

LVEP Board meeting minutes:

Meeting held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 at 3pm.

**Present**

Charlotte Cain	Staffordshire County Council – Enjoy Staffs
Kim Hill (virtual)	Staffordshire County Council – Enjoy Staffs
Alastair Budd	Trentham Estate
Cllr Philip White	Staffordshire County Council
Angela Glithero	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Olivia Thackstone	World of Wedgwood
Laura Gerrard	Alton Towers Resort
Lee Philps	World of Wedgwood
Nicola Said	VisitEngland
Colin Sweeney	Weston Park
Andrea Webster	Weston Park
Craig Simmonds	Stoke City FC
Marc Wooton	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Ed Bassett	Clip n Climb - Stoke
Maria Howes	National Memorial Arboretum
Lara Rowe	Tamworth Borough Council
Louise Griffiths	National Forest
Jonathan Vinning	Staffordshire County Council
Arthur Barnard	Philip Astley Project CIC
Steve Alty	Hilton – Garden Inn

**Apologies**

Cllr Jane Ashworth	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Anthony Hodge	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Matt Swindlehurst	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Richard Drakeley	National Forest
Frances-Marie Hitchen	University of Staffordshire

## 1. Welcome and apologies.

Alastair Budd (AB) welcomed everyone to the first Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent LVEP (SSLVEP) board meeting.

Round table introductions – name, where from, role and what looking forward to.

AB highlighted terms of reference document and opened the floor up to any questions. All present were in agreement that they were happy with the document and that their roles would include overseeing of projects and bring in the wider community to contribute.

## 2. Purpose of the LVEP and Growth Plan

Nicola Said (NS) – delivered a presentation on the subject.

Charlotte Cain (CC) talked through the Growth Plan priorities and importance of collaboration and working together to achieve common goals.

CC asked the board to think about what areas of the growth plan they think they can lead on, or contribute best to and what are particular areas of interest, and what they would identify as most important priorities.

Key areas (in no particular order are):

- Commercial – make more robust
- Events – nighttime economy/sporting, etc
- Organisation and Stakeholder alignment
- Business support and Skills Gaps
- Accommodation
- Marketing

Discussion followed around these topics.

Steve Alty (SA) highlighted the challenge Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent have with attracting bigger international trade fairs due to lack of venue big enough to be able to hold the exhibition side of this type of event. Always more of a focus on domestic and leisure routes.

CC asked the question: Do you think Business Tourism is highlighted enough?

NS to add slide regarding Insights and compare international markets and to send presentation slides.

Discussions were around links to neighbouring destinations e.g. Cheshire, Shropshire etc.

Also mentioned was the fact that we don't have the spaces to have big conferences and exhibitions except possibly for St George's Park which naturally has a commitment to Football first.

Highlighted that some of our venues have amazing conference and events spaces in unique settings, but the exhibition space to go alongside it is lacking. The Arena that was planned for Stoke-on-Trent isn't a project that will be bought forward at this moment in time.

Feeling was that when bidding for larger/national and international events that we lose out to places like Nottingham and Warwickshire, so the lack of bigger conference space is impacting our domestic and international reach.

CC – Asked the board to agree if Business Tourism needed to be a priority focus. The Board agreed this should be a priority and links with sustainability, transport, events etc.

Discussions then led to the need for the Destination as a whole, being a key marketing tool, to pool together to sell Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Skills – cannot deliver unless we have motivated, educated and skilful people.

Colin Sweeney (CS) indicated he would be happy to be involved in the skills and education aspect of the growth plan.

Nicola Said (NS) stated that she has found that it is hard for businesses to pinpoint what support they can have.

PW – Skills absolutely comes back to an important wider agenda, increases employability, makes Staffordshire more attractive to live and work. Make careers more attractive, certainly something we can do to improve knowledge of the sector and pathways and opportunities can be enhanced.

LG – Really interested in the skills and employability aspect of the growth plan. ATR having seasonal staffing, but they also have a lot of high skill level and year-round employment.

Students come in and can do their work experience in different areas and then look to retain them.

Challenge is they live further away.

AB – Passionate about seeing people come to university to study but then don't stay afterwards – key is education around Staffordshire being a great place to live, work and stay etc.

This links in with social outcomes, and where we sit with our priorities of sociability and inclusion.

Ed Bassett (EB) asked if there is an opportunity to feed into plans around these aspects and he would be willing to support.

CC confirmed – Yes, the Growth plan is the plan, and that feedback and input is invaluable to make sure we are on track for the priorities.

NS – Advice is picking 1 or 2 key aspects at a time and do them well. Go through Growth plan and see where things can be prioritised, paired back or if something is missing.

PW is interested in productivity of the sector- not simply turnover but productivity is important, as can lead to better lives for all.  
We are Staffordshire (WAS) is complimentary to SSLVEP and vice versa, continue to align and work together to achieve more.

SA – Keen to get more people to come here more often and spend longer and more.

NS – mini strategy to link in to get University students to stay in the county – Staffordshire place to Live – Work – Visit.

It starts with a Visit...

PW – Would be beneficial if attractions talk about Staffordshire as a whole and nearby other attractions – we are lucky we have so much in our county that we should be packaging it all together more.

### 3. Progress Report – Economic Impact and Project Areas

NS – Keep amending the plan.

CC updated on key areas of work:

- Website – updated and alignment with introduction of microsites for District and Borough's, creating enhanced business efficiencies.
- Accessible portal – link to accommodation and attractions and able to search products.
- Accommodation Acceleration Plan (AAP) – lots of data collected. At next board meeting will drill into the detail further, linked to planning. Is anyone interested in this area/has expertise to offer? Business support is needed to help them navigate planning process.

LG – Already working with Cllr Matt Swindlehurst, Cheadle and Staffordshire Moorlands Council on a heritage trail to link in with ATR to enhance off peak tourists/visitors for both. Packaging is particularly important off-peak season. How we work together to build packages – and can we bring our tour operators around the table is important.

NS – Stressed importance of sharing visitor numbers with Visit England and SSLVEP – as missing key attractions can give a lesser impression of what Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent actually delivers.

Louise Griffiths (LG) – National Forest and Richard Drakeley have put together a Sustainable Tourism Accommodation Guide – at market testing stage. Happy to work with the LVEP core team on this project noted in the growth plan and lessons learnt.

NS – Commented that it is a great piece done by the National Forest and on the marketing of their accommodation support scheme and business support – a case of best practice to support wider accommodation schemes.

CC fed in that Keele University is keen to contribute to Business Tourism piece and can look to be part of a sub-group.

CC to identify subgroups for Growth Plan priorities and identify key people for these groups.

ALL to feedback to CC what they are interested in getting involved in most.

CC – Proposed to launch the Growth Plan at the SSLVEP Tourism Conference Jan 2025 – all present agreed.

Craig Simmonds (CS) – feedback from booking agents when discussing booking concerts and events is – “where is Stoke?” Convention Bureau role is to get us on the map. Asked if the Convention Bureau is still going ahead?

Angela Glithero (AG) confirmed yes, it is going ahead, and recruitment is underway now this will be an area colleagues at Stoke-on-Trent City Council are keen to support.

CC added that there has been a conference bureau review and there will be a business tourism function, but not necessarily as was in the past, as there are some recommendations to be considered regarding how the market has changed. The SSLVEP board subgroup will be important to shape the direction for this.

NS – confirmed that VisitEngland has a business toolkit coming out around business tourism and commercial strategy.

#### STEAM 2023 results - CC

- 14.2% is an increase of economic impact of 2.64 billion.
- 32% increase in visitors over past 5 years – we need to think about the PR of that.
- 7.3% increase in jobs.

PW – Fantastic numbers, visitor economy is up by a third in the space of five years. Shows Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent need an LVEP and support to continue.

NS – Pull together for all LVEPS so can compare. Look at rate of growth rather than particulars as sometimes cannot compare direct.

Jonathan Vinning (JV) – Pleased to now have this data as key to helping form decisions. Collection of data runs annually April-January.

#### 4. Funding Review/Recommendations – AB

NS – You need to be ready with joined up approach (not separate D & B's) for when/if UKSPF2 info is released or a version. Evaluate UKSPF projects, and what would you do with more etc?

CC – Membership model around marketing works well for SME's but what can we do for larger businesses? E.g. How can LVEP help add value and reach an untapped market?

AB – Membership models – how do you apportion where money goes? Total marketing structure to bring people in e.g. Package Trentham Gardens with ATR would be beneficial to both. Promote the County and the City. LVEP to facilitate the packaging.

PW – Visitors will always want to visit nationally recognised attractions but then not realise what else is nearby. Marketing Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent as a whole is important.

NS – Think about when/where need to do the marketing, where are the gaps?

CC – consultation around the commercial strategy for the LVEP is important to create a sustainable partnership and look at larger growth and investment initiatives. Would the board be happy for consultation to start around this? Board agrees this as a priority.

#### Next meeting

Wednesday 22nd January 2025 – 2-4pm at Trentham Estate.

#### Additional Actions:

- Circulate Growth Plan documents - SSLVEP team
- Press Release – Growth Story last 5 years – SSLVEP team
- Conference – agreed to launch Growth Plan – SSLVEP team
- Circulate commercial paper to start consultation – SSLVEP team

SLVEP – review projects and formulate plans in advance.