

Chief Executive's Report

Quarter 3: 1st October – 31th December 2016

Quarter 3 saw two of TSE's biggest corporate events take place – the Annual General Meeting and Tourism Conference in October and the Beautiful South Awards in November – both great successes.

The Annual General Meeting was held at Epsom Downs Racecourse with key note speaker Bernard Donoghue from the Tourism Alliance and industry speakers from Bombay Sapphire and Tom's Eco Lodges. Workshops took place in the afternoon on social media and group travel.

The 2016/17 Beautiful South Awards saw the highest number of entries ever - 179 across 20 categories - an increase of 46% on last year.

Over 260 guests attended the Awards evening, held at the Ageas Hilton nr Southampton and hosted by radio and TV presenter Toby Anstis.



Subsequently, nine South East businesses went on to be shortlisted for the England for Excellence National Awards to be announced at the Hilton Waldorf Hotel in London on 24th April 2017.

We continued to pursue the Discover England Fund but despite what we thought was an extremely strong project promoting rural tourism and centred on our England's Great Country Pubs, we were very disappointed and slightly bemused, for it to be rejected by VisitEngland on the grounds that pubs wouldn't have sufficient appeal for international visitors. However, we have supported a number of other submissions to the Fund from various locations around the region and adjoining areas.

Quarter 3 was busy for me with regard presentations and representations including speaking at the launch of the new Isle of Wight BID and VisitIsle of Wight Marketing strategy; giving tourism updates to the Mid Sussex Hoteliers; explaining the vagaries of English tourism to Chinese students from Surrey University; landing unexpectedly on the 'expert' panel at the National Coastal Tourism Academy Forum in London and representing South East destinations at a VisitEngland Business Planning Day. Phew!



One of the privileges of my job is that I get to do and see all sorts of unusual things and one of my highlights was to hand feed a Giraffe courtesy of Port Lympne!

The impact of Brexit on the tourism industry continued to interest the media and I gave an interview to BBC Sunday Politics together with Duncan Leslie, General Manager, at Hever Castle in October. The Tourism Alliance also did a fantastic job in pulling together all the areas that could be impacted and we have continued to post these reports on our website and keep members up to date.

We were unfortunate to lose a number of staff in 2016 but most notable in this quarter were Dr Parves Khan, TSE's Research Director of 15 years and Rowena Moore our Destination PR Manager. Paul Jackson, fresh back from Dubai, joined us as the new Research Director and Karen Roebuck, an ex employee and long time stalwart of TSE, took over the PR role on an interim basis.

Our **Commercial Membership** team held 4 network meetings during the quarter at Wessex Mill, Oxfordshire; Henley on Thames; Chatham Historic Dockyard, Kent and Green Dragon Rare Breeds Farm, Oxfordshire networking event– already meeting the target of 12 events for the whole year.

We were pleased to welcome more businesses into membership including Woodside Coastal Retreat on the Isle of Wight, Best Western Chilworth Manor Hotel, Hampshire, Maidenhead Heritage Centre Berkshire and the Southampton Conference Centre.

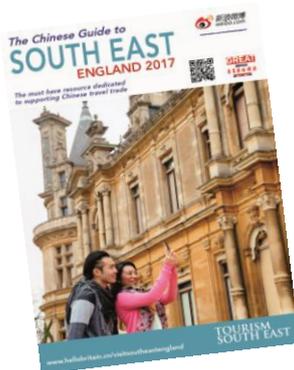


Renewals for the 2017 membership year were issued in December both for direct TSE membership as well as our joint membership scheme with Winchester and the Heart of Hampshire DMP.

Our **PR support** for our Destination Partners continued despite the loss of Rowena Moore in October due to ill health. Over 35 features were secured in both online and traditional media with Destination Partners being mentioned 65 times and commercial members over 180 times. 19 articles and 1 radio interview resulted from the announcement of the Beautiful South Award winners.

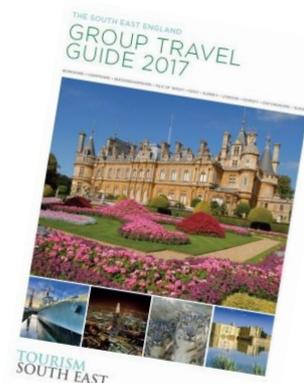
Karen Roebuck met with the Travel Editor of the Sun and came away with plans for 9 press trips to the region in 2017. We also represented our Destination Partners at the VisitEngland Media Party in November making contact with 17 top travel journalists.

We organised a press trip for two journalists from the Belgian De Standaard publication who spent 4 days touring the East Sussex area.



TSE also continued to spread the word globally with a very active schedule by our new **International Marketing** Manager, Zeenat Turner. She attended sales missions in China and then Sweden during the quarter and we published our annual Guide to South East England in mandarin which was distributed on territory in China and backed by a website, also in mandarin.

A newly designed 80 page **Group Travel Trade Guide** was also published just before Xmas. Plans were also forging ahead for TSE's exhibition showpiece Excursions planned for January 2017 with visitor registrations and demand for VIP coaches and Fam trips going extremely well. The Association of Group Travel Organisers (AGTO) also decided that they wanted to join the fun by having it's AGM at the event – we were pleased to oblige.



Traffic to our main consumer website **visitsoutheastengland.com** continued to grow with a 12% increase year on year – this was despite our Digital Manager Jon Sharkey being slightly distracted after becoming a Dad for the first time - so well done to him!

One of our managed **Tourist Information Centres** – Petersfield – won a Silver Award in the Visitor Information category of the Beautiful South Awards so congratulations go to manager Graham Haynes and his team.

The **Welcome to Excellence** training programmes tipped just over 3300 places nationwide with over 700 of these in the South East. Nearly a thousand have registered for City and Guilds awards too. The new Exceeding Visitor Expectations (EVE) course developed for VisitEngland unexpectedly caught the attention of VisitScotland after it was delivered to staff on the Royal Yacht Britannia in Edinburgh – watch this space!



After the departure of previous **Research** Director Parves Khan, replacement Paul Jackson had a baptism of fire, picking up three major on-going research projects for Coastal West Sussex, East Sussex and Marketing Lancashire. All are fascinating insights into the workings of the visitor economy and for TSE the first time for a while that we have seen such interest in research at a County level. In recent years we have done a lot at local destination level or with individual attractions so it is an interesting development to see interest higher up the public sector chain.

Finally, I must mention what a great Xmas lunch we had this year at the British Airways i360 in Brighton – with a pre-meal ‘flight’, Skybar, Secret Santa and meal overlooking Brighton beach **and** all on a beautifully sunny winter’s day - it was a real treat.

