

Leicester and Leicestershire Sales and Marketing Managers Meeting

9th June 2011 @ The Angel Hotel, Market Harborough

Minutes

In Attendance

Becky Miller-Barton, Angel Hotel
Rachael Betts, Welford Road Stadium
Alison Coulham, Belmont Hotel
Rosemary Craven, Quorn Country Hotel
Claire Dorman-Matthews, Imago
Jenny Howling, Sysonby Knoll Hotel
Elizabeth Payne, Kilworth House Hotel
Wendy Sibbald, Barceló Hinckley Island
Natasha Walker, The Three Swans Hotel

Janine Williams, Director of Marketing, Leicester Shire Promotions
Helen Bevins, Campaign Manager, Leicester Shire Promotions

Apologies

Mandy Dearsley, Curve theatre
Jo Dempster, Marriott Leicester
Julie Graham, Walkers Stadium
Sian Pollock, Hothorpe Hall
Trevor Miller, University of Leicester
Nicola Moss, Rockingham Castle
Heather Thornton, Best Western Premier Yew Lodge
Sally Summerscales, Best Western Group

1. Round-the-table updates

Imago

The Link Hotel has now been open for a year and is currently on budget. Burleigh Court has struggled and is running summer promotions. Christmas parties are starting to get booked. Imago attended the Academic Venue Show, which was good, and have had one enquiry converted into a booking. Imago have re-booked for Confex. Imago will be undergoing rebranding so that the 4 Imago venues have their own identity.

Welford Road Stadium

Currently at the end of financial year - not hit budget but are up 12% on last year. Christmas brochure is out in circulation. Getting large amounts of bookings for Asian weddings. Business seems to be picking up slightly.

Belmont Hotel

The hotel is up on budget. Business is going well on room bookings, but functions are quiet. July is good for wedding bookings, but August is very quiet. Christmas brochure has been printed - this year will be a 1930's theme.

Angel Hotel

This year is good for weddings. Angel Hotel has agreed with Brooke House College for people booking weddings to have photos taken in their grounds. Next years wedding bookings are looking good. Christmas brochure is available online. Accommodation bookings have been good this year. The hotel now has a 'History of The Angel Hotel' on sale.

Barceló Hinckley Island

April was a poor for bookings. Residential conference bookings were down in May. IPEX is moving from the NEC to Excel - which will have a massive effect on bookings. June is looking busy - running an offer for £25 DDR. Christmas bookings are up on last year, with bookings for 100+.

Kilworth House Hotel

Kilworth are currently without a Sales Manager. The theatre season is now open with Pirates of Penzance running until 3rd July; 11-24 July have a range of 1 night shows and the August - September have the Little Shop of Horrors. The bookings are slow for the LSOH, but they will come through closer to August. April was very quiet due to a lack of conference trade. There seems to be a short-lead in time. Very interested in market rates - Kilworth offer £200 24hr rate and £70 DDR, but have to reduce that by around £20-30 to secure booking. May was a strong month with June looking good. Seen a downturn for wedding bookings in August - not sure if the theatre has had an impact on that. Kilworth are serving in excess of 10,000 afternoon teas per year.

Sysonby Knoll Hotel

Business is very up and down and weekend trade is mixed. Currently developing an online booking system for the hotel. Christmas bookings are coming in. Private bookings are coming in with summer bbq's in the grounds of the hotel. Undertaking a lot of new marketing activity.

The Three Swans Hotel

Currently in 3rd quarter of financial year - not hitting budget, but business is good. Conferences have died down; occupancy is up by 13%. Have started using LateRooms.com - the flexibility is an advantage. Can take off 15%, 20% and on a Sunday 40%. Started to do this before the TravelLodge opened. Heavy local market use the hotel. Wedding bookings are up and down. April was bad for bookings, August bank holiday is busy. Christmas is looking good with 160-180 for party nights. The hotel has been heavily involved in local events. Have developed food and drink offers with the upsell on wine.

Quorn Country Hotel

Just at the end of the 3rd quarter of the financial year. The 1st and 2nd quarters hit last years budgets. Tough market at the moment. Bookings are good for accommodation, but not an average rate - have found its key to have a Revenue Manager. Janet doesn't feel that the industry isn't doing any good by slashing rates. Conference bookings for quarters 1&2 were more like 2009/2010. Wedding bookings are down, with a gap in August. Upselling on business bookings, but tough to do that on wedding bookings. Currently developing leisure packages with walking, Great Central Railway. Working closely with LateRooms.com. Have started to sell Christmas. Current rates are £170 24hr delegate rate, but coming in at £150 and £50 DDR but coming in at £35-45.

Janine: In the past Heather Thornton from Best Western Premier Yew Lodge has voiced concerns that venues should stick with their rates so that it doesn't affect the market in general.

Tigers: The DDR for 2012 is £44 - which is a decent rate in the city. It's not about rates, but quality and added value. Currently have a £20.50 special offer which has been appealing for Local Government but not for private sector. Currently use venuefinder.com - feel it's better than venuedirectory.com - you get to see who's viewed your venue and stats.

Belmont: Once you have quoted for an event, there is no chance to requote.

Barceló: Run special offers, but are always subject to availability to suit quieter times.

Quorn: Feel that the market is picking up compared to this time last year. Starting to get enquiries for 2012.

2. LPL Update

Tourism Overview

Visit England have put strategies and frameworks together for tourism which seem to have stuck with the 'attract brands' such as the Lake District, London etc. LPL would have thought that the National Forest would be included within that. Visit England have said that it's what commercial partners want to see and is a 'list' of most visited places. These 'attract brands' have no additional finance attached to them.

The Visit England themes fit very well with our own destination themes - History & Heritage, Family, Food & Drink, etc. LPL are committed to working with Visit England and have undertaken activity in the past with Enjoy England - which has worked well for family campaigns.

Leicestershire Tourism Strategy

The strategy will be launched at the end of June 2011, with a city and county wide level of what's being developed.

LPL have produced Tourism Blueprints for each of the districts with tourism/employment stats, distinctiveness, tourism offer and tourism development. LPL are working with the different district boards to pull together a 3 year action plan.

In turn these blueprints reflect the themes in the Leicestershire Tourism Strategy and Visit England's priorities.

Campaigns

Stay Play Explore: Had 4,500 bednights over Easter - the hotels do very well as do the attractions.

Family Adventure: This campaign works on the same principles as Stay Play Explore but is aimed at older children (11-16 yr olds). Activities are - Cycling, tobogganing, cinema, bowling plus accommodation for £99 B&B. The campaign ran for the Easter holiday period and had 200 bednights with minimal marketing activity. LPL are talking to other hotel partners in rolling it out with financial contribution. At present the other partner involved is the Hilton EMA.

Glorious Heritage: Again, the same principle as SPE but is aimed at older couples for £99 B&B. This campaign is great for short breaks and the group travel market. Take up was slow in April, but is picking up again now that term time has started. LPL are working with a research company to test the heritage break.

Gourmet Break: This campaign is based around Melton Mowbray. £99 B&B and working on the SPE principles - choose three activities from the following:- cream tea at Stapleford Park, Melton Cheeseboard, Ye Olde Pork Pie Shoppe, Pub Platter at the Red Lion Inn, tour of Belvoir Brewery with accommodation at Scalford Hall or Sysonby Knoll Hotel. The short break went live on 6th June 2011 with an eblast to 15,000 contacts, which resulted in an immediate booking and enquiries.

MyForestHolidays.com: This is a new website that LPL developed working with the National Forest. The site promotes short breaks, events and offers around the area along with a short break around the National Forest Wood Fair.

Renaissance East Midlands: This campaign covers Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire. LPL are looking at developing trails, similar to the Industrial Heritage trail recently, under the themes of transport (wings, wheels and waterways), castles & battles and a food trail. These trails will be around museums so therefore more for day visits and groups.

If anyone would like to find out more about the above please contact Janine Williams.

Group Travel

LPL are developing overnight visit group packages to sell on to Group Travel Organisers. For example, tickets for two for a performance of 42nd Street at Curve theatre and DBB at a city hotel.

If anyone would like to find out more about these packages please contact Helen Bevins.

Entry Level

Visit England are introducing a basic level entry scheme for accommodation providers. LPL feel that the visitor needs more information than the very basic information that this would provide. Other destinations think it's good as it allows them to work with more accommodation providers. LPL continue to support graded accommodation providers and therefore won't support this scheme. If you would like more information please contact Janine Williams.

QR Codes

Visit England has launched a new QR code scheme which is being piloted in Leicester. The code links to a video clip promoting Leicester. Visit England will be further developing use of this technology.

2012

Leicester Shire Promotions continue to have enquiries regarding London 2012.

Loughborough University still has no more new news and are working closely with the BOA. Currently waiting for details of the training schedules. All athletes are at the kitting out stage - will be at Loughborough late June, early August. Team Japan is quiet. Not all teams will be coming to Loughborough - for example rowing, equestrian.

Quorn: Are people increasing their room rates during 2012?

Janine: Research says that we aren't going to see international conferences as a result of 2012.

Kilworth: We're keeping our rates the same from a theatre perspective.

The Torch Relay is coming to Leicester/Leicestershire on 2nd July 2012 - the exact route will be announced sometime in August 2011. The Holiday Inn are official partners of 2012 and will be the official accommodation providers. LOCOG will co-ordinate any overspill for accommodation requirements for officials. Additional visitors can stay elsewhere.

LPL would like thank Becky Miller-Barton and the team at the Angel Hotel for hosting this meeting.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 6th September 2011 at the Belmont Hotel - Arrive @ 2:30pm with a view to the meeting starting at 3pm