How to be a (more) Welcoming Host
Your host today is
Fiona Wilton
WVFDTA Vice Chair
Monmouthshire Cottages
Croeso! Welcome!
“I have learned that people will forget what you’ve said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Maya Angelou
Our WVFDTA ambition 1

To improve the welcome given by each and every WVFDTA member business to customers.

Even the best of us can always do better.

How will YOU improve?
Our WVFDTA ambition 2

- Offer the World Host suite of courses to qualify members. There are several highly appropriate courses including
  - The “Ambassador Course”,
  - “Service across cultures” and
  - “Customers with disabilities”
Our WVFDTA World Host Destination Ambition

The process

• Member business to get 50% of front line staff qualified by everyone passing one of the World Host suite of courses.
• Business to apply for its own accreditation as a World Host Business (free process)
• Business to notify WVFDTA
Our WVFDITA ambition

• At least 25% of the Associations paid up Member businesses (applies equally in England and Wales) to become qualified World Host businesses.

• WVFDTA to apply for Accredited World Host Destination status.

• PUBLICITY and PR!!
Monmouthshire Cottages

Best Visitor Welcome

(Does not mean the prize for the best arrival tea tray!!)
Pride factor

Personal
Responsibility
In
Delivering
Excellence
What did we demonstrate ...

• to the judges of this award?

The areas they examined were revealing and we learned from the process
What do we demonstrate ...

• to prospective customers? Really?
• We were extensively mystery shopped!

![Icon of a mysterious figure wearing a hat and trench coat.](image)
Keeping up to date

• Who is our team
• Do we use outside professional help too?
• Do we use the free sources of available advice?
• What effort do we make to learn new things?
• What courses/seminars/workshops have we attended?
• What other awards and qualifications do we hold? New ones too?
How sustainable are we?

- Holding Green Awards (Green Dragon then Green Business Tourism Gold)
- Working with other businesses (such as WVFDTA, Walkers are Welcome, Wye Valley River Festival and others)
- Voluntary working with local community groups
- Encouraging practical car free stays
How do we demonstrate a Sense of Place?

• Bi lingual language use (although we are not Welsh Speaking)
• Vernacular buildings, materials, design,
• Local stories myths and legends incorporated
• Artworks, crafts and motifs
• Guest materials (books, CDs, music)
• Local produce
• Extensive local information
How do we adapt and flex to an ever changing market place?

- Our brand development - and its underpinning values
- Our occupancy rates and business growth
- Willingness to amend booking patterns, stay durations, packages to reflect changed demand trends
- Investment in customer focussed enhancements
- Responsive website reflects customer demand/needs
- Social media and customer engagement
- Speed of response to customers and how we maintain that
How do we quality assure our product?

• Constantly compare our offer with competitors - not only local ones. People have wheels.
• We amend our offer according to demand trends
• We talk to customers by phone, on line, on paper, in person and actually ask what they want/dont want. We listen to the answers.
• We keep statistics and respond to demand trends
• We are there to welcome everyone in person and we are available throughout their stay. Things can go wrong but they dont stay gone wrong.
Dealing with differences

- We have had some equality training
- We are in touch with disability organisations
- We have had access audits of our properties
- We have practical things like booster seats, portable steps, handrails, bright lighting, safety gates – for adults too
- Our website is DDA compliant

- It is important to note that our buildings are not great for those with mobility issues but we are clear in what we can and cannot offer and we answer questions in detail.
- We are not afraid to lose a booking and send guests to a more suitable property if we feel that is the right thing to do for them.
Our www ebsite

- Designed and updated daily ourselves (built by professionals for us in 2014 having outgrown our home made Drupal site)
- High quality images changing seasonally/topically
- Improved content management system
- Live availability shows 24/7 to guests (trialling Freetobook)
- Responsive (mobile devices)
- Gives statistics
- Links to widgets
- Links to our social media
- Has a news/blog feature
- Has a vital server backup
- We can access and update from anywhere anytime- and we do
Our social media and database

- We do our best to use Facebook, Twitter, Tweetdeck, Flickr, YouTube, Pinterest, Hootsuite, Instagram
- BUT we cant keep up with all of this all the time! (sorry Maureen)
- We do actively share local posts
- We actively engage with customers (but you cannot force them to post).
- Facebook and Twitter have both produced a little actual business. We live in hope.

- Our database has around 2500 customers. We do not plague them—with mailshots - but we use Mailchimp when we do!
Other technology

• what new (non office) technology we use, what qualifications we have gained EACH year, and what it all does for our customers.

• (Fam trips, Sage refresher, legal matters, Wordpress, Twitter, air source, solar panels, spa operators cert, fire safety, etc etc etc)

• AND whether we share any of this with others (like today).
From the guest's viewpoint are we welcoming **before** arrival?

- Welcoming at first contact? – social media, website, phone, e-mail
- Careful booking process (what do you like and how do you like it. Are we listening?)
- What's our booking system and paperwork like? Efficient? Speedy? Personal? or wholly automated?
From the guests viewpoint are we welcoming **ON** arrival?

- Arrival process. Personally prepared per the file for season and personalised for guest party.
- Detail. Detail. Detail.
- Flowers, cakes, wine, other extras. Detail, detail, detail.
- CROESO! Eye contact. Handshake. Other cultures.
- Sensitivity to how much they want us to be there and explain (or not)
From the guests viewpoint are we welcoming **during** the stay?

- We keep away!
- BUT we say we are available if they ask for us and we respond very fast
- Giving advice and information
- Fixing reported problems speedily (nothing works in an old house except the owner)
- Relationships with tradesmen
- Apologies where needed (and often where not needed)
From the guests viewpoint are we welcoming **after** the stay?

- Thanks for choosing us and follow up
- Returning lost property
- Social media and reviews
- The database and future contact
- Invitation to return
And what we are hoping for is

Croeso yn ol
Welcome back
“That's our mission statement. If people follow that, everything else seems to fall into place.”
Hwyl fawr. Taith ddiogel.
Dewch yn ôl yn fuan.
Goodbye, safe journey, come back soon