

101405831

Revision 01

TOURISM WORKING GROUP

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Meeting:	12 th November 2024, 14:00-17:00
Location:	East Suffolk House - Melton
Chair:	Alexis Corless (Tourism Programme Manager, ESC)
Attendees:	SZC: Rebecca Calder (RC), Mike Humphrey (MH) ESC: Alexis Corless (AC), Marie Webster-Fitch (MWF) – (Observer), Jake Snell (JS) – (Observer) SCC: Matt Jones (MJ) The Suffolk Coast DMO: David Scott (DS), Julian Evans (JE) – (Observer) S&EC&HNL: Paula Bartholomew (PB) Blue Sail: Laura Wakelin (LW) – (Observer), Adam Bates (AB) – (Observer)
Apologies:	Pete Waters (Visit Suffolk)

Meeting Notes:

1. INTRODUCTIONS

- Noted that the purpose of the meeting was to provide updates on previous actions and to discuss Terms of Reference and data requirements.
- AC introduced AB and LW from Blue Sail

2. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- To be covered in main meeting

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

- Interpretation of the Deed of Obligation was discussed, regarding the financial allocations within the Tourism Fund. The wording is not quite as intended with regards to the reference to '*not less than*' at paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 of Schedule 15 of the Deed of Obligation and is with SZC lawyers to resolve.
- RC - The Terms of Reference are to be (and have been) drawn entirely from Deed of Obligation.
- PB - Provision should be included in Terms of Reference to allow for amendments to be made over time. Confirmation this was included in the last paragraph.
- Collective approval of Terms of Reference.

4. ANNUAL TOURISM FUND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- The Tourism Fund Implementation Plan projects have commenced, but some aspects have encountered additional delays due to the contract prices and therefore procurement processes expected with public monies.
- RC noted that SZC Co and the Councils have in other areas of the Deed preferred local contracts to be awarded as opposed to non-Suffolk-based companies. AC confirmed she had sought clarification on the Councils' position and as with all local government procurement – open tenders cannot have a weighting for being 'local'. This side would be covered under the social value aspect that asks for details on how East Suffolk would benefit from award of the contract. A closed tender could allow for additional weighting but is not advisable as risks unfair advantage making the process challengeable.

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Visitor Perception Survey

- Discussions have taken place to enable early scoping work prior to procurement. This process has highlighted that all 4 companies suggested varied approaches on how the study could be delivered, including in person interviews to complement the panel. Each company raised questions around the intention of the study and how it is to be used – i.e. objectives / outcomes. AC proposed that as the WG wished to be more involved in the questions asked and process used, that a separate meeting be lined up asap to confirm the details + full scope to enable the procurement side to progress. AC to book a suitable date.

Project #3 – Digital Asset Management System

- Contract awarded with user access to be distributed to administrators soon. Procurement for photography and videography has been completed, and work is underway to capture winter scenes for use by the industry – likely from early 2025. Budget for project allocated £40,000; total spent to date is £10,950. Budget allows for 12 months of seasonal photos.
- Phase 1 is to set up the system and be confident the uploading facility works – access will then be shared with the DMO for their own use as well, to maximise the opportunity.
- Photography conducted by local photographers with a range of styles to capture multiple aspects of the district.
- Discussion took place around promoting the system especially at the DMO conference to increase number of uploaded assets and photography accessed. Reporting is available via the system to show numbers requested/uploaded etc.

Project #4 – Season Extension Campaign

- AC updated about the 'Find the Time' in East Suffolk campaign targeting short breaks post-Christmas period Jan/Feb. Budget: £80,000; Allocated spend: £73,255. Reporting KPIs are around overnight stays and visitors in usually quiet period.
- DS updated the WG that the DMO would like to change their membership model, to include 2 tiers of membership to avoid non-member exclusion. DS suggested future marketing could then be directed to the DMO website to capture the wider offer.

Data Related Projects

- AC updated the WG about the wider requirements for data across the SZC workstreams and potential cross overs. The Energy Projects and the ESC Data teams are meeting to discuss the feasibility of internal development or external development of an online tracker (not just for tourism) – AC noted that no timeline available currently and the importance of timely tourism monitoring data. AC will escalate if there is further delay.
- Further discussion took place on the requirement of data and the sharing of information to avoid crossover of workstreams and duplication. Noting potential of duplication across skills, environmental, and tourism. ESC requires more oversight over other streams and to monitor this. RC raised concern over the potential for data paralysis and putting fund to better use than collation of large amounts of data.
- AC updated regarding Project 2 - Territorial analysis, which is with ESC legal team for sign off due to Italian law terms and conditions, which is taking a bit longer to complete. TStats current contract was discussed and the shortcomings of the system and heavy reliance on the industry for data sources.

Project #9 – Additional data requests

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- AC propose use of Huq that would provide data on the 12 towns across East Suffolk including footfall, dwell time, visitor origin and spend data, to help understand motivations and trends. Suggested cost of £70k for 2-year contract.
- RC suggested using funds for projects bringing people into towns, new infrastructure, rather than on monitoring services due to the difficulties in distinguishing between national/regional trends such as cost of living and what were true SZC related impacts. Also, RC suggested an annual perception survey rather than the original biannual project.
- PB suggested promoting the resilience of towns and the good quality offers.

Other Discussion points

- Current spend from the resources budget (annual budget £200k) includes under £1.5k of Economic Development time to support AC, Procurement staff time at £6k and AC salary – total spend to date £43,198.

5. BLUE SAIL

- AC handed over to AB and LW where they introduced Blue Sail and their approach to industry engagement
- A Workshop took place with WG members to explore perceptions of East Suffolk and SZC effects.
- 121 interviews will be scheduled with WG members to capture individual views as to the future spend allocations. The intention is to have an officer workshop from across the SZC workstreams at SCC and ESC. Then there will be 3 workshops with the industry to explore how to prioritise the fund during 2025.

6. OTHER DEED OF OBLIGATION MITIGATION/FUNDS

Tourism Accommodation Plan / AMS

- Consultants have been appointed by ESC, who are currently reviewing the background info.
- ESC have received several planning applications for speculative tourism accommodation (campsites) and the work underway should help clarify a management plan/strategy in dealing with future supply/demand + applications.
- RC mentioned SZC funding could look to fund the larger sites for say additional shower blocks, less focus on the smaller applications – example: one-off caravan site.

Community Fund

- RC updated about the recent Community Funding successful projects. AC asked if it was possible to know about those who were unsuccessful and if any could be better fits for the Tourism fund. It would be good to make those linkages if relevant. RC to enquire if that is possible.
- The Community Fund have requested that any suitable organisations that are not engaged with the fund should look to book a 121 with the advisors who are able to advise best approach.

Natural Environment Fund

- PB undated that a second formal meeting of the panel took place last week – and their grants would look to launch early next year. They are currently in the process of producing guidelines for applicants.

7. MEMBER UPDATES: OVERVIEW

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Sizewell C

- Preliminary workforce survey identifies not many people on site, but rate of tourist accommodation is higher than expected for this time. Identified senior staff on site currently who may well be paying higher overnight rates than the longer-term workforce will be able to afford.
- Pontins accommodation – looking to open first chalet 1st January and have rolling renovation to follow growth of workforce on site.
- RC updated on SZC project – low level vegetation clearance and archaeology started on site. Being constructed offline to minimise negative effects and reducing impact to mostly traffic management.
- Temporary road signage failures were raised by PB and if there was a better long-term approach as a number were blown over or not in good repair. RC advised to report any issues.

ESC (including LVEP update)

- MJ updated that the LVEP has been approved. A destination management plan is being developed, to steer the strategic approach to the Suffolk/Norfolk Local Economy Partnership. Recruitment for the board is underway, looking to meet early 2025.

SCC

- No updates regarding devolution

DMO

- Annie left DMO few weeks ago, Jess Brown replaced Annie 2 weeks ago.

8. ISSUES TO BE ESCALATED

- AC to raise issue of procurement practice (length of time + local elements) internally and SZC concerns.

9. NEXT FORMAL WORKING GROUP MEETING

- Agreed to meet in January then proceed to meet every 6 months.

Actions raised during the meeting:

Date Raised	Ref.	Description	Lead	Date Due
12/11/2024	1	AC to organise additional perception study meeting	ESC	Next meeting
12/11/2024	2	RC to check if unsuccessful community fund projects can be shared	SZC	Next meeting

Author: Caitlin Murphy (SZC)