

Business Plan

1 Apr 2017 – 31 March 2018

VisitBrighton is the official tourism unit within Brighton & Hove City Council. The unit has three main areas of activity; marketing Brighton & Hove and the surrounding area to domestic and overseas visitors (VisitBrighton Marketing), selling the City as a destination for conferences, meeting & events (VisitBrighton Convention Bureau) and providing assistance to visitors prior to and during their visit to the City (VisitBrighton Visitor Services).

This document details the planned work VisitBrighton will undertake in the 2017-18 financial year. Whilst areas of activity are detailed separately for clarity, the plan informs the work of the whole VisitBrighton team who operate as a single business unit.

Operation Overview 2016-17

2016-17 was a busy and productive year for VisitBrighton. Key outputs included:

Partnership

- 532 businesses working in partnership with VisitBrighton
- 85% of businesses renewing their partnership with VisitBrighton

Marketing

- Over 96 press & media visits hosted
- Featured in 202 UK articles/features including; The Guardian, The independent, GQ Magazine, National Geographic Traveller and Woman magazine
- Featured in over 5177 overseas articles/features including: Cathay Pacific Inflight Magazine (Japan), Die Welt (Germany) and Forbes.com (USA)
- 9 Media Briefings delivered
- 1.5m unique visitors, 1.99m sessions and 6.2m page views on visitbrighton.com
- 50,157 Twitter followers of LoveBrighton (as of 31 Mar 17)
- 20,888 Facebook likes LoveBrighton (as of 31 Mar 17)
- 4,682 Instagram followers (as of 31 Mar 17)
- 12 consumer e-newsletters & e-shots delivered to 40,000 consumer database, with a 20% average open rate
- Partnership campaigns with VisitBritain and Tourism South East (Go! China and Near Europe Trade)

Convention Bureau

- 149 conference / event enquiries received
- 53 conferences / events confirmed for the city
- £42 million economic benefit generated for Brighton & Hove
- 10,000 bed nights placed via the Conference Delegate Accommodation Booking Scheme, with a total value of £979,000

Summary of Recent Visitor Trends

Research shows that Brighton & Hove, through the work of VisitBrighton and partner organisations, has been successful in maintaining its position in the market place as a leading UK tourist destination. The Economic Impact Assessment 2015 (produced by Tourism South East) reports the total expenditure by visitors to Brighton & Hove is estimated to have been in the region of £858.1 million in 2015, which although buoyant, supporting approximately 15,683 FTE jobs and 21,374 across Brighton & Hove (around 17% of the labour market), reflects a fall of 1.7% compared to 2014.

The fall in expenditure was accounted for by a fall in tourism day trips in 2015, reflecting the regional picture. Following, year-on-year growth, volume dropped from 10 million tourism day trips in 2014 to 9.1 million tourism day trips in 2015 (fall of 9.0%). Trip expenditure fell by 6.4%.

Overall, an estimated 1,456,000 staying trips were spent in Brighton & Hove in 2014, of which around 1,069,000 were made by domestic visitors (73%) and 387,000 by overseas visitors (27%). Compared to 2014, total overnight trip volume increased by 1.5%.

Overnight trips resulted in an estimated 4,994,000 visitor nights spent in Brighton & Hove in 2015, up by 1.4% compared to 2014. Staying visitors spent in total £526 million on their trip, up by 1.5% compared to 2014. Domestic overnight trip spend increased by 1.1% and overseas visitor trip spend increased by 1.8%.

Operating Context / Future Trends

The operating context of tourism is evolves quickly, creating both opportunities and challenges, as demonstrated by Brexit in 2016. Ongoing pressures on Local Government finances mean that it is imperative that VisitBrighton continually seeks out innovative service delivery in order to maximise budgets whilst continuing to drive revenue streams. VisitBrighton will continue to focus on activity that is central to our core function, to drive awareness of Brighton & Hove to leisure and business tourists both locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

In 2017 Britain is expected to see the biggest rise in tourist spending in four years and a surge in overseas visitor numbers, partly thanks to the slump in the value of the pound since the Brexit vote. Overseas visitors are expected to spend £24.1bn next year, up 8% on 2016, according to VisitBritain.

Just over 38.1 million tourists are expected to enter the UK, up 4%, on 2016, drawn by celebrations such as the 20th anniversary of the publication of the first Harry Potter book and the 200th year since the death of Jane Austen, as well as the potential to snap up bargain holidays

given the weakness of the pound; the 10%-plus fall in the value of the pound against the euro and the dollar since the EU referendum in June 2016 means tourists' budgets will now stretch further.

Domestically, latest results from the GB Day Visits Survey, analysing domestic day visits, reported strong growth from Jan – Nov 2016, with year on year increases of 23% and 20% respectively, in terms of volume and value of day visits. During the 9 month period, 2,4 billion three hour plus day visits with a value of £68.1 billion pound were made. VisitEngland predicts that 2017 will continue to see domestic day visit numbers rise, whilst the 'staycation' market will stay buoyant, a trend which again may be attributed to the weakness of the pound.

Business Tourism

The UK Conference and Meeting Survey 2015 (UKCAMS) evidenced the UK conference market growing 10% in 2014 with an estimated £21.6 billion in venue and destination direct spend. UKCAMS reported that the increase was primarily due to an increase in event size as rates remained static.

The lack of growth in rates achieved suggests that the market is still highly competitive, a sentiment which VisitBrighton echoes. Our competitor destinations are witnessing inward investment with new facilities opening in 2015. Liverpool opened the Exhibition Centre, augmenting existing venues Echo Arena and BT Convention Centre, Conference Centre Dublin opened and the Hilton has opened the first of two new properties in Bournemouth. Conference expenditure is still under intense scrutiny and meeting planners are constantly seeking best value, applying significant budgetary leverage.

VisitBrighton Convention Bureau echoed the findings of UKCAMS, reporting a buoyant 2015-16 with higher than anticipated levels of enquiries and subsequent conversion, but static year-on-year direct economic benefit. With this in mind we must focus on increasing both the volume and value of business events coming to the City. We need to ensure there is an even more collaborative approach to bidding for conferences and events, and focus on attracting both domestic and international events which deliver greatest economic benefit.

The 'Intellectual Capitals' concept continued to dominate through 2016-17. Conference organisers are becoming increasingly engaged in identifying and subsequently locating events in cities that are considered to be aligned to their subject matter and areas of research, enabling events to engage with the local research communities. Competitor destinations including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle and Liverpool are specifically focusing conference sales initiatives on their sectorial areas of expertise, delivering impressive results. The VisitBrighton focus moving forward will be to target events that match our clusters of expertise and inspire similar events to make Brighton their destination of choice during the year ahead.

Partnership & Advertising

Overview

Over the last year we have seen growth in the number of businesses opting to use VisitBrighton as an essential part of their marketing strategy; over 530 businesses are now in the partnership scheme, with a rebook rate of over 80%.

Key Market Sectors

Brighton & Hove

Tourism sector led businesses including:

- Guest Accommodation – Hotels, B&Bs, campsites, hostels
- Self-Catering accommodation – agencies, private owners, universities
- Attractions and activity providers
- Entertainment venues, pubs, bars and night clubs
- Shops
- Restaurants, cafes
- Language schools
- Conference venues
- Conference services
- Outdoor event organisers

Sussex

- Attractions
- Accommodation – larger spa hotels and self-catering agencies
- Vineyards
- Campsites
- Restaurants
- Shops

Strategic Organisations

Gatwick, National Express, local cab companies, train companies, other travel companies

Non-Tourism Businesses

Create a directory on VisitBrighton for non-tourism businesses such as estate agents, digital agencies, solicitors etc, and offering them a reduced package of benefits to include their listing and attendance at 2 Visitbrighton networking events a year

Partnership Lead Generation

New Brochure

- New sales brochure – available in hard copy and available on line
- To be updated in Dec 17

Partnership Rebook

- New partnership year will start April 1st
- Operating an opt out system
- Businesses which join at other times of the year will be invoice for a full 12 months from date of joining
- All partners encouraged to review their pages on VB.com and send us new images and text etc to update.
- All partners supplied with provider form to update their facilities, room prices etc.
- Partnership and advertising fees for 2018-19 to be reviewed in late summer 2017

Partner Events

VB will continue to host networking events for partners and will also use this opportunity to invite non partner businesses with a view to cultivating new relationships.

The events will also continue to include a business element in terms of external guest speakers and a desk for each area of VisitBrighton for businesses to ask advice – marketing/ conference/ partnership:

- July –Malmaison Brighton
- September – TBC
- Christmas - TBC

Industry Events

We will be attending:

- Sussex Business Expo @ Fontwell Park in May and
- Brighton Business Expo @ Brighton Racecourse in October

We will research other local or regional events with a view to attend and sell the partnership scheme to new businesses.

Local Industry Organisations

We will continue to work collaboratively with local organisations to optimise partner benefits promote the partnership scheme to new businesses including (but not exhaustively): The Bid; North Laine Traders; Hove Business Association; Brighton Marina and Restaurants Brighton.

Within Brighton & Hove City Council we will forge stronger links with the Regeneration and Economic Development teams and develop joint marketing initiatives with the Brighton Centre.

We will promote advertising opportunities to larger events coming to the city either directly or through festival organisers.

Advertising: Optimising Partnership

We will offer a wide range of advertising opportunities across our website and in print these include:

- Hero images
- 'We Recommend' banners
- Website section banners
- Dedicated consumer newsletters
- City Map
- Delegate Deal Cards
- Shopping, Eating & Drinking Guide
- Mix and match of any of the above
- Tiered packages (Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze)

Bespoke options are also available, allowing Partners to enhance their presence to market, over and above the basic partnership.

On-line leisure accommodation booking

On-line bookings continue to drive bookings to a number of B&Bs and smaller hotels. In recent years the volume has dropped due to competition from OTAs such as bookings.com, last minute and more recently, TripAdvisor. VisitBrighton is one of the few destination websites in the UK still offering this service to their Partners.

During 2017 we will:

- Continue to offer new and existing accommodation providers training sessions, refreshers and generally encourage them to use our booking service with the message that we still only take 10% commission, guaranteeing that commissions are channelled back into the work of VisitBrighton
- Work closer with our accommodation provider in-house reservation teams to ensure maximum benefits are achieved
- Offer the option of 'polling' to accommodation providers who provide allocations to encourage potential bookers to remain within vb.com to confirm their booking
- Continue to review and assess market developments

Partner Communications

The VisitBrighton Partnership will continue to engage with Partners through:

- Face to face catch up meetings
- Networking events
- Monthly newsletter
- Request for information for specific marketing campaigns
- Sharing of Partner launch events
- Sharing of Partner exclusive offers via Friday Treats email and dedicated e-shots
- Sharing 3rd party opportunities to supply offers, training courses or advertising

Targets

- *Enrol 560 partner in 17-18*
- *Achieve re-book rate of 85%*

Marketing

While the following section has been split into Online and Offline activity this is purely for ease of understanding. Both areas of marketing will work in tandem with one another towards promoting the city and our partners to support the visitor economy.

In addition to the activities detailed below, throughout the year we will be exploring other potential opportunities. All VisitBrighton Partners will be updated on additional activity and opportunities throughout the year.

Offline Marketing

Media & PR

Our media and public relations activity is an essential part of the marketing mix as it enables us to communicate the City's key selling points and stories in a cost effective manner and deliver the greatest levels of Return on Investment.

Domestic

- Maintain PR agency to ensure Brighton & Hove remains 'top of mind' for UK leisure media. A PR Plan has been agreed to ensure that Brighton & Hove benefits from the staycation trend surrounding Brexit
- Look at using other developments / activities in the city as news 'hooks' for stories, such as the 150th anniversary of Brighton Dome and the new accommodation at Proud Country House

- Work with VisitEngland, TSE and Love Sussex to maintain & raise awareness to domestic visitors

Press releases – Themed and seasonal throughout the year to deliver information at key periods and to keep the city in the minds of the press.

Media Briefings – Containing latest news and major events distributed to media.

Press Trips – Encourage media to experience the city to write about different elements of the city's tourism offer with a particular focus on encouraging overnight stays and breaks.

Overseas

- Maintain PR agency in Germany to maximise awareness in this key market; an 'Activation Plan' detailing all German PR activity for 2017 has been produced
- Maintain PR agency to represent VisitBrighton in China to maximise awareness in a key growing market, offering travel trade support to potential Chinese leisure buyers
- Ensure Brighton & Hove fits into international campaigns run by Visit Britain for example 2017 is the Year of Literature due to Jane Austen, Sherlock Holmes and Harry Potter anniversaries
- Participate in international campaigns led by Visit Britain and Tourism South East – including 'Go! China' campaign
- Participate in Near Europe marketing campaign in association with Tourism South East
- Participate in Vakantiebeurs, Netherlands (leading European consumer show) showcasing Brighton to 120,000 Dutch and Belgian visitors
- Host international media to showcase Brighton & Hove worldwide

Targets

- *Host 90 press trips*
- *Total coverage AVE value – £5 million*
- *Five collaborative campaigns with partner bodies*

Publishing Collaborations

London is the biggest source market for visitors to Brighton & Hove. In 2017 VisitBrighton will continue partnerships with key London visitor publications:

- **London Planner / Where Magazine** – schedule of editorial and advertising agreed to include Brighton & Hove in these publications
- **London Visitor Magazine** – schedule of editorial / advertising agreed to maintain & enhance a dedicated 'Brighton Visitor' section in this publication. Content will run year round.

Target

- *Three publishing collaborations with print media outlet*

Print Items

VisitBrighton will continue to support our Partners through the production of 'core' print items to inform and assist visitors on their trip to the city.

- **Bedroom Browser** – continued quarterly publication throughout 2017/18
- **Eating, Drinking & Shopping Guide**

Partner Marketing Group

VisitBrighton will establish a Partner Marketing Group giving key stakeholders from a variety of business sectors the opportunity to share good practice and actively engage in VisitBrighton's Marketing Strategy.

Online Marketing

In 2017 we will focus on developing a SEO strategy to build and grow the visitor figures for both the leisure and conference sections of the website. We will also develop a social media strategy to complement the overall marketing plan.

Key Developments:

- **VisitBrighton Blog** – Currently the VisitBrighton blog sits outside of the main website and uses the platform Blogspot. In 2017 we will bring the content of the blog into the main site.
- **Tripadvisor** – In 2017 VisitBrighton will take ownership of the Brighton destination pages of Tripadvisor. VisitBrighton will have branding on the site and a link to www.visitbrighton.com and a new destination video.

Target

- *1.75m unique visitors to vb.com*
- *2.2m sessions on vb.com*
- *7m page views on cb.com*
- *50,000 consumer contacts in database*
- *Average e-newsletter open rate of 25%*
- *Facebook – 25,000 friends by*
- *Twitter – 55,000 followers by*
- *Instagram – 5,500 followers*

Photography, Video and Mixed Media

We will be launching a new image library in conjunction with Visit Britain featuring functionality and a wider selection of images. In addition to this we will also be developing new video content to be used on the site and through our social media channels.

Thematic Campaigns

Scheduled campaigns include, hooking into key campaigns marketed via national tourist boards VisitBritain and VisitEngland, include:

April / May – Festival City

Experience a festival break in May with the Brighton Festival; Brighton Fringe; Artists Open Houses and the Great Escape taking over the city in May. This year the festivals will be targeting a younger audience as the Brighton Festival will feature its youngest ever Guest Artistic Director.

June / July / August – A Regency Summer

There will be three exhibitions running at the Royal Pavilion and Brighton Museum & Art Gallery over the summer celebrating the Regency era in Brighton. The campaign will include the bicentenary of Jane Austen's death and the 150th anniversary of the Brighton Dome.

July / August – LGBT Brighton

2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the UK. We will highlight the fact that Brighton is, and always has been, a welcoming city and that the Brighton Pride and Trans Pride festivals are still raising awareness of LGBT issues today.

September – Health & Wellbeing

Linking in with the development of the Proud Country House (Stanmer House) into a hotel and spa retreat we will highlight ways in which to plan and book a Health & Wellbeing break in Brighton and the surrounding Sussex countryside.

October – Sherlock Holmes

October marks the 125th anniversary of the publication of The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes which introduced the world to this iconic character. We will explore Sussex's links to Sherlock Holmes and other key literary figures.

November / December – Winter in Brighton

Promote the city as the perfect destination for a pre-Christmas break thanks to the independent shopping and exciting array of events including the Royal Pavilion Ice rink and Burning the Clocks.

January – Get Active

Promote the city as the ideal place to kick start your new healthy regime with an activity break including water & beach sports; country hikes and bike rides.

February – Romantic breaks

Position the city as the perfect Valentine's Day destination with a luxury break in the city complete with fine dining and plenty of jewellery shops for those tempted to pop the question...

Conferences

Key Market Sectors

Domestic, European & International Associations

This is the key performing area for the Convention Bureau is the Association sector, accounting for 51% of enquiries in 2016-17. Bids for conferences in this sector require cross-City collaboration, which VisitBrighton is uniquely placed to secure.

This sector is of critical importance in terms of value, length of stay and delegate attendance numbers; 24% of enquiries had delegate numbers between 300 – 500 people, so it will continue to be our primary sales focus.

Repeat Business

Securing repeat business is an effective way for the Convention Bureau to deliver city-wide economic benefit as well as reaffirming position as a viable business destination across industry sectors. In 2016-17, 19% of all business confirmed by VisitBrighton was repeat business.

Sales, Research & Lead Generation

Competitor destination business analysis

To secure market share the Convention Bureau will research events and conferences held in competitor destinations, both domestically and internationally, to identify new business and generate new enquiries.

Ambassador Programme

In 2016-17 10% to the total enquiry count and 7% to the level of confirmed business for the Convention Bureau originated from the Ambassador Programme.

Brighton's excellence across a broad spectrum of academic, medical and scientific disciplines is harnessed by the VisitBrighton Conference Ambassador Programme, which provides support and advice to individuals who are interested in attracting a national or international meeting in their specialist area to the city.

In order to further the reach of the Programme we will:

- Organise a series of networking events for BSMS, University of Sussex, University of Brighton and BSUH to harness the enthusiasm of new Ambassadors and to cultivate existing contacts
- Utilise ICCA Data to identify international conferences that have the potential to rotate to Brighton and secure Ambassadors accordingly to spearhead bids
- Organise and deliver four Ambassador Networking Events

Sales Calls

Proactive sales call activity will continue to be a key area of lead generation activity.

In 2016-17 pro-active call initiatives generated 23% of the total enquiry figure.

Exhibitions & Events

The Convention Bureau will be exhibiting at:

- IMEX, Frankfurt
- UK Meeting Show, UK
- VisitBritain International Business Exchange (VIBE)
- C&IT Corporate Forum

VisitBrighton will provide an opportunity for our conference level partners to join us at these exhibitions, where applicable.

The Convention Bureau will take a critical view at any other exhibiting opportunities that arise during the year. The VisitBrighton Sales Activity Calendar (Appendix I) indicates exhibitions / shows / industry events VisitBrighton will attend. The calendar may be subject to change during the year.

Familiarisation Visits

This face-to-face and city-wide activity has a proven track record in delivering conference business for Brighton & Hove, so we will continue with this highly effective sales technique.

- VisitBrighton will deliver 3 familiarisation

Account Management

- Regular client engagement will be maintained throughout the year with existing and potential clients
- Cross-city account management will be maintained with each partner assigned a team member to liaise with to ensure comprehensive understanding of processes and live enquiries

Conference Social Media

During 2017-18 Twitter will continue to be the social media focus for the Convention Bureau via @BrightonCVB. A comprehensive week by week schedule will be compiled:

- Welcoming in-coming conferences and engaging with attendees
- Promoting conference delegate accommodation booking service
- Promoting partner venues

Convention Bureau Targets

- *Attract 210 conference enquiries*
- *Convert 70 enquiries into confirmed conferences*
- *Deliver economic benefit of £40m from enquiries converted*

Conference Delegate Accommodation Booking Service

In 2016-17 the Delegate Accommodation Booking Service provided its service to 55 events that came to the city and made use of 39 VisitBrighton accommodation partners.

By securing competitive rates and offering an easy to use booking platform, it is a reliable and effective way to meet the accommodation needs of the delegates who plan to visit Brighton.

In 2017-18 we will:

- Offer new and existing accommodation providers training sessions, webinars and refreshers
- Ensure conference organisers are promoting the Conference Delegate Booking Site on their respective registration sites to achieve optimum booking numbers
- Work with BHCC Outdoor Events Team to promote our service
- Forge closer links with the universities, Brighton & Sussex University Hospitals and Brighton & Sussex Medical School
- Proactively research , meetings and conferences that are coming to the city or in the neighbouring regions to offer VB CDABS

Convention Bureau Partnerships

Having strong partnerships with local, national and international organisations is instrumental in helping the Convention Bureau achieve a number of its objectives and targets.

International

- Work with VisitBritain's overseas representatives to provide up-to-date information for their international conference organisers.
- Strengthen relationships with VisitBritain's Business Visits and Events team
- Work proactively with International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA)

National

- Be an active member of the Meetings Industry Association (MIA) Destination Group
- Work collaboratively with Tourism South East (TSE) to promote the 'Meet Beyond London' brand and be active in the Business Destination Group
- Participate in the 'Gang Network' , knowledge sharing with peer Ambassador Programme destinations

Local

- Meet biannually with individual property representatives to assess current needs, demand periods, trends and future plans
- Hold quarterly Sales Manager Meetings to provide a networking forum for City Sales Managers

Conference PR & Marketing

Work proactively with industry publications to stimulate:

- Features in key conference & business media titles eg Meetings & Incentive Travel, Conference & Incentive Travel etc
- Support key features with targeted advertising

Appendix I

VisitBrighton Activity Calendar Apr 2017 – Mar 2018

Additional events/activity will/may be added or altered as we progress through the year

Event	Date
Host VisitBritain / VisitEngland Press & Marketing team <i>Familiarisation visit to enhance product knowledge</i>	April 2017
Exhibit @ IMEX Frankfurt <i>Global leading exhibition for MICE market</i>	16 – 18 May 2017
Ambassador Programme Networking Event <i>Hosting local academic, medical and scientific professionals to inspire them to consider Brighton as a conference destination</i>	May 2017
VisitBrighton Familiarisation Visit <i>Welcoming potential MICE clients to Brighton</i>	June 2017
Exhibit with partners @ UK Meeting Show Olympia, London <i>Premier event for the UK inbound and outbound meetings industry</i>	13 – 15 June 2017
Exhibit @ Labour Party Conference Brighton Centre <i>Provide visitor information and promote destination for future conferences</i>	24 – 27 September 2017
Participate in VisitBritain's International Business Exchange (VIBE) London <i>Opportunity to network with international travel trade buyers</i>	October 2017
Ambassador Programme Networking Event <i>Hosting local academic, medical and scientific professionals to inspire them to consider Brighton as a conference destination</i>	November 2017
Brighton UnConventional ~ City-wide Fam Trip <i>In conjunction with conference partners host 50-60 MICE buyers across the City</i>	November 2017

VisitEngland PR Workshop & Meet the Media	November 2017
Exhibit @ C&IT Corporate Forum <i>Network with buyers and PCO's</i>	Feb 2018
VisitBrighton Familiarisation Visit <i>Welcoming potential MICE clients to Brighton</i>	March 2018