



Groups & Travel Trade Meeting Notes Tuesday 21 January 2021, 2pm – 3.30pm via Zoom

Attendees:

Florence Wallace, Fiona Errington – VisitWiltshire; David Lane – Holiday Inn Salisbury Stonehenge (Chair); Stuart Heath, VisitBritain; Rachel Wheeler - Marlborough College Summer School; Belinda Richardson - Marlborough Town; Anna Walton – Longleat; Alexandra Bradbury, William Cartright-Hignett – Iford Manor Gardens; Sarah-Jayne Beasley, Mercedes Pickard - English Heritage; Simon Cox – Cholderton Rare Breeds Farm; Christophe Dumeige – The Old Bell Hotel; Lorna Matthews-Keel – Salisbury Chequered History Guides; Marie Thomas, Hannah Paye – Salisbury Cathedral; Roy Hayward – The Bridge Tea Rooms; Abbey George – National Trust; Geoff Cain – Salisbury, Stonehenge & Sarum Tours; Daniel Graham – Holiday Inn- Salisbury Stonehenge; Jeffrey Bruce – Stonehenge Campsite & Glamping Pods; Nikki Honer – Salisbury Reds.

Meeting Notes:

1. Welcome, introductions and actions from last meeting

2. Election of New Chairman

Fiona Errington announced that we had received an expression of interest from David Lane to become the new Chairman for the VisitWiltshire Travel Trade Group.

This was proposed by Rachel Wheeler from Marlborough College Summer School and seconded by Anna Walton from Longleat.

It was therefore confirmed that David Lane is the new chairman and he proceeded to chair the rest of the meeting.

3. How's business eg. top line trade visitor figures, forward bookings and COVID impacts

A number of key attractions and accommodation providers are not planning for opening for Feb ½ term but aiming to open for Easter (end of March), with restrictions and limited offer for groups in place. Group bookings are slow or not yet coming in for 2021 visits at this time. Focus on domestic as international will take longer to recover. Food & drink businesses did well during the 'eat out to help out' scheme last summer – hoping for something similar again for recovery. Towns and attractions starting to promote events that will take place later in the year.

4. Travel Trade Update from Stuart Heath, Senior Commercial Partnerships Manager at VisitBritain

Stuart gave an update about the new virtual Explore GB event that VisitBritain are running 1 – 5 March 2021. Registrations are now closed for this event but there is a waiting list. Find out more [here](#).

VisitBritain are running market update and travel trade webinars – details can be seen [here](#).

Stuart explained that planning trade activity for the short-term future is hard but there does seem to be an appetite from buyers in the medium term.

VisitBritain have paused their domestic and international marketing campaigns at this time.

There are currently no plans to promote Discover England Fund projects to a domestic trade market.

Stuart asked the group “What do you need from VisitBritain?”.

Salisbury Cathedral requested forecasting and Iford Manor asked whether it would be possible to get clearer direction from DCMS regarding future staffing requirements. David Lane asked about the Brexit impact and reassurance messaging.

5. VisitWiltshire and Great West Way trade update and priorities for 2021

Prior to the meeting the [Travel Trade Activity Update](#) was distributed.

Flo re-iterated that appetite from buyers is very positive at this time and she has focussed on trade engagement, particularly with UK based Destination Management Companies (DMC's) and product sales training presentations. Suppliers are being brought into some of these presentations but its important to match the right suppliers with the right buyers. A good example of this is the new Promenades [Thomas Hardy programme](#) for Wessex Museums.

Flo mentioned we are attending BIM and Excursions virtually. There is an Excursions webinar 'Wiltshire on the Great West Way' being delivered to the domestic trade with suppliers Iford Manor Gardens, The Bridge Tea Rooms, Old Bell Hotel and Marlborough joining the presentation. To date there are 50 registrations for this event.

Fiona mentioned that we've been working on the new digital Travel Trade Guide and we'd like to hear from you with any highlights, key events, special interest tours or changes to your product offer for 2021. She also mentioned we have paused the social media trade campaign from last year but as we've heard there seems to be an appetite for domestic trade planning, we will look to press the button on this at the end of January/beg Feb.

Flo asked the travel trade group whether they can commit to a 2021 Fam visits for 2021 by April, for the visit to take place in September (Group Leisure & Travel Mag.). **ACTION: Please contact Flo with details of your product offer and any associated costs, if you would like to be included.**

6. Travel Trade Package 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

Flo communicated that we have been revising the Travel Trade Group's trade activity plan for 2021/2022. It was suggested that we exclude exhibitions and events in the packages at this time due to the ongoing uncertainty with COVID.

It was proposed that the prices will decrease by approximately 25% for each level of investment.

The DRAFT Travel Trade activity plan will be circulated in due course and will be agreed by group before the end of March for activity to start from 1 April 2021. Invoices will be sent out towards the end of February for payment prior to 31 March 2021.

It was proposed that a domestic focus should be included in the new activity plan to help with COVID recovery. **ACTION: Please advise if you have any considerations, suggestions and ideas for promoting Wiltshire to the travel trade, so we can look to include these in the group's annual activity plan.**

7. Any Other Business

David Lane asked whether anyone had experience problems obtaining Wiltshire grants. As he was experiencing large delays for Holiday Inn-Salisbury Stonehenge's submission. Others commented that they have not experienced the same delays from Wiltshire Council.

8. Date of future meetings

Thursday 20 May 2pm – 3.30pm

Thursday 16 September 2pm – 3.30pm

ACTION: Call out for any suitable speakers? Any ideas of who you would like to hear from?