

LVEP Advisory Board Meeting

Thursday 12th Feb 2026, 1330-1600

Charleston, Lewes

Item			
1	13:30	Introduction and welcome from Mardi Roberts, Chair	Chair
2	13:35	Chair actions and updates since last meeting	Chair
3	13:40	Update from Destination Forum representative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of key discussions and insights shared at the Destination Forum meeting held on Wed 17th Dec 2025. 	Lynn Trapano, LVEP Project Officer on behalf of Garry Mortimer-Cook, Enterprise Manager, Horsham District Council
4	13:45	Update on Sussex & Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority (SBCCA)	Mark Rogers, Interim Chief Executive, Sussex & Brighton Combined County Authority
5	14:30	Update on Maximising International Market Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of the key discussions and agreed next steps arising from the subgroup meeting held on Tuesday 3 February 2026. 	Lauren O’Keeffe, DoubleTree by Hilton Brighton Metropole
6	14:40	Food & Drink Development in Sussex & Brighton Gastro-tourism – A detailed look at the food & drink industry in relation to the visitor economy, future trends and opportunities for Sussex & Brighton. Workshop Discussion Explore and discuss what Sussex & Brighton need to focus on if we want to grow as a food & drink destination.	Mark Griffiths, Owner, Woodfire Camping All
7	15:45	AOB	All
	End		

Attendees:**Industry & Sector representatives:**

Mardi Roberts (Chair), Ridgeview Wine Estate (MR)
Amy Yeates, Goodwood (AY)
Celine Leslie, Gravetye Manor (CL)
Chris Hannon, South Downs National Park Authority (CH)
Gavin Stewart, Brighton BID/Brighton DEG (GS)
Lauren O'Keefe, DoubleTree by Hilton (LO)
Lucy Davies, Brighton Dome (LD)
Marilena Reina, Wakehurst (MRe)
Mark Griffiths, Woodfire Camping (MG)
Nathaniel Hepburn, Charleston (NH)
Nigel Greenwood, So Sussex (NG)
Sarah Broadbent, Swallowtail Hill & 1066 Country (SB)

Lead Local Authority representatives:

Carolyn Carr, West Sussex County Council (CC)
Cllr Brigit Miller, Brighton & Hove City Council (BM)
Richard Dawson, East Sussex County Council (RD)

District & Borough / DMO Representatives:

Garry Mortimer-Cook, Economic Development, Horsham District Council (GMC)
Rob Cottrill, Lewes & Eastbourne Councils, Hastings Borough Council (RC)

Secretariat/ Other Local Authority Representatives:

Jo Williams, Experience Sussex (JW)
Julia Gallagher, VisitBrighton (JG)
Saffron Phillips, East Sussex County Council (SP)
Lynn Trapano, LVEP Project Officer (LT)

External Speakers:

Mark Rogers, Sussex & Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority (MRo)

Observers:

Claire Ford, VisitEngland (CF)

Apologies:

Anne Ackord, Brighton Pier Group (AA)
Dawn Hudd, Arun District Council (DH)
Kim Jack-Riley, Cruise Lines International (KJ)
Richard Lennard, Gatwick Airport (RL)
Sally Staples, East Sussex County Council (SS)

1. ITEM 1 - Introduction and welcome - Mardi Roberts, Chair

- 1.1. MR welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Nathaniel Hepburn and the team for hosting the group at Charleston in Lewes. MR also welcomed two guests to the meeting, Mark Rogers, interim CEO of the Sussex & Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority and Claire Ford, Regional Development Lead for London & SE from VisitEngland.
- 1.2. The group approved the minutes from the last meeting.
- 1.3. Members had no interests to declare.

2. ITEM 2 - Chair actions and updates since last meeting

- 2.1. MR updated the group on LVEP activity since the last meeting.

- 2.1.1. A link to the LGR consultation was circulated for board members to respond to. A letter was also sent direct to MHCLG on behalf of the LVEP acknowledging the consultation and expressing our commitment to working collaboratively with future unitary councils.
- 2.1.2. A link to the overnight visitor levy (OVL) consultation was also circulated to board members to respond to. MR reminded members there is still time to respond, as the consultation closes on 18 February. Julia Gallagher from the Secretariat also attended the VisitEngland Roundtable on this topic in January.
- 2.1.3. MR attended a meeting at Gatwick Airport in October with Baroness Margaret Ford (Chair of London Gatwick), Lady Victoria Borwick (Chair of VisitEngland Advisory Board), Andrew Stokes (Director, VisitEngland) and the Gatwick Airport external engagement team to discuss how Gatwick can work with VisitEngland to encourage visitors to stay longer. It was a really positive meeting.
- 2.1.4. MR also attended the Combined Authority Stakeholder Forum in December.
- 2.1.5. JW and LT from the Secretariat attended the LVEP conference in Leeds on 28th Jan 2026.
- 2.1.6. Following October's meeting, MR was to write to all three Local Authorities and all mayoral candidates on behalf of the LVEP Industry/Sector Members to highlight the vital role and value of the visitor economy across Sussex; as the mayoral election has been postponed, MR wrote to the three upper tier authorities and included Mark Rogers, interim CEO of the SBCCA.
- 2.2. VisitBritain have recently released a report on the Economic Value of Tourism in the UK. It shows that tourism is worth £147bn annually to the UK – about 5% of the national economy and supports nearly 1 in 15 jobs.

ACTION	
Circulate VisitBritain report to all Board Members	LT

3. ITEM 3 – Update from Destination Forum Representative

- 3.1. As the meeting was running slightly behind schedule, it was agreed to omit this item. A written summary will be circulated to Board members instead.

ACTION	
Circulate a summary of the Destination Forum meeting on 17 th December 2025 to all Board Members	LT

4. ITEM 4 - Update on Sussex & Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority (SBCCA) from Mark Rogers, interim CEO

- 4.1. MR introduced Mark Rogers to update the board on the development of the SBCCA.
- 4.2. MRo thanked the board for inviting him to speak to them and gave the board details of his background and experience.
- 4.3. MRo confirmed that the Government has now laid the Statutory Instrument (SI) in Parliament that will formally establish the SBCCA. The SI will be

debated and is expected to be approved in around 6 to 8 weeks. The SBCCA should be formally vested by early April 2026 and become a legal entity.

- 4.4. MRo confirmed that although the mayoral elections have been postponed until May 2028, the creation of the Sussex Mayoral Authority is continuing at pace, but just without a mayor.
- 4.5. The recently published Local Government Settlement included money for the SBCCA as a three-year settlement. The SBCCA is set to receive £1.14bn, which will be given as tranches over a 30-year period; 50% is revenue and 50% is capital. MRo advised that because the mayoral election has been postponed, the SBCCA will get 40% of the tranches due to be remitted in the first two years, although it is anticipated if the SBCCA can present credible investment cases, more money may be released.
- 4.6. MRo reiterated to the board the importance of collaboration between the CCA, local authorities and the private sector to ensure the success of the new strategic authority.
- 4.7. MRo reminded the board that the CCA is not a new council but a regional form of government and that there will only be one directly elected individual, rather than many councillors as in a council, which creates a different dynamic.
- 4.8. NG asked if there is a risk if only one person is making the decisions. MRo responded that there are checks and balances in place. He advised that some powers are exclusive to the mayor and some require the board's input and need a majority vote. The Board will include WSCC, ESCC and BHCC (until the new unitary authorities come into being).
- 4.9. BM questioned whether LGR and devolution should be 'uncoupled' as there is confusion currently among voters and that is creating a negative environment. MRo agreed that while the sequencing was important, he was more concerned with how many people will vote in an informed way in May 2028.
- 4.10. NH raised the point that Sussex is across three distinct areas that are very different, and asked MRo if there are examples of where a mayor has been across a similar environment. MRo stated that although the name of the CCA is Sussex and Brighton, it is important to think about Sussex in its entirety and appeal to what's best for the place as a whole.
- 4.11. JG agreed that local engagement across the county was very important and reiterated that the LVEP has been adopted by all three local authorities. Work such as '[How to Sell Sussex to Visitors](#)' feeds into the Sussex identity. MRo agreed there is already a broader understanding and recognition of Sussex as a distinct place, compared to other areas which may have a less defined identity.
- 4.12. JW raised the point that a lot of government funding is going to the north and asked what benefits the mayor can secure for the Southeast region, especially considering there aren't going to be mayors in Kent and Surrey just yet. MRo replied that such leverage starts with the very existence of the CCA and investment will come if Sussex is seen as a place.

- 4.13. MRo outlined the Governance Framework for the CCA, noting the seven core competencies: Transport & local infrastructure; Skills & employment support; Housing and strategic planning; Economic development and regeneration; Environment and climate; Health, wellbeing and public service reform; Public safety. These areas will need to be progressed jointly by the Mayor and the Board. MRo noted that what is stated in legislation is a platform to build from, not the limit.
- 4.14. MRo explained how they are currently working on the Sussex Prosperity Strategy and sitting underneath this is the Local Growth Plan (LGP), which will reflect Sussex priorities in relation to some of the eight sectors in the Industrial Strategy, and Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). Over the next four months, the CCA will layout the Sussex Prosperity Strategy and consider priorities for the first tranche of funding. MRo noted that the visitor economy is not included in the industrial strategy, which underpins the LGP. However, the visitor economy will be addressed in the Prosperity Strategy.
- 4.15. NG asked about the composition of the Governance board. MRo replied that there are 12 places – six will be for the three constituent authorities. An additional six places will be available for associate members with expertise in specific sectors, for example, universities and non-constituent members (possibly Districts & Boroughs). One of the leaders of the constituent local authorities will most likely step up as Chair, and they will be the figurehead until the Mayor is elected. Special interest groups will have ways to be heard, either through the Board or elsewhere.
- 4.16. LD asked about having a Deputy Mayor. MRo confirmed there will be a statutory Deputy Mayor but that the CCA could also have other deputy mayors with a brief determined by the Mayor. Legislation is also being passed so Mayors can appoint Commissioners to lead on specific areas, such as the visitor economy, for example.
- 4.17. NH asked when the CCA will start spending. MRo confirmed hopefully the CCA will be “competent” to spend from March/April with the first Board meeting in April 2026 and an Annual General Meeting in June/July 2026. The Prosperity Strategy will provide a pipeline of projects, and the Board will want to start making investment decisions from the autumn.
- 4.18. CH asked about mayoral support for the Overnight Visitor Levy (OVL). MRo advised that all mayors belong to the UK Mayors organisation; within this group, 12 of the current 14 mayors believe the OVL should be handled at mayoral level in partnership with the local authorities affected by the decisions. It is possible that mayors would have the power to apply different rates of OVL across different areas.
- 4.19. MR asked where the money from the OVL will go. MRo replied this is under discussion. He advised the board to give their views on this to the three Local Authority Leaders as they will be talking to the mayor about whether the Sussex mayor supports the OVL and where the money goes.
- 4.20. CH commented that it is difficult for the LVEP board to be for or against the OVL, although the LVEP could have some influence over where the money

goes. JG noted that BHCC and RD noted too that ESCC fed into the Consultation, supporting the local consultations on where and how the OVL money would be spent, and suggesting that local leaders should have the power to invoke an OVL for MSA's where a Mayor has not been elected. MRo commented that there is a strong lobby at the moment for OVL money to be more directly connected to the visitor economy.

- 4.21. MRo highlighted the importance of 'liveability', noting that alongside the strategic focus of the Industrial Strategy, Sussex must be an appealing and well-connected place. He stated that this should be explicitly reflected in the Prosperity Strategy.
- 4.22. NH asked how the LVEP can influence the Prosperity Strategy. MRo suggested the board invite the Strategic Lead for Strategy, Policy and Investment for the SBCCA, to come and meet with them to discuss further. He can assist with evidence base which can be used to help the CCA make investment decisions.
- 4.23. MRo left the meeting at this point.

ACTION	
Strategic Lead for Strategy, Policy and Investment for the SBCCA to be invited to meet with Board Members.	LT

5. Group Discussion on how the LVEP can work with the SBCCA

- 5.1. The group had an impromptu discussion on how the LVEP could work with the SBCCA and how to best present a compelling case for investment and sector support.
 - 5.1.1. NH noted the need for the LVEP to develop a clear 'shopping list' outlining who is involved, how activity would be delivered, and proposed timeframes. He emphasised the importance of prioritising projects and reminding members that the three local authority leaders are the key decision makers.
 - 5.1.2. RD highlighted that the LVEP is an important partnership to the new CCA structure. He advised that the LVEP should develop a pipeline of priorities and programmes (capital & revenue), both Sussex wide and area-specific and consider whether resources should be directed towards developing these proposals further.
 - 5.1.3. CC emphasised that a clear business case is likely to be expected for any proposals and encouraged the Board to consider how we can work together collectively, rather than individually.
 - 5.1.4. JW noted there is an approved [10 year Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth in Sussex \(2024-2034\)](#) that is already in place with support from the leaders. She suggested developing a number of projects, each with strategic headlines to be put forward.
 - 5.1.5. GMC asked whether costs had been considered for existing marketing activity and suggested this could represent a quick win, as these costs are easier to define and would help promote the breadth of local product.

- 5.1.6. JW reiterated that growth in the international and MICE sectors remain critical to achieving wider economic growth objectives.
- 5.1.7. NH proposed that a collective pipeline of projects be developed, potentially using a template similar to the Culture East Sussex Cultural Priority Pipeline.
- 5.1.8. The group agreed that the Board needs to establish a clearer plan before engaging with the Strategic Lead for Strategy, Policy and Investment for the SBCCA. The Secretariat will explore next steps to take this forward.

ACTION	
LVEP Secretariat to explore next steps in establishing a clearer plan prior to meeting with the Strategic Lead for Strategy, Policy and Investment for the SBCC.	LT/JW/JG
SP to share CES CPP information with LT for circulation	SP/LT

6. ITEM 5 - Update on Maximising International Market Opportunities

- 6.1. LO provided a summary of the key discussions and agreed next steps arising from the subgroup meeting held on Tuesday, 3 February.
 - 6.1.1. There were 10 people who attended the meeting from the LVEP Advisory Board and the Destination Forum.
 - 6.1.2. LT gave a brief recap of the discussion from the LVEP Board Meeting in October 2025, reiterating the need for a sustainable medium to long-term plan for international market development.
 - 6.1.3. LT outlined how international activity aligns with the priorities and objectives of the 10 Year Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth, highlighting the best prospect international markets for Sussex and Brighton, as identified within the Strategy.
 - 6.1.4. LT presented the draft international market development plan, noting that it represents an initial outline of an “oven ready” project.
 - 6.1.5. The group discussed general reflections on the draft plan, raised questions, and explored potential gaps, including where the plan could add the most value.
 - 6.1.5.1. There was a strong consensus that a clear place brand for Sussex & Brighton would help align culture, heritage and economic growth. The visitor economy was identified as a key mechanism for bringing this brand to life.
 - 6.1.5.2. In the absence of an allocated LVEP budget, there is a need for a coordinated, long-term funded programme to support international activity.
 - 6.1.5.3. Members emphasised the importance of consistency in delivery, for example follow-up after sales missions.
 - 6.1.5.4. The broad scope of working with travel trade was highlighted (FIT, groups, OTAs, MICE) with agreement that prioritisation is needed.
 - 6.1.5.5. The group called for a more focussed/targeted approach, for example, identifying the top 10-20 priority buyers per market and stressed the importance of leveraging existing relationships.

- 6.1.5.6. Transportation was highlighted as a major barrier for visitors travelling within Sussex, emphasising the need for a clear transport narrative to support itinerary development and trade readiness.
- 6.1.5.7. Some quick wins were identified, including the development of short-term collateral, such as market-specific slide decks showcasing Sussex & Brighton as a destination, using the '[How to Sell Sussex](#)' playbook/toolkit.
- 6.1.5.8. There was also an appetite to work on familiarisation (fam) trips together in the future so if anyone is interested, please say.
- 6.2. CF reminded the group to consider opportunities in nearer-to-home markets, rather than focussing solely on the U.S and other long-haul destinations, as they are easier to penetrate.
- 6.3. CF told the board there will be some central and national supported activities next year and she hopes to share further details at the next meeting.
- 6.4. JG noted that she could share data from a recent campaign delivered in partnership with Expedia and the Gatwick Gateway Group, aimed at the Nordic market.

ACTION	
JG to share data from Expedia campaign	LT/JG
If anyone is potentially interested in supporting a future fam trip, please let us know	ALL
The market-specific slide decks showcasing Sussex & Brighton as a destination will be shared with all Board Members, in addition to the International subgroup	LT

7. ITEM 6 – Food & Drink Development in Sussex & Brighton

- 7.1. As the meeting was overrunning, it was agreed that MG's presentation and discussion on this topic would be deferred to the June 2026 meeting.

8. ITEM 7 – AOB

- 8.1. MG offered to host the next LVEP Advisory Board meeting as the focus will be on the food & drink sector, but needs to double check availability.

ACTION	
LT and MG to liaise on availability of Woodfire (Firle) for June 2026 meeting and confirm with the group.	LT/MG