



Board Papers

Thursday 19th May 2022

Agenda

Virtual Board Meeting

Thursday 19th May 2022– 8am

Venue: Oakfield House, Chester Zoo, Caughall Rd, Upton, Chester CH2 1LH

Time	Item	Lead	Reference
08:00-08:30	Arrival and tea and coffee		
08:30-09:30	Breakfast Meeting and Networking		
09:30-1000	Board Meeting		
	1 Welcome and Apologies	TB	
	2 Declarations of Interest	TB	
	3. Minutes and matters arising from Board Meeting held on 10 th February 2022	TB	
	4. Chief Executive Report (paper taken as read and questions taken)	JM	(Board Paper 247)
	5. Company Finances - 2021/2022 Q4 Financial Report - budget 2022/23	IB	
10:00-12:00	Strategy session	All	
12:00pm	Close		

**Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Board
Thursday 10th February 2022 – 8am**

Present: Trevor Brocklebank – Chair (“TB”)
Joe Manning (“JM”)
**Marketing Cheshire
Directors** Mark Goldsmith (“MG”)
Andy Lyon (“AL”)
Eleanor Underhill (“EU”)
Sarah Callander-Beckett (“SCB”)
Rob McKay (“RM”)
Gemma Davies (“GD”)
Steven Broomhead (“SB”) (part meeting)
Tracey O’Keefe (“TO”)
Jamie Christon (“JC”)

In Attendance: Nicola Said (“NS”)
Ian Brooks (“IB”)
Sharon Pond (minute taker)

Apologies: David Walker (“DW”)
Peter Mearns (“PM”)
Philip Cox (“PC”)

- **Opening by the Chairman and Welcome**

TB thanked the board for joining the call and welcomed Board members to the meeting.

- **Declarations of Interest**

TB asked Board members to advise of any declarations of interest.

- **Minutes and Actions from the last Meeting**

The Board confirmed that the minutes from the meeting on the 4th November 2021 were correct.

It was confirmed that the actions from the previous meeting have been dealt with.

- **Board Briefing Note / CEO Report**

JM referred Board members to the report circulated within the Board pack and highlighted the following key items.

- We had a strong footfall, particularly at attractions over the summer and autumn period, however, businesses in Cheshire have reported that they have been badly impacted over the Christmas period due to the implementation of additional Covid Restrictions. There are also concerns around what the economic impact of the energy and National Insurance price increases will have on businesses and whether these costs will be passed onto consumers.
- We are moving forward with the Destination Cheshire work in pushing the staycation market with the ‘Our family welcomes your family’ campaign. The theme provides us with the opportunity to package a wealth of different attractions and our diverse offer into one campaign.
- Joe, Jamie, and Gemma are looking into the future options for Destination Chester, and we are planning an in-person event at Storyhouse on the 1st

March. The Spring blooms campaign launches next week which will also help to drive footfall.

- Levelling Up white paper was published last week, not a significant amount included regarding tourism. We are still waiting for the DMO review to be published

Comments from Board

- The lack of tourism content in the Levelling Up paper was referred to and questioned on whether this should be a concern. JM advised that he is not overly concerned as the paper does not reference a lot of other sectors either. However, there was no mention of the DMO review. JM and NS are meeting with DCMS officials in two weeks-time to get an update.
- With part of the LEP's strategy being around conference and business events it was questioned whether the strategy has been adjusted in light of the Covid impact. Some of our venues are reliant on corporate bookings so discussions with these organisations is a priority for us.
- It was questioned whether there is any intelligence on what the impact of rising costs will have on visitors and the staycation market. JM advised that we have not seen any analysis on this yet but will keep under review.
JM advised that we will be promoting sustainable travel as part of the campaign and that Rail companies are offering discounted rates, we are also promoting the free of charge activities available in Cheshire.
- The understanding and prognosis around international tourism was questioned. NS advised that there is a real focus on International Tourism from Visit Britain, targeting the markets most likely to visit such as near-by Europe and the USA and primarily targeting pre children couples. We are also exploring relationships with tour operators and will be offering Familiarisation visits. NS confirmed that she is meeting with Manchester to ensure we are part of the Manchester International Gateway project and we are also speaking with Liverpool John Lennon Airport.
- VisitBritain are also leading on a social campaign funding holidays aimed at families who have not had a holiday in the past 4 years. We will share details with Councils to promote.

The Board discussed opportunities for sustainable and responsible businesses and agreed there were opportunities for us to do more on this agenda. This would also relate to inclusive growth and local multipliers of the visitor economy.

- NS confirmed that the Jubilee celebrations will be included within the Family campaign. It was advised that it would be beneficial for MC to take a leading role and give guidance on the Jubilee celebrations taking place in Cheshire.

- **Partner Engagement and Feedback**

NS ran through the partner engagement presentation providing feedback from Partners on the work undertaken by Marketing Cheshire and highlighting the 2022/2023 strategy

Comments from Board Members

- The possibility of funding for a responsible/sustainable tourism resource was discussed. JM advised that we have been looking at how we grow the offers to partners in the future.
- SB advised he would be happy to provide support and will raise this with the other local authorities.
- NS advised that she is in communication with Manchester regarding Insight gathering and there is an opportunity for future collaboration on this.
- It was agreed that it would be beneficial in the future to have a scoping meeting with research colleagues from partner organisations

TB and the Board thanked Nicola, Leanne, and all the Marketing Cheshire team for all their hard work.

Action SB

Action JM & NS to meet with AL to discuss provision for a responsible / sustainable tourism resource, sustainability conference, data dashboard and tour guide membership.

**Action
AL/JM
/NS**

- **Company Finances**

TB introduced IB to give an overview of the company finances.

IB referred Board members to the December YTD report included within the board pack advising that the operating result is slightly ahead of budget returning a small deficit and ran through the key elements of the report noting that the Audit Committee are comfortable with the cash position and reserves position.

There was a slight confusion over the use of the term projects in the accounts and it was emphasised from Board members that they need to have clear sight and understanding of the finances. Because of the recovery and future plans for partnerships, a request was made to have partnership support on a separate line so that it is clearly identifiable.

Action IB

It was advised that there is a vacancy on the audit committee should any board members wish to join the audit committee.

IB offered to organise a finance session to provide board members with a better understanding in the finance processes.

**Action
IB/SP to
find a
date**

Approach to Budgeting

Due to the uncertainty of the Government funding in waiting for the Levelling Up white paper and the DMO review it was suggested that we delay producing the budget until we have this information. One of the risks is that we may need to use reserves in the first few months on the financial year to enable us to continue running the company at its current size.

The board confirmed they are supportive to this approach.

The production of a business plan was questioned, and Ian advised that the aim is to include a delivery plan with the budget.

Due to the board papers being published online the board agreed for the finances to be extracted from the board pack and show in a separate paper.

- **Any Other Business.**

It was agreed that the May board meeting should be extended to include a discussion around the strategy of Marketing Cheshire going forward

It was agreed that JM and NS would meet with AL to discuss how the Chester Tour guides can work with MC going forward.

Future Board Meetings

Thursday 19th May 2022 at Chester Zoo – 0800-1200

Thursday 1st September 2022

Thursday 10th November 2022

Thursday 15th December 2022

Signature (Trevor Brocklebank, Chair)

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Date

19th May 2022

Chief Executive update

Paper 247

1. Visitor economy summary

Businesses in Cheshire and Warrington are full steam ahead planning their events and activities for 2022. There is a mixed picture locally. Although occupancy rates in our accommodation are still not at 2019 levels, they are getting closer with higher nightly rates. In March 2022 occupancy was 68.5% versus 71% in 2019. The average daily rate was £75 versus £64 in 2019. The rate in Chester is £80 a night. Some attractions have reported lower sales during April whilst other hospitality venues are reporting bumper sales and strong performance. Forward bookings for accommodation are slow and we are waiting to see the impact of the return of large-scale events.

Staffing issues and rising costs, including the cessation of the reduced rate of VAT for hospitality, are affecting trading conditions. There are also wider concerns about the impact of inflation and “cost of living” on consumer behaviour. This means predictions for the year ahead remain difficult. Against this backdrop, Marketing Cheshire will continue to promote Chester, Cheshire, and Warrington as an ideal destination for staycations. We have secured £100,000 from Visit England for a campaign in May and June targeted at “pre-nester” couples. This will complement our wider campaigns for the year, and we are actively involving our partnership networks.

2. LEP Review

The LEP received confirmation of their settlement from Ministers in BEIS and DLUHC. The Government wants us to work even more closely with Councils through its agenda for Levelling Up and potential County Deals. This is an important step towards further devolution and the potential establishment of a Combined Authority in Cheshire and Warrington.

The letter confirming the LEP funding settlement makes clear that the private sector which LEPs represent will be critical to levelling up, and they therefore see LEPs playing four key roles in the future:

- Embedding a strong, independent and diverse local business voice into local democratic institutions;
- Continuing to undertake strategic economic planning, building and maintaining a robust local evidence base that identifies local strengths, challenges and opportunities;
- Continuing to use their convening powers to bring together business, education and other local economic stakeholders;
- Continuing to deliver various functions on behalf of government departments ranging from Careers and Enterprise Hubs to Growth Hubs and work on skills.

Not surprisingly, all of this is to be done within the context of the twelve missions set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, in particular the mission that: “by 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.”

As a result of the national LEP Review some core funding – for strategy work and business support via the Growth Hub – will be reduced. This could have material implications for Marketing Cheshire’s financial position from 2023/24. The LEP and Marketing Cheshire are developing a delivery plan for submission to Government at the end of June 2022 and the audit papers set out our current budget assumptions. We also intend to take forward a full organisational review considering the new Government mission and funding settlement. This work will allow us to look at our future vision and business model. A timeline is included in the annex to this paper

We have briefed staff on the outcome of the LEP review. Understandably this has caused uncertainty with some programmes and roles impacted. We have taken some short-term measures. These include making sure any posts that fall vacant are advertised internally for a period of two weeks, offering shadowing opportunities, and to manage finances, whilst we conduct the review, reminded budget holders not to commit to new contracts above £5k without approval from the senior leadership team.

3. Destination Cheshire and Marketing Cheshire networks

We have launched the ‘Our Family welcomes your Family’ campaign as part of our aim to reposition Cheshire as the based place for family short breaks. We have showcased family run businesses that may including the farm at Tatton Park, Pitch and Canvas and Cotebrook Shire Horse Centre. We are working with influencers and bloggers to share their own family experiences and user generated content, as well as providing content to accommodation providers on “what’s on” in Cheshire. We intend to formalise this into a Marketing Cheshire influencers network and work with businesses to showcase the best of Cheshire to this network.

On request of the network, we are organising a training session on developing reels and setting up a tiktok account as a way of engaging younger families and family members. We are securing financial support from businesses for enhanced marketing activity related to the campaign. Cheshire East Council have committed budget for media spend. We have several businesses interested in being part of a data pilot to obtain more in-depth analysis about our customers and markets.

4. Destination Chester

We completed the last activity of the Welcome Back Fund with the Spring Blooms programme. We worked closely with Chester Business Improvement District (BID) and independent networks to engage smaller Chester based businesses we hadn’t worked with previously. This included art installations around the city and additional animation including pop up art on the streets, kayaking sessions on the river, a mini murals art trail and zero waste cocktail making. We also installed a Chester name sign in the grounds of the Cathedral which has been hugely popular with the recent University graduations. It is the intention to move the sign around the city linked to different events and activity.

Along with other Destination Chester partners, we held a in person meeting in Storyhouse in early March. It was attended by over 80 businesses and featured panel sessions with businesses and open discussion. At the event Charlie Seward confirmed that Cheshire West and Chester have agreed continuation of funding for Destination Chester, following our proposal. As a result of contributions from Cheshire West and Chester, as well as £40,000 from Chester BID and £10,000 from Chester Zoo, Destination Chester has a total budget of £160,000 for 2022/2023 as well as the £100,000 of

VisitEngland marketing funding. Cheshire West and Chester have asked us to respond to an invitation to continue to deliver the Chester Christmas Market which we intend to sub-contract as part of a Destination Chester activity.

5. Cheshire Day

We delivered an online campaign for Cheshire Day on the 30th March, encouraging businesses, residents and visitors to share what they love about Cheshire. We had 17,700 interactions with a total reach of 9.6million. We felt that businesses and partner organisations, such as libraries and local PR agencies were more engaged this year with thoughtful and pre-planned content throughout the day when compared to last year which was more spontaneous. We also achieved government recognition and engagement. This included the Conservative MPs for Cheshire and Warrington hosting a Taste of Cheshire event in parliament that was attended by the Prime minister and Chancellor amongst others. Our Council Leaders also received a letter from Michael Gove, Secretary of state for DLUHC, to congratulate us on Cheshire Day. Our intention is to expand it next year and ideas will be discussed at a future Board meeting and with Council colleagues.

6. Press and media

During the first quarter of 2022, we continued to identify and amplify the county's best leisure and hospitality news, with particular emphasis on Cheshire's strong family offer, and the Spring Blooms campaign and launch of Discover the Rows audio trail in Chester. To keep Chester content fresh, we have targeted some specialist publications, including double-page feature on the city for *The Lady* and vegan Chester appeared in *Vegan Food & Living*. The Anderton Boat Lift and Chester's Rows both appeared in *The Sunday Mirror's* Time Travel column. Other coverage included family friendly ideas for school holidays in Cheshire and Warrington that featured in *The Guardian*, *The i* and *The Telegraph*, spring city breaks in *The Times*. During the period we achieved 30 pieces of coverage with a reach of 16million. We also continued our monthly feature with *Cheshire Life*.

We have continued to offer regular media opportunities to Marketing Cheshire's membership, from press-trip partnerships to the chance to share information with national media and inclusion in press releases that can also be used for blogs on VisitCheshire.com and in information distributed by VisitBritain. In many cases, we've been able to pass these to the partners to respond to direct, a time-efficient approach and an effective way of consistently highlighting the PR benefit of membership of Marketing Cheshire.

7. Website and social media

VisitCheshire.com has had 284,563 visitors this year to date with 647,673 page views. This is an increase of 8% from pre-pandemic. We want to continue this growth over the year ahead with tailored content and blogs. Events and things to do are our most popular content, as well as shopping. Our blog has been viewed over 32,000 times which is 240% up from pre pandemic 2019. Our visitors love to read content about where to find the best places for Afternoon Tea or a Roast dinner, some of our family friendly content has also been well read here (things to do with under 5's etc). Interestingly outdoor attractions and walking trails are still very popular, maybe as people are still cautious about big crowds. Delamere Forest, Bosley Cloud, Macclesfield Forest, Marbury Park, and the City Walls have been in some of the top pages viewed. The total reach for social media over the first quarter was 950,707 and we are continuing to grow our Instagram following which is now 13,591.

8. Annual Awards

We ran a successful awards event on the 24th March on a beautiful evening at Nunsmere Hall. The awards were attended by over 350 people and it was a great, celebratory evening with lots of happy winners. Winners were shortlisted for the Visit England national awards. Chester Zoo has successfully

got through to the final stages for two awards, large visitor attraction and the resilience and innovation award. Our full list of winners can be viewed [here](#)

9. Visitor Information Centre (VIC) in Chester

The VIC will be supporting CW&C in the delivery of the Town Hall Square parklet from April 2022. The parklet proved very successful following its introduction last summer and it is anticipated that the extended 2022 season will prove even more of a success with the greater involvement of the VIC team. The team supported the Easter Trail, with trail forms being collected and returned to the VIC. They have continued to produce media packs for visiting contacts to the city and continue to support colleagues at Marketing Cheshire. The range of walking tours starting from the VIC continues to grow, with a new Tudor & Stuart tour joining the established history tours. The new Walls Walk guided tour will also join the range in April. The VIC is also working on options for bringing the guiding teams together to provide more visitor feedback.

Christmas merchandise continued to sell well in the first three months of the year and the VIC are building 'all year round' Christmas sales into buying plans. The VIC's range of in-house developed products has been expanded with the introduction of a new range of postcards with photography by the VIC team. The VIC produced visitor guides continue to sell well, with over 3000 being sold in 2021/22. Following consultation with local historians we have extended the range of books for sale and sales from these new titles are encouraging.

10. International activity

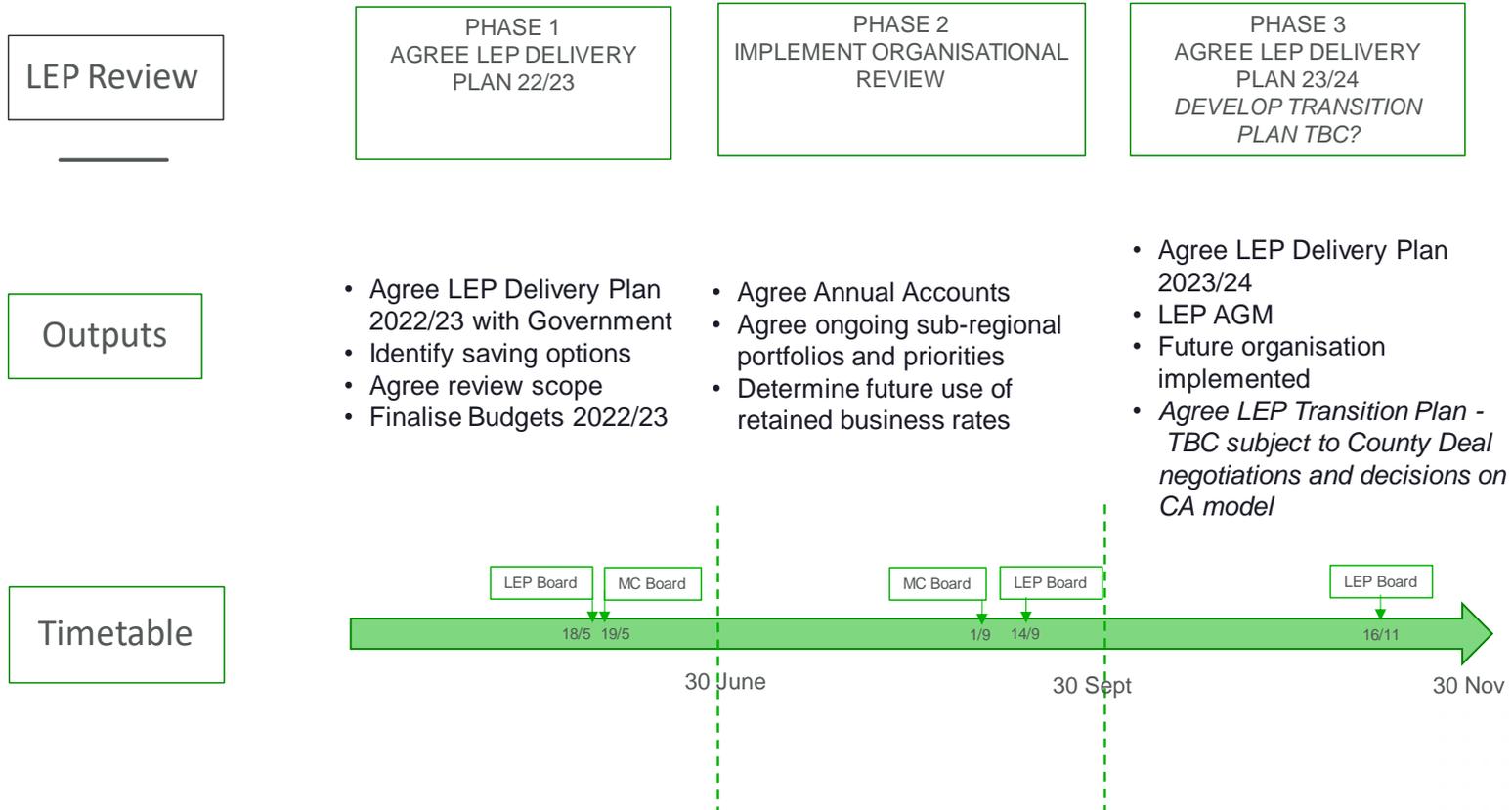
We are building our partnership with Liverpool John Lennon Airport and Marketing Liverpool to offer a joint destination promotion to targeted overseas activity. This includes a joint familiarisation visit for Irish tour operators and travel agents organised through Derry Airport. We attended the launch of the new Lufthansa connection between Frankfurt and Liverpool, which gives us opportunities for long haul connectivity through Liverpool. The opportunity for this will increase later in the year with flight connectivity from Liverpool to the US via Reykjavik. Ourselves and Marketing Liverpool are exploring promotional opportunities as part of this. We are also continuing to partner with England's Historic Cities to build back the US market.

11. Partnership update

Ashley Shacklady, Head of Sales, re-joined Marketing Cheshire on the 1 April, following a period of secondment to Growth Hub. Ashley has met with several partners already, including Cheshire Oaks, The Ice Cream Farm, Avanti Trains and Chester Racecourse. We are also building new relationships such as Liverpool John Lennon Airport. In addition, Ashley has created a campaign package for the family campaign. This encompasses varied budgets and covers wide-ranging marketing objectives, with the view of a flexible approach to build back our commercial income. We have put together a partnership communications plan for the year, with the focus on more in person events for partners. We are also holding team days with partners, most recently at Ness Gardens. This will ensure that we keep partners up to date with all our activity and any opportunities available to them. The team will also be concentrating on reaching out to potential new advertisers to enhance the product range for promotion to visitors on the website.

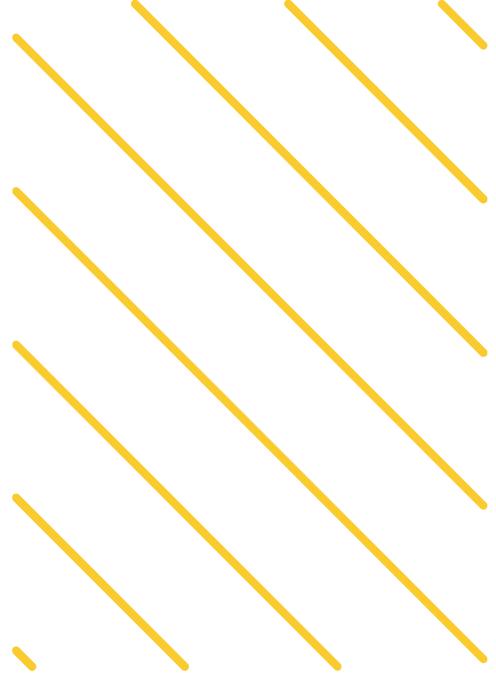
Joe Manning, Marketing Cheshire

Annex 1 – Outline Programme and Timetable for LEP Organisational Review



Marketing Cheshire

Delivery	
<i>Visitor Economy:</i> Refresh the Destination Management Plan to reflect the transition from recovery into “building back.”	Q2
<i>Visitor Economy:</i> Work with Destination Chester and Destination Cheshire network to deliver high impact visitor marketing campaigns, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit England (£100k award) – city focused campaign • “Our family welcomes your family” • Jubilee • Cheshire Day - Building on 2021 and 2022 online activity 	Q1 Throughout 22/23 Q1 Q4
<i>Visitor Economy:</i> Deliver, by Autumn 2022, a sustainability workshop and event for tourism businesses.	Q3
<i>Visitor Economy:</i> Continue to build back partnership with private sector businesses.	Throughout 22/23
<i>Place Marketing:</i> Develop “Live in Cheshire” campaign and website content.	Q3
<i>LEP Corporate:</i> Deliver programme of strategic PR and Public Affairs activity, linked to LEP priority areas.	Throughout 22/23
Facilitate & Support	
Support growth of key sectors, in particular Green Energy & Life Sciences, in identifying opportunities to host strategic conferences and events with businesses.	Throughout 22/23
<i>LEP Corporate:</i> Marketing & social media delivery, including specific support for Growth Hub and Pledge to meet their annual targets.	Throughout 22/23



**Awaiting
Government's
response to DMO
Review**

