

VisitWiltshire Performance & Activity Report June – August 2015

To: *The Board*
From: *David Andrews, CEO*

Date: *10 September 2015*

This report describes VisitWiltshire performance and activity since the June 2015 Board meeting. The Board is asked to note this report.

1. Key Points

- 2014 was a record year for international visits to Wiltshire with IPS reporting +17% growth in visits and spend.
- Wiltshire outperformed Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall in 2014 international visits and spend, and outperformed the +5% visits and +3% spend national inbound growth.
- Latest Jan-May statistics show domestic tourism visits were +16%, spend +17%. We are expecting our headline Wiltshire economic impact figures by end Sept.
- At the end of August we had 625 Partners, up from 583 at the end of March and 130% up on the same period in 2014.
- The number of Partner renewals since 1 April are 26% on the same period in 2014.
- Our refreshed website went live on 3 August, Jan-Aug unique visitors are +53%.
- We have had a better than expected response to our print programme changes, with print revenue now at over £20,000 compared with £6,000 last year.
- Our Timeless positioning continues to be adopted and used by towns, partners and influencers both locally and nationally.
- We will shortly be launching a new Wiltshire Association of Visitor Attractions

2. Partnership Activity

2.1 Recruitment and Retention

- We now have 625 Partners, up from 583 at the end of February and 130% up on the same period in 2014.
- Apr-Aug new Partner income is 140% up on the same period last year.
- Since April we have spoken to over 350 new prospects, and to date converted 69 of these.
- Renewals have gone well through our renewals period, Apr-Aug renewals are + 26% on the same period last year.
- Notable new Partners secured include: A'Becketts Vineyard, Museum of Army Flying, Army Parachute Association, Stourhead Gardens B&B, Neston Park Farm Shop, the World Heritage Site, Forest Falconry, Upavon Golf Club, Whitehall Garden Centre, Great Chalfield Manor, Postern Hill C&C, Heale House, Timbrell's Yard, White Horse Gypsy Caravans, Druid's Lodge polo.
- Our 2015 VisitWiltshire Familiarisation Passport giving savings of up to £670 on entry into Wiltshire's tourist attractions has been distributed.
- The expected loss of small accommodation Partners as a result of changes to our print model hasn't happened, indicating the industry is supportive of our move to a digital and online- focused benefits package.

2.2 Industry Events & Training

- During Sept/Oct we are hosting industry meetings in Devizes, Malmesbury, Salisbury, Westbury, plus a Wiltshire Information Centres meeting.
- Our autumn training courses include a number of social media and digital courses, 'winning the bride' and a cookery course. We are waiting to hear whether the Serco training programme can be extended. includes social media, cookery,

2.3 Town Activity

- Bradford on Avon have confirmed they would like to go ahead with our town positioning proposal with Heavenly, starting in October.
- BoA have signed-up as a main partner in our Groups/Travel Trade activity and as a result will now be hosting the CPT SW Coaching conference on 22 Oct.
- Malmesbury have signed up to a range of VisitWiltshire activity via their Town Team.
- We are working with BoA, Malmesbury and Marlborough on Coach Friendly status.
- We have been working with Swindon and Heavenly on their brand positioning project. Two concepts are being developed, results are due out end Sept.
- Separately, Chippenham and Salisbury have both done their own branding exercises, with logos and straplines being launched.
- Our joint channel website partnership with the Salisbury BID is progressing well and we are expected to launch the new site in October.
- Our 2-day Wiltshire Magna Carta trail continues to perform well with good support from Salisbury and Trowbridge.
- Corsham are now working with us on marketing and campaign activity. They have also signed up to our travel trade group and weddings activity.
- The Chippenham BID have confirmed participation in a range of our marketing activity.
- Although Salisbury Cathedral group bookings are +50% up on 2014, Wiltshire Council figures show a decline in Maltings coach parking numbers April - June.
- Warminster, Amesbury and Ludgershall have all increased town activity with us this year.
- We continue to work with Calne on a range of activity following their brand positioning, including their new Heritage Quarter.
- We have had good response from towns to the idea of creating a new A4 Tourist Trail across the county.
- We are also working closely with the new Pewsey Vale Tourism Partnership, and have increased penetration and activity in Pewsey as a result.
- Referrals to the Devizes page on our website have dropped dramatically since the town's non-renewal.
- Latest national tourism statistics indicate Swindon tourism is growing at a much slower rate than the rest of Wiltshire.

3. Marketing

3.1 Marketing Campaigns

- In June we launched our Press Pause: It's Time for Wiltshire campaign with Longleat as our lead sponsor and 13 partners. Activity included 120,000 inserts in the Telegraph and Mail, digital display and pre roll advertising, a new Press Pause pan Wiltshire video, Facebook campaign, Instagram competition and e-newsletter. All activity drove visitors to campaign pages on the website which had over 9,600 page views (competitions and Time for Wiltshire) and over 3,000 entries for both Instagram and online competition. The video has delivered over 92,000 views via You Tube, Facebook and pre roll. The Press Pause Display campaign served over 250,000 Impressions across the campaign's lifetime.
- We have partnered with National Express on a joint campaign running early-September.
- Our joint Salisbury Cathedral 2015 Magna Carta campaign finished at the end of July. Initial results are positive with advertising alone generating over 3m impressions and 10,000 clicks.
- Our main autumn campaign "Made of England Time for Wiltshire" will launch first week of October and aims to generate £715k in additional spend. We have secured English Heritage as a lead sponsor and 12 partners. Campaign activity includes 85,000 leaflets inserted in Time Out and Archant County titles; 2 weeks of advertising on train panels with South West Trains, e-newsletter, PR, online, new video and a facebook campaign.
- We are working in partnership with Salisbury BID and Salisbury City Council on a joint Salisbury Christmas marketing campaign.

- Our cities campaign will launch January 2016.
- In June we launched a new 'Saints and Sinners' campaign with the Churches Conservation Trust promoting heritage churches and devilishly good food at 4 locations.
- Additional projects we are planning on launching in early 2016 include:
 - A new Wiltshire pubs campaign working with Wadworth and Arkells.
 - A new pilot 'A4 Tourist Trail' marketing campaign.

3.2 Website and Digital

- Our refreshed website went live on 3 August. We have received positive feedback and traffic continues to perform well.
- The website is fully responsive for all devices with new itinerary planners, a new social media section and significantly enhance content, including 20 pages of new inspirational content under Ideas and Inspiration
- Unique visits to our website were June +21%, July +16%, August 6% and year to date +53%. Our top referrers are twitter, visit South West and Facebook.
- Work is currently under-way on the Visit Salisbury channel site. Estimated live date is early October.
- Our apps continue to perform well and have now had 13,000 downloads. Both our Visit Salisbury and VisitWiltshire apps were refreshed and updated in August.
- From May-August we received +500k impressions for our paid for search campaign pushing accommodation. Average page views of approx 3.8 pages is above target and shows a good quality response.
- We continue to run our digital display adverts with creative to tie-in with "Time for Wiltshire". These perform strongly to with 95% as first time visitors to the site.

3.3 Social Media

- We now have 25,000 fans/followers.
- We partnered with National Express on a twitter takeover on 4 Sept where they focused on Wiltshire product to their 40,000 followers.
- Our Instagram account is working well, with over 1,300 followers. We held our first joint-Instameet with Igerswiltshire at Bowood in July with 25 people (including people from Warwickshire, Gloucestershire and Wales) and a second event at Stonehenge on 2 September with 30 people. We will continue to develop these instameets with VisitWiltshire partners.
- We also took over the Digital Tourism Think Tank's Instagram account for a week allowing us to showcase our activity to other DMO's.
- VisitWiltshire's latest blogs include: Top ideas for Father's Day, Finding the Barons, Revving up at Wessex Raceway, A Short stop at Malmesbury and Tidworth – churches and more

3.4 Videos

- Our Press Pause video launched in June and has had over 92,000 views - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJvJAb9o8io>

3.5 Direct Marketing

- Our consumer database continues to grow and is just over 56,000 contacts; our average open rate is at 13% with click through at 2%.
- We will be changing the look and feel of the consumer newsletter in the next quarter.

3.6 Print & Brochure Distribution

- Distribution for both publications (Great Days Out and Accommodation) is on target – to date we have distributed 165,000 Great Days Out and 41,000 accommodation guides.
- The new Time for Wiltshire Map & Time for Wiltshire Visitor Guide will be delivered in Jan.
- So far we have secured over £20,000 in display advertising from 116 Partners, significantly up on £6,000 last year.

- We are currently working on options for securing new self-funding out-of-hours or information boards at a number of key sites around the county.

3.7 Groups & Travel Trade

- VisitWiltshire are leading on the Travel Trade strand on the £5m South West Tourism Growth Fund action plan.
- We have confirmed attendance at 2016 shows including Excursions Jan 16, British Tourism & Travel Show March 16, Great for Groups April 16 and Explore GB March 16.
- Two new product packages have been developed in conjunction with partners and are now being sold to trade – ‘Capability Brown’ one day package Longleat & Bowood; Salisbury Contemporary Craft & Heritage Festival and Salisbury Cathedral specialist tours for 2015 and 2016 event.
- 2015/2016 advertising plan secured and being delivered with buy in from partners. Christmas and standard adverts produced
- Our most recent July trade e-newsletter was sent out to 3,031 subscribers with an open rate of 24% and CTR of 2.7%
- We are working on our next October pan-Wiltshire travel trade familiarisation visit hosting key tour operators and GTO’s.
- New groups partners include Bradford on Avon, Corsham Town Council and Chalfield Manor as part of the National Trust’s investment. We have exceed targets for new investment in TT group. YTD 5 investors, 9 sponsors, 6 partners (targets were 5 investors, 5 sponsors and 8 partners).
- Our PR activity has achieved excellent editorial coverage in trade publications – particularly for Christmas. This can be seen in August editions of Travel GBI, Group Leisure and full pages in The Pass and Coach Monthly.
- We are in discussions with a local operator to develop bookable product for our travel trade group, we are not aware of this being done by another UK destination.

3.8 Press & PR

- Jan-Aug 2015 (YTD) our PR had a reach of over 200 million, and an AVE of £2.3m, up from 98million reach and £650k AVE last year.
- In June we hosted a very successful Time for Wiltshire International Press visit, supported by Salisbury BID and Salisbury City Council. This has already achieved over £560k AVE and reached over 68 million people.
- Other hosted press visits during Jun – August have included At Home Magazine, Cyclist Magazine, AAA Magazine USA and National Geographic Traveller Magazine.
- Press releases distributed include Adventurous Father’s Day; Press Pause Campaign; New two day Magna Carta Trail; Saints and Sinners Trail (covered by ITV); Stay and Explore Wiltshire this summer; First Ever Instameet; VisitWiltshire welcomes Prime Minister’s commitment to grow tourism in SW; VisitWiltshire unveils new-look website; What’s on in Wiltshire Summer and bank holiday weekend.
- Examples of PR coverage achieved will be circulated at the meeting.

4. Destination Development

4.1 £5m South West Tourism Growth Fund

- VisitWiltshire are on the Programme Board, leading on the Travel Trade action plan and co-lead on the Product Development action plan.
- All Action Plans are due to be submitted to DCMS for approval in Sept with activity expected to start in Oct.

4.2 Grant Funding Programmes

- We are awaiting an update on ESIF/EAFRD bids.
- We agreed with LAG Managers in June that LEADER funding would be aligned with priorities identified in our DMDP.
- A new national Product Development fund is expected to be launched by end Nov which we are expecting to submit bids for.

4.3 LEP's Strategic Economic Plan refresh

- The Chairman has been working on the SEP refresh to secure an increased focus on the visitor economy.

4.4 Deed of Entrustment

- We're expecting our next meeting with Wiltshire Council in September.

4.5 New Product

- We have been working with the Royal Artillery on their HLF re-submission due end Nov.
- The new Melksham Link development project continues to progress, next meeting in Nov.
- We have chased Wiltshire and Swindon Councils for dates for a joint planners meeting as an action from our Accommodation Futures study.
- A number of new accommodation businesses are being developed as a direct result of our 2014 study, including glamping, budget, lodge, B&B and other accommodation.