

Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee

EIN(2) 04-06 (p.4)

Date: 22 June 2006

Venue: North Wales Visitor Centre, Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay

Title: North Wales Tourism

Background

North Wales Tourism (NWT) is the representative body of the tourism industry in North Wales. The organisation is non-profit making and has some 1400 members. NWT provides a wide range of services, including developing and implementing marketing campaigns but more importantly, representing the interests of the industry for the benefit of the North Wales economy. NWT is a member of the Wales Tourism Alliance which represents the tourism industry nationally.

North Wales Tourism's principle aim is to improve business and develop the image of the region as a quality destination.

The Merger of WTB (now Visit Wales) into the Assembly Government Administration

The industry in North Wales is asking for evidence that the merger will not lead to any diminution of support for the industry generally. This is because the WTB traditionally provided the overarching marketing and development support framework within which small individual businesses (some SMEs but mostly Micro) carried out their own marketing and development. Given that tourism is the main industry supporting the North Wales economy, the continuation of this role is vital.

Business Support

There is concern within the industry regarding the weakening of support and lack of consultation between business and both WAG/EIN and local government. The direct interface between tourism operators and the customer uniquely positions the trade to shape the future direction of business support. Tourism operators in North Wales perceive that they have become increasingly isolated from both strategic and tactical decision making with regard to the level and direction of funding in support of the tourism industry.

What commercial tourism operators in North Wales are requesting from WAG having assumed the responsibilities of the WTB is:

- Meaningful consultation recognising the importance and contribution made by the tourism industry in North Wales to industry as a whole in Wales and to the economy of North Wales
- A willingness to develop policies which reflect the particular nature of the tourism industry in

North Wales.

- Recognition of North Wales as a tourist destination.
- A strong ongoing marketing campaign to give Wales a distinctive brand which will attract both UK and overseas visitors and which will be inclusive of North Wales as a destination.
- Working with the industry on targeted campaigns aimed at geographic areas and consumer groups of importance.
- Strategic Planning for quality development of the industry in consultation with the trade and backed by flexible and responsive systems of support, including appropriate financial support to implement those plans.
- Recognition and inclusion of the tourism industry in future European funding programmes.
- Direct support for improving skill levels in the industry and ensuring that the needs of the trade are properly reflected in the Assembly Government's skills and life long learning programmes.

Legislation and Regulation

- An appreciation of the burden of the increased level of regulation on an industry largely made up of small and micro family businesses.
- An understanding of the impact that business rates, which have risen by more than 80% in the last 10 years, can have on small businesses. The proposed introduction of a 10% 'bed tax' by the Local Government Association would make the UK one of the highest taxed holiday destinations in Europe

Concerns

- The need to take seriously the concerns expressed by the industry regarding the proliferation of both off and on shore wind farms which pose a threat to the region's scenic appeal and would be detrimental to the long term future of the industry.