

## **Enterprise and Business Committee**

Inquiry into Tourism

### **Engagement event with stakeholders**

**Llechwedd Slate Caverns, Blaenau Ffestiniog – Thursday 18 September 2014**

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#### **Purpose**

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

The event was split into three groups, each consisting of local tourism businesses and Assembly Members. 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