

MWT Cymru

Warm welcome awaits visitors to Mid Wales says tourism leader

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The chairman of an organisation that represents more than 600 tourism and hospitality businesses in Mid Wales has hit back at negative social media comments and stressed that visitors can expect a warm welcome in the region.

Rowland Rees-Evans, who heads MWT Cymru, appealed for a united, balanced approach during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic to support tourism and hospitality businesses and communities across Mid Wales.

His appeal follows negative social media comments in response to media interviews with international travel journalist Simon Calder and celebrities Stacey Solomon and Joe Swash last week.

Appearing on ITV's This Morning show, Mr Calder said Mid Wales is a great place to visit, referring to Machynlleth, the Centre for Alternative Technology and Barmouth. Solomon and Swash revealed that they had enjoyed a visit to the Elan Valley near Rhayader.

"It's a great shame that high profile travel journalist Simon Calder is castigated for suggesting that Mid Wales is a good place to go on holiday," said Mr Rees-Evans, a director of the family-owned Penrhos holiday, golf and leisure park at Llanrhystud, near Aberystwyth. "Mid Wales is open for business and is a great place to visit on holiday or to take a short break.

"It is very disappointing that such a positive story for tourism in Mid Wales, which gave a much-needed boost to our region in these difficult times, resulted in negative comments on social media channels.

"Whilst it is understandable that a small minority may wish to project their fear and anger online, some of these people do not even live or work in Mid Wales. 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.

“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 jobs and livelihoods.”

Mid Wales - Powys, Ceredigion and the Meirionnydd - covers more than 42% of Wales and is not currently subject to any lockdown restrictions. The region relies heavily on tourism, which supports thousands of jobs directly and in the supply chain.

“The region has one of the lowest Covid -19 rates in the UK, which 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,” stressed Mr Rees-Evans.

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

“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.”

He stressed the difficult task facing MWT Cymru in navigating the delicate balance between promoting the region, encouraging people to visit safely, supporting member businesses and reassuring communities that all possible measures have been implemented 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,” he added.

“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 members have reported that visitors to Mid Wales have been respectful and understanding of the situation, they have followed the rules and been vigilant.”

Picture caption:

Rowland Rees-Evans, MWT Cymru's chairman.

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