



**Notes from the Online Wiltshire Association of Visitor Attractions Meeting
Tuesday 22 September 2020**

Present;

Fiona Errington, VisitWiltshire; Billy Grimes, VisitWiltshire; Robin Tjolle, VisitEngland; Belinda Richardson, Marlborough; Rachel Wheeler, Marlborough College Summer School; Emma Sykes, Wiltshire Museum; Rick Henderson, REME Museum; Jen Edmondson, Bowood House and Gardens; William Cartwright-Hignett, Iford Manor; Jane Thomas, Stonehenge; Hannah Grigson, Army Flying Museum; Tony Field, The Rifles Museum; Kate Baker, Salisbury Museum; Nicola Ferguson, Swindon Designer Outlet

Introductions

Fiona Errington welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the guest speaker, Robin Tjolle.

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 that arose during the discussion;

- For those who were open, August proved to be a very positive month, with visitor numbers or at least better than expected
- Numbers have dropped off since schools went back. As expected and follows trend of every year
- Group bookings down or non-existent, however Schools enquiries are still coming in
- Social media audiences have increased over the summer and is helping to target a more domestic/local market
- More a of move towards trying to attract a more local market
- Visitors tend to be from nearby (within an hour), apart from Stonehenge which continues to attract visitors from further afield
- 'Eat Out to Help' was a great help for those who took part and resulted in higher numbers as expected
- Attractions who have done online lectures etc have had a good response and have proven popular
- Some attractions are working with reduced hours, reduced capacity and pre-booking only

Guest Speaker – Robin Tjolle, VisitEngland

Please refer to presentation included with these notes.

Impact

- Tourism sector hit first. Hit hardest. Longest time to recover

- Decline of 59% in visitors to the UK and spend down by 63%
- Forecasting that domestic tourism economy won't get back to pre-COVID levels until 2024

Key Priorities in Recovery Activity

- Research and Insights – [here](#) is the latest sentiment report.
 - o Rising sense that personal finances are playing a bigger part in peoples decision to travel – alongside COVID risk
 - o Willingness to travel will be shaped by the restrictions imposed by government
 - o When people are planning on taking a break – 19% this October – 21% Winter to March – 34% in 2021 – 26% beyond 2021
 - o South West has been number one destination people want to travel to. Towns and Cities becoming more popular over the winter months
- Government Engagement and Lobbying
- Marketing
- International Teams – still working and helping to work towards recovery
- Industry Advice and Support – ‘Good to Go’ etc
- Keeping the Importance of Tourism in the Media

Business Advice Hub

Task Force has been set up (Robin is the representative for the South West). To try and provide information and support to DMO's to then feed down to local businesses.

'Were Good to Go'

- Over 39,000 applications, a great success across the whole of the UK
- Cabinet Office supported with a £300K Social Media Campaign
- A map showing all the places who have achieved the 'We're Good to Go' certification has been developed – see [here](#).
- If you haven't yet applied, you can still do so [here](#).

Escape the Everyday Campaign

VisitBritain has launched a £5 million 'Escape the Everyday' campaign to highlight the quality destinations, visitor attractions and experiences on offer across the UK's cities, countryside and coast to boost tourism across the shoulder season and beyond. The campaign kicks off with a short video and branded content across social media, digital display and 'on demand' television advertising.

The campaign focuses on targeting Pre- and Empty-Nesters.

The content also drives online 'traffic' to www.visitbritain.com/escape with ideas and links to information on autumn and winter activities and experiences across the nations and regions. You can find out more about the campaign and download the toolkit [HERE](#). We will be working hard alongside VisitBritain to ensure that Wiltshire and Great West Way can be included in the activity as much as possible.

If you have anything you feel would fit in well with the Escape the Everyday Campaign, please send to [Helen](#) at VisitWiltshire in the first instance and we will pass it on. You can also use the hashtag #EscapeTheEveryday and tag @VisitEngland and @VisitBritain on Social Media.

Update on VisitWiltshire/Great West Way Activity

Recent Announcements

Last week the government revealed plans for stricter measures and new guidelines in attempt to curb the recent spike in cases of COVID-19. You can see the most relevant points to the tourism and hospitality industry [HERE](#). This includes updates on Track & Trace, Face Masks, Group Travel, Meetings and the Rule of Six. UKHospitality have produced a useful FAQ document to help clear up any confusion on the latest announcements. You can see the document [HERE](#).

Job Support Scheme

Last week the Chancellor confirmed that the Furlough Scheme will come to and end at the end of October. He announced that this would be replaced by a Job Support Scheme. There was also an update on the repayment of loans and VAT. See [HERE](#) for more details.

VisitWiltshire recovery planning Window and Timings

- Immediate window easing – May – July - virtual journeys – social media / plan your visit
- **July – December – opening - reassurance / open space**
- 2021 - looking ahead will depend how the next few months go
- 2020 Survival - 2021 Recovery- 2022 Growth
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- Our content and marketing is well into recovery stage with all our messaging around Responsible Tourism, 'Find Space Find Time - Time to Enjoy Wiltshire'
- Moving into the autumn we are aligning with the Escape the Everyday this VE £5m campaign (detailed above). Our activity will include a website [landing page](#), social media, e-newsletter and PR. If you would like to be involved in the campaign, please send over any relevant Autumn-themed content including breaks, special offers, activities, half term and Halloween events to [Helen](#) and [Holly](#).
- Our staycation messaging around the [Good to Go](#) and Know Before You Go showcasing partners who have been awarded Visit England's "We're Good to Go" mark as well as those participating in the "Eat Out to Help Out" scheme, featured nearly 150 partners and was very popular. We also created a reassurance [video](#) which has had over 700k views. If you would like to use the video then please do.
- **Future activity 2021**
 - Great West Way - we are working on a jointly funded (Kennet & Avon Canal and Canal & River Trust) Great West Way guide to the Kennet & Avon Canal. This will be ready for the new 2021 season.
 - We are reviewing our Wiltshire 2021 campaigns and are looking at a Wiltshire food and drink campaign (postponed from 2020) a city campaign and a spring campaign.

- We're continuing to run our Monthly consumer newsletters and now using the recovery content.
- If you would like to be included in a Spotlight On blog, please contact [Billy](#). They are a great opportunity to showcase your product as a whole, anything new or we can interview a specific member of your team (gardener, curator, volunteer etc).

Website and Digital

- Our overall web traffic has recovered from being 74% down in April, 54% down in May, 37% down in June, 17% in July and **14% in August**. Local residents were the top users of the VisitSalisbury site in May, but Londoners were the top users in June, which is in-line with national sentiment research that shows that people in London are looking at taking trips again. On the VisitWiltshire website, London and Bristol have remained the top locations for traffic throughout the COVID-19 crisis
- While we're still seeing less traffic on the website compared to this time last year, but it does seem that the people who are using the site are more engaged. Pages/sessions have increased by 10% year-on-year, and bounce rate has fallen by 5%. The time an average user spends on site increased from 1min21 (in August 2019) to 1min37 (in August 2020).
- 5% of all page views in August were the 'Eat Out to Help Out' page which proved very popular.
- Traffic has actually completely recovered on some sections of the site - and some areas were actually up year-on-year since June. [Things to do](#), [plan your visit](#), [explore](#) & the [blogs](#) are all around about (or above) where they were this time last year in terms of traffic.
- It is still primarily the "[What's On](#)" pages which are behind the drop in traffic year-on-year. With around 70% less traffic year-on-year to the "What's On" pages. This could be because people are less interested in "What's On" content, as they're not planning ahead much and, we have much less content for people to interact with, because there are less events taking place. As a comparison, in August 2019 we had 242 event products live on the Wiltshire website. In August 2020, we only had 124.
- Through the Great West Way, Leader funding project, Wiltshire is now being featured in a series of new themed consumer and travel trade itineraries carrying our Be Responsible messaging. The Vale Action LEADER project joins up rural tourism along the Wiltshire and Berkshire sections of the Great West Way and has also resulted in some good new photography and video content.

Keep us up to Date with Re-opening Information

- If you have not already let us know your plans for reopening, please send us details and dates so that we can update the website and promote via social media. Please send information to [Billy](#) or [Helen](#). Likewise, if you have been awarded the "**We're Good to Go**" mark, please let us know so we can add it to your product page.

Brochure Distribution

2020 Publications

- As the industry opened up, we restarted our domestic distribution program. Alongside this we distributed some new posters which are sitting alongside our various print publications in various outlets. They contain our latest recovery

messaging. Opportunity to See (OTS) figure just for these = 7.6 million people. Distribution is going well especially in Supermarkets, Motorway Service Areas, and Garden Centres.

- We are revisiting the 2020 [Fam Passport](#) which was ready for launch just as COVID hit, we plan to issue shortly with revised offers. Please let [Billy](#) know if you are happy to continue with or revise your offer or if you are interested in participating.
- We are producing an updated digital version of the Great West Way travel magazine, using our new messaging, referencing COVID and travel including 'Good to Go' and 'Know Before You Go'. Wiltshire has significant county-wide coverage in this.
- Plans for 2021 publications - we are currently reviewing our publications, and are looking at options to either produce digital publications possibly just one Wiltshire visitor publication with small print run. Another thought was to produce a smaller 'flyer' to push people to wards digital publications and the website.
- Fiona asked what the thoughts were on printed publications and also budget to advertise in them?

If you have any thoughts on this, then please do let us know.