

Visit Mid Wales – a delicate balance to support tourism and keep communities safe

As a region, Mid Wales relies heavily on tourism. The region - Powys, Ceredigion and the Meirionnydd - covers more than 42% of Wales and is not currently subject to any lockdown restrictions.

Mid Wales currently has one of the lowest Covid -19 rates in the country and this is a reflection on who we are in Mid Wales, the way our visitors, communities and businesses have all pulled together to protect our fragile economy whilst keeping everyone safe.

MWT Cymru has had a difficult task of navigating the delicate balance between promoting the region, encouraging people to visit safely, supporting our members and reassuring our communities that all possible measures have been implemented by our businesses to minimise any potential risk.

As a tourism membership organisation, we have never felt closer to our 600 plus tourism and hospitality member businesses and have worked incredibly closely with the Welsh Government and officials. Everyone has worked tirelessly over the last few months to enable our sector to re-open safely following months of closure.

Since re-opening in July, our member businesses have reported that visitors to Mid Wales have been respectful and understanding of the situation, they have followed the rules and been vigilant.

International travel journalist Simon Calder's recent comments on ITV's This Morning show, and the recent visit and comments by Stacey Solomon and Joe Swash to the Elan Valley praised Mid Wales as a great place to visit - a good, positive story for Mid Wales and a much-needed boost for our region in these difficult times. It was disappointing, therefore, that the coverage received negative comments on social media channels.

Our businesses have all worked so hard to safeguard their employees, visitors and local communities since the start of the Covid-19 crisis. They have invested in all the necessary Covid-secure measures to protect their communities.

It is understandable that a small minority project their fear and anger online but some of these people do not even live or work in our region. The resulting negative media coverage has the potential to impact our reputation as a warm and welcoming destination and could even affect the speed of our recovery following this crisis.

Mid Wales business owners are doing their very best to keep themselves and their families afloat through very difficult times. They are protecting jobs and livelihoods whilst keeping families and local communities safe.

With a long winter ahead of us, and virus infection cases rising in all parts of the UK, it is more important than ever that we all pull together to help each other through this difficult time. We all need to be aware of the unintended consequences of online comments which could be putting our independent businesses in imminent risk of closure, negatively impacting on jobs and livelihoods.

Our fantastic visitors love coming to our rural region to stay, relax and experience the great outdoors. They take in our peaceful countryside, visit local shops, independent restaurants, attractions and frequently comment about our warm and welcoming communities. This is the Mid Wales we all know and love, and it's important that visitors who are planning future visits see this reflected in balanced media coverage and online commentary.