



Strategic Business Plan Year 6 – 2018/19

Context

Shakespeare's England, is now in its 6th year of operation and following a review of the Terms of Agreement at the beginning of 2018 the company's main objectives remain unchanged, namely:

- Undertake marketing activities to attract more domestic and international visitors to the District of Warwick and the District of Stratford-on-Avon and increase the profile of the region
- Encourage visitors to stay longer, explore further and spend more
- Increase awareness and engagement with tourism from the wider population
- Help manage and co-ordinate tourism partners to work together for the benefit of the tourism businesses improving productivity and employment (Skills) in tourism related businesses
- Improve the welcome and experience of visitors to the area in partnership with other tourism businesses and transport providers
- Develop a sustainable and viable model of destination management through an accredited Destination Management Plan (DMP) that is recognised by VisitEngland and VisitBritain and provide advocacy and representation to the Company's tourism partners and act as their representative to VisitEngland and VisitBritain and other public sector partners

Governance

There have been no resignations from Board Member Organisations over the last Financial Year, but several representatives have changed. Cllr Maurice Howse has returned to the Board for Stratford District Council, Clive Doble has replaced Miranda Markham on behalf of Bicester Village and The Hallmark Welcombe Hotel is now represented by Daniel Graham. The Board has also been joined by 2 additional organisations, Dallas Burston Polo Club, represented by Major Richard Carney and Solihull College and University Centre (Stratford College), represented by Lindsey Stewart.

1. Birmingham Airport – Chair
2. Warwick Castle – Vice Chair (Merlin Entertainments)
3. Royal Shakespeare Company
4. Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
5. Bicester Village
6. Eden Hotel Collection
7. Hallmark Welcome Hotel (Topland)
8. Strat>forward
9. Stratford District Council
10. English Heritage (Kenilworth Castle)
11. Warwick District Council
12. Chiltern Railways

- 13. Avon Boating
- 14. Solihull College & University Centre (Stratford College)**
- 15. Dallas Burston Polo club**

Board Observers -Warwickshire County Council

The status of Warwickshire County Council should be discussed. For the last 5 years WCC has been keen to gain representation on the Shakespeare's England Board. To do this it was necessary to reach a total of 13 non-public-sector members; this was Objective 3 on the 2017/18 Business Plan. Since achieving this objective WCC has changed position and indicated that they are likely to be reducing their support for the DMO by 80%. This brings into question the role the County Council wishes to play in promoting tourism and the support it is prepared to give to this vital part of the county's economy.

Challenges & Results 2017/18

The 2017/18 year has been a challenging year particularly from a Financial point of view, although the year end figures given to the Board in October 2017 for the operating period September 2016-August 2017 showed an operating deficit the extent of this deficit did not become clear until the audited accounts were submitted in April 2018. As soon as this was recognised immediate action was taken to reduce costs in the business and ensure that 2017/18 ended at worst with no deficit and at best with a small reserve. This has been achieved.

In these circumstances hard decisions had to be made including reducing staffing costs where possible. The Business Development Manager had been taken on in the full understanding that the position was only viable for as long as the business being delivered more than made up for the cost of the BDM. By June it was clear that there would be a shortfall of at least £7k, with only 46% of the revenue target achieved and a net loss of £3500 against the cost of employing the BDM, so it was agreed this arrangement should cease.

Equally the PR consultancy being used by Shakespeare's England, namely Marketing Aloud had become a very expensive service and was no longer hitting the targets set, 54% achievement in 2017/18. I had been looking at changing the service provider for some time so when the financial situation became apparent it made sense to cancel this uncontracted agreement as soon as possible and bring in the already identified replacement Advent Communications with immediate effect and at half the costs.

It was extremely unfortunate, but purely coincidental that Kate Varvedo the Marketing Manager advised that she had been offered a position with a Shakespeare's England Member who was able to offer a considerably higher salary and that she would be leaving at the end of June.

All the above led to a time of flux but the company is now back to its full team of 3 full time staff members and Advent Communications providing PR consultancy services. The role of member enrolment and account management has reverted to the in house team, where it had previously sat. The reduced Shakespeare's England Team hosted a highly successful PR Fam visit based around Food & Drink and ran the stand at The Meetings Show as previously arranged. Within a very short time of working with us Advent Communications secured BBC prime time coverage and brought in a Daily Telegraph reporter, articles to be released very shortly.

In respect of the objectives set for the 2017/18 period a 20% increase in Membership came in at 98% with 151 members against 153, Meet Membership targeted at 20 reached 21 so 105% add we also over achieved on increasing non-public-sector revenue by 20%. The target was £133,398 we reached £191,424 = 143%. This also meant that the ratio of Public sector versus non-public sector income was approx. 40:60.

How's Business Surveys have been completed for the first 3 quarters of the year and there has also been a Tourism Economic Impact Assessment carried out for Shakespeare's England (attached) showing positive movement in trips, spend and employment. Day trips were up 7.3%, overnights 1.2% the day time spend increasing by 4.6% and over night 3.46%. Over all value of tourism for the area has risen to £691million an increase of 4%, the same % increase being shown in employment rising to 12,322. A year end Members Satisfaction survey will be circulated later in October.

We also managed to end the year having secured 2 new Board Member organisations Stratford College and Dallas Burston Polo Club, thus achieving the target of 13 non-public sector Board Members.

The only area we were unable to achieve on was the Ecommerce target where only 46% of the revenue total was achieved. Much of this was as a result of our inability to sell online advertising due to the ongoing challenges with the website and poor SEO performance. We have also been unable to reach the sales of the Explorer Pass we had hoped to see, but by transferring the day to day running of this directly to Open Pass, we are looking for a better return in 2018/19. The Stay Play Explore programme reached 76% of its target. The couples programme only came onboard at the end of the year but has proved popular, which will only grow as the so Stay Play Explore programme becomes more established.

2018/19 Operating Period

The grant funding for Shakespeare's England by Stratford District Council & Warwick District Council is up for review during this financial year and Warwickshire County Council have already advised an anticipated 80% reduction in their previous 3 year funding. All DMOs face the challenge of identifying and securing alternative funding streams as the pressures on public money continue to grow, so this will be a key focus for the organisation. We will be keeping close control of all outgoings to rebuild the companies reserves and actively looking for new revenue streams and following up alternative ways of funding a DMO in times of diminishing local authority funding.

Increased cross regional cooperation is essential with huge opportunities for further growth over the next 4 years if we maximise the potential from Coventry European City of Sport 2019, Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 and Birmingham Commonwealth Games in 2022. Consideration will need to be given to whether this could even mean some amalgamation of the Shakespeare's England DMO, with the West Midlands Growth Company and the Tourism body structure Coventry decides to operate within.

Our 4 Strategic Workstreams are

- 1. Objectives**
- 2. Marketing & Social Media Plan**
- 3. KPI Framework**
- 4. Key activities for the year**

Objectives

- I. Membership target 150, with a 40:30:30 split Bronze : Silver : Gold/Strategic.
- II. Attract 3rd party funding from 2 indirect tourism sources
- III. Delivery of E Commerce income above budget
- IV. Achieve 20% increase across all Digital channels
- V. Deliver revenue from MEET SE commissions, generated via Conference Desk

Below are the activities that will be undertaken to meet the objectives set:-

I. 150 Members with a 40:30:30 split Bronze : Silver : Gold/Strategic.

Year End 2017/18 we were at 151 Members we have seen about 10% churn during the renewal period which needs redressing, but 150 is the maximum the current SE resource can reasonably manage. We are targeting a 40:30:30 split B:S:G/S to maximise income 2017/18 Current split 46:28:28 between B:S:G/S	Complete by 31 August 2019	SE Team
Recruitment & Networking events in Warwick / Leamington / Kenilworth / Stratford	Warwick – by 30/11/18 L.Spa /Ken by 28/2/19 Stratford – by 31/5/19	EL/AN
1-2-1 visits with all Members and prospects during the course of the year	5 per month per Team Member (15) x 12 = 180	SE Team

II. Attract 3rd party funding from 2 indirect tourism sources – target £10k

Share best practice with other DMOs and EHC Members to identify and attract alternative income sources	Ongoing – 31/8/19	HP
Work with CWLEP, CW Chamber & Champions to identify additional & alternative funding streams local business sponsors	Ongoing-31/8/19	HP
Watch developments around proposed Sector Deal for Tourism as part of the Government’s Industrial Strategy for funding opportunities	Ongoing-31/8/19	HP
Closer cooperation with West Midlands Growth Company & Coventry City Council & Midlands Engine to take advantage of the regional strength	Attendance at regular meetings throughout the year	HP

III. Delivery of E Commerce income above budget

Further development of SE website with new hosts Areca	Ongoing	AN
Increase visibility of Stay Play Explore products on website	Deliver £2k revenue	EK

and all Marketing channels above and below the line	31/8/19	
Increase visibility & promotion of Explorer Pass via website and all marketing channels above & below the line	Deliver £10k by 31/8/19 (includes 3 rd DEFRA grant payment)	EK
Develop & Maximise SE website advertising opportunities	Target £2,500	EK

IV. Achieve 20% increase across all Digital channels

Work closely with Areca Design to improve SEO	Monthly meetings and quarterly Board updates	EK
Targeting 100% increase in Instagram followers 1000-2000	By 31 August 2019	AN
Optimise SE twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook accounts	ongoing	AN

V. Deliver revenue from *MEET SE* commissions, generated via Conference Desk

White labelled Conference desk in conjunction with Conference Coventry & Warks		EL
<i>MEET SE</i> Trade Show attendance potentially with CC&W and WMGC	Meet GB 5/19 Meeting Show 6/19. Confex Man (tbc) 7/19	SE Team
Business Tourism Familiarisation Visit	By Feb 2019	SE Team

Marketing & Social Media Plan

Please see separate attachments

KPI Framework

Please see separate attachments

Key activities for the Year

1. Repositioning Shakespeare's England with its:

- **Members** to ensure full understanding of the benefits a DMO brings to the area, including
 - Regular Newsletters – Members every 2 months
 - Trade 3 x a year
 - Consumer – quarterly
- Facebook Private closed user SE Members Group
- Weekly PR activity round ups
- Advent Communications presenting at all Tourism Forums

The Team will be targeted with far closer account management of Members, each Team Members will visit at least 5 members a month for a 1-2-1, so that all members will have had at least 1 personal meeting with an SE Team Member during this financial year.

- **New Members**

We will be holding a series of 'Getting to Know Your DMO' evenings in our key towns inviting existing and prospective members to an informal evening networking session. The target would be for

at least 30 attendees at each session and to convert 10% of the overall attendance into new Members. The Quarterly Tourism Forum's will continue as normal.

- **The Board**

I would like to invite all Board Members to take part in the 'Getting to Know ...' evenings where possible. Their presence at the Tourism Forum's is always well received by Members and I would encourage you to attend at least 2 of these in the year if you can. With Grant Funding coming up for renewal I would urge all Board Members to lobby their local counsellor on the merits of supporting the DMO especially at such an important time for the region with both City of Culture and Commonwealth Games both falling within the next funding period.

- **Website**

The website is now being hosted by Areca Communications, which has helped stabilise the situation. However it has also confirmed our fears that a searchable membership directory was ever created. Areca can do this but there is inevitably a charge. Approximately £2000k. An allowance of £3500 for digital platform upgrade is included in the proposed budget so this could be covered. This would allow Members to go to a members' log-in area where they can submit and amend their own entries, add a gallery to their membership page, social media links and location features. What we have been promising for the last 12 months. We could also add an event content form, which after completion is sent directly to SE for checking and uploading.

Our SEO position is 60% of where it was prior to July 2017 so this also needs serious attention. The quote I have received to date to rectify and manage this going forward is between £6-£7k which is unaffordable, so I will be pursuing other options. A stretching SEO target has been set so a solution will be found

2. Railways

- **Chiltern**

capitalise on the opportunities that will arise from the re introduction of regular direct trains between Marylebone and Stratford-upon-Avon

Run a minimum of 1, preferably 2 Member's poster campaigns along the Marylebone / Moor Street line

Hold a 'station' takeover day at Marylebone at the beginning of the Summer

- **West Midlands Railways.** Engage with the new franchisee

Work with them on the redevelopment & branding of Stratford-upon -Avon station

Work with them on the way finding between the station & Town

Develop a rover ticket to include rail & Explorer Pass &/or rail and Stay Play Explore

Station takeover with them at Snow Hill

Sponsor the Community Rail Awards that WMR are hosting

3. DMO

Continue as joint lead on the Product Development Priority as well as supporting the DMO Chair and consultant in all areas of implementation. We have lost one of the joint leads on the Skills & Welcome Priority so identifying a replacement is an immediate priority

4. Discover England Funds

Continue to play a prominent role and provide in kind support in the final year delivery of the following 4 Discover England Fund projects, though SE are no longer financially contributing as a result of SE's reduction in funding, all DEF leads have agreed that due to the previous levels of support and offer of in kind support between now and April 2019 SE can continue to be fully included

- **England Originals (formerly The Collection) led by England's Historic Cities**

Delivering 5 distinct itineraries, Wall to Wall; Treasure Trove Tour; Time Travellers Tour; Western Wanderers Tour and Thinkers and Writers Tour which is the one we are specifically involved in alongside Oxford and Worcester. The itineraries provide links around 15 of UK's Historic Cities by rail, so that visitors can plan a multi-destination visit. There will be an information hub built around

each Tour suggesting places to eat, places to stay, attractions to visit, as well as additional trips & tours to experience. Primary target market USA

- **Creating England’s Literary Legends, led by Visit Hampshire**

(previously Visit Nottingham) This project also targeting the US travel trade with literary-themed bookable itineraries based in the three locations, Nottinghamshire, Hampshire and Shakespeare’s England, has been extended from a year 2 project to a year 3 project to capitalise on the desire for themed itineraries which can then be rolled out to other areas. There are opportunities here for expansion to include George Eliot as part of the 2019 Bi-centenary.

- **England’s Waterways (Majestic Waterways), led by West Midlands Growth Company**

A year 2 & 3 project developing bookable product using the Midlands waterways as the catalyst for boating, walking and cycling holidays, aimed at the German and Dutch Markets. Covering the Warwick Ring, Birmingham, Black Country and Stratford Canals. Visitors will also be provided with push information directing them to places of special interest within easy access of the waterway they are exploring, driving additional visitation to visitor attractions, eateries and accommodation providers, as well as towns and cities

- **Experience England led by London & Partners.**

Encouraging long haul clients, especially those on Business to use open jaw flights into Birmingham and London so they spend time in both locations and experience what each has to offer.

Shakespeare’s England is also still a partner in the **England’s Heartland Gateway Project** alongside, BHX, West Midlands Growth Company, VisitBritain and Peak District & Derbyshire, however this has been temporarily put on hold due to the delay and now demise of Primera Air

5. Trade & Consumer Shows Leisure & Business Tourism

Shakespeare’s England will be present at

Group Travel & Leisure Show – NEC October 2018
 VisitBritain Business Exchange – London October 2018
 World Travel Market – Excel, November 2018
 Excursions – Alexandra Palace, January 2018
 UKinbound Conference – February 2019
 ITB – Berlin March 2019
 MeetGB – April 2019
 ExploreGB – Harrogate, May 2019
 The Meeting Show – Olympia, June 2019
 Confex - Manchester , July 2019 (tbc)

Additional International promotion of SE will be carried out by SBT & RSC

Destination Britain North America – September - RSC
 Destination Britain China - November - SBT

6. PR

Advent Communications will be our Media Consultants for the 2018/19 period with a review at the end of 6 months. We will continue to bring journalists into the region on individual and group visits as well as hosting our own themed PR Fam Visits. They will deliver regular Press Releases as well as acting upon all opportunities that arise to promote Shakespeare’s England, across print and social media, TV and radio

Press & Trade Pass

To continue to promote the benefits of the press & trade passes to SE Members and encourage those that are not already in the scheme to join. At the end of 2017/18 we had 45 Members in the scheme I would like to see this as at least 50% of the overall Membership.

7. City of Sport(2-19) City of Culture (2021) Commonwealth Games (2022)

SE will ensure they interact wherever possible with the City of Sport, City of Culture and CG Teams as well as CW Chamber, LEP, WCC and any other bodies who are getting involved with these big events to ensure we form part of the overall programme on offer and ensure our members can guarantee additional business on the back of them and on into the legacy with the regions profile being seriously heightened

Accounts

End of Year Accounts supplied under separate cover along with Proposed Budget for period 2018/19