

Visitor Economy Strategy Steering Group

Meeting Minutes (PUBLIC)

12th June 2024

Attendees:

Heath Harvey (HH) (Chair)
Tricia Warwick (TW)
Olivia Chaplin (OC)
Matt Thomas (MT)
Ana Calvani (AC)
Marcus Calvani (MC)
Tim Crowley (TC)
Patrick Burke (PB)

Agenda:

- Update on action plan
 - Publication
 - Communication
 - Progress against actions
- Metrics
- Live issues
- AOB

Summary of Meeting:

Communication

PB commented that the delivery plan actions and progress needed to be reported on regularly. TC stated that industry stakeholders were aware of the strategy and action plan but felt States Members, the broader business community and the public needed to be communicated to so as to ensure they recognised the direction of travel and the importance of the sector to the island's economy. Further work is needed to agree what each member of the Steering group's role will be in this going forward, but agree that it needs to be coordinated.

TW suggested VESG members were responsible for certain actions within the action plan and should "keep it alive" with appropriate comms aligned to delivery of those actions. Urgency and speed of delivery are to be stressed in all action plan related comms.

Delivery plan

The plan has been finalised and is due to be published in July.

It was agreed that responsibility for communicating on each project within the delivery plan will sit with individual action holders, part of that is identifying relevant stakeholders, messages and

appropriate channels. Update on the actions list will be done in advance of meetings and progress reports fed into OC and then shared as part of the minutes.

In future VESG meetings will be used to discuss key mid and long-term issues and future focused actions. The meeting will be used to agree and approve actions where required.

2024 Performance outlook

Good feedback on the new VJ marketing campaign Sea Meets Soul, it is getting cut through (referrals are 4 times the number we had for the campaign in 2023), but it doesn't seem to be translating directly into conversion i.e. hotel bookings*. Occupancy for the peak months of June and July is currently down c.5 percentage points when compared to this time last year. Meaning a less positive outlook for 2024 season vs. last year. The reason why is not clear yet but could be related to price and/or product. Overall, UK short haul outbound travel is forecasted to grow¹ in 2024 so more investigation will be needed to understand why Jersey is at risk of not feeling the benefit of that. Awareness levels are high but VJ are looking at why the bounce rate is high, resulting in lower conversions from the campaign.

Prioritization / VESG focus

A discussion was had about digital projects and available funding from various potential sources. Linking this to the above point about how to ensure marketing translates into bookings. The ability to package and sell what Jersey has to offer and make it easier for customers to book experiences and activities before they arrive was raised. The question was posed that if conversion and bookability is a key issue, should the development or procurement of a digital tool be a priority to deliver? If the gap is between consumer and product then resources should be focused there. This could in turn help to close the loop on completing the sale.

Packaging was discussed as a means of adding value and giving customers both the personalisation and value for money they were seeking. Developing industry's capability to package up products in a way that adds value to the consumer, and allowing them to customise their stay would be of benefit. The principal of a Destination Management Company (DMC) was discussed but who's role this would be, whether it sits in the private or public realm, or both, and what resources would be needed would need to be explored. It is recognised that more support may be needed in the Jersey context for bringing more businesses into the digital booking realm as digital skills and technical capabilities could be more of a challenge with onboarding of smaller operators.

The group agreed that behavioural change is needed to transform the industry, and reference was made to the ways in which this had successfully been achieved within the rural economy sector where incentives (not subsidies) were required to instigate a change in mindset and unlock investment and collaboration.

Future Meetings

The group agreed that in future meetings should be:

- Future focused – 2025 onwards
- Solutions focused
- Look at bigger issues rather than actions already under way
- Suggested priorities to be discussed could include:
 - Marketing
 - Planning (and other major barriers)
 - Product innovation
 - Industry collaboration

¹ Sources: STR, Tourism Economics

- Citizen engagement

Next Meeting - 18th September 2024