

## TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FORUM

MONDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Gerry Clark, Nicola Pryer (Chairman) and Sayonara Luxton

Officers: Julia White & Nabihah Hassan-Farooq

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Alan Mellins (Maidenhead Heritage Centre), Clare Philpott, Clare Stanley- Spencer and Councillor Quick.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

### MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 2018 were approved.

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair (Councillor Nicola Pryer) welcomed all attendees to the meeting and asked members to introduce themselves.

### THE GREAT WEST WAY

David Andrews, CEO of VisitWiltshire gave a presentation on the above titled item. Members of the forum were told that the "Great West Way" was a project funded by Discover England which aimed to market the route between London and Bristol as a premier tourism route. It was highlighted that this was a strategic opportunity for tourism and for tourists to explore places along the M4 route by highlighting routes, icons, historic sites and accommodation. Members of the Forum were told that the re-marketing of the M4 corridor as the "Great West Way" was aimed to encourage and invite the "curious visitor" to explore different destinations along the way. Various modes and routes, such as cycling, walking, waterways and railway lines were being developed to highlight the richness and diversity of places along the route. The fund was specifically utilised for international and domestic markets and it was noted that £1million worth of funding had been dedicated to the project. It was intended that the activity would be completed by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 and that the main priorities of the project were to improve travel trade and itinerary development for tourists. Work had been carried out to develop both traditional and new experiences and products.

The Forum were informed that there was a dedicated team of staff and advisory board who were working with upwards of twenty organisations, which included notable partners such as Great Western Railway and National Express. It was highlighted that this re-branding of the traditional routes and sights were a brand led approach and aimed to redevelop brand positioning and strengthen visual identity of places. Members of the Forum were shown the brand toolkit that had been designed to support the project and this included helpful information on how to best use the branding and examples of how to implement this into existing marketing frameworks. The targeted route was 125 miles long and partners along the route or within access to the main route were encouraged to join and become a part of the "Great West Way" project. Forum Members were told that editorial content had been created and that these photos had been used as a marketing tool both in print and across social media platforms. Input from industries and destinations had formed a major part of the informative

information available and there was a focus upon language and storytelling throughout the editorial content. A bespoke welcome programme for the curious visitor had been created and this had been well received with good feedback when it was piloted in March 2018. Brand development was evident in both signage and in the food and drink map. It was highlighted that development work was being carried out with producing a "Great West Way" passport and this would be stamped when an individual used the bus and rail lines along the highlighted routes.

Forum members were told that positive feedback had been received from the Highways Authority and Waterways authorities and that they had adopted the signage. Promotion of the "Great West Way" had been presented at trade exhibitions and events; and it was noted that an event had been held at the Guildhall where VisitWiltshire had presented. The supporting travel trade directory had been launched in Bath with 350 bookable and trade friendly businesses. It was highlighted that there was a need for more products and that this was an opportunity for RBWM to join and highlight the experiences and products on offer throughout the borough. Members were told that currently 184 industries and destinations had signed up as ambassador and that Reading had also joined as a destination partner. The Forum were informed that a three year commitment was expected and that this would help embed the co-branding with operators and organisations. The Forum were told that Windsor Castle had joined and that industry events had been held in Windsor. It was highlighted that the PR launch would take place on the 5<sup>th</sup> November, a further industry launch event would take place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November and that the travel trade marketplace was scheduled for the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2018.

Councillor Luxton asked which waterways would be included in the "Great West Way" offer to visitors. It was confirmed that the River Thames, Kennet and Avon had been highlighted and that multi-modal routes were encouraged to promote interconnectivity and allow visitors to use routes which suited them best. There were future plans to connect routes and that this was a government backed project. A Member of the Forum asked whether Windsor would be categorised as a title brand or a destination brand. It was noted that this would be dependent upon the contributions made and that as a product ambassador a contribution of £20,000 per annum was expected. Members commented that Windsor was a standalone destination and that they would like to encourage overnight stays. It was commented that packages were encouraged with overnight stays in destinations and it was noted that some destinations were currently working with the project as stop off destinations.

## APPRENTICESHIPS IN LEISURE, TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

Fiona Jones, Chief Executive of Slough Aspire gave a presentation on the above titled item. Slough Aspire are a training and events management company who were working to deliver effective training on Berkshire apprenticeships. They had been working with businesses to increase engagement and understanding of apprenticeships. Members of the forum were told that apprenticeships were available across a range of sectors. It was highlighted that there should be an apprenticeship agreement, contract and commitment statement in place and the organisation should be registered as a training provider. Members were informed of the differences between levy and non-levy paying providers and of the offsets available. The Forum were told that an individual apprentice's performance should be monitored and that endpoint assessments should be carried out through mock activities and trials. It was highlighted that levy payers who had less than £3m in revenue would receive an offset of £15,000 against the levy liability and could be entitled to apply for a 10% top up by the Government.

Members were told that there were currently workshops on setting up and monitoring digital accounts. Members were told that smaller organisations would not have digital accounts and that this would be for larger organisations with £3m turnover or more. It was highlighted that apprenticeships could also be sourced from within the organisation as a means to upskill existing members of staff. It was noted that there was also a bursary available for care leavers of up to £1,000. Members were informed that in order to recruit an apprentice that this would

need to be advertised or a standard could be created if the apprenticeship did not already exist. Members were told that across Berkshire that the highest level of apprenticeships were within the business, admin and legal sector, followed by health & public services and care. It was noted that only 6% of apprenticeships were found within the leisure and tourism industry and nationally the rate was 12%.

**ACTION- That the presentation be circulated to all forum members.**

Members were encouraged to look beyond traditional apprenticeships and were told that new standards could be created using a trailblazer process. The Forum were reminded that there was a public service duty where 2.7% of the Local Authority workforce must be apprentices. The Forum were told that the Berkshire apprenticeships achievement awards were held at Legoland and this had been well received with good feedback. It was highlighted that the event- “ you want me to be an apprentice?” would be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018 and further information was available at [info@berkshire-apprenticeships.co.uk](mailto:info@berkshire-apprenticeships.co.uk)

A member of the forum queried whether there were any age limits for apprenticeships and it was confirmed that there was no upper limit to age for an apprentice. Another forum member queried whether any work could be carried out to encourage apprentices after an unsuccessful recruitment campaign. It was noted that speaking with school children in earlier years was being carried out and that a new career strategy had been published which looked at the duty to engage and for a career lead to be in post at schools. Members agreed that speaking and engaging children from a younger age would widen their career horizons and that further highlighting of the diversity within the leisure and tourism industry was needed to gain a wider attraction from the available talent pool. Julia White, Tourism Manager highlighted that Fiona Jones had joined the People Task group and had been working to encourage uptake of interest within the hospitality/tourism sector. Councillor Luxton suggested that a career fair be held at the Guildhall, with vendors specifically involved in the tourism/leisure sector to peak interest in potential apprentices. At the conclusion of the presentation, members noted the presentation.

#### ETON VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

Julia White, Tourism Manager gave an update on the above titled item. Members were informed that Eton Community Association had applied for a capital bid to open an information centre in the spring of 2019. The premises would be located at number 67, High Street, Eton and that the premises were currently owned by Eton College. The Forum were told that the ongoing running costs would be funded by contributions by the Eton Community Association, local businesses and the college. It was noted that this could become a satellite for the existing visitor information centre. The centre would be open from Thursday-Sunday and the opening times would coincide with the Windsor museums and box office/activities. It was noted that there would be a larger premise space where retail use could be utilised. Councillor Luxton queried what the total cost to the borough was for the intended opening of the centre. It was confirmed that there was a capital bid of approximately £50,000 which was applied for on the basis of building costs and to bring the building to the required building standard. Members were told that the opening of the new centre would encourage use of the regenerated Eton High Street.

**ACTION- Members requested that a breakdown of costs be circulated to members of the Culture and Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel.**

At the conclusion of the discussion, members noted the update.

#### NEW LEFT LUGGAGE FACILITY FOR WINDSOR

This item was deferred to the next meeting as the speaker was unavailable.

## VISITOR MANAGER UPDATE

Julia White, Visitor Manager outlined the above titled item. Members were told that traffic to the online shop and box office was up by 28% compared to 2017. There had been mixed performance across all visitor attractions with some ticket sales up as much as 55% and others had been down by 30%. Members were informed that there were 17 hotel partners signed up to the concierge scheme and that this had been the best year to date for Windsor Castle ticket sales. Traffic to the [windsor.gov.uk](http://windsor.gov.uk) site was up by 22% year on year and visits to the website during May were the highest on record. Members were told that uptake to Twitter was up by 22%, Facebook was up by 17% and Instagram was up by 44%. It was recorded that May 2018 was the best month for every social media channel/platform with similar performance in October. There had been twice as many new followers compared to previous records. Visit Windsor had risen on social channels from position 50 to 20 in the English Tourism Social Media Index. The Forum were told that coverage tracked to date had an estimated value of £714,457 and that the total estimated reach was £32.3 million.

## Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events

Members were told that there had been an average reach of 17,000 per month on Twitter and LinkedIn. Followers included, event agencies, event executives, Senior PAs, venues, bloggers/influencers and tourism industry partners who regularly retweeted posts to their wider audiences. Members were told that the Twitter audience was comprised of 70% UK following and 24% from USA/Canada. Email marketing had been sent to over 3000 event executives, PAs and Corporate bookers. The Open rate on emails was 18% and a click rate of up to 10%. There had been two successful Solus campaigns for Amber Lakes and Sir Christopher Wren Hotel with great responses on their event and sales promotion. The Forum were told that enquiries through the agency partner were valued at £800,000 and that confirmed bookings to date were £127,790. There had also been six hosted buyer trips in 2018, the BNC Show and networking event, MeetGB, partnerships with P.A life and Meet Beyond London.

## Tourism Action Plan 2017-2020

Members were updated on the three task groups, Marketing and Product, Travel and Transport and People. Members were told that the Marketing and Product Task Group had been looking and developing Windsor as London's Country Estate. Work was being carried out to ensure that Windsor was looked at as a family discussed destination and to grow business tourism across the Royal Borough. The Travel and Transport Task Group had been looking at routes and the On Demand Bus Services along with Bike Hire Schemes across the locality. Members were told that the People Task Group had been working on the skills gap and perceptions of the industry through research conducted by Dr Karen Cripps at EBC. The Forum were told that English Tourism week was scheduled for the 30<sup>th</sup> March to 7<sup>th</sup> April 2019 and that the focus was to promote careers in the Tourism and Leisure industry. Further work was being carried out to seek new talent and to promote apprenticeships.

## FUTURE BUSINESS AND COUNCILLOR ENGAGEMENT POST TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FORUM IN MARCH 2019

Chris French, of the French Brothers gave a statement outlining of how the Tourism Development Forum had helped with networking within the industry, provided an invaluable forum for discussion with industry partners, received input from local councillors and that important information and ideas had been shared and advanced. Members discussed how the Forum would be management post March 2019 and discussed how the platform could be improved to be more focussed on particular topics of interest to Forum members and industry partners. Members were disappointed with the turn out of the evening and it was noted that there had been higher turn outs in the past with great engagement. Councillor Luxton suggested that the forum would continue to be run but would feed into town forums. Julia White, Tourism Manager highlighted that the change to the Forum was due to the reduction in the number of councillors as part of the boundary review. There would be a reduced number

of meetings held and business which would normally be heard by the Tourism Development Forum would be heard by the two town partnership boards where necessary. Members felt that it was vital to shape the Forum moving forward and to retain some councillor involvement on key issues.

Members were encouraged to communicate with councillors and Julia White on any issues or comments they felt were not made at the meeting and that any advancements to the conversation had would be circulated to the wider forum ahead of the next meeting.

#### ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

Members of the Forum were encouraged to inform the clerk of any items they would like on the next agenda and could email their suggestions to [Nabihah.hassan-farooq@rbwm.gov.uk](mailto:Nabihah.hassan-farooq@rbwm.gov.uk)

#### DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.42 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....