

LVEP Board meeting minutes:

Meeting held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2025, at the National Memorial Arboretum, [Croxall Road, Alrewas, Burton-On-Trent DE13 7AR](#)

**Present**

Nicola Said	Visit England
Charlotte Cain	Staffordshire County Council – Visit Staffs
Andrea Sammons	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 – Visit Stoke
Lee Philps	World of Wedgwood
Lesli Good	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Craig Simmonds	Stoke City FC
Clare Brookes	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council - virtual
Simon Burge	Alton Towers Resort/Merlin - virtual
Adrian Davies	virtual
Richard Drakeley	National Forest
Arthur Barnard	Philip Astley Project CIC
Steve Alty	Hilton – Garden Inn
Nicola Kent	Staffordshire County Council
Colin Sweeney	Weston Park
Maria Howes	National Memorial Arboretum
Alastair Budd	Trentham Estate

**Apologies**

Anthony Hodge	Staffordshire County Council
Angela Glithero	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Andrea Webster	Weston Park
Lara Rowe	Tamworth Borough Council
Cllr Martin Murray	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Jane Ashworth	Stoke-on-Trent City Council

## 1. Welcome and apologies.

Nicola Said (NS) welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies from Anthony Hodge, Cllr Jane Ashworth, Angela Glithero, Louisa Shaw, Lara Rowe and Frances-Marie Hitchen.

Introductions from Simon Burge – from Merlin/Alton Towers Resort and Clare Brookes representing Cllr Matt Swindlehurst and Lesli Good from SOTCC were given including an intro of their role and remit.

It was also stated that there was a need to recruit a Chair for the board with Nicola Said stepping in temporarily and that there had been some EOI's and for the Deputy/Vice Chair position. So, this will be progressed with Charlotte Cain (CC) and select members of the board.

The board were also informed that board member Ed Bassett had informed of having stepped down from the board.

The board were also informed that there had been a nomination by Maria Howes (MH) for a Chair of the Marketing and Business support priority subgroup of Adrian Davies (AD), who is a business consultant, former director of Winning moves and owner of an SME.

CC asked that the board vote AD onto the Chair of the subgroup and therefore also onto the board as the only Chair of a subgroup not on the board. The board present at the meeting all agreed to this action.

NS complemented the strength of our board and urged to keep the momentum going including securing the Chair and Vice Chair positions.

ACTION: CC to progress instalment of Chair and Deputy Chair of the board.

2. Commercial Update – Richard Swancott (RS)

RS gave a presentation on the Commercial strategy including research into best practice in similar destinations and the Rate card developed from the existing one.

NS mentioned that event organisers are very interested in soleus e-shots in the lead up to include in the offer. RS commented that we have already done this as a pilot with Waterworld and LIV Golf JCB event.

Steve Alty (SA) stated he felt having a “free” option for membership is important and the gateway to further memberships in the future. Important to offer for SME’s or for businesses to try the membership when new. But currently could we charge a small amount as what they are getting is a good amount for free.

NS stated need to think about administration costs also.

CC stated that content is king, and it is key to ensure there is always the offer to maximise content to sell our destination as the beating heart of the county, and it is a big part of the business support offering.

AD stated a free trial would be a great way of letting businesses try the membership and perhaps then consider a paid membership more than if not.

Clare Brookes (CB) stated that it is crucial for a lot of the SMEs in her area that there is a free option. She also stated that they have the most success by far when her officers go to visit the businesses in

ACTION: Send presentation slides and rate card out with minutes of the meeting.

person and help them through the process and build trust.

Need to keep track of the upsell from the free membership to paid.

NS – Perhaps offer a free listing and then paid membership options. Tourism Officers in the areas engage with listings and LVEP team focus on membership.

MH – From 0 to 100 is a lot for some SME's so a trial would be a good way to initiate it.

CC – Business support for the Visitor Economy needs connecting to the growth hub and Chamber - how many businesses are we collectively engaged with.

Action: CC to follow up with Growth Hub and Chamber

Current member numbers at the different levels were given and discussed along with current approx. income from the membership.

Richard Drakeley (RD) stated that the National Forest covers 2 different LVEP's with their geography.  
Important to do competitor analysis and see where we may be able to collaborate/share best practice.

It was then mentioned by several officers that connections with other LVEPs are being made. Kim Hill (KH) stated that there is already a recce being done on competitors, similar organisations, and also to reduce duplication of services within the county, and a needs analysis, as it is recognised that different sectors within the industry and also different scales of organisations and businesses will need different support.

SA stated that he really liked the visitor map and as a Hotelier he said that at the moment the SOT hotels are full of Scottish visitors as the Scottish education system break up for summer holidays earlier than England. So a different reach and timing to consider.

NS – Visit England are providing more data and insights and the commercial analysis and comparisons with other LVEP's will be out by October. So that we can refine our proposition for the January Big Tourism Conference 2026.

CC also commented on the opportunity to increase our Sponsorship input and offerings to see some activities be cost neutral and more activity to be enabled.

### 3. KPI's and Monitoring of the Destination Management Plan & links to Investment and Culture – CC

Wanted to ask the board what KPI's and monitoring they all do in their organisations already.

CC – mentioned that we currently do STEAM, Visit England are bringing in new and improved data collection and insights as NS will cover in her presentation. CC is also working cross collaboration with other Staffordshire County Council departments – for example looking at the connectivity in our attractions and venues, and business tourism venues. With potential to do a pilot study.

Board had previously approved the Global Destinations Sustainability index at the

last meeting with WMGC and RD will be progressing this further to help improve business resilience and efficiency – this study will give us evidence of where we can improve.

The Destination Management Plan (DMP) has been put out for tender, and a decision will be made on this soon, with board members being involved in the decision. The DMP will then run and be ready to launch at the January Tourism Conference providing insights into each county destination as well as an overview.

RD – states that the near and rove style data provides more real time data and data such as dwell time, where they come from etc.

RD also stated there is a programme called lighthouse data that looks at short term let accommodations and can also show future data – as uses future bookings.

Possibility of doing STEAM every 2-3 years as uses trend analysis.

Arthur Barnard (AB) asked if there was a hybrid of the different schemes/data collection. Not that anyone is aware of, but we are also looking into what other LVEP's and destinations use (combinations) and strengths and weaknesses.

Alastair Budd (AB) stated that Trentham are currently looking into data collection as they have many entry points to their destination it is challenging, and they would like to know where on site people go to etc as well.

Also interested in disposable income of their visitor's demographic.

Simon Burge (SB) stated that ATR uses heat mapping, but a key is to watch out for where people cannot connect to capture the data as you do not want to underplay the figures.

CC asked for board members to volunteer to work on this project further. Maria Howes, Richard Drakeley and Alastair Budd come forward to work with Kim Hill and team on a new project that would capture more real time visitor economy data.

ACTION: Share presentation slides and links.

#### 4. Visit England Tools and Monitoring - Nicola Said

Overview of LVEP's and National picture.  
Details on Visit England Tools and Monitoring.  
Training and Toolkits.  
Social Value of Visitor Economy.  
Social Productivity Index.  
Regenerative Tourism – Questionnaire due out to assess where current levels are and areas for improvement.  
Annual attractions survey – great PR.  
Monthly stats and how performing compared to others is coming.  
Visa domestic and inbound international LVEP level, linked to commercial to support businesses. Create monthly reports from all data sources.  
Local Authority lighthouse data level.

This data will support natural links to your Investment programme.

Lesli Good (LG) feels there is a need to educate other services and partners on the benefits the Visitor Economy can have to locals and social value.

ACTION: Send presentation slides

5. Subgroup updates (minus Education & Inclusion) Olivia Thackstone & Craig Simmonds, Andrea Sammons, Kim Hill and Adrian Davies (OT, CS, AS, KH, AD).

OT – Business Tourism – Presentation slides. Talking about identifying key Business Tourism Events – discussions were around what the board have attended and the usefulness of them.

Appetite for collaboration and selling the destination as a whole to benefit all is agreed.

International Tourism – a city focus? Stoke and Lichfield. Trade ready products, commercial potential. Stoke is ahead due to ceramics industry putting them on the world stage.

CS – Clear driver is USP for the destination as a whole, recognising that different parts of the area will need to focus on or identify different things also. Sustainability accreditations are now key for Business Tourism destinations to win more bookings so should be a priority and a quick win.

SEQM, GDSI, Green Tourism, etc. Work with SBEN and Keele Uni?

SA – states when someone books into a venue now they can enquire to ask for the people proactive carbon footprint of a meeting/visit etc.

AS – Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent have won the Visit England Awards for Excellence GOLD awards both in 2023 with the National Memorial Arboretum and 2025 with Keele University and so

ACTION: OT and CS to identify the exact accreditations needed and how to get them, as a business support and resilience tool.

have an award winning, best in class at the national awards in the past 3 years – Got to be a USP we can use now!

AB – World Trade market and management – Keele University has lots of international students.

SA and OT – has been to Confex before – but can be hit and miss need to go with a plan.

NS – Conference bureau launch first so have a direct place to send enquiries to.

ITB – England presence – can we work together to send a combined presence and effort as a destination.

Britain and Ireland Marketplave – OT done before trade ready products, 12 minutes speed meetings. Tour operators and Face to Face.

CC – Potential opportunity to fund itineraries – which could take to these events.

2026 Tourism Awards have now launched, actions from the board are to share posts and promote awards with people they speak to, and ensure their organisations enter the awards – lead by example. No worry of a conflict of interest as the awards are judged by completely independent judges.

20 categories this year, new Regenerative Tourism Category and re-introduced Food & Drink Retailer / Farm Shop of the year.

AS – Marketing – Visit Brand.

– Visit Staffordshire

-Visit Stoke

-Discover Staffordshire Moorlands

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

ACTION: Board members to feedback which trade events attended and were they of benefit? Pros and Cons? Is there a link to We Are Staffordshire to support delivery?

ACTION: Promote awards and enter.

ACTION: Share presentation slides

ACTION: Circulate terms of reference for Marketing and Business Support subgroup.

- Discover South Staffordshire
- Discover Newcastle-under-Lyme
- Visit Tamworth

Brand and Website estate well underway for launch at end of September.

Subgroup – Campaign.

AD – Terms of reference for the subgroup – board to go away and read and come back with any recommendations. It was agreed by all those who attended that if you have not replied with comments by the date in the email with the minutes it will be taken that all is agreed and supported.

KH – Business Support

LVEP Board – visibility – promoting on LinkedIn “Meet the board”, digital business cards. LVEP page on existing website including the minutes of meetings. New trade website will have an LVEP Board feature page.

Also as mentioned earlier currently doing a recce of best practice trade/industry sites to be a one stop shop for Visitor Economy businesses. This is in site map stage and is aimed to be done by end of year and launch at the January conference 2026.

### AOB

AB – Newcastle-under-Lyme hosted their first Visitor Economy Forum the day before with a fam trip to the alpaca farm. Lots of borough businesses engaged and enthusiastic. Discussion around QR codes.

SA – asked SB about footfall for an attraction such as ATR. SB stated he would source that information and send to KH for the board.

OT – Stoke station is closing for 3 weeks in August – huge impact on Stoke and surrounding areas during peak holiday time. – Communicate out.

11<sup>th</sup> August Josiah Wedgwood will be put back in place near Stoke Station Road.

#### **Next meeting**

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October – Tamworth Assembly rooms.