



Groups & Travel Trade Meeting Notes

Thursday 20 June 2024, 2pm

Attendees:

Florence Wallace, Fiona Errington – VisitWiltshire; David Lane – BGAM – Holiday Inn Salisbury-Stonehenge (Chair); Anna Walton – Longleat; Elaine Falconer - Milford Hall Hotel; Julia Stuart – Studley Grange; Hannah Paye & Millie Elgar – Salisbury Cathedral; Anna-Karin Hanson – English Heritage; Claire Brown – Wessex Museums; Charlotte Philips – Corsham; Jo Atkins – National Trust; Amiee Edwards – Cholderton & Bluestone Vineyards; James Sullivan-Tailyour - The Old Bell Hotel, Warminster; Preet Kalsi – The Stones Hotel; Charlotte Toop – Stourhead.

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.

A number of large attractions shared insights on business performance with increased trade bookings but lower numbers in each group – could be due to price increases. However, they've seen more luxury/high end specialist tour business. Another large attraction highlighted increased travel trade groups but a decline in the OTA sector. Both agreed there were still shorter lead times on bookings for groups.

3. Stourhead Case Study & Discussion

Technical problems caused issues with Charlotte accessing the virtual call, however Flo talked through the partnership with Stourhead and the development of their travel trade offer – introducing new house and garden tours plus catering packages.

A discussion took place about advance payments and the importance of securing revenue through deposits or full payment in advance. It became clear that the large national organisations such as English Heritage and National Trust both have challenges with booking systems which they are trying to overcome at a local level.

Anna-Karin shared English Heritage's approach, mentioning the intention to implement a new ticketing system to streamline payments. Charlotte expressed interest in using a ticketing system for coach party bookings at Stourhead to improve the arrival process for groups.

Aimee Edwards from Cholderton explained their policy of requiring advance payments for group visits, while David Lane from BGAM, emphasizes the necessity of upfront payment to mitigate revenue loss in the hospitality industry.

Anna Walton discussed the shift towards receiving payments in advance, highlighting that about 70% of payments at Longleat are made via BACs.

Salisbury Cathedral (who changed to chargeable bookings for groups in 2021) highlighted their Terms and Conditions were essential for buyers and details that full payment is required 48 hours in advance of visiting or walk-up rates are charged on the day.

In summary, having T's & C's and obtaining revenue from group organisers/operators prior to visiting was preferable and paying by BACS was a preferred method, rather than credit card payments. Paying on the day or via invoice following the visit was not as efficient for businesses.

4. VisitWiltshire and Great West Way trade update

Please take a look at [Travel Trade Activity Update 1 Feb – 13 June 2024](#).

ACTION: If you want a solus newsletter about your business distributed to our database of 2,000+ GTO and tour/coach operator contacts, please get in touch. For businesses investing at Sponsor level these will be free of charge and for those investing at Partner level a fee of £280 + VAT will be charged.

5. Travel Trade Tactical Activity Plan & Opportunities

a. Exhibitions & Events & Opportunities

[British Educational Travel Association \(BETA\) Youth & Student Travel Summit, Bristol, 8 October](#). The event consists of one-to-one meetings with hosted educational and youth group buyers, panel discussions and networking opportunities. VisitWiltshire is offering a representation opportunity for attractions and accommodation providers who are interested in attracting this market for a cost of **£250+VAT**.

[Group Leisure & Travel Show, Milton Keynes 3 October](#). We now have 9 stand sharers with many Wiltshire based businesses including Studley Grange Garden & Leisure Park, Stourhead, Longleat, Woolley Grange Hotel, English Heritage and Old Bell, Warminster. We have one space left for stand sharing for only **£890 + VAT** (excluding graphics) or book literature distribution for only **£150 + VAT**.

Great West Way Marketplace – SAVE THE DATES. Tuesday 22 October – virtual one-to-one meeting day. **Thursday 24 October** – in-person networking event at Blenheim Palace. Further details will be released in due course.

[Britain & Ireland Marketplace, Friday 24 January 2025, London](#). This event is organised by ETOA in partnership with UKinbound and VisitBritain. VisitWiltshire are offering trade group partners a representation opportunity at this buyer: supplier meeting event. **Costs from £285+VAT**

[Excursions Show, Wembley Stadium, 1 February 2025](#). Stand share opportunity **£870+VAT** (excluding graphics). Minimum of 4 stand sharers required. Please register your interest before end of July.

[British Tourism & Travel Show, NEC Birmingham, 19 & 20 March 2025](#). Stand share opportunity **£925+VAT** (excluding graphics). Minimum of 4 stand sharers required. The fee will include 1m space on Wiltshire/Great West Way stand for the two days.

There was a discussion about BTTS and Excursions and the different audiences etc. Anna from Longleat has attended this year and is keen to return next year. It's possible that in 2025, it may be a good time for a change and attend BTTS in Birmingham instead of Excursions. However, this will depend on demand from businesses.

North American Sales Mission - Great West Way are investigating an opportunity to attend a North American Sales Mission in Autumn 2024 or Jan 2025. This sales mission would run over 4 days taking place in New York and Toronto. It will include scheduled office-based meetings with existing and new tour operator/agent key contacts as well as networking receptions in both cities. Great West Way would offer representation for this.

ACTION: Contact [Flo](#) to register your interest to attend or be represented at any of these events.

b. Other Opportunities

Great West Way has a new opportunity targeting the Dutch market. Working in collaboration with one of our Official Tour Operators - House of Britain, Great West Way Ambassadors have the opportunity to be featured in the [Great Britain magazine](#). Promote your business to the Netherlands market by inclusion in a 6-page Great West Way feature in Great Britain Magazine – **October 2024**. This subscription travel magazine publication is distributed to 17,500 Dutch consumers age 50+ and will also be sold in retail outlets. It is the only printed

publication in the Netherlands promoting Great Britain. House of Britain will include their Great West Way itineraries as a call to action to enable customers to book and be contracted. There is the opportunity to secure editorial inclusion for your business or destination, at a cost of between **£195-£300**.

ACTION: Contact [Fiona](#) before 31 July if you are interested in being included in the Dutch opportunity.

Great West Way are continuing to update the [Travel Trade Directory](#) with accommodation listings and attraction listings plus new itineraries and editorial inclusion for Great West Way Ambassadors. There is still space for advertising too.

ACTION: If you've got trade news and development of your trade product offer for 2025 or if you'd like to book an advert, we want to hear from you. Contact [Flo](#) before 5 July.

c. Wiltshire self-drive Familiarisation Visits

We have reviewed how we can deliver Wiltshire familiarisation visits for 2024/2025 and are planning to offer a new bespoke self-drive itinerary development service for eligible trade businesses & GTOs.

We will encourage the trade to look at the [It's Time for Wiltshire Travel Trade Guide](#) and our [Wiltshire Travel Trade Partners](#) to see Travel Trade information listings. Then view the [Wiltshire Familiarisation Passport Offers](#) before completing the [Wiltshire fam visit enquiry form](#).

We are making it clear that complementary entry is at the discretion of the attraction and usually provided for 2 adults only. Visits will be scheduled for standard opening dates and times. We'll encourage meet & greet/show rounds for accommodation providers and towns.

VisitWiltshire will receive the completed forms and liaise with buyers, pulling together itineraries and/or putting them in touch with suppliers directly. We may give buyers access to the [VisitWiltshire Familiarisation Passport](#) (password protected) so please make sure your front of house teams are familiar with this.

ACTION: Please can all trade group partners check you are happy with the terms and conditions on the offer document and check your trade product pages are up to date. If you have any queries or amends please advise [Flo](#) by the end of June.

Any Other Business

Amiee from Cholderton asked about recommendations for travel trade print advertising and which are the best magazines to be featured in. Flo and others agreed that [Group Leisure & Travel Magazine](#) was one of the leading publications with the widest audience. There's also [Group Travel World](#), [Coach Touring](#), [Coach Tours UK](#) and [Group Travel Today](#) (some of which only have virtual publications/content).

If the Wiltshire travel trade group businesses and destinations want to have a presence in these titles and would consider being part of a Wiltshire advertorial. VisitWiltshire could negotiate a double page spread rate and we could share the costs.

ACTION: Please let [Flo](#) know what you would like by way of content / images etc and what budget you have to work with for this?

6. Date of next meeting - tbc