

# ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## REPORT TO AND DECISION OF LITTLEHAMPTON REGENERATION SUB COMMITTEE ON 10 JUNE 2020

**SUBJECT:** Summary of tourism support currently provided by Arun District Council

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Margaret Murphy, Tourism Business Development Officer

**DATE:** 10<sup>th</sup> January and 27 May 2020

**EXTN:** 37859

**PORTFOLIO AREA:** Economy

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Arun District Council supports tourism in many ways, with several departments working hard to keep the district attractive, clean and safe.

Specific Tourism Support sits within the Economy Group and provides a range of initiatives managed by the Tourism Business Development Officer, covering many different areas of activity.

This report sets out the key activities that are either led by the Council or that we play a significant role in delivering.

ADDENDUM – See 2.10

**TOURISM SUPPORT PROVIDED TO LOCAL TOURISM & HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES  
DURING THE 2020 COVID-19 LOCKDOWN PERIOD AND BEYOND**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Members are requested to note the contents of the report.

### **1. BACKGROUND:**

The Arun district attracts approximately 4.04 million visitors per year generating a total spend of approximately £298.1 million (Source: Tourism South East, Economic Impact of Tourism Report 2018) indicating that the Arun District continues to be an attractive, thriving place in which to visit, as well as to live and work in. See Item 2 and link to full Economic Impact report as a Background Paper.

Arun District Council supports tourism in many ways. There is currently one full time equivalent post, the Tourism Business Development Officer, who works with a wide range of delivery partners, both within the Council and external partners on the following initiatives.

### **2. TOURISM INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS**

## 2.1 THE VALUE OF THE VISITOR ECONOMY TO THE DISTRICT

The Council currently commissions an annual report by the regional tourist board and industry experts Tourism South East. These reports are delivered each August / September for the previous full calendar year. The most recent edition we have is for 2018 which reports the following:

Key results for 2018:

- 4.04 million trips were undertaken
- 3.43 million day trips
- 0.61 million overnight visits
- 1.74 million nights in the area as a result of overnight trips
- £120.7 million spent by tourists during their visit to the area
- £10.06 million spent on average in the local economy every month
- £116.1 million generated by overnight visits
- £104.6 million generated from day trips
- £298.1 million spent in the local area as a result of tourism (taking into account multiplier effects)
- 5,972 jobs supported, both for residents and from those living nearby
- 4,560 tourism jobs directly supported
- 1,412 non-tourism related jobs supported (linked to multiplier spend from tourism)
- 13.0% of population employed as a result of tourism in Arun District

Attention is also drawn to page 3 of the report which provides further explanation of these figures plus pages 1 and 2 which provides the regional and national figures for comparison. The report is provided as a Background Paper and also available to view online at [www.sussexbythesea.com/tourism-business-centre](http://www.sussexbythesea.com/tourism-business-centre). The 2019 figures are expected in the late summer of 2020

Since the last 'Summary of Tourism Support' report (June 2017), the Council's Economy Group team have been working closely alongside neighbouring District Councils, in partnership with Coastal West Sussex and Experience West Sussex

This has led to many benefits including economies of scale, resources and skills for tourism marketing and projects across West Sussex.

## **2.2 PROMOTING THE ARUN DISTRICT TO VISITORS AND RESIDENTS**

'Sussex by the Sea' is the tourism 'brand' of Arun District Council, widely recognised in printed publications, social media, lamp post banners and on search engines - it is used to promote the whole district to visitors and residents as the official source of tourist information.

Originally adopted in 1994 the brand is promoted using a suite of marketing tools to reach as wide an audience as possible and includes:

- Website and Social Media
- Visitor Guide and Visitor Information Points
- Destination Marketing

The Tourism Business Development Officer also supports a range of other tourism related activities including:

- Servicing the Visitor Information Points
- Visitor Enquiry handling: received via website, email, phone and post
- Working with the Council's Event Officer and other Council departments
- Participating creatively via partners in projects, marketing networking, skills and training
- Sourcing and promoting local tourism business developments and news

## **2.3 WWW.SUSSEXBYTHESEA.COM**

The tourism website and database is currently managed by the Tourism Development Officer and hosted by Verseone Technologies who also provide the Council's corporate website [www.arun.gov.uk](http://www.arun.gov.uk) and database - managed by the Communications Team.

Commissioned in 2013, we are very aware that the Sussex by the Sea requires updating. We are in the process of reviewing how the online tourism presence will look and be delivered in the future.

As a Local Authority, Arun District Council's Visitor Information still seems to be a 'trusted' source of information, but with the development of so much 'FREE' online technology the varied ways to deliver that information are more 'fragmented' and can in some cases be more resource and time consuming to utilise.

## WEBSITE CONTENT

Visitors to the website [www.sussexbythesea.com](http://www.sussexbythesea.com) are currently able to find a wealth of information and managing this data is an ongoing and almost daily task to keep up to date.

As the core digital source of tourist information for many different aspects of Tourism Support and reference, it is estimated that on average at least 25 - 30% of any working week of the officer will be spent on the website and CMS database in one way or another.

## GOOGLE ANALYTICS AND SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

Google Analytics reports that for the full year to February 2020 there were 144,298 page views on the site, compared to 195,410 in the same period last year.

The Top pages viewed are: What's On, Bognor Regis, Littlehampton Attractions, Things to Do, Home, Where to Stay, Arundel Attractions, Arundel, Littlehampton

The most popular landing page continues to be "What's On", with 14,115 views in the current year to February 2020, compared to 18,431 in the previous year.

These figures are down in comparison to previous years, one reason maybe the continued rise in the use of Social Media and other online media as prime sources of shared information for many people. Facebook is being used increasingly by many organisations to publicise their events and for many people it is the first and often only place they search.

There is also growing competition from other local websites promoting the individual towns of the area, and their events. Some of these sites are new and growing; for example, Experience West Sussex and Love Bognor Regis, plus other commercial tourism sites.

## 2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA

The popularity and use of Social Media continues to grow and is still proving to be an effective free to use and powerful communications tool. The council uses the different platforms to promote our tourism offer in several ways.

'Sussex by the Sea' is very active on both Facebook and Twitter and these media have developed into a major and (crucially) a relatively quick way of transmitting 'live' tourist information to a wide and ever-growing audience.

The Facebook account currently has nearly 2012 followers (compared to 1200 as noted on the previous report in June 2017) and the Twitter page nearly 8000 followers compared to 6500 in June 2017.

## 2.5 THE SUSSEX BY THE SEA VISITOR GUIDE

The Sussex by the Sea visitor guide provides “Inspiration & Information” for Arundel, Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and The South Downs and continues to be the principle printed tourism marketing tool for the whole district, designed in house by the Council’s Design Team.

The decision was made in early 2019 to change the style of the guide, make each edition valid for two years instead of an annual production and to not include advertising. 100,000 copies of the new A5 size guide were printed in early 2019 and are distributed in several different ways

The guide is popular with visitors, residents and local tourism businesses and is available from: Leaflet Exchanges and networking events, local tourism businesses and local Visitor Information Points (approximately 7,000 copies so far this year)

As we move into the second year of this guide, the costs and efficacy of this approach will be reviewed in 2020 before starting on the next two-year edition for 2021/2022

## **2.6 VISITOR INFORMATION POINTS (VIPs)**

The Council continues to work closely with partners to deliver a Visitor Information facility in all three district towns, each providing ‘call in and collect’ tourism leaflet facilities. This means that we can continue to offer a local customer facility alongside the online and print media.

There is currently one VIP each in Arundel & Bognor Regis and, since the closure of the Look & Sea Centre in 2018, several smaller VIPs within existing businesses and organisations in Littlehampton

### **ARUNDEL VISITOR INFORMATION POINT (VIP)**

The Arundel Museum Society continues to host a tourism leaflet display for the town’s attractions and immediate Arun District, South Downs and Chichester area, inside the foyer of the town’s museum

There is no annual cost to the Council, apart from officer time and occasional small projects paid for from the tourism development budget.

### **BOGNOR REGIS VISITOR INFORMATION POINT (VIP)**

As part of the Council’s Accommodation Review, the Visitor Information facility moved from the council owned building, previously occupied by the Observer Newspaper in January 2018.

Now located within the foyer of the Regis Centre this has developed into a good partnership with management and staff of Arun Arts Ltd, bringing tourist information to a lot more people who use the Regis Centre facilities and attend the wide range of shows and entertainment.

There is no direct cost to the Council for supplying the Visitor Information Facility, apart from officer time and small projects paid for from the tourism development budget as and when required, for example the Digital Screen and its annual licence.

## **LITTLEHAMPTON LOCAL VISITOR INFORMATION POINTS**

With the closure of the Look & Sea VIC in August 2018 the decision was made to find other sites that could accommodate visitor information displays. A range of local businesses and retailers in Littlehampton now provide a Visitor Information Point (VIP) within their premises in the town centre, river side and seafront.

Each VIP is branded with signage and location maps to signpost to alternative information points if the businesses are closed.

## **2.7 TOURISM BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

The Tourism Business Development Officer continues to work with the district's wide range of tourism businesses, encouraging and advising new contacts and helping existing businesses develop skills and quality, when time allows.

## **2.8 CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Despite all the activity online, customer enquiries and visitor guide requests continue to arrive, can be around 10 - 20 per week at peak times, via the website, email, phone and occasional letter.

## **2.9 WORKING WITH TOURISM PARTNERS**

A good relationship has been cultivated and continues with the tourism officers at all three town councils and 'Visit Arundel', collaborating and sharing information and marketing ideas and also working with the Tourism Lead Officer at The South Downs National Park Authority and other Sussex Destination Managers at destinations across West and East Sussex and regional and national sector partners.

## **COASTAL WEST SUSSEX AND 'EXPERIENCE WEST SUSSEX' TOURISM PARTNERSHIP**

The Council continue to work closely with Coastal West Sussex, neighbouring District Councils and West Sussex County Council in a partnership to encourage more visitors across the county.

Arun's Chief Executive Officer Nigel Lynn, is the project sponsor of the Experience West Sussex Partnership on behalf of the Chief Executives Working Group.

The Experience West Sussex Partnership was established in 2018. All the local authorities across West Sussex work together with West Sussex County Council and the Coastal West Sussex Partnership to support the visitor economy. The Strategic Investment Fund (Business Rate Pool) is funding a four-year programme of work.

Arun District Council provide officer time to attend meetings, networking events, plus local knowledge of the district's tourism attractions, local images and copy, events information etc. The public face of this project and campaign is [www.experiencewestsussex.com](http://www.experiencewestsussex.com).

## **2.10 ADDENDUM - TOURISM SUPPORT PROVIDED TO LOCAL TOURISM & HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES DURING THE 2020 COVID-19 LOCKDOWN PERIOD AND BEYOND**

Since the Prime Minister announced the lockdown advice for businesses on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 the Business and Regeneration Team have been exceptionally busy researching, collating and disseminating a vast range of relevant information and advice from Central Government, County & District Council departments and Business organisations; in order to assist, support and signpost local businesses to the most useful information, advice and grants available. The team are currently working on delivering the Discretionary Small Business Grant to those businesses who have not been eligible for other grants for whatever reason.

In support of the Hospitality and Tourism sector, the Tourism Business Development Officer has been working closely with sector partners at local, regional and national level on this task and has been using several media and other tools to gather and disseminate the information. Activities have included:

- Regular online and telephone meetings with colleagues at Visit Britain/England; Tourism South East Regional Tourism Organisation (formerly the Regional Tourist Board) and a South East England Destination Group of Tourism Officers, formed by Visit Britain to discuss issues, ideas and progress towards a recovery plan.
- Daily and weekly email updates from partners at: Visit Britain/England; Tourism South East, Experience West Sussex Partnership and UK Hospitality, who all pull together elements of the Government's daily updates, in very helpful and accessible reports.
- Providing regular and current information at the online Tourism Business Centre: <https://www.sussexbythesea.com/tourism-business-centre>  
Hospitality businesses are encouraged to bookmark this site and to keep checking the page for helpful links to advice and support. Signposted links include the Arun District Council Business Support website, the Arun Business Partnership Newsletter plus specialist information from the industry and sector experts at county, regional and national level. Covid-19 messages to visitors are also regularly updated on a dedicated page on the website and via our social media channels.
- Regular email updates to our local hospitality database of approximately 500, including guidance on how to access support, opportunities to participate in information gathering surveys, and advice; e.g. how to keep engaged with customers and colleagues and providing 'good news' stories online and on social media to keep the interest in the destination going.

- Attending a series of three webinars “Survive, Revive and Thrive” with panellists of industry representatives and business experts, facilitated by Experience West Sussex. These webinars give the opportunity to hear first-hand from multiple local hospitality businesses on how the pandemic has affected them and early views on how a recovery could be planned. Recordings and minutes of those webinars are available at: <https://www.experiencewestsussex.com/survive-revive-and-thrive/>

All the above work has enabled the gathering of information on how the pandemic has affected our local tourism attractions, accommodation providers and other hospitality businesses. For example:

#### Arundel Castle

The Castle Manager has been keeping in contact with staff at home to keep morale up and with visitors via newsletters, social media, quizzes. Along with regular social media updates, they have also launched a new website where visitors can view the very popular annual Tulip and Allium Festivals which by the 5<sup>th</sup> May had nearly a million views online.

#### Butlin's, Bognor Regis

A priority has been staying connected with staff, to keep motivated, engaged and to access new training around social distancing on site and, with guests; advising on cancellation or deferment options on bookings and news from the team

#### Brookside Caravan Park, Lyminster.

Social isolation planning is well underway for when holiday parks are permitted to open to visitors, with a waiting list of potential bookings but, having to balance that demand with the requirements and concerns of the site's caravan owners and those key workers and temporarily 'homeless' people who have been housed on site during recent weeks.

#### Events

This sector has been affected considerably. All the local events, large and small that had been planned for the main season so far have been cancelled. This will affect the income of the charities and organisations who, with their many volunteers, organise and deliver a wide range of events throughout the district, all year round. Many are turning their thoughts to 2021 or even beyond for new dates of postponed events. Corporate events including weddings and conferences will have been hit hard too, with a knock on effect to employees, contractors, suppliers, entertainers and caterers, not to mention the customers who had booked venues for their special events.

#### Attractions:

All attractions have been closed on Government advice, but many have resorted to some very creative use of online content including, video tours, activities, and news including gardening tips from Head Gardener at Arundel Castle and Educational Tools for youngsters from the Arundel Wetlands Centre. A series of blogs highlighting these 'good news' stories has been created on the Sussex by the Sea

website and shared on social media, along with regular sharing of news direct from the attractions on our social channels.

#### Food & Drink and local retailers

Many have revised their business models creatively and are offering online ordering and delivery services for food, drink and art and craft supplies, Examples include: Pier Road Coffee and Art, Unique Knit & Sew, West Beach Café, Slindon Forge, and The Gravy Boat, Littlehampton, plus many others. There is a view that this may benefit those proactive smaller businesses by building loyalty from new and regular or returning customers, to the benefit of local economies and with a move away from the larger national brands.

#### Recovery

We are in ongoing discussions with all our tourism partners previously mentioned about potential recovery plans, with an emphasis on sensitive marketing as the situation continues to evolve, being mindful of the views and concerns of residents as well as the desires and requirements of visitors. We will be guided by the Experience West Sussex Partnership on the strategy and delivery of this.

Visit England/Britain is currently developing a nationwide 'self-assessed' Kite Mark for hospitality businesses, which will be free for businesses to access – in order to provide some assurance to potential visitors that as much as possible has been done by the owners to ensure their properties are safe to visit. Once this is complete this scheme will be promoted to all our local businesses.

#### Marketing and Press

The Experience West Sussex marketing team have been assisting us in responding to press enquiries with appropriate sector messages and are leading on a "West Sussex Wishlist" campaign, encouraging potential visitors to identify what they would most like to do and visit, when the time is right.

The annual 'English Tourism Week' has been re scheduled and re- focussed by Visit England around the late May Bank Holiday, with a marketing campaign during the 25<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> May. We are participating in this via social media. In the current climate, the campaign's broader focus is on engagement with Government, MPs and other stakeholders, to support the recovery of English tourism and raise awareness of the importance, quality and value of the sector to the UK economy. VisitEngland are working to support English destinations with political engagement nationally, regionally and locally and local tourism businesses are being encouraged to participate in the campaign.

The Business & Regeneration team are also planning a local business focussed recovery marketing campaign, which could include many hospitality businesses.

**2. PROPOSAL(S):** None, this report is for information only

**3. OPTIONS:** None, this report is for information only

**4. CONSULTATION:** None, this report is for information only

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		X
Relevant District Ward Councillors		X
Other groups/persons (please specify)		X
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial		X
Legal		X
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		X
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		X
Sustainability		X
Asset Management/Property/Land		X
Technology		X
Other (please explain)		X
<b>6. IMPLICATIONS:</b> Not applicable		

**7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:** Not applicable

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

The Economic Impact of Tourism in the Arun District 2018 can be found at:  
[www.sussexbythesea.com/tourism-business-centre](http://www.sussexbythesea.com/tourism-business-centre)

A fuller version of this report was presented at the Bognor Regis Regeneration Sub-Committee on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and can be found at:  
<https://democracy.arun.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=164&MId=961&Ver=4>

The previous Tourism Support Report on the 26 June 2017 Item 7 Page 180.  
<https://democracy.arun.gov.uk/Data/Bognor%20Regis%20Regeneration%20Subcommittee/20170626/Agenda/Agenda.pdf>