amesbury History Centre; Chris Bolt, Crofton Beam Engines; Louisa Reeves, Stourhead; Jackie Guscott, Studley Grange; Tony Field, The Rifles Museum; Lorna Matthews-Keel, Salisbury Chequered History Guides; Melissa Barnett, Chippenham Museum; Jo Hutchingson, Crofton Beam Engines; Belinda Richardson, Marlborough; Nikki Rowe, Vintage Classics; Helen King, Malmesbury TIC; Eleanor Burke, Wiltshire Creative; Hannah Grigson, Army Flying Museum; Rachel Wheeler, Marlborough College Summer School

Introductions & Apologies

Fiona Errington welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced the panel and structure of the meeting.

Apologies were received from Longleat, who were to be part of the Panel speaking during the meeting.

Update from latest ALVA Research

Fiona started the meeting by highlighting some of the key points from the latest ALVA Sentiment Report. You can see the whole report [here](#). The key points were;

- Since early March there has been a further very strong positive shift in appetite for visiting attractions when they re-open. In particular, much of the large 'stubbornly cautious' segment are now at least beginning to consider visiting
- With visit appetite now way higher than at the point when attractions re-opened in 2020, we might expect higher demand than last year – particularly once the 'wait and see' segment are reassured on safety
- Although still lower among those aged 55 or over, visit appetite has grown significantly across all age groups since early March and regional differences have disappeared
- However, even with the perceived success of the vaccine rollout and continued declining infection rates, there is a lingering nervousness about the visitor attraction experience when returning to visit – particularly around crowds and distancing

- Three-quarters of the attractions-visiting public are not yet ready to remove Covid-19 safety measures, again especially those focussed on distancing
- Once vaccines have been fully rolled out to the population, there is notable support for some form of 'proof of vaccination or exemption' to gain entry to attractions, particularly indoor venues
- 80% of the attractions-visiting public in London would now use public transport to visit attractions.

Key things to continue to help with consumer confidence

- Visible Cleaning
- Visible management of social distancing
- Continue to offer a video explaining what has changed / what to expect etc.
- Keep using Good to Go

From June onwards – advice is to continue to plan for social distancing and use of face coverings etc – as there is still a large % (50%) nervous about visiting. For most ALVA partner attractions they are planning to continue with these measures for most of 2021. However, depending on the speed of return of consumer confidence this could change.

Wiltshire Association of Visitors Attraction Panel

REME Museum – Rick Henderson, Museum Director

What they have learnt from previous re-openings;

- The main lesson is that clear communication is key – e.g. didn't make it clear from the start that people had to arrive and visit the museum within a specific timeslot. This resulted in people turning up at any time throughout the day.
- Online booking has been useful in restricting the numbers, managing the social distancing and harvesting the relevant information for track and trace.
- Have had to remain flexible – people were still turning up without booking, but still allowed them to come in if possible.
- Regular cleaning throughout the galleries of major touch points and bins are emptied regularly. Visitors were picking up on the cleanliness on TripAdvisor etc
- Temperature taken on entrance – very few people who objected to this. If there were high temperature, they asked them to take 5 mins to 'cool down' and come back. Mainly seen as a positive to ensure the safety of visitors

Marketing;

- During the closure periods, tried to develop more of a digital presence. Kept trying to keep the museum in the public eye
- Education Officer, delivered educational programmes for children
- Posts about items in the collection – developed a strategy on what days and times worked best to get the most engagement
- Developed partnership with other organisations using relevant hashtags
- Did do some paid advertising on Facebook ads

- Applied for Google Ads Grant – so far the feedback shows that this is working really well
- Dropped any attempts at marketing to the international trade and took ALVA's advice, focussed on local distance market (this is where they have spent their money, both physical and digital)
- Schools and Travel Trade – had some success, with schools coming from the first week they are open. A few coach companies have been in touch, and book.

Is there anything you are differently from when you re-opened last July?

- Following very much the same pattern with risk assessments etc to ensure people are confident and feel safe
- Have moved to Digitickets from EventBrite
- Playing on the opening – BBC Radio Wiltshire have asked them to display the 'Poppy Together Mosaic', being unveiled on 18 May
- Bookings – early part of the day is more popular, with it easing off in the afternoon after lunch

Stonehenge – James Rodliff, Operations Manager

- The main focus has been rethinking every step of the journey and making sure it remained both safe and welcoming – explaining how they expect people to behave in a friendly and welcoming way
- Working hard to try and use the space available to them efficiently – and giving a different way to explore the site
- Not trying to overly anticipate everything the visitors would want and expect
- There was been a big emotional response to re-opening the first time around. People very excited and emotional being re-united with family and friends etc
- People are more likely to notice operational things and mentions in reviews
- Significant and emotional impact on staff – getting their input into things was important.

What's different this year?

- New audio guides – downloadable onto your own device
- New café completed – more space and choice
- Visitors are now staying longer – some for 2 meals!
- Agile interpretation and online exhibition – allows people to get some information or experience on parts of the site that remain closed off
- People are more tired and weary this year – and people aren't as emotional and positive as last year. Worth bearing in mind people are used to restrictions and no the score, need to be more tactful in implementing rules etc
- This applies to staff as well
- Using the lack of groups to allow more space in car park, facilities etc
- Have improved their walk-up process – reviewing how they can best avoid queues and build ups of people to ensure a good flow around the site
- Bookings – quitter than usually like as a result of the peaks and troughs of the weekends

- No Shows – initially more of a concern but then improved and levelled out to about 10%, which meant they could adjust numbers and over-sell slightly. No shows mainly came from members – no good mechanism for members to return their tickets

Stonehenge - Jane Thomas, Marketing Manager

- This time there feels to be a bit more certainty with the roadmap, as audience is going to be mainly domestic with people heading towards Devon and Cornwall – Stonehenge is a good stop off for those travellers
- Marketing behaviour has changed – no longer booking anything that can't be moved or refunded
- Have done no print advertising this year – all digital
- Using providers who can back spend effectively- e.g. QuantCast who use AI and Geo-tagging to work out who your bookers are and go and look for more of them
- Campaign messages that will appeal to the domestic audience, for example 'Make a Memory to Last'. This goes alongside the exhibition of photos from family outing to the site through history
- Not expecting groups to recover until 2025-26, not really marketing this anymore overseas
- UK visitors spend less than international – however with less visitors there is more chance for personal interactions leading to more membership sign-ups and spend in the shop
- Stone Circle experience tickets are more readily available than usual – helps get the message out that people can actually go inside the stones
- Events – looking at more low key family events rather than peak-time large events

Update from Businesses

After going around the room for an update from attendees, here are the key points;

- Targeting the people travelling to and from Cornwall/Devon to visit
- Marketing shifting heavily towards to the domestic/local market with international audiences having much less priority for targeting
- Roadmap has helped with planning and decision making
- Initial bookings/footfall going/gone very well, showing a pent up demand
- Weekdays a lot quieter than weekends, afternoons quieter than mornings
- Visitors are now getting used to the rules, restrictions and pre-booking, and have been trusting of the procedures in place

Update on VisitWiltshire/Great West Way Activity

Marketing

- Our 2021 digital publications are now live. Within these there is new digital content including virtual tours, videos and reassurance messaging for visitors. Our strategy is to drive online downloads via our distribution and lead generation campaign. Please use the links to view the [Visitor Map](#) and the [Visitor Guide](#). Please do highlight these within your social media posts and to your visitors.
- Our Wiltshire Towns maps are being distributed as a physical piece of print. This is not dated, so has a longer shelf-life than other pieces of our print. You can order copies from [Pear Distribution](#).

- We are currently updating the Fam Passport for 2021/22. If you submitted an offer for last years, Billy would have been in touch asking you to update. If you would like to submit and offer for this year's edition, please contact [Billy](#). Remember you can change these throughout the year
- We are applying for 'Welcome Back' funding and if successful we hope to deliver a reassurance 'It's Time for Wiltshire' campaign to a local audience (we may include a Residents Week within this for end of June)
- Please keep us up to date with any content; any opening up stories/hooks/newsworthy items etc. Also, please ensure you upload any events using the [event form](#) and send us any special offers you may have coming up.
- Wiltshire was well placed in our Escape the Everyday Great West Way campaign. This ran throughout March. Activity included paid for digital (Native advertising, Programmatic display and video), paid for social (Facebook, Instagram), Video, Lead generation competition, Organic social, newsletters, new content, distribution of consumer itineraries and our travel magazine, press and PR and influencers. Wiltshire features within this. We had over 6.1 million impressions, 57k clicks to website and over 250k views of the film. We are now planning a summer campaign as part of a Rough Guide multi-platform campaign – insert into the Sunday Times which we will feature in and content on their website plus social posts.

Website and Digital

- This month we have updated the website to highlight the range of products that are in the process of reopening and to encourage visitors to book their Wiltshire trip now that lockdown is easing. We launched a new 'time for Wiltshire' landing page on 12 April, accompanied by a newsletter which went out the same day to our 100,000+ consumer database. We have seen website traffic grow encouragingly over the last few months, with nearly 50% more users in March compared to February - and traffic continuing to grow steadily into April. In particular, we have seen big increases in traffic to the "food and drink" and "things to do" sections of the website in April. This month, the average time spent on the website has increased, the number of pages viewed has improved, and the bounce rate has fallen - all positive signs pointing to the website's recovery.
- As we are now entering a time when businesses can start opening up again, we would love to get any events you have planned on our 'What's On' pages whether virtual or in person. The easiest way to get them online is to complete the short Event Form. Our Whats' On pages are consistently our most visited pages (pre-lockdown), and more likely to be included social media posts, blogs and our consumer newsletter.
- We continue to send out our monthly newsletters and the consumer newsletter mailing list currently stands at 118k opted-in subscribers, 3.5% more than at the end of 2019, with an average open rate of 12.5%. Please let [Helen](#) know if you have anything you'd like to go into these.
- Pre re-opening don't forget to check your content on our website as it may have changed. It is important to make sure that all the content including opening times and prices are up to date. If you would like to refresh the photography on your page, remember you can have 6 photos for a silver partner and 10 for gold and all photos

must be landscape. Gold partners can also include video on their product page. If you would like to make additions or changes to your page please contact [Billy](#) or [Helen](#).

Groups and Travel Trade

Flo has been in touch with relevant partners regarding two self-drive Fam Trips that are being organised (June and September) – one is with [Group Leisure and Travel](#) and one is with Meridian

There is a travel trade meeting on Thursday 20 May with guest speaker Keeley from Group Leisure magazine – if you would like to attend please contact [Flo](#)

We're at the final stages updating the GWW Travel Trade Directory and have now completed work on our VisitWiltshire Travel Trade Guide. The Wiltshire guide will be going live this week and a trade newsletter will be going out distributing it to our database.

VisitWiltshire Advice Page

There is a [COVID-19 advice page](#) on the VisitWiltshire website for businesses. The page details the latest government guidance, information from travel authorities and some useful resources. We are regularly updating this page with the latest information.

The page also includes the latest research carried out by VisitEngland/VisitBritain and the details of the various grants, loans and support for businesses being provided by the government. You can also follow us on our [@VisitWiltsBiz](#) account for more updates. We have also set up a [Brexit advice page](#) along similar lines, and will be adding any relevant news, research and insights to it as and when we get them.

Priorities for 2021

Please let us know if you gave any suggestion or requests on the following;

- Is there anything that you would like to see us doing more of?
- What would you like to see us focus on?
- Where should our priorities be? (Digital/Online/Booking functionality?)