STAFF CONFERENCE: 23 JANUARY
FEEDBACK SHEETS

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FROM FUTURE COMMUNICATIONS/CONFERENCES?

- Monthly staff email with genuine SP info.

SAS news has been developed for staff updates and news sharing but this has to be a two way communication and we need your help to populate. More regular staff updates will be sent when possible.

- Understanding the Trustees and do they know who we are?

Trustee site visits are being arranged and they have also indicated that they would like to hold joint meetings with SMT at least twice a year.

- Email all individuals rather than leave heads of departments to impart info-sometimes info is not passed on.

The staff email list has been updated but where staff share an email address and would like communication direct please nominate an email address to marketing@sussexpast.co.uk where you would like communication sent.

- This staff event may have been better held at one of the properties.

- Great to have a yearly conference – could we do it at SP properties, rotate

- Give each staff a chance to show off their pride in their workplace.

- Should increase value to frontline staff visiting other properties

The next staff conference has been set for 22nd January 2015 at Michelham Priory. Future conferences will be held at SAS properties on a rotation basis and will contain more show casing of projects and an opportunity to view the site. Please let marketing@sussexpast.co.uk if you would like to nominate a project that you would like to showcase at this event. In the meantime please forward all news you wish to share for SAS news.

A number of comments related to communication and information sharing.

This will be a topic discussed at an SMT meeting on how we best communicate across the organisation and share best practise. There is a strategy day to be scheduled with the Trustees and SMT to develop the Society’s future plans. Where relevant the final outcome will be shared.
More inter-site publicity/promotion of other Curriculum workshops

The Education team have been asked to submit their new Curriculum workshops which will be shared with Sussex schools as a joint SP offering. Education does have the opportunity to share ideas and best practise as a team.

Paid staff meetings – take rota into account

This is an issue that needs to be raised at staff meetings to find a mutually convenient time to meet. Suggest these meetings are held at different times to ensure all staff can attend some meetings.

Roll out AQA system on policies like customer service – passed to staff and in-house trained.

Some key organisations were identified in the afternoon customer service activity. A couple of these will be approached to see if they can assist in developing our customer service and other similar systems.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF YOUR ROLE AT SAS?

- Too much work, too few hours
- Negativity
- The negativity every time there is a change or something different is proposed
- Over coming negative attitudes

We do recognise how hard our staff are working and this reflects the nature of the work in a charitable organisation and/or the heritage sector. If staff raise their concerns with their manager/CEO/Personnel we will do our best to address them.

Negativity can impact significantly on everyone’s experience of their working environment and potentially can impact on the service that we provide. It is important that staff feedback on areas which bring about negativity and help be part of suggesting and developing solutions.

- Poor communication – things aren’t always cascaded down
- The difference between what is said and what is done
- Poor internal & cross site communication

It is easier to communicate within sites than across sites and regular staff meetings are helpful in achieving this. SMT is meeting every two months and will try to ensure that information is cascaded to staff. It is understood that the nature of the Society, with many sites and functions spread across two Counties means that communication issues will arise and it is helpful when staff suggest ways in which this can be approved.

- Closed staff feedback or info exchange – FB site/twitter
- Respond to customers on the internet “No 2nd chance in 1st impression
A policy has been put in place but will be reviewed and reissued.

- Internet Site- phone app for schools etc.
- Website hard for visitors to use.
- Website not updated enough
- More/better publicity

The website is continually evolving and a lot of work has gone into developing the site over the last couple of years using staff and visitor feedback. The site is also monitored using several analytic tools to review the hierarchy of pages viewed, to ensure correct tone of voice etc. If there are elements that staff have received specific feedback on then please forward to marketing for review. Visitors to the website view it less often than staff so the change in content is based on their viewing cycle and SAS staff capacity. If staff have elements they would like included on the site this should be feedback to marketing@sussexpast.co.uk.

A responsive design for the website which allows it to adapt to the screen size e.g. mobile, is currently being developed to launch in May 14.

- Return of GA discount cards

The policy to use existing till receipts as proof of GA was developed to save costs. If this needs to be revised a cost/benefit needs to be submitted.

- Please can we have our new guidebooks at MP & Lewes Castle

Lewes Castle will be available in May. MP’s is still being worked but there is still existing stock of the current book.

- EH signs at all properties & Art Fund for those that offer it.

New ArtFund stickers have been circulated to the relevant properties EH is being looked at.

- Details at FB on 3 properties doing weddings e.g. brochure

Copies have been sent to the properties and are available on www.sussexpast.co.uk.

- Balancing the demands of my nationally based job with local society (SAS) functions and education

- Lack of financial funding & staff support for what I do means that although I try to help other departments, I do not get much support in return. As my responsibilities are growing, my job becomes increasingly unsustainable.
If this is an issue please raise this with a member of the SMT and we will see if it something we can address/help

- Broken/inadequate/wrong furniture FOH at LC
- Not enough hours outside opening hours (maintenance)
- A chance to learn more historical conservation directly in-house or supported training

We have appointed a new Maintenance Assistant at LC who has a background in furniture restoration so if you need anything doing please email Sheena and Izzy and we will put it on the forthcoming works list. If some significant maintenance needs doing outside opening hours we will consider the best way of achieving this.

If there is an interest in historical conservation please email Sheena and she will consider how this development need might be met.

- CEO felt it unnecessary to stay to listen to staff or even personally thank staff for attending & apologise for leaving
- I was disappointed that having listened to Tristan’s ideas about the way forward, he left without hearing ours.

There was an unfortunate clash on day of the staff conference with an essential pre-arranged meeting which had been set up between the CEO, the Commercial Manager and several senior regional conservation and advisory staff from English Heritage. This meeting covered the issue of the flooding at Fishbourne and the degradation of the mosaics, the complex works required at AOC regarding fire mitigation measures, two major areas of physical works at Lewes Castle and the required research programme which has to be undertaken prior to any major moat enhancement works at Michelham Priory. Apologies are offered that this was not fully communicated to all staff at the meeting. The excellent input from all staff has been captured and will be considered by all senior managers and thanks are given to everyone for this support and contributions – they are noted and valued.

Change in Curriculum – Sept 14. Diminished Primary School visits, diminished revenue

Please see earlier education feedback

- Accommodate KS3 (secondary), we need a further large area (seated) space at AOC to develop new schools services.

Anne of Cleves is undergoing a major development. New facilities and amenities have been developed. The use of space is part of this and this is already evolving to meet our needs, and those of our visitors. This will continue and the various relevant heads of service will be involved with these discussions.
WHAT IS GREAT ABOUT WORKING FOR SAS?

- The knowledge and staff enthusiasm
- Consideration of the time flexibility that life sometimes requires
- Things can get decided and implemented much more quickly than big organisations
- Variety and Autonomy
- I like working at FB because I like Archaeology
- Good management, staff communication, nice setting to work in, overall friendly, positive customers
- My colleagues, my manager, the view from the top of the castle.
- MP is a lovely place to work with great staff & a beautiful sense of place. Never dull spent yesterday painting.
- I get to work with the most over-qualified & incredible staff in Heritage. Many individuals hold on to an increasingly under supported and stressful job because they personally believe in what we do as a team- their is perseverance and spirit is an inspiration.
- My volunteers – the most fearless, intrepid people and faithful in spite of no compensation and little benefits outside my gratitude.
- Working for an institution with a legacy of exemplary work in archaeology & heritage
- Team feeling – in it together and good site manager
- Ambience – good vibrations
- Genuinely miss it if not able to attend work
- Good feelings for the work I do – I have received positive feedback from visitor’s comments on the work I do.

CAR PARK – OTHER COMMENTS?

- Thought needs to be given to the parking needs at FB following a large development. If paddock is sold for housing there won’t be an overflow facility. Also where will the picnic area be allocated?

  This will be taken into consideration.

- Keep adding to/ improving the product/attraction we are selling to keep it fresh and customers coming back.
Each property has a future strategy plan that was shared at the meeting and available on the website.

- Membership benefits – put on special activities behind the scene tours, museum trips, lectures only available to members

- Promote yearly membership opposed to life as prices go up the revenue is lost – although admit there is a big pot in one go.

We have offered ‘behind the scenes’ tours at the CDC at Fishbourne and at Anne of Cleves House, and can certainly consider other options if there is anything suitable. Unfortunately, experience shows that we rarely fill members events solely with members, and we also have to be careful not to run foul of HMRC’s rules concerning Gift Aid (as claimed on membership subscriptions), which preclude us from offering discounted rates to members to attend any of our events. We were given the chance last year to run a subsidised visit to Oxford’s Pitt Rivers Museum, to include private tour, handling session and transport, and the number attending was so low that I would not consider doing anything similar as we would lose heavily.

We do not actively promote Life membership; although it is available as an option (we only have 93 Life members, out of 2000). The preferred route is to encourage people to complete a direct debit form when they join, as this method lends itself to regular renewals at minimal cost to us.

- Promote the properties via film location agencies – as far as I am aware only 3 major productions have used SP properties (excluding news & docs)

SAS properties are listed on a couple of free film production websites and have been used as locations for a number of TV programs at least five in 2013. We have to weigh up the cost/disruption to the site versus the benefits we receive. Any recommendation to other sites welcome please forward to marketing.

- Sponsorship of Lewes Tapestry by local business that could pay towards framing/leaflets in return for image copyright/advertising thus also promoting the society.

A marketing plan and sponsorship has been developed for the Tapestry

- Joint tickets with similar properties i.e. AOC with Hever etc.

Viability will be investigated.

- Volunteer dedicated membership recruiters thus freeing up FOH staff also photo boards to show organisation at work with its aims and obligations.

Michelham Priory have demonstrated best practise for membership recruitment. Additional membership recruiters were tried at busy events at both Michelham and Fishbourne and membership recruitment did not increase the volume of new members.