



**APPG for the Visitors Economy
Minutes**

**22 March 2016
Committee Room 18, 5.00pm**

Present

Margaret Ritchie MP, Nigel Huddleston MP, Dr Philippa Whitford MP, Oliver Covile MP, Sammy Wilson MP, Parliamentary Assistant to Mark Williams MP, Parliamentary Assistant to Matt Warman MP, Timothy Jenkins - Visit Britain, Sara Williams - Campaign to Cut Tourism VAT, Gabriel Gavin - Campaign to Cut Tourism VAT, Deirdre Wells - UKinbound, Felicity - UKinbound, Edward Gallier - Jurys Inn, Sandra Kelly - Whitbread PLC

Apologies

Seema Kennedy MP, Caroline Lucas MP

Introduction

Margaret Ritchie MP welcomed members to the meeting and updated the attendees on the progress of the ongoing inquiry into apprenticeships and skill development in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Deirdre Wells, CEO, UKinbound

DW: UKinbound is one of the leading trade association and represents the interests of its members. UKinbound conducted a survey of its members which identified three main barriers to the industry; logistics, education and perception. Our members have concerns about the apprenticeship levy and noted they would like to see a real ABC guide to employees outlining processes and options of apprenticeships.

There is a lack of understanding about tourism and the lack of European language skills is a majority issue for tour operators in the B2B environment. Moreover, apprenticeships being “work ready” is still a problem and more needs to be done at the school and college level. There is also the wider perception of the industry being low pay, low skill, seasonal with a high turnover which together we need to tackle.

The UK tourism industry should focus on the opportunity that returning visitors bring. This is a market that foreign countries tap into and the UK doesn't utilise.

Margaret Ritchie MP: How can we change the perception of the industry?

DW: The industry needs to provide concrete examples of how quickly apprenticeships can rise up the ranks. Widening the understanding of the benefits of the tourism and hospitality sector will pay great dividends with qualification led pathways providing an alternative route to University.

Nigel Huddleston MP: Is this perception real?

DW: High spending markets are key to target and they are mostly concerned with the customer facing aspect of visiting a country. Investing in our people to provide a ‘welcoming face’ increases the opportunity for return travel.

Oliver Colville MP: In Plymouth we are hosting 400 years of the Mayflower. To make sure you have enough personnel to deliver high quality hospitality, how long do you need to plan ahead of the event?

DW: I worked on the Liverpool City of Culture and Olympic Games and found that the best way to plan ahead is to harness local people as ambassadors. Ideally this should be done one year in advance.

Most importantly, engagement with local businesses is key. Events are hugely galvanising and are great opportunities for new areas to harness tourism potential. Make sure you develop good relationships with the local media as this is crucial to success.

Dr Philippa Whitford MP: Scotland backs the living wage - how do we move away from feeling like tourism doesn't deliver good service?

DW: The industry must showcase best practise. For instance, Macdonalds Hotels has one of the best customer service programmes in the UK as they invest heavily in their staff. A measure of success is repeat bookings from tour operators.

Margaret Ritchie MP: What is your opinion of the apprenticeship levy?

DW: Our members are nervous about the levy. Although most of our members will not be affected, they have questions about accessing funding and with the introduction of the living wage whether this will be the perfect storm.

Margaret Ritchie MP: How do we persuade people to visit outside of London? All members here today represent different parts of the UK.

DW: UKinbound run events in all constituencies in the UK as we believe it is crucial to promote all towns and cities. Edinburgh is the UK's second most visited destination and that is because people understand the product. Events, such as the Mayflower in Plymouth, will draw people in to areas that may not have visited before. Education of product knowledge is essential in success of towns and cities.

Sandra Kelly, Head of Education, Whitbread PLC

SK: From its inception, Whitbread's heritage has been investing in people. In 2011 Whitbread PLC had a new CEO who wanted strong KPI's and for Whitbread to be a leading investor in people. I undertook a 6 month programme of analysing our current structure and realised we needed a single programme which could be measured, the WISE programme.

The WISE Programme (Whitbread Investing in Skills and Employment) builds on the success of existing programmes to deliver a strategy focused on attracting young people into the hospitality industry and a career with Whitbread.

The programme was established with a four-year plan and set the following targets focusing on two groups of people, schools and work experience placements and unemployed people irrespective of age.

- Deliver 2,000 work inspiration placements
- Provide 84 internships
- Recruit 160 graduates
- Deliver 1,800 work placements
- Deliver 1,485 Apprenticeships

Nigel Huddleston MP: Sandra, you have an interesting title. It really shows the investment Whitbread PLC is making in educating their workforce. Do these programmes cost you more than you make back?

SK: The great thing about the WISE programme is that we can track it. We have found that retention and progression of staff is much better and the social return on investment is tenfold. Our staff are happier, healthier and more positive.

Margaret Ritchie MP: Has Whitbread been heavily involved with the Government and what more would you like to see?

SK: When I first created the programme I wanted it to be as visible as possible. It was important that we engaged with all departments in government as a cross sectoral approach is crucial to success. This programme can be applied to all industry not just hospitality. We have had meetings with Nick Boles MP and are confident that this model should be applied to all sectors.

From the Government we would like to see more media campaigns as it is crucial that we change the perception of the industry.

Oliver Colville MP: What do youngsters need to join the industry?

SK: Most importantly, youngsters need the right attitude. Functional English and maths are important but ultimately they need to be social creatures. Pre-employment training programmes are essential to this process.

Dr Philippa Whitford MP: In my constituency, there is a further education college in Ayrshire. They do cooking at the front of house - do you think these are good models?

SK: Further education colleges are great avenues for creating talent. The industry can rely on anyone to showcase for us but it is most believable if our champions are young and on a first name basis with students. Most businesses know how much man power they will need for the next 3 years and it would be great if they could hire from these colleges and utilise the apprenticeship pool.

A good, close relationship with job centre plus is crucial to developing links. All business in the areas should connect and share talent pools.

Nigel Huddleston MP: Sandra, how many apprenticeships has Whitbread Plc. employed so far?

SK: At present we have achieved

- 1,019 in learning programmes
- 1,489 achieved apprenticeships
- 9,200 qualification
- 3,772 work placements
- 3,500 apprenticeship schemes for students

Sammy Wilson MP: Many of constituents complain about high level of unemployment yet businesses still find it difficult to recruit. What have you done to change this?

SK: I've had 24 years at Whitbread Plc and have found that we need to reposition the employee. With rating sites the management are now, more than ever, being held to account. We need to develop people to understand that they are representing the whole industry rather than a sub sector. At Whitbread Plc we do not offer zero hour contracts.

Nigel Huddleston MP: What would you like to see in policy change?

SK: I see that the Government already do listen to employers and forums such as this are great opportunities for us to work together, the Government needs to continue to listen and play a role in raising the profile of the sector.

Edward Gallier, Learning and Development Manager, Jurys Inn

Jurys Inn is a part of Amaris Hospitality, one of the UK's largest hotel operators with 74 hotels across the UK and Ireland. A small to medium size employer, we have 42 hotel units employing over 2,000 staff. We currently have around 100 people in apprenticeships. Jurys Inn acknowledge the value of lifelong learning and continued professional development and aim for this to be incorporated into their programs. The Government should help the industry by publicising the dynamic and wide range of roles for young people in the sector.

Nigel Huddleston MP: During this inquiry we have found that there is a shortage of chefs in the industry - are there any other shortages? Are you able to track investment of your apprenticeships?

EG: We do track investment of our apprentices but in not as much detail as Whitbread. We aim for a high percentage of learners to succeed approximately at a 60% success. Regarding chef training programmes, the kitchen is best for mentoring therefore you need a good programme in place. An employer will often try and recruit job ready team members, Chefs training is skilled and hands requiring specialist equipment and skills which is why it can be seen as difficult to train them prior to work. This is an area employers can make big difference in work based learning as hotels, restaurants etc. already have the equipment and skills present.

Margaret Ritchie MP: How can Government facilitate further, and what do you think of the apprenticeship levy

EG: The Government should acknowledge the role of young people in the development of the sector. It is important that career gate keepers are educated and informed appropriately so that they do not block the career path of young people through misunderstandings and lack of quality career path information in an industry ideal for vocational students. Our industry should not rely so heavily on anecdotal evidence and word of mouth and be more direct in publicising the opportunities available early in a student's career decision making.

Regarding the apprenticeship levy, we already pay for some employees apprenticeships as required and we will continue to fund the cost rather than the employees. We always work with our employees to find learning pathways fully or part funded by us. The cost overall is met by the business. It would be good to have more input and influence on how the levy was spent, reallocated and directed as a 'learning tax'.

Dr Philippa Whitford MP: What more could be done in schools and gender bias?

EG: I don't think there is a gender bias, anecdotal evidence could show that female graduates are more inclined to take places on hospitality graduate programmes. Is this because hospitality is seen as a 'female' industry or are they more likely to take positions in perceived low pay graduate jobs than male students. Pathways at schools are extremely important in developing an understanding of our industry and increasingly social media is too. We should be utilising all channels to challenge and change the perception of the industry.

Next meeting

The next APPG meeting will be held 19 April 2016 at 2.30pm. We will be receiving evidence from Minister of State for Skills, Nick Boles. Working across Business, Innovation and Skills and Department of Education, the Minister is responsible for apprenticeships and professional education.