



ENGLAND'S GREAT WEST WAY®

Great West Way Connections

Virtual Meeting Wednesday 27 March 2024, 3pm

Meeting Notes

[View the Virtual Connections Meeting Recording](#)

ATTENDEES:

Florence Wallace	Great West Way
David Andrews	Great West Way
Jessica Lithen	VisitBritain
Nicola Smith	Guest House Hotels
Isobel Thomas	Hampton by Hilton Bath City
Kim Downing	Village Hotel Swindon
Julia White	Visit Windsor
Christie Lung	Royal Collection Trust
Charlotte Phillips	Corsham
Aimee Edwards	Cholderton Rare Breeds Farm
Edward Keir	Ascot Racecourse
Jo Atkins	National Trust
Charlotte Toop	Stourhead National Trust
Carla Brooks	Brooks Guesthouse
Trish Fairbeard	YMCA Brunel Group
Rob Boreham-Fish	University of Reading – Venue Henely – Greenlands Hotel
Sarah Moon	In & Beyond Bath
William Davy	In & Beyond Bath
Lucy Grier	Brunel's SS Great Britain
Elaine Falconer	Milford Hall Hotel

1. Welcome / Introduction /How's Business

How's business highlighted a very mixed picture with it still being early in the season but many businesses are aiming for trade numbers to be in line with last year.

One key destination along the route highlighted their local business face operational challenges such as weather/flooding but trade business is still a key focus.

One accommodation provider stated that there is continued demand from the US market.

A large attraction group stated that they continued to be challenged without a national booking system for trade, but are having a renewed focus on trade activity. They are focusing on getting the right product offer for the trade in place and ensuring they can deliver this onsite and are marketing this more effectively to get an increased level of interest.

One tour guiding and transport company highlighted a quiet first quarter (which is normal) but a good level of business on the books for 2024. They've been pro-actively working with the Great West Way team and are positive for the rest of the year.

Great West Way have seen a surge in international operators putting programmes together over last 6 – 9 months.

2. Great West Way Travel Trade Update

Please see [Great West Way Activity Update October 2023 – March 2024](#).

There are now 111 Official Tour Operators from UK, Ireland and around the globe. Recruitment is on-going with lots of interest in programme development.

Priorities 2024/2025

Our priority and focus for 2024 continues to be trade engagement and the help and support we offer for programme development. We have a continued focus on international markets such as the Scandinavian/Nordics and there's still interest from North American buyers.

The [Travel Trade Directory](#) will shortly be reviewed, and content is required:

ACTION: Please check your listings in the Travel Trade Directory and make sure that the information about your business is accurate. Please keep us up-to-date with any new trade news, specialist tours, anniversaries etc.

ACTION: There has been a lot of interest in the Jane Austen 250th anniversary for 2025. Do you have any related contact to add? We'll be adding a new suggested itinerary on this so are looking for any events, exhibitions, tours etc. that have literature / Jane Austen links.

Other ideas include a new suggested itinerary is to include 'Explore Beyond the Great West Way – Oxford and surrounding area. Buyers are keen for reasons to visit our region, so we're trying to join up the geography up with themes, creating a logical journey for buyers to package and sell.

ACTION: Please advise if you have any ideas to help with this.

Other priorities can be seen in the [Great West Way Travel Trade Tactical Activity Plan 2024/2025](#).

Forthcoming Opportunities

Please take a look at our [Great West Way Travel Trade Opportunities](#). Imminent opportunities that require booking now include:

VisitBritain's Australian Roadshow, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, 8-13 September 2024. Great West Way are offering Ambassadors a representation opportunity from £995 - £2,500+ VAT (depending on level of interest and type of business). This Australia Mission, attended by Great West Way, will include 4 workshop days targeting product managers and buyers such as local tour operators, retail travel agencies and OTAs. Evening events offer the chance for ensuring high performing front line retail agents are familiar with your tourism product, service or destination. **Deadline for booking 24 April 2024.**

Group Leisure and Travel Show, Milton Keynes, Thursday 3 October 2024. Domestic trade show with stand share opportunity. **Cost £890 + VAT** (excluding graphics). Confirmed stand sharers/ those shown interest include English Heritage, Longleat, Woolley Grange Hotel, Old Bell Hotel Warminster. Please can you register your interest for this exhibition by **30 April 2024**, so we can secure the stand.

ACTION: Please contact [Flo](#) if you'd like to discuss or book any of these events/exhibitions.

3. Focus on the Scandinavian/Nordics market:

VisitBritain Nordics update - Market Insights and Future Potential

Jessica provides an overview of the recovery progress in Scandinavian markets, emphasizing the potential for the UK visitor economy and the resurgence of city breaks. She also discusses consumer insights, including pent-up travel demand and the impact of potential interest rate cuts on spending power. Additionally, she highlights the growing interest in English sparkling and vineyard visits among trade operators.

Please see the [VisitBritain Nordic Update Presentation 2024](#).

Discussion on Scandinavian Market Opportunities

David Andrews facilitated a discussion on the Scandinavian market, encouraging questions about business prospects and cultural interests. Jessica shared insights on travel patterns, highlighting the preference for local experiences among Scandinavian travellers and the popularity of incentive business from Norway.

Scandinavia Mission Update - Discussion on Recent Travel Trade Event and Sales Calls

Jessica and Flo shared their experiences from the recent travel trade event and sales calls, highlighting the interest and enthusiasm shown by tour operators in Scandinavia for the Great West Way region. They discussed the potential for new programs and the unique selling points that resonated with the operators, such as waterways, vineyards, and historical themes.

4. New Connections Group Chairperson Position Available

There is a vacancy for a new chairperson for the Great West Way Connections travel trade group. David Andrews talked through the responsibilities involved.

ACTION: If you would like to find out more and/or be considered for the Great West Way Connections Chairperson, please contact [David](#).

5. Any Other Business / Date of next meeting

AOB - None

Date of Next Meeting - Flo Wallace proposed a tentative timeframe for the next meeting in the autumn, taking into account the participants' availability and the upcoming marketplace event in November. A date will be released in due course.