

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FORUM

TUESDAY, 13 MARCH 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Colin Rayner (Chairman) and Gerry Clark

Also in attendance: Councillor Samantha Rayner, Don Yates (French Brothers), Amanda Bryatt (Windsor Tourist Guides), Simon Williams (Windsor Racecourse), Max Roberts (Windsor Racecourse), Mark Persad (The Crown Estate)

Officers: Julia White and Nabihah Hassan-Farooq

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Shelim, Grey, Pryer and Majeed.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were received.

MINUTES

Resolved unanimously: That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on the 30th November 2017 were approved.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed attendees of the Tourism Development Forum and to the new proprietors of the Windsor Racecourse.

VISITOR MANAGER UPDATE

Julia White, Visitor Manager gave a presentation to the Forum. The Panel were updated that the official visitor guide, Windsor & Eton Town Map and Official Venues directory had been completed and had now included the phrase, "London's Country Estate".. There had been a push to directly target the overseas market by advertising that RBWM was close by and with good travel links to Heathrow airport and was a great place to visit. The RBWM tourism website had been relaunched at the end of 2017 with an integrated blog, special offers, details of the Royal Wedding and social media channels. The online box office had also been redesigned to reflect the main website and encourage visitors to buy tickets to various attractions.

A new consumer e-newsletter s had also been designed. There was estimated to be a database of 35,000 consumers on record. The forum were reminded that open rates had been strong and that newsletter content was good.

There had been great growth on social media fronts especially on the Facebook, Instagram and Twitter platforms. The Facebook page had announced the royal procession and had great viewing numbers. Current rankings for the English Social Media Index had an upward trend from 50th position to 20th nationally and in the south eastern RBWM had moved from number 10 to number four. The ambition was to be in the top ten nationally next year and it was felt that this was achievable. RBWM had received an influx of press and PR enquiries in relation to the Royal Wedding which had meant a lot of coverage from travel/lifestyle bloggers. In order to provide more coverage for the borough group press trips had been hosted and there had been interviews with local experts which had again raised the awareness profile and destination message across. The Royal Borough had been contacted by, broadcast media

and individual travel and lifestyle journalists from the following countries; Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Sweden and the USA. The borough had some income generated from the press enquiries and filming through licensing fees and a global audience.

The Forum were informed that the 'Discover England Fund Projects' included the Great West Way and Horseracing- Sport of Kings (UAE). Both of the projects were at the brand identity stage and were nearing launch. The Horseracing-Sport of Kings project was focussed on the UAE and RBWM had two of the courses out of five available for this project. AMEX had been confirmed as the exclusive distribution partner with the media launch to follow later in April in Dubai. There had been an ambition to increase the travel trade online training and cultural training programme was to be conducted. Councillor S Rayner informed the Panel that there had been £2.6m invested into the borough to upgrade the town along with highways and infrastructure enhancements.

The Forum were informed that business tourism had seen higher activity and there had been a number of partners who had bought into 'MICE marketing.' Highlights of the good work being carried out included; BNC Events shows (February), Meet GB(April), LinkedIn and Twitter, an e-newsletter had been launched to corporate and meeting/event buyers, weekend familiarisation trips, proactive sales calls and branded USBs. It was noted that the feedback from social media had been positive and there was a database of 3500 buyers.

As part of the Tourism Action Plan 2017-2020 there were three task groups, Marketing task group chaired by Anna Bishop, Ascot Racecourse (focussed on business tourism growth, highlighting RBWM as a family focussed destination and promoting the borough as London's Country Estate), Travel and Transport Task Group chaired by Ben Smith, RBWM (focussed on improving transport connections and increasing the use of public transport) and People Task Group chaired by Mandy Lane, Live-tourism, (focussed to boost the image of jobs in tourism and to increase the number of apprenticeships).

The Forum were updated with details of the economic impact assessment that had been carried out. There had been 630,000 staying trips, 1.74 million nights spent and 7.8 million day trips which had equated to £571 million. The visitor survey showed that there was now a 50/50 split and that there had been an upward trend with overseas visitors. It was predicted by Visit Britain that in 2017 and 2018 that visitor inbound numbers would top 40 million for the first time this year. Nationally the UK had been losing market share despite record years as visitors were choosing rival destinations and those countries had more spend on tourism marketing. The forum were also updated with details of the concierge scheme and there was 17 hotels who had signed up so far. The scheme had been relaunched in January 2018 and there was a new point of sale collateral and in house training materials. Members were reminded that Barbara Hunt would be retiring after 23 years of service to the VIC. Alison Warren would be appointed to take over from Barbara. Kathryn Harlow was welcomed to the team and was currently working on the digital projects such as the concierge scheme.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Members discussed the 50/50 split of the visitors. It was confirmed that due to recent terror attacks in London, that planned trips to the capital had been diverted to RBWM and other areas and that the increase of overseas visitors was namely due to the decrease of domestic visitors. The Forum were updated that Savill-Gardens had undertaken a major refurbishment and that it now offered extended pathways, a new visitor centre, new café and online sales portal. It was noted that the car parks had not been utilised for the purposes of visiting but namely filming that had been taking place nearby and that illegal parking on nearby verges had been occurring. It was confirmed that this had presented a problem but that this would soon pass.

CAR PARKING IN WINDSOR

Julia White, Visitor Manager verbally updated the Forum with a written update provided by Ben Smith, Head of Commissioning. The Forum were informed that car parking in Windsor

was critical to the operation of the town and activity had ranged from creation of additional spaces to the effective management of the operation of existing spaces both on-street and off street. The forum were advised of the current live issues as follows;

- River Street Car Park had faced a number of operation difficulties with the existing equipment and work with the current supplier were in place to resolve the matter. The Forum were advised that the approved capital programme for 2018/19 included an allocation of £750,000 to upgrade all pay and display equipment to improve options and facilities for residents, visitors and business. The upgrade would ensure that all equipment offered resident discounts through the use of the 'advantage card' together with facilitating all payment options. It was confirmed that River Street car park would be part of this upgrade programme. Capital funding had been approved to investigate the feasibility of an additional deck to increase parking capacity.
- Alexandra Gardens Car & Coach Park; The Windsor Riverside feasibility study had progressed well and G.L Hearn (Council Consultants) had presented an update on the process to the Windsor Town Forum on the 14th February 2018. The update included details on the extensive stakeholder engagement that had taken place and as a result of feedback from Cllr Rankin, Rob Large (Property Manager) had instructed the council consultants to engage with the public in addition to stakeholder groups. Members were reminded that there was a feasibility study workshop with all councillors before the report would be finalised in June 2018.
- Parking Charges; The forum were informed that parking charges had been benchmarked against neighbouring authorities to ensure that they were competitive and delivered excellent value for money. There were no increased charges on any advantage card tariffs and resident tariffs remained unchanged.

At the conclusion of the update, Members discussed the need for better functional parking equipment and the impact this could have upon tourists visiting RBWM. It was also discussed that the parking equipment was relatively new and that replacement of this existing equipment would be costly but that any improvements would be welcomed as Members were aware that residents had been unhappy with the way in which the equipment currently worked. Members felt that it would be useful to have a member of the highways team present at the next meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEM: ROYAL WEDDINGS- IMPLICATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESSES

Julia White, Visitor Manager outlined the update on the Royal Wedding- Implications and opportunities for businesses to the forum. The Forum were informed that the planning and information elements of the Royal wedding were in the final stages and that currently not all information was available to be shared in the public domain due to security issues. Details of the date, time, processional routes and some guests had been announced and were available on line. Forum Members were reminded that this event had been the largest event to be co-ordinated by the borough in over 30 years and that there had been a large and intricate planning process to cover every detail of the planning. Members were updated that visitors would be staying in the area and it was currently forecasted that visitors would arrive a week before the royal wedding, bringing mass numbers of visitors to the borough.

RBWM had received a large influx of media enquiries relating to the royal borough which had been positive and provided a global platform for the borough, which could not have been achieved through direct marketing or funding. It was highlighted that there would be some impact to local businesses as there would be significant road closures. At the end of the update, Members discussed the need for residents and local businesses to be communicated to surrounding road closures. It was confirmed that there was a Communications Plan and that businesses would be notified as far in advance as possible, but that this information was not yet available in the public domain.

Members felt that there had been a feeling of discontent from businesses and that there would be a loss of trade to niche businesses , hotels and trade enquiries could not be answered at this point in time. It was confirmed that there was a team of officers who had been working on the road closures, parking and the critical needs of businesses. Members felt that there was a need for more communication to be relayed to local businesses to include details of road closures. The forum were informed that a briefing note had been prepared and that this would be circulated as soon this information could be circulated and that Andrew Scott, was the lead officer for the group of officers working on this.

The forum were informed that there were individual meetings that were being held with transport and other affected individuals/groups. Windsor Racecourse representatives stated that they were currently working with French Brothers to co-ordinate car parking spaces at a premium and were currently working on the promotion of this. The Forum were informed that there was a major opportunity post the Royal Wedding and that the marketing task group would be promoting to US operators, work on product development for the borough to best target the overseas markets.

BENEFITS OF THE NIGHT-TIME CULTURE FOR TOURISTS

Julia White, Visitor Manager updated the forum on the benefits of night time culture for tourists. The Forum were informed that there was currently a theatre, art centre and a mass array of restaurants and bars. Further to the economic impact assessment data, Forum members were reminded that there had been 630,000 staying visitors, 1.74 million nights spent in RBWM and that most of the money spent had been on food and attractions. Current figures suggested that the total spend had been approximately £54 million and that £74.3million had been spent on accommodation which had proved lucrative for the royal borough. In accordance with the Windsor survey, there had been 12% growth in theatre visits, and 52% in pub visits.

Members discussed the need for the night time aesthetic to be considered and for shops and local businesses to change where they left their rubbish bags. Members felt that the displays of rubbish in doorways did not encourage a positive view of Windsor and that this could deter people from spending evenings there. Members were reminded that there was a thriving arts centre in Maidenhead and that the Old Court would shortly be re-opened.. Members also felt it was important for the 'Citiwise' application on mobile devices to be utilised as this would promote real time information of venues and events being held for tourists and residents. The Chair noted that he would like to see more promotion of night clubs and that social media considerations should be taken into account, due to the recent negative media attention.

ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

Members were reminded to email Julia White, Visitor Manager or the clerk for any suggested items for future meetings.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was to be confirmed.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.09 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....