

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Enterprise and Business Committee

## Tourism

November 2014



Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales

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Enterprise and Business Committee

**Tourism**

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Wales

## Enterprise and Business Committee

The Committee was established on 22 June 2011 with a remit to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising its expenditure, administration and policy, encompassing economic development; transport and infrastructure; employment; higher education and skills; and research and development, including technology and science.

### Current Committee membership



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Welsh Conservatives  
South Wales East



**Mick Antoniw**  
Welsh Labour  
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Welsh Liberal Democrats  
South Wales Central



**Gwenda Thomas**  
Welsh Labour  
Neath



**Joyce Watson**  
Welsh Labour  
Mid and West Wales

The following Members were also members of the Committee during this inquiry:



**Julie James**  
Welsh Labour  
Swansea West



**David Rees**  
Welsh Labour  
Aberavon

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## Recommendations

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**Recommendation 1.** The Welsh Government should build upon the work of the Ashton Brand Consulting Group to develop a strong, cohesive Wales tourism brand. (Page 19)

**Recommendation 2.** The Welsh Government should improve co-ordination between departments that contribute to Wales's tourism appeal – such as culture and heritage – to strengthen the Wales tourism brand and offer. (Page 19)

**Recommendation 3.** The Welsh Government needs to communicate clearly to businesses the key Wales tourism brand messages that it is pursuing following the Ashton Brand Consulting Group branding review. This should include improving the *Wales the Brand* website. We also recommend that tourism businesses in Wales be directly involved in the work the Welsh Government is undertaking to develop its “in-depth delivery strategy for Wales's tourism marketing”. (Page 19)

**Recommendation 4.** Visit Wales should involve tourism businesses more closely with its advertising campaigns, so they understand better what Visit Wales is trying to achieve, and can co-ordinate their own work accordingly. (Page 20)

**Recommendation 5.** The Welsh Government should do more to sell what is unique about Wales as a tourism destination, including its scenery, history, industrial heritage and language. (Page 22)

**Recommendation 6.** The Welsh Government should do more to encourage joint promotion of heritage assets, including those outside of its care, building upon existing examples of good practice. (Page 24)

**Recommendation 7.** The Welsh Government should do more to maximise the tourism impact of major events and ensure that Wales's success in hosting major events feeds through into a strong Wales tourism brand. (Page 27)

**Recommendation 8.** The Welsh Government should explain how it is continuing the work carried out by the Welsh Music Foundation, in terms of promoting Wales and Welsh culture internationally (e.g. WOMEX 2013), following its disbandment. (Page 28)

**Recommendation 9.** The Welsh Government should publish an economic impact assessment of the immediate benefits of Wales's hosting of the NATO summit, including its impact on the tourism industry. The Government should in due course also publish a longer term evaluation of the impact of hosting the summit, and confirm the timescale for doing so. (Page 29)

**Recommendation 10.** The Welsh Government should publish an assessment of the success of the Dylan Thomas centenary events, and ensure that this experience influences its work on similar events in the future, such as Roald Dahl's centenary in 2016. (Page 30)

**Recommendation 11.** The Welsh Government should keep under review its growth target in view of the good performance of the sector. If growth continues to exceed that needed to meet the target, a new and more challenging target for the sector should be set. (Page 34)

**Recommendation 12.** The Welsh Government should identify tourism sectors with major growth potential and develop specific strategies and growth targets for these sectors. (Page 36)

**Recommendation 13.** The Welsh Government should simplify the process for organisations to get a brown and white sign, in light of concerns about bureaucracy and cost. (Page 37)

**Recommendation 14.** The Welsh Government should recognise the importance of broadband to tourism businesses whilst it is prioritising broadband roll-out under its Superfast Cymru and Access Broadband Cymru schemes. (Page 38)

**Recommendation 15.** The Welsh Government should work with Ofcom to increase broadband and mobile phone coverage in order to improve Wales's tourism offer. (Page 38)

**Recommendation 16.** The Welsh Government must do more to engage the tourism industry with the work of Visit Wales. This should include establishing whether Visit Wales publishes sufficient information about its activity (including that of the Major Events Unit) to enable the industry to assess and engage in its work. (Page 40)

**Recommendation 17.** The Welsh Government should work with the tourism industry in Wales to improve the online presence of Visit Wales. This should include a more user friendly, dynamic and interactive website. Consideration should also be given to developing apps that could help tourists get the most from their visit to Wales. (Page 41)

**Recommendation 18.** The Welsh Government should work more closely with the tourism industry in Wales to communicate the changes made to the regional tourism support structure, and to ensure that new structure is a success. (Page 43)

**Recommendation 19.** The Welsh Government should take steps to improve the level of knowledge that VisitBritain staff have of Wales and the Welsh tourism offer. (Page 44)

**Recommendation 20.** The Welsh Government must do more to increase and improve VisitBritain's promotion of Wales. (Page 48)

**Recommendation 21.** The Welsh Government should work with VisitBritain to establish challenging growth targets for VisitBritain to increase tourism in Wales. (Page 48)

**Recommendation 22.** The Welsh Government should work with the industry to improve Visit Wales's provision of timely, impartial research into tourism activity and trends in Wales. (Page 50)

**Recommendation 23.** The Welsh Government should develop a strategy explaining how Visit Wales will work with the Department for Education and Skills to improve the provision of training for the tourism industry, including delivery dates and intended outcomes. (Page 51)

**Recommendation 24.** The Welsh Government should maintain a capital funding scheme (such as the Tourism Investment Support Scheme) for tourism businesses to improve their facilities. (Page 52)

**Recommendation 25.** The Welsh Government should re-evaluate whether participation in the Visit Wales grading scheme needs to remain a prerequisite for TISS funding, considering the contemporary, social media-driven way in which tourism accommodation is now marketed. (Page 52)

**Recommendation 26.** The Welsh Government should improve the transparency of funding information by publishing a breakdown of the £20 million “total funding” for Wales’s tourism industry and comparative figures to enable stakeholders to make an objective assessment of how funding for Wales’s tourism industry compares with other parts of the UK. (Page 54)

**Recommendation 27.** The Welsh Government should recognise the substantial return on investment for tourism funding and the budgets of other competing nations. In light of this, it should review whether its tourism budget is sufficient to enable Wales to fulfil its tourism potential. (Page 55)

**Recommendation 28.** Given the value of tourism to Wales’ economy and the rich range of natural, cultural and other assets in Wales, we believe the Welsh Government, working closely with key stakeholders across Wales, should ensure that tailored support is available to maximise EU funding opportunities to help grow the industry in Wales. (Page 56)

## Foreword

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1. Tourism is worth £6.9 billion a year to Wales, or 13.2% of GVA. As a sector, it supports an estimated 206,000 jobs and is one of our three biggest employers. We heard that goods and services consumed by tourists are proportionately more important to the Welsh economy than to any other part of the UK.<sup>1</sup> Tourism is also one of our biggest export industries, with 80% of visitor spending coming from outside Wales.<sup>2</sup> Since 2005 it has been the fastest-growing sector of our economy.<sup>3</sup>

2. In 2013, the Welsh Government set itself a target of 10% real terms growth in tourism earnings by 2020. Substantial progress is already being made towards this goal, with figures for the first half of 2014 showing an increase in both visits and spending by tourists. This is all the more impressive given that Britain as a whole has seen a slight decrease in both visits and spending over the same period.

3. We welcome this growth and expect to see the Welsh Government meet its target well in advance of 2020. However, given the rate of expansion in the sector, we hope to help the Welsh Government do even more to maximise our potential. In the course of the inquiry we heard lots of success stories, and saw at first hand some of the unique attractions that already make Wales a world-class tourist destination. Yet we also heard some specific and compelling arguments for strengthening the support that the Welsh Government makes available to the industry.

4. One fundamental issue that was raised with us was the scale of Welsh Government investment in tourism. We heard that the marketing spend on tourism in Wales was roughly equivalent to that of Glasgow, and several stakeholders felt that more money was needed to promote our tourism offer. Studies show that the return on investment in tourism marketing is often significant, a point that the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism himself made in evidence to us. We therefore ask whether the level of spend on marketing should be reassessed. At the same time, we welcome the capital investment that is available through the Tourism Investment Support Scheme, and urge the Government to maintain this.

5. Another key factor to emerge in the inquiry was branding. Time and again we heard that Wales needed a more visible and coherent brand that

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<sup>1</sup> Written evidence TOU 24, Prof. Annette Pritchard

<sup>2</sup> [Partnership for Growth](#), p.7

<sup>3</sup> [Tourism Sector End of Year Report 2013](#), p.1

tourism businesses of all sizes could tap into—particularly through the Visit Wales website, which should be the hub of our marketing activity. The industry was aware that the Welsh Government had commissioned Ashton Brand Consulting Group to look at the issue, but the results of this exercise had not been communicated to stakeholders. It seemed to us that the rebranding work was far from complete, although welcome progress had been made in recent advertising campaigns.

6. Within the Welsh Government, there is perhaps scope for improved co-ordination on tourism. As Ministers have pointed out in evidence, this is an industry that draws support from several departments and portfolios, and the cross-cutting nature of the sector is reflected in the title of the strategy for tourism, ‘Partnership for Growth’.

7. This need for connected working was apparent with regard to infrastructure. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of good transport links and broadband and mobile connectivity for attracting visitors. Good relationships with local authorities were also essential—for example, in the provision of road signs for tourism businesses (a practical problem that several stakeholders felt was under-appreciated). We also heard that the Welsh Government could do more to commission research on tourism and disseminate the data that emerge from it; this information is critical for business planning and supports applications for funding from the EU and elsewhere.

8. We are concerned that the relationship between Visit Wales and VisitBritain is not sufficiently working to Wales’s advantage. During the inquiry, we heard that the Google summary for VisitBritain (found when searching for “VisitBritain”) stated: “Official UK tourism and places to visit: England, Scotland and Britain”. After we highlighted this issue, Wales was added to the list. However, we heard from other evidence that opportunities were being missed by VisitBritain to promote Wales as a distinct destination within the UK. We note that Visit Wales now has a secondee within VisitBritain and hope that this provides an opportunity to improve this relationship.

9. Education also has a vital role to play in developing the industry, with some evidence suggesting that qualifications in tourism were not highly regarded, and jobs in the sector were seen as low-paid and lacking in prospects. This is at odds with the undoubted importance of the industry in economic terms. We hope that the Welsh Government will be able to look at ways of making training and employment in tourism more attractive.

10. The Welsh Government has recently restructured support for the industry at a local level, with the regional tourism partnerships being discontinued. While we found that stakeholders generally accepted this, they were keen for an effective new structure of regional support to be swiftly put in place. We therefore urge the Government to engage with local businesses to ensure that this is a success.

11. Much good work has recently been done in the field of tourism, and we are pleased to see the Welsh Government making the sector a priority. We hope that the recommendations we make in this report can help to further develop an industry that is an increasingly important economic driver for Wales.

## **Introduction to the inquiry**

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12. We began the inquiry by issuing a call for written evidence in April 2014. The terms of reference for the inquiry are attached at Annex A. We received 27 written submissions, which are listed at Annex B.

13. We held nine oral evidence sessions with a range of witnesses, including the Welsh Centre for Tourism Research, VisitBritain and the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism. A full list of witnesses is attached at Annex C.

14. We also held three focus group sessions at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff; Oriel y Parc, St Davids; and Llechwedd Slate Caverns, Blaenau Ffestiniog to meet local tourism organisations. The groups at Cardiff and St Davids met simultaneously and key messages were tweeted between the two groups throughout by the Assembly's Outreach and Communications teams, with the St Davids tweets reaching "top tweet" status online.

15. The summary of our discussions is included as Annex D.

16. We are very grateful to all the contributors to our inquiry and trust that our report and recommendations have taken on board the evidence we received.

## Welsh Government policy context

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17. Since April 2006, tourism development and support in Wales has been undertaken within the Welsh Government by Visit Wales. Prior to that, this work was done outside of government by the Wales Tourist Board.

18. The Welsh Government has allocated £12.8 million for tourism (marketing and development work) in 2014-15.

### **Partnership for Growth: the Welsh Government Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020**

19. The Welsh Government published its tourism strategy [\*Partnership for Growth: The Welsh Government Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020\*](#) in June 2013. This document reiterates the Welsh Government's tourism priorities (as set out in its Programme for Government) as follows:

- develop tourism activity and specialist markets and secure maximum benefit from major events in our high profile venues;
- promote Wales as a destination by making a high quality tourism offer;
- work to extend the tourism season and associated benefits;
- identify funding opportunities to improve the visitor infrastructure and product in Wales;
- support investment in staff training and management to support a high quality tourism industry.

20. The Strategy includes the target to grow tourism earnings in Wales by 10 per cent or more (in real terms) by 2020.

### **Measuring progress**

21. The following indicators in the Programme for Government are used to monitor the work of Visit Wales and the success of its tourism marketing campaigns:

- additional spend in Wales generated by tourism marketing campaigns (increased to £163 million in 2012 from £48 million in 2009);
- proportion of UK population aware of Visit Wales marketing (increased to 29 per cent in 2012 from 22 per cent in 2009);

- value of tourism spend at heritage sites (increased to £4.57 million in 2012 from £3.89 million in 2008, but down from £4.84 million in 2011);
- evaluation of Cadw's Heritage Tourism Project.

### **Tourism and EU funding**

22. In the 2007-13 round of EU Structural Funds, the Welsh Government has drawn down money for tourism through the Environment for Growth (E4G) theme within the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Convergence programme. A February 2013 report<sup>4</sup> stated that this project involved £35.6 million of ERDF support (as part of a total project investment of £80.8 million).

### **Sectors policy**

23. In September 2011 "tourism" was added to the Welsh Government's list of sectors key to the Welsh economy.

24. Consequently, the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport established a [Tourism Advisory Board](#), comprised of business people, academics and other key stakeholders, whose role is to advise the Welsh Government on how best to support the tourism industry.

### **Tourism Investment Support Scheme**

25. This is a scheme offering grants and repayable financial support for the purpose of upgrading the quality of facilities and increasing capacity where there is a gap in the market. The Welsh Government is also encouraging businesses to show how aspects of the planned development will directly benefit energy efficiency or environmental improvement.

### **Other relevant bodies**

#### ***Regional Engagement Team***

26. Previously, the primary channel for Welsh Government engagement with the tourism sector regionally was through four Regional Tourism Partnerships (RTPs) formed in 2002 to cover four regions: North Wales, Mid Wales, South West Wales and South East Wales. These were public-private sector partnership organisations almost wholly funded and remitted by Welsh Government and incorporated as companies limited by guarantee. The

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<sup>4</sup> [Environment for growth monitoring and evaluation project](#), Cardiff Business School, February 2013

RTPs worked with Visit Wales, local authorities, businesses and other organisations to deliver a range of marketing, product investment and business support activities to the tourism sector in Wales.

27. In April 2014, the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport announced that:

“Following advice from the Tourism Advisory Board and a 12 week consultation period with the industry to consider options for future tourism support and delivery in the regions, Welsh Government funding for the four Regional Tourism Partnerships will cease after 30 September 2014.

“In place of these partnerships, a new Regional Engagement Team will be established within Welsh Government as part of Visit Wales. This change will provide a simpler and more focused structure for the development of tourism taking account of wider Welsh Government initiatives and policies for economic growth. New regional representatives will be recruited to the Tourism Advisory Board.”<sup>5</sup>

### ***Wales Tourism Alliance***

28. The Wales Tourism Alliance (WTA) was formed following devolution as the voice of the industry in Wales. The WTA’s role is to inform and forward the views of the tourism community to the Welsh Government and to Westminster (on non-devolved issues).

### ***VisitBritain***

29. VisitBritain is the UK’s tourism agency, a non-departmental public body, funded by the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It is responsible for promoting Britain worldwide and developing its visitor economy.

### ***Local Government***

30. Although tourism is not a statutory function for Welsh local authorities, they play an important role in marketing their area and in providing information and signposting services at the destination level. The 22 local authorities currently work within 14 marketing areas (local authorities working either singly or in combination). These marketing areas print their own marketing materials, develop websites and respond to enquiries.

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<sup>5</sup> [Welsh Government written statement](#)

Tourism Information Centres (TICs) are also important facilities provided by many local authorities in Wales.

## Marketing and Wales's tourism brand

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31. According to Professor Annette Pritchard, Professor of Tourism and Director of the Welsh Centre for Tourism Research at Cardiff Metropolitan University:

“Brand Wales is at a tipping point. It needs greater clarity, stakeholder buy-in and consumer and media resonance.”<sup>6</sup>

32. This view was supported by a number of respondents to the Committee's consultation. We were told that “the Wales tourism brand is almost non-existent and compared to Scotland and Ireland we are way off the mark”<sup>7</sup>; “tourism businesses that we have engaged with over the last three years are generally dissatisfied with the identity of the Wales tourism brand”<sup>8</sup>; and “compared with Britain's other nations, Wales is the least known internationally.”<sup>9</sup>

33. In their written evidence, the Wales Tourism Alliance said that, with branding Wales for tourism:

“A cohesive approach is needed” and “this has to be done in partnership with the industry and with a detailed knowledge of the structure of our micro-business dominated industry.”<sup>10</sup>

34. The need for industry buy-in was also highlighted by Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Wales, who told us:

“From a Wales tourism perspective, it is very important to get a buy-in from those microbusinesses on the ground that are actually delivering the brand. The first important thing is that they need to understand what that brand is and, secondly, they need to be committed to engaging with the ideals of that brand. I am not convinced that that is actually happening, because when I talk to businesses on the ground, they do not have much of a clue what is happening in terms of promoting Wales as a brand.”<sup>11</sup>

35. Evidence from Pembrokeshire Tourism suggested:

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<sup>6</sup> Written evidence TOU 24, Professor Annette Pritchard

<sup>7</sup> Written evidence TOU 01, The National Showcaves Centre for Wales

<sup>8</sup> Written evidence TOU 27, Federation of Small Businesses Wales

<sup>9</sup> Written evidence TOU 16, VisitBritain

<sup>10</sup> Written evidence TOU 11, Wales Tourism Alliance

<sup>11</sup> RoP, para 140, 18 June 2014

“The ‘brand’ for Wales is beginning to strengthen, however the very nature of the country and all it offers makes it extremely difficult to generate a single unifying brand.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Brand evaluation exercise**

36. The Ashton Brand Consulting Group had been commissioned by the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport to undertake a Welsh brand evaluation exercise. This work started in 2012 and included branding Wales for tourism, foreign direct investment, and trade and industry purposes. Although a number of witnesses reported having spoken to Mike Ashton, witnesses were not aware of the specific outcome of this exercise. In its written evidence, Wales Tourism Alliance suggested that:

“We believe that the final report produced as a result of this ambitious two year commission by the Welsh Government will not be made publicly available in its entirety...”<sup>13</sup>

37. In response to our request to see the results of this exercise, the Minister told us:

“the work initiated by Mike Ashton, recruited to Welsh Government on a short term secondment, has already delivered high profile brand communication campaigns in Wales including the “*Have you packed for Wales?*” tourism campaign, refreshed marketing at Cardiff Airport and *Just Ask Wales*.<sup>14</sup>

“The work is currently being taken forward under the leadership of my new Director of Marketing, building on the key branding principles which have been established.”<sup>15</sup>

38. We also questioned the then Minister for Culture and Sport on his department’s involvement in the evaluation exercise, given the popularity of Wales’s heritage and natural assets with domestic and international tourists. The then Minister told us that he had not had any direct involvement with Ashton Brand Consulting Group and had only recently become aware that the exercise was taking place.

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<sup>12</sup> Written evidence TOU 10, Pembrokeshire Tourism

<sup>13</sup> Written evidence TOU 11, Wales Tourism Alliance

<sup>14</sup> *Just Ask Wales* is the Welsh Government’s current inward investment marketing campaign. We recently published our report into [the Welsh Government's approach to the promotion of trade and inward investment](#)

<sup>15</sup> Enterprise and Business Committee Paper EBC(4)-23-14(p3), *Inquiry into tourism*, Letter from Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, 2 October 2014

39. We were concerned by the apparent lack of joined up working between the Department for Culture and Sport and the Department for Economy, Science and Transport in developing a coherent tourism brand for Wales, given the significant contribution of cultural and heritage tourism to both the domestic and international markets.

40. We hope to see greater co-ordination between departments that have a significant influence on Wales's tourism appeal – such as culture and heritage – now that culture and sport fall within the Economy, Science and Transport portfolio.

41. The Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism told us that the Welsh Government's "in-depth delivery strategy for Wales's tourism marketing is currently undergoing further development."<sup>16</sup>

**The Welsh Government should build upon the work of the Ashton Brand Consulting Group to develop a strong, cohesive Wales tourism brand.**

**The Welsh Government should improve co-ordination between departments that contribute to Wales's tourism appeal – such as culture and heritage – to strengthen the Wales tourism brand and offer.**

**The Welsh Government needs to communicate clearly to businesses the key Wales tourism brand messages that it is pursuing following the Ashton Brand Consulting Group branding review. This should include improving the *Wales the Brand* website. We also recommend that tourism businesses in Wales be directly involved in the work the Welsh Government is undertaking to develop its "in-depth delivery strategy for Wales's tourism marketing".**

#### **Visit Wales's current advertising approach**

42. On 1 March 2014, Visit Wales launched a £4 million advertising campaign.<sup>17</sup> The advert was directed by Marc Evans, director of the BBC/S4C drama *Hinterland/Y Gwyll*, and featured a Welsh lullaby sung by musician and broadcaster Cerys Matthews. It featured a variety of outdoor activities, from exploring castles to mountain biking, before asking "have you packed for Wales?"

43. Some comments submitted to our consultation were critical of certain aspects of the campaign:

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<sup>16</sup> Enterprise and Business Committee paper EBC(4)23-14(p1), 2 October 2014

<sup>17</sup> [www.visitwales.com/latest-news/2014/02/have-you-packed-for-wales](http://www.visitwales.com/latest-news/2014/02/have-you-packed-for-wales)

“Whilst there was commendable use of the Welsh language (a feature which sets Wales apart) there was no subtitling or voice over to explain what was being shown;”<sup>18</sup>

“The TV ads are not promoting Wales’s USP. There are many areas in Britain just as good as Wales for mountain biking, dolphin watching and ruined castles. We need to promote the differences not the bland sameness of others.”<sup>19</sup>

44. Several witnesses welcomed the approach that Visit Wales appeared to be pursuing in the campaign, but noted that it was currently too soon to assess its success. The view of the Arts Council of Wales was:

“The ‘*Have you packed for Wales?*’ campaign certainly feels like a change in tone, and using people like Cerys Matthews gives a sort of feel to what we are about.”<sup>20</sup>

45. Professor Annette Pritchard’s written evidence stated:

“Whilst many people recognise Wales as a scenic destination, they remain unconvinced that it can offer aspirational, vibrant and fulfilling products and experiences. The current Visit Wales ‘*Have you Packed for Wales?*’ campaign seeks to address this perceptual gap and by using a Welsh lullaby for its soundtrack it is attempting to communicate Wales’s distinctive Welsh Celtic heritage.”<sup>21</sup>

46. Stakeholders at our Llechwedd engagement event suggested that the aims of Visit Wales’s advertising campaigns were not communicated well to local stakeholders. Local businesses said they had not been approached to feed into the “*Have you packed for Wales?*” campaign. They were also disappointed that only one attraction from north Wales featured in the advert.

**Visit Wales should involve tourism businesses more closely with its advertising campaigns, so they understand better what Visit Wales is trying to achieve, and can co-ordinate their own work accordingly.**

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<sup>18</sup> Written evidence TOU 08, Wales Association of Self Catering Operators

<sup>19</sup> Written evidence TOU 01, The National Showcaves Centre for Wales

<sup>20</sup> RoP, para 139, 2 July 2014

<sup>21</sup> Written evidence TOU 24, Professor Annette Pritchard

## Wales's natural, historical and cultural assets

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### The popularity of Wales's natural, historical and cultural assets

47. According to the Wales Visitor Survey 2013,<sup>22</sup> the main reasons for visits to Wales were:

- to enjoy the landscape / countryside / beach (69%)
- to visit places / historical sites / specific attractions / sightseeing (58%)
- to take part in outdoor activities (35%)

48. VisitBritain's evidence states:

"According to our research coast, countryside, national parks and walking are enjoyed by international visitors to Wales, with going on a tour of Welsh castles listed as a dream activity. We share these insights with Visit Wales – through the governance structures described previously and at ad hoc bilateral meetings – and they also inform our marketing programme."<sup>23</sup>

49. However, Professor Annette Pritchard told us that despite the international popularity of Wales's natural, historical and cultural assets, "Wales lacks a clear brand strategy to harness and build on these key assets"<sup>24</sup> and consequently marketing activities are fragmented.

50. We feel that more needs to be done to show what makes Wales a unique holiday destination. Our landscape, history – including industrial heritage – and language are all unique selling points which highlight what gives Wales a distinctive and vibrant tourism offer.

51. Conwy County Borough Council told us:

"Culture, history and natural assets: I believe that these are key selling points for Wales, the history and environment are outstanding and can compete with most nations."<sup>25</sup>

52. Also, the Federation of Small Businesses said:

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<sup>22</sup> [Wales Visitor Survey 2013](#)

<sup>23</sup> Written evidence TOU 16, VisitBritain

<sup>24</sup> Written evidence TOU 24, Professor Annette Pritchard

<sup>25</sup> Written evidence TOU 22, Conwy County Borough Council

“What does Wales have that is actually different from anywhere else? One thing is the language, of course. It is the only area, really, in the UK, where the language is strong.”<sup>26</sup>

**The Welsh Government should do more to sell what is unique about Wales as a tourism destination, including its scenery, history, industrial heritage and language.**

### **Cultural tourism**

53. According to the Arts Council of Wales the term cultural tourism is not helpful from a marketing perspective. It suggested that:

“Amongst the public, the term cultural tourism appeals to only a very small minority and is typically described as ‘high’ culture. The alternative, much broader, Visit Wales definition is too wide to help define market segments; and

“The public tend to think of cultural destinations as cities rather than countries and Cardiff is not seen as a cultural destination. As a consequence, the concept of promoting Wales as a cultural destination is an inappropriate objective at present.”<sup>27</sup>

54. It also quoted research it commissioned which suggested that there is “substantial unmet demand from potential visitors to Wales for cultural activity”<sup>28</sup> and goes on to say that “Visit Wales has identified over 11 million ‘cultural explorers’ who might visit Wales should the right proposition be available.”<sup>29</sup>

55. However, in its oral evidence, the Arts Council of Wales stated:

“If the business, in the next few years, is to get at 11 million potential visitors who are cultural explorers, then there needs to be a refinement in tactics to get to them. They are the type of visitors who will spend more in Wales – we know that. We also know that we are not getting our market share.”<sup>30</sup>

56. It went on to say:

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<sup>26</sup> RoP, para 209, 18 June 2014

<sup>27</sup> Written evidence TOU 26, Arts Council of Wales

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> RoP, para 141, 2 July 2014

“The way to attract that market is to keep building up a different image of Wales that is around its contemporary culture, alongside its heritage, and to really enter into that sense of cultural adventure. It has many assets that we feel are probably underplayed at the moment.”<sup>31</sup>

57. Professor Pritchard suggested that “although Wales has some world-leading cultural events and a vibrant cultural offering, this has not translated into Wales having a reputation as a place to go for culture.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Heritage tourism**

58. The Welsh Government is managing a project to develop heritage tourism in Wales. The £19 million project is largely funded from EU Convergence funds and by the Welsh Government, and is intended to maximise the economic value of heritage by increasing the number, length and value of visits to Wales. This project began in 2009 and is due to run until March 2015.

59. Cadw is leading the Heritage Tourism Project, having successfully bid for Convergence Funding under the Priority 4, Theme 3 heading, Environment for Growth.

60. In his written evidence, the then Minister for Culture and Sport stated that:

“A research project by Cardiff Business School at six large sites associated with the Heritage Tourism Project in 2013 found an average of £6.95m added GVA per site, of which £1.75m GVA was directly attributable to the site. The six sites were Blaenavon Ironworks, Caernarfon Castle, Caerphilly Castle, Conwy Castle, Harlech Castle and St Davids Bishop’s Palace.”<sup>33</sup>

61. The then Minister’s paper also noted that a major redevelopment of St Fagans National History Museum is planned. This project is valued at £25 million and is intended to increase visitor numbers from 600,000 to 850,000 by 2021. He told us:

“St Fagans gets a very impressive number of visitors, and it is obviously an absolute flagship for culture and heritage in Wales.

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<sup>31</sup> RoP, para 141, 2 July 2014

<sup>32</sup> Written evidence TOU 24, Professor Annette Pritchard

<sup>33</sup> Enterprise and Business Committee Paper EBC(4)-18-14(p1), 2 July 2014

However, it can be improved and there is a very ambitious programme for the National Museum generally in the centre of Cardiff, and also at St Fagans, to be better in terms of telling the story of Wales; to be more structured and more effective; and to have a better understanding of wider Welsh Government strategies. So, there will be a real emphasis on connecting with our communities and that can be done through the actual procurement and building process as well as the end product. I very much hope that Members will follow the redevelopment at St Fagans, Chair, because it is very significant not just for our tourism project, but for the understanding of what Wales is about in terms of people living here.”<sup>34</sup>

62. We discussed with the then Minister for Culture and Sport the extent to which the Welsh Government promoted heritage assets outside of its care. He told us:

“Cadw is increasingly working closely with other organisations, such as the National Trust, for example, to see what can be done through joint initiatives.”<sup>35</sup>

63. The Minister’s official went on to say:

“There are always things that we can do better, and the work that we have been doing on pan-Wales heritage interpretation is only the start. There is a lot more that we can do in terms of joint events and joint ticketing. There are good examples of it. There are examples of cross-promotion, particularly in a local area where we might work, such as in Pembrokeshire, with the privately owned Pembroke castle working with Cilgerran castle, and, hopefully, in the future very soon, with Cardigan castle to tell the story, for example, of the princes of the *Deheubarth*.”<sup>36</sup>

**The Welsh Government should do more to encourage joint promotion of heritage assets, including those outside of its care, building upon existing examples of good practice.**

64. When questioned on VisitBritain’s understanding of Welsh culture and its relationship with Cadw, the Minister’s official said:

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<sup>34</sup> RoP, para 74, 2 July 2014

<sup>35</sup> RoP, para 101, 2 July 2014

<sup>36</sup> RoP, para 102, 2 July 2014

“The pan-Wales heritage interpretation plan has certainly helped with exploding myths and preconceptions. It does not just focus on the predictable and the obvious; it does focus on authentic stories and that has been a real help, both within Wales and outside Wales in getting across perhaps a more rounded and more authentic story about Wales. In terms of our relationship in Cadw with VisitBritain, we have had quite positive experiences over the last few years and it was brokered by Visit Wales.”<sup>37</sup>

65. The then Minister went on to say that he believed it was the responsibility of the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport and Visit Wales to manage the relationship with VisitBritain:

“It is very important that, within my department, we get the product right, and that we invest in the product and improve the product. We have these great assets in Wales that are so important in terms of tourism visitors. I believe that that is very well understood by Visit Wales, as it should be, of course, and indeed by the Minister for economy with responsibility for tourism. So, I think that my relationship with this is very much in terms of working very closely with the Minister for the economy, and in terms of our officials working very closely.”<sup>38</sup>

66. We were concerned that there did not seem to be sufficient co-ordination within the Welsh Government between different departments – such as culture and heritage – that are responsible for key aspects of Wales’s tourism appeal. The evidence discussed in this chapter serves to reiterate Recommendation 2.

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<sup>37</sup> RoP, para 81, 2 July 2014

<sup>38</sup> RoP, para 83, 2 July 2014

## Major events

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### Major Events Unit

67. Professor Annette Pritchard told us that “Wales has a strong reputation for events, both sporting and cultural”, and is a “well-established player in this area”. She cited the success of the Welsh Government’s Major Events Unit, stating:

“The MEU has been very successful in attracting a number of high profile events to Wales with more planned. It has also helped to grow a number of Welsh events and Wales has an emerging reputation for alternative and ‘quirky’ events which generate a disproportionate amount of positive PR and social media coverage, such as the Do Lectures and Bog Snorkelling Championships.”<sup>39</sup>

68. However she suggested that Wales’s reputation for success in hosting events “does not seem to be feeding through into the Welsh brand, which still lacks cachet.”<sup>40</sup>

69. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) evidence stated that “major events can have a big impact on local areas and provide a significant boost to local economies.”<sup>41</sup> It noted that joint-working between local authorities and the Welsh Government’s Major Events Unit had succeeded in bringing national and international events to Wales.

70. Stakeholders at our St Davids engagement event spoke positively about their engagement with the Major Events Unit. They also said that local events, like Ironman Wales, brought significant numbers of visitors to the area outside of peak season and should be encouraged as the economic impacts were significant.

71. In his written evidence, the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism said:

“Since Welsh Government launched the major events strategy in 2010 we have made big strides in building Wales’s position in the global events industry. Working with partners across Wales and the UK, we have built strong and effective relationships with international event

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<sup>39</sup> Written evidence, TOU 24, Professor Annette Pritchard

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Written evidence, TOU 25, Welsh Local Government Association

owners, gaining their trust and confidence in Wales's event hosting capability."<sup>42</sup>

72. In 2014, Wales hosted a range of major sporting and cultural events with the support of the Major Events Unit, including the Senior Open Championship at Royal Porthcawl, the UEFA Supercup Final and Festival No6 (an arts and music festival held in Portmeirion).

73. The Welsh Government is currently working with partners to prepare for the following major events:

- 2015 Rugby World Cup (8 matches including 2 quarter finals at the Millennium Stadium);
- 2015 Ashes Test;
- 2016 World Half Marathon Championships;
- 2017-18 Volvo Ocean Race.

**The Welsh Government should do more to maximise the tourism impact of major events and ensure that Wales's success in hosting major events feeds through into a strong Wales tourism brand.**

#### **Cultural events**

74. In October 2013, the WOMEX international world music trade expo was held in Cardiff. The bid to host WOMEX in 2013, and subsequent organisation of the event, was led by Cerdd Cymru: Music Wales (a partnership between Welsh Music Foundation, Wales Arts International and the Arts Council of Wales), with support from the British Council and Welsh Government. The economic impact on Wales of hosting WOMEX 2013 was estimated to be £3 million.

75. In January 2014, we took evidence on the impact and legacy of WOMEX 2013. Following the meeting, we wrote to the Minister congratulating her and her officials on their instrumental role in supporting such a successful event, which showcased Cardiff and Wales on an international stage. We believe that WOMEX 2013 produced a template for staging other international events and a platform for developing Wales's profile, and the talent and skills of Welsh artists and felt it was essential that momentum was sustained to capitalise on the event and that it led to further investment in Wales's creative industries.

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<sup>42</sup> Enterprise and Business Committee Paper EBC(4)-23-14(p1), 2 October 2014

76. The Welsh Music Foundation was disbanded on 1 July 2014, after its three-year core-funding agreement with Welsh Government expired.

77. When questioned on what would replace the Welsh Music Foundation and when it would begin its work, the then Minister for Culture and Sport said:

“These are matters for the Minister for the Economy, Science and Transport, Chair, as it sits within the creative industries strand of the Minister for economy’s work. I know that a statement has been made in terms of what will follow and succeed in terms of these developments, but they are matters for the Minister for the economy.”<sup>43</sup>

78. Given that the Arts Council of Wales told us there was “substantial unmet demand from potential visitors to Wales for cultural activity”, the Committee believes that events which promote Wales and Welsh culture on the world stage, such as WOMEX 2013, are important in terms of growing tourism within Wales.

**The Welsh Government should explain how it is continuing the work carried out by the Welsh Music Foundation, in terms of promoting Wales and Welsh culture internationally (e.g. WOMEX 2013), following its disbandment.**

#### **The NATO summit**

79. In September 2014, world leaders gathered at the Celtic Manor outside Newport for the NATO summit.

80. When discussing the potential benefits to Wales prior to the summit, Professor Annette Pritchard said:

“I am very sceptical about what benefit Wales will get from NATO. We must have a real Welsh presence there if it is to have any impact whatsoever. People have to be staying in Wales, eating Welsh produce, flying Welsh flags, otherwise the media just moves on and it goes to the next place, and I think that we will perhaps have a lot of the hassle but no benefit, really.”<sup>44</sup>

81. However, in his written evidence, the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism stated that:

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<sup>43</sup> RoP, para 130, 2 July 2014

<sup>44</sup> RoP, para 176, 12 June 2014

“The successful delivery of the NATO Wales Summit 2014 has created a wider platform from which Wales’s profile on the world stage can be strengthened. Welsh Government took full advantage of opportunities before and during the summit. Arguably, one of the key moments from the summit, in terms of promoting Wales came from President Barack Obama’s remarks that he will encourage people in the United States to visit Wales. He praised the country’s ‘extraordinary beauty, wonderful people and great hospitality’.”<sup>45</sup>

82. He went on to say that:

“Post-summit, Welsh Government will use this, the wider visibility that has been generated by the summit and the relationships that have been developed to position Wales as a confident, capable and creative nation; and a world-class place for business, investment and tourism.”<sup>46</sup>

**The Welsh Government should publish an economic impact assessment of the immediate benefits of Wales’s hosting of the NATO summit, including its impact on the tourism industry. The Government should in due course also publish a longer term evaluation of the impact of hosting the summit, and confirm the timescale for doing so.**

### **Golf tourism**

83. Following his appearance on 2 October, the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism wrote to the Committee regarding the value of golf tourism to the Welsh economy. In that letter, he stated that:

- “golf tourism to Wales saw a 14% increase in its value to the Welsh economy in 2013 compared with 2012;
- the total value of golf tourism in 2013 was £38 million, an increase of £4.7 million compared with 2012;
- the successful bid for the Ryder Cup provided a catalyst to establish Wales as a golf tourism destination with visitor numbers growing 40% between 2004 and 2013 to 196,000 and total related expenditure growing 65% to £38 million over the same period;
- in total, golf tourism to Wales has generated £313m to the economy over the past 10 years with a total of 1.72m golf visitors.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Enterprise and Business Committee Paper EBC(4)-23-14(p1), 2 October 2014

<sup>46</sup> Enterprise and Business Committee Paper EBC(4)-23-14(p1), 2 October 2014

<sup>47</sup> Enterprise and Business Committee Paper EBC(4)-25-14(p3), 16 October 2014

84. In addition, the Senior Open Championship was held at Royal Porthcawl in July 2014, the first time one of golf's 'Majors' has been staged in Wales.

85. We welcome the growth in this tourism sector. We expect the Major Events Unit's work to be targeted to include supporting events that can act as catalysts to grow other new tourism markets in Wales.

### **Dylan Thomas centenary**

86. In 2014, the Welsh Government is leading, in partnership with the Arts Council of Wales and local authority partners, a year-long international festival to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Dylan Thomas. The Welsh Government expenditure on the Dylan Thomas Centenary Programme is almost £1.16 million. The First Minister has stated that "the intention is to ensure that the festival itself delivers educational, cultural and tourism benefits during 2014, but also before and after that date".<sup>48</sup>

**The Welsh Government should publish an assessment of the success of the Dylan Thomas centenary events, and ensure that this experience influences its work on similar events in the future, such as Roald Dahl's centenary in 2016.**

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<sup>48</sup> RoP, 24 April 2012

## Maximising the value of tourism

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### The current value of domestic and international tourism in Wales

87. Tourism in Wales is currently dominated by visitors from within the UK. In 2013, 89.7 per cent of visitor spending in Wales was from UK residents.<sup>49</sup> Wales accounted for 6 per cent of all domestic visitor spending in the UK in 2013, and 2.6 per cent of spending by foreign visitors to the UK. These figures can be compared with Wales's UK population share of 4.9 per cent.

88. The number of overseas visitors to Wales has been declining for five years. In 1999, over 1 million staying visits were made by overseas tourists in Wales. This dropped to 854,000 in 2012. However, this decline has been experienced by all UK regions and nations other than London.<sup>50</sup>

89. In her evidence, Professor Annette Pritchard stressed that whilst the budget for Visit Wales was disproportionately small compared with its competitors, tourism was extremely important to the Welsh economy. She stated that:

“Wales tops UK regions for tourism direct GVA (i.e. goods & services consumed by tourists), ahead of Scotland, the SW and London. This is the most useful measure of the proportionate impact of tourism expenditure in a region and indicates that tourism is proportionately more important to Wales's economy than to any other UK region.”<sup>51</sup>

### International/domestic focus

90. The majority of respondents agreed that the focus should remain on the domestic market – Wales's current core market.

91. Wales Tourism Alliance told us:

“We must not lose sight of where our mature markets are already. The domestic market is, by far and away, the most important to us. We have to make sure that we do not take our eye off the ball when it comes to the domestic market.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> [Tourism: jobs and growth](#) The economic contribution of the tourism economy in the UK, Deloitte and Oxford Economics, November 2013

<sup>50</sup> Visit Britain, [Visit to different parts of the UK](#)

<sup>51</sup> Written evidence TOU 24, Professor Annette Pritchard

<sup>52</sup> RoP, para 12, 18 June 2014

92. However, it was noted that the overseas market was a small but high spending one for Wales.

93. Professor Annette Pritchard stated:

“Whilst only 10% of staying trips are from overseas visitors they account for 20% of all staying expenditure.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Welsh Government targets and opportunities for growth**

94. In January, the Welsh Government hailed 2013 as “a very successful year for tourism in Wales, with increases in Wales compared with 2012 well ahead of those for Britain as a whole”. In a press release, the Welsh Government stated:

“The figures are for the first nine months of 2013, and show that British residents made 8.04 million visits to Wales, up by 7.8% in comparison with the same period in 2012 (7.46 million) and 5.4% higher than in 2011 (7.63 million), which was considered an excellent season for tourism in Wales.

“Expenditure associated with these visits increased by 11.9% compared with the first nine months of 2012, with visitors spending £1,415 million [that is, £1.415 billion] in Wales from January-September 2013.”<sup>54</sup>

95. As previously stated, the Welsh Government tourism strategy *Partnership for Growth* includes the target to grow tourism earnings in Wales by 10 per cent or more (in real terms) by 2020. In order to achieve this aim, tourism earnings will have to grow by, on average, about 1.4 per cent in real terms each year. On the face of it, this may seem an ambitious aim. However, the *Tourism: Jobs and Growth* report, commissioned by VisitBritain and published by Deloitte and Oxford paints a picture of a sector with the potential for substantial growth throughout the UK:

“Tourism economy spending in Wales is forecast to grow slightly more slowly than in the other UK nations, at an annual average of 3.7 per cent in real terms, to reach £11.9 billion in 2025, or 5.1 per cent of the UK total.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Written evidence, TOU 24, Professor Annette Pritchard

<sup>54</sup> [Welsh Government press release](#)

<sup>55</sup> [Tourism: jobs and growth](#)

96. Although caution should be exercised when using economic estimates, this forecast does then raise the question whether, when set against a backdrop of large forecast growth in the sector, the Welsh Government's aim is particularly ambitious.

97. Professor Annette Pritchard told us that she did not think the Welsh Government's growth targets were ambitious enough.

98. Wales Tourism Alliance said:

"Given the slightly improving economic conditions juxtaposed with the huge public and private debt burden, this is probably in the right ball park, although we hope to see this target broken before the deadline!"<sup>56</sup>

99. In contrast, Pembrokeshire Tourism stated:

"This is a commendable aim, and recent statistics shared by Visit Wales suggest that progress towards this is good. There will be challenges ahead as the economy continues to be unpredictable in certain areas to see this fully realized, and it will also be important to ensure that all businesses within the sector, regardless of perceived target market (budget through to luxury) are supported in order to contribute to this.

"Defining a means of measurement to assess how well this aim is met and communicating that across all levels of the industry to enable clarity is important to enable all tourism operators to understand their role and involvement in delivering this."<sup>57</sup>

100. In response to the suggestion that the Welsh Government's target lacked ambition, the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism told us:

"It is worth bearing in mind that the baseline showed that, between 2006 and 2012, there was a 6% fall. So I think that it is ambitious. I think that other countries that have set bigger targets may find that they do not meet them. That said, I am more than happy, Chair, to look at what this committee recommends in terms of the target, with, potentially, a view to evaluating whether it is ambitious enough."<sup>58</sup>

101. He went on to say:

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<sup>56</sup> Written evidence TOU 11, Wales Tourism Alliance

<sup>57</sup> Written evidence TOU 10, Pembrokeshire Tourism

<sup>58</sup> RoP, para 47, 2 October 2014

“I think it is important to say that we have had a pretty impressive 18 months in terms of the increase in visitors and also the spend. Indeed, the first half of this year has been quite remarkable, with the total number of trips to Wales for the period increasing by some 14.5% compared to a fall across Britain of 2.9% and, of course, expenditure has increased by almost 10% compared to a fall of 2.9% across Britain. So, the performance of Wales in this period has been quite remarkable.”<sup>59</sup>

102. Given the growth in tourism in Wales in recent years, we expect to see the Welsh Government meet its growth target well in advance of the 2020 deadline.

**The Welsh Government should keep under review its growth target in view of the good performance of the sector. If growth continues to exceed that needed to meet the target, a new and more challenging target for the sector should be set.**

#### **Developing markets with potential for growth**

103. A number of respondents to our consultation felt that further focus should be placed on developing markets with growth potential in order to maximise the value of tourism in Wales. These growth markets included:

##### ***Nature-based and wildlife tourism***

104. Wildlife Trust Wales suggested that “wildlife tourism is still a relatively untapped market in Wales – primarily because people are unaware of what wildlife wonders Wales has to offer.”<sup>60</sup>

105. Wales Environment Link noted that:

“Within the UK, Scotland is currently the top wildlife tourism destination, with a relatively well-developed and organised wildlife tourism industry attracting more overnight and long break visitors and a higher proportion of international visitors. Scotland’s wildlife tour operators are highly organised, presenting a fairly cohesive face in the form of the Wild Scotland website. There does not appear to be an equivalent website for companies operating in Wales.”

106. They went on to say that, in order to grow these sectors, investment is needed “in the whole tourist experience to agreed quality standards,

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<sup>59</sup> RoP, para 49, 2 October 2014

<sup>60</sup> Written evidence TOU 12, Wildlife Trusts Wales

including visitor facilities, staff, communications and marketing, and accessibility, including sustainable transport access.”<sup>61</sup>

### ***The cruise sector***

107. In his written evidence, Professor Stuart Cole described the cruise market tourism sector as “yet largely untapped in Wales”. He stated that:

“The cruising market is the fastest growing tourism segment with financial and economic characteristics making it essential for Wales to acquire a greater part of that global market currently dominated by the Caribbean, Mediterranean and Baltic seas. The Celtic Sea provides a significant tourism opportunity for Wales.”<sup>62</sup>

### ***Activity tourism***

108. In its written evidence, Conwy County Borough Council suggested that:

“Far more needs to be done on promoting the ‘adrenaline’ side of the outdoors, as for this area of the Country, it is fast becoming our best offer. In addition, it promotes Wales as being ‘young, adventurous and vibrant.’”<sup>63</sup>

109. Wales Tourism Alliance also highlighted the activity sector as a potential growth area but emphasised the need for a balanced approach:

“Certainly, there is an absolutely burgeoning market there, but the reality is that, if you put money into activity breaks and support all the stuff that is happening throughout Wales, at the same time, you are going to upset all the people who, for instance, have attractions that rely upon families to come to see them. So it is very dangerous to go down the niche route if that is all you are going to do.”<sup>64</sup>

110. At our Llechwedd engagement event, the Countryside Alliance told us that tourism based around angling was worth £150 million a year to the Welsh economy, yet does not feature in any of Wales’s current marketing campaigns.

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<sup>61</sup> Written evidence TOU 15, Wales Environment Link

<sup>62</sup> Written evidence TOU 17, Professor Stuart Cole

<sup>63</sup> Written evidence TOU 22, Conwy County Borough Council

<sup>64</sup> RoP, para 27, 18 June 2014

## ***Faith tourism***

111. Participants at our St Davids engagement event told us faith tourism was an increasing market but was not receiving the support it needed to help it grow.

**The Welsh Government should identify tourism sectors with major growth potential and develop specific strategies and growth targets for these sectors.**

## **Barriers to growth**

### ***Transport connectivity***

112. Wales Tourism Alliance stated that Wales's transport infrastructure needs improving "to the point where this is not seen as a barrier and there is smooth transportation of visitors from, or even away from, London on a significant scale".<sup>65</sup> This was a view shared by a number of other respondents to the Committee's consultation.<sup>66</sup>

113. VisitBritain highlighted the importance of getting our public transport right:

"Getting a transport offer that is accessible and affordable to international visitors, and getting more transport passes that we can sell is absolutely crucial to getting visitors around. One key piece of advice that we have is that we should talk about time taken, not distance travelled."<sup>67</sup>

114. While tourism stakeholders at our Cardiff engagement event suggested that a lack of internal connectivity within Wales was a barrier to further tourism growth, they did, however, welcome the role the Welsh Government was playing in the redevelopment of Cardiff airport.

115. Professor Annette Pritchard cited "limited transport connectivity"<sup>68</sup> as a barrier to the growth of Wales's international market, and suggested that "it is vital that investment in Cardiff Airport continues and that every effort is made to develop services between Wales and key hub cities."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Written evidence TOU 11, Wales Tourism Alliance

<sup>66</sup> Written evidence TOU 18 Railfuture Cymru, TOU 21 Capital Traffic Management, TOU 17a Professor Stuart Cole

<sup>67</sup> RoP, para 251, 18 June 2014

<sup>68</sup> Written evidence TOU 24, Professor Annette Pritchard

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

116. In her oral evidence, she went on to say:

“Connectivity goes beyond the airport. It is also things like rail and roads. If London is the major entry point for overseas visitors, then we need to have good links between London and Wales to encourage visitors to come. Equally, Manchester is very important for the north Wales economy. Manchester is the second port of entry, I think, for overseas visitors. So, it is really important that north Wales can take advantage of, and exploit, the opportunities offered by Manchester Airport.”<sup>70</sup>

117. This view was supported by Conwy County Borough Council, who believed “there should be stronger messaging about connectivity to Liverpool and Manchester airports and the accessibility of Wales.”<sup>71</sup>

118. Participants at our Llechwedd engagement event also highlighted the need for a greater Welsh presence at Liverpool airport.

119. Our Cardiff engagement event heard that effective signposting was a key (and underrated) problem for tourism businesses, with the application process complicated and slow, and the cost prohibitive. Stakeholders at Llechwedd agreed, saying that Wales, and the UK as a whole, compared badly to countries overseas in this regard.

**The Welsh Government should simplify the process for organisations to get a brown and white sign, in light of concerns about bureaucracy and cost.**

### ***Broadband and mobile phone reception***

120. A number of stakeholders at our St Davids engagement event raised the issue of unreliable broadband and mobile phone connections as a barrier to tourism growth in Wales. One participant told us that his business spent £20,000 a year on leased lines to provide reliable broadband to their customers.

121. This issue was also raised by stakeholders at our Llechwedd engagement event. They told us that WiFi and mobile phone network coverage continued to be problematic for tourism businesses. Although customers now take connectivity for granted, some of the areas of Wales that were strongest for tourism were weakest for broadband and mobile signals.

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<sup>70</sup> RoP, para 137, 12 June 2014

<sup>71</sup> Written evidence TOU 22, Conwy County Borough Council

122. The Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism told us:

“Much of that is non-devolved and is a matter for Ofcom and the mobile phone operators. However, in the last auction of the 4G spectrum, there are obligations placed on the operators to meet a specific level of reception. I think that 96% to 98% of people must be able to obtain 4G by the latter part of this decade. So, that should be delivered under the obligation of the auction of the spectrum. In terms of superfast broadband, you will be aware of the Superfast Cymru programme – the intervention programme – which, I am pleased to say, is very much on track.”<sup>72</sup>

**The Welsh Government should recognise the importance of broadband to tourism businesses whilst it is prioritising broadband roll-out under its Superfast Cymru and Access Broadband Cymru schemes.**

**The Welsh Government should work with Ofcom to increase broadband and mobile phone coverage in order to improve Wales’s tourism offer.**

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<sup>72</sup> RoP, para 65, 2 October 2014

## The performance of Visit Wales and VisitBritain

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### Role of Visit Wales

123. Visit Wales is the Welsh Government's tourism team within the Department of Economy, Science and Transport. It is responsible for formulating tourism policy, encouraging investment in, and improving the quality of, the visitor experience in Wales. Visit Wales is also responsible for marketing Wales within the UK and internationally.

### Accountability

124. In its written evidence, FSB Wales suggested that, at present, a lack of available information made it hard to assess the work of Visit Wales:

“There does not appear to be an annual report for Visit Wales which again makes its impact and activities hard to assess. Similarly, it is difficult to ascertain how much funding Visit Wales is allocated from the Visit Wales or Welsh Government website.”<sup>73</sup>

125. The Welsh Government's annual budget does not include figures for Visit Wales. Instead, the Welsh Government budget includes an allocation from its Economy, Science and Transport budget to all the priority sectors supported by the Government (of which tourism is one), without providing a further breakdown of funding provided to individual sectors. Similarly, FSB Wales stated that a lack of available information for the Welsh Government's major events budget makes scrutiny of this activity also difficult.

126. When we questioned the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism on this, he told us:

“In June, the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport updated the framework action plan, which is published on the Welsh Government tourism site, and that provides information on the actions taken over the past year, so it is readily available to everybody who wishes to look at it. We are also undertaking a review of our research outputs. There is also a detailed annual report on progress against the tourism strategy, which is published online as well, and it includes a report on the major events unit's activities and outputs as

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<sup>73</sup> Written evidence TOU 27, Federation of Small Businesses Wales

well. So, I am confident and satisfied that we do have sufficient information available to those who wish to look for it.”<sup>74</sup>

127. Participants at our St Davids engagement event talked about a lack of clarity around what Visit Wales does and how it spends its money. There was also a feeling that Visit Wales needed to improve its overall communication with businesses and a single point of contact would be beneficial.

128. Participants at our Cardiff engagement event also felt that Wales had had a more coherent approach to promoting tourism under the previous tourist board.

**The Welsh Government must do more to engage the tourism industry with the work of Visit Wales. This should include establishing whether Visit Wales publishes sufficient information about its activity (including that of the Major Events Unit) to enable the industry to assess and engage in its work.**

#### **Visit Wales’s website**

129. A number of participants at our St Davids engagement event stated that the Visit Wales website was hard to navigate and did not work effectively as a portal. Some also reported difficulty in getting up-to-date information about their business onto the website.

130. In its written evidence, the Wales Association of Self Catering Operators (WASCO), stated that there is a

“Lack of sufficient personnel with direct experience and knowledge of the tourism sector within Visit Wales in addition to their technical expertise. This would appear to be particularly applicable to the development of an effective web presence.”<sup>75</sup>

131. Professor Annette Pritchard told us:

“If you look on the Welsh Government website, the Visit Wales site is very poor in terms of its information, and that is really problematic because the industry looks to Visit Wales to provide the stats, to provide the research, to give it the information that it can then use to build and develop the industry.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> RoP, para 79, 2 October 2014

<sup>75</sup> Written evidence TOU 08, Wales Association of Self Catering Operators

<sup>76</sup> RoP, para 164, 12 June 2014

**The Welsh Government should work with the tourism industry in Wales to improve the online presence of Visit Wales. This should include a more user friendly, dynamic and interactive website. Consideration should also be given to developing apps that could help tourists get the most from their visit to Wales.**

### **Restructuring of regional support**

132. As stated in paragraph 27, in April 2014 the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport announced that funding for the Regional Tourism Partnerships (RTPs) would end in September 2014 and they would be replaced by a Regional Engagement Team within Welsh Government as part of Visit Wales.

133. In its written evidence, Pembrokeshire Tourism stated:

“At present, the detail regarding the proposed replacement for the Regional Tourism Partnerships is limited, and this is causing concern particularly for organisations such as Pembrokeshire Tourism who have previously been contracted by the South West Wales Tourism Partnership to provide a range of activities and opportunities to strengthen trade engagement and support.

“There are concerns that the proposed Regional Engagement Teams that will be managed by Visit Wales and it is understood based in Welsh Government offices regionally will struggle to foster strong engagement relationships with the trade following a significant number of personnel changes within Visit Wales and as such a lack of clarity for the trade on who is responsible for what within the organisation.”<sup>77</sup>

134. Participants at our St Davids engagement event also felt that the changes to the RTPs had not been well managed and Pembrokeshire would lose out as a result. This view was supported by FSB Wales, who told us:

“I can speak only for north Wales, because I am not really aware of the work of the partnerships elsewhere. However, if I can mention names, Dewi Davies heads up the regional tourism partnership in north Wales. He is just Mr Tourism, and if we lose Dewi, I have really

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<sup>77</sup> Written evidence TOU 10, Pembrokeshire Tourism

grave concerns on how we are going to go forward because he is the glue that pulls everything together.”<sup>78</sup>

135. They went on to say:

“I would urge the Welsh Government to look at the assets that it has in terms of the experiences of those people who have been working in the partnerships to see whether there can be another role for them.”<sup>79</sup>

136. The WLGA stated:

“It is not clear yet how the new arrangements will work with Visit Wales having a regional role; however we strongly advocate the need for enhanced partnership working to deliver programmes and projects at a local level. This localised approach should be inclusive of local government and local businesses and linked to the priorities with the Destination Management Plans which all local authorities have prepared.”<sup>80</sup>

137. However, participants at our Llechwedd engagement event generally welcomed the restructuring of regional support. They believed that previously there had been a lot of duplication in the work of the various agencies and that they were all competing for the same available funding.

138. The Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism also told us:

“This was one of my problems with the regional partnership approach. I do not think there has been [enough co-ordination] in the past. I do not think that there has been a strong enough focus around product development, and the tourism offer is product led, so there has been a very disparate and unco-ordinated strategy – well, I could not even call it a ‘strategy’; it is a tourism offer that does not really have any definition or identity. If you do not have identity or definition, then you are not able to ensure that you get the mass, or rather you cannot get the recognition that comes from having a mass of co-ordinated branding.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> RoP, para 189, 18 June 2014

<sup>79</sup> RoP, para 190, 18 June 2014

<sup>80</sup> Written evidence TOU 25, Welsh Local Government Association

<sup>81</sup> RoP, para 60, 2 October 2014

**The Welsh Government should work more closely with the tourism industry in Wales to communicate the changes made to the regional tourism support structure, and to ensure that new structure is a success.**

### **Relationship between Visit Wales and VisitBritain**

139. In its written evidence, VisitBritain told us:

“VisitBritain and Visit Wales, the Welsh Government’s tourism department, work closely on a range of areas including business planning and has governance structures and formal agreements in place to ensure that we work in partnership. This includes a seat on our Board and a Memorandum of Understanding, signed by both of these organisations in January 2013, which aims to optimise promotional activity overseas and support growth of the visitor economy.

“VisitBritain will – in the near future – have a member of Visit Wales’s marketing team work from our London office where they will represent Wales in internal meetings, attend VisitBritain’s international sales missions and events and bring enhanced knowledge of Wales’s product and industry.”<sup>82</sup>

140. This was welcomed by witnesses. Wales Tourism Alliance said:

“We welcome the fact that Wales is going to have a seconded manager posted to London to work with the VisitBritain team ‘to be embedded at Visit Britain London offices with the aim of maximising the opportunities for Wales within VB work.’”<sup>83</sup>

141. Professor Annette Pritchard told us:

“We are very reliant on making the VisitBritain partnership work, and we need to make sure that VisitBritain works for Wales as effectively as possible. I think that needs agreements, and not just these kinds of vague co-operation statements that they have tended to be in the past.”<sup>84</sup>

142. The Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism said:

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<sup>82</sup> Written evidence TOU 16, VisitBritain

<sup>83</sup> Written evidence TOU 11, Wales Tourism Alliance

<sup>84</sup> RoP, para 157, 12 June 2014

“I think that the relationship with VisitBritain has strengthened significantly in recent times, not least because we now have a secondee with the VisitBritain team. That said, I think that, in the past, the targets have, to some extent, encouraged VisitBritain to get the easy win, which is to get tourists into London, and there has not necessarily been the need to distribute tourists outside London. Now, we will be feeding our concerns into the triennial review of VisitBritain in this regard, but, again, I should stress that relations and partnership working have improved with VisitBritain in recent months.”<sup>85</sup>

**The Welsh Government should take steps to improve the level of knowledge that VisitBritain staff have of Wales and the Welsh tourism offer.**

**VisitBritain’s marketing approach**

143. VisitBritain’s main marketing campaign, designed to encourage overseas visitors to come to the UK, is the GREAT campaign, which is itself part of a wider UK Government campaign to encourage overseas tourism, trade and inward investment. According to VisitBritain’s written evidence:

“Evaluation of the cross-governmental GREAT image campaign in 2012/13 shows that Wales saw a three-fold increase in the number of nights spent in the destination among those influenced by the campaign, compared with those who had not been influenced by the campaign.”<sup>86</sup>

144. A number of witnesses felt that the campaign concentrated too heavily on London. WASCO stated:

“It would appear that there is an undue focus in VisitBritain’s work on London and the South East.”<sup>87</sup>

145. Professor Annette Pritchard told us:

“With VisitBritain, its targets have changed and its priorities have changed. Before, it used to be that there was a sense that it needed to disperse some of the overseas visitors around the UK—it was the UK then. That kind of happened because people were very conscious of that. Now, it is more about getting numbers and London is seen as

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<sup>85</sup> RoP, para 30, 2 October 2014

<sup>86</sup> Written evidence TOU 16, VisitBritain

<sup>87</sup> Written evidence TOU 08, Wales Association of Self Catering Operators

the prime driver of that. So, a lot of effort is being focused into driving London tourism up, and it has—it has doubled in 10 years virtually, but that has been at the expense of everywhere else in the UK.”<sup>88</sup>

146. Wales Tourism Alliance said:

“Personally, I think that the ‘great’ campaign deals with the United Kingdom, Great Britain, but it is mostly London-centric, and I think that it tends to be pastiched together. I think that it should be divided up, so there should be a Welsh section. In that Welsh section, should be all things that Wales is proud of, but also all things that the visitor is looking for and has a fine experience from and that they can tell other people about.”<sup>89</sup>

147. It also suggested that the GREAT campaign should be “open source”, and that “there are significant rules that partners need to follow to be able to engage, partly due to big sponsors (of which Wales possesses few).”<sup>90</sup> They said:

“When it comes to the actual ‘great’ campaign, it is not very open source. We are very much a country made up of microbusinesses; 80% of our businesses are microbusinesses. The ‘great’ campaign is, I think that it is fair to say, orientated toward bigger business. It is after sponsorship from the likes of British Airways and Jaguar, and that is how it brings it in. There is, I think, an emphasis on that in the ‘great’ campaign. Of course, we then end up getting the crumbs, in some ways, of that campaign. I am not saying that it does not do anything for Wales, but the odd shot of a Welsh castle here and there probably is not going to drive a lot of visitors to Wales, to be perfectly honest. It probably does the best that it can, but there is certainly a need for us to have a greater presence in the ‘great’ campaign first of all, certainly in terms of the BRIC countries. Again, that comes back to money, because VisitBritain is going to turn around and say, ‘Well, put some money into it, then’, which is, I suppose, fair enough.”<sup>91</sup>

148. However, in its evidence, VisitBritain talked about a “reluctance to engage with the ‘great’ campaign”. It told us:

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<sup>88</sup> RoP, para 139, 12 June 2014

<sup>89</sup> RoP, para 90, 18 June 2014

<sup>90</sup> Written evidence TOU 11, Wales Tourism Alliance

<sup>91</sup> RoP, para 22, 18 June 2014

“If you look at the commercial partnership, on which I know that Visit Wales has commented, we have to match fund; if we do not match fund, we do not get Government money. So, we have a broad range of commercial partners. One of the criteria we use is that they must work with us in developing regional spread around Britain. So, we have had cracking deals with people like British Airways, who have taken people from Wales—from the castles and from the Wales coastal path—out to international markets to talk about what Wales is and to give a real feel to international consumers. We have deals with Expedia, where, in America, it had an advertisement running that Wales was not in and we asked it to include Wales in the storybook part of that. We are absolutely open to Visit Wales coming into that partnership mix, and we have tried to encourage that. It does not always need to be about money; Expedia is as interested in content as it is in money. There has been a reluctance to do that. There has not been a suggestion of partners that would work for Wales with whom we could work. Expedia, for example, was really interested in working with Visit Wales to support the new Cardiff-Germany link. We left that conversation with Wales and it has not happened.”<sup>92</sup>

149. VisitBritain also said that it was finalising a Countryside is GREAT campaign to promote rural Britain, focusing on National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Beauty:

“Although the campaign is still in the planning stage, we can confirm that on Wales specifically it will promote the Coast Path, mountaineering, castles and natural beauty. It will not simply focus on landscapes, but the social and cultural experiences the British countryside can offer. In the lead-up to the countryside campaign, Welsh mezzo-soprano Katherine Jenkins will work with us on a range of projects showcasing the best of Britain’s culture and heritage.”<sup>93</sup>

150. Participants at our Llechwedd engagement event spoke highly of the Ten Top Attractions advertising campaign in north Wales, which had been successful in promoting the region and suggested that this kind of campaign needed to be picked up by VisitBritain and promoted at a UK level.

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<sup>92</sup> RoP, para 223, 18 June 2014

<sup>93</sup> Written evidence TOU 16, VisitBritain

## Is VisitBritain working for Wales?

151. In its written evidence, VisitBritain provided a variety of indicators to suggest that it was working successfully on behalf of Wales. These included:

- in 2012/13 users of VisitBritain.com were twice as likely to spend money in Wales than the average visitor and those visitors spent £16 million;
- evaluation of VisitBritain's 2012/13 tactical partnership campaigns shows that those who travel to Britain as a result of these campaigns are almost twice as likely to visit Wales than the average visitor to Britain;
- in 2012/13, when the Olympics took place, VisitBritain's press and PR teams generated 1,491 articles and 79 press visits on Wales with AVE (advertising value equivalency) of just under £90 million (to put this in context, VisitBritain's target for 2012/13 was AVE of £400 million). The latest available data highlight that between April and September 2013 VisitBritain generated 1,278 articles and 25 press visits on Wales worth £44.5 million AVE.<sup>94</sup>

152. In contrast, Professor Annette Pritchard described the international promotion of Wales by VisitBritain as "problematic"<sup>95</sup> and noted that "Wales is almost totally absent from much of VisitBritain's digital content"<sup>96</sup>.

Furthermore, she stated that "Wales is not being explicitly presented as a distinctive, different destination offer in VisitBritain presentations"<sup>97</sup> and that "much more needs to be done to embed Welsh products on VisitBritain's digital platforms."<sup>98</sup>

153. She suggested that a more effective VisitBritain strategy for Wales would be:

"One which marketed Great Britain as a constellation of three different countries and cultures. However, this is not a preferred option for the UK government and it is difficult to see any significant change to VisitBritain priorities and strategies in the short term."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> RoP, para 262, 18 June 2014

<sup>95</sup> Written evidence TOU 24, Professor Annette Pritchard

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Ibid

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> Ibid

154. Furthermore, although VisitBritain states that “encouraging visits to Wales, and promoting regional spread more broadly, is a key aspect of our strategy,”<sup>100</sup> overseas visitors to Wales – and indeed to all regions and nations of the UK outside of London – have been declining since 1999.

155. In giving evidence to the Committee on 12 June, Professor Pritchard told us that the Google summary for VisitBritain (found when searching for “VisitBritain”) stated: “Official UK tourism and places to visit: England, Scotland and Britain”. The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport immediately after that meeting, asking her to encourage VisitBritain to add Wales to this list as quickly as possible. Following the 12 June meeting, the VisitBritain Google summary was changed to include Wales.

156. When discussing criticism the Committee had heard of VisitBritain’s promotion of Wales, Patricia Yates, Strategy and Communications Director at VisitBritain told the Committee:

“I think that if you feel that it is not good enough, then it is not good enough, and we need to have a conversation about that and make it better. I take the criticism.”<sup>101</sup>

**The Welsh Government must do more to increase and improve VisitBritain’s promotion of Wales.**

**The Welsh Government should work with VisitBritain to establish challenging growth targets for VisitBritain to increase tourism in Wales.**

### **Research**

157. Wales Tourism Alliance told us there was a shortage of thorough research into tourism performance and growth prospects. It said:

“It is about making sure that we have up-to-date research—good, responsive research—and that we are not just relying on these top-level figures, which we tend to do a lot of, and making sure that we are very responsive and quick, so that we can get our message out there to our target markets as quickly as possible.”<sup>102</sup>

“We think that there is a large gap when it comes to research, which is why we are having a conversation with Cardiff Metropolitan

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<sup>100</sup> Written evidence TOU 16, VisitBritain

<sup>101</sup> RoP para 262, 18 June 2014

<sup>102</sup> RoP, para 31, 18 June 2014

University. Part of the gap is because the industry at times finds it difficult to engage in helping itself.”<sup>103</sup>

158. The WLGA’s written evidence suggested that:

“Measuring the volume and value of tourism in Wales is problematic as it needs to be model based with a number of variables fed into that model such as accommodation occupancy statistics. The Wales occupancy survey undertaken on behalf of the Welsh Government is a small sample size and cannot be used reliably for sub-national analysis to inform future initiatives.”<sup>104</sup>

159. Participants at our St Davids engagement event said that provision of timely, current data would be beneficial to businesses in forward planning and predicting future trends. Witnesses felt that the data produced by Visit Wales were made available too late for meaningful use by businesses.

160. This view was supported by the Wales Tourism Alliance, who told us:

“At the moment, we have very top-level figures that are very retrospective, to be honest. We are always looking back at what has happened, and that is all you can do, to be fair. However, we need to be a bit more predictive and say, ‘Well, this is the trend so far’. For instance, you can say that we have gradually come out of recession and tourism has done pretty well, but in terms of actually projecting forward, we need to look outside Wales and outside the figures we generally get, because there is a lot of information being produced by those big corporates outside that is giving us good indications. We need individuals who can take all that information and balance it out and say, ‘Actually, this is where we think the growth is going to be in the next five or six years’.”<sup>105</sup>

161. However, Professor Annette Pritchard’s written evidence stated:

“VW undertakes substantial research and monitoring of its tourism marketing and support programmes. This research is a high quality but it could be more effectively communicated to key stakeholders and thereby used for advocacy and lobbying purposes.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> RoP, para 34, 18 June 2014

<sup>104</sup> Written evidence TOU 25, Welsh Local Government Association

<sup>105</sup> RoP, para 33, 18 June 2014

<sup>106</sup> Written evidence TOU 24, Professor Annette Pritchard

**The Welsh Government should work with the industry to improve Visit Wales’s provision of timely, impartial research into tourism activity and trends in Wales.**

## **Training**

162. FSB Wales told us about the importance of training for people working in the tourism industry, and how it can be difficult for people working in small businesses to access this training in formal education settings. It said:

“In order to maximise the value of both the domestic and international tourism markets, ensuring those working in the area have the right skills is essential. Small businesses often do not have time to research what is on offer. A problem identified by businesses is that the majority of schemes are based in colleges and universities, making it difficult for small businesses in rural areas in particular to send staff on courses because of the distance and transport issues. The impact on a small business of having one or two people away on courses is greater than for larger companies. Often, on site or very local training is preferable. The timing of courses needs to take into account the seasonal needs of tourism businesses.”<sup>107</sup>

163. The National Museum Wales also highlighted the importance of good customer service and suggested:

“An all-Wales customer care training scheme to replace the recent Welcome Host should be considered.”<sup>108</sup>

164. Participants at our Llechwedd engagement event told us they found it difficult to attract young people into a career in tourism as it was seen as offering only seasonal employment with limited pay and career prospects. They felt that more degree standard courses were needed which linked up with businesses and provided opportunities for mentoring and work placements.

165. In his paper to us, the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism said that developing people was a key strategic aim, as was increasing the profitability of the industry. This would include working in partnership with stakeholders to extend the season and support higher yield so that salaries improved over time.

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<sup>107</sup> Written evidence TOU 27, Federation of Small Businesses Wales

<sup>108</sup> Written evidence TOU 23, National Museum Wales

166. The Deputy Minister also told us:

“As the Department for Education and Skills has the remit and funding budget to deliver training in the tourism industry it is vital that Department for the Economy, Science and Transport work closely with them – and the education and training sector – to ensure that the right training and qualifications structures are in place to develop the performance of the sector and achieve the ambitions in the Tourism Strategy.”<sup>109</sup>

**The Welsh Government should develop a strategy explaining how Visit Wales will work with the Department for Education and Skills to improve the provision of training for the tourism industry, including delivery dates and intended outcomes.**

### **Tourism Investment Support Scheme**

167. The Tourism Investment Support Scheme (TISS) is a Welsh Government scheme offering grants and repayable financial support for the purpose of upgrading the quality of facilities and increasing capacity where there is a gap in the market. The Welsh Government is also encouraging businesses to show how aspects of the planned development will directly benefit energy efficiency or environmental improvement.

168. Participants at our Llechwedd engagement event told us that capital funding provided by the Welsh Government, including help to build mountain bike trails, had been very useful.

169. However, an issue that was raised by a number of respondents in written evidence was the quality grading scheme for accommodation providers, in which participation is a prerequisite for TISS funding.

170. Under the Thatch told us:

“We're the only agency that currently gets no support from the current structures, either central or regional (or county) because we refuse to play what I consider to be the 'accreditation game' (where self-catering property owners have to pay annually or bi-annually to receive a star grading). I've never been satisfied with the grading system or its cost, and prefer to do our own, saving our clients money, and refusing the 'kick-back' within the system that the other

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<sup>109</sup> Enterprise and Business Committee Paper EBC(4)-23-14(p1), 2 October 2014

agencies keep. This means, however that we never get support and PR, which I've always felt was unfair.”<sup>110</sup>

171. The WLGA said:

“Direct funding support such as Tourism Investment Support Scheme (TISS) has improved the tourism offer. However, the quality grading scheme for accommodation providers for which participation is a prerequisite for TISS funding is likely to become less effective in the future. In the past the most effective route to market accommodation was through Visit Wales and marketing area destination brochures. As more accommodation providers use the internet for marketing, there is no incentive for them to participate in the quality grading scheme and therefore do not receive feedback on how to improve their offer.”<sup>111</sup>

**The Welsh Government should maintain a capital funding scheme (such as the Tourism Investment Support Scheme) for tourism businesses to improve their facilities.**

**The Welsh Government should re-evaluate whether participation in the Visit Wales grading scheme needs to remain a prerequisite for TISS funding, considering the contemporary, social media-driven way in which tourism accommodation is now marketed.**

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<sup>110</sup> Written evidence TOU 04, Under the Thatch

<sup>111</sup> Written evidence TOU 25, Welsh Local Government Association

## Funding issues

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### Sufficiency of resources

172. Several respondents to our consultation suggested that there were insufficient resources in Wales to develop the tourism industry. The Welsh Association of Self Catering Accommodation believed that “the current level of investment in tourism is not reflective of nor appropriate to the significant contribution tourism makes to the Welsh GDP”.<sup>112</sup> Wales Tourism Alliance noted that “in comparison to the private sector’s marketing spend, public sector resources on a UK basis are limited”.<sup>113</sup>

173. Professor Annette Pritchard agreed, stating that Visit Wales was “under-resourced” and received far less funding than its competitor tourism agencies in the UK. She told us:

“We are definitely not spending enough money. Wales is dramatically under-resourced. If you compare it with any other tourism development agency in the UK and abroad, it is surviving on peanuts. Wales has as much marketing clout as Glasgow, which is pretty shocking.”<sup>114</sup>

174. She went on to say:

“The message has to be that we need much more money to make Wales competitive. You can see that, when there was money, Wales was doing better in the international markets. In the mid-2000s, when we had strong marketing budgets that were matched with European funding—we are talking about marketing budgets of £50 million—Wales was doing well. We had the record peak of international visitors to Wales of over 1 million at that time—1.16 million or something like that. Since then, as budgets have decreased and the activity targeted at the overseas market has similarly fallen, visitor numbers have decreased. The correlation is quite clear, really, with spending money—obviously, you spend the money well—but we have a good product that is very appealing to people in the outside world. What we have to do is be able to communicate with them to build that brand and message, and then people come.”<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Written evidence TOU 08, Wales Association of Self Catering Operators

<sup>113</sup> Written evidence TOU 11, Wales Tourism Alliance

<sup>114</sup> RoP, para 119, 12 June 2014

<sup>115</sup> RoP, para 123, 12 June 2014

175. VisitBritain also told us:

“VisitBritain would advocate greater investment in Visit Wales to allow for increased international marketing activity, which could be conducted with and through VisitBritain, to make the most of Wales assets and grow the number of overseas visitors and the value of tourism to Wales.”<sup>116</sup>

176. Participants at our Llechwedd engagement event told us that although they believed Visit Wales did a good job, the scale of Government spending on tourism elsewhere in the UK made it difficult for Wales to compete. The shortfall in funding for marketing was especially significant because the challenge for Wales was to get tourists to visit for the first time; experience showed that they tended to return thereafter.

177. However, in his evidence to Committee, the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism said:

“I would never argue against having more money for marketing, but, that said, the twentieth century and the twenty first century were remarkably different places in terms of how you market a product. It is my view that the marketing budget is broadly proportionate to that of other UK countries. The total funding for our tourism industry this year is £20 million, but that excludes staff and running costs, which are often included in comparative figures. So, it is actually a competitive sum. The total marketing budget for the year is just under £8 million. I do think that the focus, far too often, is on input – that is, the budget – rather than the output.”<sup>117</sup>

178. He went on to add:

“The return on investment in terms of marketing is pretty incredible, so it makes sense to spend a little more in order to reap a little more back.”<sup>118</sup>

**The Welsh Government should improve the transparency of funding information by publishing a breakdown of the £20 million “total funding” for Wales’s tourism industry and comparative figures to enable stakeholders to make an objective assessment of how funding for Wales’s tourism industry compares with other parts of the UK.**

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<sup>116</sup> Written evidence TOU 16, VisitBritain

<sup>117</sup> RoP, para 90, 2 October 2014

<sup>118</sup> RoP, para 94, 2 October 2014

**The Welsh Government should recognise the substantial return on investment for tourism funding and the budgets of other competing nations. In light of this, it should review whether its tourism budget is sufficient to enable Wales to fulfil its tourism potential.**

### **European funding**

179. The Environment for Growth (E4G) programme receives funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) via the Convergence Programme, covering West Wales and the Valleys, and the Competitiveness programme covering East Wales.

180. This programme is work in partnership between Visit Wales, the Department for Housing and Regeneration, Cadw and Natural Resources Wales.

181. Since 2008, work has been progressing on six strategic projects:

- Valleys Regional Park;
- Heritage Tourism;
- Communities and Nature;
- Wales Coast Path;
- Coastal Tourism;
- Sustainable Tourism.

182. In its written evidence, Wildlife Trusts Wales was critical of the use of Environment for Growth funding to develop sustainable tourism. It stated that “the ERDF operational programmes in Wales have failed to provide any funding opportunities for biodiversity protection or enhancement.”<sup>119</sup>

183. It went on to suggest that:

“Other EU Member States recognised that EU funding is a key driver in delivering biodiversity benefits and grasped the opportunity to invest in their natural capital as a source of economic development through the ERDF. Particularly significant budgets for nature conservation interventions are provided through the convergence operational programmes for the Czech Republic, Murcia and Greece, where

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<sup>119</sup> Written evidence TOU 12, Wildlife Trusts Wales

upwards of 12.2% of the total convergence budget has been allocated for delivering environmental outcomes.”<sup>120</sup>

184. The Arts Council of Wales noted that in the previous funding round, timing and reporting issues meant that it failed to receive EU funding through Visit Wales to fund a “Digi-Music Tourism project.”<sup>121</sup> It stated that it was now investigating further EU funding opportunities for a Music/Economic/ Tourism project:

“Clearly, with the financial situation as it is, we have to look for all opportunities out there to draw in investment. We are definitely looking at these schemes coming out of Europe to develop all sorts of things, in terms of regeneration, music and tourism.”<sup>122</sup>

185. During the Committee’s recent work on EU funding opportunities<sup>123</sup> it heard compelling evidence that tailored support – which can involve relatively small levels of resources – can make a significant difference to participation levels. The support provided by the Welsh Government’s Media Antenna, for example, is highly valued by the creative and cultural sector.

**Given the value of tourism to Wales’ economy and the rich range of natural, cultural and other assets in Wales, we believe the Welsh Government, working closely with key stakeholders across Wales, should ensure that tailored support is available to maximise EU funding opportunities to help grow the industry in Wales.**

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<sup>120</sup> Written evidence TOU 12, Wildlife Trusts Wales

<sup>121</sup> Written evidence TOU 26, Arts Council for Wales

<sup>122</sup> RoP, para 183, 2 July 2014

<sup>123</sup> Enterprise and Business Committee report: [EU funding opportunities 2014-2020](#)

## Annex A - Terms of reference

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The terms of reference for this inquiry were:

- To assess progress made by the Welsh Government towards achieving its Programme for Government commitments relating to tourism, as well as the suitability of these aims;
- To assess the ambition and deliverability of the Welsh Government's aim to grow tourism earnings by 10 per cent by 2020, as well as progress made towards this aim;
- To assess the suitability and effectiveness of the structures and support the Welsh Government has in place for the tourism industry in Wales, and its future plans for regional support.

Issues that the Committee is considering as part of these terms of reference include:

- The clarity and strength of Wales's tourism "brand";
- The effectiveness of Welsh Government attempts to maximise the value of the domestic tourism market;
- The effectiveness of Welsh Government attempts to maximise the value of the international tourism market;
- Performance of Visit Wales compared with tourism development agencies in the rest of the UK;
- The success of Visit Wales marketing activities;
- The work of Visit Britain as it relates to Wales, and the extent of coordination between Visit Britain and Visit Wales;
- The sufficiency and effectiveness of Welsh Government resources targeted at promoting tourism and supporting Welsh tourism businesses, and whether it represents good value for money;
- How the Welsh Government monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its tourism support and marketing activities;
- The use made of opportunities for funding and other support from the EU;
- The success of Welsh Government efforts to increase the quality of Wales's tourism offer;

- The extent to which the marketing and development of tourism in Wales makes the most of Wales's cultural, historical and natural assets;
- The impact of major events on Wales's tourism economy, and the success of Welsh Government attempts to maximise this.

## **Annex B - List of written evidence**

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### *Organisation*

The National Showcaves Centre for Wales

James Brown

Dave Robinson

Under the Thatch

Ramblers Cymru

Alliance for National Parks Cymru

Campaign For Protection of Rural Wales

Wales Association of Self Catering Operators

South East Wales Directors of Environment and Regeneration

Pembrokeshire Tourism

Wales Tourism Alliance

Wildlife Trusts Wales

National Parks Wales

The National Association for Areas of Natural Beauty

Wales Environment Link

VisitBritain

Professor Stuart Cole

Railfuture Cymru

Walkers are Welcome Network UK

Steven Campbell-Kelly

Capital Traffic Management Ltd

Conwy County Borough Council

National Museum Wales

Professor Annette Pritchard

Welsh Local Government Association

Arts Council for Wales

Federation of Small Businesses Wales

## **Annex C - Witnesses**

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The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed in full at: [www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=8492](http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=8492)

### ***12 June 2014***

Prof Annette Pritchard	Cardiff Metropolitan University
Lowri Gwilym	Welsh Local Government Association
Huw Parsons	Carmarthenshire County Council

### ***18 June 2014***

Adrian Greason-Walker	Wales Tourism Alliance
Chris Osborne	
Iestyn Davies	Federation of Small Businesses Wales
Mike Learmond	
Geoff Cole	
Patricia Yates	VisitBritain

### ***2 July 2014***

John Griffiths AM	Minister for Culture and Sport
Llyr Jones	Welsh Government
Marilyn Lewis	CADW
Linda Tomos	CyMAL
David Alston	Arts Council for Wales
Siân Tomos	
Rebecca Brough	Wales Environment Link
James Byrne	

### ***2 October 2014***

Ken Skates AM	Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport & Tourism
Manon Antoniazzi	Welsh Government
Dan Clayton Jones	Chair, Tourism Advisory Board

## **Annex D - Notes of stakeholder events**

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### **Purpose**

The aim of these events was for Members of the Enterprise and Business Committee to hear the views and experiences of local tourism businesses.

### **National Museum, Cardiff - Thursday 26 June 2014**

Session 1, 10:30-11:30

The following people took part in the event:

William Graham AM (Chair)  
Neil Anderson, Associate Director, Capital Traffic  
Kevin Burt, Manager, Cardiff Castle  
Keith Davies AM  
Eluned Parrott AM  
Steve Salamon, Owner, Wally's Delicatessen  
Natalie Taylor, Community Liaison Manager, Flat Holm Island/Cardiff Harbour Authority

### **Summary of the main points made**

#### **Redevelopment of Cardiff city centre**

- The St David's 2 development had been a boost to retail, though the effect was waning. The rise of online shopping and out-of-town retail parks meant that shopping was less important for drawing people into the city centre.
- The cost of car parking was an issue for city-centre tourism.
- Where shops were lying empty in Cardiff's arcades, this was often because they were owned by London-based landlords who were prepared to wait for someone to pay the price they wanted.

#### **Tourism in Cardiff**

- More could be made of Cardiff's Victorian shopping heritage and independent retailers. A comparison was made with the marketing of Brighton's Lanes district.
- Cardiff's attempts to create a 'Brewery Quarter' and 'Castle Quarter' had not worked because they were too small, but an 'Arcade Quarter' could be viable. Exeter had successfully used colour coding to define different areas of its city centre.

- The castle is the biggest visitor attraction in central Cardiff. Along with Flat Holm Island Tours, it was using social media as a free alternative to traditional marketing methods. The castle had no capacity for outreach activities, but 56,000 people who live or work in the city had signed up to a 'Castle Key' scheme whereby they have free access to the site for three years.
- Among the castle's most popular events are the banquet nights, but although it holds more than 200 a year, the margins are low, with most of the profits going to tour operators.
- It was difficult to get Visit Wales to promote Flat Holm. The island was involved in collaborative marketing as part of the South Wales Attractions Partnership, and the best way of marketing the island was off the back of other attractions people visit.
- An online presence was now more important than hard-copy marketing. The Castle had reduced its spend on marketing by 30% over the last 10 years.
- Cardiff needed more distinctive branding.
- Culinary tourism was a growing market and Cardiff would benefit from a Michelin-starred restaurant.

### **Tourism in Cardiff Bay**

- Cardiff Bay might not have the right mix of visitor attractions, with too much emphasis on the night-time economy of bars and restaurants and too few retail opportunities. It was felt that Roald Dahl Plass was a wasted space, and that a market or event should be held there every weekend. It was suggested that Riverside Market might benefit from relocating to Roald Dahl Plass and attracting tourists as well as local customers.
- Attractions in the Bay could strengthen their collaborative work as the 'arc of entertainment', which runs from the Doctor Who Experience to Cardiff International White Water.
- The Extreme Sailing Series, which has been supported by the Welsh Government Major Events Unit, had been very successful.
- The Bay is quiet in the winter, but the Cardiff Harbour Authority (Cardiff Council) in partnership with the Waterfront Partners is looking at a six-week winter festival.

- Melbourne's reclaimed Bay area is a good example of how to do more to attract tourists.

### **Transport links**

- The lack of a good link between the city centre and the Bay was a problem. An extension to the water-bus service was suggested. Cardiff Harbour Authority had gone out to tender for a passenger waterbus transportation service, to act as a commuter and leisure/tourism service, a number of years ago, but the costs and subsidy that was expected from the public sector, and the risk for the private sector, were too high.
- A tram or trolley-bus link was also suggested.
- The fact that the Bay's rail link runs to Queen St rather than Central station is also a problem. Although there is a bus service from Central station to the Bay, and through-ticketing via PlusBus, this is not widely known outside Cardiff itself.
- A Wales tourism card was suggested, allowing visitors to use public transport more effectively.

### **Tourist information**

- This was seen as a major weakness in Cardiff.
- Tourism bodies should work with hoteliers to improve the information available to visitors in the places where they stay.
- More could be done with maps to help tourists. The information design used by the tourism industry in Wales is not especially clear. Many free maps, including online maps, are of poor quality, and Ordnance Survey maps are expensive. Capital Traffic's written submission to the inquiry proposes investigating mapping options for the tourism industry in Wales.
- However, Cardiff Bay provides tourist maps from the Cardiff Bay Visitor Centre and the Waterfront partners have developed a leaflet and map highlighting attractions, points of interest, etc. in the Bay.
- It was difficult to find information about Cardiff Castle, for example, on the Visit Wales website. VisitBritain was better, but still not particularly effective.

## **Changing models of governance for public sector tourism**

- Cardiff Castle was considering whether to adopt trust status. In recent years it had received £8 million of lottery funding and £10 million of capital funding from Cardiff Council. It had traded at a surplus for the last four years.
- Flat Holm Island has been run by Cardiff Council since 1996, initially in conjunction with Vale of Glamorgan Council. Money had been tight since the economic downturn and the council had recommended community asset transfer, with the RSPB and National Trust in talks.

## **National Museum, Cardiff - Thursday 26 June 2014**

Session 2, 11:45-12:45

The following people took part in the event:

William Graham AM (Chair)

Keith Davies AM

Stephen Davies, Managing Director, Penderyn Distillery

Chris Hadfield, Manager, Cardiff International White Water

Eluned Parrott AM

David Pearce, Strategic Director (Business Performance), Wales

Millennium Centre

Peter Trevitt, CEO, Techniquist

### **Summary of the main points made**

#### **Branding of Wales and Cardiff**

- Wales needs a clear and distinctive brand. This should be based on new research and aligned with a tourism strategy.
- Cardiff seemed unsure whether to prioritise the Bay or the city centre, with the focus switching from one to the other. It needed to find a way to market both.
- More could be done to market the Bay, in particular, to families.
- Tourist destinations within Wales could be 'twinned', to encourage visitors to move from one to another.

#### **Welsh Government Tourism Support**

- The VisitWales website was not helpful in terms of directing tourists to the Penderyn distillery. Even when you search for 'Penderyn' you are not directed to the relevant page.
- Support for tourism in Wales is too fragmented.
- Wales had had a more coherent approach to promoting tourism under the old tourist board.

#### **Transport links**

- The lack of an effective rail link between the Bay and city centre was a big issue. The original plans for redevelopment of the Bay had featured a monorail, but this was never built.

- Similarly, the A4232 link road was planned to connect with the M4 to the east of Cardiff, but was never completed; as a result, satnavs send tourists to the Bay through the industrial area around Rover Way, which is hardly the scenic route.
- Wales's proximity to London and Heathrow should be a strength, and something that differentiates us from Scotland, but our internal transport infrastructure lets us down.
- The recent improvements to Cardiff Airport were welcome.
- Wales needs a tourism presence at Paddington station.

### **Development of the Bay**

- It was difficult to move around the Bay. The Bay does not need more big buildings, but work on the spaces in between, including connections.
- Pont y Werin had increased footfall to the White Water Centre.
- A capital city like Cardiff should have an exhibition centre, ideally with two large halls and an auditorium capacity of over 2,000. If this were located between the Bay and city centre it might act as a link between the two.
- Bay attractions – including Techniquest, the WMC and Cardiff International White Water work to market themselves collaboratively, but the panel still felt the Bay was yet to reach its full tourism potential. It was felt that businesses could do more to encourage tourists to visit several attractions in one trip to the Bay.

### **Road signage**

- It is difficult for attractions to persuade the relevant agencies to put up brown road signs for tourists.
- The amount they charge for putting up brown road signs was prohibitive: figures were quoted of £18,000 for a trunk road and £250,000 for the M4.
- Tourist destinations north of the M4 were poorly served by signage on the motorway.
- Government could do much more to provide a streamlined, joined-up service to tourism businesses as far as road signage was concerned.

- Retailers like McDonald's were getting signage when local tourism businesses were being turned down.
- The Committee might look at the French model of a 'tourism corridor' in road signage, perhaps using new digital signs.

### **Distinctive Welsh products**

- Wales lacks strong food and drink brands. Penderyn has been a pioneer in this regard.
- Scottish tourism was partly based around distinctive products, such as whisky. Wales could make a different offer, based around experiences. It was suggested that though the Scottish tourism brand was perhaps better known than an equivalent Welsh brand, the tourism product in Wales was in many respects better.
- Much of the best Welsh produce is perishable, and so not easily adaptable to the tourism market.

## **Oriel y Parc, St Davids, Pembrokeshire - Thursday 26 June 2014**

The following people took part in the event:

Joyce Watson AM (Chair)  
Julie James AM  
Suzy Davies AM (substitute for Byron Davies)  
James Parkin, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park  
Dr Beth Swan, Venture Jet  
Andrew Tuddenham, National Trust  
Simon Morris, Bluestone Wales  
Ellen Llewellyn, Aberglasney  
Dilys Burrell, Anna's Welsh Zoo  
The Very Reverend Jonathan Lean, Dean of St Davids Cathedral

### **Summary of the main points made**

#### **Barriers to growth**

- The weather!
- The rationalisation of school holidays has had a huge impact on the summer season, effectively reducing it to five weeks.
- Unreliable broadband and mobile phone connections
- Locating tourist information centres in libraries has limited access to the services they can provide, due to libraries' limited opening hours.

#### **Marketing Strategy**

- Some small businesses don't feel they benefit directly from Pembrokeshire County Council's marketing strategy, although it is generally felt that the Council do a good job of promoting Pembrokeshire as a high quality destination.
- More dialogue with Pembrokeshire Council over their marketing strategy would be helpful.
- Events like Ironman Wales bring significant numbers of visitors to Pembrokeshire outside of peak season and should be encouraged as the economic impacts are significant.
- The market is very reliant on repeat visitors and has a very loyal customer base. Once people have holidayed in Pembrokeshire, they

tend to return year after year, but the difficulty is in attracting them initially.

- Greater emphasis on Pembrokeshire's unique selling points is needed.
- Consideration should be given to creating tourism packages for special interest groups (eg birdwatching, walking and photography).
- It was felt that a co-ordinated approach amongst local businesses in relation to flexible opening times was an important factor in providing a quality product to the consumer. It was suggested that Visit Wales could act as a conduit in implementing a through ticketing strategy.

### **Support from Visit Wales**

- There is a lack of clarity around what Visit Wales does and how it spends its money.
- Businesses are not clear about how the data collected by Visit Wales helps drive up their business.
- The Visit Wales website is hard to navigate and doesn't work effectively as a portal. Some of the businesses reported difficulties in getting up-to-date information about their business on to the Visit Wales website.
- If a business doesn't have a presence on the Visit Wales website it also doesn't appear on the Visit Britain website.
- It was felt that a single point of contact at Visit Wales would be beneficial.
- There was a general feeling that Visit Wales could improve their overall communication with businesses.
- Provision of timely, current data was seen as beneficial to businesses in forward planning and predicting future trends. It was felt that the data produced by Visit Wales was made available too late for meaningful use by businesses. Earlier access to data would be welcomed by businesses even if it were still in draft form and had not been officially ratified.
- Visit Wales needs a presence on Trip Advisor.
- The 'Have you packed for Wales' campaign is generally well regarded, although there is some concern that the adventure holiday aspect is predominantly aimed at young people.

- Faith tourism is an increasing market but it wasn't felt that there was enough support for this sector to help it grow.

### **Support from Welsh Government Major Events Team**

- Generally, experience of working with the Major Events Team has been positive.

### **Regional Tourism Partnerships**

- There was a view that the proposed changes to the regional tourism partnerships have not been well managed and that Pembrokeshire will lose out as a result.

## **Llechwedd Slate Caverns, Blaenau Ffestiniog - Thursday 18 September 2014**

The event was split into three groups, each consisting of local tourism businesses and Assembly Members. Group 1 consisted of the following people:

Joyce Watson AM (Chair)  
Suzy Davies AM  
Michael Bewick (Llechwedd Slate Caverns)  
Jana Jones (Attractions of Snowdonia)  
Ceri Cunnington (Antur Stiniog)  
Jennifer MacDonald (Welsh Mountain Zoo)

### **Summary of the main points made**

#### **Infrastructure problems**

- Mobile phone and broadband coverage must be improved. Nowadays most tourism businesses rely upon online bookings, which are often made using mobile devices.
- North-south transport links need to be improved.
- There is not enough good signage to direct tourists to attractions. However, the situation regarding brown tourism attraction signs has improved.

#### **Visit Wales and Visit Britain support**

- Regional Tourism Partnerships were a mixed success. One of their strengths was that they provided an opportunity for tourism businesses from different sectors to get together. However, they seemed to duplicate some of the branding work done by other agencies.
- The transition from Regional Tourism Partnerships to a new model of regional support could be positive, depending on how it is done.
- Research produced by Visit Wales is useful, and helps to create business cases needed for investment. Further impartial research would be welcomed.
- Capital support from Visit Wales (for example, for mountain bike trails) has been very helpful.
- Visit Wales is good at business support.

- Visit Wales' marketing aims are not communicated well with local stakeholders. Local businesses have not been approached to feed into the "Have you packed for Wales?" campaign. Stakeholders were also disappointed that only one attraction from north Wales featured in this advert.
- Visit Wales seems Cardiff-focussed – e.g. local businesses are not made aware of Visit Wales press trips, which they would have been able to help with. A clear point of contact for local stakeholders is required within Visit Wales.
- Visit Wales has insufficient resources.
- Visit Wales should invest further in providing a specifically Welsh welcome at Holyhead port and Liverpool and Manchester airports.
- Local tourism stakeholders do not have a direct relationship with Visit Britain.
- Visit Britain needs to do more to sell distinctive aspects of Wales. Selling Britain in a general sense usually means selling England.

### **Other Welsh Government support**

- Cadw do not seem engaged in tourism in the area, and have withdrawn from a number of local partnerships.
- There does not seem to be sufficient communication within the Welsh Government regarding tourism. This makes, for example, erecting signs to promote tourism businesses difficult.
- Communication between the Welsh Government and local stakeholders should be improved.
- Go Wales and Jobs Growth Wales are both excellent.

### **Welsh Government growth aims**

- Given the rate of growth experienced by tourism businesses last year (approximately 3-4 per cent), ten per cent growth in tourism earnings by 2020 seems achievable, but unambitious.

### **Other points**

- There is not enough tourist accommodation of high enough quality.
- Local authorities seem to appreciate the value of tourism in their area, but are still working out what their role is in supporting it.

- Local authority Destination Management Plans sound overly bureaucratic, and consequently local businesses do not tend to engage with them.
- The outdoor activity sector - and tourism businesses more broadly - help to retain talented young people in the area, and attract further talented people.

## **Llechwedd Slate Caverns, Blaenau Ffestiniog - Thursday 18 September 2014**

Group 2 consisted of the following people:

Rhun ap Iorwerth AM (Chair)  
 Keith Davies AM  
 Rachel Evans (Countryside Alliance)  
 Meurig Jones (Portmeirion)  
 Ceri Thomas (Cadw)

### **Summary of the main points made**

#### **Barriers to Growth**

- Although stakeholders felt that Visit Wales was doing a good job, the scale of Government spending on tourism elsewhere in the UK makes it difficult for Wales to compete. Glasgow alone has the same marketing clout as the whole of Wales. The shortfall in funding for marketing was especially significant because the challenge for Wales is to get tourists to visit for the first time; experience shows that they tend to return thereafter.
- A lack of joined-up working between local authorities was sometimes a problem. An example from south Wales was Penderyn whisky, which is situated in Rhondda Cynon Taff but is just a few miles from Merthyr; it cannot get a sign there because it is in a different local authority area.
- On the subject of signage, it was mentioned that New Zealand allows tourism-related retailers to have road signs, which works well. We could also do more to signpost play areas for children, which are important for families on holiday.

## **Infrastructure**

- Transport was another barrier to growth, particularly in this region. For example, it was difficult to persuade tourists in Llandudno to make the journey across to Portmeirion because the roads were seen as inadequate.
- Not enough was being done on the A55 to promote the tourist industry. The road carries huge numbers of people travelling to and from Ireland and there is an opportunity to interest them in Wales. A tourist map of the A55 would be useful, showing the various attractions along its route.
- WiFi and mobile phone network coverage continue to be problematic for tourism businesses. Customers now take connectivity for granted, but some of the areas of Wales that are strongest for tourism are weakest for broadband and mobile signals.
- Rail connections to London were a strength for north Wales, with a good service from Euston. It would be useful to introduce something like the Oyster card, though, so that visitors to Wales could use a single ticket to travel in different areas and on different modes of transport.

## **Marketing Wales**

- It was felt that Wales's history could be used more prominently in promoting tourism. Normandy, for example, was very effective in tying tourism to the historic WW2 sites along its coast. This was another way in which Wales might attract visitors, with many of our tourist destinations being rich in historical interest.
- Welsh literature could also be used to promote tourism.
- Food was another attraction we could make more of, with agri-tourism being hugely successful in places like Italy.
- Some recent advertising campaigns had tried to show that there was more in Wales than people realised. It was suggested that it might be better to focus on our known strengths.
- There was a general need for more advertising, especially in the north.
- We could do more to market Wales abroad and attract overseas visitors.
- The attraction of activities for tourists visiting Wales was often underestimated; for example, angling-based tourism was worth £150

million to the economy, and shooting was worth £75 million, but these were not featured in our advertising campaigns. We should look at ways of packaging these kinds of activities into a programme that would keep tourists in Wales for a week or more.

- There was praise for the Ten Top Attractions advertising campaign in North Wales, which had been successful in promoting the region – even if there were now 14 attractions in the top 10! However, this kind of campaign needed to be picked up by the likes of Visit Britain and promoted at a UK level.
- One suggestion was that the Visit Wales website should be themed, so that people can find destinations and activities grouped together appropriately.
- The panel were concerned at the loss of the regional tourism partnerships, and keen to know more about how they would be replaced.

### **Major Events**

- Wales has hosted many major events in recent years. How much of a boost do such events give to tourism? It was felt that the Ryder Cup generated interest in Wales during the build-up to the event, but not thereafter. The Welsh Open golf tournament, for example—which was hosted on the Ryder Cup course at Celtic Manor—has been discontinued just four years later. The fact that we hosted the Ryder Cup rarely features in our advertising these days.

### **Business Support**

- This was seen as one of the most valuable ways the Government could support the tourism industry. For example, Portmeirion had been looking at ways of better informing visitors about the history of the site, and would benefit from a visitor centre at the entrance where tourists could learn the basics. Government could help to add value to tourism businesses by supporting that kind of project, and by streamlining the planning process where appropriate.
- Similarly, the Government might be the right kind of agency to help produce and promote maps of the Ten Top Attractions.
- Small businesses often have particular difficulty in accessing support from the Government or EU, and this was something that might usefully be looked at.

## **Llechwedd Slate Caverns, Blaenau Ffestiniog - Thursday 18 September 2014**

Group 3 consisted of the following people:

William Graham AM (Chair)  
Mick Antoniw AM  
Liam Barrie, Marram Grass Café  
Sean Taylor, Zipworld  
Jonathan Williams-Ellis, Glasfryn Park

### **Summary of the main points made**

#### **Restructuring of regional support**

- Generally, the restructuring was welcomed as it was felt that previously there had been a lot of duplication in the work of the various agencies and they were all competing for the same pot of money.
- The Tourism Advisory Board needs more input from people operating at a grass roots level, especially those who can combine knowledge and experience of the industry with a good understanding of local issues.

#### **Visit Wales support**

- Visit Wales is not good at interacting with local businesses and therefore the appointment of Jane Richardson was welcomed.
- Where Visit Wales do consult with the industry, they do not appear to take those views on board.
- Greater clarity is needed in how to access advice from Visit Wales.
- Visit Wales advertising over the last four-five years has been poor.

#### **Infrastructure**

- A Welsh presence needs to be developed at Liverpool airport.
- Mobile phone and broadband coverage must be improved.

#### **Barriers**

- There is a lack of accountability in the planning authorities and no consistency in the interpretation of planning guidance.
- The planning process is too time consuming and bureaucratic.

- Local authorities are too risk adverse when making decisions in relation to planning.
- A senior member of the tourism department should be involved in approving planning applications.
- There is a perception among non-Welsh speakers that they are treated less favourably when dealing with some local authority departments than Welsh speakers.

### **Recruitment, Education and Training**

- It is difficult to attract young people into a career in tourism as it is seen as offering only seasonal employment with limited pay and career prospects.
- More degree standard courses are needed which link up with businesses and provide opportunities for mentoring and work placements.

### **Other points**

- There is a need to extend the season.
- Funding should only be provided for festivals held out of the summer season and should be limited to a period of two years.
- There are not enough high quality restaurants and there is insufficient high quality tourist accommodation.
- The northern European market is huge but is being neglected by the tourist industry. We need to identify the holiday patterns of these neighbouring countries to ascertain whether we can bolster the shoulder season.
- There are people on the ground who want to be listened to and who can advise.
- Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland work well together on tourism marketing. North Wales would benefit from a similar partnership with Liverpool because of its high-profile associations, such as the Beatles.