

LVEP Board meeting minutes:

Meeting held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 10am at World of Wedgwood, ST12 9ER.

**Present**

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Charlotte Cain            | Staffordshire County Council – Visit Staffs |
| Kim Hill                  | Staffordshire County Council – Visit Staffs |
| Ben Watts                 | Trentham Estate                             |
| Richard Swancott          | Staffordshire County Council – Visit Staffs |
| Olivia Thackstone         | Stoke-on-Trent City Council                 |
| Lee Philps                | World of Wedgwood                           |
| Frances-Marie<br>Hitchen  | University of Staffordshire                 |
| Craig Simmonds            | Stoke City FC                               |
| Cllr Matt<br>Swindlehurst | Staffordshire Moorlands District Council    |
| Ed Bassett                | Clip n Climb - Stoke                        |
| Lara Rowe                 | Tamworth Borough Council                    |
| Richard Drakeley          | National Forest                             |
| Arthur Barnard            | Philip Astley Project CIC                   |
| Andrea Webster            | Weston Park                                 |
| Angela Glithero           | Stoke-on-Trent City Council                 |
| Steve Alty                | Hilton – Garden Inn                         |
| Nicola Kent               | Staffordshire County Council                |

**Virtual**

|             |                             |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Maria Howes | National Memorial Arboretum |
|-------------|-----------------------------|

**Apologies**

|                    |                              |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Anthony Hodge      | Staffordshire County Council |
| Alastair Budd      | Trentham Estate              |
| Colin Sweeney      | Weston Park                  |
| Cllr Philip White  | Staffordshire County Council |
| Cllr Jane Ashworth | Stoke-on-Trent City Council  |

**1. Welcome and apologies.**

Charlotte Cain (CC) welcomed all to the meeting.

CC confirmed that Laura Gerrard has stepped down from the board due to her leaving Alton Towers. The board wish to thank Laura for all her hard work.

CC has confirmed she has spoken to a replacement from Alton Towers who is keen to be involved once in new position.

Angela Glithero (AG) stated that it would be pertinent to do a skills audit of the board to identify for Chair and other board member recruitment, to lead the EOI.

Laura was due to lead on the Marketing and Business Support subgroup and therefore need EOI for new lead of this priority subgroup.

There is also a need to recruit a Chair of the board.

## 2. English Tourism Week and Tourism Awards 2025

Olivia Thackstone (OT) provided an update on some of the English Tourism Week activities and the Tourism Awards, of which two of the Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent award winners have been shortlisted for the Visit England national awards.

Keele events and conferencing for Business venue of the year and World of Wedgwood for International Tourism of the year.

CC referenced the need to commercialise the LVEP and that there is considerable cost to the judging of the awards.

Therefore, there should be a drive towards covering the cost of the awards, including the judging.

Ideas were then put forward from the board, discussions included finding

ACTION: Recruit a marketing subgroup lead, develop EOI. Recruit a Chair to the board.

sponsorship or putting together a judging panel.

Frances Marie Hitchen (FH) suggested that the Uni as headline sponsor could play a part – with tourism specialists in the University.

There was also discussion around how other LVEP's/destinations or other awards such as the University and Chambers of Commerce awards are judged. Could talk to Maritn Tideswell as to how they do the University awards panel.

Kim Hill (KH) mentioned that as we feed into the national awards there are rules that we need to follow and the judges we currently use produce quality reports that are taken note of by Visit England. They also judge successful areas such as the Southwest and so know of the levels required. KH also mentioned that the requirements from Visit England need to be explained in more detail to understand commitment levels also. There are some LVEP's that swap or share judging, but having a professional judging service does prevent any issues of allegations of bias from occurring and ensures our winners are put forward on best foot for national awards.

CC asked that anyone who has any interest in being involved in this or has any further ideas to contact and let us know.

Lara Rowe (LR) also mentioned that it is becoming increasingly difficult for Local Authority ran attractions such as Tamworth Castle to take part as there is a call to restrict physical meetings and costs of attending the awards etc.

ACTION: Call to action for EOI for being involved in awards or come forward with ideas.

ACTION: Circulate slides from presentation to board.

### 3. The Commercial Way Forward

Richard Swancott (RS) delivered a presentation on current/past and potential future.

SWOT analysis and competitor/best practice analysis.

Matt Swindlehurst (MS) Importance should be placed on supporting and protecting market towns as Staffordshire has many. Lots of small businesses would be put off any sort of financial contribution.

Steve Alty (SA) knows that Marketing Manchester has businesses contributing amounts circa £20k.

CC commented that we do have members paying various amounts, some north of this amount.

Also acknowledging that our current offering does not offer enough for the bigger businesses and there needs to be differing offering for small and larger businesses as needs are different.

Ed Bassett (EB) asked if the reach from the website was known. Where is traffic coming from? Is it internal/external to the area? Etc.

RS stated we do get access to this information and can send a break down to the board including SEO we access. We have 600,000 visitors to the website per year, 50-60k on socials.

Richard Drakeley (RD) needs to air caution against bundling across including too much in memberships.

Need to do an analysis of the cost of servicing the membership – monetary and resources.

ACTION: RS to send report to board.

OT mentioned that World of Wedgwood are members of Marketing Manchester, Visit Peak District, Derbyshire & Derby, and Visit Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

Circulate slides of presentation

Lee Philps (LP) mentioned that for example from Marketing Manchester they have been able to access more International Tourism events, where they are put in front of buyers. No traction yet, but only in first 3 months, but have got leads for next 12 months. Networking events are good.

RS – Planning on meet the buyer event on Sept 19<sup>th</sup> at Alton Towers – networking event.

ACTION: Please send ideas and comments around this via email before next meeting.

Staffordshire Day – in future arrange transport to take employees around attractions to know how to market the whole destination as a package better.

OT – Business Tourism post will be in place June.

Research into what is needed by Business tourism.

Venues would like referrals.

#### **4. Richard Drakeley (RD) and Charlotte Cain (CC)– Sustainability and Destination Action Plan**

GSDI – Global Sustainability Destination Index measure will provide an extensive audit and create a baseline measure for current performance standards in sustainability.

This can then be used to direct the projects and sustainability action plan priorities. It also enables us to compare ourselves to competitors, other destinations and of course to our previous selves when re-measured.

Recommendation is to do a preliminary assessment – cost is £6,000 plus officer resource.

Makes sense to combine efforts to minimise costs.

CC – LVEP budget is made up of 90% District and Borough commitments for next 2-3 years. 200k in budget currently.

Need to do a Destination County- and City-wide development plan imminently which could cost around 15-20k.

The GDSI index can drive forward the Destination management plan for 2026, which is a national directive mandate from Visit England (all destinations must provide one).

Budgets are expected to go down – hence the importance of the focus on commercial side.

Budget does roll over.

SA asked what the timelines are for this?

CC stated that the DMP needs to be in place by 2026, so work on procurement needs to be started now and over summer, ready to do work in the autumn.

Important the GDSI work can be done now to help guide the DMP.

Budgets can go down so important to drive commercial plan.

SA – what are the timelines for the outcomes?

CC – Need to have DMP ready for 2026, so need to go to tender/procurement process starting now and over summer, ready for work to take place in Autumn.

EOI were asked for to score the procurement/tender process.

Maria Howes, Fran Hitchen, Arthur Barnard, and Richard Drakeley put themselves forward for this.

Get baseline scores asap – now and 2026 full assessment for GDSI.

FH mentioned that she is doing a doctorate on the connectivity of attractions.

Local Authority Stakeholders Group to feed into this.

ALL BOARD Agreed to action spend for GDSI project to get underway.

#### 5. Lyn Thomson and Adam Gough – Hotel Solutions – Accommodation Study.

Slides will be sent in separate attachment.

Richard Drakeley worked closely with Lyn on the National Forest Accommodation plan.

EB stated he would like to see how much stock we need in comparison to what we have and compared to other local/comparative counties/destinations.

Adam Gough (AG) stated that this can be added if parameters are given.

Cheshire and Derbyshire are effective use for benchmarking.

Use this for targets and forecasting.

Key to include in LVEP VE plan to set new targets.

The Accommodation Acceleration Study was funded by UKSPF in Staffordshire Moorlands,

ACTION: Circulate presentation slides.

and to be used as pilot/pioneer, can then roll out to wider county area.

#### 6. Research and Intelligence Guest experience study – Frances Marie Hitchen (FH).

Sub-group focus is on pitching VE in Staffs and SOT educate and progress into dream jobs in the playground of the UK.

VE has a 2.9 billion economic impact, with 30% growth. Cheshire has grown a further 9% as invested in hotels and accommodation.

Key aspects to look at:

- What are the quick and easy wins to gain impact.
- What are the most important out of the recommendations.
- Nicola Kent (NK) stated this can make dramatic difference.

RD stated not sure of the different types of opportunities available.

RD worked closely with the planning officers for the National Forest.

CC has been talking to other destinations about how they do it.

FH is looking to engage more businesses into the priority subgroup, currently have a lot of interest from education institutions, but need to know what the businesses need. Already have a curriculum that is set, but if can incorporate real life needs from the businesses to better equip the students then there is a high passion for this.

Graduate internships are available at the University of Staffordshire – with bursary of 30% of salary. Fifty available.

IOH reach is great, and TMI accreditations.

FH – reminder that her students do research all the time and are looking for themes and projects to do. This is potentially free research and data for businesses to access.

For example, the students are going to the Stone Food and Drink Festival to do an impact report, and they will get important information and data and will be included in the International Journal – free advertisement!

Marketing personnel also use journals to evidence.

Currently there are projects on the Visitor Attraction experience – emotions and immersive experience etc.

Could run an evening to discuss research findings, charge a fee for tickets but free consultation.

Have a think of any project type themes/questions and use the resource.

For information:

IOH <https://www.instituteofhospitality.org/> is the world's leading, award-winning, professional membership body for hospitality professionals around the globe. It has a wide range of benefits, promotes networking with industry contacts and helps members develop professionally to achieve their full potential. You can get accreditation as an educational provider and / or employers or training providers. This was linked to the MPs comments about hospitality being the 'pull' as such. FE College and HE institutes can get accreditation, the aim would be for the Universities to have it and other FE colleges. It is more about raising awareness also.

ACTION: KH to engage LA SH group for FH's connectivity project.

TMI is the leading professional body for destination management, TMI provides a unique opportunity to align HE programmes with current industry standards, support employability of graduates, and enhance the national and international profile of tourism and destination management-related courses. Having the would be great for CPD and might be one to look at for Destination Management and planning?

<https://www.tmi.org.uk/university-recognition-scheme>

## 7. AOB

KH – STEAM data – CALL TO ACTION – data collection forms are now live, please do complete for your businesses and/or advertise and encourage businesses to complete. Deadline is 30<sup>th</sup> May. Data analysis in June and reports by August.

Thank you to NMA, WOW, Tamworth Castle, Trentham Estate for all contributing previously.

It is important to get info from venues that have submitted data before to get historical data and trends but also from new venues. KH is also doing an education piece on why it is important to take part, what the benefits are etc to get more buy in.

Looking at transport data and events also.

AG – Stoke 100 Centenary – branding and toolkit is on the Stoke 100 website – please use in events you are doing.

[Stoke-on-Trent Centenary – Stoke-on-Trent Centenary](#)

Heritage trail app is launching this weekend. It is an app.



FH – can we have an LVEP board type banner or the digital business cards to use on footer of emails etc to advertise their board member status and extend reach.

CC – Visit Staffs are developing a trade website and LVEP page.

**Next meeting**

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 10am – at National Memorial Arboretum.