

## Tourism South East - Chief Executive's Report Quarter 2: 1<sup>st</sup> July – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016

### Overview

Quarter 2 was perhaps typified by three issues – the impact of the Brexit vote, the Discover England Fund and a wave of TSE staff changes.

**Brexit** tended to dominate Q1 but of course escalated in Q2 with the amount of information, speculation and panic that ensued. Hence, we continued to try and keep a balanced view of both short term and long term impacts. I tended to be a focus for the media with several interviews with BBC TV and radio. The fall in exchange rates created some optimism throughout the industry albeit the longer term concerns with regard to freedom of travel, freedom of labour and replacement of EU funding, remain. The role of the Tourism Alliance has been invaluable in this respect.



Since the start of the year some familiar faces have left the organisation to pursue their careers elsewhere. We have managed to replace them with some **excellent and very experienced staff** who have brought a new energy and capacity to TSE.

Unfortunately and unexpectedly, we were unsuccessful in our joint bid with London & Partners for support from the new **Discover England Fund** but will continue to look for other opportunities the Fund may offer and also to develop our relationship with London & Partners.

Business, of course, had to continue despite these distractions and it was great to be reminded what a diverse, evolving and high quality industry we are privileged to be involved in through my attendance at the re-launch of the Mary Rose at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, the opening of the Novium Museum in Chichester and a viewing of the new developments at the Weald and Downland Museum, West Sussex. I was also pleased to support on a branding workshop for the planned redevelopment of the D Day Museum in Portsmouth.



I also continued active engagement with VisitEngland and VisitBritain with attendance at various forums in the summer. TSE also put forward a 3000 word submission on rural tourism to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee as part of its review of the role of tourism in supporting rural growth in England.

I am pleased to report that our **commercial membership** activity has been going extremely well – Q2 tends to be the period where we get a full picture on membership renewals for the year and we are ahead of target with particular gains in Oxfordshire and Kent this year. Our on the ground network meetings are very popular and during the quarter we had 3 - Wokefield Park, Reading; Hawk Conservancy, Hampshire and Farmer Gows, Oxfordshire – a total of 8 events in the first half of the year.

Support PR for our destination partners produced over 30 features during the quarter including **UK Nationals** - The Times, The Guardian, Daily Mail, Daily Mirror; The Sun; **Online** - Skyscanner, Yahoo Style; **Lifestyle** - My Weekly, Womens Own, Star Magazine; Fabulous Magazine; **Specialist** – Group Leisure magazine.

**Press trips** were particularly popular in this quarter. Natalie Crofts, a journalist with

Landlove Magazine, produced an amazing 8 page spread on East Sussex following a 3 day visit. Richard Sowersby from Good Motoring Magazine enjoyed 3 days touring the Cinque Ports – Hastings, Rye, New Romney, Dover and Sandwich. Kate Wills from The Sun's Fabulous magazine spent 3 days in Brighton.

We also had lots of interest from **international media** including US Bloggers Daryl and Mindi Hirsch from 2FoodTrippers who toured the region and Cathay Pacific Inflight Magazine that following a visit produced an article worth £150,000 AVE. Lars Bang from the National News Agency, Denmark visited the NewForest, Portsmouth, Brighton and 1066 Country.



Across all the PR coverage destination partners were mentioned 60 times and businesses or events, mostly members, 124 times.

Our new **Group Travel team**, Anna and Emma, took up the baton for Excursions 2017, the Group Travel Guide and other group travel activity to keep them all on target as well as developing some new initiatives for next year.

Our new **International Marketing Manager**, Zeenat, started in September and immediately brought in some new partners for the **Go China** campaign. In a seminar in Greenwich in July, VisitBritain highlighted TSE's work in the China market as best practice for destination campaigns.

In the absence of a VisitBritain event in **North America** this year, TSE joined up with the MADE agency on a trade mission in September to New York and then Toronto, Canada. The mission involved either meeting or presenting to over 40 travel trade operators and meeting VisitBritain staff. Over 50 North American trade contacts were secured for future TSE communications. Sales missions also took place in **Germany and Belgium** with further activity planned for **Scandinavia** in December and then at Vakantiebeurs in **Holland** for January 2017.



Work is continuing to keep engagement going with destinations interested in the MICE market and a meeting of the Business Tourism Forum was held on 20 July in Guildford with VisitEngland in attendance. Work has progressed on a **Meet beyond London** social media activity, e communications to a buyers database and the development of a new website.

TSE's **Digital Manager** is continuing to develop the training provision to members and destination partners with courses in Hastings, for Hampshire CC staff and Surrey Heath Council staff. He has also developed a 45 minute webinar in conjunction with ZC Social Media, which was rolled out in a project with Camberley Theatre.

An open evening was held at **Romsey TIC** in conjunction with Test Valley BC where local stakeholders, businesses and community groups were invited in and given a presentation by David Gleave from Test Valley and myself.

VisitEngland decided to remove the TIC category from the **England for Excellence Awards** for 2017 but after taking soundings from TICs across the region and beyond we lobbied for them to reconsider and lo and behold they did and re-instated it! For own own **Beautiful South Awards** the 2016/17 competition resulted in 179 entries across 20 categories - an increase of 46% on last year! Judging took place throughout the summer and

over 80 awards will be presented at the Awards evening being staged at the Ageas Hilton nr Southampton on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

In July, the **Welcome to Excellence** franchise holders met in London to discuss plans for the year and future direction for the training brand. Just over 2600 training places had been taken up nationwide by the end of Q2. 557 candidates have attended Welcome Host Gold/Delivering Service Excellence courses and registered for the City and Guilds Awards. Notably, the training team finalised bespoke courses for **Carnival (P&O and Cunard)** for disability awareness training for the ship's staff. Bespoke courses were also delivered to **Empark** staff – the company responsible for parking services at Gatwick and Stansted.



Parves Khan, TSE's Research Director, left at the end of September after 15 years at the organisation and after a particularly busy summer for the research team. Over 20 **Cambridge Models** were completed for destinations across the country providing local destinations with volume and value figures on the impact of tourism. Contracts for **visitor surveys** were undertaken for 1066 Country; Chichester Council; Wheels Festival, Bournemouth; Brighton City Council; Dreamland, Margate; Beaulieu, New Forest; Gosport BC; Windsor & Maidenhead BC and on the Isle of Wight Ferries. The **National Coastal Tourism Academy** in Bournemouth commissioned TSE to produce three Coastal Tourism Business Barometers throughout 2016 involving interviews with over 400 businesses in coastal resorts across England. The three largest projects undertaken during the quarter were comprehensive **visitor research, industry audits and product development reviews** for Coastal West Sussex, East Sussex County Council and Marketing Lancashire.

A new Research Director, **Paul Jackson**, was appointed to start at the end of October.