

VISITOR MANAGEMENT FORUM

TUESDAY, 5 JULY 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Colin Rayner (Chairman), David Burbage (Vice-Chairman), Gerry Clark and Nicola Pryer.

Also in attendance: Majella Baldacchino (Windsor Racecourse), Ingrid Fernandes (Legoland), Chris French (French Brothers), Wyatt Gates (South West Trains), Sunil Kalia (Jetset Coaches), Simon Lane (Legoland), Alan Mellins (Sterling Travel & Maidenhead Heritage Centre), Claire Pearce (CIM Moor Hall), Denise Snook / Ellis (Bray Cottages / Monkey Island), Kevin Snook (Bray Cottages),

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 Windsor Racecourse for kindly hosting the meeting.

Apologies were received from Amanda Bryett (Windsor Tourist Guides), Martin Denny (Windsor Festival), Tony Howe (Visions of History), Jade Humphrey (Millenium Hotels & Resorts), Debbie Keenan (Blue Badge Guides), Bobbie Latter (Windsor & Eton Tour Guides), Louise Martin (The Runnymede on Thames), Kathy Morgan (Millenium Hotels & Resorts), Jo Peck (Horse Power), Paul Roach (Windsor & Eton Town Manager, RBWM), Rebecca Seear (Windsor Carriages), Nigel Smith (Tourism South East), Anne Taylor (Windsor & Eton Society), Hilary Thompson (Windsor Welcome Tour Guides), Sally Worman (Norden Farm), Don Yates (French Brothers)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman declared a personal interest in the "Update from Legoland" item as he had an eighteen year daughter that had a summer job at Legoland.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

WELCOME AND ROYAL WINDSOR RACECOURSE UPDATE

The Chairman thanked Windsor Racecourse for hosting the meeting.

The Commercial Director at Windsor Racecourse, Majella Baldacchino, welcomed everyone to the venue and informed the Forum that Monday nights were race nights throughout the season which ran from April through to October. It was noted that Windsor Racecourse were celebrating 150 years of racing with its first race taking place in 1866.

The Forum was informed that Windsor Racecourse would be hosting a food festival this weekend followed by a concert 'On track for summer' on the 23 July 2016.

The Commercial Director went onto explain that the rest of the year would consist of arts and Christmas fairs, along with a fireworks event in November. Members were informed that the fireworks event was being extended to a two night event this year and would be based on a surprise global film brand.

VISITOR MANAGER UPDATE

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

With regard to Press & PR it was noted that the Visitor Management Team had been very busy with the Queens 90th birthday activities on the 20 and 21 April 2016. Members were informed that the BBC 1 viewing figures had reached 5.9million with a 36% audience share (didn't include I-player). The Visitor Manager went onto explain that there had also been the Beacon Lighting on the 21 April 2016, the HMQ90 event and Royal Windsor Horse Show in May and Shakespeare 400 events throughout July and August which celebrated the anniversary of his death.

The Visitor Manager showed the Forum a copy of an article in a South Africa paper which had covered the Queens 90th birthday - just one of many articles resulting from a global press trip hosted by the council.

Members were informed that web users were up 5% year on year and that their consumer database had reached 40,000. The Visitor Manager explained that the current following on Facebook was 10,237, Twitter was 4,128 and Instagram had reached 1,348. The Forum was informed that the power of social referrals had been proven with a 100% increase in traffic to the Visitor website and online shop.

Members were informed that a joint box office had been run by the Visitor Information Centre team for the HMQ90 & Royal Windsor Horse Show events. It was noted that 70,000 applications had been submitted for 5,000 ballot tickets for the Celebration on The Long Walk. The Visitor Manager went on to explain that the box office was now promoting new events which included the DogFes, the British Food Festival (which was taking place this weekend) and the Concours of Elegance 2016 at Windsor Castle in September. Members were informed that the Concierge Service was doing a lot of work to increase ticket sales which was on the increase year on year.

The Visitor Manager went onto explain that with regard to business tourism there was a new marketing package including an official venues directory 2017/18, a new conferencing section on the website, targeted social media activity and PR.. Members were informed that there was a venue finding service offered by the Information Centre seven days a week. The Visitor Manager informed everyone present that she was looking for a minimum of thirty venues to sign up to this service.

The Visitor Manager finished by informing the Forum about the following that were now available / being progressed:

- New attractions leaflet.
- Queens Walkway Guide.
- Coach Park tidy up.
- 'Evan Evans' – new full day tour to Windsor
- Working with John Lewis Partnership to help promote the hidden gems / products in Windsor.
- Group Travel Organiser events.
- International Travel Trade Familiarisation visits.

It was noted that the town Wi-Fi contract had been awarded which would provide a destination app to replace the destination's current app. Members were informed that the new app would have more functionality and coverage across the borough and could include real-time travel information. The Visitor Manager explained that the timescales were currently unknown.

UPDATE FROM LEGOLAND

The Chairman welcomed Simon Lane, a former Director of Windsor Racecourse for five years, who was now the Divisional Director at Legoland and Ingrid Fernandes (Strategic Development Director) to the meeting.

Simon Lane thanked the Forum for the invite and opportunity to attend the meeting. Members were given a short Legoland update presentation. The Divisional Director at Legoland explained that Legoland played a big and influential part in the wider community. It was noted that Simon Lane had been in his role at Legoland for seven months.

Members were informed that Legoland had been founded in 1932 and that last year Lego had been voted the most powerful brand in the world, overtaking Ferrari. Legoland was noted to have approximately 14,000 employees and was the world's number one toy.

Simon Lane went onto explain that Merlin Entertainment was Legolands parent company with 116 attractions in 23 countries. It was noted that Legoland had six parks with a further three currently being developed in Dubai, Japan and South Korea). It was also noted that there were six resort theme parks with 104 midway attractions.

Members were informed that Merlin Entertainment had six growth drivers which were:

- Pro-active investing capital investment back in.
- Strategic synergies.
- Resort positioning.
- Midway rollout.
- New Legoland developments.
- Strategic acquisitions.

It was noted that the first Legoland park had been opened in 1968 in Finland, 1996 in Windsor, 1999 in California and 2002 in Germany. Members were shown a short video about Legoland.

Simon Lane went into explain that Legoland wanted to be the ultimate short-break destination which was aimed at 2 – 12 year olds. It was noted that Legoland Windsor consisted of eleven lands including a castle themed extension of 62 bedrooms which would be open on the 1 July 2017. Members were informed that the hotel would show 4D movies in the movie theatre and had a model of the Death Star which had been constructed from 500,000 lego bricks

Members were informed that Legoland operated 211 days per year and had just fewer than 2,000 employees. Simon Lane went onto explain that Miniland was the heart of the park and could be entered 30 minutes before the park opened if staying in the on-site hotel.

It was noted that in the future Legoland planned to work with Merlin Entertainment to align with the Borough Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. Members were informed that the parent company, Merlin Entertainment, expected a 20% pure profit return on capital invested.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

- That Legoland sold conference packages, held prom nights but planned to reduce down that type of business to concentrate more on the entertainment aspect of the business. It was hoped that the number of operating days would be expanded over the next few years.
- Legoland strategy was to even out the peaks and troughs in their business in order to help local traffic levels and improve their customer experience.
- That Legoland planned to open a reduced offering at Christmas but include Christmas offerings instead. It was noted that Legoland was looking to introduce weather-proof attractions so they can attract customers all year round.

- That Legoland did not tend to get much resistance from local people / local businesses when looking to set up new parks abroad as it increases employment (by approximately 2,000 jobs) and helps make the area a destination.

SOUTH WEST TRAINS, MAJOR EVENT PLANNING UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Wyatt Gates from South West Trains to the meeting and invited him to address Members to give an update on the subject of major event planning (July 2016 – September 2016).

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. Examples of what South West Trains planned for were Twickenham, Ascot, Farnborough Air Show (every two years) and Wimbledon.

Members were informed that major works were planned during summer 2017 which would be quite a challenge as it equated to a loss of 14% of train services. It was noted that where possible extra / longer trains would be provided but that it was also about changing peoples habits during this time (more working from home, etc). It was suggested that the message be positively communicated via VisitEngland / VisitBritain.

It was noted that approximately 400,000 people used Waterloo every day.

The Forum was informed that regular calendar updates would be provided to Members.

DISCUSSION ITEM: TOURISM POST BREXIT - HOW WILL THIS AND THE FALL OF STERLING VS DOLLAR AFFECT RBWM?

The Forum was given a copy of a letter from Tourism Alliance to the Rt. Hon. John Whittingdale OBE MP dated 28 June 2016 regarding the impact of the referendum. The Chairman explained that the Forum needed to give the Visitor Manager some examples of ways they could all help encourage people to the Royal Borough.

The Visitor Manager explained that VisitBritain and VisitEngland had their TIER (tourism industry emergency response) group that sprung into action when there was a crisis (e.g. foot and mouth disease). It was noted that both organisations monitored what was being discussed in the overseas press. It was noted that there had been extensive coverage in the international media and that this was a complex issue as no-one was sure how it would affect us. Members noted that the GBP had been weakened which was encouraging people to visit the UK in the short-term. The Visitor Manager went onto explain that a perception of poor welcome had been quoted overseas in addition to the uncertainty with regard to travel requirements (visa's) going forward and the effect on exchange rates.

The Visitor Manager read out some quotes from the British Hospitality Association Summit which had been held almost immediately after the result had been announced. It was noted that the UK now had to work hard to overcome the negative perception that it was not very welcoming.

Members were informed that the impact on the Royal Borough was nothing immediately although it could potentially see an increase in domestic visitors. It was noted that the decision could result in a delay in the decision over the UK airport expansion and also result in recruitment issues if the migrant workforce was lost.

The Chairman stated that he believed it would be three years before anything happened.

Alan Mellins stated that he believed the best thing that could be done would be to get the message to the Government to ask them to look at tourism as Ireland does (e.g. lower tourist tax, etc).

The Visitor Manager stated that in order to encourage local young people into the leisure tourism industry the profile needed to be raised and young people educated to this industry with regard to what careers it offered. It was noted that results of the impact on visitor numbers would be available in the Visitor Survey later in the year.

The Chairman asked that the Visitor Manager add a message to the RBWM website to say that the Royal Borough was welcoming visitors from overseas and will continue to do so.

It was suggested that the effect on the French market be discussed at the next meeting.

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 the next meetings were as follows:

- 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 6.30pm, finished at 8.25 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....