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## GLOBAL TRAVEL INDUSTRY GATHERING FOR IWTTF 2021 RESULTS IN PLEDGES AND ACTIONS TO BUILD BACK BETTER



**21 May 2021** – Over 350 travel industry leaders and next-generation professionals from across the globe gathered virtually and pledged to build back better at the first virtual International Women In Travel & Tourism Forum (IWTTF), held 10-15<sup>th</sup> May.

The five-day event, organised by social enterprise [Women in Travel CIC](#) (Community Interest Company), aimed to stimulate discussions that would result in actionable solutions that could accelerate diversity, gender balance and inclusion across the travel and tourism industry, and this certainly seemed to be the case, as keynote speaker Laura Storm set the scene on day one with a rallying cry for the travel industry to embrace regenerative leadership in order to champion sustainable tourism as “we can no longer fix new problems with old solutions”. (link to session - [here](#))

On day two, storytelling was the focus, when the Forum heard from two out of three [Urban Adventures female tour guides](#), who were trained as part of a collaboration between Intrepid Travel and Women in Travel CIC. Their passion for sharing their culture and the untold stories of their communities was palpable and underlined the importance of authentic story-telling within the travel industry and the need to share the stories of often invisible women that are key to truly understanding a destination. (YouTube session link is [here](#))

Day three shone a spotlight on travel and technology, when delegates heard from next-generation plus experienced professionals within travel, tourism and hospitality tech. In the third session of the day, ATPCO shared how they are putting enormous effort into attracting



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and developing female tech talent through innovative recruitment and retention by embracing doing things differently. (link to session - [here](#))

Day four amplified the diverse voices from across the industry who have felt overlooked or marginalised by mainstream society, and focused on the tangible actions that could be taken to change the status quo within the travel industry. In the [Diversifying Travel Panel](#), hiring and retaining diverse talent was discussed as a starting point, but also championing more diverse leaders by inviting different people to have a seat at the table where decisions are made. Additional suggestions included reaching more diverse groups by listening to them and their wants and needs, through focus groups and polls, and by implementing staff diversity training that allows a safe space for different voices to be heard and where difficult conversations can be encouraged.

A highlight from Day five of the Forum was the launch of Women in Travel's Male Allyship Network at the first Male Allyship Roundtable. Moderated by TTG CEO Dan Pearce, and supported by Battleface, more than 30 senior male leaders took part, including Finnbar Cornwall from Google, Jeremy Sampson from The Travel Foundation, John Bevan from Dnata and Toby Horry from TUI.

The new cross-industry Male Allyship Network in travel and tourism will foster mentoring and the sponsorship of women, particularly those from underrepresented groups.

Speaking about the launch of the Male Allyship Network, Hugh King, Director of Business Development, UK & Europe, Battleface, said: "On behalf of Battleface, I can truly say that I am delighted that we sponsored the Male Allyship Roundtable debate. At Battleface we are on a mission to develop a humanity-focused global travel insurance company. Diversity, equality & inclusion is right at the heart of our values. We have an unwavering commitment because we believe that it is absolutely crucial in a multi-cultural society, which is why we wholeheartedly supported what turned out to be a very frank, open and honest discussion.

"During the round table, I was pleased to hear about the excellent programmes that are already ongoing to address diversity, equality & inclusivity throughout various travel organisations around the world. However, there was a strong will and desire to do even more; to challenge the status quo further. The Male Allyship Network was universally agreed as a superb concept to engage, embrace and enrich the talent of women no matter their background, diversity, disability, orientation or ethnicity. 'Lifting up' individuals through the process of allyship; encouraging individuals to follow their path, forge successful careers, to



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strive and obtain leadership (senior to board level) roles within travel is what this project is all about.”

Speaking about IWTTF 2021, Alessandra Alonso, Founder of Women in Travel CIC, adds: “The 2021 Forum provided a space for the industry to come together to share ways to rebuild and reinvent the sector, and I’m delighted this year’s event resulted in tangible actions to change the way the travel industry gets back to business and does travel differently. The fact that over 350 men and women across the world attended this event demonstrates the time is right for that change.

“The three tangible actions that Women in Travel will take forward in 2021 as a direct result of Forum feedback and input is: more storytelling initiatives to amplify lesser-heard voices; the launch of a new DEI Leaders in Travel and Tourism Network; and the formation of another industry-first, the Male Allyship Network. I do hope that those who feel the travel industry has not reflected their interests or listened to them in the past will now get in touch and get involved with Women in Travel, and more men will get in touch to express an interest in joining this inaugural male network. Your input is necessary to really embrace the change that is so desperately needed to transform the direction of recruitment and retention within the travel industry.”

**For further information about Women in Travel, visit [www.womenintravelcic.com](http://www.womenintravelcic.com)**

**ENDS**

**For interviews and media requests, email [WIT@gecpr.co.uk](mailto:WIT@gecpr.co.uk)**

## **NOTE TO EDITORS**

### **Image Captions:**

Image 1: Top L-R: Alessandra Alonso, Founder of Women in Travel CIC, and the IWTTF event, Jamie Lee Abtar, Executive Director for Bame, Women in Travel CIC, and Hugh King, Director of Business Development, UK & Europe, Battleface, speaking at a IWTTF Roundtable debate where the new cross-industry Male Allyship Network in travel and tourism was launched.

### **About Women in Travel**

Women in Travel (CIC) started life as a gender-focused platform at World Travel Market 2014 in London. Growing successfully from then onwards, in 2017 it was incorporated as a social



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enterprise dedicated to empowering women through employability and entrepreneurship in Travel Tourism and Hospitality. Its vision is to become a catalyst for sustainability by placing women at the heart of an industry which is inherently attractive to females and growing at a fast pace. It is the brainchild of Alessandra Alonso, who has been recognised as a trailblazer when it comes to gender diversity in the industry and who has supported women in maximising their opportunity in the travel, tourism, and hospitality (TTH) industry for well over a decade. Women in Travel partners with employers and charities to provide the first Women Returners service through which the industry can access a pool of marginalised but often highly skilled women who are eager to get back to work. Women in Travel also runs entrepreneurship-focused events, mentoring and networking supporting start-up and early-stage female entrepreneurs and those wanting to start a business, particularly of BAME background. In January 2020, Women in Travel hosted the first International Women in Travel & Tourism Forum in Iceland, where Iceland's First Lady was the keynote speaker.

**For further media information, images or interview opportunities please contact:**

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