



## **Groups & Travel Trade Meeting**

**Tuesday 17 January 2023, 2pm – 3pm**

### **Attendees:**

Florence Wallace, Fiona Errington – VisitWiltshire; David Lane – BGAM – Holiday Inn Salisbury-Stonehenge (Chair); Helen Stuart – The Stones Hotel; Marie Thomas - Salisbury Cathedral; Lucy Bridal - Salisbury Museum; Tracey-Ann Walpole – Corsham; Emma Griffiths - Angel Hotel, Chippenham; Anna Walton – Longleat; Alex Bradbury; Anna Temple – Milford Hall Hotel (Brightstar Hospitality); Anna-Karin Hanson – English Heritage; Nat McConnell – Bluestone Vineyard; Jo Wood – Salisbury City Council.

### **Meeting Notes:**

#### **1. Welcome and introductions**

A brief welcome was given by David Lane.

#### **2. How's business? eg. top line trade visitor figures, forward bookings etc.**

Attractions and accommodation providers reported good visitor numbers for the Christmas period, exceeding budgets, and sold-out dates. Lack of staff still being reported as problematic for some. Concerns regarding last minute group numbers reducing from operators who have booked way in advance. Attractions are revisiting their T's and C's to take deposits and needing confirmation of numbers a month out. Operators seem to be happy to adapt accordingly.

One large attraction welcomed back coach groups – mainly domestic - and has adapted product offer for guided tours only in some areas plus additional costs, but a 20% discount on standard rates for pre-booked groups applies (excluding summer holidays).

Forward group bookings also looking positive with one visitor attraction reporting booking requests from Australia, Netherlands, USA, UK, and Germany and sating that 2023 is looking to be their best year yet.

Accommodation providers also receiving lots of 2023 enquiries, more domestic but starting to hear from Europe.

January is no longer a quiet month as there seems to be pent up demand and people seem busy with forward booking enquiries and seem to be starting to book further in advance.

Towns also reported good Christmas light events, busiest ever! Plus forward bookings with town tours starting to come through.

Discussions regarding coping with large numbers of visitors and how people will have to get used to crowds again in a post Covid world. Good problem for businesses to have as we predict pre-pandemic numbers again for the future.

### 3. Top Tips for Working with the Travel Trade by Janet Redler Travel

- Inbound operator working with agents and the main business is from North America (90%) with groups from Canada, FIT from USA. Pre-Covid length of stay was around 11 – 13 nights and now they are booking for 17 – 19 nights.
- Also work with agents in Sweden who focus on special interest groups like gardens and opera.
- Multi-generational families with money to spend.
- Huge change in cliental in last 12 months/ business changes due to COVID.
- 2022 busiest year ever, which was a challenge because business was understaffed.
- Top Tips:
  - Keep in touch with your news eg. VisitWiltshire news is fed through and distributed to agents in regular newsletters
  - Provide discounted trade rates for groups and FIT rates – looking now for 2024 rates
  - Speedy responses within 48 hours – need to hear back from tourism businesses regarding availability and pricing so they can get back to agents promptly.
  - Looking for more twin rooms for the Swedish and/or interconnecting rooms for families required from accommodation providers
  - Easy booking process - dedicated point of contact - maintaining relationship
  - Product Development group experiences – visitors want different levels of experiences and clients willing to pay but want something special
- They are also finding agents are dropping numbers on pre-booked future bookings, which have knock on affect to tourism businesses but also their viability to run, due to cost implications.
- Changes post COVID include pent-up demand and willingness to spend. Keen to hear about England's heritage and the Royal Connections with the Coronation being a huge pull for 2023.
- Trying to encourage groups to not just do icons and London but stay local and visit less well known, for shopping etc.
- For further information please contact Janet Redler on [jredler@janetredlertravel.com](mailto:jredler@janetredlertravel.com)

### 4. VisitWiltshire and Great West Way Travel Trade Updates

Please take a look at the [Travel Trade Activity Update October 2022 – January 2023](#).

**ACTION: Please submit any new content including new product offer, specialist tours etc. for 2023 Time for Wiltshire Travel Guide.**

**ACTION: Please provide Marketplace 2022 feedback to assist with planning for Marketplace 2023. Plus get in touch if you can offer a venue or experiential product offer for this event in November.**

#### Forthcoming events

- **Showcase Britain – 26 January, London.** VisitBritain Destination event to network with over 120 buyers that have been brought to UK to showcase Britain. Plus Canadian fam visit visiting Wiltshire.
- **Britain and Ireland Marketplace – 27 Jan.** We are attending to represent Salisbury and Wiltshire as part of England's Heritage Cities and Wiltshire/Great West Way.
- **Excursions, Twickenham, Saturday 28 January 2023.** We are attending with Bowood House & Gardens as stand sharers

- **VisitBritain Nordics 15 & 16 February, Copenhagen.** Flo is attending this new market to engage with Swedish, Danish and Norwegian tour operators with a view to package and sell Wiltshire/Great West Way.
- **Explore GB, 27 Feb – 3 March,** online. Meetings with Official Tour Operator network and prospects to encourage additional distribution of Wiltshire/Great West Way product.

**ACTION: Please keep Flo updated with your news eg. New for 2023/2024, so this can be highlighted to buyers at these events.**

#### 5. Travel Trade Tactical Activity and Priorities for 2023/2024 Discussion:

Please take a look at our DRAFT [Travel Trade Tactical activity plan for 2023/2024](#).

**ACTION: We are requesting your input to our DRAFT travel trade tactical activity plan. What do want Wiltshire to focus on for 2023/2024? Please list your top 3 trade priorities for 2023/2024, from the list below:**

- Production and Distribution of Trade Collateral
- VisitWiltshire travel trade website development
- Trade engagement, marketing and distribution (via OTO network and prospects)
- Familiarisation visits
- Digital Trade Communications
- Travel Trade Training and Supplier Product Development
- International travel trade activity and partnerships
- Attendance at Events and Exhibitions

**ACTION: Please check and update your travel trade product pages for 2023/2024. Click on your product listing below and send any amends through to [katiebrown@visitwiltshire.co.uk](mailto:katiebrown@visitwiltshire.co.uk). Please make sure we have the correct trade contact and % discount rates relevant for 2023/2024.**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • <a href="#">Stonehenge Campsite &amp; Glamping Pods</a> | • <a href="#">Stonehenge</a>                                  |
| • <a href="#">Salisbury Cathedral &amp; Magna Carta</a>   | • <a href="#">Salisbury, Stonehenge &amp; Sarum Tours</a>     |
| • <a href="#">Longleat</a>                                | • <a href="#">Best Western Plus Angel Hotel</a>               |
| • <a href="#">The Old Bell Hotel</a>                      | • <a href="#">Mad Max Tours</a>                               |
| • <a href="#">Bowood House &amp; Gardens</a>              | • <a href="#">Studley Grange Garden &amp; Leisure Park</a>    |
| • <a href="#">Bradford on Avon</a>                        | • <a href="#">Legacy Rose &amp; Crown Hotel</a>               |
| • <a href="#">Marlborough College Summer School</a>       | • <a href="#">Cholderton Rare Breeds Farm</a>                 |
| • <a href="#">Corsham</a>                                 | • <a href="#">The Bridge Tea Rooms</a>                        |
| • <a href="#">REME Museum</a>                             | • <a href="#">Holiday Inn Salisbury-Stonehenge</a>            |
| • <a href="#">Bluestone Vineyard</a>                      | • <a href="#">STEAM – Museum of the Great Western Railway</a> |
| • <a href="#">Marlborough</a>                             |   |
| • <a href="#">Iford Manor Gardens</a>                     |   |

**If you do not have a travel trade product page but would like one please contact Flo.**

**ACTION: Please can Travel Trade group members contact Flo before the end of March, to schedule meetings to utilize your trade support for 2022/2023.**

**ACTION: Please advise Flo if you are interested in attending any 2023 events such as World Travel Market, Vakantiebeurs, Netherlands, ITB Berlin etc. or any domestic events that could be booked for Wiltshire/Great West Way.**

## 6. Travel Trade Package and Proposal 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Please take a look at the [Travel Trade Group Benefits document](#) with Investor, Sponsor and Partner packages detailed for 2023/2024. Three new additions - introductory emails to Official Tour Operators (for Investors and Sponsors), all can now submit video imagery and content for Time for Wiltshire groups guide and all can now be included in sales related social posts throughout the year.

**ACTION: Please contact Flo or Fiona if you have any queries/comments or ideas as to how else VisitWiltshire can add value to these packages.**

**ACTION: Travel Trade Group members will be invoiced by the end of February for 2023/2024, based on your current level of investment. Please contact Flo/Fiona before 10 February if you wish to change your level of investment. If we do not hear from you before 10 Feb we will assume you want to continue to be part of the Wiltshire Travel Trade Group and programme of activity for 2023/2024, and you will therefore be invoiced accordingly.**

## 7. Any Other Business

**ACTION: Question for all travel trade group members - are you still wanting virtual travel trade meetings or should we look to run one in-person one a year?**

## 8. Date of Next Meeting

**Tuesday 16 May 2023, 2pm**

Please register to attend this meeting [here](#). We will be in touch nearer the time with activity update and agenda.

**ACTION: If you have any ideas for speakers or would like to add something to the agenda, please advise Flo.**