



Great West Way Connections

Virtual Meeting Tuesday 9 September 2025, 2pm

Meeting Notes

[Great West Way Connections Meeting Recording](#)

Attendees:

Florence Wallace	Great West Way
Fiona Errington	Great West Way
Sarah-Jayne Beasley	Blenheim Palace (Chair)
Lucy Floyd	Carvers Hill Estate
Shannen Bretti	DoubleTree by Hilton Swindon
Rick Henderson	REME Museum
Robbie Kennedy	Legacy Rose & Crown / Angel Hotel Chippenham
Naomi Grit	American Museum & Gardens
Lisa Kent	Bowood House & Gardens
Claire Mcnicol	Courtyard by Oxford South
Richard Goodwin	Bishopstrow House Hotel
Joana Ferreira	Roseate Hotels
Ruth Newell	National Trust – Bath Assembly Rooms
James Sullivan-Tailour	Old Bell Hotel, Warminster
William Davy	In & Beyond Bath
Birendra Kumara	Old Bell Hotel, Malmesbury
Elaine Falconer	Winchester Royal Hotel
Stephen Fox	Woolley Grange Hotel
Joella Ronchetti	Visit West
Rache Whitty	In & Beyond Bath

1. Welcome / How's Business

Tourism businesses reported on the challenges they face in attracting visitors. One large attraction reported that ongoing restoration work has affected visitor perceptions. This emphasized the need for a revised approach to attract visitors, particularly in light of challenges such as visa issues and rising costs, and acknowledged the importance of trade focussed opportunities in 2026.

One popular trade hotel's strategy prioritized occupancy over revenue, which, while successful in filling rooms, has not meet revenue targets, whilst another smaller trade hotel reported a slight decline in staying visitors, but with revenue growth due to price increases. Another hotel reported better performance for occupancy in Salisbury but challenges in Chippenham.

Large town/city events such as the Women's Rugby World Cup and the Jane Austen Festival have been key to highlight to encourage forward bookings.

However, rising costs and their impact on pricing strategies are an ongoing concern for the group, which also noted trends of decreasing group sizes as the new normal, and market sensitivities.

2. 'A DMC Guide to Trade Product Pricing' - Abbey The Destination Experts from Sarah Muir

Sarah Muir, Product Manager from Abbey The Destination Experts, presented an extensive overview of the role of a Destination Management Companies (DMCs) and how this can benefit attractions and accommodation providers. She covered the DMC journey including contracting, booking and trade product pricing as well as useful tips to help tourism businesses work with a DMC.

You can see Sarah's presentation [here](#).

Q & A's followed.

3. Marketplace 2025... what to expect...

Virtual Marketplace – Tuesday 23 September - Flo gave an update about the forthcoming Great West Way Marketplace Event. There are 38 buyers from 10 markets including UK, Netherlands, Italy, USA, Belgium, France, Canada, Denmark and Germany. There are over 44 tourism supplier businesses being represented.

Log in at 9am with meetings starting at 09.30. The day will finish at 5.30 (not 5.45 as originally detailed). There are two 15-minute coffee breaks in the morning and two in the afternoon, with an hour lunch break scheduled. Note meetings are 15 minutes and you need to start and stop your own appointments.

Emails with log in details have been issued and preferences now been made. The matching system will take place and the system will re-open shortly for you to see your appointments, with approximately 80% of your meetings scheduled. You will be able to request ad hoc meetings once the system reopens and before the event starts.

ACTION: The system will issue further information to attendees in shortly.

Fiona gave an update on Pre & Post Meeting Preparation and advised the following:

- Buyers are looking for concise trade information, specifically for booking and contracting eg. Group benefits, special offers, specialist tours, new developments, trade contacts etc.
- Useful resources include:
 - All buyer and supplier information can be found in the new Delegate Directory.
 - VisitEngland's 'Taking England to the World, has a useful [inbound tourism toolkit](#)'.
- Prior to the event, familiarise yourself with the buyers you will be meeting and tailor your product information/conversation accordingly.
- Prepare questions which could include, which products they currently feature, FIT and/or groups; what comms/marketing you could feature in, what are their customers looking for and do they any specific product requirements etc.
- Find out about their product and contracting cycles, this will help to tailor your follow up and understand marketing opportunities.
- Post the event, send out tailored follow up information as discussed in each meeting. Include a link to any relevant documents, slides, website pages etc.

Networking Day at Carvers Hill – Thursday 25 September – Delegates will arrive at Carvers Hill at 11.00 and depart between 3.30 and 4pm. Lucy gave an update on what to expect at Carvers Hill Estate vineyards and winery. They'll be offering buyers and suppliers tours and tastings of their award-winning wine as well as showcase the secluded luxury accommodation in the woodland cabins. On the day you'll be split into three groups of around 20 pax, mixed buyers and suppliers, and each group will head out on a different tour

to explore. There'll be an opportunity to network throughout the day a buffet lunch will be provided. Please dress for the weather and wear sensible footwear.

ACTION: Flo will issue further information eg. Parking etc. shortly.

4. Great West Way Travel Trade Update

Flo highlighted the trade priorities with the imminent launch of the new 7th edition of the Travel Trade Directory in time for Great West Way Marketplace. The 400+ attractions/accommodation listings, new itineraries, highlights, quick refreshment stops for groups, sustainable travel etc will be communicated to trade buyers for the rest of 2025 and throughout 2026. Great West Way will also continue our programme of trade engagement, webinars, supporting fam visits and growing & supporting our Official Tour Operator network of over 120+ companies.

Forthcoming Great West Way opportunities include stand sharing, literature distribution or representation at the following events:

- [Group Leisure & Travel Show](#), Milton Keynes, **Thursday 2 October 2025**. Domestic trade show for GTOs, coach and tour operators. We have an 11m x 2m stand with many Ambassadors stand sharing. Literature distribution is available for. £155 + VAT.
- [Britain & Ireland Marketplace](#), London, **Friday 30 January 2026**. This meeting event brings together the networks of ETOA, UKinbound and VisitBritain for a 1:1 B2B workshop connecting buyers with suppliers from across UK & Ireland. Representation available from £385+ VAT, to include 'hot leads' contact details/introductions.
- [British Tourism & Travel Show](#), NEC Birmingham, **Thursday 19 March 2026**. Domestic trade show for GTOs, coach and tour operators. Stand share opportunity for £1,100 + VAT (excluding graphics) (min 3 stand sharers required).

ACTION: Contact [Flo](#) if you're interested in any of the above

There may be other international opportunities in 2026 in conjunction with VisitBritain, such as attending ITB Berlin, a Netherlands event and/or North America event.

ACTION: If you are interested in these markets and have budget to target them, please get in touch with [Flo](#) to register your interest/ discuss.

5. Any Other Business

None

6. Date of Next meeting - tbc