



Groups & Travel Trade Meeting

Thursday 6 March 2025, 2pm

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Florence Wallace, Fiona Errington – VisitWiltshire; David Lane - Holiday Inn Salisbury Stonehenge / The Stones Hotel (Chair); Robbie Kennedy -Legacy Rose & Crown / The Angel Hotel; Lisa Kent -Bowood House & Gardens; Keith Harris, Helen Bath – The Old Bell Hotel Malmesbury; Elaine Falconer - Milford Hall Hotel; Charlotte King - McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Swindon; Anna-Karin Hanson - English Heritage; James Sullivan-Tailyour – Old Bell Hotel Warminster; Nathaniel McConnell – Bluestone Vineyard; Amiee Thomas – Longleat.

1. Welcome, introductions and How's business? eg. top line trade visitor figures, forward bookings etc.

Updates from attendees, revealed similar reports for attractions and accommodation providers for Q1 with a flat Jan and weak Feb business. Forward bookings looking good with some attractions up on targets for 2025 and accommodation providers hopeful for a good 2025 season.

2. Top 2025 Trade Priorities for Wiltshire Partners

The conversation shifted towards strategic planning for 2025, with Flo Wallace facilitating discussions on individual priorities among group members. Lisa Kent outlined her marketing strategy aimed at increasing group bookings by targeting wholesale and high-end tour operators, while Anna-Karin emphasized the need to attract international visitors, particularly from China and the US. The importance of understanding both domestic and international markets was highlighted and David pointed out opportunities to target cruise ship operators. Anna-Karin confirmed she will reach out to her colleague Laura, who is a cruise expert, to facilitate a discussion about cruise business opportunities for a future meeting.

Collaboration emerged as a key theme, with Flo advocating for partnerships between accommodation providers and local attractions with coordinated promotional activities and enhanced partnership marketing to generate future bookings.

Nat from Bluestone Vineyard shared insights about their offerings and the importance of engaging with the travel trade demographic. The conversation also touched on the complexities of the travel trade landscape and the need for effective communication strategies. Nat proposed that the group collaborate to showcase the Great West Way and Wiltshire to influencers, suggesting coordinated visits and activities.

Fiona confirmed that they have previously engaged in similar initiatives and highlighted the role of Visit Britain and Visit England in facilitating these efforts. Fiona highlighted the 2025 FAM Passport initiative, for tourism businesses to submit an offer so other tourism businesses / staff can familiarise themselves with attractions in the county. These Fam

passports are available for the trade to use as well as content creators such as media, influencers/blogger visits.

David pointed out that promotional costs should be viewed as marketing investments, encouraging participation from all members.

Flo Wallace stressed the significance of tailored messaging and database segmentation to enhance communication and booking outcomes. Amiee Thomas shared her focus on promoting local events and connecting with youth groups, while also exploring partnerships.

Keith Harris, who recently joined Wim Hospitality, shared insights on the Old Bell's approach to enhancing its travel trade offers and measuring their success. He highlighted the importance of building relationships with VisitWiltshire to promote economic interest in the region. Helen Bath, the General Manager, expressed a desire to improve marketing and networking efforts to better engage with partners and attract visitors to Malmesbury.

The group also focused on maintaining effective communication strategies and updating trade collateral, with plans for joint exhibitions and events to boost visibility. Overall, the discussions highlighted the necessity of strategic partnerships and targeted marketing to target the trade and increase tourism in Wiltshire.

3. VisitWiltshire and Great West Way Travel Trade update

The [Travel Trade Activity Update for Dec 2024 – Feb 2025](#) and [Wiltshire Travel Trade Tactical Activity Plan for 2025/2026](#) was circulated prior to the meeting.

Flo Wallace discussed the tactical activity plan, highlighting the need for updated trade collateral and effective communication strategies. She urged participants to contribute to newsletters and share information about events/exhibitions they are attending. Additionally, she mentioned upcoming exhibitions and opportunities for collaboration, including the distribution of promotional materials.

The VisitWiltshire tactical activity plan & priorities for 2025/2026 included the following:

- Product and distribution of collateral
- Digital trade communication
- Events & Exhibitions
- Trade Engagement, marketing & distribution
- Website development / trade product pages
- PR, Editorial & Advertising
- Familiarisation Visits
- Industry memberships / partnerships

Flo Wallace highlighted the [2025 Travel Trade Opportunities](#) & 1:1 support available to business/destinations.

Forthcoming opportunities include:

- BTTS (19 & 20 March) Literature Distribution - £170 + VAT
- Group Leisure & Travel Show (2 October) – stand share from £935 + VAT or literature distribution from £155 + VAT.
- Great West Way Marketplace in October (details tbc).

ACTION: Please get in touch with Flo to book or discuss any Travel Trade Opportunities, request a meeting or to discuss any 1:1 support.

4. Any Other Business

Fiona updated the trade group about the Great West Way Media Discovery event 23 & 24 March.

Platform has now launched and Wiltshire will be highlighted to press. There are also a few trade press attending, however, it is predominantly consumer focussed.

ACTION: If anyone does want to have any sort of PR presence at the Great West Way Media Discovery event, such as distribution of your press releases, please let Fiona know.

5. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 19 June, 2pm

This meeting will include speaker Laura Gibbs, Travel Trade Manager from English Heritage presenting about Cruise business. Plus updates and opportunities from the Wiltshire travel trade team. An activity update and agenda will be issued in due course.

Register to attend this meeting [HERE](#).