

## Rother District Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	29 March 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Support of Sussex Modern
<b>Report of:</b>	Ben Hook, Head of Acquisitions, Transformation, and Regeneration
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Timpe
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	Support the continuation of the successful Sussex Modern marketing campaign.
<b>Decision Type:</b>	Non-Key
<b>Officer Recommendation(s):</b>	It be <b>RESOLVED:</b> That a £15,000 grant be funded from earmarked reserves, towards the continuation of the Sussex Modern campaign 2021-22.
<b>Reasons for Recommendations:</b>	Addition level of tourism marketing for Sussex post COVID-19.

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### Introduction

1. Sussex Modern (SM) is a consortium of 22 cultural and viticulture businesses that came together to curate a high-end offer and maximise the impact of their offer in Sussex and redefine the identity of the County.
2. The research, development and piloting of the identity has received significant private investment from the consortium businesses as well as public funds through East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Locate East Sussex, Arts Council England and South Downs National Park.
3. East Sussex devolved its tourism offer to the towns, boroughs and regions within the county driven in part by the fact that there is no County Council tourism lead. There is a clear understanding that in having a spilt County, developing East Sussex as a brand of its own is unworkable.
4. COVID-19 has shown us that local Destination Management Organisations (DMO) have been a lifeline for many businesses in the sector. In Rother our DMO; 1066 Country Marketing, has supported, advised and promoted local tourism and hospitality businesses providing an important network through this very difficult period. This level of local infrastructure is crucial and needs to be maintained. SM seeks to take nothing away from our DMOs but to add another level of marketing at a County level to support the work happening at local level.

5. The brand came out of the Sussex Modernism exhibition at Two Temple Place in 2016 which attracted 52,597 visitors and delivered £4.9m (figure reported by Rees and Co agency engaged by Two Temple Place and comes from column inches and broadcast) worth of press coverage for East and West Sussex. During 2016 most of the cultural partners involved in the exhibition reported a 3% increase in visitors, notably made up of London audiences, during that year.
6. This was followed in 2019 with Art, Landscape, Wine, a collaboration with the Sussex Wineries Group which celebrated the growth of Sussex's viticulture industry and developed a new narrative around coming to stay in Sussex. This was targeting the wine tourist, whom data shows will spend nearly 32% more than the average tourist, with the international wine tourist spending nearly 80% more. The viticulture focus will continue to grow as a central strand of SM, further supporting Rother vineyards at their associated businesses i.e. local guesthouses / B&Bs. In the latest Gourmet Garden Trail campaign Tillingham Wine and Great Dixter feature as local heroes of excellence.
7. SM's recent project is the development of two films raising awareness and building advocacy amongst key business to business (B2B) and business to consumer (B2C) audiences with the B2B film promoting Sussex as a place to start or do business and the B2C film showing stories and experiences to be explored in self-guided visits.

### **Analysis / Details of the proposals**

8. Over £100,000 of public and private investment has been made in SM to date, including staff time. The SM board is seeking investment from a number of partners towards a core budget of £147,000 per annum to deliver a phased marketing, communications and digital audience development campaign to develop and enhance perceptions of Sussex, grow target audience awareness and engagement and encourage a rediscovery of the region.
9. The campaign is growing quickly and SM is about to recruit to the first dedicated role, that of Campaign Manager. District and borough councils across both counties have begun to support the project financially with commitments confirmed from Eastbourne, Lewes and Wealden.
10. Rother has also approached SM with a view to supporting the campaign and the board has indicated that local authority support sits at around £15,000.
11. There has been further funding from the South East LEP sector support fund, with SM in partnership with Visit Kent and Essex securing £150,000 (£50,000 of which will come direct to East Sussex). A second application is currently being considered.
12. With this core budget in place SM will pursue three main objectives:
  - Broaden Reach; find and engage target audiences through activity that reflects Sussex's contribution to modern culture.
  - Drive engagement; share inspiring content that spotlights curated stories of the region driving audience buy-in and brand awareness.

- Encourage visits; use the ‘join the dots’ message to encourage audiences to plan, explore and discover ‘their’ Sussex.

13. A five year strategy and development plan is currently being produced and will expand these objectives into measurable targets. SM progress and decisions are reported regularly to the Culture East Sussex board on which the Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration represents Rother District Council.

## Conclusion

14. Supporting the growth of SM will help to allow the brand to develop and fill a gap in the branding and marketing of Sussex as a whole. We know from previous experience that this cannot be local authority led without considerable investment. This natural coming together of business partners has developed a very interesting and valuable tourism tool for our post COVID-19 recovery.

## Implications

### Financial Implications

15. This funding is not included in the annual budget and would be taken from the earmarked reserves.

### Environmental

16. Increased tourism levels could have a detrimental effect on the local environment depending on the modes of transport used to get to and around the District.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	No	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

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Appendices:	N/A
Relevant Previous Minutes:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
Reference Documents:	-