

MID WALES TOURISM

WORK TOGETHER TO ATTRACT MORE VISITORS SAYS TOURISM CHIEF

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Organisations involved in promoting tourism in Wales must work closely together to ensure that the industry's diminishing marketing resources are used wisely to attract more visitors.

That's the view of Val Hawkins, chief executive of Machynlleth-based Mid Wales Tourism, an independent organisation with more than 600 members covering all sectors of the tourism and hospitality industry in Powys, Ceredigion and Meirionnydd.

With the Visit Wales marketing budget expected to reduce in the next financial year, she says the cut could not have come at a worse time.

"We are seeing Tourist Information Centres closing because councils can no longer afford to keep them open and now we hear that there are going to be cuts at a national level in tourism marketing activity," said Mrs Hawkins.

"These cuts could not come at a worse time for the industry, which is already suffering from the recession. It is more important than ever that every organisation involved in promoting tourism in Wales pulls together to ensure that we spend the limited resources wisely and avoid duplication.

"We must ensure that we have the best structure in place in Wales to take full advantage of the excellent marketing campaigns run by Visit Wales at a national level."

She called on all tourism organisations across Wales to use Wales Tourism Week from March 23-29 as an opportunity to lobby politicians at all levels and impress upon them the value of tourism to the economy.

"We can use Wales Tourism Week to get the message across about how important the tourism industry is to the Welsh economy," she added. "Research has shown that up to 40 per cent of trade in the hospitality sector is derived from tourism.

"There is a constant need for tourism businesses to improve and update facilities but if there is a reduction in profit there is less money to invest. It's a vicious circle.

"In Mid Wales everybody needs to appreciate how important tourism is to our economy. We must all improve our customer care skills to ensure that visitors are made to feel welcome and valued because we want them to return."

Overnight visitors to Wales spend around £1.7 billion a year while tourism trips amount to around £1.5 billion. Around 104,000 people are employed in the Welsh tourism industry in full and part time jobs.

Wales Tourism Week, which is led by the Wales Tourism Alliance, runs alongside British Tourism Week, which has the Prince of Wales as patron. A series of inter-related events during the week aims to raise national and international awareness of the size, value and importance of Britain's £86 billion visitor economy.

British Tourism Week 2009 will highlight the contribution made by businesses large and small, public and commercial and aims to galvanise the commitment of organisations and individuals to further improve and develop the industry.

Ends

For more information please contact either Val Hawkins, Mid Wales Tourism chief executive, on 01654 702653 or Duncan Foulkes, public relations consultant, on 01686 650818.