



## **Groups & Travel Trade Meeting Thursday 20 May 2021, 2-3.30pm**

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### **Attendees:**

Florence Wallace, Fiona Errington, David Andrews – VisitWiltshire; David Lane – Bowling Green Asset Management Hotels (Chair); Keeley Rodgers – Group Leisure & Travel Magazine; Rachel Wheeler - Marlborough College Summer School; Simon Cox – Cholderton Rare Breeds Farm; Marie Thomas – Salisbury Cathedral; Roy Hayward – The Bridge Tea Rooms; Geoff Cain – Salisbury, Stonehenge & Sarum Tours; Sharon Thomas – Corsham; Nikki Rowe – Vintage Classics; Anne Bartlett – Tour & Explore; Cathy Lewis – Wessex Museums; Jackie Guscott – Studley Grange Garden & Leisure Park.

### **Meeting Notes:**

#### **1. Welcome, introductions and actions from last meeting**

Actions from last meeting were confirmed as done or repeated as ongoing call outs:

- **Please advise Flo if you have any suggestions for domestic focussed campaigns for 2021**
- **Please advise Flo if you have any ideas for future speakers to add value to these meetings.**

#### **2. 'Group Travel Insights' from Keeley Rodgers, Editor, Group Leisure & Travel Magazine**

Keeley delivered a presentation which included results of their domestic focussed research. The presentation slides can be viewed [here](#). She highlighted that GTOs would like the following from businesses/destinations:

- Cancellation guarantees
- COVID measures in place and communicated this to the trade
- Price points kept low – particularly for coach companies
- Key contact for groups departments

Keeley also highlighted some key links from Group Leisure & Travel that businesses can take advantage of.

### **ACTION:**

- **Sign up to the new 'We Welcome Groups' Accreditation at [www.groupleisureandtravel.com/we-welcome-groups](http://www.groupleisureandtravel.com/we-welcome-groups)**
- **Request your free listing in the next edition of Who's Who in Group Leisure at [www.groupleisureandtravel.com/directory](http://www.groupleisureandtravel.com/directory)**

Keeley confirmed that GTOs are recognising VisitEngland's 'We're Good to Go' accreditation and results from her survey showed that they are looking to attend trade events and exhibitions in person again later this year.

Keeley confirmed that she has had a positive take up to the Group Leisure & Travel Reader offer 'Wiltshire on the Great West Way' fam visit scheduled for September. Details can be seen [here](#). Flo will be in touch with relevant businesses and destinations about this in due course.

### 3. How's business? Eg. Top line trade visitor figures, forward bookings and COVID impacts

There were updates from a number of key attendees including Salisbury Cathedral, Cholderton Rare Breeds Farm/Cholderton Hostel, Salisbury, Stonehenge & Sarum Tours, Studley Grange Garden & Leisure Park and Tour and Explore.

The general outlook was that trade bookings are starting to pick up but coming in for shorter lead times and businesses are trying to ascertain the 'new normal'. A few key points worth highlighting are as follows:

- For one key hotel chain it was reported that 80% of business coming in is for the same month as being booked.
- A key attraction reported they have quite dynamic bookings with as many cancellations as there are bookings coming in. Its therefore difficult to look too far in advance due to ongoing changes.
- For another attraction and hotel business they've noticed cyclist business being picked up for those passing by to and from South West – indicating could be worth targeting cycling specific tour groups.
- A key educational establishment reported that educational bookings have started to come in for June/July but for smaller class sizes in minibuses to visit more regularly as opposed to full year groups in coaches visiting less frequently.
- Staffing remains a challenge for a number of businesses.
- There is also some initial indication for businesses who have FIT rates/benefits that they could pick up more visitors during key holiday periods, with targeted distribution via the trade.

### 4. Travel Trade Update

Prior to the meeting the [Travel Trade Activity Update](#) was distributed and this should be referenced for a full update covering the period from January to May 2021.

Flo reported that the new digital 'It's Time for Wiltshire Travel Trade Guide' has now been finalised as a digital guide only and has been distributed via VisitWiltshire's database, with additional distribution planned via UKinbound's database. All Travel Trade group partners are now eligible to receive a new key trade product page on the B2B VisitWiltshire website.

The forthcoming fam visits were mentioned. **An additional UPDATE since the meeting** is that the Meridian self-drive fam visit due to take place 27 & 28 June has now been cancelled. This is due to lack of take-up by GTOs (possibly COVID uncertainty related) and for the few that did register they are being driven to register for the September Group Leisure one.

Flo continues to have excelled trade engagement with buyers and has been delivering regular product sales training presentations including a number of Wiltshire suppliers and content.

Fiona updated the group about the recent digital trade campaign. All statistics and further information can be seen in the activity update.

We continue to secure significant Wiltshire product in Great West Way Official Tour Operator programmes and activity. This includes a focus on development and distribution of B2C UK programmes to align with domestic marketing for 2021.

There are still opportunities to influence Wiltshire content in the new digital Great West Way Travel Trade Directory. **Action: Please check your listings in the current edition of the Great West Way [Travel Trade Directory](#) and advise any amends by Tuesday 1 June.**

A new Great West Way Connections travel trade group is being developed. **Action - call out to all those who feel this is relevant to attend future meetings (first one took place on Thursday 27 May).**

It's always helpful to receive up-to-date details of businesses/destinations. **Action: Please advise Flo/Fiona of any new product changes, COVID or non-COVID related?**

## 5. Travel Trade Tactical Activity Plan - Priorities for Discussion

VisitWiltshire is asking how can we help drive forward your trade objectives and priorities for 2021.

Although international travel is currently uncertain, it was noted, that international travel requires a longer lead time and therefore this requires a continued focus to stimulate key markets for when they re-open – driving business into 2022 and beyond.

Flo reminded the group that events and exhibitions have not been included in the tactical activity plan so if anyone is interested to attend these please get in touch. Realistically, this is likely to drive short term day visit businesses or longer-term overnight business for 2022. Those worth considering are:

- [Go Travel Show](#) – 8 September 2021, Kempton Park Racecourse
- [British Tourism & Travel Show](#) – 22 & 23 September 2021, NEC Birmingham
- [Group Leisure & Travel Show](#) – 7 October 2021, Milton Keynes
- [World Travel Market](#) – 1 – 3 November 2021, Excel London

**ACTION: Please let Flo know if you are interested in attending any of the above exhibitions with VisitWiltshire?**

It became clear that a domestic digital focus should be a priority to try and drive any remaining trade business for 2021. Although previously VisitWiltshire has targeted trade websites with banner advertising etc. it was agreed that we could achieve better results with Facebook advertising targeting 'interest groups' and such like.

Traditionally, the VisitWiltshire advertising campaign has run from September – March to collectively promote Wiltshire as a destination to the trade. This will continue for 2021/2022 as this is the buying period for trade.

However, there is an opportunity for a select number of businesses/destinations to collaboratively work together communicating their product offer for a summer campaign. This could be targeting Mature mainstreamers (driving consumer focussed business) or via trade groups.

**Action: If you are interested to take part in a bespoke summer Facebook/Instagram campaign, please advise Flo/Fiona with your preferred target audience and available budget eg. 6 x partners paying £500 each.**

Flo has researched a few special interest groups for future targeting and these can be viewed on this [Google Doc](#). **Action: Please take a look at this document and add any other Facebook groups that you have engagement with and believe they may be worth Wiltshire targeting.**

## 6. Any Other Business

Great West Way are looking at options for holding a Marketplace event as a possible virtual event for November 2021. Flo will report back to the group about this in due course.

**Date of Next meeting:**

Please ensure you have the date of **Thursday 16 September 2pm – 3.30pm**, in your diary. We will confirm details i.e. virtual or in-person, in due course.