

Brilliance of the Seas returns to Anglesey

Tourism Minister, Lord Elis-Thomas had the opportunity to step on board the ship during a visit in June to meet with Captain and crew and explore how Wales can further increase its share in the lucrative cruise sector.

The cruise ship market has been identified as growth market for Wales. This year alone, Wales will have welcomed 100 cruise visits – which means over 51,000 cruise passengers from USA, Canada, France and Germany, to name but a few countries. It is also a significant upturn on 2017 year's figures which show a year on year increase of 15%. Holyhead will welcome 54 of these calls in 2018 – an increase of 30% from 2017.

Wales has attracted new lines such as Norwegian Cruise Line, Aida, Regent Seven Seas and Phoenix Reisen and work is ongoing to attract further cruise lines as well as retain the existing ones. Cruise & Maritime Voyages cruise line will continue to offer turnaround cruises in 2019 to the Mediterranean, following the second successful year of sailing out of Cardiff port, where 750 passengers boarded and disembarked the Marco Polo cruise vessel.

The Welsh Government and Cruise Wales have been working in partnership with Local Authorities and Ports on a marketing programme for Wales as well as improving what we have to offer in Wales for the cruise market.

In Fishguard port, through the Tourism Investment Support Scheme, Welsh Government has invested in a pontoon allowing larger cruise vessels to call. As a result, there is already an increase in passenger numbers for 2019 of 30%, including the arrival of the Aidabella cruise ship, with 2500 cruise passengers on board. This will be the largest ship to call in Fishguard so far.

The port of Holyhead is also to undergo change, with a new multi-use berth development under consideration. In Milford Haven, revised plans for a multi-million pound marina redevelopment, including new hotels, shops and restaurants, have been approved by Pembrokeshire County Council.

A key part of retaining calls is to develop and promote new onshore tour itineraries for passengers and showcasing more of Wales's attractions to cruise lines and ground handlers. A new tour, involving the architect of the Wales Millennium Centre has been developed for passengers arriving in Cardiff; and for passengers arriving in Fishguard, a Hwyl event featuring entertainment to showcase Welsh heritage & culture and been developed. In Holyhead, an adventure tour option is being offered to Zip World Forest Coaster.

Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

"I was delighted to have the opportunity in June to see how a

cruise ship such as the Brilliance of the Seas operates, and look at the opportunities these cruise calls present for the wider economy of Wales.

It's great news that Anglesey is welcoming passengers again today. The growth of the sector is testimony to the collaborative work between public and private sector partners, working closely with the cruise liners to ensure that Wales is developing the right infrastructure and products which will appeal to their customers. I'm sure the passengers will have an excellent time exploring the variety and quality of what Wales has to offer and we look forward to welcoming more ships to Wales during 2018."

Anglesey's Major Projects and Economic Development portfolio holder, Councillor Carwyn Jones added:

"The economic benefits the cruise industry brings to Anglesey and North Wales are hugely important.

Anglesey Council is pleased to be leading the North Wales Regional Cruise Project, and support via the Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF) has helped us attract many more cruise ship passengers to the region.

We will continue to market North Wales as a unique destination, build on our success and cement Holyhead's position as one of the UK's premier cruise ports."

The cruise industry is also supported by the Destination Anglesey Partnership, where key private sector representatives collaborate with the public sector to maximise benefits.