

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FORUM

THURSDAY, 15 JUNE 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Colin Rayner (Chairman) and Nicola Pryer.

Also in attendance: Jenny Allan (Sir Christopher Wren Hotel), Sarah Billing (Great West Way), Amanda Bryett (Windsor Tourist Guides), Sunil Kalia (Jetset Coaches), Jane Lee (FirstGroup / MTR), Claire Milne (Windsor Neighbourhood Plan), Mark Persad (Windsor Great Park), Helen Price (Windsor Neighbourhood Plan), Susy Shearer (Windsor Neighbourhood Plan/WES), Don Yates (French Brothers).

Officers: Tanya Leftwich, Julia White and David Scott.

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 Sir Christopher Wren Hotel for kindly hosting the meeting, providing the meeting room and refreshments.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Burbage, Councillor Gerry Clark, Councillor Jesse Grey, Councillor Shamsul Shelim, Sean Gleeson (Oakley Court), Debbie Keenan (Windsor & Eton Tour Guides), Abigail Kirkwood (Windsor Castle), Peter Langthorne (Windsor Town Horse Drawn Carriages Ltd), Claire Pearce (Moor Hall Conference Centre), Emily Perrier (Royal Holloway University of London), Paul Sedgewick (The Crown Estate), Rebecca Sparrow (Windsor Carriages) and Anne Taylor (Windsor & Eton Society).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

RESOLVED Unanimously; That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

Jenny Allan (Cluster Director of Sales at the Sir Christopher Wren Hotel & Spa) welcomed everyone to the venue and explained that the hotel had undergone major refurbishment over the last year which had resulted in a lovely new brasserie. It was noted that the new brasserie offered all day dining and a new menu. In addition there were 34 new bedrooms (now 134 bedrooms in total plus 7 conference rooms).

It was noted that the hotel was expecting to be very busy next week!

The Chairman thanked the Sir Christopher Wren Hotel & Spa for making an investment in the town and stated that they were a great asset to Windsor.

The Chairman questioned whether it would be possible to bring the concierges together so that they could have a group meeting following his wonderful experience with Concierges Service on a private holiday in Lake Como.

NEW RAIL FRANCHISE

The Chairman welcomed Jane Lee from FirstGroup to the meeting and invited her to address Members to give a brief presentation on the new rail franchise.

The presentation covered the following points:

- Stakeholder engagement during the bid.
- FirstGroup is a leading surface transport group.
- FirstGroup is one of the largest rail operators in the UK.
- MTR is a leading rail operator.
- Change is coming to South Western Railway...
- ...as we deliver a £1.2bn investment for our customers.
- More seats across the franchise...
- ...with increased frequency, better weekend services and quicker journeys.
- Making ticketing more intuitive.
- Investing in your stations.
- Stakeholder engagement.
- What this means for passengers on the Windsor Lines.
- Working with you.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

- ❖ That more detail would be available soon.
- ❖ That the FirstGroup had spoken to approximately 120 stakeholders regarding their thoughts of the current franchise and their aspirations for the future which was incorporated into the bid.
- ❖ That it was already a good business / brand that FirstGroup wanted to build on and make better.
- ❖ That it was more an evolution rather than a revolution.
- ❖ That the franchise would start on the 20 August 2017 and would last seven years.
- ❖ Will invest £1.2bn (for customers).
- ❖ Time savings would kick in from December 2018.
- ❖ The consultation starts before the end of the year.
- ❖ 52,000 extra seats into Waterloo.
- ❖ 750 new carriages being ordered for the Windsor line, Reading line and suburban network.
- ❖ That consistency was wanted across the service.
- ❖ Would start to come into service in 2019 and would all be in service by the end of 2020.
- ❖ Improved wifi.
- ❖ Charging points to be installed at every seat.
- ❖ Real-time whilst on trains.
- ❖ Journey times to be reduced across the franchise.
- ❖ New half hourly service between Farnham to Guildford and Weymouth to Portsmouth.
- ❖ 400 Sunday services being added.
- ❖ Ticketing would be made more intuitive – mobile phone barcode tickets, smartcard scheme, flexible season tickets, a direct debit monthly season ticket, delay repay to be introduced. .
- ❖ £90m station investment programme.
- ❖ 1,500 new car parking spaces plus 60 electric charge points at stations.
- ❖ Work with stakeholders to progress new plans for new stations.
- ❖ Going to have Regional Development Managers and Commercial Development Managers.
- ❖ Plan to set up a South Western Transport Partnership.
- ❖ Network Rail Alliance - hope to have in place by day 1.
- ❖ Annual Stakeholder Survey – to find out how the franchise is doing.
- ❖ Working with you – membership of relevant tourist boards, keen to promote destinations in addition to London, new website and customer app, Sales Manager to

focus on business direction, customer loyalty scheme, Partnership and Events Manager, special promotions, extended advanced fares and plan to have at least 50 station adoptions.

The Chairman stated that Windsor needed more tourists to come to Windsor by train / via French Brothers / Ascot in order to reduce traffic. It was also noted that the signal points had not been adjusted with regard to the extended carriages at Datchet which were causing problems.

Sunil Kalia stated that he found the quarterly spreadsheet produced by Wyatt Gates to be very helpful.

It was questioned whether more parking would be made available at Riverside. Helen Price informed everyone present that the car parking was going to be replaced by houses in the Borough Local Plan.

The Head of Communities and Highways, David Scott, stated that he did not feel the 2020 date to be a viable one.

The Chairman highlighted that there were no ticket barriers in Horton and Wraysbury and the Sunnymeads which was causing issues on the train. It was noted that there was also no parking at the Sunnymeads. The Chairman went on to explain that the locals were keen for ticket barriers to be installed. Jane agreed to take these comments back to see what could be done.

THE GREAT WEST WAY - A NEW TOURING ROUTE FROM LONDON TO BRISTOL

The Chairman welcomed Sarah Billing on behalf of VisitWiltshire to the meeting and invited her to address Members to give a brief overview of the Great West Way – a new touring route from London to Bristol.

The following points were noted:

- That Sarah had only been with VisitWiltshire for the last two weeks.
- That a year ago a discovery fund was applied for which had been very successful. It was noted that funding had been won in September and they were now in Phase 1.
- That VisitWiltshire had been leading on developing a new touring route which would join up many of England's iconic destinations and attractions along a corridor west of London through to Bristol. This was one of a number of successful projects made possible by HM Government's £40m Discover England Fund, administered by VisitEngland.
- Looked into Route 66 case studies to see what had been done well and not so well.
- That there were ¾ world heritage sites en-route to Bristol along with ease of access (two airports), heritage, films plus different arts and cultural scenes.
- Everyone present was given a booklet which was part of the Phase 1 funding.
- That there was lots of opportunities available around joint plans and new cycle schemes.
- Phase 2 had been applied for in April (approximately £1m) to help promote the whole region. It was noted that it would be found out next week whether the bid had been successful. Sarah explained that if successful someone would come back to the Forum to explain Phase 2.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

- ❖ Sunil Kalia stated that he could find no photo of Concorde in the Great West Way booklet.
- ❖ That the map in the booklet was for demonstration purposes only as it did not cover the whole area.
- ❖ That there were lots of opportunities for small start-ups.

VISITOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2017- 2020

The Visitor Manager explained to the Forum that the Visitor Management Strategy 2017-2020 was not a new strategy but a refresh. It was noted to be a three year strategy with its objective to increase visitor expenditure from £380 million in 2006 by £45 million per year to 2016. Members were informed that 80% of actions had been achieved or partly achieved contributing to a total visitor spend in 2015 of £485 million.

The Visitor Manager went onto explain that in 2015 the industry supported 7,157 FTE jobs, day visitors contributed 56% of expenditure, 63% of expenditure was on food & drink and shopping and the average spend per night was £105 for domestic visitors and £107 for overseas visitors.

The Visitor Manager explained that the data from 2011 to 2015 showed an increase in the volume of trips and overnights from both domestic and overseas visitors.

The Forum was informed that the Visitor Management & Marketing Team had played a significant role, connecting people to the tourism product, through information, marketing, PR and training and that this had included:

- Generating PR that reached 290 million people worldwide since 2011, with a value of £4.3 million.
- Developing a website which generates 1.2 million visitors annually.
- Producing printed guides with a print run of 300,000 copies.
- Training and deploying 210 local ambassadors.
- Running a visitor information centre which is open 363 days per year, dealing with 90,000 customer enquiries and 8,500 telephone calls.

With regard to looking ahead Members were informed that:

- The overall goal for 2017-2020 remained to deliver real terms growth.
- The focus remains on getting overseas and domestic visitors to stay overnight in the borough and attracting the lucrative business tourism market.
- Five quality themes from the previous strategy remain valid – Travel & Transport, Product Development, Marketing, Information, People.
- Establish industry led task groups to oversee delivery.

The Visitor Manager explained that the key objectives were to:

- To ensure visitors to the Borough could get in and out with ease.
- To provide and influence the use of alternatives to car travel.
- To ensure our product meets the needs of loyal visitors as their demands change, as well as meeting the needs of new visitors in emerging markets.
- To rebrand Windsor to ensure its proximity to London and Heathrow was understood.
- To reposition the destination as family-focused.
- To provide accessible, accurate and appropriate information that puts the needs of the visitor first and to facilitate information sharing among the local tourism industry.
- To ensure frontline staff act as proud ambassadors, understand the needs of visitors and are knowledgeable about the destination.

The Forum noted the next steps were to have:

- Action plan written.
- Task group leads recruited.
- Terms of Reference for each task group agreed.
- To have arranged kick off meetings.
- Invited industry and council participants.

The Chairman felt that Windsor Castle needed to upgrade their forms of ticket sales via timed ticket slots. Amanda Bryett (Windsor Tourist Guides) stated that she was unsure whether timed slots would work at the Castle but did state that tickets could now be bought online.

VISITOR MANAGER UPDATE

The Visitor Manager gave Members the highlights since the last meeting via a brief presentation which covered the following subjects:

- ❖ Conference News Familiarisation visit.
- ❖ European MICE Buyer visit for an overnight stay.
- ❖ Competition running in Executive P.A. Magazine.
- ❖ Official Venues Directory Mailing.
- ❖ On Sunday and Monday the new Meridian Familiarisation visit took place.
- ❖ Second Facebook contest with Ascot Racecourse, Harte & Garter Hotel, Windsor Carriages and Bateaux Windsor. It was noted that the customer database had grown by over 1,000.
- ❖ Destination content for Great Western Railway and South Western Railway websites.
- ❖ Signed a new PR contract with LiveTourism.
- ❖ New destination app launching on Saturday along with town WiFi.
- ❖ New Attractions Leaflet in production.
- ❖ New Official Visitor Guide underway.
- ❖ Digital screens – awaiting decision from planning.
- ❖ Office move next week to Central Station.

Sunil Kalia (Jetset Coaches) registered his interest in becoming an ambassador. The Visitor Manager thanked Sunil for his interest and explained that whilst she could take new ambassadors on there was no budget at present to cover training.

The Visitor Manager informed the Forum that new digital screens had been installed in three locations which were the Coach Park, Station Approach, Windsor Royal Shopping and Farm Yard, outside Windsor & Eton Riverside Station.

The Chairman thanked the Visitor Manager for her update.

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 the next meetings were as follows:

- 12 September 2017 (6.30pm start) – venue to be confirmed.
- 30 November 2017 (6.30pm start) – venue to be confirmed.
- 13 March 2018 (6.30pm start) – venue to be confirmed.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.15 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....