



Great West Way Connections Meeting Notes

Virtual Meeting Tuesday 21 September 2021, 2pm

Attendees:

Florence Wallace - Great West Way; Fiona Errington - Great West Way; David Andrews, Director- Great West Way; Iain Terry (Chairman) - Windsor Castle; Osnat Borreda-VisitBritain; Robin Tjolle- VisitBritain; Belinda Richardson- Marlborough; Sarah-Jayne Beasley – English Heritage; Mercedes Picard - English Heritage; Karen Roebuck - Visit Thames / TSE; Sharon Thomas – Corsham; Jon Chamberlain - Visit West; Alison Hilton - Museum of English Rural Life; Eloise Gordon- Whatley Manor Hotel & Spa; Anne Bartlett - Tour & Explore; David Lane - Holiday Inn Salisbury Stonehenge; Daniel Graham - Holiday Inn Salisbury Stonehenge; Marianne Edwards- Iford Manor Gardens; Victoria Annett - Bath Bus Company; Paul Chibeba- Brunel's SS Great Britain; Jacqui Mills - Bristol Airport; Carla Brooks - Brooks Guest House

1. Welcome and introductions

2. Business Updates

- a. **How's Business? Eg: Top line trade visitor figures, forward trade bookings, COVID impacts etc.**

The large-scale attractions are reporting they have received strong domestic trade business by way of day visits and those on route to South West on holiday. For most, the international trade groups have yet to return but there are some promising signs as operators are reporting that demand is there.

Similarly, accommodation providers are reporting the lack of international trade and strong domestic levels of business but the overriding worry is of staffing concerns.

Most businesses continue to run with advisory restrictions in place, except the airport where mask wearing is compulsory and passengers are off loaded if they don't comply. Building confidence, managing expectations and pushing outdoor activities is a key focus for many.

- b. **Update on how Ambassadors are including/referencing Great West Way in their travel trade activity.**

Linking ideas and pushing the Great West Way geographic region helps the trade connect the area in order to develop itineraries etc.

Visit West are about to launch a new travel trade website where Great West Way has been featured, including inspirational pages, bookable itineraries plus links to our maps, discoverer pass,

bookable itineraries etc. On the Bath and Bristol websites they link out to the Great West Way website.

Whatley Manor have recently supported a press fam visit. They have included a Great West Way link on their website and keen for front of house training to ensure staff are able to communicate the route to visitors.

On the 15th November, Royal Collection Trust will be launching Platinum Jubilee displays at both Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace, which will open in July 2022. There will also be significant social media activity in February to mark The Queen's Accession, and again in June when the official National celebrations take place over the Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend.

Flo added a few key ways in which Ambassadors can include/reference Great West Way in their travel trade activity. This included positioning your product/destination as part of the route in trade newsletters; adding a link to www.GreatWestWay.co.uk/traveltrade on your trade pages of your website; joining up with neighbouring destinations/products on the route when developing new trade itineraries. In addition, when meeting with buyers, especially for overseas markets, position your product as part of the England's Great West Way, joining up geographic boundaries will make it a better proposition for your business.

3. Great West Way Travel Trade Update

The [Travel Trade Activity Update](#) was issued prior to the meeting and this details what the Great West Way team have been up to. Highlights include, the publication of Beau Business Media's Group Travel Today – A Groups Guide supplement - which can be seen [here](#). This was distributed to the trade at the recent British Travel and Tourism Show (BTTS).

The 2021 Travel Trade Directory is now finalised and distributed as a digital edition and can be seen [here](#).

There has been an ongoing series of travel trade engagement, most recently at the UKinbound Convention last week. We've also been undertaking virtual product sales training for a number of DMC's the most recent being Jac Travel in August. Flo urged everyone interested to respond to any email call outs for these so you can be included in future presentations.

Working with our Official Tour Operator partners we have also launched our new [Book a Package Trip](#) page on our website to the domestic consumer audience. We've also recently delivered a Great West Way presentation to VisitBritain team including overseas trade reps.

4. Great West Way Tactical Activity Plan /Forthcoming Opportunities

Flo highlighted the [Tactical activity plan](#) which details activity in timeline format up to the end of March. There are opportunities to get more involved particularly with stand sharing at exhibitions.

Having a presence at these shows will help you target international markets in a cost effective joined up way.

ACTION: Please let Flo know if you are interested in stand sharing World Travel Market (WTM) (London), Vakantiebeurs (Netherlands) or ITB (Germany)?

We have booked to attend Global European Marketplace (GEM), ETOA event in person on 29 October and the virtual event Relaunch '22 on 30 November. We are planning on booking Britain & Ireland Marketplace (ETOA) in January too.

Great West Way has been allocated a large stand at Excursions where there are still opportunities to have a presence and get involved (further info below).

5. Excursions Update

Karen updated everyone that we have booked a 20 square metre stand for Great West Way. This will be split between the destinations - Reading, Thames, Wiltshire and Great West Way. We are still looking for partners to stand share for only £500.

ACTION: Please let Flo know if you wish to attend as a stand sharer with Great West Way.

Karen highlighted that there has been a good take up for the show so far with repeat stand booking business returning and good new business too. There will be a bigger South West presence.

Results from a TSE survey issued to their group travel database in July shows that 56% are planning to attend Excursions with 37% still deciding; 60% are planning more than 3 trips next year with 45% planning 3 or more trips; 60% are looking to book trips over 2 hours away and 63% are looking for two nights or longer. There is a high percentage for four nights or more and 73% couldn't wait to get back out to face-to-face meetings by the winter.

6. Summary of the forthcoming Travel Trade Training Programme

We've circulated a draft Travel Trade Training programme which features 8 different modules, starting from mid-October. It includes VisitEngland's Taking England To The World, speakers from UKinbound, ETOA and other tourism experts. The programme has been developed based on feedback we've had from Ambassadors about what they think would be useful.

We welcome further input and thoughts from the Ambassador network, particularly, if you feel we have missed anything. We also need your help to distribute and recruit businesses/destination staff to attend once launched.

It is worth noting that you don't have to sign up to all modules but pick and choose the ones you want to attend.

Feedback from Visit West included ensuring there is an introduction/ foundation level for people who haven't worked with trade before; a suggestion to revisit the ordering of sessions, moving the UKinbound session lower down; and with the accommodation rebuilding businesses session, Jon highlighted that we could reconsider our language such as 'rebuilding', due to many having had an excellent summer. He wondered whether we'd missed out a session on working with OTAs.

In response David Andrews clarified that we have included a 'Basic Understanding' module but can rename to include word Foundation level and OTA's are included in the domestic elements.

David Lane – suggested switching session 1 and 2 around and re-visiting the order with the basic understanding session first.

Flo explained possible diary issues for speakers and that we were keen to schedule early on from experienced suppliers who work with the trade within our current ambassador network. However, we take on board the points about language which we'll revisit.

It is worth noting that the summary that was issued prior to the meeting is a scaled down version of what's included. The Eventbrite links will have more detail about what will be in each session and these will go live in due course.

Alison from MERL supported the new really interesting programme but asked if it could clarify and make it clearer who this is aimed at and how businesses can benefit as there are clearly different businesses with different levels of expertise. David Andrews clarified it is absolutely for SME businesses and we will make the benefits clear.

Iain from Windsor Castle stated he was delighted with this programme and he had never seen anyone do such a comprehensive span of different sessions so at a glance you can see which ones will be most useful.

In response to Alison's point about trying to appeal to different people's level of experience, he went on to say that he felt strongly that we can't work collectively without other organisations and we should all be aware of the Great West Way circle of life which makes the whole proposition more attractive to the trade. Therefore, there is a keenness to train and help others to work with the trade. Sharing the wealth and levelling out of experience and information for the common good. Iain went on to say this excellent series of training modules would be useful to many within his organisation (even at Director level), and he would be recommending for others to attend.

Alison commented that she felt it was of great value of being part of this network.

ACTION: If you have any input/thoughts or comments regarding the new Travel Trade Training Programme please contact Flo asap.

7. Taking England To The World overview

Osnat presented in some detail what will be included in the Taking England to the World Sessions. The presentation can be seen [here](#).

8. Any Other Business

Carla Brooks made a comment about targeting TV production team at BBC Bristol. David highlighted some of the press coverage we have recently had and will pick up with VisitBritain / Visit West to see how we can proceed.

David highlighted some points from the chat where SS Great Britain asked about rail itineraries as trade opportunities. David explained we are currently in discussion with GWR about extending the existing Great West Way GWR Discoverer pass in to the Discoverer Plus pass incorporating attractions into the offer.

Jon – mentioned that the Travel Trade Foundation session needs to be as much as about 'why' as 'how'. This was noted - thanks.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 25 January 2022.