

Chief Executive's Report

Quarter 4: January 1st 2017 – March 31st 2017

Quarter 4 always tends to be the busiest period of the year and, this time, it certainly didn't disappoint!

The highlight of the quarter (if not the year) was accepting the **Destination Marketing Company of the Year 2016** award from UKInbound at its Annual Convention in Plymouth in February. In a shortlist that consisted of London & Partners and VisitScotland, I was stunned and uplifted in equal measure when TSE's name was announced. However, it was fitting recognition of not only what we have achieved over a long period of time with relatively little resources but also of the support of our partners from both the public and private sector in the region.



I was also privileged to be a VIP guest, courtesy of Brighton City Council, at the Explore GB Gala Dinner which was Harry Potter themed by Warner Brothers including a surprise appearance by actor Warwick Davis.

In addition to the 'jollies', I was also really pleased to have secured a successful tender to undertake work for the rural areas of East Surrey Boroughs and Districts of Mole Valley, Tandridge, Epsom & Ewell and Reigate and Banstead. Over the next 12 months, with EU funding via the Coast to Capital LEP, we will be helping them develop Destination Management Plans and new Partnerships to maximise the value of the rural visitor economy.

Almost every week of the quarter, TSE staff were putting on events, attending events or supporting in one way or another.

TSE's single biggest project – the **Excursions Travel Trade Show** – took place at Alexandra Palace at the end of January and attracted over 1100 group and coach operators to meet with over 250 exhibitors. It included feature areas for Jane Austen 200, food and drink and for Alexandra Palace to promote its new developments. The Association of Group Organisers (AGTO) also held its AGM at the event. In addition we put on two fam trips either side of the event for the trade - to London and Bournemouth & Poole.



TSE also organised a South East England presence at other trade shows including the BTTS at the NEC, Birmingham and the WI Fair at Alexandra Palace both in March.

Leading the way on our **International Marketing** programme was the 'England's South Coast' and London stands at Vakantiebeurs in Holland for six days in early January. Our main partners included Hampshire, Portsmouth, East Hampshire, 1066 Country, VisitIsle of Wight, VisitBrighton and Blenheim Palace and Waddesdon Manor. For the first time, Warner Brothers Studios, in Herts, joined us to promote the Harry Potter experience. We once again co-ordinated with Dutch Tour operator House of Britain (HOB) to produce bookable product for tours to our destination partner areas in the South East which were available at the show

TOURISM SOUTH EAST



and throughout the year through HOB. Over a 100,000 Dutch visitors attended the show including lots of trade operators and press. Then came the **UKInbound Annual Convention** in Plymouth in February where we met 20 international trade operators on a one-to-one basis. We had two members of staff representing our partners at VisitBritain's flagship event **ExploreGB** which was held in Brighton in early March. It was attended by over 450 international buyers and 450 suppliers. We met with 45

operators over two days. VB also organised a special event for MICE buyers where we met 20 on the day to promote TSE's new Meet Beyond London campaign.

Two new shows were added into the Nr Europe activity for 2016/17 - ITB Berlin and the ITITS trade event in Dublin both in March. ITB is one of Europe's biggest trade and consumer events. We also attended a pre-event media party at the show securing 14 overseas journalist contacts.

It didn't finish there because also in March, we facilitated, in conjunction with VisitBritain, a trade fam trip for 8 Dutch Trade operators and a VB representative putting together the itinerary, arranging visits and transport and acting as escorts throughout. The trip took in Winchester, the Isle of Wight and New Forest.



To help support our extended international activity we took on a new Marketing Executive – Kerrie Messenger - at the end of the quarter.

Quarter 4 is also a crucial period with regard to **Commercial Membership** renewals that apply from January 2017, so it was great to see a renewal rate of 90% by the end of March – well above the target of 85%. We also welcomed on board new members such as Bluebell Railway Sussex, Kia Oval Cricket Ground, Surrey and Sandy Balls Holiday Park Hampshire.

There have been 3 network meetings during Q4 – 8th February Richmond village, Oxfordshire; 15th March Chislehurst Caves Kent; 22nd March, Green Dragon Rare Breeds Farm, Oxfordshire. Over the year there has been a total of 15 network events –exceeding the target of 12.

It was very disappointing to receive notification from VisitKent that it no longer wished to continue with the joint Investor membership arrangements. The joint arrangement has been running for several years and was set up originally at the behest of VisitKent. Contact was made individually with Investors to express our regret and to initiate conversations about joining TSE directly. Early signs have been very positive.

We held a **Destination Managers Forum** at the Hogs Back in Surrey in March. The agenda included presentations by David Thornton from VisitIsle of Wight on the new BID for the island and Mark Smith about the Bournemouth BIDs. TSE staff also gave presentations to review 16/17 activity and communicate plans for 17/18 in their individual areas.

The main TSE PR event of the year for our Destination Partners – the **Annual Media Party** – was held at the Royal College of Surgeons in London. Nearly a hundred



TOURISM SOUTH EAST

journalists registered to attend and 44 came on the night. PR staff from VisitEngland also attended. The wine for the evening was kindly donated by Denbies Vineyard.

Following the event a Destination Press Portal was created on the corporate website Medway secured interest from 5 journalists to attend its launch of Medway in Flames event later in the year.

There were 2 press trips in Q4 :-

- Solange Berchamin – Huffington Post – went to Portsmouth in January
- Margriet de Groot ZIN Magazine, Netherlands – visited Southampton in March

14 other journalists were engaged for further press trips in 2017/18.

An additional contract for extra PR services was also secured with Dover District Council.

VisitBritain also held a PR version of VIBE in London in February where they brought in their PR teams from overseas. TSE attended and secured 25 direct contacts to circulate to partners.

Web traffic for **visitsoutheastengland** website was down 14% on the same quarter last year due to Easter falling within the quarter in 2016 but not this year. However, overall the traffic is still up 7% on the full 12 months reaching over 1.4 million users during 2016/17

Additional digital contract work was secured in Q4 for Hastings and VisitThames and we shared our digital expertise with training for staff at the British Airways i360, Brighton.

The Digital team also took over the **Great Country Pubs** website and we said a fond farewell to Jackie Staddon who has been a stalwart in making such a success of Great Country Pubs over the past 5 years. The site continues to profile the best country pubs in the south and east of England.

Just over 5000 **Welcome to Excellence** training places were taken up nationwide by end of March 2017. Nearly a 1000 of these were in the South East. Clients were as diverse as the Canterbury Christ Church University, The Oxfordshire Museum, HMS Warrior Portsmouth and Warner Brothers, Herts.

I was personally pleased to present the tourism and hospitality workers of the future with their Welcome to Excellence certificates at Portsmouth University where over 40 students had completed Welcome All and Welcome Host Gold courses.

Over 1400 candidates have attended Welcome Host Gold/Delivering Service Excellence courses and registered for the City and Guilds Awards.



One of the most popular courses nationally was the Exceeding Visitor Expectations (EVE) course launched last year with VisitEngland. After delivering some of these in Scotland we garnered interest from its national tourism agency in delivering a similar course branded VisitScotland!

TOURISM SOUTH EAST

Our **Visitor Services** team successfully concluded negotiations with the respective local authorities on all 4 of our current TIC contracts for 2017/18. I was also pleased to make a presentation to one of our most outstanding members of the TIC staff – Kay Allen at Gosport for a decade of service.

To celebrate English Tourism Week, East Hampshire Tourist Information Centre organised an event in Alton Town Hall on Tuesday 28th March. Supported by the Town and District Council, visitor attractions came together to advertise events for 2017, particularly those celebrating the anniversaries of Edward Thomas and Jane Austen. Romsey TIC has secured the agency for Romsey Festival. This is held every 3 years and around 40 events are held at venues in the town.

A regional TIC Managers meeting was also co-ordinated by TSE at the Novium Museum in Chichester in February.

The **Research** team have been finalising major pieces of work for Coastal West Sussex, East Sussex and Marketing Lancashire (including separate reports for Chorley, Burnley, Pendle and Preston) during Q4. Work continued on the Isle of Wight Ferry surveys, Coastal Business monitors for the National Coastal Tourism Academy and a number of Cambridge models were commissioned. Paul Jackson our new Research Director is also working on new products to offer members and partners for the coming year looking particularly at market segmentation and improved economic impact models.

Finally, despite our own disappointments with the Discover England Fund we have continued to support other projects that have secured investment. I facilitated two workshops at the 'Great West Way' Project Conference nr Chippenham at the end of March on how to promote to international markets. I also acted as support/adviser/critical friend for a number of projects being developed for the Round 2 process including England's National Parks, South East Vineyards Association and the Industry, Innovation, Ingenuity :industrial heritage trails project.

