



Women in Travel cic releases its first Social Impact Report on International Women's Day 2022 and rallies industry to understand benefits of female empowerment as staffing crisis continues

- Report coincides with the social enterprise's five-year anniversary of supporting women through employability, entrepreneurship and mentoring
- Results demonstrates vital work of training and mentoring women into employment as travel and hospitality recruitment crisis continues
- MD and Founder Alessandra Alonso recognised by two organisations celebrating the contribution of women in social enterprise: **NatwestWISE100 2022** and **Euclid Network's Top 100 Women in Social Enterprise in Europe**

8 March 2022 (International Women's Day): Women in Travel cic is today releasing its first ever Social Impact Report, a deep dive into the impact of the life-changing initiatives and programmes it has delivered since its inception in 2018. The release also marks the organisation's fifth anniversary.

Women in Travel cic is a UK-based, award-winning social enterprise dedicated to empowering all women using travel, tourism and hospitality as a 'force for good', with the founding principle that empowered women thrive and in turn foster thriving communities. It partners with employers and charities to provide women – especially those who are marginalised, vulnerable and under-represented – with visibility, confidence, access to training and mentoring, and eventually employment and enterprise.

Conceived in support of a number of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, Women in Travel's three core programmes are: *Employability Programme* (often referred to as the Women Returners programme); *Entrepreneurship* and *Mentoring* (including one-to-one, group, mentoring circles and a *Male Allyship Programme*), all operated under the values of integrity, honesty and respect.

Many of its beneficiaries, particularly those on its *Employability Programme*, are referred from domestic abuse, refugee or modern slavery charities such as Refuge, the Refugee Council and the Sophia Hayes Foundation amongst others.

In the last five years, and in particular in the last two years since the start of the pandemic, Women in Travel cic has:

- Supported over 1,207 women across all programmes.
- Helped 154 women with over 1,200 hours of guided support through its Employability (Women Returners) Programme
- Successfully supported 80 women - who had lost their income as a result of the collapse of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry during the Covid-19 pandemic – into training or employment, following a four-fold increase in referrals
- Successfully trained the first three women micro-entrepreneurs as tour guides in its Entrepreneurship Programme.

- Delivered group mentoring to over 2,000 women mainly across international travel expos between 2017 and 2021, including WTM London, Dubai, Cape Town and Sao Paulo, to groups ranging from 50 to 200 women.
- Supported 72 women who were unemployed or self-employed and at risk of losing their income due to the Covid-19 pandemic through the Mentoring Circles programme.
- Matched ten women seeking support to progress in their career/entrepreneurship with senior male leaders in the industry through the Male Allies Mentoring programme.
- Launched an allyship toolkit and run training sessions with the likes of Google and Dnata
- Released an industry-leading Multicultural Travel Report in partnership with the University of Surrey and ran three annual Multicultural Travel Summits

Furthermore, Founder and MD Alessandra Alonso has just this month been recognised by two prestigious organisations that celebrate the achievement of women in social enterprise: the annual **NatwestWISE100 Top Women in Social Enterprise 2022** that recognises the most inspiring and influential women in social enterprise, impact investment and mission-driven business in the UK and the European-wide **Euclid Network Top 100 Women in Social Enterprise 2022** which awards women leaders who have demonstrated significant social and/or environmental change in this sector. These are just the most recent in a number of accolades and awards across the last five years as a result of Alessandra's tenacity, drive and leadership at the forefront of the organisation's endeavours.*

With the release of the report, Women in Travel cic is urging more partners and investors to recognise and support its important work. Recent figures from the Office for National Statistics reported nationwide job vacancies hit 1.3 million in January - with travel firms highlighting recruitment as one of the most pressing issues facing the sector - and there are currently 400,000 vacancies in hospitality alone, according to UKHospitality. Women in Travel seeks to bridge this employment gap to the benefit of both individual and industry, encouraging businesses to look at potential versus qualification as they seek to fill vacancies and rebuild post pandemic, and highlighting they can offer access to an incredible pool of untapped talent.

Alessandra commented: "It's so rewarding to take a detailed look back at what we've achieved over the last five years, and I'd like to extend a huge thank you everyone that has partnered, supported and engaged with our work and our community in that time.

"We knew we had been busy, and we knew we had made a significant impact in providing life-changing training, mentoring and opportunity. With the fallout of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, our mission has become increasingly important, and more and more companies are seeing the benefits of having access to the often hidden and invisible talent that Women in Travel affords – it's a win-win for both business and individual. We have exciting plans to further develop and deliver our vital work, but as with every social enterprise, we need investors to understand the value and support us."

A full copy of the report can be downloaded at www.womenintravelcic.com

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Notes to editors

Comments from some of Women in Travel's beneficiaries, as highlighted in the report, include (*NB names have been removed to protect the identity of the beneficiaries*):

"It's very motivational, and helped me build some confidence in looking for work."

“Before the sessions, I felt very alone with my problems. Seeing and meeting others with similar difficulties as me helped me to overcome my frustrations. The guided exercises and shared conversations all helped me to find myself again. As a result, I became much more open to new opportunities, which eventually led to me finding a job.”

“I am so happy that I was referred to this programme, it's given me hope for my future and started giving me back some of my lost self-esteem and self-confidence.”

“My self-esteem was extremely low when I was introduced to Woman in Travel. Having someone to talk to who can help you see yourself in a new light is extremely beneficial. I no longer believe in any limiting beliefs; instead, I have evolved and am aiming for the stars. Through WIT, I was able to find work.

“The mentoring circles have been a ray of light in the darkest time of the beginning of the pandemic and we have evolved together week after week supporting each other as well as creating opportunities among the members of each group.”

“Through Mentoring Circles I have met such powerful, inspirational and motivated women entrepreneurs within the travel industry. New collaborations, synergies and networking opportunities are already on their way due to this amazing opportunity!

Comments from partners / employers include:

“Women In Travel CIC offers not only an effective talent service in identifying great candidates but offers an invaluable service to the women they are finding positions for. To be able to give opportunities to marginalised women who may have more challenging life circumstances is a ‘win win’ for everyone. WIT CIC not only provide an excellent calibre of potential employees but support the candidates & employers through the entire process offering mentoring & training services if needed. We are extremely happy with our new employee & looking to use this service again for many other roles.’ Christina Lawford, CEO, DiamondAir International

“We are pleased to be working with Women in Travel on their Women Returners programme, which supports the economic empowerment of marginalised women, by providing them with the training and the access needed to return to jobs in hospitality and tourism. Women traditionally sit at the heart of hospitality and we want to encourage those disengaged from the economy to consider a career in the sector.” Nadira Lalji, Owner, Inhabit

“The quality of the content, the networking opportunity with like-minded people, the feeling of being in a safe environment, the chance of meeting potential recruiters who can provide suitable shift patterns, inspiration and awareness of own capabilities/skills and the best way to "sell" them in an interview. The high level of professionalism of the facilitator.... The list is endless.” Local Employment Agency

*Awards list includes:

- Fitur NEXT Innovation Award (Business, International)
- Bessie/Journey Woman Award (Individual, International, Lifetime achievement award)
- Forward Ladies – Not for profit category (Individual, UK award)
- WISE 100 list Top Women in Social Enterprise (2019, 2020 and 2022)
- Recognised as ‘one of 9 women transforming travel’ by the Matador Network
- One of 50 ‘most important women in travel’ by Wonderlust Travel

** Source Harvard Business Review: <https://hbr.org/2021/04/research-adding-women-to-the-c-suite-changes-how-companies-think>

About Women in Travel

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