



Accommodation Focus Group – Tuesday 18th September 2018

Imperial Hotel, Torquay 2pm

Present: Sarah Hemingway, Carolyn Custerson (ERBID), Nigel Makin (NM), Jacqui Carlin-Wells (JCW), Gemma Carlin-Wells (GCW), Robbie Clymo (RC), Keith Hutchinson (KH), Stuart Lewton (SL), Anthony Payne-Neale (APN), Debra Wilson (DW), Jessica Dowell (JD), Leandra Goldberg (LG), Paul Feasey,

Chair: Tony Smyth

1. Welcome & Apologies

Tony welcomed members.

Apologies were received from Angie Wright, Michele Kenhard, Vicky Pritchard-Davies and Nigel Ede.

2. Action Points and matters arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Website Performance

Carolyn provided an update:

The website is now well protected against cyberattacks, following incident earlier in the year, with NewMind providing excellent 24/7 support services. As a result of the attack website traffic went down 10-15% but there are now 75% new visitors using the site, accessing 1400 product pages and 500 content pages.

ERBID has appointed a Digital Marketing Manager, Nathan Hoare who is working hard to retrieve a greater website position with a major review of the site underway. New content has been added focussing on local heritage, Agatha Christie blog, 'Be Inspired' pages with organic traffic now being seen. There is a strong recommendation not to develop micro sites rather create blogs for each town and to update and simplify accommodation searches which show date only with a secondary level for added options: dog friendly and other criteria.

New software investment tracks that direct traffic to the home page clicks progress to the accommodation search, whilst page views also come via event information searches.

Action: Members to look at 'Be Inspired' sections to see latest website additions.

Only 134 of 514 accommodation businesses have provided their availability for the ER website with 83 bookings onsite taken. NewMind has access to 21 OTAs. Those businesses linking up to the facility are benefiting.

Action: Members to review their ER product pages and ensure content and images are up to date.

ERBID continues to market the destination, with reported May to July business activity outperforming other resorts in the region. There has been national press coverage in The Guardian and Daily Telegraph promoting the English Riviera.

4. Online bookings

Tony reported that some accommodation providers felt that the ER website was not producing online bookings and that having the 'family room' option on the search bar would be beneficial.

Product performance page data can be supplied to individuals upon requests. It is in everyone's interest to upload information and availability to drive bookings and it was proposed that an email be sent to those that haven't linked up to join.

Action: A dedicated focus group to be created to review and recommend improvements to online bookings.

5. 2019 Destination Marketing Activity review

Members provided an overview of volume, value, average spend and duration, booking trends for the season. Most reported that the early Easter period and bad weather conditions in April had affected business. During the summer period, offering room only basis with an option to pay for breakfast had worked well for The Commodore. Some saw an increase in the number of night stays rather than visitors, possibly due to the good weather. More experienced last-minute bookings, saw good June to August trade, an increase in visitors with dogs and an increase in average spend on food and beverage.

Carolyn informed members that a Group showcase initiative and 2-day visit has been organised for March 2019.

2019 draft Marketing plan, budget & rationale

This year's TV advertising campaign focussed on the Midlands area, with a positive impact showing peak website views and a 20K increase in requests for the destination guide. Research undertaken was very positive, from 1500 respondents in the over 55yrs category. A £5k edit to the footage will be made to reflect the feedback with changes to the voiceover and music, and include drone footage of local beaches. The advert will run again in March 2019 for a 6-week period during daytime TV slots and a £70k investment. This spend has given ER the edge on destination marketing, with evidence of the area outperforming the rest of the region. There will be another campaign showing beach footage on digital screens and London underground station posters.

The budget will be circulated at the next meeting following ERBID board approval.

ERBID will be sponsoring the destination guide, group marketing showcase, ongoing business conference support with RICC, Food and Drink focussed campaigns based around national themed days (National Pie Week etc) and more digital marketing campaigns with a and extended family focus.

Tripadvisor pages for Torquay, Brixham and Paignton have been sponsored, giving more control over content, with location focussed filming take place in September. £20k has been allocated for additional filming and photography for 2021 advert.

ERBID is also looking to sponsor local events, developing a £20k events support fund with criteria being drawn up to support shoulder season with a cross sector focus. The group agreed that ERBID investment in the air show would be beneficial to accommodation providers.

6. How's Business Survey/Performance monitoring & evaluation (T.Stats)

There have been 111 responses to the How's Business Survey. £4.5k investment in a new performance monitoring and evaluation platform, T.Stats is planned, which will provide a live platform to allow members to login and access data to compare performance against other UK destinations. It will also provide AirB&B data showing occupancy rates and unit information detailing the impact on this area. It will provide quantifiable data, with a town focus, breakdown of types of accommodation, enabling each business to measure their effectiveness.

Action – Carolyn to look into whether it is possible to input data into How's Business survey twice, in error.

7. AOB - ADDITIONAL POINTS DISCUSSED AT MEETING:

With regards to TV advertising, could there be an opportunity to sponsor the weather slot.

Action – CC to share National Tourism Academy breakdown of regional visitors to the group.

The homeless situation in the area continues to cause concerns and impact on tourism.

Carolyn provided an update on planning permissions and new developments relating to Park Hotel, Paignton; Corbyn Head Hotel, Torquay; Palace Hotel, Torquay; Torwood Street, Torquay and Hilton Hamilton; Premier Inn Torquay and Terrace Car Park; Paignton Harbourside and St Austell Brewery taking over Harbour Lights, Paignton.

The Young Farmers Convention is no longer returning to the resort, with a family-focussed rebrand underway.

Reminder to the members that the deadline for advertising in the new style 2019 Destination Guide is 15th October, print date 21st October for a pre-Christmas mailout.

Date of Next Meeting: 11th December, The Commodore, Paignton