



House of Commons  
Welsh Affairs Committee

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**Wales as a global  
tourist destination:  
Government Response  
to the Committee's  
Fourth Report**

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**Sixth Special Report of Session  
2022–23**

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 25 October 2023*

## Welsh Affairs Committee

The Welsh Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales (including relations with the Senedd Cymru—Welsh Parliament).

### Current membership

Stephen Crabb MP (*Conservative, Preseli Pembrokeshire*) (Chair)

Simon Baynes MP (*Conservative, Clywd South*)

Virginia Crosbie MP (*Conservative, Ynys Môn*)

Wayne David MP (*Labour, Caerphilly*)

Geraint Davies MP (*Independent, Swansea West*)

Ruth Jones MP (*Labour, Newport West*)

Ben Lake MP (*Plaid Cymru, Ceredigion*)

Robin Millar MP (*Conservative, Aberconwy*)

Rob Roberts MP (*Independent, Delyn*)

Dr Jamie Wallis MP (*Conservative, Bridgend*)

Beth Winter MP (*Labour, Cynon Valley*)

### Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

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Committee reports are published on the Committee's website and in print by Order of the House.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Aneesha Bhamrah (Committee Operations Manager), Gabriel Byrne (Committee Specialist), Eldon Gallagher (Committee Operations Manager), Sarah Ioannou (Clerk), Chloe Jago (Senior Media Officer), Francis Morse (Second Clerk), and Lara Stace (Committee Specialist).

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You can follow the Committee on X (formerly Twitter) using @CommonsWelshAff

# Sixth Special Report

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The Welsh Affairs Committee published its Fourth Report of Session 2022–23, Wales as a global tourist destination (HC 220) on 12 July 2023. The Government's response was received on 19 October 2023 and is appended below.

## Appendix: Government Response

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### Introduction:

The Government welcomes the publication of the Committee's report and is grateful for the Committee's comprehensive inquiry into 'Wales as a global tourist destination'.

The Government shares the Committee's view that tourism is a cornerstone of the British economy – a significant economic, cultural and social asset to the United Kingdom. In 2019, tourism contributed £75 billion to the UK economy – 4% of the UK's total Gross Value Added (GVA) with the sector directly supporting 1.7 million jobs.

As the sector continues to navigate the challenges from COVID 19, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has full confidence in the long-term strategic planning efforts of the Tourism Recovery Plan, which is set to keep tourism on a path to a more resilient, productive and innovative future. As tourism policy holds interest across Government, the Plan reflects cross-Whitehall efforts to ensure that tourism continues to thrive in an increasingly competitive landscape. Furthermore, the UK Government also has a long track record of UK wide investment in tourism across the Home Nations. For example, the Government has accelerated its investment in three Growth Deals in Wales (Swansea Bay, North Wales, and mid-Wales), where over £84.5 million will be invested in local economic priorities, including visitor economy projects. As such, the UK Government remains committed to facilitating inbound and domestic tourism with our Wales counterparts.

A full response to each of the Committee's recommendations is provided below. The text taken from the Committee's report is in italics and highlighted in bold.

***Recommendation one: We recommend that VisitBritain and Visit Wales work together to develop a strategy, by February 2024, for promoting Wales as a first-choice destination for international visitors to the UK. A key aspect of this should be the development of a distinctive brand that raises awareness of Wales, which can be used consistently to help market Wales and to raise awareness of its location as a holiday destination.*** (Paragraph 39)

VisitBritain has worked closely with Visit Wales for many years to ensure Welsh products are incorporated in all their activity. VisitBritain promotes Britain abroad by running campaigns in best prospect markets to maximise their reach and impact. They generate a return of investment of £21 for every £1 invested and, as a result of their activity, international visitors spent an additional £34 million in Wales in 2019-20 alone.

VisitBritain's international marketing campaigns are part of the GREAT programme inspiring the world to collaborate, visit, study, live, work and do business around the UK.

Visit Wales leads on the development of a tourism brand specifically for Wales, while VisitBritain works with Visit Wales to ensure these brand values are reflected in the broader GREAT Campaign.

VisitBritain's Strategic Partner Framework is designed to deliver the growth and recovery of the UK visitor economy by working in partnership with Visit Wales, VisitScotland, and London & Partners. As part of the strategic framework, partners feed in their growth objectives and priorities, which then drives how VisitBritain develops brand stories and themes. Visit Wales is an active part of that framework approach.

**Recommendation two: *Visit Wales should investigate working with the Welsh diaspora to increase the diaspora's attachment to its Welsh heritage, with a view to increasing international visitors to Wales.*** (Paragraph 40)

Although this recommendation is addressed to Visit Wales, DCMS is supportive of Visit Wales' work in this space and takes our commitment particularly to Wales' natural heritage very seriously. The UK Government continues to support and represent Wales at UNESCO, most recently supporting 'The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales' to successfully become a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2021. This recognises the Outstanding Universal Value of the rich history and heritage of slate quarrying and mining in Wales at a global level, which aims to contribute to a rise of international visitors.

Similarly, one of DCMS's public bodies, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, continues to deliver a number of grant programmes focused on natural heritage for the Welsh Government. Since 1994, the National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded over £460 million to more than 3,200 projects in Wales – ensuring the Welsh offer remains attractive for the Welsh diaspora and beyond.

**Recommendation three: *When developing a joint strategy to promote Wales, as a distinct destination, we recommend that VisitBritain and Visit Wales encourage tour operators to include Wales in UK holiday packages. We expect VisitBritain to report its progress on this issue by February 2024.*** (Paragraph 61)

VisitBritain works closely with Visit Wales to support connections with relevant tourism operators in Wales. Although Tourism policy is devolved, VisitBritain still has the power to market Wales abroad. As a result, VisitBritain organises trade events, such as ExploreGB, Destination Britain North America, and Destination Britain China, to connect international buyers with British suppliers in order to open up new connections and business opportunities for British destinations to be sold around the world. Spaces are always made available specifically for Welsh businesses, and Visit Wales has the role of recruiting Welsh businesses to join these events.

However, uptake by Welsh organisations could be improved. Despite Visit Wales offering subsidised places for Destination Britain North America 2023, Welsh businesses did not take up all of the allocated slots, and – as of 19 October 2023 – no Welsh businesses had signed up to the upcoming trade missions in India and China. Nevertheless, VisitBritain will continue to liaise with Visit Wales to ensure the benefits of tourism are spread across all Home Nations.

Each year VisitBritain also organises a series of educational trips for international travel trade buyers across Britain, including Wales. In 2023, buyers from Germany, Canada

and Brazil visited destinations across Wales as part of that programme. Locations can be initially proposed by our market leads, Visit Wales or the destination management company. The final itineraries are confirmed with the agreement of all three joint parties.

VisitBritain is also committed to ensuring that inbound tour operators are able to develop and market tourism to and around the UK from international visitors. The Inbound Tour Operator Amplification and Distribution Fund promotes the regional spread of tourist visits, as well as the promotion of visits outside traditional seasonal peaks. As applicants must have a permanent place of business in either England, Scotland or Wales, the Fund provides eligible applicants with grant-funding to support the cost of marketing tourism itineraries in their choice of one of VisitBritain's priority overseas markets as a means of driving forward tourism recovery and growth.

**Recommendation four: *VisitBritain should make improvements to better reflect Wales as a distinct location, with an increased Welsh presence in its marketing materials and a greater number of Welsh tourism offerings featured on its website. VisitBritain should report to us on progress made by February 2024.*** (Paragraph 62)

VisitBritain recognises the importance of marketing in supporting the wider visitor economy, and does so by ensuring that all parts of Britain are sold in international markets – connecting trade partners, hosting events to connect buyers and suppliers, and promoting positive stories of Britain to the international media using social and digital channels. A new commercial website launched in December 2022 promotes visitor offers, including from Wales, in English, German, French, Spanish, Italian and Dutch. A new industry website will also be launched imminently. VisitBritain ensures all Welsh content is shared with Visit Wales and regular meetings provide an opportunity for Visit Wales to review and give feedback on the perception of Wales as a distinct location across marketing materials.

The Tourism Exchange GB (TXGB) is a digital Business to Business platform that brings together tourism businesses. It enables suppliers to manage live availability, pricing and bookings across multiple distributors. TXGB has been working with Visit Wales for the last 12-18 months, and is on-boarding more Welsh products. Both VisitBritain and Visit Wales are conscious that creating bookable product is an important part of making more experiences and attractions visible to visitors, which makes TXGB an important element of how they work with industry. In total, VisitBritain has already had over 180 leads and expressions of interest from Wales-based tourism businesses, including over 60 that were interested in the recent VisitBritainShop.com National Lottery campaign.

The VisitBritain shop is working to increase the number of Welsh products available. Suppliers can approach the VisitBritain shop to be included on the platform and, where there are particular gaps, VisitBritain will reach out to suppliers to invite them to join the platform. In the past year, the number of Welsh products available on the VisitBritain shop has increased. This is partly due to campaigns like the National Lottery Days Out campaign, where UK consumers can redeem lottery tickets to receive a £25 voucher via the VB shop for attractions across the country.

**Recommendation five: *VisitBritain and Visit Wales, in fulfilling the various other recommendations made in this Report, should assess how they can better collaborate, including in the sharing of data.*** (Paragraph 83)

VisitBritain (including VisitEngland), VisitScotland, Visit Wales, Tourism NI and London & Partners meet quarterly to share recent work and discuss topics of common interest. For example, domestic traveller sentiment is monitored through their jointly funded monthly tracker and official domestic volume and value statistics, which facilitates a deeper understanding of consumer sentiment that can be used to deliver innovative, creative and data-led campaigns for international visitors to the UK.

Moreover, VisitBritain's in-market teams work closely with Visit Wales located in 16 countries globally, who work to promote the whole of Britain across 22 markets.

The strategic partner framework with Visit Wales, VisitScotland, and London & Partners is used to move towards a shared focus and set of priorities. As part of this framework, VisitBritain are in regular contact with Visit Wales through marketing and PR functions.

**Recommendation six: *We call on the UK Government and the Welsh Government to recognise the key importance of transport to the tourism industry. We urge the UK Government and the Welsh Government to bring forward proposals to address these issues, focussing on the potential positive impact on tourism of resolving this infrastructural deficit. The UK Government and Welsh Government must look creatively at ways to better fund transport infrastructure projects.*** (Paragraph 107)

**Recommendation seven: *In particular, we urge that positive consideration be given to the proposed new direct rail link to Heathrow Airport from the west. This would hugely improve connectivity between Wales and Heathrow and make it much easier for international tourists to come to Wales.*** (Paragraph 108)

The UK Government believes that transport is key to binding the family of nations – that is the United Kingdom – closer together so that prosperity can be shared more evenly and that to realise our full national potential we must mobilise the resources and skills of all parts of the UK. We are committed to investing in transport infrastructure projects which better connect Wales locally and with the rest of the UK.

The former Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, asked Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill, CBE, to undertake an independent review into how transport connectivity across the UK could be improved. Lord Hendy's review was published in November 2021.

The UK Government is grateful to Lord Hendy for his work and is considering his 19 recommendations carefully. We will publish our response as soon as is practicable. The UK Government has set aside funding to support studies into options for strengthening some of the UK's main transport arteries, in line with Lord Hendy's recommendations. We are continuing to engage with the devolved governments to consider opportunities to collaborate on projects that address some of Lord Hendy's key recommendations.

On 2 February 2023, the UK and Welsh Government jointly announced £2.7 million of UK Government funding to develop options for further enhancement of the South Wales Main Line and for additional rail stations to relieve M4 congestion. Transport for Wales and the Welsh Government have submitted further funding proposals for studies to improve connectivity with Wales and decisions will be announced in due course.

Separately, the UK Government is committed to investing in rail in Wales and £2 billion will be invested between 2019 to 2024. Office of Rail and Road figures demonstrate the

Government's commitment to investment in rail across Wales. In 2020-21, Government funding of the operational railway was £1.27 per passenger km in England and £2.39 per passenger km in Wales. Furthermore, over £343 million is being invested in Welsh schemes from the rail enhancements budget in the current railway Control Period (2019-2024).

The Department for Transport is also working closely with the Secretary of State for Wales, Transport for Wales (TfW), Network Rail, and regional authorities through TfW's Metro Development Strategy Boards to bring forward integrated connectivity solutions across the various regions of Wales. The studies being progressed under the auspices of the Metro Boards consider local needs including the tourism industry.

The Department for Transport is investing £1 billion to electrify the North Wales Main Line, bringing parts of North Wales within an hour of Manchester. We will oversee more punctual, reliable journeys on the 126-mile route between Crewe, Warrington, Chester, Llandudno and Holyhead, where ferry services run to Dublin.

In response to a recommendation from the Welsh Affairs Select Committee we have, together with the Welsh Government, established a Wales Rail Board that is jointly accountable to the Secretary of State for Transport and the Welsh Minister for Climate Change. The Board will identify a Shared Vision for alignment of rail service and rail infrastructure development and delivery, compatible with Llywybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021, DfT's Strategic Priorities, and the Whole Industry Strategic Plan (WISP). During 2023, the Board will set out a Strategic Programme based on the Shared Vision, with a prioritised set of proposals and project pipeline, including timescales and funding required.

The UK Government's support for a western rail link to Heathrow is predicated on the promoters of such a scheme being able to produce a satisfactory business case and which is subject to the agreement of an acceptable financial contribution from Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL). Given the changes to travel demand as a result of the recent pandemic, there are a number of assumptions that will need to be reconsidered and we understand that the promoters are undertaking further work.

Notably, the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund (LUF) is a cross-departmental fund between HMT, DLUHC and DfT investing in infrastructure that improves everyday life across all countries and regions of the UK. The LUF delivers genuine local priorities for communities, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets. These themes are likely to have clear benefits for local visitor economies, with efforts intended to protect and strengthen the local offer for visitors.

Major Government investment will benefit millions of people across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland and spread opportunity to historically overlooked areas – with £672 million to develop better transport links, £821 million to kick-start community regeneration, and £594 million to restore local heritage sites. More specifically, the UK Government is investing £330 million for 21 projects in Wales (over 8.7%) from the Levelling Up Fund. This includes a range of transport schemes to improve connectivity for visitors as part of our £80 million funding to Wales through the first two rounds of the Levelling Up Fund. These schemes include:

- £11 million for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to deliver the A4119 Coed-ely Dualling Scheme, which includes delivering a new active travel route and footbridge.
- £50 million for Crossrail Cardiff, helping to deliver a new line between Cardiff Bay and Cardiff Central Station, improving travel for thousands of people who travel daily between the stations.
- £18.6 million for Betws y Coed via the Conwy Valley to deliver a safe and direct cycle route between Llandudno Junction.

As confirmed by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities in his speech to the LGA conference on 4 July, there will be a third round of the Levelling Up Fund. More details will be announced shortly.