



Culture & Visitor Economy Sub-Group Meeting

Monday 7th June 2021, 10am-12noon

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Draft Minutes

Present:

John Hoy, Hoy Consultancy (Chair)
 Ahmed Goga, OxLEP
 Ruth Taylor, Artswork
 Miranda Markham, Bicester Village
 Hayley Beer Gamage, Experience Oxfordshire
 John Newbiggin OBE
 Laura Elliot, Oxford Playhouse
 Paul Hobson, Modern Art Oxford
 Helen Ryan-Wallis, OxLEP
 Chris Jackson, Cotswold Tourism
 Dr Peter Lugosi, Oxford Brookes University

Paula Redway, Oxford City Council
 Richard Bellamy, National Heritage Lottery Fund
 Vanessa Lefrancois, Oxford Playhouse
 Dave Dunphy, James Sadler Attraction (part only)

Apologies:

Lucy Shaw, GLAM, University of Oxford
 Lucinda Whiteley, Novel Entertainment
 Dr Victoria McGuinness, University of Oxford
 Lesli Good, Oxfordshire County Council

	Item	Action
1.	<p>Introductions and welcome</p> <p>JH opened the meeting and welcomed Vanessa Lefrancois to the group.</p> <p>JH highlighted that due to political changes, Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale had lost her seat on the County Council. All the group wished to thank Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale for her valuable contribution to the group, and to the wider visitor economy over the last few years. Councillor Neil Fawcett now has the cabinet portfolio for Culture at County Council and has been invited to join this group moving forward.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes from the meeting held on 22nd February 2021 were accepted as a true record of that meeting.</p> <p>The updates on matters arising are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festival 2022 – still to keep a watch on activities in Oxfordshire connected to Festival 2022 • Update on BICS to roll onto the next meeting agenda due to LG being unable to attend this meeting 	

<p>3.</p>	<p>Economic Recovery Plan and OxLEP Updates</p> <p>AG gave a verbal update:</p> <p>OxLEP have now moved out of the City Centre office and are transitioning into a digital business with a small back office facility at Harwell. The Board are currently reviewing options for the future of potential face to face meetings, and locations that could be utilised. It should be acknowledged that virtual meetings have resulted in high attendance levels, and engagement has improved not lessened.</p> <p>The Economic Recovery Plan has seen a £million investment secured through the European Social Fund for adult skills, and for the development of the social contract which will begin in September with a couple of years delivery.</p> <p>The Business Investment Fund is reviewing applications and is hopefully aiming to support 35-40 projects across all sectors including culture and the visitor economy. With match accounted for, the fund will see investment of at least £4.2 million.</p> <p>The Levelling up Fund is District Council led, projects being put forward for this phase have mainly been infrastructure ones despite lobbying to include culture and visitor economy ones from the ERP.</p> <p>The next Board meeting will hopefully see approval for amendments in programming for George and Cave Street entrepreneurial hubs.</p> <p>The BEIS LEP review is underway and is considered a process to ensure LEPs reflect BEIS priorities, ENZI (enterprise, business, net zero and Innovation).</p> <p>JH raised that the political changes at county council may see changes in policy. The new council - 'the Fairdeal Alliance' - is led by Liberal Democrats working with Labour and the Green Party. The new leader is on the LEP Board.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Working Group – OXiA</p> <p>MM updated the group:</p> <p>The plans are still confidential; however, the scheme is progressing at pace. There are regular meetings with the partner to assist them where required. Heads of Terms are in negotiation and planning discussions have begun.</p> <p>Great Wolf has also been granted approval via Planning appeal. This will see investment in a water park and associated facilities to include a hotel, conferencing and a 5.7 ha nature trail at the Chesterton location. It is proposed the site will also generate 1,000 jobs.</p> <p>Action – MM and HRW to engage with the owners re the proposed conferencing facilities proposed.</p>	<p>HRW/MM</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Working Group - The Visitor Economy</p> <p>HRW fed back:</p> <p>The VE group hasn't met during the last quarter, the focus has been driving the DMO review response on behalf of the LEP which has been circulated previously. Next steps are to keep Thrive and the Visitor Renaissance proposals alive and to try and secure funding for some of the proposed initiatives.</p> <p>HBG updated the group regarding the sector:</p> <p>The DMO review by DCMS has been welcomed by industry, and it appears comprehensive despite its short timescales. Moving away from 150 organisations to a manageable smaller number potentially makes sense.</p> <p>There is concern over what may occur with regards to relaxing restrictions on the 21st June. It is difficult for businesses to operate with current number restrictions in place, and they need advance notice if the 21st June doesn't see a full reopening without restrictions. EO has been lobbying on behalf of businesses regards this.</p>	

	<p>Workforce issues are becoming apparent as many have up to 50% vacancy rates and this is a nationwide issue and perhaps the first sign of the BREXIT impact. Many previous employees sought alternative sector employment, and the lack of students to fill casual seasonal posts is apparent in Oxfordshire.</p> <p>'We're good to go' industry standard scheme is being supported throughout 2021 and in Oxfordshire the number remains static at approximately 500 businesses having signed up.</p> <p>English Tourism Week (11 days long) has just finished and EO hosted a cross party-political discussion, held roundtables with businesses, and hosted tours.</p> <p>Local Authority grants - whilst welcomed by businesses - are seeing lag time in knowing if they are eligible for grants (approx. 3 months wait time).</p> <p>Visitors are double-booking holidays in case of overseas not being allowed, then cancelling one.</p> <p>Current campaigns that EO are leading on: 'Escape the Everyday' throughout June and July, 'Rediscover Oxford' until end of August.</p> <p>With regards to business visits, interest is growing and 2022 are seeing USA and European enquires.</p> <p>MM raised the demise of Visitor Information Centres and the lack of a physical presence in towns/cities being an issue. Could meanwhile pop-up space be utilised somehow? Resourcing is thought to be the key challenge with this idea.</p> <p>PR mentioned that in the city, locality hubs are being set up and PR is happy to raise the idea of using these spaces to highlight the visitor economy and arts and culture offer with the management team and feed back to the group.</p> <p>CJ fed back that both the Burford and Witney Visitor Information Centres were now closed and that the decline in use of leaflets, and priority to encourage forward bookings, had seen the traditional role of these centres change.</p>	PR
6.	<p>Working Group – Arts and Culture</p> <p>PH fed back:</p> <p>The group have met a couple of times during the last quarter. The priority has been to consult with the wider sector across Oxfordshire and set emerging needs of priority and support. This has seen a regular monthly zoom meeting with c.50 organisations across Oxfordshire sharing intel, informing sectoral priorities, and discussing ideas on how best to support the blended programme of digital and in-house offers. The Arts and Culture Framework has been updated and a draft has been shared with the group for comment.</p> <p>Action – any comments/thoughts to be fed to PH and HRW</p> <p>The impact on the Oxfordshire arts and culture sector is in line with the national trend, seeing freelancers being the most heavily impacted and the sector witnessing 'burn out' due to reduced staffing, and implementing new digital offers. The downtime has however enabled some facilities to invest in refurbishments.</p> <p>The group is looking to help promote culture and are discussing options with EO with regards to a summer campaign.</p> <p>Also, with regards to the newly announced capital funds available via the Cultural Development Fund, the group plan to explore appetite for a LEP-led capital bid (to perhaps fund a Digital Investment Fund that organisations could bid into). EOI's are due by 23rd July, and a full application is then required by 15th October.</p>	PH/HRW

	Action- Do feedback thoughts or improvements/additions on this to JH/HRW.	ALL
8.	<p>Invited Speaker – Dave Dunphy, James Sadler Oxford Balloon Experience</p> <p>JH welcomed DD to the meeting. DD introduced the concept of the attraction which, subject to securing funding (via sponsorship) and planning consent, will be hosted on Oxpens Meadow just behind the Ice Rink. It is a 2-3 year Meanwhile Project. The ride will last 15 mins – 5 mins up, 5 mins at the top, then 5 mins back down. The estimated price point is currently £20.</p> <p>MM enquired as to whether the balloon can be flown to other locations? It is a static attraction; however, DD welcomed a discussion with MM re Bicester Village.</p> <p>PR highlighted the need to engage local stakeholders near the proposed site particularly before submitting the planning application. Chris Bell, the Park Manager at City Council, was a recommendation for DD to speak with. Oxford City have also just approved a balloon festival to go ahead this year and recommended DD to engage with this.</p> <p>HBG asked as to the dwell time on site? Also recommended packaging the attraction with other experiences.</p> <p>DD left the meeting.</p> <p>PL mentioned Bournemouth have a similar attraction.</p> <p>RB has visited the Bournemouth attraction which has a lower charge of £12.50. It is on the seafront. He mentioned that the design of the balloon is critical.</p> <p>All agreed the price point seemed a little high.</p> <p>Action – HRW to share comments and contacts with DD post this meeting.</p>	HRW
9.	<p>AOB</p> <p>HRW updated that there hadn't been a submission into DACS due to the £160k investment required. There are conversations between the Meanwhile in Oxfordshire steering group and the operator as to whether a small-scale trial initiative that is similar could be done in Oxfordshire.</p> <p>RB updated that from Oxfordshire there are three organisations that have been successful in being invited to submit for a lottery application. These are Harcourt Arboretum to upgrade the site as a visitor attraction, Abbey Buildings in Abingdon, and Blenheim Palace (in connection with the relocation of the Churchill exhibition).</p> <p>The location of the next meeting will be confirmed as to whether still virtual or face to face.</p>	
7.	<p>Dates of next meetings:</p> <p>Monday 6th September 2021 10.00-12.00 Teams or tbc</p> <p>Monday 6th December 2021 10.00-12.00 Teams or tbc</p> <p><i>Electronic invitations have gone out.</i></p>	