

VISITOR MANAGEMENT FORUM

TUESDAY, 8 MARCH 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Colin Rayner (Chairman), David Burbage (Vice-Chairman), Gerry Clark, Jesse Grey and Shamsul Shelim (sub for Nicola Pryer).

Also in attendance: Amanda Bryett (Windsor Tourist Guides), Nick Day (Crown Estate), Stuart Dorn (Windsor Racecourse), Chris French (French Brothers), Wyatt Gates (South West Trains), Steve Harris (Fringilla), Chris Ireland (Legoland), Sunil Kalia (Jetset Coaches), Peter Langthorne (Windsor Town Horse Drawn Carriage), Suetlana Langthorne (Windsor Town Horse Drawn Carriage), Claire Murrell (Macdonald Windsor Hotel), Alan Mellins (Sterling Travel & Maidenhead Heritage Centre), James Perowne (Windsor Castle), Paul Sedgwick (Windsor Estate), Rebecca Seear (Windsor Carriages), Craig Staddon (Ascot Racecourse), Anne Taylor (Windsor & Eton Society) and Don Yates (French Brothers).

Officers: Tanya Leftwich and Julia White.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was announced by the Chairman that the meeting would be recorded and posted to the web.

The Chairman welcomed everyone and thanked the Macdonald Windsor Hotel for kindly hosting the meeting.

Apologies were received from Councillor Pryer, Claire Pearce (Moor Hall), Graham Lumley (Duck Tours Ltd), Sally Worman (Norden Farm).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

VERBAL UPDATE ON WINDSOR WAY FINDING SCHEME

The Visitor Manager, Julia White, explained that the Windsor & Eton Town Manager (Paul Roach) had provided her with an update on the Windsor Way Finding Scheme. It was noted that All Points West are currently in the middle of completing phases 2 & 3 of the Windsor Town Centres Way Finding Scheme. Members were informed that there would be an additional five monoliths and fifteen finger posts that would extend as far as Windsor Leisure Centre working their way back to the Town Centre.

The Visitor Manager went on to explain that the new monoliths and existing ones would have upgraded maps to include details of the Queens Walkway which was due to be launched officially in April. It was noted that the maps would direct people to the Visitor Information Centre where they could gather further information. Members were informed that St Leonards Road's monolith was being upgraded to include a shop directory similar to those at the two shopping centre entrances to highlight the independent shops in St Leonards Road.

It was noted at the last meeting concerns had been raised that the river was not signposted well enough from the High Street and an additional finger would be added to the finger post outside Windsor Castle to help direct visitors.

Members were informed that the final installation was expected to be completed by the end of March.

VERBAL UPDATE ON COACH PARK WALKWAY REFURBISHMENT

The Visitor Manager gave Members an update on the Coach Park Walkway Refurbishment. It was noted that the Council was currently awaiting a licence from Network Rail. The 8-12 week closure period was due to start on Monday 9 January 2017. It was noted that the closure would impact the Town Centre but that clear signage and good communications would be used. Members were informed that the Council was looking to refurbish the lift at the coach park at the same time.

SOUTH WEST TRAINS - MAJOR EVENT PLANNING, WYATT GATES

The Chairman welcomed Wyatt Gates from South West Trains to the meeting and invited him to address Members on the subject of major event planning.

Wyatt Gates explained that he had been the Events Strategy Manager at South West Trains for the past two and a half years. Members were informed that the new role involved looking ahead and working with key stakeholders to plan events to ensure the customer experience was safe and professional. Members were informed that major engineering works were planned two years in advance and populated in a calendar. An example was given of major works in Waterloo where it was planned to provide a ten car train service on the suburban service as platforms would be shut for two to three weeks. It was noted that if a clash of events did occur options were available. Wyatt Gates explained that train information could be found on Twitter.

The Chairman stated that communication to residents with regard to train line works and the use of coaches could be improved. It was noted that when major events were taking place in the Town Centre it would not be feasible to have coach services running in place of trains. Wyatt Gates explained that sometimes major works could not be moved due to the scale of the works and that in such a case South West Trains were proactive working with stakeholders to see if there was any flexibility with event dates.

Sunil Kalia (Jetset Coaches) informed Wyatt Gates that with regard to using Twitter TFL were looking to possibly pull out of using Twitter which might have an impact going forward. It was suggested that this might be something South West Trains might like to look into.

Councillor Grey raised a concern on behalf of his residents that the platforms in Datchet had not been extended and whether there were any plans to extend the platforms at the front end in the future. Wyatt Gates agreed to ask the question and come back to the Forum with an update. It was agreed that Wyatt Gates would also forward details of the Windsor Users Group & Stakeholders Management Group to the Chairman.

It was noted that a later train would be added for the Horse Show dates and that a couple of the trains would be extended past Staines. Wyatt Gates agreed to provide Members with details.

French Brothers stated that they did not have the connection they would like with South West Trains and it was suggested by the Chairman that they swapped email addresses outside of the meeting in order to help rectify the situation.

VISITOR MANAGER'S UPDATE

The Visitor Manager gave Members the highlights since the last meeting.

With regard to Press & PR it was noted that there had been a lot of activity and to date there had been a reach of nearly 13million. Members were informed that coverage was valued at approximately £300,000 . The Visitor Manager explained that the National papers and Irish and Scottish versions of those papers had picked up the same stories and that Lastminute.com had published a piece on attractions in Windsor along with ladies and baby magazines. It was noted that with regard to the groups sector Coach Tourism Council group press trip had taken place which had been jointly hosted and had been featured in a six page spread in a magazine with a Magna Carta theme. The Visitor Manager gave everyone present a weekend break feature example of a guided walking tour, a duck tour and a walk around Windsor Castle.

The Visitor Manager explained that in the last couple of weeks she had attended the Tourism South East Media Party at the Royal College of Surgeons where she had met over seventy writers. It was noted that the Visitor Manager had made contact with some good travel writers which included Wonderlust, the Nomadic Boys and the Lazy Travellers. Members were informed that the Visitor Manager was also working with Visit Britain and Visit England and that two significant press trips were due to the Royal Borough. Members noted that the Council was planning a Q& A session for the journalists with Horse Power and hoping for them to be accredited for the events on the 21st April. The Visitor Manager explained that the anniversary of the death of Shakespeare had also been of great interest, information about Shakespeare 400 was provided to everyone present.

The Visitor Manager explained that the final Facebook campaign had been completed in January and had received a good take up. Members were informed that the current following on Facebook was just under 10,000, Twitter was fast approaching 4,000 and Instagram had just gone over the 1,000 mark. The Visitor Manager urged everyone present to send through useful content (e.g. images on their route into work that had caught their eye, funny happenings, behind the scene information) in addition to long-term plans for their major events. It was noted that the February Facebook campaign had resulted in just over 2,000 competition entries and 1,652 op-ins which were people wanting to be kept informed of what was going on. The Visitor Manager explained that this campaign had reached an audience of 83,586 and that she was now looking at ways to deliver these campaigns in a more cost effective way.

Members were informed that the Visitor Manager was also running the ballot for the Celebration on The Long Walk which was going very well and was due to close on Monday. It was noted that the ballot would then go through a randomiser which would result in 50% of the tickets going to residents in the Royal Borough and the other 50% to people all over the world.

The Visitor Manager went onto explain that with regard to the Visitor Information Centre refurbishment, the Council would be looking to renew the lease for Windsor Royal Shopping centre first. It was noted that the Royal Borough had committed £20,000 towards the refurbishment which would allow a freshening up but that the Visitor Manager was still keen to do the full refurbishment which would need sponsorship for it to be possible.

Members were informed that the concierge scheme figures last year were up on the previous year and that this was a scheme that was growing year on year.

It was noted that the website had received a complete update as it always did at the start of the year and that web pages had been re-written to include new imagery.

The Visitor Manager explained that she was currently working on a new social media strategy and that there would also have a new PR strategy from the 1st April. It was noted that the

Royal Borough was pleased to continue with Live Tourism to deliver the Councils PR as they had done such a fantastic job.

It was noted that the Visitor Manager was producing a new brochure for the Queens Walkway which included the new 6.3 kilometre trail in Windsor to commemorate the Queen being the longest reigning monarch and that sponsors were being sought to help fund the brochure. It was noted that the new brochure was hoped to be available by the 21st April.

The Visitor Manager went onto explain that preparations for the Queens 90th birthday celebrations were currently taking place and that events would be taking place on the 20th & 21st April. It was noted that the Visitor Manager had been working with the volunteers to ensure there would be enough volunteers available to deal with the number of visitors expected.

Members were informed that the Council had gone into a partnership agreement with an agent who would be an extension to the Information Centre to provide a venue finding service. It was noted that the Royal Borough might run a showcase event or might take its partners into London to do an event there. The Visitor Manager stated that she would start to present ideas to partners very soon to get their input.

It was noted that the Visitor Manager was also working with Windsor Festival, the Fringe Festival and Theatre Royal to look at an umbrella brand and to help extend festival events through September and October.

The Visitor Manager explained that a report would be going to Cabinet in April about the town WiFi project. It was noted that whilst the Royal Borough did have their own destination app it was felt that the provider bidding for the town WiFi contract could potentially provide more interactive apps which would in turn enable information to be pushed to visitors as they arrived in the borough.

Members were informed that the Visitor Manager had last week attended Explore GB in Liverpool and would send an update report out to partners ASAP.

It was noted that the Visitor Manager had commissioned the visitor research for this year but an opportunity to change the face to face questionnaire had arisen. Members were informed that Tourism South East was also available to give the Council an insight into visitors as to reasons why they did or did not visit Windsor.

The Visitor Manager informed everyone present that on the 6th October the Tourism Development Day would take place at Ascot Racecourse and that she would keep everyone informed as and when further details were available.

Members were informed about the Discover England Fund which was a new scheme being promoted by Visit England. The Visitor Manager explained that more information on this fund would be available next week. It was noted that Visit England would now be focusing on product development and Visit Britain would be doing the international and domestic marketing. It was noted that this fund would require match funding - £6million in first year, 12million in second year and £22million in the third year. Submissions of interest from partnerships needed to be submitted by December this year. The Visitor Manager explained that Andrew Stokes was now the Interim Manager of Visit England and that she was hoping to hear from him at a meeting next week. The Visitor Manager assured everyone present that she would inform them of the criteria once she knew.

Members were informed that the Council was coming to the end of its current Visitor Management Strategy and would be looking at a new three year plan which was hoped to be a refresh of the current plan. It was noted that the core objectives would stay the same and that it was vital the Council had industry input in this plan. It was hoped that the final version of the Visitor Management Strategy Plan would be available in April.

It was noted that the Queen would be joined by the Duke of Edinburgh for the Royal Maundy service, which was to be held in St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle for the first time since 1959. It was suggested that this event could be promoted by the local media.

It was noted that copies of news round-ups were distributed to everyone present at the end of the meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEM - VISITOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

The Chairman explained that the Forum needed to give the Visitor Manager some key objectives for the new Visitor Management Strategy. It was noted that the Chairman wanted to change the name to 'Tourism Strategy' but that a name change would need to go via the Leader of the Council.

The Chairman went onto explain that the Council wanted to attract people to Windsor to stay longer and spend more money. It was noted that the average tourist stayed approximately three hours and it was questioned how the Council could promote Windsor to the world and encourage people to the Royal Borough as a 'destination'. The Chairman explained that ideas would be welcomed as to how the Council could encourage day visitors to stay longer, how the Council could encourage visitors to spend more money and also how they could be encouraged to stay more nights in the Royal Borough.

The Chairman opened up the floor to suggestions:

- The Vice-Chair stated that if the Council and local businesses could work together to produce itineraries to encourage people to stay longer that would be very helpful.
- It was noted that Windsor Castle were looking to help promote festival packages but that they would need to put out next years programme this year which was a little difficult due to time constraints. The Chairman agreed that joined up thinking was needed and that itineraries would definitely help encourage visitors to stay longer in the Royal Borough.
- Coach tour operators were felt to be key to encouraging visitors to stay longer and that they needed to speak to their customers to explain there was lots to do in the Royal Borough. It was felt that the Council needed to understand what visitors wanted when they came to the Royal Borough.
- It was felt that Windsor was currently used a stepping Stone to places such as Stone Henge. It was suggested that Windsor Castle and Legoland considered producing a combo ticket to help make the attractions more cost friendly.
- It was suggested that the biggest market could be the corporate market and that the Council needed to start discussions with top restaurants to help attract business. It was suggested that discussions with top end supermarkets could also be started e.g. Waitrose who organised trips for their partners where they spent full days in a single destination.
- It was suggested that the Council needed to on a higher quality visit.
- It was suggested that the Council and local businesses needed to be more proactive rather than reactive and look at the Royal Borough as a whole rather than promoting specific areas.
- It was suggested that the Council needed to target the international high end market to encourage people to visit Windsor Caste and possibly spend money on souvenirs.

The Chairman suggested setting up a working party with French Brothers, and a few local big companies to discuss the subject of the corporate market which was agreed. It was also suggested that stakeholder meetings took place so the Visitor Manager could meet people individually.

It was noted that further ideas / suggestions could be emailed directly to the Visitor Manager julia.white@rbwm.gov.uk

ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

Members were asked to email any additional item suggestions for future meetings directly to the Visitor Manager, Julia White at julia.white@rbwm.gov.uk and the Clerk, Tanya Leftwich at tanya.leftwich@rbwm.gov.uk

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chairman informed Members that the date of future meetings were as follows:

- 5 July 2016 (6.30pm start) – venue to be confirmed.
- 22 September 2016 (6.30pm start) – venue to be confirmed.
- 5 December 2016 (6.30pm start) – venue to be confirmed.
- 30 March 2017 (6.30pm start) – venue to be confirmed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

“That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on items 12 & 13 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act”.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.45 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....