

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FORUM

WEDNESDAY, 4 JULY 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Colin Rayner (Chairman), Gerry Clark, Shamsul Shelim and Nicola Pryer (Vice-Chairman), Sunil Kalia (Jetset Coaches), Don Yates (French Brothers), Amanda Bryett (Windsor Tourist Guides Ltd), Ingrid Fernande (Legoland, Windsor), Ed Lumley (Windsor Duck Tours), Graham Lumley (Windsor Duck Tours)

Officers: Louisa Dean, Julia White and Nabihah Hassan-Farooq

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON THE 13TH MARCH 2018

Resolved UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 13th March 2018 be approved.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair of the meeting welcomed all the members of the forum to the meeting and asked for each member to introduce themselves.

VISITOR MANAGER UPDATE

Julia White, Visitor Manager presented an update to the Forum. The Forum were informed that the Royal Windsor Information centre had seen record ticket sales for June 2018 and that Original Tour tickets had been up 90% year on year. Royal Windsor Racecourse had seen an increase of 44% to date since 2017 and Ascot Racecourse had sold more tickets than the total sold in 2017. The Theatre Royal had also seen a significant increase of 92% in ticket sales and Windsor Castle had nearly doubled their 2017 figures and were 9% up from year to date. It was noted that French Brothers Boats and Duck Tour sales were down year to date as compared to 2017 after the recent bad weather; however sales were now picking up. It was also highlighted that traffic to the online shop and box office were up 110% compared to 2017.

The Forum were told that the concierge scheme now had 17 partners and that the monthly e-newsletter had proved popular in raising awareness to hotel staff on products on offer. It was also highlighted that three new digital screens were up and running at the Station Approach, Coach Park and Farm Yard/Datchet Road. Members were told that online traffic had increased by 26% and that visits to the website in the month of May were unprecedented. The Royal Borough Image Bank had been redesigned and relaunched. It was also highlighted that May had yielded significantly great results for all social media platforms and channels and the number of followers had doubled. Members discussed the retention of followers to all social media platforms and it was confirmed that these had been kept and were also on the increase.

An update on meetings, incentives, conferences and events (MICE) included details of reaching on average 17,000 per month on Twitter and LinkedIn. It was highlighted that RBWM's Twitter audience had a 70% UK following and the remaining majority was 24% USA/Canada. Email Marketing had been sent to 3000 event executives, PA's and corporate

bookers. The open rate on emails was recorded as 18% and held a click rate of 10%. Bookings had seen £123,000 worth of MICE business which had been placed with venue partners and enquiries had been generated which were worth a further £600,000 but had not been converted due to a lack of availability or client preferences. Members were reminded of the two Discover England Fund Projects which included the Great West Way (USA, Germany & The Netherlands) and the Horseracing- Sport of Kings (UAE). It was confirmed that AMEX would be the distribution partner and that Travel Counsellors and A.C Luxe would also be involved. It was noted that the ambition was to widen the horseracing appeal to China and clients were looking for high end, VIP experiences, luxury packages, family orientated and cultural activities.

At the end of the presentation, Members noted the contents and were pleased with the outcomes for the year so far.

TOURISM ACTION PLAN

Julia White, Visitor Manager outlined the presentation to the Forum. Members were informed that three task groups had been set up which included:

- Marketing and product group (Chaired by Anna Bishop, Ascot Racecourse)
- Travel and Transport Task Group (Chaired by Ben Smith, RBWM)
- People Task Group. (Chaired by Mandy Lane, LiveTourism)

Updates on marketing and products included details of longer stay messaging being incorporated into email signatures, automated responses and on partner websites. Reciprocal links between attraction partner websites had been provided to encourage longer stays in the borough. Following on from the success of “London’s Country Estate”, attraction partners had begun using this in their editorial, advertising and signage campaigns. It was highlighted that there was an opportunity to develop the business tourism product to incorporate attractions into residential conference programmes. MICE activity had been carried out which highlighted the attraction and leisure available on offer to help extend stays. Work was being carried out to develop the family product such as redesigning the Attractions Leaflet and developing a family selfie trail.

The Travel and Transport task group had reviewed and rewritten travel information on the www.windsor.gov.uk website which had proved to be more helpful and had highlighted ease of travel by public transport in the borough. The Forum were informed that discussions with London Heathrow had taken place surrounding the reduction of car journeys between the borough and airport and that an on-demand bus service had been highlighted as a point of particular interest. There had also been discussions regarding bike hire schemes, joint up travel and transport communications across all channels and this included improved variable messaging, rail service improvements and the future of Crossrail.

Forum Members were told that the People Task Group with the help of Dr Karen Cripps at East Berkshire College had carried out research into industry perceptions of skills shortages and potential gaps in the RBWM tourism and hospital industry. Members were told that plans were underway to attract and retain young talent through apprenticeships and equipping young people with the necessary soft skills. It was also noted that an online destination training course was being developed and that this could be used as a bolt on for businesses when conducting their own induction training, however a sponsor was still needed for this piece of work.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Members discussed whether there were any plans to increase the number of digital screens around the borough and it was confirmed that there were 6 in the information centre area and 3 across the town with no future plans to increase the number. Members were keen to understand how RBWM tourism had been increased by the Royal Wedding and whether there had been any plans to sustain the increase. It was stated that there were financial challenges with budgets and that there was no extra funding

available to carry out an economic impact assessment of the event nor any specific marketing activity to capitalise on the increased tourism in the borough. Louisa Dean, Communications & Marketing Manager stated that tourism was now a part of the communications/marketing unit and had been supporting the Visit Windsor Team. Work had been carried out to captivate the new and different audiences and to keep engagement on all social media platforms. Members also highlighted, in regard to the skills research, that there were some notable gaps in skill sets across the borough and they welcomed the planned activity to promote more apprenticeships for the young people throughout the borough.

ROYAL WEDDING OVERVIEW

Julia White, Visitor Manager presented and outlined the above titled item. The Forum were informed that the Royal Wedding had attracted over 120,000 visitors to the borough. The Royal Wedding had been watched by an audience of 2 billion individuals worldwide with Windsor being captured by various media outlets. It was noted that 120 Royal Ambassadors had volunteered to help with the safety and crowd management of the day. As part of the crowd safety and planning measures in place on the day there had been 7km of crowd barriers placed along the procession route, along with 746 extra toilets and 13 tonnes of waste had been collected by a team of 80 waste collectors from Veolia and Urbaser. It was also highlighted that there had been 68 catering units, 20,160 bottles of Buxton water handed out, 45,000 passenger journeys on South Western Railway, 22,000 on Great Western Railway, 100,000 pints of Windsor & Eton Brewery's Harry and Meghan's Windsor Knot sold nationally and 1000 tonnes of material had been used to resurface town centre roads.

Members were told that there had been a significant impact to the local economy and that local businesses had benefitted from increased trade both before and after the Royal Wedding, with some achieving staggering increases such as 400% compared to 2017 data. The Forum were told that the hotel occupancy rates throughout the Royal wedding was 98%. Windsor Town Centre had seen increased footfall with a further 82% on the Royal Wedding day. It was reported that footfall had increased by 35% weekly since the wedding and some business had seen further increases of up to 150% for the week leading up to the wedding.

It was highlighted that in the lead up to the Royal Wedding that 50 journalists and broadcast crews from Australia, USA, Canada, Japan, UK, Brazil, Argentina, Norway, Sweden, Spain, France and the UAE had been hosted by the VisitWindsor team. There had also been multiple enquiries which had been directed to partners for specific tailored needs and editorial images had been provided. It was also noted that on the website and social media platforms that messaging encouraging visitors to plan ahead, extend their stay and return again had been received well. The Visitor Information Centre had also sold official royal wedding merchandise and had run the box office for the car park on the Review Ground.

There had been 120 trained and deployed Royal Ambassadors who supported the Royal Wedding and there had been 12 new ambassadors from East Berkshire College who also took part. The Forum were told that the borough's Ceremonial Wardens also worked as Ambassadors for the event and that refresher training on spectator safety, first aid training and counter terrorism (provided by Project Griffin) had been provided. Ambassadors also received media attention for their shoes which had been provided by Hotter Shoes.

At the conclusion of the presentation Members discussed whether timed ticketing could be introduced at Windsor Castle and it was stated that conversations surrounding this had happened. It was noted that the focus should be on promotion of advances ticket sales. Members also discussed whether there were any locations suitable for secure bag drop offs and it was noted that some operator tours provided the facility for luggage to be held on their vehicles and that sites were being looked at for a left luggage facility. Operators were now offering whole day tours in Windsor as opposed to only a couple of hours which is a positive improvement on previous arrangements. Members discussed their role in the Royal Wedding celebrations and that they had also been involved with the media with giving interviews and that the perception of their robes had been well received by members of the public. Forum

Members also discussed ways in which visitor volume and income generated from their visits could be monitored and it was noted that there was not enough budget to carry out economic impact assessments or any further research work. Members were informed that limited footfall figures could be monitored but that it was not a clear indicator of specific retail expenditure or if there had been any economic impact.

FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Louisa Dean, Communications & Marketing Manager outlined a proposal for the future arrangements of the Tourism Development Forum. It was requested that the time of the meeting be moved to the day time to accommodate business partners and local businesses. It was agreed by Members that the Tourism Development Forum meetings would have a start time of 3pm moving forward.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That the scheduled time of the Tourism Development Forum be amended to 3pm for all future meetings.

ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

Members discussed and agreed that the following items be arranged for future Tourism Development Forum meetings;

- Storage sites for luggage
- Update on Apprenticeships and soft skills training for young people

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meetings were confirmed as follows:

- 13th September 2018
- 26th November 2018
- 11th March 2019

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 7.46 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....