



## **Groups & Travel Trade Meeting Notes Tuesday 15 September 2020, 2pm – 4pm via Zoom**

### **Attendees:**

Florence Wallace, Fiona Errington, David Andrews – VisitWiltshire; Simon Smith – ETOA; Laura Gibbs- English Heritage; Freya Webb – McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Swindon; David Lane- Holiday Inn Salisbury Stonehenge; Sharon Thomas - Corsham Town; Rachel Wheeler - Marlborough College Summer School; Carole Devonshire - Lucknam Park Hotel; Anna Walton – Longleat; Emily Knox- Tinga; Rick Henderson - REME Museum; David Dawson - Wiltshire Museum; Belinda Richardson - Marlborough Town; Jo Atkins - National Trust; Stephanie Shearing – Bradford on Avon; Alison Bucknell – Wiltshire Councillor.

### **Meeting Notes:**

- 1. Welcome, introductions and actions from last meeting**
- 2. How's business eg. top line trade visitor figures, forward bookings and COVID impacts**

Most businesses reported cancellations to group business for 2020 due to Coronavirus but many bookings moved to 2021. Some businesses are no longer able to take coach/group bookings for the foreseeable future due to uncertainty of pandemic. Generally, a move towards FIT bookings where possible. German market starting to open up again with some enquiries for future bookings.

- 3. Industry updates and trends from ETOA's Policy Manager** Simon Smith

(correct as at 21 September 2020)

ETOA – European Tourism Association (in UK also known as European Tour Operators Association)

Approx 1100 members including tour operators, DMCs, wholesalers, OTAs, hospitality, visitor attractions and DMOs)

Insights from tour operators, DMCs and wholesalers:

- Communication with suppliers to obtain refunds/contract/operational queries has been and in some cases still difficult due to furlough and redundancies (flexi-furlough has helped).
- Delayed re-opening to the travel trade by some attractions but recently improved in some cases.
- As smaller groups are likely going forward beyond 'rule of six', operators would like suppliers to reconsider group numbers for discount.
- There is still demand to visit UK but quarantine requirements make it unviable unless a travel corridor country (e.g. Germany).

UK general industry updates:

- Tourism Industry Emergency Response (TIER) group meets regularly to discuss impact of Covid and preparations for Brexit post-transition. Chaired by Visit Britain and attended by UK Government, industry associations and NTOs.
- To monitor UK Government watchlist and areas of concern that have or may lead to local intervention measures, see [here](#).

- Visit Britain's 'Escape the Everyday' domestic marketing campaign launched 16 September (replaces Enjoy Summer Safely).
- 'Rule of Six' – Further information [here](#) including list of exemptions. In England, applies to all ages but persons working are exempt (e.g. coach driver or tour guide). The 'rule of six' does not apply when on-board a coach as transport operators are following guidance for public transport operators (which includes 'closed door' coach services). When not on-board the coach the 'rule of six' applies in a hotel, restaurant or attraction. Guided tours of up to 30 people can take place but the groups of 6 have to follow risk mitigation measures e.g. social distancing between the groups.
- Quarantine – UK Government considering two test procedure (e.g. 1 on arrival and 1 about a week later). If traveller tests negative for both the quarantine period would reduce to between 5-10 days (yet to be agreed).
- Brexit – UK Government intend to phase out use of national I.D cards by EU visitors at the UK border in 2021 (potential to affect demand to visit UK). Waiting for confirmation from Home Office.
- Brexit- [VAT Retail Export scheme](#) to be stopped from 1 January 2021. International visitors to the UK will be unable to re-claim VAT on their shopping to carry items home in their luggage (potential to affect demand to visit UK).

Further information:

[www.etoa.org/coronavirus-hub/](http://www.etoa.org/coronavirus-hub/) (some content member only)

[www.etoa.org/policy/brexit/post-transition/](http://www.etoa.org/policy/brexit/post-transition/)

4. Terms of Reference and Strategy documents for the group

David / All

Following consultation and amendments due to COVID-19, the [Terms of Reference](#) and [Travel Trade Strategy 2020 - 2023](#) were signed off by the travel trade group as final versions.

5. VisitWiltshire and Great West Way trade update

Flo

The most recent [Travel Trade Activity Update February 2020 - September 2020](#) was distributed prior to the meeting.

6. Advertising Plan 2020/2021

Fiona

The [Advertising plan 2020/2021](#) was distributed prior to the meeting. It was explained that the Celebrate Group Travel Day filming and broadcast (including Wiltshire, Bowood, Longleat and Salisbury Cathedral, plus Great West Way) has already taken place.

The Facebook advertising has been booked and we're just finalising artwork for carousel ads.

**ACTION: Please advise any additional suggest groups to target. See tab 2 on spreadsheet for existing ones. Deadline 30 September 2020.**

**Please note that due to ongoing COVID restrictions this advertising plan may be paused and timings reviewed.**

7. Discuss priorities for future trade activity 2021 including print, fam visits, exhibitions etc.

All

When asked are businesses/destinations still targeting groups there was a mixed response. Many have pulled back on trade marketing/sales due to 'the rule of six'. Domestic trade and FIT was a focus for some whilst others are only concentrating on short term consumer activity.

There was a general agreement that trade print for 2021 should be updated for digital distribution and fam trips rescheduled for 2021.

We will aim to put together a tactical activity plan for 2021 and share with the group in due course.

**ACTION: Please can businesses/destinations advise Flo whether they would be interested to attend virtual trade events and if so, which ones?**

**ACTION: If you are interested in targeting specific tour operators please let Flo know as there are opportunities to join online sales presentations.**

Broadly the travel trade group remained positive but we are aware there are currently many challenges for businesses/destinations.

**ACTION: Please let David/Flo know if you are experiencing any challenges with the trade, government guidance or what available support?**

8. Chairperson vacancy

David Andrews

Thanks were given to Jo Atkins who is now stepping down as Travel Trade Group Chairperson after a number of years of service. This leaves a vacancy to be filled.

**ACTION: If you are interested in putting yourself forward to become the next chairperson of the VisitWiltshire travel trade group please can you email Flo to register your interest prior to 16 October 2020.**

9. Any Other Business

All

Flo mentioned that due to the ongoing Coronavirus situation, we will be extending the Travel Trade Group membership by 3 months. We will therefore not be sending invoices out for renewal this autumn but will be planning to do this in the Spring for the new trade activity year to start on 1 April 2021.

No additional AOB.

Next meeting date will be issued after new chairperson has been recruited.