

Welsh Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Wales as a global tourist destination](#),
HC 1088

Wednesday 20 April 2022

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Stephen Crabb (Chair); Geraint Davies; Ruth Jones; Ben Lake; Robin Millar; Beth Winter.

Questions 31 - 50

Witnesses

[II](#): David Anderson, Director General, National Museum Wales; Ian Edwards MI FIH, Chief Executive, The Celtic Collection and ICC Wales; and Rebecca Williams, Assistant Director, National Trust Cymru.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: David Anderson, Ian Edwards MI FIH and Rebecca Williams.

[This evidence was taken by video conference]

Q31 Chair: Good morning to our second panel as part of our session looking at Wales as a global tourist destination. It is the first of the evidence sessions that we will be undertaking as part of this new inquiry. I am delighted that on our second panel we are joined by David Anderson, Director General, National Museum Wales, and Ian Edwards, Chief Executive, The Celtic Collection and International Convention Centre Wales, and we are joined remotely by Rebecca Williams, Assistant Director, National Trust Cymru. I know that you were all listening into that previous session where we had quite a wide-ranging discussion about some of the opportunities and challenges for Wales as a global tourist destination.

I will start this section of the evidence session by asking Mr Edwards about the level of ambition within Wales around tourism and international tourism specifically. When I look back over the last 10 or 15 years and the work that you and Terry Matthews have been doing at the Celtic Manor, whether that is the Ryder Cup or the NATO convention, you have been out there at the very peak of Welsh ambition in trying to attract international attention on Wales and making it a focus. Looking back over that period, do you feel that other players in the sector have met your level of ambition? Do you feel that you have helped move the whole industry forward, or do you feel that the events I have just talked about were more of an outlier?

Ian Edwards: I hope that we have helped Wales with that ambition. You heard previously how resilient our industry is, but they are not just resilient, they are ambitious as well. I am hugely proud of the efforts that we have done with Sir Terry and also with Welsh Government and UK Government in moving our ambition forward. When Sir Terry built the Celtic Manor, or when he added the extension in 1999, the whole purpose of that was to bring international tourism to Wales. It started back then with the Ryder Cup, and for the golfing market it absolutely put Wales on the international map, but that was predominantly around golf. I suppose if you are not a golfer you may not know what the Ryder Cup is. It definitely helped propel golf in Wales, no question at all.

It was a springboard for us then to see what else we could do and how else we could promote Wales internationally. The next phase of that journey was pushing business events and business tourism. We have heard previously about our reputation and the inflow of the international market. A big percentage of the international market comes from business tourism. When business tourists come to a destination, over 60% of those tourists will come back again not as individuals, but with family, so you can multiply that by one, two, three, four-plus people. Our ambition then was to see what else is out there, and we worked hard with



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UK Government and Welsh Government. It was very much a Team Wales approach to bring NATO to Wales. What an achievement that was for Wales and Team Wales and for UK Government.

Once we did that, we decided to work with Welsh Government and work very closely over a long period to encourage them to work as a partner with us to build the International Convention Centre for Wales. If you have not been there, I suggest you go and have a look at it. It is outstanding. Of course I am going to say that, but it is the best international convention centre in the UK, no question. We have worked hard on that and we have done some big events and great events. Business tourism, once we get going—unfortunately we have been shut longer than we have been open. We were shut for two years because of the pandemic, but we are already starting to get into our stride this year with some major events like CYBERUK that is coming in May.

The economic impact will be £80 million per year for £100 million investment. We are excited about that. The ambition has come with us from Welsh Government, with support from UK Government and our colleagues within the industry. We have a long way to go but we are definitely moving in the right direction.

Q32 Chair: Fascinating. Thank you very much, I am sure there will be further questions along those themes in a moment. Mr Anderson, I will turn to you and ask you about the role of cultural tourism in Wales as Director General of the National Museum of Wales. How important is having that capital centre cultural offering to attracting international visitors?

David Anderson: Culture has enormous potential for Wales and we are already achieving it in a fair degree. One of the things we have done in the last decade is redevelop the St Fagans Museum just outside Cardiff. I believe that we have transformed that offer to tourists and to local residents in Wales as well. We won UK Museum of the Year award in 2019. We were Which? Best Museum in the UK in 2020, and we were Which? Best Museum in the UK in 2021, so fingers crossed for 2022.

On ambition, if I can pick up in part on the previous question, the ambition of the cultural sector is very strong and we have demonstrated that commitment by redeveloping St Fagans. We have turned it into a showcase for contemporary Wales as well as the history of Wales. We tell the story of Wales in a way that very few other places are able to do at the moment. We bring it in as a comprehensive offer. Therefore, I have no doubt that cultural tourism is one of the growth areas going forward out of Covid that we should be focusing on.

Q33 Chair: Have you already seen the fruit of that strategy with an increase in international visitors to the museums?

David Anderson: Yes, we get about 35% of our visitors come from over the border, in the sense that they are not Welsh residents. Of those—the last time we did a survey before Covid hit—about 25% were from the rest



of the UK and 10% were broader international tourists. We believe the potential for more international tourists is strong.

I still vividly remember the Japanese ambassador of about four years ago coming to Cardiff to visit National Museum Cardiff. He did so because he had heard, I believe from outside the UK, about the impressionist and post-impressionist collections, which he and his wife were very passionate about. He came and we welcomed him and showed him round. A matter of a few months later he came back with Japanese airline representatives, more people from the Japanese embassy and Japanese tourism people, because he said he felt that Japan was not aware of the riches of Wales culturally. He was going the extra mile by saying he was now trying to encourage us in his own tourism industry to regard this as a great opportunity for them. He then came back himself several times more in the next year or so.

I think there is a very clear message from outside Wales, from outside the UK, about the potential of culture and reach out across the globe and to bring people to Wales.

- Q34 **Chair:** Thank you, that is interesting and insightful. We will come back to some of those points in a moment. Rebecca Williams, it is good to see you and National Trust Cymru. How does the National Trust present a picture of Wales internationally? Is the National Trust being proactive in trying to make Wales better understood to international visitors, or are you focused mainly on domestic members and the domestic market?

Rebecca Williams: I think it is a bit of both. The important thing for me is the quality of the visit as well—regardless of where your visitor is coming from, we should offer a high-quality, genuine and memorable experience that sells Wales at its best. Building on what we have heard from the museums, that is important to make Wales stand out as a visitor attraction. That will help us whether the visitors are international or domestic visitors, but hitting on the quality of visits is key as well.

- Q35 **Chair:** Before I start to bring in some of my colleagues, can I ask you about the Snowdonia National Park, where obviously National Trust Cymru has a big interest? Headlines over the last few days in Wales were relating to the fact that Snowdon is full. How concerned are you that there is a negative message about Wales being presented to do with Snowdon being full and stories of people using the path up to the mountain for going to the toilet and that kind of thing?

Rebecca Williams: It is sad to hear those stories and seeing those kind of images. There is a point again about the quality of visit, and sadly those people who have been visiting Snowdonia this week and climbing Snowdon will not be getting the quality of visit that we would like them to have or an image that we would like them to leave with.

We need to balance numbers against experiences and ensure that we get that right. Sadly for us, we have seen similar places, not just Snowdonia,



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and the impact from the small minority—and it is a small minority—who possibly do not respect where they are visiting. The costs of that for us as a conservation charity are that we are spending money cleaning up and possibly not investing in the conservation that we could be doing otherwise.

- Q36 Robin Millar:** On that point, I am very fortunate in Aberconwy that about two-thirds of the constituency lies within Snowdonia National Park, and we have problems such as the Chairman has mentioned but also of parking and the difficulties there. As operators, owners and curators of major attractions, how much of the expectation of visitors is shaped long before they arrive? I wonder if this is an effective way for us to start addressing these inappropriate behaviours by setting people's expectations before they get out of bed, before they leave their house and travel over. What is your experience of shaping messaging in that way to visitors to your attractions?

David Anderson: I think we realise that we have to go upstream. By the time somebody arrives at our museums, it is already too late in some respects to shape those expectations. For us, one of the key issues is keeping a balance between the interests of the local communities and local populations and those who are coming in as visitors. One of the purposes of Amgueddfa Cymru is that we should represent Wales and our museums should reflect life in Wales, both historically and as it is today.

One of the things we want to set is the value and significance of Welsh culture, which by implication, therefore, is very much deserving of great respect as well. On our own sites, we find that people are generally very well behaved and mix very well with different kinds of visitors. We have a site up in north Wales at the National Slate Museum in Llanberis and we understand and empathise with the local residents for what they have experienced in the last year or two. As perhaps you are indicating, it is a matter of communicating, but it is also about building the infrastructure needed to be able to shape the tourism targeting around what is available and in a way to make it a positive relationship between people who are living and working in the area and those who come in.

- Q37 Robin Millar:** I will ask about the Tourism Recovery Plan in a moment but, Mr Edwards, do you have any thoughts on shaping expectations and messages to your visitors? I do not mean to imply that any of your visitors behave in that way, but I am curious about that.

Ian Edwards: Absolutely, it is hugely important. Shaping their expectations right at the beginning has a massive impact on what they will experience when they are here. For example, again talking about international tourism, when we are out, whether it is IMEX in Germany or America or IBTM or any international destination, the first thing we sell is the destination and not, for example, the International Convention Centre. It is Newport in our case, and then the attractions around that.



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The Welsh Government have a brilliant basics programme at the moment where they are investing £2.5 million in the basics like toilet infrastructure, and so on, because all of those things, while they might seem minute to us, massively impact the guest experience when they are here. If we want the guest or the visitor to come back again, we have to get it right, and the basics have to be right and the infrastructure has to be right. More importantly, if we want people to invest in our area, it absolutely has to be right. Yes, it is about shaping that experience before they get here, but delivering on it when they are here is just as important.

Q38 Robin Millar: I will come back to you on that point, if I may. What are the National Trust's thoughts on that?

Rebecca Williams: One of the very few positives possibly to come out of the last two years is the way that we have worked with partners in the tourism sector—with Visit Wales and National Parks, NRW and other attraction owners—to try to work through how we co-communicate to visitors, share messages and use social media and channels like that to inform visitors before they arrive and be supportive of each other as a tourism sector. That has worked well in ensuring that we are not promoting peak days at Snowdonia, for example, and in moving people around or highlighting different parts of Wales at different times.

That has been a very successful way of working together, which is as a result of the pandemic, but I hope that continues. That allows us to do some of that work in preparing people—highlighting that there is a countryside code, for example, and visitor behaviour or expected behaviour—and in getting messages across in a less threatening way but in a way that is tangible for people. That partnership, sharing hashtags and sharing key messages, has worked well, and I hope that continues.

Q39 Robin Millar: I am particularly interested in the Tourism Recovery Plan and initiatives around sustainability. Do you think that there is good engagement between UK and Welsh Governments on that, and have you had involvement in the shaping of that plan at all yourselves? Mr Edwards, I will start with you.

Ian Edwards: We have, and we have had huge engagement, particularly with the Welsh Government, on how we come out of the situation we are in now and how we move forward with that. We are fortunate in Wales that we have direct access to senior Government officials and senior Ministers. I think it is fairly unique, particularly during the pandemic, that for two years we had weekly meetings with Welsh Government officials and Ministers to talk about the situation we were in and the recovery from it. I am proud to say that we have been involved with that and the communication has been both ways.

David Anderson: Likewise, we have had very close communication with Welsh Government throughout the last two years, working closely with National Trust, Cadw and other similar heritage organisations to ensure



that we are very consistent in what we are doing and that visitors are not finding they are getting one set of rules or experiences at Amgueddfa Cymru and another one at, say, a Cadw site. That has meant that we have also been very much kept up to date on the intelligence of how things could move forward and have been able to prepare in advance for likely directions of travel.

We see ourselves as part of an ecosystem and I do not think any cultural organisation can see itself in isolation. It is important for us, as we go forward, that the cultural sector as a whole moves forward and—

Robin Millar: Can you clarify whether that is an ecosystem that is UK-wide or a Welsh ecosystem?

David Anderson: Predominantly, for people visiting, it is Wales-based, because people will come to Wales and they will do activities within a reasonable travelling distance of wherever they settle.

However, our role within the wider UK picture is also very important and perhaps something that we can come back to because clearly—we have heard earlier on in this session—the recognition rate for Wales is not as high as I am sure it is for England. England is 100%. I do not know what the figure is for Scotland but I would suspect it is significantly higher than Wales is, for all sorts of reasons as well. I think that getting recognition for our work in the UK-wide sector is important and how we are identified in that is important as well.

Q40 **Robin Millar:** I will conclude with a question about sustainability. It is a big problem in Aberconwy at a very small level, but also at a large level you have to think about these things. Is there anything that is missing that you think should be included in the sustainable tourism plan? Rebecca, if we can start with you.

Rebecca Williams: I am not sure I am best placed to answer that one. For me the sustainability with tourism is, from our perspective, about ensuring that tourism development is hand in hand with what the community can manage and cope with and getting that balance right and recognising that balance is key to successful tourism. Things go badly when we add to that balance.

Ian Edwards: I agree. The sustainability of tourism within Wales is obviously hugely important. It is at the top of everyone's agenda at the moment, but we are doing everything we can as it stands at the moment. There is obviously still more to do. As we become more educated within this process, the stronger we will become.

David Anderson: Again, I am probably not the best qualified person to comment on it more broadly but I will give an anecdote. To get from the centre of Cardiff to St Fagans there is a bus, and it goes once every half hour. I think most visitors to Cardiff have no idea where it starts or even that it exists. We would love to see fewer visitors coming by car to St Fagans and far more people coming by public transport. I think that



would also in many ways improve the quality of the experience for visitors. I acknowledge that investment is always a challenge for Governments, both UK and Welsh, but some of the things that are about seeing the needs of local communities and tourists have been very closely aligned and I think is important, and public transport is one of the key elements of that.

- Q41 **Beth Winter:** Can I pick up very quickly on a couple of points that have already been mentioned? My constituency is located in the south Wales valleys, which has a huge amount of cultural heritage and history but is also looking towards the future. We have Zip World at the north end of the valley and we also have Penderyn Distillery. Similarly to Cardiff, you cannot get a bus from one to the other directly, you have to go through the villages. We are also seen as a gateway to the Brecon Beacons. I am interested, particularly from Ms Williams and Mr Anderson, about how we get tourism promoted more in the south Wales valleys, so that people are coming out of Cardiff and up to the valleys, and also about how we link the past with the future. There is so much to offer in the previously industrial south Wales valleys. I do not know if either of you have any particular comments on that looking forward.

David Anderson: Investment in the south Wales valleys is crucial. We hope that the Cyfarthfa proposed development, for example, will be significant, for that part of the valleys anyway.

The National Coal Museum, for example, very powerfully tells the story of the past of the coal industry. There is potential for interpretations, which are looking forward and maybe link up again with sustainability and environment, too. We have natural scientists working for the museum who have been doing studies of the ecology of the coal waste tips, for instance, and seeing how the natural environment is slowly reclaiming those environments. Those are things that we are doing, for which we are involving local communities in doing the surveying. We have a lot of those community-based survey projects.

There are ways of starting to reflect Welsh presents and futures, even in historic sites, which can start to tell the different stories about the valleys as well. I worry that we do not say enough—and I would include museums in this—about the very positive present. Museums should not just be about the past; they should be about celebrating the present.

- Q42 **Beth Winter:** Ms Williams, do you want to add anything?

Rebecca Williams: Something that we have been trying to look at is how we work beyond our boundaries as well. It is not just necessarily about getting people to come to visit us, but how we present information and knowledge about what we do and what we care for outside our boundaries. A recent campaign that we have been working on is our blossom campaign, where we are connecting people to nature. We have worked with politicians and people like yourselves in planting trees in all



sorts of communities right across Wales with the intention of creating that hub, that link to try to tell the story differently.

Also picking up on the point that Mr Anderson made about the museums, we are giving a lot of consideration to how we tell our stories and what stories we tell at our places, to ensure that it is welcoming and we offer diverse stories to encourage people who possibly have not previously visited that might want to come along and see what we are doing at our properties as well.

Q43 Beth Winter: The other question relates to the international perceptions of Wales. I was surprised to see the Nation Brands Index say that Wales ranked 45th out of 50 countries on overall familiarity. What more could be done to raise Wales's profile abroad? I will ask Mr Edwards first.

Ian Edwards: There is a huge amount that needs to be done. We are 45 out of 50, and that is not great and it is not something that is new as a challenge. We have faced this challenge for many years. I think it is a challenge in the UK domestic market as well as the international market in perception and where we were. I hosted a meeting with some major London businesses at ICC Wales on Tuesday last week, and every single one of them could not believe how close Newport was to London. They thought—and I am serious, these are serious people in serious businesses in London—it was four, five hours away, and it took them an hour and a half to get from Paddington to Newport.

I think we have a problem in the UK domestic market, and we also have a massive problem in the international market, but I think we are addressing that going forward. For many years Visit Wales dipped out of the business events market, so we did not promote business events internationally. That is a big mistake. When we compare ourselves to Scotland and England, they have the infrastructure around business events. In Scotland, you have Glasgow and Edinburgh with massive convention centres that have been promoting that for many years. They have the infrastructure, and the airports that support all that. They have been in the international ring for a long time pushing that. We are back in that ring now and I am pleased to say that Visit Wales is working with us in that international market.

The way to keep doing that is to be standing loud and proud and saying, "This is who we are and do not be afraid, you might not have heard of us. You thought whales swam in the sea but we are more than that." There is a lot more to do, and we are now pushing hard in that market. Obviously we have been out of it for a good two years because of Covid, but we have jumped back into that arena now and we are starting to push it hard.

We are also working with VisitBritain. The relationship between Visit Wales and VisitBritain probably four or five years ago was not at its best, but there has been massive improvement and massive collaboration between Visit Wales and VisitBritain. I think they are both underfunded.



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To be able to shout and promote us internationally you need funds to promote yourself as a marketing campaign. None of this comes for free. It is about investing. If you want to be known internationally, you have to put your hand in your pocket and show that you want to be part of that. It is not cheap, but that is what makes a difference. Be there and stand there as loud and proud as Wales.

David Anderson: I will make a controversial statement, if I may. I was born in Northern Ireland and I have lived in each of the four countries of the United Kingdom during my life and career. I think the future is Wales when it comes to tourism. In relative terms of where there is potential for growth and development and discovery, I think that Wales has greater potential than any other part of the United Kingdom. If we start off with that very positive assumption, which I believe is well based on the realities of Wales and its potential as well, our way of looking at tourism in Wales could shift quite a lot.

I do not think we are helped always by the train companies, if I am honest. Great Western's poster, which I am sure many of us have seen, says, "Five Have a Caper in Cardiff". That says nothing about Welsh culture. It is rather a demeaning statement for a nation to have that as the way it is presented by the major company bringing trains into Wales, but it is indicative of a mindset that has to change.

We have been through a process of developing our brand recently and, as part of that, we have consulted internationally as well as within Wales and the United Kingdom. There was very interesting feedback from the German consultation process, which was that Welsh culture and the Welsh language are tremendous assets for Wales because they identify distinction, difference, tradition and heritage in a way that nobody else can offer.

I very much hope that these elements of distinction are not seen as an issue; I would particularly argue from the UK tourism perspective that when presenting the four nations internationally, they are seen as assets and advantages. I personally would like to see UK tourism, alongside the Welsh tourism industry, looking at the United Kingdom as four nations, each with very distinctive offers to make. I think that will increase the potential tourism for the whole of the United Kingdom, not diminish it or mean that one is feeding off another. There is additional tourism to be found by taking a much more focused, culturally-rooted approach to all this, and the evidence we had from the German consultations we did was very strongly about that way.

One more thing to add on this is that in building up that tourism—I mentioned the Japanese ambassador a little bit earlier—we sent a major exhibition from our art collections to Japan a few years ago. It was seen by approximately 500,000 people in five cities across Japan. The exposure of Wales through Amgueddfa Cymru's collections was enormous. There is again huge potential for us to use major arts



interventions and exhibitions. In the Rugby World Cup in Japan, for example, we know that Wales was partnered with Ōita. I went there as part of that, and the warmth for Wales that is felt there and the connection that is still felt there is very strong. A few weeks ago, at the initiative of the museum at Ōita, we signed an MOU with them. This is in support of the Welsh Government's MOU.

There are foundations through sport and culture that we can build on. I am not saying that is the only answer, but a strategy of recognising Welsh culture—the valleys and the rural north Wales Welsh-speaking areas, for example—and the diversity of Wales has huge potential, and we should seize it. Amgueddfa Cymru is absolutely 100% there to do that. That is why we are working so much with Japan and so closely with Ireland and Germany. We have also, twice in the last just over a decade, sent major exhibitions to cities across the United States.

Chair: We just need to pick up the pace a little bit if we are going to stay within time.

Q44 Ruth Jones: All of you have already mentioned marketing campaigns and you have looked at VisitBritain and Northern Ireland's campaign. In your own areas, what would you do differently or better to improve it from a Welsh perspective? I need to tell you that I have been to the ICC and the dragon is iconic. I think he should be mechanised and he should be breathing steam. I understand the safety features of the M4, but I think that would be better, having seen the graduation photos and the social media—absolutely brilliant. What would you do better and differently?

Ian Edwards: In marketing it internationally? We are in our infancy. Again, I touched on it a moment ago, but Wales dipped out of promoting business tourism internationally as a market that we stepped away from because of lack of funding. Unfortunately VisitBritain as well, because of lack of funding, is stepping away from marketing business tourism, which is unbelievable.

If I had my way I would absolutely be putting more money into promoting business tourism pan-Wales, not just ICC. We have Venue Cymru in the north as well. It is about promoting business tourism internationally, going to all—and we do go—of the international events that promote business tourism but again showing that we are a proper destination, with a stand of substance. If you go to IMEX in Frankfurt, for example, which is at the end of this month, Scotland will be there loud and proud with their huge stand with all of their partners, and we need to get to a position where we are doing exactly the same. Visit Wales is doing that. We need to encourage partners to come with us to promote that.

As I said earlier, business tourism does not just promote one person coming to a conference and having a few drinks and networking. What it does do is 60% of them will come back again with their families. More



importantly, business deals are done at those type of events and people will then invest in that area if we show that we are the right place to do it.

We held the aerospace conference in 2019, just before we went into lockdown. It was the biggest event they had ever done in the UK because of our location. Again, people could not believe how where we sit in Newport that 64% of the UK population is within a two-hour drive. No one knows that. I know it and hopefully other people will know it now. We have to start shouting and promoting the proximity and the infrastructure that we are now starting to get. We are a long way from getting it right, but we are definitely on that footing, but it is absolutely about investing in international events.

Q45 Ruth Jones: Absolutely. Thank you. Rebecca, if I go to you next. Tredegar House in Newport West is very important to us. What would you do better in marketing the campaigns there?

Rebecca Williams: I think for me there is something about maturity. When we brand Wales we often think of dragons and daffodils and we absolutely need to move beyond that in the messages that we give off internationally. For me, it is about the connection to nature, to beauty and to history, and about people getting that experience and that feeling—that is what we need to be selling and investing in.

Again, particularly looking at the pandemic over the last two years, we have seen how much people have valued being closer to nature and closer to beauty. I think there is something powerful in that, and in being strong and confident enough that when people come and visit us in Wales we have amazing places for people to come to. It is about investing and connecting people and providing experiences that are unique for us in Wales.

Q46 Ruth Jones: David, do you have anything to add?

David Anderson: The cultural sector is an industry in itself. Amgueddfa Cymru, before Covid, was contributing £83 million per annum GVA to the Welsh economy. Very broadly speaking, £1 of investment in Amgueddfa Cymru was producing an additional £4 of return for the Welsh economy. I will expand that out and say that will be true for very many other cultural heritage organisations—National Trust being a case in point, and Cadw. We need to be regarded as an industry. There is very often a tendency to regard culture as being a soft thing that you add on the end of stuff. In fact, we are a major industry and that needs to be borne in mind.

Also we should perhaps bear in mind that we have many tens of thousands of international visitors who come for three or four or five years—the students. They are a significant proportion of the student population in Wales, and I feel we could do a great deal more to nurture them, because they very often will be people who will think about coming back later in their careers and maybe making decisions about where to



invest in some cases later in their careers. There are networks there, along with the Welsh diaspora, that we could be building on more.

We need to think of culture as being embedded in this wider concept of economy, industry and long-term future development as well. We also know that a lot of key business decisions about where to locate firms are made on the basis of what it will be like to be one of the senior executives who makes the decisions, what it will be like to live there. That has a significant economic impact. I think again the more that we give a chance for businesses and business leaders to be able to come to Wales for a conference, for example, the more likely it is they will suddenly realise what they did not know before, which is what a wonderful country it is and think much more positively possibly about investing in it. That is probably one of the reasons why Japan is such a major partner for Wales when it comes to Japanese businesses in Wales.

Ian Edwards: Can I come back on that? What we do differently, maybe it would be when we go and exhibit internationally that we work collaboratively with our colleagues in the cultural sector and do not just have a stand that shows ICC and the hotels that are in the area. We should think about what else can we do. Even if it is learning from today, how do we bring different partners to promote Wales internationally?

David Anderson: Could I add to that, if I may? Sorry to jump in. But I think if we go back to the 500,000 people who saw the exhibition a few years ago in different cities in Japan, how fantastic would it have been if the Welsh higher education sector had been there, if the business sector had been there? If you have to explain what is Wales, then having a major exhibition at the centre of your city that is from Wales is a very good platform to make that explanation from.

I quite agree that, learning from today, there are synergies we could use to try to maximise the impact of each of our different parts.

Ruth Jones: I can see a whole new focus group coming together.

Q47 **Ben Lake:** Thank you very much for your answers this morning. I am keen to probe a little bit further on VisitBritain's work and some of its campaigns in supporting tourism in Wales. Can I ask you for your comments on the "Welcome to Another Side of Britain" campaign and specifically whether or not it was successful in supporting tourism in Wales? Could you also comment in your remarks about whether you felt that the focus on cities was a benefit to Wales?

Ian Edwards: You touched earlier on Cardiff as a destination. Cardiff as a capital city does not get the true marketing that it should. It is an amazing city and I do not think we put enough emphasis on that. We talk about coastal and rural, but we have Swansea, Cardiff, Newport, all of these areas could be a real focus as a destination and bring people into Wales.



VisitBritain has been focusing their campaigns over the last two years on UK domestic marketing and that was right at the time because obviously the international market could not travel, so I think their focus was correct. Again, because VisitBritain and Visit Wales are working more collaboratively now it was not a case of stepping on toes where previously it would have been. This is what we do, Visit Wales. We market domestically, you market internationally.

I think there is always more that we can do. The campaigns do work—they create that awareness—but again you need constant funding because nothing is for free. Both areas are definitely underfunded in pushing those campaigns, but it absolutely works. Visit Wales has done an incredible campaign recently saying Wales is open for business, but again we have to keep on pushing that, particularly in the international market.

David Anderson: I agree. There is great potential in the cities of Wales too. As well as the future being Wales, I think that the future also needs to be hybrid in the sense that it cannot be either adventures and landscapes or nothing. It has to be different options for people. The city experiences—Bangor, for example, is another case in point. There is great potential there. They also have the benefit perhaps of having a bit more infrastructure in place at the moment so it can be built on without creating some of those tensions pre-investment that are happening in some of the other areas.

My feeling is that—I agree with you—there has been a much closer relationship between the UK tourism leads and the Welsh ones, and that synergy is absolutely essential. It will be helpful for Wales if there can be as much synergy in what is being said about Wales between the UK and Wales. It will be a different story for different nations within the UK. I personally believe there is a lot of potential for that for Wales and that does not undermine the UK initiatives. I think that means a better sell internationally.

Rebecca Williams: There is something about that point in time with the VisitBritain campaign that we have these major events happening this year. The question for me is about how you create the ripple effect from those events that possibly helps us to promote and highlight some of the activities in Wales. If people are visiting the Commonwealth Games, for example, that is not far from Wales. How do we ensure that the people who are using this as a landing point to get into Britain are then having the opportunities to flow out from that? How we make those connections is the key thing I would be looking for.

Q48 **Robin Millar:** Thank you for your time today. It has been fascinating for me to hear your comments. You have touched on several points I want to ask about brand, but I will start with a question about business, because my understanding from business, and the little experience I have in it, is that you back the winners. The fact is that most people come to the UK



and we attract something like 2% of the visitors to the UK. It seems to me that the thing to do is to try to peel off that visitor group. They are coming to the UK already; how do we bring them across to Wales? How do you think we could do that in branding and appeal?

David Anderson: I have touched on this already, I think. The cultural distinctiveness of Wales, the identity of Wales—

Robin Millar: Just to be clear, this is within the context of the UK. They are coming to the UK and we need to tell them about Wales.

David Anderson: It is that it is different to what you find anywhere else. Clearly the recognition factor at the start is a major problem for Wales—the fact that people are not aware it is there. But I can only go by the feedback we have had on our own international consultations over brand and say that that was the message we were getting back. I did not predict it but it was very clear and very loud, which is one reason why we need to be very confident in arguing for that distinctive identity there.

Clearly it is part of the UK brand as well. I am very glad that we are beginning to diversify from the Britain is Great campaign because I do not personally think that sold Wales particularly strongly. I think ways of branding the UK that are more diverse would probably increase our pot together as well.

Q49 **Robin Millar:** Mr Edwards, you made a very powerful case for selling Wales as a business destination. How does that work in the context of the UK and Wales again? How do we peel more people off into Wales?

Ian Edwards: There has been a massive missed opportunity for the tourism sector with Expo in Dubai. I do not know if the panel went to the event, but all the countries around the world—maybe not all, but a huge percentage of the countries around the world were at Expo. Britain had a stand there and I asked the question of VisitBritain, “Why was that stand there? What did it do?” It was apparently for artificial intelligence, which was the sector that they were looking at. But if you went to the stands for Azerbaijan or Zambia, they were predominantly there for tourism. The people who go to that event are tourists, so not AI specialists or not someone who is going to invest in tech. I think that we had a massive missed opportunity at Expo for the international market. I did go and when I was there it was just full of people who wanted to know—and I booked my holiday to Azerbaijan while I was there. No, I didn’t, that was a joke. But the point is that it made you feel as though that is where you wanted to go, and I think we had a missed opportunity there.

Once people are in the UK, it is a challenge because we know that the international travellers predominantly will stay in London, they will go to Oxford, Cambridge, and push maybe up north if you are lucky. There is a massive opportunity to bring—when they are there, how do you capture them? Again it goes back to marketing. For example, when we hosted the NATO event in 2014, we were on every single TV channel around the world—not just golf channels, every channel.



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Following that we did a marketing campaign in the London Underground, across all the major Tube channels to say, "Did you hear about NATO? Did you know where it was hosted? It was hosted in Wales." Remarkably people started to come to us, the international market started to travel. The easy answer is we know where the market is, we know where the people are, let's get out there and promote Wales in London, not just in Wales week, on St David's Day, but all the time. We have to be in your face promoting Wales. If you have ever stayed at the Celtic Manor, you are probably hit all the time with our marketing campaigns because I am a big believer in shouting about what you have and giving people a reason to come and stay. That is not just Celtic Manor or ICC, that is the whole of Wales.

Q50 Robin Millar: I completely agree. People get fed up with me talking about north Wales. Rebecca, Mr Anderson mentioned Bangor—I was born there—and Penrhyn Castle is one of the National Trust's properties. How does the National Trust market Wales distinctively within the UK?

Rebecca Williams: I think the challenge for us as an organisation is slightly different because we are very fortunate in having that strong National Trust brand as well. The challenge for us as National Trust Cymru is how we ensure that everything we have spoken about today in terms of our cultural identity is obvious when visiting Wales. When people come to our places they know that they are coming to visit a place in Wales and are able to have a unique and distinct experience from some of our places in England.

The National Trust is historically a very strong brand, so how do we use the networks, the value, the brand that we have, and work in partnership with colleagues in other organisations? What we have learnt so much over the last couple of years is that tourism is not necessarily about working against other organisations, but working with other organisations and with other destinations, and that is where the value comes. There is much more we can do in not cumulating our brands together but adding the value of our brands to sell Wales and sell it as a destination. Then we will all get the advantage from that.

Robin Millar: Certainly one of the messages that I am taking from today is that blend of tourism plus business, of dragons, daffodils and the other things that come with that.

Chair: Mr Anderson wanted to make a very brief supplementary comment.

David Anderson: A very brief comment, which is that I think we need to propose contemporary Wales as a vibrant modern society with fantastic arts experiences, as well as the historical part, which is profoundly important too. But I think that perhaps we could do more with the contemporary bit.

Chair: Thank you very much. Mr Edwards, I completely agree with your comments about the Expo event in Dubai. The United Kingdom stand was



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a massive missed opportunity—not just a failure to market the United Kingdom as a whole, but also to bring out some of the complexities, the fact that we are a Union of nations. There was nothing about that on the stand. I went there in January and it was a huge let-down.

We have had an interesting discussion this morning—very insightful—and we are very grateful for your time: Rebecca Williams, remotely from Cardiff; Mr Anderson, thank you; Mr Edwards; and our first panel as well; and my colleagues on the Committee. It has been very useful, thank you.