

Minutes of the
Cross Party Group on Disability
Wednesday, 9 December 2020
1.00pm to 2.30pm

Virtual meeting by Zoom

Attendees:-

Jeremy Balfour	MSP
Stuart McMillan	MSP
Mike Harrison	Treasurer / (SATA)
Julia Shillitto	Secretariat
Katie Mackie	Office of Jeremy Balfour MSP
Angela Dulley	Office of Mary Fee MSP
Gary McLean	Office of Mary Fee MSP
Leon Thompson	Visit Scotland
Marina DiDuca	Visit Scotland
Abby Richards	Euan's Guide
Mike Adams OBE	Purple Tuesday
Marg McNiel	See Around Britain
Andrew Ewen	Leonard Cheshire
Lynne Glen	Scottish Disability Sport
Maggie Ellis	EKTG
Aurora Constantin	Individual
Clare Lally	Individual
Paul Cockburn	Individual
Alison Wright	Carers West Lothian
Hussein Patwa	MACS
Jenny Milne	Scottish Rural and Islands Transport Convention
John Ballantine	Edinburgh Access Panel
Denis Shovlin	Scottish Churches Disability Group
Colette McDiarmid	MND Scotland
Robin Wickes	Edinburgh Access Panel
Tracey McFall	Partners in Advocacy
Michael McEwan	Individual
Megan Hood	Ecas
Donna Tomlin	Contact Scotland
Aidan Reid	rcpsych - Royal College of Psychiatrists
Gillian Sefton	Sacu
Fiona Warrender	Royal College of Occupational Therapists
Tina Yu	Sense Scotland
Salena Begley MBE	Family Fund

Nada Shawa	EaRN
Rory Hannon	Family Fund
Terry Robinson	Individual
Kerry Donaghan	Shared Care Scotland
Kayleith O'Neill	Individual
Sarah Cameron	Senscot
Ross Pollock	Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park
Douglas Logan	Scottish Destination Management Association
Yvonne Bole	RSPB, Loch Leven
Kenny Higgins	Elfenheim Park
Tom Wightman	Pasda
Marianne Scobie	GDA (Glasgow Disability Alliance)
Sue Sharp	DG Voices

Apologies:-

Kieth Robson	MS Society
Olivia Carson	CIPD
Hazel Kelly	RNIB
Richard Baker	Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans
Patricia Hewitt	Adult Carer
Alistair Bruce	Disability Equality Scotland
Ian Buchanan	Disability Equality Scotland

The minutes of the meeting were taken by Leon Thompson of VisitScotland

Welcome and Introductions

It was made clear at the start of the meeting that it was being recorded.

Welcome and introduction from Jeremy Balfour (JB) to the meeting and the agenda.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and seconded.

The group approved the application for the Royal College of Therapists membership to the group, with Alison Kerr recognised as member.

JB then introduced the session presenters and thanked VisitScotland for putting the agenda together with its focus on inclusive tourism.

Marina Di Duca, Inclusive Tourism Manager at VisitScotland set out the National Tourism Organisation's approach, referencing it in the context of the organisation's work on responsible tourism.

Marina set out the following:

Inclusive tourism: key audiences

Disabled people, friends & family; Families with young children, including low income families; seniors (over 55s)

Drawing on statistics from the International Passenger Survey and the Great Britain Travel Survey (2018) the UK market value of inclusive tourism is estimated at £1.6 billion, broken down as follows:

Day visits run to £1,177 million and Domestic Overnight trips: £414 million - described as some 15% of spend.

The virtuous circle of a great experience leading to more trips and business was described as vital. 83% of disabled customers tell others about their experience and 49% share on social media according to the Euan's Guide Survey.

Marina went on to set out VisitScotland's role and activity, falling into the following key areas:

Influence product development; create support tools for businesses; industry groups and destination organisations; encourage community involvement and collaboration to improve product/visitor experience; share expertise and provide advice.

VisitScotland's ultimate objective was explained as being to support sustainable, inclusive growth by supporting provision of a quality of visitor experience for all.

Four strategies were set out and described in helping to achieve this objective.

1. Raise awareness of the market, dispelling the myths and promoting the economic & societal value through activities like:

- access guides (500 created)
- 2000 users have completed Accessible Training programme
- 58 ScotSpirit Break Partners (This is a programme led by VisitScotland helping disadvantaged families enjoy a holiday.)

2. Address the business barriers by providing relevant advice and engagement tools:

- Dementia Tourism and Autism Advice Guides
- Creation of an inclusion checklist for events
- Best practice case studies

3. Encourage provision of quality information & accessible product by working in partnership:

- Collaborations with AccessAble, Euan's Guide and Purple
- Travel Trade Itineraries
- Regional accessible tourism itineraries
- Accessible Forth Valley – Growth Fund support project

4. Influence & provide expertise to staff to see inclusion as integral to our corporate behaviour:

- Access Guides for key VisitScotland iCentres and local offices
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Steering Group & Charter

Additional services and resources were also highlighted, including Neatebox, virtual inclusion and customer e-tutorials created by Purple, all highlighted as some of the services and resources promoted by VisitScotland to assist in the advancement of inclusive tourism.

Marina then handed on to **Abby Richards, Communications Manager of Euan's Guide.**

Abby introduced Euan's Guide – online disabled access guide, been running for seven years, with thousands of access reviews for venues across the UK.

Information is provided by disabled people based on their experiences and from venues; and it's all about giving disabled people confidence and choice to visit new venues.

Abby then set out the results from the 2019 (pre-covid) survey which covered more than 1,000 people and found the following:

93% of disabled people try to find disabled access info before visiting venues for the first time.

81% look on venue websites for access statement information.

41% avoid venues that do not have / do not share access statements.

Covid has heightened concerns with people looking for accurate and up to date information.

It is important that venues address concerns pre-arrival and 56% of people taking part in the 2020 Covid survey would like to see Covid precautions listed beside disabled access info.

Other top concerns from the Covid survey included social distancing, toilets and queues, and then use of face coverings, one-way routes and parking and public transport.

Abby provided some solutions for venues, which include sharing disabled access statements; make sure this is only a click away on websites; create an accessibility guide; and list to Euan's Guide to benefit from honest reviews, good use of images and information from venues.

The third presenter, **Mike Adams OBE Founder and Director of Purple Tuesday** introduced the organisation and set out the goals.

A disability organisation which supports businesses on their journey to being more inclusive. Purple provides a range of training, audit and wider consulting products and services which are bespoke to individual businesses.

Purple is the creator of Purple Tuesday (www.PurpleTuesday.org.uk), a change programme for organisations of all sizes and sectors to get involved with to improve the customer experience for disabled people 365 days a year.

Mike set out some key statistics related to the Purple Pound - the spending power of disabled people and their families.

In the UK, the Purple Pound is worth £274 billion and is estimated to be rising by 14% per year.

However, less than 10% of businesses have a targeted plan to access the disability market. This was highlighted as not only a huge frustration for disabled people, but also a missed opportunity for businesses who could be benefiting both socially and commercially by opening up to the disability market.

Another stat highlighted was that 50% of people in the UK have a disabled relative, so are mindful of the experience they have.

The success of Purple Tuesday (November 2020) was described, reaching 11.6 million people on Twitter; generated 270 plus items of media coverage; the TV ad was viewed more than 1.5 million times and trended at #5 on Twitter worldwide.

In talking about a COVID recovery plans Mike highlighted the need to make it inclusive; make the physical environment more accessible in a socially distanced world; make online digital environments meet minimum industry standards; integrate disability awareness training into new ways of working for all staff.

As part of activity for 2021, Purple is planning to delivered 12 webinars and creating engaging resources for the UK's workforce, highlighting the importance of delivering quality experiences for disabled people every day.

The fourth presenter **Marg O'Niell, Founder-Trustee of See Around Britain** set out the background to and this online resource.

An information paper was circulated ahead of the meeting and Marg set out the background to See Around Britain.

The key points included:

Marg McNeil, along with Trevor Palmer BEM and Vin West MBE, is a founder trustee for a disabled-run charity called 'See Around Britain'.

It aims to encourage full use of its photographic nationwide platform and survey of a huge range of venues and welcomes online volunteer contributors to expand its coverage.

It now has well over 16,000 venues covering the UK, Ireland and Europe, and over 1,000 venues in Scotland.

It is intentionally fully inclusive and not just aimed at disabled people, so that it reaches as many citizens as possible, both residents and visitors, and by its extensive use of photographs shows what to expect at any venue.

It is multilingual in over 50 languages, and also uses GPS so that its users can find venues wherever they are located.

Volunteers of all ages can participate online to help the charity writing venue descriptions for its huge backlog of venue photos waiting to be uploaded to the website, or contributing to the charity's social media platforms to help raise its profile, or when able to provide photo and video surveys of new venues, including venue owners, to show anti-Covid measures.

To upload them & for further information & to register directly as a volunteer go to <https://seearoundbritain.com/about-us>

One of its aims is to help disabled people move safely out of lockdown by inviting citizens and venue owners to submit photographs and videos that will help give confidence and reassurance to people who need or wish to visit a venue.

During the worsening of Covid this is even more critical, as Disabled citizens are 11 times at risk of contracting and dying from Covid 19.

Two key asks were made at the meeting.

1. SAB needs a firm commitment by the Governments of the UK of active engagement and promotion SAB.

Action: the group agreed that the convener should write to the Minister for Equalities highlighting SAB. This has now been done, and letters have also been sent to the other relevant ministers in the devolved administrations and UKG.

2. A call for more volunteers - <https://seearoundbritain.com/about-us>

Action: Details shared with CPG members.

Following the presentations questions were taken and points made around the importance of transport being accessible and improved parking. The importance of getting websites right was highlighted.

Improved access to the outdoors was discussed, including guides that specialise in providing walking and climbing experiences for disabled people.

AOB

Megan Hood of ECAS updated the group on the holiday opportunities provided by ECAS.

End

The date of the next meeting of the CPG on Disability is scheduled for Wednesday 3 February 2021 at 1.30pm by Zoom.