



Visit Chichester Annual Report Up to 31 August 2020

Executive Summary

Since our last report Visit Chichester has:

- Listened to our whole community
- Built a strong board
- Built support across both the political spectrum and officers at CDC
- Achieved a greater level of funding security
- Delivered a credible and forward looking business plan and
- Appointed a replacement for Louise Adlam on maternity leave
- Appointed a PR lead called Nicola Cutler
- Nearly completed the process for appointing a CEO

Overview

Since our last formal report, Visit Chichester has made significant progress against the following objectives:

- **Listened to our community** – Francis Hobbs and the exec team engaged via meetings and, during the early part of the COVID lockdown, on regular Zoom calls with interested local stakeholders. Having listened carefully to all views it was clear the Visit Chichester brand needed to change if we were to gain long term community support. Following a special board workshop we agreed a way forward including a new brand name The Great Sussex Way™ with a tag line of “*from the downs to the dunes*”, which gained support from all stakeholders,
- **Built a strong board** – The board is now much stronger with the addition of Kathy Bourne, Executive Director at the Festival Theatre. In addition Gary Shipton, Editor-in-Chief of JPI media, has agreed to join as a regular observer. The plan is to recruit 2 further members of the board over the next year bringing the total to 9.

The board is now 7 strong:

- Francis Hobbs – Chairman/CDC representative
 - Danielle Dunfield – Vice Chair/businesswoman
 - Olaf Gueldner- Formerly Marketing Director Goodwood Estate
 - Nicola Jones – Business leader in Petworth
 - David Coulthard – The Communar at Chichester Cathedral
 - Kathy Bourne – Executive Director of the Festival Theatre
 - Dan MacAuley – Business owner in The Witterings
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- **Built support across both the political spectrum and officers at CDC –** Francis Hobbs has briefed all political groups personally and CDC officers where appropriate. There will be a key stakeholder briefing on Tuesday 17th November to bring all interested parties up to date on brand development and launch.
 - **Achieved a greater level of funding security –** CDC recently agreed a 5 year funding settlement for Visit Chichester, which will retain its current legal name. This has provided the security needed to develop the wider business plan discussed in earlier briefings. The long term aim is to achieve significant funding from the private sector, partly built on an updated membership scheme, but also supported by significant sponsorship and corporate donations in due course. This will be a key task for the new CEO.
 - **Delivered a credible and forward looking business plan –** the business plan was signed off by the board earlier in 2020 and a copy is. It is a dynamic document and some elements will be updated in time for the next financial year.
 - **Appointed a replacement for Louise Adlam on maternity leave –** Emma Cox has stood in for Louise Adlam over the last few months and led the brand development, along with Helen Broom, Richard Cole and Nicola Cutler. Emma is now moving to a new opportunity at a time when a new CEO can pick up the reins.
 - **Appointed a PR lead –** Nicola Cutler has joined the team in the last couple of months to lead the PR element of The Great Sussex Way launch. She has some highly innovative ideas for how to gain maximum exposure for our new brand which includes the support of Hugh Bonneville in a virtual trade launch event.
 - **Started the process for appointing a CEO –** with the core funding provided by CDC we have advertised for a new CEO. At the time of drafting this report we had had over 80 expressions of interest. The aim is to shortlist and appoint if possible by the end of November.

Despite the challenges faced over the last 2 years Visit Chichester is now in a strong path to providing the style and quality of visitor economy support many hoped to see. The new brand is catching the imagination and we are optimistic it will provide significant media coverage, particularly in these challenging times. Being little more than an hour outside London puts our district in an excellent position to gain future visitors and business, particularly in 2021 when we imagine staycations will be the

order of the day. In this regard, we are pleased to see the headline figures in the recent Tourism Impact report for 2019, and attached to this report.

Other Key Activities

- **Brand** - The Visit Chichester Executive have been working on creation of the new Visit Chichester brand, The Great Sussex Way. Alongside the new name, we have developed a logo, and branding to position the Chichester district as a stand out tourist and leisure destination. A marketing strategy was created to underpin the brand, using data insights from both Visit Britain and Visit England. During the brand development, consultation and engagement has taken place with key attractions, groups and stakeholders across the district to gain both input and support for the new brand, the feedback has been extremely positive.
- **Website** - A new website has been built to support the brand, with updated user functionality. The site will become a one stop shop for potential visitors seeking inspiration and information about our area – included suggested itineraries. We will be going live with over 350 businesses listed ranging from accommodation, to food & drink, attractions and shopping. The executive will be reaching out to further businesses as part of a campaign to encourage them to take up free membership of The Great Sussex Way and to support them to list their business on the website.
- **PR** - To support the PR launches social media content, newsletter email campaigns will be sent to further publicise the brand within and outside of the district.
- **Publicity and Social Media** - We have had a successful period in generating PR activity over this period. Details can be found at Appendix 1. We expect this to accelerate following launch on 19th November 2020.
- **Brand ownership/Trademark** – To protect our long term brand value we have bought most relevant website domain names and registered The Great Sussex Way™. We are further seeking to trademark other elements of our work to provide some IP value long term.
- **Business Support** - During the height of the covid-19 pandemic Visit Chichester held weekly calls for members and the wider tourism community to provide information and advice on current guidance and restrictions and to facilitate relationship building and support between businesses.
- **Membership** – The membership scheme has been updated and, as a result of the CDC funding, we are able to offer “free” standard membership for 2021. We have also halved the cost the 2 other membership levels, which will be £200 and £400, rather than £400 and £800 respectively. This is only possible because of the support from CDC and, over time, we expect the standard membership offer to become strong enough to support a base level of £200/year.

- **Students** – We have had significant success engaging with several students over the last year. Not only has this provided them with work experience and value for their studies, it has been a helpful and timely addition to our team’s capabilities. We aim to work with more in future.

Looking Ahead

- **Launch** – Despite the COVID situation we will be launching our new brand The Great Sussex Way to key media influencers on Thursday 19th November 2020.
- **CEO** – Appointing a CEO is now our top priority. With over 80 expressions of interest we hope to find an appropriate candidate and have them in post by the end of 2020.
- **Chichester BiD** – Whilst the relationship with Chichester BID has fallen away over the last period we would like to find ways of re-invigorating the relationship in 2021.
- **Stability** – With financial stability and a growing team, including students from our local community, we will be aiming to build our new brand and create an organisation that can stand the test of time.
- **Funding** – With a new corporate brief and support from key members of the board and supporters we aim to generate independent commercial funds to support our operations in future. If successful this will hopefully reduce the need for CDC funding support long term.

Appendix 1

PR and Statistics

- From late March until July we refocused our social media and web content to be offer responsible, informative and inspirational posts: virtual tours, inspiring images and videos, reopening and booking information, key local messages (i.e. Parking at West Wittering Beach) while still growing our audiences (see stats below)
- Produced a 'Visit Chichester Later' video featuring key locations and attractions which circulated via social media channels in early June (achieved Facebook 4,683 views/estimated reach c.13,000, Instagram 631 reach, Twitter 3,727 impressions)
- Weekly Zoom meetings with members and wider business community April-July
- Weekly business email updates communicating Visit Britain news, business and financial support reduced from April-August.
- Visitor Guide distributed in local and regional locations and nationwide during Summer months

Press/publicity directly achieved by VC team

- BBC Radio Sussex: Visit Chichester Chairman, Francis Hobbs talks about Chichester being named 'Best summer City destination' https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/live:bbc_radio_sussex (7.29am 4 August)
- The Guardian - CFT's Movies & Music Weekend featured in a round-up of Bank Holiday activities <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/aug/28/best-things-to-do-around-the-uk-bank-holiday-this-week>
- BBC Radio Sussex – Francis Hobbs talking about Chichester as city destination https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/live:bbc_radio_sussex (7.12am 28 Aug)
- The Guardian 10 August - Marine Life by Mulberry Divers, Selsey walks in 10 best beach/coast activities <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/aug/09/10-best-beach-coast-activities-uk-coasteering-surfing-climbing-foraging>

Website and Social Media Statistics

Website - Number of page users: (despite C-19 our July figures YonY were up 46%

- 22,944 in October 2020
- 33,730 in July 2020
- 15,236 in November 2019
- 23,169 in July 2019

Social Media

Facebook likes:

- 2,469 October 2020
- 1,990 November 2019
- 611 November 2018

Twitter followers:

- 6,980 October 2020
- 6,766 November 2019
- 6,438 November 2018

Instagram followers:

- 2587 October 2020
- 1,706 November 2019
- 1,014 November 2018

E-NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

- 16,067 total subscribers at October 2020
- 9,515 subscribers at October 2019