

The Manifesto October 2021

As life returns to its new normal, the Wedding Venues Support Group is still here for you. It's time to work together to create a forward-thinking trade association. Are you with us?

The beginning

In 2020, nature threw us a curve ball and Covid-19 saw life as we know it grind to a standstill. Amidst the ensuing chaos, a number of wedding venue owners passionate about the wedding industry formed the Wedding Venues Support Group.

Our initial goal was Covid survival - to challenge unfair refund demands based on CMA Guidance, to lobby for political and financial support, to share experience and ideas and to enable our members to get back to doing what they do best - operating exceptional wedding venues.

The WVSG was established. We found legal support, we fought, we won. Members shared an immense amount of knowledge, experience and problem solving with each other through our confidential Slack community forum. After all, knowledge is power and power makes for a stronger, more resilient industry. That invaluable online chat space will shortly be migrated to a members-only group on our website, making it even easier for our members to access.

What about now?

2021 is looking brighter. Our venues are open, our members are thriving and we're getting ever closer to that light at the end of the tunnel.



So why is the WVSG still here?

We firmly believe that our industry needs a trade association. While the pandemic was our catalyst, it was just the beginning. Unfair decisions and a challenging year made us stamp our feet and, once we started, we realised just how much there is to fight for. We became aware of the importance of preparing for a future that could bring further disruptions.

We're still working tirelessly to support wedding venues all over the UK. We're industry experts, we've got a strong framework in place, we've spent time strategising about our future and we're ready to go.

In short, we believe we have an important role for the future. We might not be as big and broad reaching as some other associations, but we are entirely focused on wedding venues AND we can pull together a mass of specialist experience.

Moving forward, our **WVSG strategy** includes the following points:

1. WVSG Governance and Positioning

- > **Establishing a Members Council**
- > **Devolved nations** - analysing challenges faced in the devolved nations to see what we can tackle together, what is region specific, and how we can offer support

2. Representation

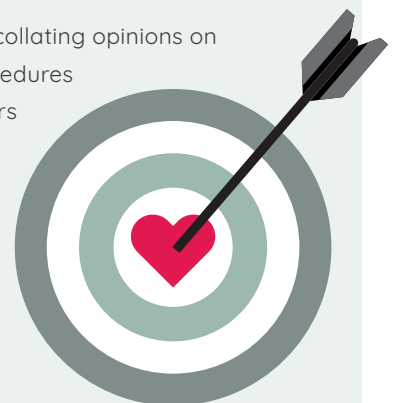
- > **Political lobbying and legislation** - giving our industry a voice with Government through the All Party Parliamentary Group for Weddings and Wedding Taskforce, harnessing the lobbying clout of UK Hospitality as a Corporate Member and briefing the press
- > **Pandemic response** - remaining 'ever ready' to support WVSG members in the case of future pandemics and industry restrictions
- > **Collaboration with other associations and partnerships** - and partnerships including UK Hospitality, Historic Houses Association and Country Landowners Association - forging relationships, gaining knowledge and sharing benefits for members
- > **Challenging attacks on the industry** - questioning challenges to the wedding industry that we believe to be unfair or biased
- > **Supplying wedding venue data** - becoming the port of call for media enquiries requesting data surrounding wedding venues

3. Legal Support

- > **The Legal Toolkit** - updating and adding to our exceptional Legal Toolkit - the essential 'legal package' for all wedding venues
- > **Our Primary Authority Partnership (PAP)** - nurturing our partnership with Cornwall Trading Standards, sharing guidance and advice with our members
- > **Cases of relevance/appeals** - supporting relevant legal cases and sharing outcomes with our members
- > **Documents of support** - compiling and sharing documents that are of direct use to our members, such as legal guidance, templates, court transcripts and terms and conditions

4. Knowledge Sharing/Working Together

- > **Online member forums** - hosting 'members-only' platforms where our members can ask advice and share knowledge
- > **Marketing opportunities for WVSG members** - passing forward any opportunities for our members to promote their venues
- > **Collaboration on projects of specific interest** - working together on venue-related projects to explore common solutions
- > **Sharing best practice** - collating opinions on correct professional procedures and sharing with members
- > **Surveys and industry analysis** - carrying out regular surveys and sharing data with our members
- > **Member discounts** - approaching relevant companies and associations to investigate member discounts
- > **Meet ups** - organising social events for those who would appreciate the opportunity to talk 'face to face'



Why do we need a trade association for wedding venues?

Put simply, to get a seat at the table, we need volume. While we can all lobby as individuals, it's costly and often ineffective. 'United we stand, divided we fall' – perhaps that's why all other comparable sectors have a focused trade association. As individuals, we become the unrepresented part of an unrepresented sector. And, as such, policy will continue to damage our businesses, such as the slow reclassification to punitive business rates of venues that will catch up with everyone eventually.

Numbers count. The more members we have, the more representative we are, the stronger we are, the harder we can fight our corner and the more funds we have to achieve our aims and spread our costs.



Are you IN?

Our hope is that you share our vision, that you appreciate the importance and value of the Wedding Venues Support Group as your trade association and that you want us to keep moving forward.

As we focus on areas that are crucial to all of us, will you 'come along for the ride'?

There are around **300,000** marriages in the UK each year – more than enough to keep our

industry thriving. With a common interest and shared goals, we are undoubtedly stronger as we work together, giving every couple the wedding they have always wished for and supporting each other through both calm and stormy seas.

As venue owners and operators, the time the WVSG team has dedicated to the cause over the last 15 months has been entirely voluntary. To widen our skills and expertise, we now invite others to come forward and join the team.

Equally, if you're not already a member, this is your chance to join us.

Membership

**Annual membership costs
£360 including VAT.**

We have now secured VAT registration. Members can offset VAT on their subscriptions against their VAT liability and WVSG can offset VAT on legal costs, UKH corporate membership and other expenditure against VAT due on memberships (but reclaimed by members). That would have saved us £20,000 last year. We think it's exceptional value.

If you are interested in joining WVSG as a new member, or renewing your membership, please visit

wvsg.org
or contact
kate@wvsg.org

What next?

We've reached a crossroads, and your responses to this document will enable us to decide whether or not to expand our horizons.

We would be grateful to receive your thoughts on the trade association and details of any skills, ideas or experience you can bring to the table by 15th November. Please email info@wvsg.org or contact any of the founding Directors, listed below.

Founding WVSG directors contact details

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The information and support we received from the WVSG was essential to us winning and protecting our business against a court case with a couple. Knowing we had the right to retain costs incurred and what those costs might be, enabled us to put a fantastic case together.

Lara Stokes

Launcells Barton



We have found the networking, sharing of ideas, learnings of other members, legal support (to a level as an individual venue we would not have been able to access) and thoughts on best practice invaluable. For anyone considering joining we would highly recommend.

Gavin & Sarah Mackie

Larchfield Estate