



EXMOOR TOURISM AGM – 3 MARCH 2016 REPORT ON 2015 BY CHAIRMAN, EVELYN STACEY

A summary of 2015, when the work of the Exmoor Tourism Partnership and Exmoor Tourism Association were combined to provide a lead body for the industry, backed by businesses and public organisations.

Meetings

Executive Committee met formally in March, May (away day to plan strategy), July, October, December (focussing on placing of contracts) and January 2016. Initial meetings concentrated on agreeing strategic direction, identifying members' skills and commitments to varying aspects of work and identifying a list of key organisations with which to liaise and develop partnerships, together with a plan to achieve this. The Executive Committee adopted role descriptions for its members as part of improved governance arrangements and a Development Sub Committee recommended role descriptions and contract terms for all contractor roles, starting recruitment and appointments towards the end of the 2015.

Grateful thanks to SW Lakes Trust, My Holiday Cottage Marketing, the Yarn Market Hotel, Exmoor NPA and West Somerset Council for the use of their facilities for meetings and events.

Sub-Groups - marketing and membership - met as and when required, making recommendations to the Executive Committee and having authority to co-opt skills from the wider industry for greatest benefit. Local authority officers, our 'advisers,' attended meetings.

Key aims agreed for Exmoor Tourism for the period to end of December 2016 Progress in red

- Exist to and be effective in increasing visitor numbers to Greater Exmoor as well as becoming an effective lobby body. **Recorded excellent results from marketing campaign planned in Autumn 2014 'Somerset and Exmoor Great Escapes' featuring over 50 experiences promoted in a full colour supplement placed in magazines such as Country File, online marketing and a popular web video. Utilised PR service funded by local partners and the COOL Tourism project and initiated local PR with support from Clare O'Connor at ENPA. Started to recruit Ambassadors to spread the word outside the area. 2016 onwards: agreed funding and strategic destination marketing plan with partners and appointed Marketing & PR/Social Media agency for 2 one year contracts.**
- The 'go to' place for Exmoor tourism businesses, providing a network of likeminded people and signposting training, advice and business development opportunities. **Set up trade website, liaised with WS Council on training initiatives, circulated newsletters on wide range of topics. Publicised vastly increased web statistics from greatly improved Visit Exmoor web site; set up Coleridge Way website. Promoted brand guidelines. Ran Exmoor Exchange.**
- Members will understand what the Executive Committee is doing to represent their interests and to improve opportunities for their businesses. **Members have been asked for their views on what services they are looking for. Executive Committee team met members at Dunster Show. Conference has been planned as a showcase for plans and to raise awareness of what will be on offer.**
- Develop strengthened relationships with local authority partners and agreement for continuing support from the advisers. Service level agreements with local authority partners and related two year agreed financial framework. **Working well together and agreements in place. Member of the Exmoor Consultative and Parish Forum and the Exmoor Partnership Plan Forum.**
- Have a robust business/development plan in place, contributing to the wider area destination plan and will have revisited its strategy for the following three years. **A priority for 2016, with key links such as European Charter for Sustainable Tourism and Darks Skies Reserve.**
- Have in place a paid professional (organisation or individual) for either a one or two year contract to coordinate and manage the development of ET's membership, raising funds, advertising, web site, social media and sponsorship growth, with work programmes in place to be completed within agreed timescales. **Elke Winzer appointed as Tourism Development Manager initially one year.**

- Have a seat at the national table and be in regular discussion with our partners in North Devon and Somerset, the AONBs and the key tourist attraction operators (eg NT/SWLT/Butlins). **Established Exmoor Tourism Network with ENPA and presented on success to date and forward plans. Met Chairmen/Chief Executives of neighbouring tourism organisations, attended SW Tourism Network meetings, liaised nationally, including applying for DMO recognition. Established working relationship with Visit Cornwall, including sharing best practice and peer discussion for our new Development Manager. Visit England is being subsumed into Visit Britain and is to focus on product development rather than marketing. Given that the Destination Management Organisation forum may not continue, Exmoor Tourism has been engaging direct with Visit England and Visit Britain in the transition, in particular seeking to influence the development of the new Discover England Challenge Fund. We have been involved actively in the planning for £5m South West Tourism Growth Fund supporting overseas marketing.**

Other Significant Activity

- Agreed a succession plan and started recruitment of new Chairman and Treasurer
- Membership of the Hinkley Tourism Development Action Partnership, with Somerset Tourism Association, West Somerset Council, Exmoor NPA, attending meetings and seminars representing Exmoor tourism businesses. This will provide PR opportunities going forward including a new 'Secret Somerset and Exmoor' campaign
- Invited by Somerset Council to attend New Nuclear Local Authorities' Group, working together with Anglesey tourism representatives
- Gaining sponsorship (first time) from South West Water for two year Exmoor COAST Festival, with partnership funding from Exmoor NPA and SW Lakes Trust. Underwriting the Walking Festival. Assisting with promotion of Snowdrop Valley Festival
- 2015 trade shows and events where Exmoor was promoted by a team led by the Yarn Market Hotel and West Somerset Railway and where some funding was provided by partners, included
 - Utrecht – Vakantiebeurs - Jan
 - Excursions, Alexandra Palace, London - Jan
 - National Rail Museum events show (with West Somerset Railway) - Jan
 - SW Group Travel Show, Weston Super Mare - Feb
 - Best of Britain and Ireland (BOBI) – Birmingham - March
 - MAMA - March
 - Great for Groups South, Kempton Park - April
 - North Somerset Show - May
 - Great for Groups North, Old Trafford Cricket Ground - Sept
 - WI Centenary, Harrogate - Sept
 - Somerset Tourism Expo on WS Railway – Oct
 - Group Leisure, NEC - Oct

Applied to new sources for funding support for 2016, 7 shows already attended but others where volunteers would be very welcome to join the promotional efforts include

- Best of British NEC - March
- IMEX Frankfurt – April
- Great for Groups South – Middlesex – April
- North Somerset – Wraxhall – May
- Diversify Great for Groups - July
- UK Inbound – Bristol – Aug
- Great for Groups North – Manchester – September
- Group Leisure and Travel – Birmingham – Oct
- Great for Groups Central – Birmingham - Nov

Conclusion

This has been a year of change – consolidation of previous plans, identifying our priorities, establishing a new way of working in partnership with local authorities, putting volunteers' skills to best use, assembling funds and recruiting a skilled team to take our agenda forward. We are now in a good position to represent the best interests of Greater Exmoor's tourism businesses, whether involved in hospitality, retail, service provision, outdoor activities, attractions or accommodation.