



Great West Way Connections

Virtual Meeting Tuesday 24 June 2025, 2pm

[VIRTUAL MEETING LINK](#)

(expires 22 Oct 2025)

Meeting Notes

ATTENDEES:

Flo Wallace	Great West Way
Sarah-Jayne Beasley	Blenheim Palace
David Andrews	Great West Way
Fiona Errington	Great West Way
Ritushri Dhankher	VisitBritain Canada
Jeffrey Yau	VisitBritain USA
Julia White	Visit Windsor
Sharon Thomas	Corsham TC/Visit Corsham
Carla Brooks	Brooks Guesthouse Bristol
Elaine Falconer	The Winchester Royal Hotel
Lisa Kent	Bowood House & Gardens
Lucy Grier	Brunel's SS Great Britain
Amiee Thomas	Longleat
Chris Douglas	Bombay Sapphire Distillery
Robert Kedde	Hampton by Hilton Bath
Ruth Newell	National Trust
Jon Chamberlain	Visit West
Richard Goodwin	Bishopstrow House Hotel
Laura Hilton	Clifton Suspension Bridge
William Davy	In & Beyond Bath
Anna-Karin Hanson	English Heritage
David Vella	Hilton Reading
Joana Ferreira	Roseate Hotels
Shannen Downey	DoubleTree by Hilton Swindon
Kimberley Jeffrey	Royal Collection Trust

1. Welcome / Introduction

SJ welcomed everyone to the meeting

2. How's Business

Attendees shared business updates, focusing on recent performance trends and challenges in the tourism sector.

English Heritage reported mixed results for Stonehenge, with a successful April followed by disappointing visitor numbers in May and June, particularly among group bookings. She attributed the decline to reduced participation from day trip organizers, linked to difficulties in the US market, although she noted improved performance from online travel agencies. Blenheim Palace highlighted concerns regarding lower average coach sizes for day trips, indicating a shift in market dynamics. Many attractions have noticed a rise in enquiries for smaller groups, contrasting with previous years.

An accommodation provider in Bath and Bristol, faced struggles in the first quarter but saw a 5% increase in business in May due to local events. School holidays and weather continues to have an impact on hotel occupancy.

Destinations and tour guides are concerned about a decline in the North American market. It was noted that potential visitors are perhaps hesitant to book, due to border control concerns and there is evidence of shorter booking windows. However, businesses were optimistic about forward bookings delivering numbers for 2025 overall.

3. North American Update by VisitBritain

Ritushri Dhankher, VisitBritain, National Travel Trade & Aviation Manager from Canada, and Jeffrey Yau, VisitBritain, National Travel Trade & Aviation Manager from USA delivered their presentations.

Ritushri presented an overview of the Canadian tourism landscape, highlighting political stability under Prime Minister Mark Carney and economic challenges such as rising unemployment. She noted a significant increase in airline capacity and a trend towards shorter booking windows, with a rise in last-minute bookings and interest in destinations like South Africa and Japan. The resurgence of UK cities like Bath and Bristol was attributed to film and TV promotions, indicating a shift in travel preferences. Her slide deck can be seen [here](#).

Jeffrey provided insights into the U.S. travel trade, emphasizing the tri-state area as the largest source of outbound travellers to Britain, along with significant contributions from California and Texas. He discussed the decline in travel intentions following recent tariffs and the cautious optimism in the U.S. market. Additionally, he addressed the current aviation landscape, including the relaunch of flights and challenges in long-haul growth due to supply chain issues. Jeffrey also highlighted the importance of unique experiences for attracting U.S. tourists and provided updates on key accounts and upcoming events in the travel trade sector. His slide deck can be seen [here](#).

Great West Way is working closely with Ritushri & Jeffrey to target Canadian & USA in-market tour operators. We are looking to get content out via their newsletters, run webinars, and deliver fam visits across the route.

ACTION: Get in touch with Flo if you're keen to get visibility via VisitBritain channels.

4. Great West Way Travel Trade Update & Opportunities

Please see [Great West Way Activity Update March – June 2025](#). Flo highlighted the production and development of the new 7th edition of the Travel Trade Directory, Group Leisure & Travel Show Awards and exhibition. Plus the recent distribution of a trade newsletter highlighting EV charging points, Luxury &

wellness, 5* Driver Guide Tours, new itinerary ideas and launching the Great West Way Marketplace to buyers.

Opportunities include the following:

- [Group Leisure & Travel Show](#), Milton Keynes, **Thursday 2 October 2025**. Domestic trade show for GTOs, coach and tour operators. We have stand sharers, eg. Wiltshire, Longleat, Stourhead, Waddesdon Manor, English Heritage, DoubleTree by Hilton Swindon, Old Bell Hotel Warminster and Bishopstrow. If you would like to join our Great West Way stand the cost is £935+VAT (excluding graphics). Literature distribution. £155 + VAT. Booking deadline – ASAP.
- [Great West Way Travel Trade Directory](#) has some editorial and advertising opportunities. This resource receives over 10,000+ views online annually from domestic and international trade and is the main resource being used by 120+ Official Tour Operators. We are holding advertising prices at last year's rates. For Ambassadors, prices are from £365 + VAT for a quarter page. Please see the [advertising spec](#) and get in touch asap to secure your space.

5. Great West Way Marketplace 2025

Flo announced the upcoming virtual marketplace on 23 September and an in-person networking event on 25 September in Hungerford. Book early and get in touch if you'd like to discuss benefits of attending and/or have ideas for improving the networking experience.

All details are now available online at www.GreatWestWay.co.uk/Marketplace and specific supplier information at www.GreatWestWay.co.uk/traveltrade/marketplace/suppliers

ACTION: BOOK NOW - Great West Way Marketplace has now been confirmed as 23 September – virtual event day and 25 September – networking event day at Carvers Hill, Hungerford. [REGISTER HERE](#).

6. AOB

None

Date of next meeting

Tuesday 9 September

This meeting will include useful information in preparation for Great West Way Marketplace as well as updates from the Great West Way team.

[REGISTER HERE](#)