

Appendix 2 - Additional feedback comments regarding the Place Branding Strategy

Midhurst Vision

There hasn't been enough time to get feedback from many people or discuss it, but I think with the few who have responded there is a consensus that we don't need a place branding exercise or place brand for the district for many reasons.

The district is a local authority area which is part of West Sussex. The difficulties in having one clear brand for the district was very apparent during the tourism branding exercise by Visit Chichester which was done very recently. While I wasn't very involved in the whole exercise it was apparent how difficult this was - which resulted in The Great Sussex Way from Downs to Dunes. The variety of the coastal areas, Chichester City, the historic towns of the downs areas and everything in between make it almost impossible to be covered by one place brand - hence the Great Sussex Way.

Also the various Vision groups within the district have been working individually for years now so it is rather late in the day to be suggesting this and certainly would create havoc with what the TGSW tourism group and others have done.

It is concerning that the work being done by the various Vision groups is not being shared within the district - for interest - best practice etc and this only highlights the need for this to happen.

Re the place branding - if anywhere needs it it is probably Chichester - which should be part of Chichester Vision? but not for the district.

As you know we are operating on very limited funding, so if there is funding for another district wide branding exercise, which from what you've shared below seems quite comprehensive, it would be fantastic if some of that could be shared with us.

This feedback is based on limited consultation with the group so we would need more time if you would like us to consult fully.

The Great Sussex Way

The tourist economy of Chichester District is highly fragmented, made up of a great variety of businesses over a semi-rural, geographically dispersed area with poor connectivity. You can do practically anything in our wonderful area but that is as much of an asset as it is a curse with regards to consolidating our offer in a way that is accessible to the potential visitor.

We have come a long way in the last 9 months in consolidating our offer;

- 1. Working with partner brands locally*
- 2. Meeting regularly with DMOs around the country*

3. *Speaking every day to new and existing businesses to determine what type of visitor stimulates their business and what are the limitations to profitability (eg. Parking, number of grapes grown, weather, space, traffic, cycle path surface quality)*
4. *Analysing what is the consumer looking for. Our recent website audit shows clearly that the visitor is searching for 'Things to do' rather than places. This is corroborated by Visit England, Visit Britain, Visit Kent, Visit Cornwall.*
5. *Liaising regularly with Gary Shipton to learn what is trending in the news across all channels. We use this to curate local content that will create traffic to our site eg wine, cycling and dog friendly activities.*

Our aim is to showcase our main attractions and places whilst netting the smaller ones. We have done this highly successfully through developing itineraries. Our maiden itinerary launch was The Great Sussex Wine Route (coverage below);

<https://www.tatler.com/article/west-sussex-wine-pilgrimage>

<https://thesouthernquarter.co.uk/2021/08/09/the-great-sussex-way-wine-tour/>

<https://www.cntraveller.com/gallery/best-vineyards-england-wales>

<https://www.decanter.com/wine-travel/sussex-vineyard-cycling-take-the-great-sussex-way-wine-route-462821/>

<https://www.standard.co.uk/escapist/ashling-park-vineyard-rooms-review-b949104.html>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000yysy>

<https://www.express.co.uk/travel/articles/1492263/uk-things-to-do-september-2021-England-Scotland-Northern-Ireland>

The point I would like to make here is that developing a successful place brand strategy, is not an independent activity. It is an integrated one.

I attach the very recently published government DMO review for your reference. The Great Sussex Way was proactive in feeding into this process and I support the findings of the report.

In summary, the report finds that the approach to Destination Management is fragmented. There are too many parallel activities that are insufficiently funded to make meaningful gains. They recommend that ;

“The visitor economy should be working hand in glove with direct inward investment. Through visitors, they are encouraging people to live and work here, as well as visit – that will support levelling up agenda. Today’s visitor is tomorrow’s investor.”

I have been greatly supported by Karen Rolling and our outputs are better for her contributions. Equally, there is no doubt, particularly with the lion’s share of her enquiries into inward investment being about tourism business, that there would be synergies in a closer collaboration.

The report also say that DMO’s are mostly best positioned, with the right support, to do the strategic work on place-shaping.

“Place-shaping is also a strategic area where DMOs feel they could do more, with the right support; this would contribute in turn to levelling up. DMOs know their local area better than almost anyone else, and are aware of the challenges it faces. They have the connections needed to build stronger skills networks, encourage inward investment, and support areas to regenerate, bringing visitor spend back to the destination – but at the moment, they can’t dedicate the energy and resource to doing so.”

I should add that The Great Sussex Way, are sincerely grateful for the support generously given by the council. We are moving the dial on our local offering and making it more accessible to the visitor. This couldn’t come at a more critical time for the many small and medium sized businesses that make up our tourist economy. The report says that the most successful DMO’s are the ones that geographically match the political embrace of the funding partner. They also note that independent but cooperative relationships with local government are crucial. I am deeply appreciative to CDC in driving these two winning factors.

I would also like to add that COVID has seen a distinct improvement in collaboration and cooperation across all businesses and organisations across the district. The Season of Culture has been a triumph of communication and collaborative goodwill, which we, at The Great Sussex Way, will ensure sets a precedence for coordinated endeavour going forwards, for the benefit of our entire district’s tourism offering.

To conclude, with regards to Tania Murphy’s enquiry about developing a place brand and strategy, I greatly welcome ongoing discussions about our identity and our perceived identity. However, I am firmly against further fragmenting our tourism landscape with parallel endeavour to the many that are on-going and like ours, establishing. I would like to urge the council to have confidence in the business community and the efforts of The Great Sussex Way to continue to develop this important work. If faster progress is required then I would urge you to consider supporting us to prioritise the necessary activities but to include it within our remit so that the project benefits from the many synergies that our day to day activities can provide.

Chichester BID

A Place Brand Strategy for the whole District sounds conflicting – given the various organisations already in existence e.g. The Great Sussex Way. The District is such a broad church and has such wide appeal - that packaging it as such would be difficult and possibly misleading for all the audiences.

However, I do believe that the city centre patricianly could do with a lot more focus and cohesion of message. What I would be in favour of is a focus on the city itself in terms of how we present and brand the city centre and would be more than happy to be involved in this. It sounds like a good opportunity for Chichester BID and perhaps the CCC as well as CDC to work together to facilitate this.