

ATISN 19108

1) The record of unaccredited attractions and unaccredited activity providers that have been deleted from the Visit Wales database, on a month by month basis, from April 2020 through to September 2023.

Attractions removed, by month

Cardiff Castle	May-22
Cyfarthfa Castle Museum	May-22
Haverfordwest Town Museum & Record Office	May-22
Wrexham County Borough Museum	May-22
Aberconwy House	May-22
Storiell (Formerly) Amgueddfa ac Oriell Gwynedd	May-22
Barmouth Sailors' Institute	May-22
Buckley Library, Museum & Gallery	May-22
CARAD	May-22
Greenfield Valley Museum	May-22
Joseph Parry's Cottage Museum	May-22
Llanidloes Museum	May-22
Lloyd George Museum	May-22
Mold Library Museum & Gallery	May-22
Nelson Museum & Local History Centre	May-22
Old Bell Museum	May-22
Regimental Museum of The Royal Welsh (Brecon)	May-22
Rhyl Library, Museum and Arts Centre	May-22
Toll House	May-22
Tŷ Mawr Wybrnant	May-22
University of South Wales - Art Collection Museum	May-22
Ebbw Vale Works Archival Trust (Museum-Archive)	May-22
Firing Line	May-22
Tredegar History & Archive Society	May-22
Llŷn Maritime Museum / Amgueddfa Forwrol Llŷn	May-22
Cowbridge & District Museum	May-22
Caldicot Castle & Country Park	May-22
Abergavenny Museum & Castle	May-22
Chepstow Museum	May-22
The Play King	Aug-22
Techniquet Person 2dwr	Aug-22
Garwnant Visitor Centre	Aug-22
The Silver Mountain Experience	Feb-23
The Gate	Apr-23
Nanteos Mansion	Apr-23
Surf Snowdonia	Sep-23

Activity providers removed, by month

Capital Adventure Wales Ltd	May-21
Wye Valley Canoes	May-21
Big Blue Kitesurfing	May-21
Swansea Watersports	May-21
Bikes & Hikes	May-21
River Wye Activity Centre	May-21
Outeractive	May-21
Arc Adventures Ltd	May-21
Antur Ltd	Apr-22
Dragon Activity Guides	Apr-22
Llandegfedd Watersports Centre	May-22
Ty Nant Outdoors	May-22
Interactivities	May-22
Outdoors @ Hay	May-22
Cantref Riding Centre	May-22
Mountain & River Activities Ltd	May-22
Cilan Riding Centre	May-22
Hilston Park OEC	May-22
Pembrokeshire Cruising	May-22
Pembrokeshire Paths	May-22
Adventure Powerboating & Dive Pembrokeshire	May-22
Blue Ocean Activities & Adventure	May-22
Lion Royal Trekking Centre	May-22
WANT TO CANOE?	May-22
Bryngwyn Riding Centre	May-22
Gwent Outdoor Centres	May-22
Anturio Adventure	May-22
Pembrokeshire Wake Park	May-22
North Wales Gliding Club	May-22
Dinefwr Riding Centre	May-22
The Oaklands Centre	Aug-22
Down to Earth	Oct-22
Up4ItOutdoors Ltd	Oct-22
Taff Valley Quad Bike & Activity Centre	Oct-22
Anglesey Outdoors & Canyon Wales	Oct-22
Snowdonia National Park Centre	Dec-22
Gaia Adventures	Dec-22
Andy Newton MIC	Feb-23
Tom Hutton MTB Guiding	Feb-23
BikePark Wales	Feb-23

Sunnybank Equestrian Centre	Feb-23
Oneplanet Adventure	Feb-23
The SUP Gower-Standup Paddleboarding / Surfing	Mar-23
Bike Corris Ltd	Apr-23
H5 Adventure Ltd	Apr-23
Coastal Adventures	Aug-23
Good Trails	Aug-23

2) All digital data concerning Visit Wales assertion that a guided walk leader must remain within 30 minutes of their vehicle or be accredited. So, emails and any other communications held on your database from external to Welsh Government sources and sources within the Welsh Government.

and

3) All internal and external communications that the Welsh Government hold digitally concerning the grading of tour guides and guided walk leaders in Wales by Visit Wales since May 2020.

From: Person 1
Sent: Wednesday, August 30, 2023 3:20 PM
To: Person 2 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism)
Subject: Re: Query

Hi Person 2

I am aware of the correspondence as I was copied in!

'Within 30 minutes' is referred to in the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations (AALR). It's also something that we agreed with WOTGA, along with the MTUK&I definition for terrain i.e. Lowland leader. Below is an extract from the Lowland Leader Handbook regarding terrain definition. You'll see that it indicates 'no more than 3km'. In this such terrain, the average pace would be around 5 km/hour so there are some similarities. I noted a comment in the correspondence that AL could return from Pen y fan in 30 minutes. To be clear, the summit of Pen y fan is more than 30 minutes away from the road/car park taking into account the distance and height gain, alongside the average walking speed and the terrain is beyond the remit of the environment the VWAAAS is indicating. Additionally, this is not about any one person's specific ability but more about the average person, of average fitness on a typical day, walking at an average pace i.e. between 4 & 5km/hour.

The questions that need to be asked here are:

1. Is guided walking being offered?
2. Is the guided walking being offered in MTUK&I Lowland Leader defined terrain and/or beyond?
3. Does the guided walk venture beyond 30 minutes of the road head?

Extract:

1.2. SCOPE OF THE SCHEME

A qualified Lowland Leader can lead others on day walks in low-level countryside and woodland environments. Qualification holders are able to manage groups safely during this activity.

TERRAIN

Low level countryside and woodland in the UK and Ireland meeting the following criteria;

- *Walks must follow paths or tracks that are both marked on a map and clearly visible on the ground and that do not require navigation across untracked areas.*
- *Throughout the walk the group should generally be no more than 3km away from a key access point such as a car park, lay-by or populated area.*
- *Walks must use bridges or other recognised water crossing points.*
- *Any potential escape routes should also lie within the scope of the defined terrain for the Lowland Leader qualification.*

Here's a link to the Handbook: <https://www.mountain-training.org/Content/Uploaded/Downloads/MLT/fc7bef54-fbb1-4c31-912d-e4983532dce2.pdf>

I hope this helps?
Happy to chat.
Cheers

Person 1

----- Original Message -----

From: Person 2
To:
Sent: Wednesday, 30 Aug, 23 At 13:48
Subject: Query

Hi,

Hope all is well?

Are you able to signpost me to the definition as noted by Mountain Training United Kingdom & Ireland and reference to 30 minutes – need it in order to reply to some correspondence

May need to speak further as this correspondence develops....

Thanks.

Person 2

14. I'm a tour guide and include guided walks as part of my packages, do I need to be assured?
Your need to be assured will depend on where your guided walks are taking place.
If your guided walk is within 30 minutes of the vehicle or equivalent then there is no need to be assured. The walk could be for longer than 1 hour as long as you are within the 30 minute reach of the vehicle. It's important to note that the assurance is in place to provide safety assurances and those offering guided walks will need to ensure that they consider the environment and terrain they are operating in, even if within a 30 minute parameter as some relatively accessible locations still provide challenging environments e.g. sections of the coast path, waterfall country etc.
Where your guided walks extend beyond 30 minutes of the vehicle or equivalent, are coastal (excluding urban areas), lowland, moorland, hill or mountain (as defined by Mountain Training United Kingdom & Ireland) you will be required to be accredited/assured if you wish to be listed on visitwales.com.

From: Person 2 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism)
Sent: Wednesday, September 6, 2023 1:12 PM
To: Person 1
Subject: RE: Sense Check

Thanks – much appreciated as always.

From: Person 1
Sent: Wednesday, September 6, 2023 11:55 AM
To: Person 2 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism)
Subject: Re: Sense Check

Hi Person 2

I've made some additions/amendments in Green below.

The road/vehicle issue is a bit of a grey area. The AALR actually refer to a road or refuge as this would indicate that an emergency vehicle could get to within 30 minutes/2 km of an incident. The reason the WATO definition refers to a vehicle is that a self rescue using their own vehicle may be possible. As you know, this was agreed between VW, WATO & WOTGA, with the acknowledgement of MTC.

It mentions that his waterfalls walk in no more than 30 minutes travel time. Whilst that may be the case (although I doubt that given the terrain and where the walk is going to), some of his other walks may be more than this and the accreditation covers all that is being offered within the business. Public footpaths are mentioned, is this a reference to pedestrian walkways (pavements) or public rights of way (PRoW) on private or access land. If its pavements then this would be classed as urban, and excluded. If it is PRoW on private or access land then these have the potential to fall with the definition, as outlined.

Unfortunately, he is looking at the finer detail in isolation rather than how it relates to the whole, all because he does not agree with a third party audit of his business!

Hope that helps.

Cheers

Person 1

----- Original Message -----

From: Person 2

To:

Sent: Tuesday, 5 Sep, 23 At 15:57

Subject: Sense Check

Hi,

Would you be able to sense check my responses (in red) please and add/amend as you think appropriate?

Many thanks.

Person 2

OK, so I'll tick all of the boxes on the form in that case?

Operators are responsible for accurately representing the activities they provide in their listings.

- You say 'Adventure is where the focus is on engaging with the natural environment in a physically challenging manner where skill and an element of risk are central to the experience' Are you stating walking on a public footpath falls into this category? Please clarify whether walking on a public footpath in lowland countryside is adventurous and risky or not?

It will depend on where the guided walks are taking place as to whether accreditation/assurance is required. Guided walks that are coastal (excluding urban areas), lowland, moorland, hill or mountain (as defined by Mountain Training United Kingdom & Ireland) are required to be accredited/assured if they wish to be listed on visitwales.com.

- Please clarify the mechanism that came to the conclusion that 30 minutes from the vehicle rule ought to be a thing. Please provide me with the written documentation that spells this out and the dates that this was implemented.

'Within 30 minutes' is referred to in the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations (AALR) and whilst the AALR refer to under 18's, the outdoor sector looks to the

AALR and other NGB guidance to assist in determining and maintaining 'good practice'.

- You say 'Based on the above explanation, Cardiff on Foot, Cardiff Tours, Griffin Guiding, Sarah's Wales do not, in our opinion, require accreditation.' Please provide evidence that you know that these tours travel no further than '30 minutes from the vehicle'. I know that some of these will take place within a city but you are insisting upon proximity to the vehicle. Further, as an example, my waterfalls walk is never more than 30 minutes from a road and Mountain Training only delivers guided walks of this nature. **Clarify road or vehicle and please explain why vehicle rather than road.**

In terms of the examples, we have made a judgement to include based on the information they have provided. It will depend on where the guided walks are taking place as to whether accreditation/assurance is required. If a guided walk is within 30 minutes of the vehicle or equivalent then there is no need to be assured. The walk could be for longer than 1 hour as long as you are within the 30 minute reach of the vehicle. Assurance is in place to provide safety assurances and those offering guided walks will need to ensure that they consider the environment and terrain they are operating in, even if within a 30 minute parameter as some relatively accessible locations still provide challenging environments e.g. sections of the coast path, waterfall country etc.

Any information available on vehicle rather than road?

Thanks.
Person 2

Word document attached to above email

WTPD guidance from WATO on Guided tours and guided walking:

Guided tours (including a walk)	Guided walking tours	Guided walking tours
Walk out to a view point or to a site of interest as part of a guided tour. As long as within 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent.	Walking tours in towns, cities and lowland locations (non-moorland, hill or coastal walking*) *Unless within 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent.	Walking tours (including those with other visit elements e.g. castle visits) where more rugged and or elevated terrain – moorland, hill or coastal walking is included (beyond the 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent).
Examples include Great Orme, Swallow Falls, Devils Bridge, part of the Wales coastal path.	Examples include city and town walks, lowland countryside, coastal (within 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent) e.g. Rhosilli, White Sands beach, Constitution Hill, Nefyn Golf Club, etc.	Examples include walking tours into moorland and hills e.g. ...full day's hiking taking in some archaeological sites along the way. We'll leave the World Heritage Conwy Castle and hike up through the gorse and heather to the top of Conwy Mountain to check out the Iron Age

		<p><i>fortress there. It's a good stretch ascending 1,000 feet...</i></p>
<p>WOTGA guides will need to consider the locations and environment they are walking in but this <i>should not require</i> WATO accreditation.</p>	<p>WOTGA guides will need to consider the locations and environment they are walking in but this <i>should not require</i> WATO accreditation.</p>	<p>WOTGA guides will need to consider the locations and environment they are walking in but this is where WATO accreditation would apply.</p>

WOTGA & WATO Visit Wales Notes March 2021

WOTGA / WATO

1. From WOTGA: Topics for resolution

1. To agree to some sensible compromise on the definition of countryside/coastal walks for qualified tourist guides. [See below \(4\)](#).
2. To permit qualified tourist guides to lead walks within their training and competence without further costly inspection and assessment. [Within parameters as below \(4\)](#).
3. To permit WOTGA Guides to advertise tours on the Visit Wales website which include an element of country or coastal walking. [Within parameters as below \(4\)](#).
4. To reconsider whether adventure tour leaders should be permitted to advertise tourist guiding on the VW site if they have not qualified for a Green or Blue WOTGA Badge. [Not considered appropriate – however see suggestion below \(6\)](#).

2. WOTGA OVERVIEW:

70 active guides and the linguists bringing in coach tours from abroad. The range of requests that come to the WOTGA guides is quite varied. Nearly all of our guides are requested to walk out to view points with groups such as the Great Orme, Swallow Falls, Devils Bridge, part of the Wales coastal path or along a beach so that they can interpret and explain the history geology etc. - each of those has its own set of risks that are managed by our guides but WATO is appearing to argue that they come under their jurisdiction due to the terrain.

Driver guides are frequently asked to stop and walk. For example a walk out to Rhossili head to interpret the landscape, or take a short walk on the Wales Coastal path or view a waterfall. Again we believe that all of those are well within our competency even though it might include walking boots. There is no possibility of the guide saying sorry I cannot take you here.

One example: "I am regularly employed by American hiking companies because they want a qualified guide for interpretation purposes and for local route finding and terrain knowledge. Boots are necessary for almost all of these walks. All of these companies (Wilderness Travel, Adventures in Good Company, Walking Adventures International, etc. These companies want to mix a three hour walk with a visit to a castle, historic site, rural farmhouse or ride on steam train and walk back. They tend to have a good ration of staff to clients and often send their own representative to work alongside me the local guide. They have a policy of wanting the same guide for a week whereby walking and talking besides clients individually the clients get an immersive experience chatting informally and learning the language, culture and history as well as being shown first-hand the geology or plants as we beach forage or stop to examine hedge-laying or interesting lichen etc. In addition I have some day or half day work for specialised land-based or cruise companies where they want me to interpret the landscape etc. from a coach and then say lead a walk. Here we, say tour Anglesey getting out to do a short section of the coast path - i.e. around Moelfre to meet the Sea Life representatives - or around South Stack to visit the Irish Huts and walk back along the coast path to the lighthouse. I have just received two

different enquiries from upmarket British companies that usually take British abroad but are looking to mix sightseeing and coach commentary with short walks say to around Beddgelert in once case or to Aber Falls in the other case.”

Another example, previously supplied: ‘This is a great mix of a full day’s hiking taking in some archaeological sites along the way. We’ll leave the World Heritage Conwy Castle and hike up through the gorse and heather to the top of Conwy Mountain to check out the Iron Age fortress there. It’s a good stretch ascending 1,000 feet but we’ll be rewarded by the views over to the Great Orme limestone peak in Llandudno and across to the island of Anglesey.

We then continue across undulating moorland crossing little streams and we’ll probably see the wild mountain ponies and almost definitely the welsh mountain sheep. We eventually reach the Druids Circle - a site that’s most definitely much older than when the Druids lived, dating back to Neolithic times. We then follow old droving roads descending the mountain past old granite quarry workings down to finish at the bus stop where we’ll take a regular bus (leaving about every half hour) back to Conwy. This hike lasts 4 hours and ascends (and descends) over 1,000feet. You’ll need good hiking footwear and clothing and water and a packed lunch. We’ll be hiking on rough tracks through heather and gorse moorland at the edge of the Carneddau Plateau the largest, highest mountain massive south of the Scottish highlands. People have wandered these tracks for millennia and it’s a pre-historian’s paradise scattered with axe-head quarries, iron-age forts and older standing stones. Hikers come from all over Britain to wander these fascinating hills.”

Some of the locations where WOTGA guides take groups as part of wider day tours/excursions (suitably advised to dress for walking):

- Section of Wye Valley Walk
- Caerwent Roman Fortress
- Caerleon (if visiting Amphitheatre & Barracks)
- Newport Wetlands Bird Reserve
- Nash Point
- Laugharne (coast route around castle to DT Boathouse)
- Dinefwr (House & Castle)
- Pembs Coast Path
- Caldey Island
- Constitution Hill, Aberystwyth
- Blaenavon WHS
- Access to Chartist Cave, Brecon Beacons ([WATO have specifically commented on remoteness of this location](#))
- Nefyn Golf Club coastal walk to Porth Dinllaen
- Bardsey Island
- South Stack, Holy Island
- Walk from National Slate Museum
- Great Orme

3. VISIT WALES approach, WATO OVERVIEW:

Our approach, developed in partnership with the [Wales Activity Tourism Organisation \(WATO\)](#), will provide visitors to Wales with a simple way to select activity providers and operators based on their ability to deliver safe and effective

industry practice. It will also allow us to recognise activity providers that meet our expectations in terms of:

- Sustainable activity tourism
- Good practice and standards of customer care

It will also give us all confidence that risk managed, high quality activity provision is available across Wales.

The accreditation scheme is not just about an individual holding a qualification, this is about a business being able to demonstrate that they operate a safe quality business, regardless of whether they are a sole trader or a business who employs staff.

The scheme does not ask for businesses to be a member of WATO. It requires a business to have been audited by a third party (unless you already have an agreed form of accreditation).

With regards to WOTGA it appears that currently there is no accredited inspection process so anyone who is a WOTGA guide, runs a business and wishes to be listed on the Visit Wales website as offering guided walking that falls within the WATO criteria (Coastal, Hill & Moorland*) will need to be inspected by a third party accreditation scheme.

*See further details below.

<https://www.visitwales.com/activity-providers-self-certification-form>

4. AGREED REVISED APPROACH

WATO and Visit Wales have discussed and agreed that no one is in need of the WATO accreditation if they are walking within 30 minutes of the vehicle or equivalent. The walk could be for longer than 1 hour (as long as they are within the 30 minute reach of the vehicle). It's important to note that the accreditation is in place to provide safety assurances and WOTGA guides will obviously still need to ensure that they consider the environment and terrain they are operating in, even if within this 30 minute parameter (some relatively accessible locations still provide challenging environments e.g. sections of the coast path, moorland, etc.). The rationale for this is based on HSE regulations related to the Adventure Activity Licencing Authority (AALA). (WATO accreditation is based on that scheme, for under 18s), bearing in mind the risk for the guide/group and Visit Wales is supporting this approach. The more remote a location the greater the associated risk, as well as consideration of the environment and terrain. Further details can be found in the HSE [L77](#) document (also referenced below).

Guided tours (including a walk)	Guided walking tours	Guided walking tours
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<p>Walk out to a view point or to a site of interest as part of a guided tour.</p> <p><i>As long as within 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent.</i></p>	<p>Walking tours in towns, cities and lowland locations (non-moorland, hill or coastal walking*)</p> <p><i>*Unless within 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent.</i></p>	<p>Walking tours (including those with other visit elements e.g. castle visits) where more rugged and or elevated terrain – moorland, hill or coastal walking is included (beyond the 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent).</p>
<p>Examples include Great Orme, Swallow Falls, Devils Bridge, part of the Wales coastal path.</p>	<p>Examples include city and town walks, lowland countryside, coastal (<i>within 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent</i>) e.g. Rhosilli, White Sands beach, Constitution Hill, Nefyn Golf Club, etc.</p>	<p>Examples include walking tours into moorland and hills e.g. <i>...full day's hiking taking in some archaeological sites along the way. We'll leave the World Heritage Conwy Castle and hike up through the gorse and heather to the top of Conwy Mountain to check out the Iron Age fortress there. It's a good stretch ascending 1,000 feet...</i></p>
<p><i>WOTGA guides will need to consider the locations and environment they are walking in but this should not require WATO accreditation.</i></p>	<p><i>WOTGA guides will need to consider the locations and environment they are walking in but this should not require WATO accreditation.</i></p>	<p><i>WOTGA guides will need to consider the locations and environment they are walking in but this is where WATO accreditation would apply.</i></p>

5. INFORMATION ON VW/WATO ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The inspection via a recognised third party accreditation process will have been carried out by one of the following:

- Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) - a UK statutory process for providers offering adventure activities to under 18's;
- Adventuremark Accreditation - a UK non-statutory process for providers of adventure activities;
- British Activity Providers Association (BAPA) - a UK non-statutory process for providers of adventure activities;
- National Government Body (NGB) Accreditation - a UK non-statutory process for providers, offered by individual NGB's for single activities e.g. Kayaking and Canoeing, Hillwalking, Sailing and Windsurfing;
- A [Visit Wales nominated Technical Consultant](#) - a non-statutory process offered to adventure tourism providers in Wales who are not governed by a statutory process and have chosen not to engage with the other listed non-statutory processes. The technical auditor will:
 1. Have a proven level of technical competence within the outdoor activity sector and in at least one of the activities offered by the provider (usually as set out

in L77, "[Guidance from the Licensing Authority on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004](#)");

2. Have a good knowledge of the venues to be used by the provider;
3. Have access to, knowledge and understanding of the management of the provider, including the instructors concerned;
4. Have sufficient experience in at least one of the activities offered by the provider, as well as maturity to make suitably sound judgments.

The process requires the technical auditor to consider the following 10 standards of the providers business:

1. Autonomy and Accountability – Competence of Instructional Staff
2. Delivering a Safe and Effective Service
3. Learning and Development
4. Working in Partnership
5. Consent
6. Record Keeping and Information Governance
7. Communication
8. Management and Provision
9. Evaluation of Services
10. Promoting and Marketing Activity Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Sector Services and Products

After which, the technical consultant will provide a report, along with recommendations, to Visit Wales. The report and its recommendations require an endorsement from the [Wales Activity Tourism Organisation \(WATO\)](#) before approval is granted by Visit Wales. The cost for the audit per business/sole trader has been maintained at £250 plus expenses and lasts for 3 years.

The [Visit Wales Self-Certification](#) process confirms that a recognised third party accreditation process has been completed (Evidence required by Visit Wales) and that the provider agrees with the Terms and Conditions of signing up. The Terms and Conditions relate to the 10 standards listed above.

6. FURTHER VISIT WALES/WATO SUGGESTIONS:

WOTGA may want to further consider looking at guides achieving the Lowland Leader qualification. Visit Wales is following up with Mountain Training Cymru. Would give additional competencies for WOTGA guides and open up regular CPD that goes on within framework of mountaineering and if WOTGA guides were Lowland Leaders it should potentially open up opportunities to offer CPD training. In general, having the Lowland Leader qualification would expand the scope of WOTGA delivery. Mountain Training Cymru offer their own accreditation scheme (an audit of each WOTGA guides business which would satisfy VWWATO requirements).

Likewise, there is scope for WOTGA to offer a session or module on guiding for adventure leaders. This to be followed up directly by WOTGA and WATO.

From: Person 3 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)
Sent: Wednesday, May 12, 2021 1:53 PM
To: Person 4 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)
Cc: Person 5 (ESNR-Tourism,Heritage&Sport,Tourism&Marketing)
Subject: WATO / WOTGA - TPD

Hi Person 4

I have been liaising with Person 7 and Person 6 at NVG regarding the new guidance from WATA in relation to walking which you asked me to check to see if any changes are needed on the TPD system.

These changes have been made, see attached taxonomy:

- Cell D 23, added 'and more strenuous walks within 30 mins of a vehicle or equivalent'
- Cell D 54, added 'short walk'

This is now live and Person 8 and I had a chat earlier about it and we think that is ok.

Person 2 also commented as Person 7 involved him in the conversations – he provided a list of current activities (attached) and Person 8 and I have gone through the list and compared it to what we have listed. We have proposed that the following changes are made. We feel that not all needed to be included.

Scrambling and canyoning – to include via feratta and **gorge walking**
Walking experience – non-strenuous walking including **lowland**, themed
Caving or potholing – includes **mine exploration** and the use of.....
Other activities – can we remove photography, cookery and art as there is already a tick box for photography, art and food & drink separately. Instead can we have – includes courses and experiences (e.g. orienteering and fell running).
Food & drink – can we add ? and state e.g. cookery course.

I'll save the email communication with NVG etc.

Thanks

Person 3

[PDF attached to above email](#)

[WATO draft definition of adventure and associated activities:](#)

Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation (WATO)

Definition of Adventure and associated activities

(in relation to the Visit Wales Self Accreditation Scheme – excludes petrol & blood sports)

"Adventure is where the focus is on engaging with the natural environment in a physically challenging manner where skill and an element of risk are central to the experience and the participant seeks to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the natural environment in a peaceful manner."

The following comprise of the core 'guided activities' that fall within the outdoor sector definition, as defined by inspection / accreditation schemes for Adventure Activities in the UK:

CLIMBING			
Abseiling	Bouldering	Ice Climbing	
Rock Climbing		Ropes Courses (inc. Zip Wires)	
WATERSPORTS			
Board Surfing	Canoeing	Diving	
Improvised Rafting	Kayaking (inc. River, Sea, Surf Kayaking & Sit-on-Top Kayaking)	Sailing	
Kite Surfing		Stand Up Paddleboarding	
White Water Rafting	Wild / Open Water Swimming	Windsurfing	
COMBINED WATER & ROCK ACTIVITIES			
Canyoning		Coasteering	
Gorge Walking		Sea Level Traversing	
TREKKING & LAND BASED ACTIVITIES			
Bushcraft	Coastal Walking* (excluding urban areas)	Fell Running	Hill Walking
Horse Trekking	Lowland & Moorland Walking*	Mountaineering	
Mountain Biking	Off Road Cycling		Orienteering
Road Cycling (excluding urban areas)	Scrambling	Skiing	Snow Boarding
CAVING			
Caving	Pot-Holing	Mine Exploration	
AIR SPORTS			
Paragliding			

* Environment as determined by Mountain Training United Kingdom & Ireland (MTUK&I) definitions for Lowland Leader Award

From: Person 3 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)
Sent: Wednesday, May 12, 2021 1:40 PM
To: Person 6; Person 7 (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport, Tourism & Marketing); Person 2 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)
Cc: Person 8
Subject: RE: FW: WATO - Product Database

Hi Person 6

Thank you for making those amends, that's great.

Person 8 and I had a chat this morning about the list of activities Person 2 provided and we are wondering if it is possible to make the following amends to the text when hovering on ? for Travel Trade and Business Events:-

Scrambling and canyoning – to include via feratta and **gorge walking**
Walking experience – non-strenuous walking including **lowland**, themed
Caving or potholing – includes **mine exploration** and the use of.....
Other activities – can we remove photography, cookery and art as there is already a tick box for photography, art and food & drink separately. Instead can we have – includes courses and experiences (e.g. orienteering and fell running).
Food & drink – can we add ? and state e.g. cookery course.

Hope this makes sense. Any problems please let me know.

Kind regards

Person 3

From: Person 6
Sent: 06 May 2021 13:44
To: 7 (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport, Tourism & Marketing); Person 3 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing); Person 2 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)
Subject: Re: FW: WATO - Product Database

Hi All

Please find attached the updated taxonomy v6.

- Cell D 23, we added 'and more strenuous walks within 30 mins of a vehicle or equivalent'
- Cell D 54, we added 'short walk'

[Please see responses in blue below.](#)

Kind regards

Person 6
Account Manager at Simpleview

On Wed, 5 May 2021 at 09:27, wrote:

Thanks for your response Person 6. If you could provide me with an updated taxonomy if/when you update that would be great.

Also Person 3 on B2B side has some queries (see e-mail trail), grateful if you could provide a response.

Thanks
Person 7

From: Person 3 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)

Sent: 04 May 2021 12:38

To: Person 7 (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport, Tourism & Marketing); Person 2 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)

Subject: RE: WATO - Product Database

Hi both

I assume then that we need to amend the list of activities under section – offer activities requiring quality assurance – to reflect the list that Person 2 has provided. Is it still relevant to include the wording ‘quality assurance related to the following activities is being reviewed?’

We do not recommend changing the list of activities, as you might need to reassign a lot of data. Instead we suggest deciding what goes under each of the existing ones. Though we could add or edit the list if you let us know exactly what you would like changed.

When I run through this next week, I will ask if there is any data they are also aware of that needs to be moved, (assuming the existing activities list).

I have asked a developer to update the ProductListing help text for Walking Experience to, ‘Non-strenuous walking including themed and animal walks and more strenuous walks within 30 mins of vehicle or equivalent’

If NVG could also make the amends to Person 2’s other recommendations please.

Person 7 – when you hear back from NVG regarding the question below let me know what they say:-

Looking at the database, an operator/handler has an option to tick Walking Tours. If a WOTGA guide offers walking tours but within the guidelines that don’t require WATO assurance as above would they then tick n/a in the question ‘offer activities requiring assurance’ to enable their listing to go live?

We think they should tick ‘No’. (If they select ‘Yes’, I understand the procedure is that you follow up with them.)

Not sure how we are going to address this if they can’t tick N/A as they have agreement from WATA that they don’t need accreditation for a walk within a guided tour or walking tours in town, cities and lowland location within the parameters mentioned below.

Thanks
T

From: Person 2 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)
Sent: 30 April 2021 09:39
To: Person 7 (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport, Tourism & Marketing); Person 3 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)
Subject: RE: WATO - Product Database

May well be worth reviewing the walking listings - although I would hope that all those displaying do need accreditation.
Instead of referring to 'quality assurance' can we refer to 'suitable accreditation'

Please confirm if you would like us to change the title to, 'Offer Activities Requiring Suitable Accreditation' and start the paragraph with your:

If you offer the following activities you will need to hold suitable accreditation or have been audited by a Visit Wales nominated technical consultant
You might also want to use the list the activities on the attached ?

Please see above about changing the list.

From: Person 7 (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport, Tourism & Marketing)
Sent: 30 April 2021 08:58
To: Person 3 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)
Cc: Person 2 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)
Subject: RE: WATO - Product Database

Hello Person 3

I'm good thanks, hope you are too.

I think the message does come up when you tick any activities that require WATO. I'll check this with NVG, we also need to update the tool/taxonomy in light of this information.

Person 2 – do we need to go through the 'walking' listings to ensure we don't ask for WATO when no longer a requirement?

Person 7

From: Person 3 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)
Sent: 29 April 2021 15:00
To: Person 7 (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport, Tourism & Marketing)
Subject: WATO - Product Database

Hi Person 7

Hope all ok with you?

Person 4 has asked me to look at how changes to WATO and walking may need to be reflected on the product database. WATO and WOTGA have agreed the following:-

1. AGREED REVISED APPROACH

WATO and Visit Wales have discussed and agreed that no one is in need of the WATO accreditation if they are walking within 30 minutes of the vehicle or equivalent. The walk could be for longer than 1 hour (as long as they are within the 30 minute reach of the

vehicle). It's important to note that the accreditation is in place to provide safety assurances and WOTGA guides will obviously still need to ensure that they consider the environment and terrain they are operating in, even if within this 30 minute parameter (some relatively accessible locations still provide challenging environments e.g. sections of the coast path, moorland, etc.).

The rationale for this is based on HSE regulations related to the Adventure Activity Licencing Authority (AALA). (WATO accreditation is based on that scheme, for under 18s), bearing in mind the risk for the guide/group and Visit Wales is supporting this approach. The more remote a location the greater the associated risk, as well as consideration of the environment and terrain. Further details can be found in the HSE [L77](#) document (also referenced below).

Guided tours (including a walk)	Guided walking tours	Guided walking tours
Walk out to a view point or to a site of interest as part of a guided tour. As long as within 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent.	Walking tours in towns, cities and lowland locations (non-moorland, hill or coastal walking*) *Unless within 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent.	Walking tours (including those with other visit elements e.g. castle visits) where more rugged and or elevated terrain – moorland, hill or coastal walking is included (beyond the 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent).
Examples include Great Orme, Swallow Falls, Devils Bridge, part of the Wales coastal path.	Examples include city and town walks, lowland countryside, coastal (within 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent) e.g. Rhosilli, White Sands beach, Constitution Hill, Nefyn Golf Club, etc.	Examples include walking tours into moorland and hills e.g. ...full day's hiking taking in some archaeological sites along the way. We'll leave the World Heritage Conwy Castle and hike up through the gorse and heather to the top of Conwy Mountain to check out the Iron Age fortress there. It's a good stretch ascending 1,000 feet...
WOTGA guides will need to consider the locations and environment they are walking in but this <i>should not require</i> WATO accreditation.	WOTGA guides will need to consider the locations and environment they are walking in but this <i>should not require</i> WATO accreditation.	WOTGA guides will need to consider the locations and environment they are walking in but this is where WATO accreditation would apply.

Looking at the database, an operator/handler has an option to tick Walking Tours. If a WOTGA guide offers walking tours but within the guidelines that don't require WATO assurance as above would they then tick n/a in the question 'offer activities requiring assurance' to enable their listing to go live?

I was discussing this section with a colleague and she thinks that if someone selects Yes to this question there should then be a question to ask 'Do you have quality assurance?' Not too familiar with how this was set up so wanted to check this with you?

Operator/Handler Type (select up to 3)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation Agency | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adventure Tours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coach Holidays | <input type="checkbox"/> Cruise Operator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cycling Tours | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DMC / Wholesaler / Ground Handler |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Language Learning | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Golf Tours | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Incoming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online Travel Agent | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sightseeing and Tours |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Special Interest Tours | <input type="checkbox"/> Tour Operator |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transport | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking Tours |

Offer Activities Requiring Quality Assurance

Quality assurance related to the following activities is being reviewed: bushcraft, foraging, horse riding, skiing, snowboarding, paragliding, guided biking or cycling, abseiling, carving, potholing, climbing, scrambling, canyoning, zip wire, high ropes, guided walking, orienteering, canoeing, coasteering, kayaking, kite surfing, power water sports, sailing, scuba diving, stand up paddleboarding, surfing, whitewater rafting or windsurfing. Do you offer any of these activities? If we require further information we will contact you.

- Yes No N/A

Hope I am making sense?

Many thanks
Person 3

From: Person 3 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)
Sent: Wednesday, May 12, 2021 1:57 PM
To: Person 6
Subject: RE: FW: WATO - Product Database

Hi again

Not sure if I have confirmed to amend:-

change the title to, 'Offer Activities Requiring Suitable Accreditation' and start the paragraph with your:

If you offer the following activities you will need to hold suitable accreditation or have been audited by a Visit Wales nominated technical consultant

Many thanks

Person 3

From: Person 3 (ESNR - Tourism, Heritage & Sport - Tourism & Marketing)
Sent: Thursday, January 13, 2022 9:41 AM
To: [Company name redacted]
Cc: Person 10
Subject: RE: VW entry

Hi Person 9

Thank you for your email.

Please go on to the online form [Activity providers: Self certification form | Visit Wales](#) and complete this with the information you have provided in your email, this will trigger the process to ensure you have everything in place. This provides safety assurances that individuals are operating a safe and effective industry practice.

I have included below the table that was agreed a while ago now and communicated with WOTGA:-

Guided tours (including a walk)	Guided walking tours	Guided walking tours
Walk out to a view point or to a site of interest as part of a guided tour. <i>As long as within 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent.</i>	Walking tours in towns, cities and lowland locations (non-moorland, hill or coastal walking*) <i>*Unless within 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent.</i>	Walking tours (including those with other visit elements e.g. castle visits) where more rugged and or elevated terrain – moorland, hill or coastal walking is included (beyond the 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent).
Examples include Great Orme, Swallow Falls, Devils Bridge, part of the Wales coastal path.	Examples include city and town walks, lowland countryside, coastal (within 30 minutes walk of the vehicle/equivalent) e.g. Rhosilli, White Sands beach, Constitution Hill, Nefyn Golf Club, etc.	Examples include walking tours into moorland and hills e.g. <i>...full day's hiking taking in some archaeological sites along the way. We'll leave the World Heritage Conwy Castle and hike up through the gorse and heather to the top of Conwy Mountain to check out the Iron Age fortress there. It's a good stretch ascending 1,000 feet...</i>
<i>WOTGA guides will need to consider the locations and environment they are walking in but this should</i>	<i>WOTGA guides will need to consider the locations and environment they are walking in but this should</i>	<i>WOTGA guides will need to consider the locations and environment they are walking in but this is</i>

<i>not require WATO accreditation.</i>	<i>not require WATO accreditation.</i>	<i>where WATO accreditation would apply.</i>
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Kind regards

Person 3

From: [Company name redacted]
Sent: 13 January 2022 06:47
To: Person 3 (ESNR - Tourism, Heritage & Sport - Tourism & Marketing)
Cc: Person 10
Subject: VW entry

Happy New Year Person 3, Person 10 says you asked about WATO re. The above. I presume this is because I offer a hike on my website. I do hold a Mountain Leadership certificate and insurance. Your website says NGB recognition is required and specifically mentions hillwalking. What NGB do you classify for covering hillwalking - as all I can think of is Mountaintraining.org? Coincidentally, if the boot was on the other foot and a WATO member was applying with my website - their lack of official guide training would not stop them having an entry? I would like to resolve this as I have an application in for support for new (FIT and group coach tours) under the WIITF and an entry with you is a requirement for this

Person 9

From: Person 11
Sent: Monday, February 22, 2021 8:10 AM
To: Person 4 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing); Person 3 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)
Cc: Person 9; Person 12; Person 13
Subject: Country walking tours

Dear Person 4

Thank you for listening to me on the above matter on our last call. It has been a long standing area of contention between WOTGA and WATO. Only a few months ago Person 1 and myself discussed the matter but his consequent email stated that his views were supported by other adventure groups- However we strongly disagree with his approach and wish to see a fair compromise. WOTGA completely understands the need for inspection of individual adventure businesses that are not bound by a Membership code of conduct such as WOTGA. We do not expect our members to take walks beyond their competence.

I have no knowledge of any claims being made against our members for walking tours outside town walls.

I am asking for just a sense of balance and fairness.

Both WOTGA and WATO want to support Visit Wales and promote good safe tourism in Wales and to share the work appropriately.

I hope that the paper attached can lead to a resolution of our differences.

Another paper is on its way to you in a few hours about our ideas for recovery - A resolution to this problem would also help the second paper.

I am assuming that you will copy Person 14 into this discussion

Yours

Person 11

Word document attached to the email above:



February 2021.

Position statement from WOTGA re trained Professional Tourist Guides' capability to lead countryside and coastal walks.

The Matter of Concern

The reasonableness of the definition of country and coastal walking tours as proposed by WATO does not accord with the views of WOTGA.

WATO has responsibility to oversee the standards of adventure activities. WOTGA has responsibility to oversee the professional standards of tourist guides. Tourist guides by definition take visitors on walking tours. Sometimes these tours are in towns, up ruined castles, down slate quarries, over rough ground to reach a site and in the countryside on defined paths. These tours do need to be identified as "Adventure" by WATO. If they are so defined then they thereby prevent WOTGA trained guides from working within their skill set and expertise.

It is our contention that the walking tours given by our guides are NOT adventure in nature but cultural and leisure and our guides have been trained accordingly and are insured to do so.

WATO does not take account of the training received for a qualified Blue or Green Badge Guide. The result is that all of the WOTGA qualified guides are barred from advertising countryside strolls on the VISIT WALES website unless they have been inspected by WATO.

However WATO inspected adventure leaders are not prevented from advertising their tourist guide abilities even though they have no qualifications from WOTGA, British Guild of Tour Guides or the Institute of Tourist Guides.

Topics for resolution

- A. To agree to some sensible compromise on the definition of countryside/coastal walks for qualified tourist guides.
- B. To permit qualified tourist guides to lead walks within their training and competence without further costly inspection and assessment.
- C. To permit WOTGA Guides to advertise tours on the Visit Wales website which include an element of country or coastal walking.
- D. To reconsider whether adventure tour leaders should be permitted to advertise tourist guiding on the VW site if they have not qualified for a Green or Blue WOTGA Badge.

Trends in tourism.

Adventure tourism is a growing industry – especially after the pandemic when many people want to spend more time in the countryside.

WOTGA Guides are responding to this new trend in tourism.

Many people who have lived in towns and cities are not familiar with the risks of the countryside or coast and so care must be taken to ensure their safety as well as enjoyment of the environment.

Visit Wales needs to recognise that there are two different markets who wish to visit the countryside.

1. Those wishing to have an adventure
2. Those wanting a slower pace with more information than high octane adventure.

Professionally qualified Tourist guides taking country or coastal walks are trained in managing groups, risk assessments etc in the second definition.

The training provided for Tourist Guides includes many of the elements defined below in the Mountain training Lowland walk handbook. Appendix 1

Our Guides are:-

1. Trained in group management
2. Trained in managing health and safety risks whilst out walking
3. Planning routes
4. Risk assessment
5. Following paths and looking out for hazards
6. Equipped with phones and contact numbers
7. Aware of correct footwear and clothing
8. Understand disability awareness.

There is no need for tourist guides to be trained in

1. Motivation.
2. Detailed knowledge other local walking groups.
3. Our Tourist Guides do not lead groups of children without their parents or school teachers.
4. They are not required to be able navigate by compass.

It is clear from the above that Tourist Guides are competent and capable of leading short walks on coastal and countryside paths whilst discussing the environment or site of historic interest.

Ways to promote resolution

1. Most tourist guides have already undertaken some First Aid training as they recognise its importance. It is not included in our syllabus. WOTGA will encourage all guides to undertake their own First Aid course.
2. WOTGA would welcome a session from a WATO trainer to lead a part of one module on coastal walking on the next Blue Badge training course, if it would lead to an acceptance of our right to guide in the country for walks without the need for their inspection.

It should be noted that WOTGA feel deeply aggrieved that WATO approved group leaders assume that they have the right to lead tours around buildings or sites of special interest without any

qualifications and to advertise on the Visit Wales website. WOTGA has set up a training company called Wales Best Guides Enterprises and would be pleased to set up courses for the WATO group leaders.

Finance

As stated above the safety of all our visitors is paramount. All adventure and tourist guides must be fully insured. However at this time after the pandemic when the tourist guides have lost up to 95% of their work it is not the time to ask them to pay out more money for inspection when it really is of minimal benefit as WOTGA believe that their current training is more than adequate for country and coastal walking of less than 2 hours at a time.

Appendix 1

Taken from the "Mountain Training UK and Ireland" – Lowland walking Handbook

2.1 The Lowland Leader qualification trains and assesses candidates in the skills required to lead others on walks in lowland countryside and woodland that fit ALL of the following criteria:

- Walks must not cross any hazardous terrain (e.g. cliffs, very steep slopes, water hazards etc.).
- Throughout the walk the group should never generally be more than 3km away from a key access point such as a car park, lay-by or populated area. Any potential escape routes should also lie within the scope of the defined terrain for the Lowland Leader award.
- Walks will require the ability to plan routes, use simple navigation skills using a map and compass and be self sufficient.
- Walks must follow paths or tracks that are both marked on a map and clearly visible on the ground and that do not require navigation across untracked areas.
- Walks must use bridges or other recognised water crossing points.
- Walks must only take place in summer conditions (ie when there is no unavoidable snow or ice on any part of the route).

2.2 A combination of technical competence, leadership skills and a wide range of experience form the basis of effective group management. The scheme addresses all these elements. However, the employer or operating authority must ultimately decide whether a leader possesses the personal attributes needed to take responsibility for any particular group of people.

Syllabus

The leader should be aware of:

- a. their responsibilities to the group and individuals within it, parents/guardians, employing authorities, other outdoor users and the general public, including the choosing of venues and planning and recording of routes.
- b. current legislation that relates to the care of groups under their charge, including legislation relating to the care of young people and vulnerable adults.
- c. specific responsibilities to choose appropriate objectives, to complete detailed preparations and ensure that the group is adequately equipped and briefed for the activity.
- d. the health and fitness benefits of walking, and be able to explain them to a group.
- e. communication strategies whilst leading groups.
- f. group management strategies and the need to adapt to differing groups and situations.
- g. the variety of barriers to participation, including mental and physical disability, ethnicity, fitness/health and be aware of the impact of various medical conditions.
- h. the progress of those under their charge and motivate them towards further participation where appropriate.
- i. national walking initiatives.

As can be seen from these extracts the Lowland Walking Leadership syllabus and criteria reflect the definition set out by the Wales **Adventure** Tourism Organisation (WATO)

“Adventure is where the focus is on engaging with the natural environment in a physically challenging manner where skill and an element of risk are central to the experience and the participant seeks to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the natural environment in a peaceful manner”

Appendix 2

Our standard insurance cover that we now take with the British Guild of Tour Guides. To note that it covers cycling – which by inference is more than walking.

From: Person 11

Sent: Monday, March 1, 2021 12:37 PM

To: Person 4 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing); Person 15 (ESNR - Tourism and Marketing); Person 14 (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport, Tourism & Marketing)

Cc: Person 16; Person 9; Person 13

Subject: WATO and WOTGA

Dear All

A few weeks ago I had a conversation with Person 4 about the definition of coastal and country walking tours that are provided by our trained guides and how WOTGA cannot accept the opinion of WATO that our guides should be prevented from doing so unless accredited by WATO.

WOTGA is a competent body that oversees the training of tourist guides in Wales to the European standard of tourism EN15565. The course has been accepted by the Federation of European Guides. Perhaps WOTGA could be considered as Governing Body on a par with WATO??

We have reviewed the course again and in future will include a module on Tourism for All as requested by FEG and we will include an extra module on country walks.

We have submitted to you our views on recovery 2021-2022 and it obvious that there will have to be ground root recovery as international trade will be limited and that there will be an emphasis on OUTDOOR tourism. It is vital that we resolve this definition as soon as possible so that we can support you in your ambitions as set out in your recent recovery document.

Please can we have your support.

Yours

Person 11

Chair of WOTGA

From: Person 11

Sent: Wednesday, March 3, 2021 12:38 PM

To: Person 4 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)

Subject: Country walking tours

Here is a further piece of information that further demonstrates that the boots are not a definitive cut off point

The list below is from one of our guides who issues advice before any of the following routes that visitors should have boots and waterproof clothing etc

- Section of Wye Valley Walk
- Cearwent Roman Fortress
- Caerleon (if visiting Amphitheatre & Barracks)
- Newport Wetlands Bird Reserve
- Nash Point
- Laugharne (coast route around castle to DT Boathouse)
- Dinefwr (House & Castle)
- Pembs Coast Path

- Caldey Island
- Constitution Hill, Aberystwyth
- Blaenavon WHS
- Access to Chartist Cave, Brecon Beacons
- Nefyn Golf Club coastal walk to Porth Dinllaen
- Bardsey Island
- South Stack, Holy Island
- Walk from National Slate Museum
- Great Orme

From: Person 11

Sent: Wednesday, March 3, 2021 9:30 AM

To: Person 4 (ESNR-TourismHeritage&SportTourism&Marketing)

Cc: Person 9

Subject: Country side walks

Dear Person 4

I cannot give you a definite number of guides involved - past activity might not have any bearing on future activity given the impact of COVID. The guides who focused on cruise ship tours in the last years will now be looking at alternative guiding options for at least a year. When the new cohort has attained qualifications we will have about 70 active guides and the linguists bringing in coach tours from abroad and I am not yet in a position to say how they are planning their tours.

The range of requests that come to the WOTGA guides is quite varied.

Nearly all of our guides are requested to walk out to view points with groups such as the Great Orme, Swallow Falls, Devils Bridge, part of the Wales coastal path or along a Beach so that they can interpret and explain the history geology etc- each of those has its own set of risks that are managed by our guides but WATO is appearing to argue that they come under their jurisdiction due to the terrain.

Driver guides are frequently asked to stop and walk. For example a walk out to Rhossilli head to interpret the landscape, or take a short walk on the Wales Coastal path or view a waterfall. Again we believe that all of those are well within our competency even though it might include walking boots. There is no possibility of the guide saying sorry I cannot take you here.

I have also attached some notes from one of our most activity savvy guides. But these sort of tours probably only apply to the minority of our guides- I would estimate 10-20.

"I am regularly employed by American hiking companies because they want a qualified guide for interpretation purposes and for local route finding and terrain knowledge. Boots are necessary for almost all of these walk All of these companies (Wilderness Travel, Adventures in Good Company, Walking Adventures International, etc. These companies want to mix a three hour walk with a visit to a castle, historic site, rural farmhouse or ride on steam train and walk back. They tend to have a good ration of staff to clients and often send their own representative to work alongside me the local guide. They have a policy of wanting the same guide for a week where by walking and talking besides clients individually the clients get an immersive experience chatting informally and learning the language, culture and history as well as being shown first hand the geology or plants as we beach forage or stop to examine hedge-laying or interesting lichen etc. In addition I have some day or half

day work for specialised land-based or cruise companies where they want me to interpret the landscape etc. from a coach and then say lead a walk. Here we, say tour Anglesey getting out to do a short section of the coast path - i.e. around Moelfre to meet the SeaLife representatives - or around South Stack to visit the Irish Huts and walk back along the coast path to the lighthouse. I have just received two different enquiries from upmarket British companies that usually take British abroad but are looking to mix sightseeing and coach commentary with short walks say to around Beddgelert in one case or to Aber Falls in the other case."

We consider that none of the above require WATO approval but WOTGA should be responsible for our guides training and CPD.

I hope that helps

Yes next Tuesday at 11.30 would be great and I hope that I can bring Mandy Whitehead and one other experienced activity guide with me.

Many thanks

Person 11

Person 4 / Person 15 / Person 2 / Person 17 Discussion 02/03/21

Topics for resolution

1. To agree to some sensible compromise on the definition of countryside/coastal walks for qualified tourist guides.
2. To permit qualified tourist guides to lead walks within their training and competence without further costly inspection and assessment.
3. To permit WOTGA Guides to advertise tours on the Visit Wales website which include an element of country or coastal walking.
4. To reconsider whether adventure tour leaders should be permitted to advertise tourist guiding on the VW site if they have not qualified for a Green or Blue WOTGA Badge.

Example of walking tour 2020 (Person 9)

This is a great mix of a full day's hiking taking in some archaeological sites along the way. We'll leave the World Heritage Conwy Castle and hike up through the gorse and heather to the top of Conwy Mountain to check out the Iron Age fortress there. It's a good stretch ascending 1,000 feet but we'll be rewarded by the views over to the Great Orme limestone peak in Llandudno and across to the island of Anglesey. We then continue across undulating moorland crossing little streams and we'll probably see the wild mountain ponies and almost definitely the Welsh mountain sheep. We eventually reach the Druids Circle - a site that's most definitely much older than when the Druids lived, dating back to Neolithic times. We then follow old droving roads descending the mountain past old granite quarry workings down to finish at the bus stop where we'll take a regular bus (leaving about every half hour) back to Conwy. This hike lasts 4 hours and ascends (and descends) over 1,000 feet. You'll need good hiking footwear and clothing and water and a packed lunch. We'll be hiking on rough tracks through heather and gorse moorland at the edge of the Carneddau Plateau the largest, highest mountain massive south of the Scottish highlands. People have wandered these tracks for millennia and it's a pre-historian's paradise scattered with axe-head quarries, Iron Age forts and older standing stones. Hikers come from all over Britain to wander these fascinating hills.

When: Monday, Wednesday & Saturday at 10am, Sunday 12.00 midday

Previous comments from Person 1:

Person 13 is looking at this in the same way that many individuals with a qualification look at it. The accreditation scheme is not just about an individual holding a qualification, this is about a business being able to demonstrate that they operate a safe quality business, regardless of whether they are a sole trader or a business who employs staff.

The scheme does not ask for businesses to be a member of WATO. It requires a business to have been inspected by a third party. It doesn't appear that WOTGA offer an inspection process so anyone who is a WOTGA guide, runs a business and wishes to be listed on the Visit Wales website as offering guided walking that falls within the WATO criteria (Coastal, Hill & Moorland) will need to be inspected by a third party accreditation scheme.

**47 guides on <https://www.walesbestguides.com/guides/>
<https://www.visitwales.com/info/travel-trade/useful-information/toolkit/wales-best-guides>**

Wato criteria/accreditation:

<https://www.visitwales.com/activity-providers-self-certification-form>

From: Person 2 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism)

Sent: Monday, September 4, 2023 12:40 PM

To: Person 18 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Marketing); Person 19 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub); Person 15 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Tourism Marketing); Person 20 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub)

Subject: Update following meeting with Person 1

Hi All,

I caught up with Person 1 on Friday. As you know he was copied into some of the correspondence so is aware of the ongoing situation.

I have attached a copy of the note of our discussion talking through some of the considerations and an options appraisal that he has prepared for Guernsey (the driver of any of these scheme on Guernsey is HSE and therefore they are responsible for the islands legislation) which I think is useful for us to look at.

Thanks.

Person 2

Documents attached to the above email:

1) Guernsey Health & Safety Adventure Activity Providers Audits - Options Appraisal [redacted]

2) Word document – Options for Activity Assurance September 2023:

Discussion on potential options for Visit Wales to recognise Activity Providers on vw.com

Issues

1. Ongoing correspondence from one guided walking provider
2. Wider restrictions in terms of activity products that can displayed on vw.com

Potential Options

- Retain current approach – voluntary process for those that want a listing on vw.com
- Statutory Licensing of all activity providers

- Move away from current policy completely and open the doors for all providers to display without form of assurance
- Self-declaration for all providers
- Adopt a two-tiered approach (current approach and self-certification)
- Desk-based audit, with the possibility of an online interview

Discussion points

- Current approach required a third-party audit which is good industry practice
- What would be the views of those who have gone through the process?
- Need to seek views of WATO/Technical Consultants of any options – already an agenda item for WATO meeting. The agenda item will reflect any possible changes, including being specific to guided walking
- Is this just an issue related to guided walking – is a solution required just for this element?
- Self-declaration process is an option on the proviso that providers sign-up to being spot checked – non-compliance/non-co-operation would result in removal.
- What would be the minimum criteria?
- Potentially less assured products if this route was pursued (i.e. more would self-certify)
- A two-tier approach would require those that have gone through the accreditation process to be (more) clearly identified and listed above non-accredited on vw.com
- Would need to be clearly communicated with consumers
- Would need to consider fees in terms of any approach
- Look at what other countries are doing and seek their views on VW approach
- Is a desk-based audit a possibility (potentially straight-forward for one activity but more onerous for providers with multiple activities)
- Is this an opportunity to review VW policy to accreditation/assurance across activity and accommodation (for completeness)? Look at pros/cons/risks of all options
- Could licensing of activity products be mandatory (i.e. a statutory scheme) as licensing (AALA) is devolved matter?
- Consider the options appraisal for Guernsey – would one of these options be suitable or a hybrid approach?

From: Person 2 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism)
Sent: Friday, September 15, 2023 9:33 AM
To: Person 20 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub); Person 18 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Marketing); Person 21 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Programme & Policy); Person 19 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub)
Subject: RE: Product Listing Removal

Approved criteria – providers need to meet a minimum set of standards and adhere to a code of practice – they do get a visit (rather than self-certify)

A two tiered approach (as per the attached) for activity providers is an option but needs to be worked through as to what that would entail.

From: Person 20 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub)
Sent: Friday, September 15, 2023 9:15 AM
To: Person 2 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism); Person 18 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Marketing); Person 21 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Programme & Policy); Person 19 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub)
Subject: RE: Product Listing Removal

Person 2 what is the approach for the listed accommodation?
Is there something that could be classed as a 'listed activity' that meet certain criteria but not full WATO.

I think the (A) sticker is a good approach and we can look at doing some work so the weighting on these return them higher in results, we can also have a filter by accredited only.

Diolch,

Person 20

From: Person 2 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism)
Sent: Friday, September 15, 2023 8:47 AM
To: Person 18 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Marketing); Person 20 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub); Person 21 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Programme & Policy); Person 19 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub)
Subject: RE: Product Listing Removal

We currently have an A in a circle to identify those that have gone through the process - see [Anglesey Adventures and Coasteering Wales | VisitWales](#) – we may need to make that clearer on the initial search return, prioritise in terms of searches (Person 20 mentioned this previously).

Accommodation providers have to be approved or graded by VW, or graded by the AA in order to have a listing – if we were to allow non-accredited activities to display

then should non-graded accommodation businesses be offered the same opportunity?

I'm not saying that is the right approach but should be considered.

Thanks

Person 2

From: Person 18 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Marketing)

Sent: Friday, September 15, 2023 8:27 AM

To: Person 2 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism); Person 20 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub); Person 21 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Programme & Policy); Person 19 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub)

Subject: RE: Product Listing Removal

Hi

Could we not use a sticker that is clearly an outdoor safety related sticker though for example WATO accredited? How would that create a risk for the accommodation sector?

Person 18

From: Person 2 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism)

Sent: Friday, September 15, 2023 8:19 AM

To: Person 18 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Marketing); Person 20 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub); Person 21 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Programme & Policy); Person 19 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub)

Subject: RE: Product Listing Removal

With regards to:

is there anything stopping us from adopting the sticker approach on our content i.e adding a Kite mark for anything that is accredited? Is a full review needed? Views?

This is a change in policy and would apply to accommodation businesses as well – it may well be the conclusion we come to but I'm of the view that we should look at a range of options having taken into account approaches elsewhere and the views of stakeholders (internal and external).

Thanks

Person 2

From: Person 18 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Marketing)

Sent: Thursday, September 14, 2023 4:27 PM

To: Person 20 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub); Person 21 (ETC - Culture, Sport &

Tourism - Programme & Policy); Person 2 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism); Person 19 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub)
Subject: RE: Product Listing Removal

Hi

The correspondence has not gone out yet. I'd suggest holding fire on this front whilst we agree next steps on the review.

The wording in the correspondence will be.

We are not aware that other outdoor activity providers have raised any issues around this approach, but we are nevertheless taking Mr Lamb's concerns very seriously and we will look again at our processes to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and report back on the results to Mr Lamb /you when this process is concluded.

Discussing with Person 21 earlier – is there anything stopping us from adopting the sticker approach on our content i.e adding a Kite mark for anything that is accredited? Is a full review needed? Views?

Person 18

From: Person 20 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub)
Sent: Thursday, September 14, 2023 3:43 PM
To: Person 21 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Programme & Policy); Person 2 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism); Person 18 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Marketing); Person 19 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub)
Subject: Product Listing Removal

Hi all,

Now that the responses have gone back on the previous items there needs to be a decision on the following listing by the same operator:
<https://www.visitwales.com/activity/mountain-training-2172659>

Person 2 I believe Person 19 emailed you previously on this listing and you discussed with WATO.

Can you confirm if this listing needs to be removed from unable to meet the grading requirements.

And if this is the case, how do we review / remove the wider flagged items from the previous correspondence – can they be checked if they meet requirements.

Person 21 / Person 18 – appreciate your views if this listing is to be removed as will likely cause further reaction whilst we are looking at the bigger picture. But if we are to be true to our approach we should follow the advice being provided on their accreditation.

Diolch,

Person 20

From: Person 22
Sent: Thursday, July 20, 2023 4:28 PM
To: Person 23 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub)
Subject: Re: Visit Wales article

Hi

Thank you for your email.

Yes we run walks and many other outdoor activities.

I have looked into becoming accredited with VW and we had a meeting with Person 25 who gave us some advice on that.

Any advice and tips gratefully received.

If there is anything I can do to help please do let me know with articles, image support or anything else please do let me know.

Kind regards

Person 22

On 20 Jul 2023, at 15:17, Person 23 wrote:

Hi Person 22,

I hope all is well with you.

Person 24 passed your message over to me as earlier this year she was successful in gaining a development opportunity so has now moved roles – lots of great things happening here too!

Lovely to hear from you and hear how things are developing. A 35k following for your group is brilliant!

When you say you *run a large Walking and outdoors group*, do you mean you run physical walking sessions?

If so, it might be worth you looking to get VW accreditation so that you can be listed on our provider database.

You'd then appear in results when users search the Visit Wales site for walking as an activity. Listings provide users with a bit of information about what you provide along with contact details and a link through to your website to find out more and to book.

We require all activity providers to be accredited in order to be listed to provide our users with a high level of quality assurance.

There's more information about the process and how to apply on our [working with us](#) page.

Diolch,

Person 23

From: Person 22

Sent: 04 July 2023 15:59

To: Person 24 (ETC - Culture, Sport & Tourism - Brand Hub)

Subject: Visit Wales article

Hi Person 24,

Hope you are well.

I have my own website now and also run a large Walking and outdoors group which has 35k members.

Just wondering if there maybe any interest in doing something new?

I am very passionate about helping people with their mental health, being active and spending time outdoors.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Person 22

Extract from Word document:

Content planning meeting – minutes

26 July 2022

Content update from Person 23 - there was a recent court case relating to the way we feature activities on our site.

Accommodation and activities must be accredited, we must link to the product (in English) and not the providers external site. If accreditation lapses. It is better to have broken internal links to product listings, than to link out to external providers who are no longer accredited.

For events it's slightly more flexible. For attractions we prefer them to be graded, but they don't have to be.

Activities and activity providers must only be featured if they are accredited and have an active product listing in the database. Accreditation involves the business being thoroughly checked to ensure their practises are safe and have quality assurance. The requirement applies to providers featured on Croeso and De, even though we don't have a language specific listing to link to. On the Croeso site, we can link to external sites but they still need to be accredited providers in order to be featured in any editorial content. Person 26 said that the German site tends to link to the English product listing page from the De site.

Person 3 has been looking at key activities and activities that have been removed because that are not graded. Person 3 **to share the list of key activities and activities that have been removed.**

Person 23 said that there are steps we can take to improve the current workflow. We receive a list of newly graded accommodation, but we don't get a list of what has been dropped from the list of activity providers. We need to look at the communication between the teams to pass on information about providers that are removed from the database. At present, there's at least a two week lag, between the end of the accreditation and when the database listing is removed and this information isn't provided to the content teams – we rely on picking up broken product links. We aim to change this by having a list of providers removed from the database sent to the content team as soon as possible.

Person 27 has run a report of all external links for all sites. We will need to check that any existing external links to activity providers are updated to link to the product listing, or removed.

The file is very large, so it is being looked at before it is sent out to each team to action. There is no search function on De site. The external link document will contain the links and the page they are on to make it easier to work through and make changes.

We can feature non accredited links, such as Refill Cymru. Person 27 will get clarity on whether we can link to certain attractions/activities where the external link is used in additional to the product link to provide more detail.

Person 23 will follow up with Person 19 who has been asked by Person 4 for clarity regarding Travel Trade links as they have a limited database.

Person 3 asked about Zip World's new attractions. Person 7 has been asked to contact them to ask that they update the product listings. The coaster has reopened and they've added a new attraction, Zip Climber. Person 28 has made draft amendments to a page Visit Wales page include these.

Person 23 said their understanding of accreditation was that if a business was already accredited, they are a safe provider So no further accreditation will be required for us to feature the new Tower Climber. Person 29 used to work in grading and agreed. Person 23 said Zip World Tower took a while to be added to the database previously as it was a new site/product. There is also a new Zip World site in Rhyl, which Person 23 needs to check with Person 2 about.

As mentioned previously, [company name redacted] is no longer accredited. We have removed a fair bit of content featuring the business and owner. Owner said they will complete the accreditation when they get around to it. Person 23 said that there's a lot of work to keep on top of active product listings but it really important that we do.

Person 23 is reviewing the editorial guidance and documentation to include the need to ensure activities are linked to as products and not external links, as well as to outline the new components that have been added to the CMS.

Person 23 to circulate links to revised editorial guidance and documentation when this is completed.

Actions for Person 23: to ask someone to send the accommodation list updates to the Travel Trade mailbox, to get clarification about linking to products on the Travel Trade website and to check about accreditation for the new Zip World products, including Zip World Rhyl and to clarify if we can feature links to external sites on pages where we already have a product link.