



Destination Staffordshire Tourism Board Meeting

Held via Microsoft Teams on 24th September 2020 at 2:00 pm

Present:

Francis Jackson	Alton Towers Resort	francis.jackson@alton-towers.com
James Dennison	Canal and River Trust	james.dennison@canalrivertrust.org.uk
CLlr Tony Johnson	Cannock Chase District Council	tonyjohanson@cannockchasedc.gov.uk
Claire Furnell-King	Doubletree by Hilton Stoke-on-Trent	clare.furnell-king@dtstoke.com
CLlr. Edward Barker	East Staffordshire Borough Council	edward.barker@eaststaffsbc.gov.uk
CLlr. Iain Eadie	Lichfield District Council	iain.eadie@lichfielddc.gov.uk
Lisa Clemson	Lichfield District Council	lisa.clemson@lichfielddc.gov.uk
Simon Warburton	Lichfield Cathedral	simon.warburton@lichfield-cathedral.org
Sarah Oakden	National Memorial Arboretum	soakden@thenma.org.uk
CLlr. Andrew Hart	Peak District National Park Authority	andrew.hart@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk
Hayley Cooper	South Staffordshire Council	h.cooper@sstaffs.gov.uk
CLlr. Frances Beatty	Stafford Borough Council	fbeatty@staffordbc.gov.uk
Richard Swancott	Staffordshire County Council	richard.swancott@staffordshire.gov.uk
Andrea Sammons	Staffordshire County Council	andrea.sammons@staffordshire.gov.uk
Jon Vining	Staffordshire County Council	jonathan.vining@staffordshire.gov.uk
CLlr. Philip White (Chair)	Staffordshire County Council	philip.white@staffordshire.gov.uk
Clare Brookes	Staffordshire Moorland District Council	clare.brookes@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk
Julie Arnold	Staffordshire Waterways Group	julie@waterwayimages.com
Claire Williams	Stoke-on-Trent City Council	claire.williams@stoke.gov.uk
Stacy Birt	Tamworth Borough Council	stacy-birt@tamworth.gov.uk
Paul Williams	TMI	williams.paul40@sky.com

C.C:

Alexa Hickling	Drayton Manor Park	alexahickling@draytonmanor.co.uk
Sara Botham	East Staffordshire Borough Council	sara.botham@eaststaffsbc.gov.uk
Philippa Rawlinson	National Memorial Arboretum	prawlinson@thenma.org.uk
Tracy Williams	National Trust	tracy.williams@nationaltrust.org.uk
Hayley Mival	National Trust (Shugborough)	hayley.mival@nationaltrust.org.uk
Louise Driver	National Forest Company	ldriver@nationalforest.org
Mitch Floyd-Walker (Presenter)	R H Advertising	mitch@rhadvertising.co.uk
CLlr. Roger Lees	South Staffordshire District Council	r.lees@sstaffs.gov.uk
CLlr. Hayley Plimley	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	hayley.plimley@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk
Sarah Porru	Staffordshire Moorland District Council	sarah.porru@highpeak.gov.uk
Julian Woolford	Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	j.woolford@staffs-wildlife.org.uk
CLlr Lorraine Beardmore	Stoke-on-Trent City Council	lorraine.beardmore@stoke.gov.uk
John Till (Presenter)	Thinking Place	john.till@thinkingplace.co.uk

1. **Introductions, apologies and housekeeping**

Following introductions around the virtual table, the following apologies were received: Louise Driver, Philippa Rawlinson (Sarah Oakden sub), Hayley Mival, Cllr Roger Lees, Cllr Hayley Plimley, Julian Woolford, Cllr Lorraine Beardmore.

Agenda Item	Resp.	Due Date
<p>2. Previous Meetings Minutes</p> <p>Agreed as a true record of the meeting.</p>		
<p>3. Introduction Cllr. Philip White (Interim Chair)</p> <p>Philip W set out Staffordshire County Council (SCC) changes to administration with his responsibilities as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy & Skills. Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on all sectors of UK economy and affected our priorities and workstreams. He reaffirmed SCC commitment to the visitor economy through the Place Branding work being led by SCC (presentation by consultants Thinking Place at this meeting) and shared his own thoughts on the value and importance of the tourism sector.</p>		
<p>4. Economic Recovery – Strategy & sectoral background.</p> <p>Jon Vining, Head of Economic Growth & Delivery, SCC. Following SCC restructure, the tourism service reports to JV who updated on SCC economic response to Covid-19, key initiatives and future opportunities. (Presentation to be circulated with minutes).</p> <p>Experience of the Sector</p> <p><u>Sarah Oakden (NMA)</u> A challenging environment with advice changing on a daily basis. Visitor number are doing OK and better than they would have expected. Seeing lots of first-time visitors and more families. Initially was a very local focus and now an increase in visitors coming from East Midlands. Conferencing restrictions are an issue.</p> <p><u>Francis Jackson (Alton Towers)</u> Opened 4th July. Demand has been far in excess of expectations and tested to the limits of what's feasible - need to remain agile and flexible. Customer expectations are different to ours - 10% of visitors are nervous but vast majority happy with how we're running the business. Still a core younger audience of people on thrill rides but limited young families coming into the resort. Uncertainty around Christmas and the school holidays is a concern. VAT reduction extension - would be keen to see that continued post 31 March 2021.</p> <p><u>Simon Warburton (Lichfield Cathedral)</u> Indoor attraction therefore different experience to the mainly outdoor venues. Currently around 25% of normal visitor numbers but about 50% of projected capacity. Group travel in particular has been affected and have had to lose staff in café & shop. Offers of thanks to Public Sector support which has helped to reduce their deficit significantly.</p> <p><u>Paul Williams (TMI)</u> TMI engages nationally and VAT reduction is key to lobby for. Need to move messaging along - 'sanitise the site, not the experience'. Consumers are still nervous - advises businesses to look at VB's Mood of the Nation (Consumer sentiment research tracker link below) https://www.visitbritain.org/covid-19-consumer-sentiment-tracker</p>		



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<p>5. Place Branding Presentation</p> <p>John Till, Director, Thinking Place. Thinking Place are the consultants that have been awarded the tender working with SCC Communications Team and Tourism Team. JT updated the Board on the work undertaken so far including the research and the proposal for the themes of the Staffordshire Story. (Presentation to be circulated with the minutes)</p> <p>Robust stakeholder research – key findings:</p> <p>People are surprised by Staffordshire, it has everything you need in a place and amazing assets but is seen as second or third division, despite its great assets. Initial perspective of external people is the lack of knowledge of where it is. The Place is seen as welcoming, but traditional and complacent with a lack of confidence - weak brands within a weak brand which feeds into lack of external investment.</p> <p>Position between Midland Engine, Northern Powerhouse and relationship to London - need to nurture these relationships and shared confidence to take advantage of our assets to recover from Covid 19. Staffordshire needs to develop the relationship with Birmingham and Manchester - at the moment the towns don't feel like they are for young people. Too inward looking at the moment - if we look outwards and say to the cities what we can bring to them, we have the glue that can bring us back into play.</p> <p>Staffordshire is very strong on good value, a great place to visit and grow up with a family, however the narrative around cheap land etc. needs to be changed as it is much more valuable than that.</p> <p>Visitor economy of Staffordshire isn't being joined up as effectively as it should. The Visitor economy is undervalued, under resourced and not valued as a contributor to the economy. It is not necessarily being seen as central to the wider economy - and possibly being seen as secondary. This leads to individual destinations driving activity rather than the place.</p> <p>Multiple opportunities exist</p> <p>Staffordshire is "Attraction Central" – dripping with 1st class assets. Best kept secret is our countryside and the best attribute when promoting the Place - also builds into active lifestyles. Heritage and history are also strongly identified.</p> <p>"Adventure, Nature, Culture" - Somewhere you can still go to the city but have a great quality of life in a wonderful environment. Value is key, but it is more than just the 'cost' - "Work live lifestyle opportunity where space is easily accessible"</p> <p>'In between' becomes 'the heart of'</p> <p>Themes for Staffordshire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active, adventurous and fun • Inspiring and applying ingenuity • Cherishing our natural liveability <p>Staffordshire - a nationally valued centre (the big idea)</p> <p>Ian Eadie - how do we weave all of this into everyone's narrative?</p> <p>Answer (JT) - the key is to get the whole network of stakeholders on board - possible place leadership group and ambassador groups.</p>		



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<p>Simon Warburton – History and heritage is recognised as important, does this naturally fit with the themes?</p> <p>Tony Johnson - how to overcome parochialism?</p> <p>JT – Collaboration is key. Everyone has to do their bit. External links to Birmingham and Manchester are fine - but we also need to work with Staffordshire.</p> <p>Paul Williams – so what do we do next? A series of themes that can be shaped around the towns / villages / districts / attractions to create a set of narratives. Staffordshire has to want to create standout and get behind the set of themes to create our own set of stories.</p> <p>JT - It will only work if everyone works together to build on the big picture.</p>		
<p>6. Marketing Campaign update</p> <p>Mitch Floyd-Walker, Client Director, R H Advertising. MFW updated the Board on the #EnjoyStaffsSafely Summer marketing campaign. (Presentation to be circulated with the minutes).</p> <p>Enjoy Staffs campaign tied-in to reopening of the sector, national Enjoy Summer Safely and 'Know Before you Go' campaigns and consumer reassurance that 'We're Good to Go'.</p> <p>Digital advertisements and radio ads targeted residents and visitors within 1-hour drive designed to raise awareness that Staffordshire is open, encourage responsible visits, support local tourism businesses and reinforce Covid safety / public health messaging using #EnjoyStaffsSafely</p> <p>Channels used included Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google and Signal Radio.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5 million impressions (opportunities to see the ads) • Facebook and Instagram carousel adverts generated 5,273 clicks • 46,000 views of campaign ads videos • Very positive results on Google Responsive Display campaign platform • Benchmarking against August 2019 - website received an increase of 6.7% <p>Proposal for an Autumn and October Half Term campaign with similar messaging to focus on families with young children and with teenagers - within around a 1-hour drivetime.</p> <p>Recommendation that £8.5k is budgeted for the campaign - agreed by the board</p>	AS	31/10/20
<p>7. Purpose and future of the DMP</p>		



There was an open round table discussion

Ian Eadie - query about the £500K investment of SCC into Place Branding. Is any of this investable in the DMP?

Otherwise what's the purpose of the DMP? Needs to have teeth. Don't forget the Commonwealth Games!

Andrew Hart - reflects on Ian's points, many other Counties have ceased to function in this way - doesn't want to see us disappear. There are very few DMPs left that are like this and have a valid role in helping SCC deliver. How do we go forward from here? Let's grab the opportunity of increase in domestic tourism.

Paul Williams - there are still a number of countywide tourism companies albeit structured differently e.g. CIC, others becoming more commercialised. How much of SCC funding will come across to support the visitor economy, and how to coral this for a countywide push? Big question is how we work with other DMOs up and down the County? Alignment of local with the countywide purpose.

Ed Barker - inclined to believe there is a need for Destination Staffordshire as the Countywide umbrella. Only chance for us as councillors to get behind the service, work with attractions etc.

Francis Jackson - would like there to be more active and less passive approach. Would like the time being invested to be more fruitful and more worthwhile. Needs to have far more punch. Reports strong demand for premium accommodation, more accommodation. Occupancy has been very high during the season.

Philip White - there are fewer visitor attractions on call than would have liked - need to be relevant to those organisations. SCC work is about place based approach – it's about economy, including visitor economy and raising families and investment from government etc. Place Marketing Board and Ambassador Group - a number of options are available to us. Do we want to become a CIC or talk to LEP to deepen interest with them? Is there appetite for PW as chair to investigate ways we can do this?

Sarah Oakden - DMOs likely to become more important post-COVID, as more emphasis on domestic tourism. We need to be one of the first to grab the opportunities.

Simon Warburton - group travel opportunities are still a good opportunity - building on the fact that Staffs is a good place to stop. Good county-wide discussions pre-pandemic. How is the budget set? Also need to set some targets against which to consider success.

Julie Arnold - canal holidays have been booming - usage has been increasing across the county. Also need to use canals as a marketing theme. Wants more info on budget, membership.

Budget

£260k - SCC contribute £125k and other LAs @ £45k , private sector £80k to £90k
Ideas around budget can be plugged into the options work

Options appraisal - future model of DMP that the industry can consider as a way forward which encompasses place branding, lobbying, market intel and research. Research and market making into hotels and business support.

Action: SCC go away and prepare options report for next Board meeting

JV/AS Next Board Mtg

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8. AOB

Tony Johnson - £250k has been earmarked as a District for the Commonwealth Games approach. There will be a legacy from the Common Wealth Games – a good example of County and districts working together. Concerned by shortage of hotel rooms.

Claire Furnell King - Engagement of the hotel sector?

- Philip W - a lack of higher end capacity
- Philip W - this is an example of work we might want to lead and market make
- CFK - the issue is there are so many budget hotels across the region

Francis - research suggests demand for premium accommodation, running high occupancy in the season but overall increase in staycations in the area.

Attached: Economic recovery – strategy & sectoral background presentation, Place Branding presentation, Marketing Campaign presentation.