

**Marketing
Cheshire**

**Local Visitor
Economy
Partnership**

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Board Papers

Thursday 4th September 2025

**Marketing Cheshire Advisory Board
Agenda
Thursday 4th September 2025, 9.30am – 11am
Jodrell Bank**

Time		Item	Lead	Reference
09:30am	1	Welcome and Apologies	JC	
09:40am	2	Declarations of Interest	JC	
09:45am	3	Minutes and matters arising from Board Meeting held on 5 th June 2025	JC	
09:55am	4	Board Matters <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Devolution and Joint Committee update- Place Branding next steps- Apprentice Board Member	PC CM CM	
10:15am	5	Media Getaway evaluation – and future FAM visits from the Netherlands, China and Australia	Ash Shacklady	
10:30am	6	MD Report <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Update from Destination Cheshire / Chester chairs- MC Partner Connect and Lady Borwick visit	CM/LH	(Board Paper 289)
10:40am	7	Financials <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Q1 update and forecast	CM	(Board Paper 290)
10:50am	8	A.O.B		
11:00am	9	Meeting Close followed by optional tour of Jodrell Bank		

Marketing Cheshire Advisory Board Meeting CWTB NO. 5067662

**Thursday 5th June
0800-1000**

Via Microsoft Teams

**Present:
CWTB Directors**

Attendees

Jamie Christon - Chair
Philip Cox
Sarah Callander-Beckett
Colin Potts
Eleanor Underhill
Mark Goldsmith

**In attendance:
Board Advisory Members**

Jean Flaherty
Hayley Owen
Kenny Murray
Cristian Marcucci
James Hall
David Lyne
Rachel Scott
Chris Naylor

In attendance

Carole Hyde, Cheshire East Council (observer)
Richard Milkins, Cheshire East Council (observer)
Liam Hartzenberg
Sharon Pond (minute taker)

**Apologies:
Board Directors**

Peter Mearns

Board Advisory Members Kirsten Warren

Opening by the Chair and Welcome

JC welcomed Board members and thanked everyone for joining the meeting

Declarations of Interest

Board members to advise Sharon of any declarations of interest.

Minutes and Actions from the last Meeting held on the 3rd April and Matters Arising

It was confirmed that all other actions from the previous meeting have been resolved, and the minutes were agreed to be an accurate representation of the meeting.

With regard to the formalisation of CWTB appointments CM advised that a meeting is scheduled to take place later this month to confirm Eleanor Blackburn as one of the new company directors. Once this has happened, we will be able to action board resignations and move the board forward to an advisory board. **CM to advise once this process has been completed**

**Action
CM**

SCB advised that the Rural Strategy Board meetings have been scheduled to take place every two weeks and minutes from these meetings have been shared with PC.

Board Matters

Terms of Reference and future ways of working

CM advised of the following recommendations that came out of discussions at the board workshop on the 30th May

- Six in person meetings to take place a year rotating across the county
- DC chairs to be allocated time to update on board agendas
- Arrange for external speakers to attend future meetings
- Ad hoc workshops to take place as required
- Recruitment of an Apprentice Board member to the board – **JC/CM to review possible candidates**
- Review Local Authority membership on the Board with regard to office / member representation – **CM to discuss with local authority representatives**

Action
JC/CM
Action
CM

Comments from Board members

KM highlighted a date error on page 3 re the commencement date of new board members; it should be 2025.

EU questioned whether CWTB should be referenced in the ToR

PC confirmed that today's meeting is a hybrid meeting of both CWTB and the MC Advisory Board.

SCB suggested looking to Chester University for the Board Apprentice, however it was agreed that ideally, we are looking to recruit someone already working in the sector in a Junior Managerial Role or young business owner.

It was agreed to drop age limit to under 30.

If possible, meetings should be available to join online and representatives will be accepted if board members are unable to attend.

Action CM to update ToR with the feedback and circulate updated version to Board members

Action
CM

Devolution and Joint Committee update

PC updated Board members as follows:

The devolution programme work is continuing, and we are waiting for the Secretary of State to formally confirm that C&W meet the statutory tests and can formally move forward to devolution. We are expecting a draft of the devolution agreement later this month this will include financial details, which will be available following the spending review on the 11th June. Once we have the devolution agreement the three local authorities will be required to agree to it. When it has been approved to move forward the combined authority will be formally established in January / February with mayoral elections taking place in May.

JF added that the joint committee are taking steps to convey positive messaging to help assure agreement by all three local authorities.

CN referred to the message put out by CE stating that they were unable to access funding as a result of not having a mayor. PC advised that Government in practice is only dealing with areas who have a mayor in place. When we have a mayor, we will put ourselves in the frame for funding. MG advised that it is hoped that the Middlewich bypass will be funded through the spending review process.

CP stated that the devolution marketing materials need to be enhanced to optimise the messaging. CM confirmed this is something that is currently being reviewed and materials will be updated prior to September.

SCB requested access to devolution material to assist with promoting devolution particularly with local CE councillors. **CM to circulate updated ambassador pack to Board Members**

Action
CM

Future of Marketing Cheshire

CM advised that linked into devolution conversations we are reviewing the models of LVEPs in other combined authority areas, particularly around funding. The desire is to continue to be an arms-length organisation and part of ECW but keep the MC identity. CH is leading on the visitor economy workstream and as part of this we have put together a funding proposal to cover work on travel trade, place marketing, extra capacity for Destination Marketing, to support work around business tourism and funding for the film office. The proposal is being finalised and will be submitted as part of the ongoing devolution work.

PC advised that the mayor would have responsibility for the whole of Cheshire and Warrington and will want to see a stronger promotion of the area. The mayor will decide where the inward investment marketing role sits within the combined authority. Work is taking place with CM and the joint committee with regard to future arrangements. **CM to provide an update on this at the next board meeting.**

Action
CM

Destination Management Plan and MC Business Plan

CM provided the board with an overview highlighting the following key items

- The DMP contains over 50 actions and aligned to this we have the MC business plan which follows the same themes of the DMP. The plan is aspirational considering resources and the RAG report highlights progress across the actions.
- DMP – half of the actions are ranked green; however, we have been unable to move forward with the brand, business tourism and travel trade work due to capacity.
- There has been positive progress on business developments around the Zoo, Northgate and planning permission granted for new businesses around the county, such as Tatton Services.

MC Business Plan

- 6 key priorities including the Chester ABID which is ongoing, and a meeting of the shadow board takes place on the 16th June.
- Destination campaigns and targeted activity across Cheshire Towns is in progress
- The visitor pass feasibility study advised that a pass for Chester and Cheshire was not viable. We are therefore in discussions with Liverpool and Manchester regarding partnering with them to have a Cheshire offer within their visitor passes.
- New website has launched and is supported by enhanced social media activity.

EU questioned whether it would be possible to develop 3-4 key visitor economy metrics, rather than specific MC metrics. CM advised that we continue to receive new data from VisitEngland and we will be looking to include this in the future. We have clear evaluation on each of our campaigns and are looking at engagement rates on all of our social media activity.

Travel Trade Strategy and Action Plan

CM advised that the MC budget has reduced by 50% since 2018 therefore there are certain elements of our work that we have had to pause, this included the travel trade work. Currently we only conduct travel trade work through our partnership with England's Historic Cities (EHC). This year EHC will be at the North America event in the autumn. We are keen to develop our relationships with the travel trade to raise the profile of C&W. We therefore commissioned a report to identify the key markets we should be targeting and to create a three-year action plan. The report was produced by Reith consulting who have identified key targets being Germany, GCC countries, France, Spain, Italy, Netherlands and USA. However, the Australia

and New Zealand markets are also important to us from a visiting friends and relatives' perspective and due to Rugby League links in Warrington. Cheshire and Warrington are overlooked in this market and not represented in major inbound operator itineraries and coach tourism has declined significantly post Covid.

The VISA data is suggesting that we are seeing increased spend from overseas visitors, therefore recognising this as a valuable market for us.

The report itself sets out a range of activity and suggests partnerships with organisations such as UK Inbound. We are looking to implement a travel trade steering group in September who will identify the key trade shows and exhibitions to attend. In year 2 we will look to have a more regular presence at trade shows, year 3 we will look to expand to the international market including the US market.

To fund this work, we will be looking to ask partners to buy into the campaign and when possible, bring in additional resource to move this forward. The hope is that this work will be funded via Devolution and ABID funding.

Comments from Board members

KM expressed support for forming a working group with our partners and raised a question about whether we know how many of them currently work independently with travel consultants. KM suggested that sharing insights within the group could help us collaboratively identify what would work best for C&W. CM confirmed that the consultants met with a number of partners to ascertain this information, which identified the ambition to bring all of the partners data together to pool resources and to have a bigger C&W presence at the trade shows.

DL stated that it is a great plan however raised concerns that it would not be achievable based on .3 FTE. If funding does become available from devolution, we should look to be more ambitious. It will be key to work together with existing businesses who already have links with these markets and interacting with organisations such as UK Inbound to leverage opportunities. DL also was surprised that the Asian market was not identified as a target market. DL volunteered to assist with this project.

EU felt this is a great move forward and referred to the NT decline in coach visits which included school groups and questioned whether a similar trend with school groups could be attributed to the decline of coach tours in Chester.

PC advised that budgets are tight however the local authorities voiced concern that ECW relies on funding from the enterprise zone which is not sustainable long term. Additional funding may be available from other sources going forward.

CN stated that it is a good report and great starting point to build on, working with partners is definitely the way forward.

HO asked if there are any plans to work with partners outside of Cheshire. CM confirmed that we are already in discussions with the cruise terminals and Manchester and Liverpool Airports and will include them in this travel trade work.

CP agreed it is a very comprehensive report. CP stated that travel trade is a constantly evolving market, and the report was published in 2024, and this could explain the under emphasis on the Asian market. We should also be looking to include the future growth market. Agreed that .3 FTE would not be sufficient to undertake the role and we need aspiration to expand on resources for this project. Regularity of connectivity, the ability to anticipate change in the markets and collecting information in the way in which the trade want it will be key and this needs to be considered when developing the materials.

Managing Director Report

CM highlighted the following key items from the MD report

- We have had a lot of good PR linked to our Cheshire Day campaign. We are also receiving a lot of interest from the travel trade journalists who will be attending Media Getaway. Rajan Data from, BBC is looking to do a Chester Podcast as part of Media Getaway and we will encourage him to include wider Cheshire.
- The Visit Cheshire Awards will be launched on the 10th June and will be open until the end of August. The event will take place on the 5th March at Walton Hall and Gardens. Jodrell Bank received a silver medal at the VE awards yesterday evening. We have changed our sponsorship approach this year and are looking at a reduced fee to encourage more sponsorship. CM to share the target companies with the board and requested the board advise of any other potential businesses to approach.
- MC connect conference will be held on Monday 15th September at Mottram Hall and will be looking to arrange a dinner with Lady Borwick and board members to be hosted at the Zoo.
- The national campaign brings our partners and transport providers together to promote the destination nationally across multiple platforms and locations under a single brand and narrative. The average reach of our campaigns is 4.5M each year and encourages longer dwell time and a higher spend in the destination. The campaign narrative this year is 'find your Chester' the campaign expands into Cheshire and includes Jodrell Bank and Wilmslow.
- We have secured partnership with Merseyrail which will further our programmatic reach.
- Film Office, consultants report will be presented at a Growth Directors meeting later this month to highlight the benefits of a Cheshire film office. We will be bringing together partners, council reps, Manchester and Staffordshire film offices and a number of TV producers to attend the director box at Chester Races on the 11th July. We will be attending Focus in London with partners and CM will be attending the first Screen Tourism conference in November.
- What's On Guide goes to print this week and will be distributed across the northwest and is a positive new income stream for MC.
- Website – We continue to build the new sections of the website and are monitoring our SOE performance. There is a difference in the way our previous provider, Simple View measured visits to the site as numbers included bots and Destination Core only record real visits.
- Media Getaway taking place 7-9 July. We have had a positive number of delegates booking onto FAM trips and we have been offering discounted opportunities for our partners to attend the connection Zone on the 8th July at the Racecourse.
- Booking.com celebration event took place at Chester Zoo yesterday evening
- We took a Cheshire and Warrington delegation to UKREiF which took place in Leeds 19th – 22nd May. Lots of positivity and Louise Stewart, Chester Racecourse spoke at the event. We are already in discussions around next year's event.

Action
CM/All

JC advised that he met with Stephen Butchard, producer of This City is Ours who is keen to work with MC. **Action CM /JC to arrange to meet with Stephen**

Action
CM /JC

JC referred to the importance of the brand and identity work for Cheshire and Warrington and the need for this to be actioned as soon as possible. **Action JC and CM to discuss with PC.**

Action
JC/PC/
CM

HO referred to UKREiF and stressed the importance of this event in the promotion of destination place and the ability to promote our sub-region collaboratively.

Destination Cheshire update

EU referred to the meeting in April where the 3 priorities for the group were agreed; Cheshire Day, championing the broader Cheshire visitor economy and Christmas.

A conversation took place around membership which identified gaps from accommodation providers and some of the larger businesses from the wider Cheshire economy. It was agreed that membership needed to be kept at a manageable level. A Destination Cheshire Steering Group has now been formed, and the first meeting took place in March. Following the success of this year's Cheshire Day which focused on food and drink the Destination Cheshire Group set up a steering group to take this project forward and create a five-year plan.

The group looked at the towns campaigns and are partners are reviewing what they can do to work collaboratively to capitalise on our existing marketing campaigns. It is hoped that Devolution will present the group with better opportunities by being able to approach one combined organisation rather than three separate local authorities.

PC referred to Cheshire Day and felt that this is something the new Mayor would want to be involved in however, the date may be an issue as it falls within the Mayoral election dates.

CM advised that coverage received for the Cheshire Day campaign was equivalent to £345k of PR.

Destination Chester update

The last meeting took place on the 15th May at Cheshire Oaks, EU attended the meeting to forge the synergy between the two groups. At the meeting the tourism vision for Chester was agreed which will feed into the One City Plan. The hook of the vision is that Chester will provide the best visitor experience of any historic city and focuses on peoples' experience and not numbers and will be connected to the regenerative tourism buzz phrase, suggesting improvement to place. The lease has been signed by the Martin's Group for Harrods to move into the old Debenhams store; this has resulted in 5 new tenants locating to the Grosvenor Shopping Centre. Northgate 2 will transform a sixth of the town centre and the developer will be decided upon in the next month, it will be important to have a cultural element within this facility. The Gladiator exhibition comes to Chester in September and will be the start to a whole year of gladiator events across the city, there will be an opportunity to expand the reach of this across the whole of Cheshire.

A perceptions study was reported on at the DC meeting which will be useful to guide future place branding - **Action SP to circulate to Board**

ABID – an objection has been raised in Liverpool by Premier Inn and we are considering the implications of this on the Chester ABID, a meeting will take place on the 16th June when a decision will be made around going to ballot.

CP has confirmed he is happy to serve an additional year as Chair of the DC group this will be voted for at the July meeting

Financials

CM provided the board with an update on the financial position, advising that the operating deficit has reduced, mainly attributed to resolved cash flow issues. The reserves remain within the required operating levels. VIC income is down, and steps are being considered to look at ways to address this. We have introduced Stripe payments for partnerships to help reduce debtor levels.

Action
SP

SCB asked whether a list is available of lapsed or potential important missing partners to enable board members to target these partners. **CM to circulate list to the Board**

**Action
CM**

EU referred to the VIC and questioned how this will fit into the new structure. CM advised that we deliver the VIC as part of our SLA with Cheshire West and Chester Council so this will continue.

CP referred to the separate VIC financial statement and requested that this is issued with the year-end figures.

**Action
CM**

CP felt that remedial action was required due to the financial position.

AOB

None

Future Board Meetings

1000 -1200 Thursday 4th September – in person

1000 - 1200 Thursday 27th November – In person

Actions	Owner
CM to advise Board members once the position on CWTB directors has been resolved	CM
JC/CM to review possible candidates for the board apprentice role	JC/CM
CM to discuss local authority officer/member representation on the board with LA representatives	CM
CM to update ToR with the feedback and circulate updated version to Board members	CM
CM to provide an update on the position around inward investment marketing at the next meeting	CM
CM to provide board with a list of potential sponsors for the awards and asked that board advise of any further businesses to target	CM/ALL
Action CM /JC to arrange to meet with Stephen Butchard	JC/CM
JC/CM/PC to discuss the brand identity work	JC/CM/ PC
SP to circulate the perceptions study	SP
CM to circulate a list of lapsed and missing partners to board	CM
Separate VIC financials to be included in the year-end figures	CM

Signature (Jamie Christon, Chair)

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Date

Marketing Cheshire Advisory Board

MD Report

Thursday 4th September 2025

Period June – August

Paper 289

Visitor Economy

Marketing Campaigns and Content

Our national, multi-channel campaign has delivered strong results this season with over **5.3 million impressions** served to date, positioning Cheshire as a leading visitor destination and increasing bookings for our transport partners. In partnership with Sojern, a travel advertising specialist, we commissioned a retargeting search and display campaign supplemented by Meta, targeting audiences with travel intent. The Sojern approach tracks users from click through to the destination, tracking bookings and interactions through the user journey to refine and optimise our targeting.

The Avanti element continues to perform strongly, with **2.6 million impressions, 506 direct bookings, and £58,425** in generated revenue. The activity has exceeded its ambitious target of 80% return on ad spend (ROAS), currently standing at **96%**.

The Transport for Wales element is reinforcing visibility across key access points, with **1.8 million impressions** and an average 2.24% CTR. While the CTR is lower than in previous campaigns, this activity delivered quality leads that are converting into visitors. In addition, 25 strategically selected kiosks near stations in North Wales and at Manchester Piccadilly were branded with “Find your wild-side” messaging, reinforcing a travel by train message and complementing in-station advertising. Driving awareness online, we commissioned two micro influencers with high engagement rates, focusing on further amplifying the “Find your wild-side” narrative with a city stay and itinerary tailored around a zoo experience. Over the past few weeks, this activity has seen over 95,000 views across 3 reels. We also supported this stay-and-play messaging with targeted Meta, outside of the retargeting campaign, achieving a reach of 225,865 and 5,589 clicks.

Outside of Chester, the campaign showcases Cheshire’s UNESCO World Heritage Site, Jodrell Bank, under the narrative “Find some space” – positioning it as a place of discovery and wonder. Primarily, PrOOH (programmatic digital) delivered exposure to 48,000 within a 90-minute drive time, with ads played over 3,000 times across 256 digital boards. Complementary to this, Meta activity saw a 237,000 reach, gaining just under 8,000 clicks to the campaign landing page.

In summary, the headline results highlight the strength of a collaborative, experience-led campaign with our partners – promoting Cheshire’s world-class attractions through compelling narratives, securing short-stay bookings, and building long-term brand equity at a national scale.

As a result, Sojern have asked CM to speak about the collaborative approach to place promotion at the City National Place conference in Glasgow in September.

As part of our national campaign, we partnered with Merseyrail and Chester BID to deliver the **“Chester for Less”** initiative, designed to drive visits and highlight Chester’s value proposition. The campaign included free attraction tickets offered by the BID and complimentary travel provided by Merseyrail, with coverage in the Chester Standard amplifying the offer alongside supporting blog content. The activity generated strong engagement, with **127 free tickets claimed** and over **1,800 competition entries** for our Chester weekend experiences in partnership with the Liverpool Echo.

Public Relations

Between April and June 2025, we delivered strong results for Cheshire, securing 17 articles across 9 print and 8 online articles, reaching a combined audience of **5.2 million** with an impact of **4.6 million**. Recent coverage highlights included major lifestyle features in Sainsbury’s Magazine, Waitrose Food, and The Sun, as well as national mentions for Chester Zoo, Great Budworth, and Nantwich Brine Pool. Cheshire East generated 6 pieces (impact 2.1m), Cheshire West and Chester 14 pieces (impact 3.4m), and Warrington 1 piece. We also managed multiple press trips (including Waitrose Food, Red, Homes and Antiques and The Independent), pitched Cheshire to 25 journalists, and drafted press releases on the Festival of Ideas, Bolesworth Estate, and Cheshire’s summer festivals.

To follow, our priorities include building on the momentum of Media Getaway, securing coverage for Wilmslow as part of our ongoing towns work, positioning Chester as the UK’s “spookiest city,” and maximising coverage around new openings, Cheshire’s foodie offer, and Christmas events. **Visit Cheshire, Consumer Site** The new [visitcheshire.com](https://www.visitcheshire.com) continues to perform well with an average of 171k views per month, well within the industry average range with an average of 65k users per month. Dwell time is good at 1m 3s and the average engagement rate is 66%, also above the industry average. We continue to add new, seasonal and relevant content in the form of blogs, itineraries and hub pages. Chester and What’s on content are still most popular with the Zoo, Cheshire Oaks, Festivals and the city walls amongst the most viewed.

Content added recently about free and low-cost days out is performing well, as is Summer Holiday content as expected. Stats show that people are already searching for the Christmas Market so work has started on sections for Halloween and Christmas which will be the focus over the coming months. The blog continues to be well read with blogs about Quirky Date nights, Summer Holiday Fun, Afternoon Tea, places to visit with under 5s and picnic spots amongst the most popular.

Visit Cheshire Tourism Awards

Nomination deadline was Friday 22 August 2025 for Visit Cheshire Tourism Awards. Entries have almost equaled levels from last year, despite a significant downturn in entries from many other English regions.

Press release gone out announcing Walton Hall and Gardens as the host venue for the Tourism Awards on Thursday 5 March 2026.

Booking.com and Manchester social media agency Social Trinity are confirmed award category sponsors. Work is ongoing to secure further sponsorship.

MC Connect

Annual partner conference taking place on Monday 15 September at Champneys Mottram Hall. Lady Victoria Borwick, Chair of the Visit England Advisory Board to attend and speak about the national landscape. Agenda includes a panel chaired by James Hall discussing Regenerative Tourism; 3 workshops (delegates will choose to attend 2 out of 3), one from Booking.com on industry trends and AI, another run by David Lyne on how and why venues should engage with the Travel Trade and finally Social Trinity on digital marketing. Representatives from Lapland UK will talk about the new attraction coming to Capesthorpe Hall, while Wrexham Council will also be in attendance to talk about the rise of international tourism and the opportunities this can bring for our neighbouring destination.

Strategic Projects

Visit Cheshire, Industry Site

Our new B2B site - industry.visitcheshire.com - provides a central hub for our tourism and hospitality partners, featuring partnership opportunities, business resources, industry news, awards content, and more. It sits alongside our consumer site, ensuring a consistent and connected digital presence for Visit Cheshire.

Film Office

Following the completion of the feasibility study, The Film Office (working title Screen Cheshire) has been put forward for funding from the new Mayoral Combined Authority as a signature project and we now await confirmation from Government of the investment fund for C&W. Hayley Owen attended Chester Races on 11 July for a networking event featuring TV and film producers, locations and neighbouring Film Offices, to raise the profile of the region as a filming destination.

Marketing Cheshire has partnered with Peckforton Castle, Chester Zoo, Tatton Estates and Bolesworth to book a stand and sponsor a location managers' reception at the FOCUS film conference in London in December to raise the profile of the developing Screen Cheshire proposition and promote the region as a filming destination.

Travel Trade

Our new approach to travel trade engagement will begin in the autumn, including our workshops at the Connect Conference on 15 September. The new travel trade section of the visit website is now live and the main point of contact to interact with the sector.

We will be attending a Group Travel Roadshow in Harrogate in November, run by Steve Reed Tourism, to reconnect with buyers. Chester Zoo is planning to host one of these roadshows in September 2026.

The team continues to develop our travel trade action plan, researching potential exhibitions and opportunities available. Funding and resources for this will be dependent on interest from partners, devolution and whether the proposed ABID receives the go ahead. We will be engaging with partners in the coming months to establish what activities they would like to see to encourage engagement with the trade.

We continue to play an active role in EHC and have updated their travel trade guides and provided content for trade show activity, promoting key Chester attractions and accommodation providers.

What's On

This season's What's On guide was all about Summer being alive and kicking in Cheshire with unmissable experiences, festival favourites and family adventures.

New advertisers this edition included:

Hole in Wand

Bents

Living Heritage

Storyhouse

Truck Fest

Deva Fest

LeMieux National Dressage Championships

Data and Insight:

A dashboard for the period April to June is included in the accompanying documents.

Commercial Income 2025-26

- 93 partners – £67,633
- Seasonal Campaign - £21,640
- What's On - £16,744
- Digital advertising - £6,524
- **Total - £112,541**

New partners include – Boutique Hotel Group & Woodland Creatives Pottery

A **Strategic Partnership** has been proposed for Avanti Circa £10k with a range of benefits including partnership, advertising and sponsorship we are in the final stages of confirming

Devolution Communications & Engagement

CM supported council comms colleagues to recruit public affairs and communications agency Whitehouse to support on devolution media and PR activity over the summer, ahead of the three councils' votes on devolution in September.

UKREiiF – 19–21 May 2026

The Cheshire and Warrington stand has been rebooked for 2026 in the same location but with a 50% increase in footprint to allow for greater on-stand activity and meetings. Marketing Cheshire will continue to lead on preparations and event management for UKREiiF, and we are scheduling a workshop with council colleagues in October to agree our approach, priorities and themes for 2026.

Place Brand

Following an approach from Marketing Cheshire, leading place branding agency thinkingplace will be hosting their annual conference at Chester Racecourse on 12 November. The event will bring place specialists from councils and other organisations from across the country, to share case studies and practical advice on all aspects of place marketing. The event is free to attend and supported by sponsorship from CWaC Council, Chester BID and Groundworks.

Chester Media Getaway

A Resounding Success – 7th – 9th July

The recent **Media Getaway event in Chester** was a fantastic showcase of the city and wider region, bringing together **89 media representatives** and **80 exhibitors** representing destinations from across the globe. The event delivered not just strong attendance but genuine engagement, with **familiarisation trips** playing a central role in showcasing the region:

- 89 attendees took part in fam trips on Monday
- 71 participated on Wednesday - these experiences offered first-hand exposure to the area's attractions
- On arrival guests received a warm welcome from Marketing Cheshire and were given locally themed materials including the new Chester map, visitor guide, personalised postcards, and curated goody bags.

The official welcome at Chester Town Hall was a standout moment, where Gyles Brandreth charmed the audience, describing Chester as: *“As modern as tomorrow but a lot of time for yesterday.”*

The event celebrated local producers and talent, with media guests enjoying products from Spitting Feathers, Bar Lounge, Forest Gin, and the ever-popular magic potions from Hole in Wand. Catering by Restaurant 209 was a particular highlight and received glowing feedback.

A real team effort brought this event to life. The Connect event proved an invaluable opportunity for exhibitors and destinations to build relationships with media representatives. Our PR agency, JSPP, was on hand throughout, fielding queries about Cheshire and helping to facilitate meaningful connections.

A special mention goes to Chester Zoo, where delegates were treated to a VIP Heart of Africa viewing and an exceptional dining experience—one of the most talked-about parts of the event.

Impact and Feedback

- The event generated a direct economic impact of £68,000
- Media feedback described this as the “best Media Getaway yet”

This success is a testament to the hard work, collaboration, and passion of the entire team. Thank you to everyone who played a part in delivering an event that not only raised the profile of Chester but left a lasting impression on some of the UK's top media professionals.

PR and Follow-Up:

Media Getaway, coverage to date:

<https://omotgtravel.com/england/chester-a-city-where-the-legwork-is-worth-it/>

<https://mnmedia.co.uk/a-walk-around-chesters-city-walls-is-well-worth-the-legwork/>

[Open Air Theatre Review: Pride & Prejudice - Magenta Adventures Travel Publication](#)

Sunday Times – Grosvenor Open Air Theatre

Social Media

https://www.instagram.com/p/DMPZOIIMEw_/?img_index=1

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DL5jRp5gaAy/>

https://www.instagram.com/p/DMSGWM4lI95/?img_index=1

<https://www.instagram.com/absolutelylucy/>

Upcoming or potential coverage

- The Sun have scheduled a Chester focus this upcoming weekend
- We have hosted Rachel McAlley for a piece on Chester this week for H&N Magazine
- We've sent imagery for Carole Edrich's substack, piece yet to be published - <https://caroleinnit.substack.com/>
- JSPR are in the process of organising a stay in Chester for Heather Lowrie of The Sun (Scotland) for a piece on festive shopping, and in discussions on:
 - An article by Lisa Minot of The Sun on a piece on Cheshire's Foodie Triangle
 - freelancer Jaymi McCann on a piece of the Rural Housewives of Cheshire, interested in pitching to the Daily Mail
 - Adrian Bridge on a piece on travelling through Cheshire on its waterways. We've been in touch with Lynn from the Canal & Rivers Trust and are working on shaping an itinerary/angle for Adrian.
 - Mark Bibby Jackson has been in touch on a return trip to the city.

Several writers have expressed interest in collaborating on Cheshire Day. Some are seeking a fee for their involvement, while others may be open to a barter arrangement—we'll share more details soon to see who we can bring on board.

We've also followed up with suggestions around *Spooky Cheshire*, *Dog-Friendly Stays*, and stories focused on *Macclesfield* and *Northwich*, which could open up additional opportunities.

It's still early days, but we're hopeful that interest will continue to build, and we expect to see more coverage and media requests coming through in the months ahead.

Partner Meetings

Destination Chester

At the most recent meeting on 10th July, the group confirmed that Colin Potts would continue as Chair for another year. Following the resignation of Steven Hesketh as vice-chair, nominations are now being sought for a replacement, to be confirmed at the next meeting in September. The meeting included an update on data from Visitor Insights, a SEIS consultation update and feedback from Media Getaway, which was unanimously positive.

Destination Cheshire

Following the success of this year's Cheshire Day, which focused on food and drink, the Destination Cheshire Group set up a steering group to take this project forward and create a five-year plan. The first meeting of the Cheshire Day steering group was held in June. The group agreed to progress with the Made in Cheshire theme for 2026. LH is working on a detailed campaign plan to bring to the September meeting of Destination Cheshire.

The group looked at the towns' campaigns and partners are reviewing what they can do to work collaboratively to capitalise on our existing marketing campaigns. It is hoped that Devolution will present the group with better opportunities.

Look Ahead – September to December 2025 Priorities

- **Monday 15th - Wednesday 17th September** Lady Victoria Borwick, Chair of the VisitEngland Advisory Board, tour of Cheshire including speaking at MC Connect at Champneys Mottram Hall - itinerary confirmed
- **Saturday 27th September** Dutch delegation visiting Chester - morning/afternoon only - arranged with VisitEngland to promote new Eurostar route to Amsterdam and rail travel in England/Wales - itinerary tbc
- **Wednesday 1st - Thursday 2nd October** Austrian Travel Trade - Ruefa Reisen, Austria's largest tour operator with 72 travel agencies, bringing 10 people to Northwest and Wales. Overnight stay in Chester and city visit in the morning - itinerary tbc
- **Wednesday 8th October** UKInbound agent visit with Visit Wales. Will be in Chester morning / lunch - itinerary tbc
- **Monday 13th October** Partner showcase, Chester Town Hall
- **Wednesday 12 November** Thinking Place conference, Chester Racecourse
- **Wednesday 10th December** VisitBritain Europe Team having annual meeting in Manchester (9-12th Dec). On the Wednesday will be coming to Chester for a Christmassy afternoon/evening - itinerary tbc but to include Christmas Market and potentially Lanterns at Chester Zoo. Numbers tbc