



Activity Report for BTVLEP Board July 2018

Buckinghamshire Strategic Tourism Group

To help with the delivery of the tourism strategy as set out in the VB business plan, a tourism group has been established and includes the following individuals:

- Steve Gardem – Director Roald Dahl Museum
- Kim Hallet – Director of Business Development, Waddesdon Manor (Chair of the group)
- Ruth Page – Culture and Learning Services Manager, Bucks CC
- Becky Salisbury – Owner, Salisbury Pubs
- Nick Downie – PR Manager, Stoke Park
- Arthur Le Cour – Owner, Hand Held Tours
- Peter Ratcliffe – Owner, Bedford Arms and Classic Cars
- Laura Cotton - Centre for Bucks Studies, Bucks CC
- Philippa Batting – MD, BBF
- Lucy Dowson – Tourism Development Manager, VB
- Annette Venters – Chilterns Conservations Society
- Mary Tebje – Director, Visit Chilterns
- Val Mott – Director, Motts Travel

The group meets quarterly . At each meeting action points are agreed on and a person assigned to fulfil the brief.

Stakeholder engagement

We have engaged with tourism businesses via face to face appointments, telesales calls, attendance at networking events and workshops, exhibitions, and sitting on the board of local and national steering groups.

County/District Councils:

The relationship with Wycombe District council has gone from strength to strength and they have committed additional funds, aside from their contribution to the website for future tourism projects which included the Midsomer Murders Itinerary for Marlow. They have been very positive with the development of the website, it's content and VB's social media this past year. With Aylesbury Vale there has been several changes of staff so progress has been a little slower. That said AVDC are supportive of what VB do and the VB website.

With Bucks CC, as they embark on their new cultural strategy VB is working very closely to ensure the VB tourism strategy is aligned to the cultural strategy and regular meetings are taking place with Bucks CC.

Chiltern & South Bucks activity is less advanced unfortunately but the loss of two key contacts within C & SB has slowed progress. A new recruit has started and is picking up the tourism mantle



and there are plans for a stakeholder workshop in order to get the district tourism businesses signed up.

Visit Buckinghamshire is involved with the following Steering Groups

- Bucks & The Chilterns Regional Tourism Strategic group
- Visit England's Rural and Coastal DMO Steering group
- Visit Chilterns Networking Group
- Aylesbury Marketing Group
- Clay Vale LAG

VB Members (business operating in the Buckinghamshire visitor economy)

The engagement and support from businesses within the visitor economy has been very encouraging. They have been very positive with comments about the website, the newsletter, VB social media and of course the support offered by the team

Following an initial triaging meeting for the businesses with a member of the VB team there are several ways a tourist attraction or accommodation provider can benefit from engagement with Visit Buckinghamshire. The most significant has been the encouragement of collaborative working amongst relevant businesses. Some examples include:

- Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway and Bucks Railway now sharing engineering resources and have developed a collective product for groups
- Thame Midsomer walking tours have now developed a day trip promotion with Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway
- Claydon Courtyard have formed a joint marketing fund with all the businesses on site and the first step has been to sign up to Ambassador membership of Visit Bucks for the group.
- Milton's Cottage has been put in touch with Marlow Museum due to a common link on forthcoming exhibitions.

Website

The website has come on leaps and bounds since its inception and now includes a growing membership of tourism businesses (now circa 200), lots of vibrant content such as articles, current events and offers and lots of ideas on what to do when visiting the region. There has also been continued development of the website to include a new area for Corporate Meetings, conference, events including weddings, a pop up on the website encouraging people to sign up to the consumer newsletter and a change of logo from Visit Buckinghamshire, to Visit Buckinghamshire & The Chilterns.

The content on the website has included over 115 articles written by the team covering topics such as best Sunday roasts, Buckinghamshire best walks, The National Trust in Buckinghamshire and Award winning eateries etc. Here is a selection of some of the articles that have been written. Articles are uploaded to the website, promoted via social media, and can be used as content for VB newsletters.



<https://www.visitbuckinghamshire.org/article/get-your-creative-juices-flowing-in-bucks>

<https://www.visitbuckinghamshire.org/article/veganuary-in-buckinghamshire>

<https://www.visitbuckinghamshire.org/article/the-best-sunday-roasts-in-buckinghamshire>

<https://www.visitbuckinghamshire.org/article/national-trust-in-buckinghamshire>

Specific pages on the home page of the website are also created for special occasions such as Valentine's day, Easter holidays, The David Bowie unveiling and the Whizz Fizzing festival etc. There are currently several in development to include Buckinghamshire WW1 centenary celebrations.

Total 2017/2018 Website Statistics

	01/03/2017- 30/03/2018
Sessions	60,102
Users	49,334
Pageviews	166,354
Pages / Session	3
Avg. Session Duration	00:02:11
Bounce Rate	60.37%
% New Sessions	90.30%
Organic Search	36,304
Email	232
Referral	2,740
Direct	7,084
Social	3,306

Social Media Statistics

Social Media	2017/2018
Instagram	1368
Twitter	4222
Facebook likes	4576

In one month alone, there was over 881 referrals to the website via social media.

Marketing & PR

Newsletters are sent out every 6 weeks, and over 35% of the recipients open the newsletter.

As of the 30th June we had 830 consumers signed up to receive the VB newsletter. On average there is 5-10 people signing up weekly. A key part of the VB strategy going forward is to encourage more sign up's as this ultimately drives traffic to the VB website.



A quarterly newsletter is also sent out to VB members (businesses operating within the visitor economy in Buckinghamshire) which lets them know what is being planned within Buckinghamshire for future months and how they can play their part. It also offers insight into funding available, tourism trends and other opportunities from organisations such as Visit England.

Groups business

Exhibitions - As part of the tourism strategy a key focus has been the development of the groups market and looking at ways we can encourage day and overnight coach trips to the region. We have a few venues that cater to this market very well, such as Waddesdon Manor and Bekonscot Model Village, however it would be good to encourage more businesses which will ultimately attract more visitors.

As this market tends to plan 12-18months out time is of the essence. A decision was made to exhibit as Visit Bucks along with Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway at the Group, Leisure & Travel exhibition back in October 2017. We then exhibited along with the railway again and Milton's Cottage at another group show, Excursions this January.

Both attractions have had group enquires and bookings as a result of exhibiting which is fantastic news. We have committed to exhibiting again at both exhibitions for 2018/2019

Joint promotions – following meetings with a number of businesses we are now in the process of creating joint promotions for the day trip market some of which include

- Boat trip at Windsor with trip to Bekonscot in the afternoon
- A Midsomer day trip which includes a guide to accompany group on outlying Bucks/Oxon villages, a guided walking tour of Thame and then a trip on the 'Causton Bubble' at Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway.
- A day trip to Cliveden with tour on the Thames in Marlow
- Combined day trip to Bletchely and Stowe House

Motts the local group coach operator has confirmed three, 2 night/3 day trips to Buckinghamshire in their 2019 short break brochure.

Midsomer and WDC

There is now a self-guided Midsomer Trail which will launch in July 2018. This initiative has been funded by WDC and focuses on Marlow as the town where the spend is, but also takes in the outlying villages of Turville, Freith and Hambledon. The artwork/style and content is very similar to the rest of the Midsomer leaflets already produced elsewhere. We hope to follow the launch event with a workshop to encourage local Marlow businesses to get involved.

WDC have plans to roll this out to other Midsomer towns/villages in the district 2018/2019.

Additional funding secured

Project Name: Visit Bucks Business Advisory Service (VBAS)



- **Start Date: July 2018**
- **Project term: 1 year**
- **BBF / Visit Bucks contribution to Project : £24,219**
- **HS₂ Business & Local Economy Fund contribution to Project: £74,898**
- **Total Project Value: £99,118**

The VBAS project will augment the Visit Buckinghamshire tourism strategy by providing a tailored and targeted Business Adviser Service to support businesses located within a 5 kilometre range either side of the new HS2 line.

Specifically VBAS will deliver business advice, peer-to-peer support, workshops and networking events to local enterprises particularly for those within the retail and tourism sector and their supply chains.

VBAS will:

- Provide businesses with an assisted diagnosis, to support them to identify and understand potential areas for future development. This will be provided (in part) via an online diagnostic.
- Provide businesses with an agreed action plan which sets out what actions the business owner will take forward to support the development of the business. This will help and encourage businesses to implement improvements and connect them to a range of solution providers who can best provide the expert support needed to help them grow and develop. This will include links to skills development and apprenticeships.
- Provide appropriate follow up account management to support the customer to implement the activities set out in the plan, monitor the customer journey and help ensure the company's objectives are met.

VBAS will arrange a series of locally based events and development workshops on topics such as finance, innovation (digital), marketing and sales, procurement opportunities, improving productivity etc.

This project is the first in the county to secure funding from HS₂