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SZC TOURISM WORKING GROUP MEETING

Meeting Type:	Deed of Obligation Governance Group
Date:	18 th November 2025
Venue:	Hybrid – SZC Orwell Logistics Park and MS Teams
Meeting Chair:	Alexis Corliss
SZC Attendees:	Rebecca Calder , Jen Mills, Mike Humphrey
Regulatory Attendees:	ESC – Alexis Corliss, Marie Webster-Fitch, Jon-Paul Farthing, Joss Mullet Visit England – Pete Waters The Suffolk Coast DMO – David Scott, Jess Brown, Julian Evans SCC – Matt Jones
Apologies:	National Landscapes – Simon Amstutz, Paula Bartholemew
Meeting Record produced by:	Jen Mills
Next Meeting Date:	10 th February 2026
Quorum:	Quorate members are highlighted in bold.

Actions from previous meeting:

Date Raised	Action Ref.	Description	Lead	Status
12/11/2024	1	RC to check if details of unsuccessful Community Fund projects can be shared.	SZC	Closed
21/03/2025	2	PB and AC to take lead in establishing a sub-group and defining its parameters to ensure effective coordination across various departments and alignment of different workstreams and funding sources.	Working Group	Closed
21/03/2025	3	AC to circulate the Events scope for the group's review to gather additional insights.	ESC	Closed
21/03/2025	4	AC to follow up with Pete Waters' Sector Development & Training plans to ensure alignment.	Working Group	Closed
21/03/2025	5	AC to draft scope outlining the type of items expected to fall under "supporting resources" in the DoO.	Working Group	Ongoing

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Summary / Key Discussion

Meeting Notes:

Review of Actions from Previous Meeting

- 1 – Unsuccessful community fund projects cannot be shared with the TWG but these are shared with the Community Safety team at ESC to identify gaps. If there is a tourism specific project, it can be shared with the Tourism Working Group. Closed.
- 2 – A subgroup to connect linked areas such as PRoW, Ecology, Tourism to align workstreams and funding has been created. Intention is for this group to coordinate and work together going forward to maximise opportunities and avoid duplication. Closed.
- 3 – Event scope has been circulated, became live in July and further detail was provided in meeting. Closed.
- 4 – Sector development and training plans to be covered later in meeting. Closed.
- 5 – Scope of 'supporting resources' to be clarified and checked with legal advice. Picked up later in meeting. Ongoing.

Project Update (SZC)

- Final Investment Decision achieved in July, Financial Close completed in November.
- Work underway across all sites - Freight Management Site and some of the parking spaces at the Northern Park and Ride are now operational.
- Annual Sustainability Report and Annual Report and Accounts published.
- General concerns raised at Community Forum regarding tourism and problems faced by businesses, particularly hospitality, although generic and not clearly identified as due to SZC. It was noted that Visit England have reported that National Insurance contributions are contributing to difficulties faced by hospitality sector, more so than SZC.
- Accommodation Management System registered information provided. Noted that working on improving ability to capture segmented data; also that total "seekers" will be more than the number of NHB workers e.g. some people will have left the project, some are registered (SZC and ESC) to enable them to see what is happening on the system.
- SZC talking to SZB regarding planned outage - potential to offer accommodation to SZB outage staff but for them to use the AMS, would need to ensure that users legitimate SZB workers, which SZC would not currently be able to confirm (no access to their HR system).
- Project accommodation availability provided, TCPA for caravan park expansion at Pakefield submitted. Campus under construction.
- SZC noted that temporary traffic lights causing some disruption at present – other roadworks for the solar farm and Orwell Bridge also causing delays (sometimes incorrectly blamed on SZC). SZC has taken the decision to increase signage to improve identification of SZC works as opposed to other work being undertaken.

Tourism Fund Update (ESC)

2024

- Launch of foundational research and digital tools, engagement with the industry via 3 workshops, and delivery of pilot campaigns and imagery projects.

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- SnapSea digital asset management system funded to commission photography and share free use of assets by industry members. Other sources have also input to this library, not all through the funding. Feedback very positive so likely to invest further to bring through amateur photography. DMO members noted to be very positive towards SnapSea.
- SZC noted Sizewell Creative has produced some photography and digital assets which may be able to contribute.
- Tourism Fund branding has been agreed with SZC, shown on slides.
- Perception Study findings completed and very lengthy. Aiming to produce bitesize videos to aid accessibility and understanding of lengthy document. Consensus sought from group as to what could be helpfully put into public domain. Qualitative stage complete for this year. Desire to share understanding of motivation of undertaking perception study and findings with the public.
- Key findings include that overall sentiment is not strongly negative and any concerns are practical rather than ideological (traffic, wildlife, character).
- It was noted that the segmented group split within the perception study does not seem to include local populations who come to the area for the day, which are also key to reassure. Visitors will not have the same emotional attachment to the changes being experienced and day visitors will have more of the travel disruptions etc for the length of experience.
- DMO noted that communication with hospitality staff, so they can help reassure and inform visitors, would provide positive reassurance.
- ESC noted that positive messaging and reassurance needed e.g. the main development site will be fairly self-contained so things will improve once the initial earthworks and key off-site infrastructure are complete e.g. Friday Street roundabout should be operational shortly after opening of 2026 summer tourism season. SCC / ESC noted portfolio holders takes a keen interest and could support in providing positive information.
- DMO raised concerns that the Friday Street works have very poor visibility, particularly with the clock change. SZC took an action to feed this back to relevant colleagues.
- ESC noted that a separate Word document covers where each of the projects are with spend which will be circulated.
- Remaining budgets linked to data have been carried over and included into 2025 spend.

ACTION - SZC to investigate connecting Sizewell Creative digital outputs to ESC/SnapSea digital library.

ACTION – sector staff education for positive messaging key to be brought into next iteration of the Plan.

ACTION – SZC to feedback on target timescales for completion of Friday Street and Yoxford works.

ACTION – ESC to circulate full slide deck of Perception Study for any colleagues who want to see this.

ACTION – ESC to circulate Word document providing spend update regarding existing projects.

2025

- Five delivery programmes areas within 2025 Implementation Plan: marketing and PR, destination development, grants scheme, sector development and training, and coordination and enabling.
- Marketing and PR to raise the profile of East Suffolk. Following tender programme, companies / partnerships have been appointed - Jacob Bailey Partnership which includes local Ipswich based company - same company is also undertaking work for the DMO so this provides very positive interconnections.
- Intention is for an online fortnightly update meeting with marketing and PR colleagues, which DMO would ideally be involved with.
- SZC queried whether Local Nature Recovery Scheme information is linked up with environment funds at SZC. ESC noted this could be picked up at the sub-group establish and ensured.

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- ESC noted that new system Destination Core is bringing forward would be a tiered level so DMO would have its own identity but could feed into other tourism bodies' approaches. Early work being undertaken of how and where the investments will go.
- PR contract is a 12-month contract, campaign contract is a short-term delivery. ESC noted that following procurement lessons learnt and in terms of building relationships with businesses, a longer-term marketing approach may be better. Potential for TWG to agree a longer-term marketing approach, which can be reviewed annually to ensure it remains appropriate. An annual process can make it very cumbersome and lead to potential timescale slippage. A longer-term approach may be more efficient and better financially, the activity would then be able to build momentum rather than be stop-start.
- This approach is technically possible under the Deed of Obligation – was suggested that the TFIP should build in review points and put clauses in contracts to reflect this (so failure to deliver could result in contract cancellation).
- ESC are working on ensuring promotional communications are clear and efficient.
- DMO suggested that it is crucial to ensure that the person managing this work has the marketing knowledge and background to ensure that agencies receiving the funds are challenged and deliver what is required - Digital Media expertise crucial. ESC advised that there are KPIs within the contract to support efficient management. Noted that the TWG could request that reports are completed at any defined stage to see if the work has been effective.
- ESC sought feedback from Visit East of England as to whether they would look for reporting to analyse or employ a colleague to brand manage projects. VEoE agreed with DMO that it would be better to have someone employed who knows how to ensure agency delivers best results. Noted there is a lot of skill out there who would be able to do this.
- SZC noted that there was a marketing programme manager within the Deed, which could be hosted by ESC or the DMO. This role could provide this knowledgeable challenge.
- Further discussion on a potential post as to whether this would be full or part time. Potentially a peer reviewer on a monthly basis, rather than a full-time post.
- Destination Development links to Public Rights of Way work. Ambitions for a walking/cycling trail from Aldeburgh to Sizewell. Consultants appointed, although long term sickness at SCC has resulted in some slowing of development.
- Digital presence audit to help businesses improve where this is needed.
- Changes Places surveyor consultant engaged and to start work in early 2026.
- Grants Scheme currently four rounds in, good applications supported, over £60k awarded to date. As a result of lessons learnt, ESC have brought in support for applicants for grants.
- Many community orientated events have come forward, SZC checked that ESC are linked to the Community Fund. ESC confirmed that they have linked up to try and ensure applicants don't fall between the gaps. Next phase in innovation, resilience and product development.
- Sector development and training has delivered first series of workshops in the Leiston area, working alongside DWP and VENI. Supports individuals attending with employment skills, getting into workplaces and taking pride in hospitality. ESC noted ESC is funding small pilot project linked to kitchens and food prep, which can offer some feedback to skills agenda and link in.
- Coordination and enabling work include free DMO membership and social events across the area.
- Hard hat tours proposed, SZC noted that huge pressure in relation to visits at present which would affect this. Noted the visitor centre should be opening in January which should help but a concentrated group would be preferred. Mainly earthworks to be seen at present but scale of note. ESC noted potential link to awareness within local staff so that there is an awareness of what it on the doorstep, some visitors may be interested in the project itself.
- Food and drink work being undertaken to understand the sector and noting SZC commitment to 80% locally produced food at peak for catering. ESC noted the number of food and drink opportunities discussed at workshop yesterday. Opportunities should also take into account existing provision in the area given maximum

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capacity. Potential for economies of scale with linking SZC as well as local tourism industry perhaps, perhaps local distribution centres.

- Noted potential for 'blue lights' type scheme for SZC workers, to encourage eating out in locality.
- Data and monitoring work pressing ahead with Suffolk County Council on board, to enable a Suffolk wide approach.
- Visa card in situ spend data provides early indication data which has produced interesting points requiring further investigation. Identifies spend in 12 towns. Can be divided to look at data for various splits, provides insight to transactions. Can identify catchment areas, type, and seasonality of spend.
- ESC queried growth in sales for hospitality but anecdotal losses. Colleagues noted inflation would need to be factored in, i.e. costs to deliver greater but covers may be down etc. Other impacts will need to be borne in mind, ability to compare data in different ways to see if trends are the same over towns or areas etc.
- Data in relation to monthly spend shows fairly consistent spread for all towns except Southwold and Aldeburgh, which fluctuate greatly over summer and winter months. Need to look into data as bookings not made in situ may affect and level this, with peak summer holiday bookings over January. Impacts of day trips from local visitors may be a factor, as well as second home ownership.
- Online software platform providing data for simple analytics, helping inform local business with an insight of how to target and market etc. Not reliant on businesses providing their data. Data will be tracking footfall at 12 key towns to be captured to match the spend data areas, as well as origin, age and income band of visitors, accommodation, employment vacancies, visits to attractions, weather, events, car park duration, digital marketing KPIs and ongoing visitor survey responses.

ACTION – ESC to circulate T-Stats videos with group

2026

- Chair suggested an informal meeting end of January to run through suggested programmes and spend for 2026.
- SZC confirmed that Tourism Fund is an automatic annual payment to ESC, rather than amounts released based on approval of projects. Next payment will be made to ESC in January 2026 of £571,429 plus indexation.
- ESC noted that longer term allocations need to be mindful of potential clawback, SZC confirmed that as long as it is committed before 5 years this would avoid clawback, also that there is no intention to actively seek clawback where there is clear intention to spend the money appropriately - this provision is there to have the ability to recall money spend inappropriately or not at all.

Risk Register

- Draft risk register to be circulated for discussion at next TWG.

ACTION – SZC to circulate draft Risk Register for group for discussion

AoB

- Colleagues noted the excellent work undertaken by ESC tourism colleagues.
- Discussion held regarding sharing spend data with the public for awareness and transparency.
- Discussion of holding DMO conference in February/March rather than later in the year. A lot of content to cover. Discussion of having digital skills training within conference to upskill with matters that align with some of the projects, to lift the value of this. Awareness of grants can be shared. Need to share the understanding

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that the fund is not to compensate businesses, but for promotion initiatives. Need to lay foundation for longer term approach.

- Members noted that the last year does not appear to have seen a significant impact on tourism spend, despite delivery phase of SZC; TWG's role to promote support and positivity.
- Noted pressure is from national impacts too - timing of SZC fund could be seen as positive, with this level of investment can help during a period of national impacts on sector. Potential legacy impact of fund could help businesses across this period and leave them stronger for the future.
- It was noted from DMO perspective that one of the hardest things was being able to communicate with businesses. For example, workshop take up is often agencies, so potentially could benefit from looking at how to engage businesses. ESC noted talent bank is a collective of various expertise which can be called on. Importance of offering things which are beneficial to the businesses and ensure efficient time allocation for them.
- It was also noted that one of the biggest challenges is with the responsibility on the businesses themselves. The TWG and partners encourage to engage with opportunities, initiatives and campaigns to get the visitors to the area are key but must be borne in mind that the onus is then on the businesses themselves to invest and maximise the opportunities.
- It was noted that 2026 meeting dates will be extended to 3 hours.
- No issues raised for escalation to ERG.

Actions agreed in meeting:

Action Ref.	Description	Lead	Target date / Milestone
1	RC to investigate connecting Sizewell Creative digital outputs to SnapSea digital library.	SZC	Next meeting.
2	Sector staff education for positive messaging is key to be brought into next Plan iteration.	ESC	Next Plan
3	SZC to feedback on target timescales for completion of Friday Street and Yoxford works.	SZC	January 2026
4	ESC to circulate full slide deck of Perception Study for any colleagues who want to see this.	ESC	Next meeting
5	ESC to circulate Word document providing spend/budget update regarding existing projects.	ESC	Next meeting
6	T-Stats videos to be circulated with group.	ESC	Next meeting
7	Informal meeting of the TWG to be arranged in January, to cover suggested programmes and spend for 2026 Tourism Fund.	SZC	December 2025
8	Draft group Risk Register to be circulated for group discussion.	SZC	January 2026