



Covid-19 Survey #3

Clwydian Range Tourism Group

February 2021

Clwydian Range Tourism Group



This Survey was distributed to Clwydian Range Tourism Group (CRTG) members, and non-CRTG members who ran local businesses in the area were also able to participate via our website and social media. The survey ran from the 18-24 February 2021 and generated 29 responses.

The survey was undertaken when the tourism industry was again in lockdown for the winter season 2020/2021. Reviews by the Welsh government are being announced every three weeks.

This is the 3rd survey we have conducted to establish the impact of Covid-19 on our tourism businesses in NE Wales.

Who we are

The Clwydian Range Tourism Group (CRTG) is a voluntary group of friendly, enthusiastic business people who are committed to sustainable tourism in and around the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Group works closely with the AONB to achieve the aims of both organisations. The Group is led by voluntary board members who represent the interests of tourism businesses with various organisations across Wales but in particular, across North East Wales. The group is an independent body but is grateful to receive funding from the AONB whose support helped fund this survey and also Flintshire County Council who fund, Covid-19 permitting, our business meetings.

Acknowledgements

The Clwydian Range Tourism Group wishes to acknowledge the contribution from the AONB's Sustainable Development Fund for enabling this survey to be undertaken. We are also grateful to Flintshire, Denbighshire and Wrexham Councils, the AONB, Flintshire Tourism Association and food groups for encouraging businesses in their respective areas to participate in this survey. And finally we are grateful to the 29 local businesses who engaged with and participated in this survey. In particular, their fulsome replies help bring the document to life. These are real businesses who have already suffered a major loss in income and are facing a very uncertain future.



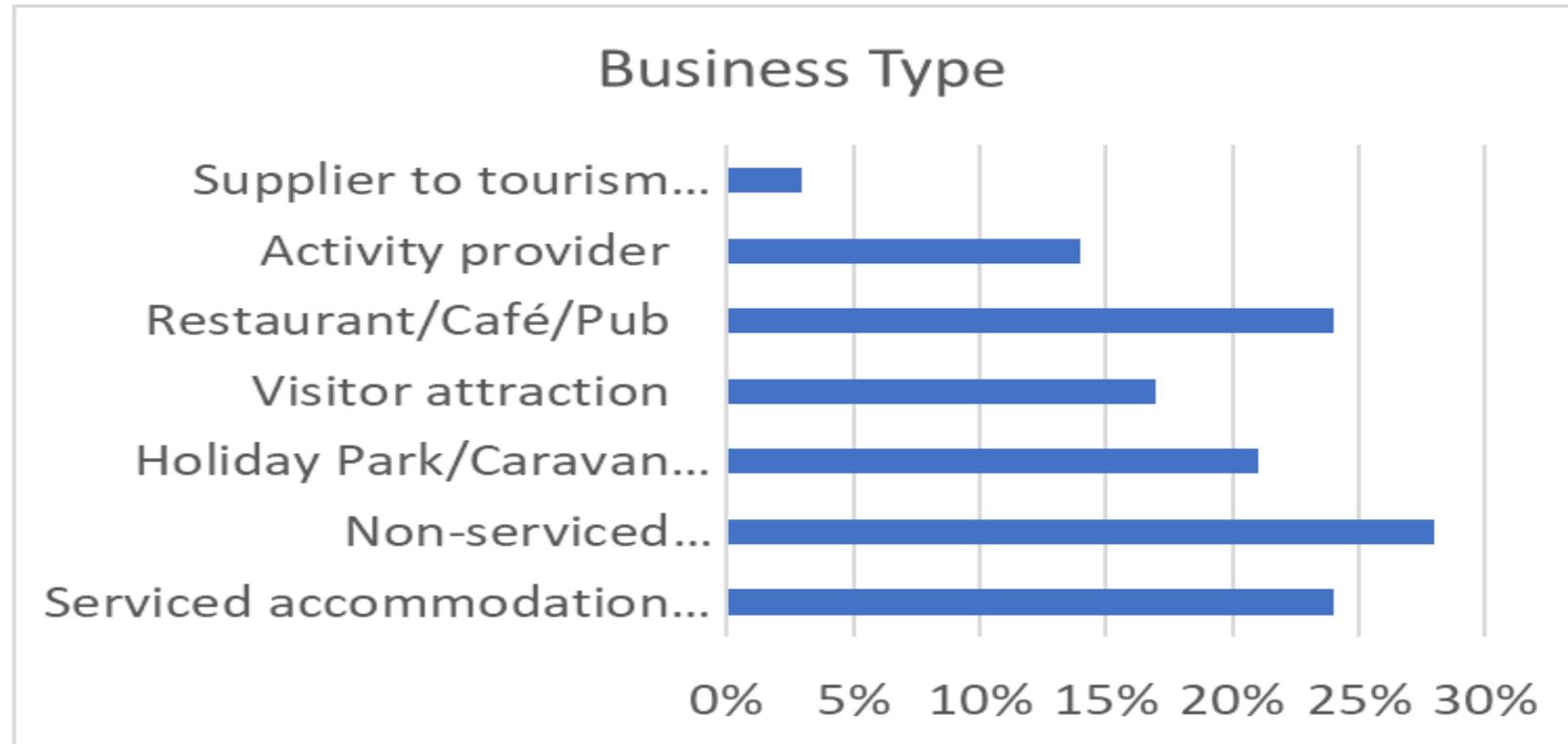


Key findings

- Businesses are frustrated by unclear guidelines for preparing to re-open; the three week announcements do not allow future planning, and the different rules in different parts of the UK are confusing, and don't give the business or consumer confidence to book.
- Businesses have established safety protocols in place, and are positive and keen to re-open.
- 79% of the businesses who responded to the survey have qualified for some form of funding.
- Of the 29 businesses who responded, 7 said the application process was easy; 13 found the funding application process frustrating and restrictive.
- Four businesses have applied for business interruption insurance, but none of them have yet had a payment.
- The Stay Eat Do project ends in March 2021. The project has had extremely positive feedback, and businesses would like to see the opportunities through SED continued – particularly networking and sharing of ideas.
- The main support businesses would like to see through their county council is PR and marketing the NE Wales area post lockdown. And extensions to funding and finance to ensure they can open in 2021.
- Businesses also want marketing and promotion from Clwydian Range Tourism Group, together with forums to network and again share best practice.

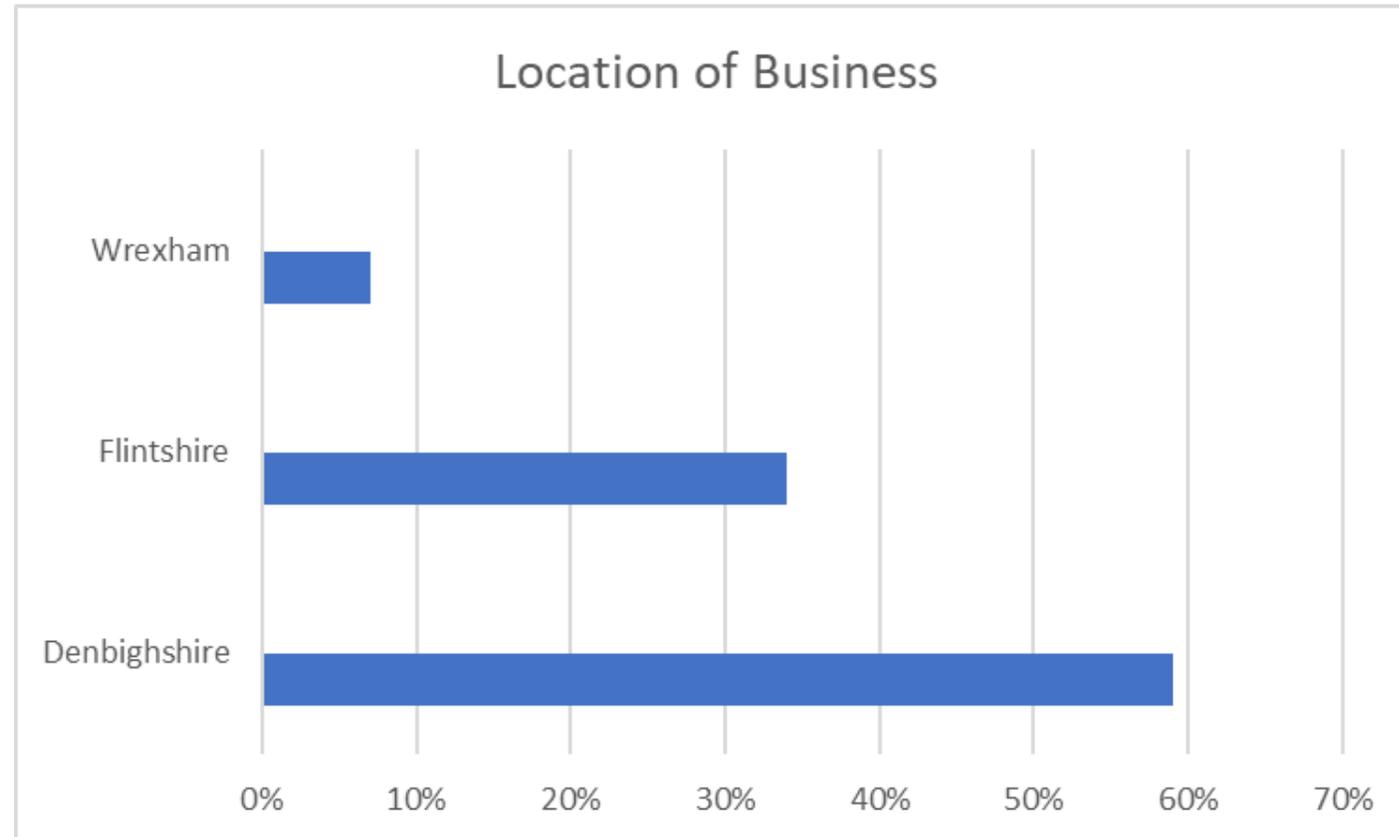


Qu 1: Select your business type



Serviced accommodation (Hotel, B&B, Guesthouse)	24%
Non-serviced accommodation (Self-catering cottages)	28%
Holiday Park/Caravan Park/Chalets/Camping	21%
Visitor attraction	17%
Restaurant/Café/Pub	24%
Activity provider	14%
Supplier to tourism businesses	3%

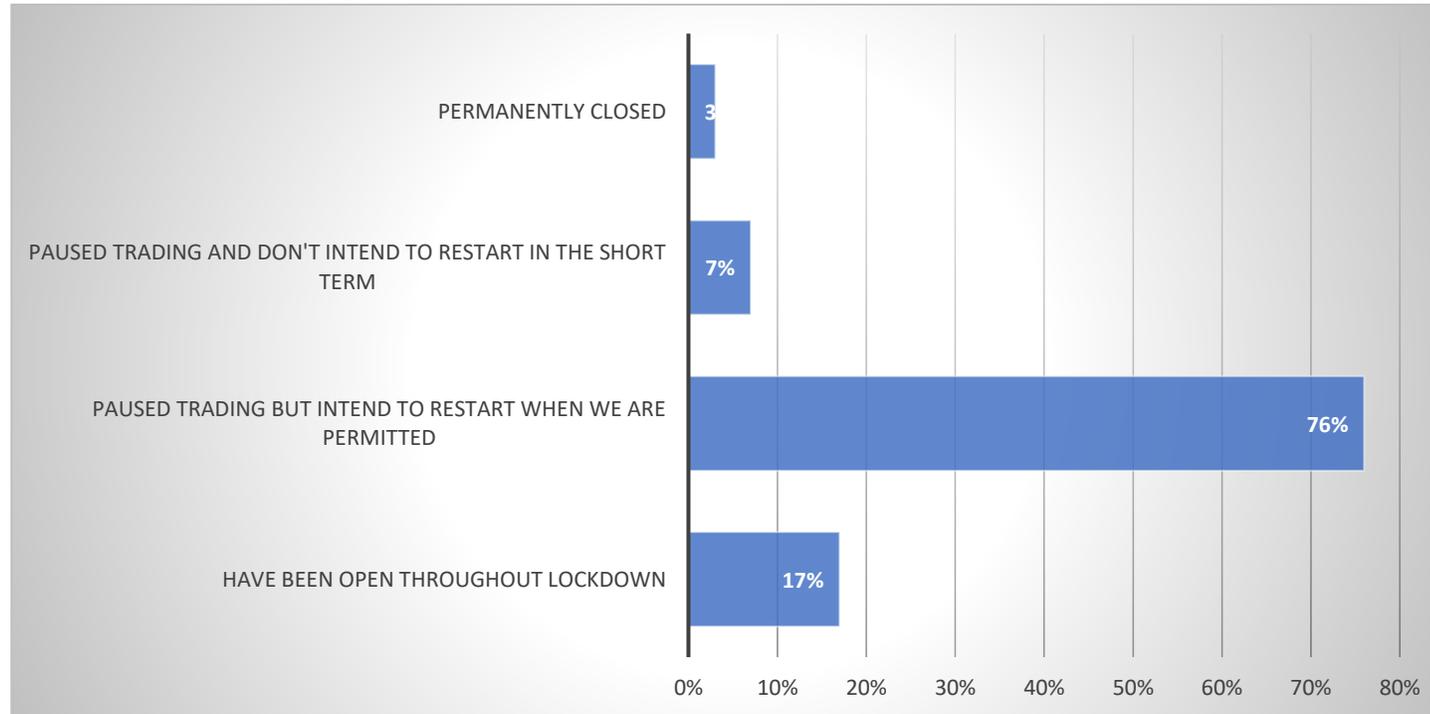
Qu 2: In which county does your business operate?



Denbighshire	59%
Flintshire	34%
Wrexham	7%



Qu 3: Is your business currently open?



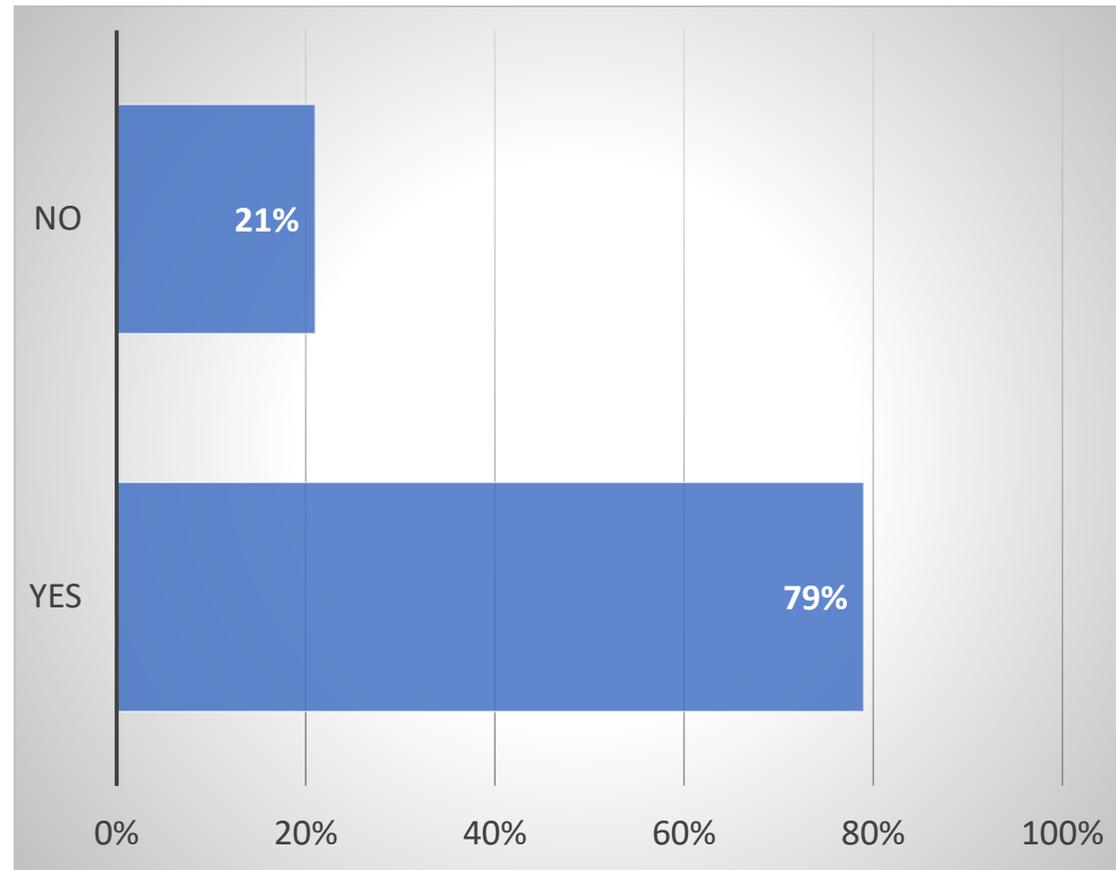
Have been open throughout lockdown	17%
Paused trading but intend to restart when we are permitted	76%
Paused trading and don't intend to restart in the short term	7%
Permanently closed	3%

Qu 4: Let us know of any issues and concerns you are facing in deciding whether or not to re-open.



THEME	PERCENTAGE	QUOTES
Uncertainty due to changing rules on lockdown	26%	<p><i>"The unknown is the hardest aspect"</i></p> <p><i>"England and Wales not working together when lifting restrictions"</i></p> <p><i>"We are holding off to open our calendar as we have been penalised for cancellations"</i></p> <p><i>"Don't want to take bookings to find having to cancel again. We need clear guidelines hat if we open can stay open"</i></p> <p><i>"The three week review programme doesn't give potential guests much confidence to book"</i></p> <p><i>"Chaotic state of the tiers....not knowing whether the people who are booked are allowed to come or not"</i></p>
Safety concerns	22%	<p><i>"Whether covid cases fall to a low enough level so that we feel safe"</i></p> <p><i>"We are happy with the protocols we have put in place and will continue to use them for the foreseeable future"</i></p> <p><i>"Caravans are spaced 6 metres apart"</i></p>
Uncertainty there will still be demand for a product/service	7%	<p><i>"decrease in trade and lack of footfall in the town"</i></p> <p><i>"The age of our average customer is in the vulnerable bracket for covid. We're concerned that we will have customers when we re-open, whether customers will want to be out and visiting cafes"</i></p>
Positive outlook	22%	<p><i>"No issues, we can't wait to open!"</i></p> <p><i>"Converting my Dairy and will open as soon as I can"</i></p> <p><i>"We have been taking advantage of free training and have diversified"</i></p>
Financial Concerns	19%	<p><i>"Not sure how long savings will last due to cost of animal husbandry and park maintenance"</i></p> <p><i>"We have not been able to run any combat games or event = zero income"</i></p> <p><i>"We are incredibly grateful for the grants and would not have survived without them"</i></p>
Stress	4%	<p><i>"It has all been really stressful and hard work"</i></p>

Qu 5: We are interested to hear if you have been successful in applying for financial aid during Covid19



Qu 6: Please add any comments you may have, regarding your experience of applying for financial loans, grants or other funding during Covid-19.



Main findings:

We did not ask businesses to list which types of financial aid they were successful in applying for, but for their general comments. However, businesses have had success in applying for staff furlough, discretionary lockdown grants, ERF, bounce back loans, and business rate relief.

Of the 29 businesses who responded, 7 said the application process was easy and that they felt supported.

Other businesses said they found on-line forms ambiguous and complicated.

Updates from CRTG, local authorities and the Welsh Government have been useful.

It is not always easy to understand whether or not the business qualifies for the funding applied for, and keeping up to date with opportunities is hard.

Businesses that do not pay business rates, are relatively new start ups, or recently become self-employed have found it the most difficult to apply for funding.

A major frustration is with discretionary grants, which are issued on a first come first served basis, and takes a long time to get a response or a payment. No central point of contact to chase up applications has been available.

A full transcript of the comments received is available in the appendix at the end of this report.

Qu 6: We are particularly interested to hear if you have made a claim on your insurance for business interruption following the recent Supreme Court ruling



THEME	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	QUOTES
Have put a claim in	4	<p><i>"We have put a claim in with our insurers but they are refusing to pay due to the nature of the wording on our policy"</i></p> <p><i>"We have been unsuccessful in making a claim for business interruption as it is using the notifiable disease as a restriction for business interruption rather than enforced closure by the government. We are appealing."</i></p> <p><i>"I am making a claim for business interruption – all accounting information has been supplied and I am awaiting to hear back. It's very slow"</i></p> <p><i>"We're in the process of making a claim to our insurance company. However policy was renewed in June 2020 and cover for losses due to Covid-19 were removed"</i></p>
Not Claimed	9	<p><i>"No insurance claim"</i></p> <p><i>"Not claimed as was told it was not available with a pandemic"</i></p> <p><i>"We are not covered for business interruption"</i></p> <p><i>"I did email my insurance broker with regard to making a claim but didn't receive a reply – will chase this up"</i></p>

The Stay Eat Do Project comes to an end in March 2021. How has your business benefited from the project/any further comments?

11 respondents/18 comments



THEME	PERCENTAGE	COMMENTS
Networking	28%	<p><i>"The links made have been really helpful"</i></p> <p><i>"Main benefits from networking/interaction with similar and complementary businesses....network with local business owners and build beneficial relationships"</i></p> <p><i>"Julie's work has been excellent and it would be nice to see it continue"</i></p> <p><i>"Benefitted from the general networking and understanding of local businesses during the pre-Covid"</i></p>
Training helpful	22%	<p><i>"The training provided has been really useful"</i></p> <p><i>"free workshops such as social media marketing and AirBnB experiences"</i></p> <p><i>"Social Media side"</i></p>
Want SED extended	11%	<p><i>"Only just found out about it – would love to do more"</i></p> <p><i>"I genuinely hope the project is extended beyond March 2021"</i></p>
Covid-19 halted or stalled our SED plans	11%	<p><i>"We would have benefitted but for Covid closing travel down"</i></p> <p><i>"Covid and new package insurance requirements prevented wider collaboration"</i></p>
Were not able to move forward with SED plans	11%	<p><i>"We have not been able to make anything happen within the realms of this project"</i></p> <p><i>"we have joined curious neighbours but have yet to see any result"</i></p>
SED has helped my business plan	11%	<p><i>"This project has been a lifeline for my fledgling business"</i></p> <p><i>"We intend to join the AirBnB experiences and attended a Zoom about it"</i></p>
Raised awareness	6%	<p><i>"SED has brought awareness about what we and others are doing"</i></p>

Qu 8: What support do you feel you need from your county council, the wider business development services, and other organisations?



THEME	PERCENTAGE	QUOTE
PR/Marketing/Publicity	35%	<p><i>"Central Booking Hub"</i></p> <p><i>"let tourists know we are open for business and welcoming visitors"</i></p> <p><i>"Advertising less well-known areas such as NE Wales as damage done last year by complaints across all media that people descended on honeypots... gave impression they would be 'full' so don't bother coming to Wales"</i></p> <p><i>"Marketing support to make sure that we are able to make full use of the any time that we are allowed to open"</i></p> <p><i>"Farmers markets to promote my artisan cheese"</i></p> <p><i>"Hoping Visit Wales and Destination Partnerships will promote..... NE Wales"</i></p>
Funding/finance	26%	<p><i>"More grants would help"</i></p> <p><i>"VAT and business rates are abolished for at least another year"</i></p> <p><i>"Prompt payment of grant aid"</i></p> <p><i>"Need reduction in VAT rate to remain"</i></p> <p><i>"Financial assistance for marketing"</i></p>
Clear Guidance on reopening/rules for travel	9%	<p><i>"Clear guidance of what we can and can't do when we do reopen"</i></p> <p><i>"changes to guidelines for accepting guests/keeping everyone safe need to be published promptly so businesses are fully prepared"</i></p>
Happy with service	9%	<p><i>"Business Wales Conwy and Denbighshire Tourism teams have been fantastic"</i></p> <p><i>"Impressed with support from local council"</i></p> <p><i>"Communication from Visit Wales has been brilliant"</i></p>
Planning and refurbishment grants	6%	<p><i>Planning to allow caravan park hard standings due to wetter seasons"</i></p> <p><i>"Help available to refurbish our toilets as these are used by all visitors to the area"</i></p>
Local Business Collaboration	6%	<p><i>"look at what we do with a consultant and a session throwing ideas around of what we offer and how we do it"</i></p> <p><i>"Local businesses supporting each other and working together"</i></p>
Free parking/town websites	6%	<p><i>"Free parking, town websites advertising small businesses"</i></p> <p><i>"WCBC need to start working with us in the Pontcysyllte WHS"</i></p>
Training	3%	<p><i>"Booked onto training from Superfast Business Wales"</i></p>

Qu 9: What do you think CRTG could do to help you and your business in 2021?

34 comments, 29 respondents



THEME	PERCENTAGE	COMMENTS
PR Promotion Marketing	38%	<p><i>"Keep promoting the area"</i></p> <p><i>"Contact all the relevant tourism organisations for publicity for our members"</i></p> <p><i>"I like all the videos and information on the area and share them on our facebook page. It encourages visitors to come to another part of Wales, away from the beaches and the traditionally popular areas such as Snowdonia"</i></p> <p><i>"Spread the word"</i></p> <p><i>"Promotion day"</i></p>
Networking Forums	21%	<p><i>"Networking within businesses, accommodation providers suggesting local venues to travellers"</i></p> <p><i>"Member forums either where people meet or virtual as a support network for businesses"</i></p> <p><i>"Networking and best practice ideas that we can all becoming more confident that it is worth re-opening"</i></p>
Lobbying	12%	<p><i>"Lobby local, nationwide and UK-wide politicians and decision-makers to offer much more comprehensive package of financial support to business."</i></p> <p><i>"Support us and all other businesses in realising that most of us are very good Circular Economy businesses."</i></p>
Happy with current service	12%	<p><i>"You are doing everything you can to keep people connected and informed"</i></p> <p><i>"Continue with website updates and regular newsletters, social media updates to keep everyone informed"</i></p>
Not sure	9%	
Directory of suppliers	3%	<i>"Is there a directory of suppliers etc that other businesses can use on the website?"</i>
Advice on building a website	3%	
Focus less on sustainability	3%	<i>"Focus less on sustainability, more focus on attracting visitors!"</i>

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the survey.

Please find us on the following links:



- CRTG members page: <https://crtgmembers.co.uk/>

- Visit the Range: <https://www.visitclwydianrange.co.uk/>



- Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=visit%20clwydian%20range>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/271996239520838>



- Twitter: Visit Clwydian Range
• @visittherange



- Instagram: @visitclwydianrange
#visitclwydianrange



For up to date information about Covid-19 please
visit our page on:

<https://crtgmembers.co.uk/Covid-19>

Appendix to Question 6



Question six asked please add any comments you may have, regarding your experience of applying for financial loans, grants or other funding during Covid-19

We have provided the full transcript of answers to this question as each is a valuable comment and is unique to that business.

Applied for NDR business restriction grant - application was simple. not covered for business interruption

We have only been able to apply for the discretionary grants. I did email my insurance broker with regard to making a claim, but didn't receive a reply. I will chase this up.

We're in the process of making a claim on our insurance company. However, policy was renewed in June 2020 and cover for losses due to covid-19 were removed

We managed to be awarded one discretionary grant so far. We have also taken out a bounce back loan.

Flintshire very helpful with grants, bulletins. It has allowed us to invest and prepare for re-opening.

To be fair the Government has tried although the grant criteria is not that well thought out and unnecessarily restrictive. No insurance claims made.

I have applied for a Rural Business Investment Grant, which I'm hoping to hear back from in the next 2 months. This is to upscale my cheese business (purchase of bigger VAT etc) and take on additional staff.

Appendix

We received a start up business grant earlier in the year last year and then one discretionary lockdown payment. However we have not had a response to our application to Denbighshire for December lockdown. We have also applied again in February but not yet expecting an answer for that one. We cant get hold of anyone in the business and economic development team to enquire about the December application, despite emails and phone calls.

we are not registered as a business just furnished holiday let so could not claim any financial aid

We've had furlough for the staff, also £10,000 from the ERF and £3,000 from the recent Sector Specific Fund. We haven't claimed for business interruption from our insurance company.

Sadly nothing from our insurance company. Financial help has been quite simple to apply for due to our business sector - retail and hospitality. At times we feel we dip out a little but are fortunate to be in a stable condition.

Grants very easy but now not enough to cover outgoings; took a Bounce Back Loan and nearly pent it just to maintain buildings whilst force to close.

The on line form is ambiguous, complicated and not user friendly

Have not claimed for assistance

Frustration over the difference between help given to England an no help to zoos and parks in Wales

Appendix

Had no help at all, feel extremely let down by Flintshire County Council (s/c cottage).

HMRC originally contacted me to let me know I was eligible, then claimed through County Council. Has enable me to continue bills.

As a small Caravan and Motorhome Club Certificated Site we have found that we are not eligible for any funding at all. Our annual income doesn't reach any of the criteria, but it has made a difference to us as we lost 4 months of trading last year and have had no compensation for this. We will not be claiming any insurance cover.

We have received help from the government, however, I have not received any help for my rented shop, within the Ponderosa Cafe, horseshoe Pass Summit. I've not applied for business interruption as was told it was not available with a pandemic.

The hardest part has been making sure we don't miss out on any opportunities and understanding whether or not we meet the criteria.

All been fine, bit confusing now with the different grant and dates. ie firebreak etc.

All non domestic rate grants have been successfully applied for and paid promptly. ERF phase 3 was closed before we could apply as there was a glitch in the system which wouldn't let us input our sector. ERF phase 4 was applied for and granted but at a much reduced amount than we claimed for. We have secured a bounce back loan with NatWest bank We have been unsuccessful in making a claim for business interruption as it is using the notifiable disease as a restriction. For business interruption rather than enforced closure by the government. We are appealing.

Appendix

Accommodation attracted grant as I receive business rate relief but tea hut hadn't been open long enough. I also hadn't been self employed long enough for support. I applied for and received a bounce back loan but as I only had my first years figures to go on for the tea hut, it wasn't a significant amount

The bulletins and emails have kept us up to date with what we can apply for.

We have only received the NDR funding

FCC grants easy to access. No insurance claim

Automatically been given the rate relief grants but these haven't covered the cost of the bills. Unable to apply for the economic resilience fund as I'm a sole trader who isn't VAT registered which has been a massive blow to trying to keep the business and staff jobs viable post covid and when furlough comes to an end.

Been great

The WG has been very supportive and the grants and loans have been very simple to apply. We have put a claim in with our insurers but they are refusing to pay due to the nature of the wording on our policy.

Have made claims for the discretionary grants for those who pay domestic rates. The second one has just been paid out (although very slow) My third application has also been made. It would be helpful if DCC could provide updates where there are delays or offer a point of contact within the team that is dealing with the grants if businesses need to chase up. I am also making a claim for business interruption - all accounting information has been supplied and I am awaiting to hear back. Again it's very slow.

Flintshire have been super supportive as have HMRC and the banks. We didn't have business interruption on our insurance.