

## Chief Executive's Report Quarter 1 (1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016)

It is always important to start the financial year well and this year has been full of reasons to be cheerful! There has been a particularly strong showing in Research and Training Services with lots of new contracts being secured. The vast majority of our Members and Destination Partners have also re-engaged which is one of our key performance measures.

Quarter 1 has also been a period where there have been a number of tenders submitted for Government funding – despite Brexit there are still streams of EU funding to support the industry particularly in rural areas. In addition, TSE put in a joint bid with London & Partners for the Discover England Fund and supported a number of other projects.

We also tried to make sure that in the build up to the EU Referendum and post the vote to leave at the end of the quarter that we kept our members informed of the issues. I also did a couple of live radio interviews on BBC Sussex and BBC Surrey in the aftermath of the vote.



It was an extremely varied quarter for me especially because of the launch of the **Discover England Fund** and the creation of a bid that would have maximum benefit for members and partners. Unfortunately, with this type of exercise you end up discarding lots of potentially really good ideas to go for the best one. A key deciding factor in the bid we eventually posted at the end of May was the enthusiasm of London & Partners in continuing our co-operation from last year. However, new relationships in many other areas may result because of the catalytic effect of these types of exercises.

As part of our work in **China**, I do get asked from time to time to make presentations to trade delegations from Chinese provinces and this quarter my International Marketing Manager and I met with a dozen representatives from Yunnan Province. In addition and following a similar presentation to the equivalent from Guangdong last year, we had a follow up meeting to discuss further co-operation.



This quarter also saw a lot of engagement with two **airports** in the region Gatwick and Southampton – as a matter of course I serve as a full time representative on both Airport Consultative Committees. We also supported the launch of two new routes into Southampton from Munich and Amsterdam including assisting with a press trip by 6 German media. We also hosted a travel writer for Cathay Pacific Inflight magazine who spent 4 days in Mid Sussex and Brighton in advance of new routes into Gatwick.

We intend to maintain the uplift we created last year in increasing the number of **membership network meetings** throughout the region and one our busiest in the first quarter was at Marwell Wildlife Park in Hampshire. For the first time we brought together some of our key suppliers with members and destination partners. I also gave presentations to the Sussex Top Attractions Group and the Portsmouth



Marketing Partnership and we were invited to a VisitBritain China Workshop in Greenwich to speak about our Go China campaign.

It was also great news to confirm that VisitKent is continuing with our joint benefits arrangement for the businesses that are VK Investors. Unfortunately,

ExperienceOxfordshire decided to discontinue a similar arrangement from April although many of the Oxfordshire businesses chose to continue with us as direct members including Blenheim Palace, Bicester Village and the Randolph Hotel, Oxford.

We lost two of our **Destination Partners** this year – Fareham DC and West Berks Council both withdrawing from supporting tourism as a function of the local authority. However, over 30 others renewed again for another year.

On the **PR front** the quarter has been notable for the number of press trips we have organised to various destinations across the area. These included Blogger Mummy Barrow, the Rough Guide and New Delhi TV!

Over 45 features were secured in UK media including the Times, Guardian, The Sun and Daily Mail. There was also an increasing amount of interest from overseas media and we secured coverage in Britblog (Belgium/Netherlands); Norrköpings Tidningar (Sweden); T-Online (30 million), FashionVictress, Killerwal, Suddeutsche Zeitung (Germany).

On the **Group Travel** side we said farewell to Joanne Channon after 5 years at TSE who went on to join Merlin Entertainments in London. Her parting shot was the first joint show we had done with Great for Groups at Kempton Park in April. It was attended by over 560 group and tour operators and generally rated a success.

Sales for Excursions 2017 were also launched and Karen Roebuck and Adrian Gates both with a very long association with the show, joined our sales team.



Our **international marketing** campaigns welcomed some new partners this year including Stonehenge, Continuum and East Hants DC. We held meetings with VisitBritain and will be a key sponsor at the ExploreGB event in Brighton in March 2017.

All our TIC contracts were secured for 2016/17 and with the withdrawal of VisitEngland from **Visitor Information** activity our Head of Visitor Services, Teresa O'Kelly is increasingly on call for support and advice to TICs across the region and beyond. She organised a TIC Managers meeting in Marlow in June.

Bouyed by new courses such as Welcome Afloat and Exceeding Visitor Expectations(EVE) and a resurgence in interest in Welcome All and Welcome for Volunteers, our **Training** Team and our various Welcome to Excellence franchisees throughout the country, saw a considerable uplift in interest in customer service training. The flexibility and relevance of Welcome to Excellence means that it is applicable across all sectors of industry, not just tourism. Some of our most recent clients are Champion Timber,

Mitie (outsourcing and energy services company), Carnival Corporation, Brighton & Hove Bus Co. and the National Memorial Arboretum.

Locally, we have also run a number of Social Media courses that have been popular with members and our Digital Manager, Jon Sharkey has been providing SEO and Googleanalytics sessions in conjunction with Destination Partners.



Our **Research** team has had a particularly busy and successful start to the year with a plethora of contracts across Sussex for visitor survey and destination audit work. One of the biggest contracts, however, has been for a visitor survey for Marketing Lancashire. We have also been commissioned by the National Coastal Tourism Academy in Bournemouth to set up a national business barometer for England's coastal resorts.

The end of June saw the closing date for most of the categories in this year's **Beautiful South Awards** and with more categories this year we recorded a record level of entries and judging will now take place throughout the summer with the Awards Ceremony being in late November at the Hilton at the Ageas Bowl , Southampton



**July 2016**