



Scrutiny Report

The Promotion of Tourism in North Lincolnshire

Corporate Scrutiny Panel

April 2015



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FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN



**Councillor
Jonathan Evison**
Chairman of the
Places Scrutiny
Panel

I still think we can expect more from this sector and now that the economy is back in growth and starting to overtake pre-crash levels businesses, individuals and voluntary groups will have the confidence to expand their enterprises and endeavours boosting this sector greatly.

That just leaves me to thank the members of the panel, our officers, stakeholders and contributor for their work and the democratic service officers for compiling this report.

This review looks into a very important but often overlooked sector within our economy. Tourism is the 5th largest sector in the UK economy and the job creation and income streams are very much larger than you would think. It is important to understand that a flourishing tourism industry pulls in cash from outside our region while simultaneously retaining income from within by supplying activities, attractions and cultural outlets negating the appeal for our residents to travel out of the region.

During our review we heard from cabinet members, directors, officers and stakeholders who I would like to thank for their time and candour, I was pleased to hear informative discussions and a willingness to explore opportunities and act on ideas from the panel with the proposed petting zoo and the enhanced offer for Caravan visitors at Normanby Park being two examples. It is also good news that we are investing in two children's water play areas at Normanby Hall and Central Park.

BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

Local Government has made a significant contribution to deficit reduction and played a major role in promoting business and the local economy. Now that we have moved back into growth and the economy has started to attain levels last seen before the financial crisis, where output and jobs are expanding rapidly we are well placed to capitalise on a sector that has developed well and sustained itself during the period after the crash. The council is keen to promote this expansion and generate the business rates that will help sustain and increase front-line services, through galvanising all available opportunities in North Lincolnshire including unlocking the local growth potential of the visitor economy.

It has been estimated that the Yorkshire and Humber visitor economy employs around 250,000 people and is worth around £7 billion. The value of destination brands across the region are critical to local employment, particularly in the tourism sector, but also in terms of wider economic growth, infrastructure, arts and cultural provision, and in helping to create a local environment where people wish to live, work, invest and spend leisure time.

Consequently, members wished to determine whether North Lincolnshire was making the most of its potential as a destination for tourists, including maximising the economic benefits for the area.

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The scrutiny panel agreed to focus on a number of key issues. These were to determine –

- The existing nature of tourism in North Lincolnshire
- The existing strategies and resources for marketing tourism
- The potential for increasing tourism in North Lincolnshire
- The role of the council in delivering regional tourism strategies

This was to be undertaken by -

- Assessing the council's involvement directly and indirectly in tourism including the provision of tourist information and the support provided to local businesses.
- Considering how well council departments work together to promote tourism.
- Examining the responsibilities of other key partners and assessing how effectively partners work together to promote tourism in North Lincolnshire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 The Panel notes that the www.visitnorthlincolnshire.com website is currently being redesigned. However, with the tourism season almost upon us, its completion and more importantly its launch and subsequent promotion must be a priority.
- 2 The Panel expect the new 'VisitNorthLincolnshire' web site to be fully interactive, allowing the user to benefit from on-line services.
- 3 Once the new www.visitnorthlincolnshire.com web site goes live, members would like council officers to attend a scrutiny panel meeting to demonstrate the improvements made to the site.
- 4 Whilst the Panel welcomes the numerous twitter accounts that are available for visitors to obtain information on North Lincolnshire's events and attractions, the Panel recommends that having just one generic tourism twitter account would, in the Panel's opinion, make it simpler for the visitor to obtain the information they require.
- 5 The Panel recommends that the council and partners to, wherever possible, proactively source external funding to develop tourism facilities in the area. It would be an advantage, for example, for the council to be able to offer small grants to accommodation providers to create/improve their facilities.
- 6 The Panel notes the expansion to the Nightel Hotel and the development of the Hilton Hotel accommodation that will shortly be built at Humberside International Airport. However, the Panel recommends that the council and partners proactively seek the establishment of at least one additional 4* hotel, although other levels of accommodation would be welcome as well.
- 7 The Panel heard evidence that many people involved in the tourism sector have low levels of IT skills. Training in this has been offered by the council in the past but with limited take up. Therefore, the Panel would like to see this training provision be offered to all employees in the tourism sector. In addition, Customer Care training is needed if the area is to meet the expectations of our customers.
- 8 North Lincolnshire has clearly demonstrated that it can attract 'large' scale events to the area, namely the Tour of Britain and the Olympic Torch Relay. Members would therefore expect that the council proactively seeks similar sized events to be held in North Lincolnshire.

FINDINGS

Tourism and the Visitor Economy

The obvious starting point for members was to understand just what is meant by tourism. The term tourism tends to describe the obvious tourism elements such as overnight visitors, attractions, and accommodation establishments directly.

The visitor economy is a more useful term to understand the complexity of the relationship between the visitor and their expenditure and the supply chain which provides for their needs. It takes into account that not all visitors stay overnight, that leisure day visitors have different needs, that business visitors and people visiting friends and family are important. It also takes into account the wider range of businesses that benefit from visitor expenditure – the bars and restaurants, shops, petrol stations, local food suppliers, laundry services and the people that service the tourism businesses.

Improving Quality of Offer

Since the financial crash an increased number of people have decided to start up their own business¹ and the tourism sector offers many the opportunity they have been looking for with an estimated 80 per cent of new businesses small and medium sized being tourism related.

This means a far greater proportion of spend stays within the local community compared with other industries. However, it also means that these smaller businesses' turnover is more fragile and likely to fluctuate as a result of factors such as a financial crisis, staffing,

cost of complying with regulations and consumer confidence. This means they can often struggle with the money or skills required to improve their quality of service.

To help provide a high quality offer local tourism needs to be underpinned by a robust quality assurance system. Visitors to an area need to have absolute confidence in the quality and safety of the food they are eating, the accommodation they are staying in and the attractions they visit. An effective, but proportionate regulatory offer can be critical in enabling businesses to thrive while sustaining the high standards that promote consumer confidence.

A quality offer is equally important to create an attractive destination for business tourism, which typically demands a higher quality across a range of services but delivers a higher yield and more all year round business. This helps sustain permanent employment in an area and bring in inward investment, trade opportunities and showcases an area to business visitors who may return at a later date with family or friends.

The council is working with local stakeholders to identify opportunities and create attractive offers for business tourism. As part of partnership working, the local authority are assisting local Small and Medium Enterprises by equipping them with the understanding, skills and resources required to drive up their quality of offer.

¹Barclays Capital, BDO article, <http://www.bdo.uk.com/business-news/more-people-setting-up-own-business-says-bank>

²Supply side of tourism report, Office for National Statistics, 2012

³Tourism Alliance, Tourism for Growth

FINDINGS

The North Lincolnshire Offer

North Lincolnshire is not a traditional resort destination with an attractive coastline. Despite this, Members heard that the area does provide a high quality tourism offer. This ranges from adrenaline sports to historic houses and gardens.

North Lincolnshire is able to offer a wide variety of options to visitors. Mainly these are based around heritage, culture, wildlife and the arts. However, food either as Farmers' Markets or Food Festivals is a growth area. The area also has an increasing number of outdoor activities from walking, cycling and fishing to golf, parachuting, gliding and paintball.

Principal attractions include Normanby Hall, 20-21 Visual Arts Centre, The Ropewalk, The Trolleybus Museum at Sandtoft, Epworth Old Rectory and the newly established Brigg Heritage Centre. The area is marketed as a place to unwind and relax whilst highlighting that there is plenty to do for those who wish to be more active.

Barton-upon-Humber has a collection of attractions that exceeds most towns of its size, including views of the Humber Bridge. The town's attractions were highlighted in The Times, "Great British Weekend" series⁴.

The award winning Brigg Farmers' market has achieved fame and is recognised as one of the best in Britain. The area as a whole produces food of high standard and it is available to visitors in a selection of farm shops.

The Baths Hall and the Pods developments have significantly enhanced the leisure offer in North Lincolnshire.

Members heard, however, that North Lincolnshire has no large all weather attraction such as the Eden Project or a Centre Park style venue. The popularity of outdoor activities is increasing nationally and North Lincolnshire could benefit from some sort of Outdoor Pursuits Centre offering a wide range of activities from mountain bike trails, woodland trails/orienteering, rock climbing, (disused quarries) and suitable camping facilities.

A three year survey, 2009-2011 commissioned by Welcome to Yorkshire showed that many of the area's visitors are making a repeat visit, (75%) and over 94% said that they would come again and recommend the area to others. Descriptive words such as friendly, relaxing, natural and traditional were highlighted in the report.

Transport routes to North Lincolnshire are good. The M180 links the area with the national motorway system and the railway stations at Scunthorpe and Barnetby link to the national rail system. There are also national bus services to Scunthorpe. North Lincolnshire is also fortunate to have access through Humberside International Airport and Robin Hood Doncaster International Airport as well as the P&O terminal in Hull. Locally the road network is good, however public transport can be an issue in getting to some attractions particularly on a Sunday.

⁴Tourism Alliance, Tourism for Growth

Direct rail access is relatively poor compared to some other tourist destinations.

Accessibility for visitors with special needs is generally very good. Most attractions have made adaptations where possible and for those where this has not been possible other arrangements have been made such as at Thornton Abbey where there is the facility to take a virtual tour of the upstairs rooms of the gatehouse.

There are 59 attractions in the North Lincolnshire Visitor Guide plus Brigg Farmers' Market. In addition to these there is the Northern Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage trail that consists of eight airfields across North and Northeast Lincolnshire and the Northern Lincolnshire Heritage and Church Trails that covers 16 churches across North and Northeast Lincolnshire.

Overseas tourism to the UK increased by 23% in 2013 compared to 2012 and is forecast to continue growing. Given the proximity of the Hull Ferry Terminal and the Humberside and Robin Hood Airports, potential opportunities exist to develop North Lincolnshire as a destination for overseas visits, particularly linked to the Hull City of Culture 2017. Potential target markets include Belgium, Holland and Denmark. Currently it is estimated that around 5% of all visits to North Lincolnshire are by overseas visitors.

Visitor Numbers

Members were informed that every January, the council asks all the attractions and event organisers how many visitors they had during the previous year. When the council first started counting in 2002, there were 200,000 recorded day visits to attractions in North Lincolnshire. Over the years there has been a steady increase as more people discover what the area has to offer and new attractions open.

a) 2011

In 2011, North Lincolnshire had 59 attractions and 1,295 quality inspected bed spaces. Tourism was worth £167 million to the local economy and 3,971 people were employed in the industry.

The figures for 2011 show that there were 2.53 million recorded day visits to North Lincolnshire attractions, a rise of over 230,130 from 2010. Brigg and the Ancholme Valley attracted 355,234 visitors. Barton and the Wolds attracted 779,922 visitors. Epworth and The Isle attracted 190,396 visitors. Over 1.2 million people visited attractions in the Scunthorpe area (which includes Winterton and Messingham).

It was noted that visits to retail attractions were not included in the calculations as these would skew the results. However, it could be argued that some retail centres (like major garden centres) are tourist attractions in their own right, bringing in significant visitor numbers.

The figures at the Baths Hall and The Pods were included in the council's figures, both of which are new for 2011. However, if the figures from the new venues were not included, the figures are still up by 42,165.

b) 2012

In 2012, Britain was in the global spotlight with events such as the Olympics and the Queen's Jubilee celebrations.

North Lincolnshire had 75 places to visit in the area and 1,335 quality inspected bedspaces. Tourism employed over 4,000 people and was worth around £167 million to the local economy.

There were 2,618,517 recorded day-visits to events and attractions in North Lincolnshire. This represented an increase of more than 3.4% on the previous year.

This was good news in a year where the national visitor figures had again fallen. A VisitEngland report shows that domestic trips in England and Great Britain had both fallen by 7%.

c) 2013

After the high profile events and poor weather of 2012, tourism locally had seen a significant rise in the number of day visits.

There were over 75 places to visit in the area and 1,126 quality inspected bed spaces. Tourism continued to employ just over 4,000 people and was worth £167 million to the local economy.

In 2013, there were over 2.9 million (2,946,228) day-visits to events and attractions in North Lincolnshire. This was an increase of 318,000 on 2012, or an increase of over 12%.

Especially pleasing to members was a marked increase in the number of visitors to council owned venues. Normanby Hall has seen a 3% increase and the figures for 20-21 Visual Arts Centre are up by 8%.

North Lincolnshire Museum was recently highlighted in the national press as one of the five best free UK museums and galleries for children.

Other North Lincolnshire attractions have seen rises as well. The Pods is now becoming well established and saw an increase in visitors of over 96,000. The Baths Hall doubled its 2012 visitor numbers.

Value of tourism

It is important for tourism organisations and businesses to be able to understand the value of tourism, both at a national level and within the destination or destinations they operate in. This information has not always been easy to access. However, the Tourism Intelligence Unit (TIU) within the Office for National Statistics published a report in 2008 titled 'the Sub-Regional Value of Tourism in the UK in 2008'.

(i) Tourism Spending by Type of Tourism (£m, 2008)

Area	Inbound Visitors	Domestic Overnight Visitors	Domestic Day Visitors	Domestic Outbound Visitors	Total	Total UK Destinations (excluding outbound)
UK Total	16,323	22,140	48,310	26,881	113,654	86,773
England Total	17,471	17,267	41,452	24,643	97,833	73,190
Yorkshire & the Humber	431	1,503	3,197	571	5,703	5,131
North & North East Lincolnshire	17	60	176	60	313	253

(ii) Tourism Spending by Type of Tourism (% share, 2008)

Area	Inbound Visitors	Domestic Overnight Visitors	Domestic Day Visitors	Domestic Outbound Visitors
UK Total	14%	19%	43%	24%
England Total	15%	18%	42%	25%
Yorkshire & the Humber	8%	26%	56%	10%
North & North East Lincolnshire	5%	19%	56%	19%

(iii) Tourism Spending by Tourism Product (£m, 2008)

Area	Accomm. Services for Visitors	Food & beverage serving services	Passenger Transport Services	Cultural, sport & recreational services	Other products	Total
UK Total	13,152	22,719	22,045	5,683	50,055	113,654
England Total	10,826	19,135	19,955	4,904	43,013	97,833
Yorkshire & the Humber	658	1,479	574	400	2,591	5,703
North & North East Lincolnshire	27	48	52	32	154	313

(iv) The Economic Contribution of Tourism (2008)

Area	Total Direct Gross Value Added	Tourism Ratio
UK Total	44.9	3.47%
England Total	38.7	3.47%
Yorkshire & the Humber	2.3	2.45%
North & North East Lincolnshire	0.12	2.13%

(v) Tourism Employment by Local Authority – Numbers in Employment (2009)

Area	Employees	Full-time employees	Part-time employees	Employment
Great Britain	2,717,900	1,395,900	1,322,100	2,938,000
England	2,343,400	1,213,100	1,130,300	2,536,100
Yorkshire & the Humber	211,100	92,700	118,400	229,200
North Lincolnshire	5,400	2,000	3,500	5,900

(vi) Tourism Employment by Local Authority – Share of Employment (2009)

Area	Employees	Full-time employees	Part-time employees	Employment
Great Britain	10%	8%	16%	11%
England	10%	8%	16%	10%
Yorkshire & the Humber	10%	6%	16%	10%
North Lincolnshire	8%	4%	16%	8%

In 2013, there were over 2.9 million (2,946,228) day visits to events and attractions in North Lincolnshire. This figure was up by over 318,000 on 2012, an increase of over 12%.

According to the STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Model) report in 2012, tourism was worth £132,745,000 to the local economy. In the same report, it showed that 2,049 individuals were employed in tourism related jobs.

Investment in Tourism

With the current austerity measures resulting from the financial crisis and deficit reduction pressures on local government budgets that have traditionally been relied upon to support tourism the arts and culture in order to boost visitor spend, members were delighted to hear that the council continues to invest in its visitor attractions.

Recent examples include the introduction of a tractor train and new woodland paths at Normanby Hall, the recent opening of the Brigg Heritage Centre displaying the Brigg Raft and improvements to the galleries at

North Lincolnshire Museum. Further projects include improvements to visitor facilities at the 20-21 Visual Arts Centre, the development of an Ancholme River path running from Brigg to South Ferriby, improvements to Barrow Market Place, investment in Scunthorpe Museum, Petting Zoo and enhanced facilities for caravans at Normanby Park and the proposed children's water play areas at both Normanby Park and Central Park Scunthorpe.

Food events in North Lincolnshire are very popular. The Epworth Food Fair has run for two years and the number of visitors has continued to grow. There were also three food events in Brigg and a new Food Festival in Barton-upon-Humber.

Members learned that there was an historic lack of resource and occasional reluctance to take commercial risk which has previously affected some venues. However, it is gratifying to learn that this is now starting to change as the recovery gathers momentum.

The Pods swimming-orientated sport complex in Scunthorpe was designed to a

high standard, with the intention of it being a landmark. With the right promotion, the facility is now becoming a significant visitor destination and we must capitalise on this further.

In addition, the planned Lincolnshire Lakes project gives Scunthorpe the opportunity to reposition itself. The recreational facilities that will be needed, especially in the form of open space, provide the opportunity to add to the appeal of the town as a destination.

Partnership Working

The council continues to work closely in partnership with a range of organisations involved in providing the North Lincolnshire tourism offer.

Northern Lincolnshire has shown its capacity to work together to stage major events by successfully hosting the Tour of Britain and the 2012 passage of the Olympic Torch.

The council also uses its enhanced community grant programme to provide support funding to a wide range of groups involved in developing local projects that assist in enhancing the local tourism offer.

The council also uses the opportunity to work in partnership with other local authorities to secure funding to develop the offer for local residents and visitors. Members heard of examples of successful partnership working, which included collaboration with East Riding of Yorkshire Council and Hull City Council to secure £0.5m of Arts Council England funding to develop exhibitions at attractions across the three authority areas commemorating

the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War.

The council is in contact with all the attractions and accommodation providers on a regular basis. They are provided with visitor information which they can either order straight from Brigg TIC or they can request staff to visit to restock. In return, both TICs stock any leaflets and information on all our attraction and accommodation providers and will help them distribute this to areas outside of North Lincolnshire.

All attractions and accommodation venues are entitled to a free 1/6 page entry in our annual visitor guide which they can choose to enhance for a small cost. Inclusion in the visitor guide automatically gives them an entry on to the visitnorthlincolnshire.com website. All are invited to take part in the Great Attractions Fair and all are asked to supply us with their leaflets for the shows that we attend. The council is able to advise accommodation providers on the Quality Inspection process and can help guide those new to accommodation through this. The council can also help attraction owners with queries they may have regarding promotion.

For the annual visitor guide, the council works with a distribution house to supply TICs across the country. The council supplies the company with a quantity of guides straight from the printer and then TICs can order stocks from them. Both TICs also fulfil enquiries made directly to them. Advertising is also placed in several national publications, particularly aimed at the group market to encourage visits to North Lincolnshire.

The council works with staff based at the P&O Ferries terminal in Rotterdam to have our information stocked on the ferries. In 2013, an information leaflet was produced in four languages, Dutch, German, French and Danish to encourage passengers to visit this area.

These leaflets have also been supplied to Humberside Airport for them to be displayed in their partner airports.

National Economy

The UK economy as a whole crashed at the start of the global financial crisis in 2008 but has latterly achieved and started to overtake pre-crash levels and growth, by comparison the UK tourism industry has not followed this trend and continued to grow strongly throughout this period. Despite being a small island with an unpredictable climate, the UK is the seventh most popular destination in the world. The Tourism Alliance has indicated that revenue from inbound tourism has increased by about 30% since 2008 and domestic tourism has grown significantly from £19.5 bn in 2010 to £23.5 bn in 2013.

The visitor economy is the UK's fifth largest industry and is a leading sector seeing substantial growth – it contributes around £127 billion to the UK economy (almost 10 per cent of GDP and the long-run Gross Value Added growth rate of the visitor economy is forecast to be 3.5 per cent per annum over the period 2010 to 2020, which is even ahead of the high growth rate of 2.9 per cent forecast for the economy as a whole. This means that for every £1,000 generated in

direct tourism GVA there is a further £2,500 that is secured elsewhere in the economy through the supply chain⁵.

Employment

Research commissioned by Visit Britain concludes that tourism-related employment now accounts for 3.1 million jobs in the UK – almost 10% of the entire workforce. And growth and employment generated by tourism has spread widely across all regions and provided employment for groups most affected by the global financial crisis – young people, Black and Minority Ethnic etc.

The Panel recognizes that the visitor economy offers opportunities to deliver on many Government and local government priorities. One third of all new jobs created between 2009 and 2011 were in tourism⁶. The sector directly employs over 1.3 million people (twice that of the education sector) with many of these jobs being entry level or part time jobs, offering much needed opportunities for 16-24 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and parents of young children looking to return to work.

National Policy

This year the Culture, Media and Sport Committee has announced an inquiry into tourism in the UK and invited written evidence for contribution.

The deadline for submission was 29 September 2014. The members await the findings of the report with interest.

⁵Deloitte, 'Tourism: jobs and growth', November 2013

⁶Analysis of Office National Statistics data 2012. Employment Characteristics of Tourism Industries 2011.

Role of Local Authorities

The Local Government Association (LGA) and VisitEngland have stated that understanding the unique characteristics of a place and creating an authentic experience for the people who want to visit is the key to good destination management. They consider that local authorities are at the heart of this because tourism supporting the creation of great places for communities and businesses to thrive in is what councils are there to do

However, following the financial crisis and in a post-crash economy some councils are making unpalatable cutbacks. For example, there is no statutory requirement on local authorities to pay for the running of tourist information centres, and with the growth of the internet, many are being closed, even though it is acknowledged that they still play an invaluable role locally for visitors. This is not the case here in North Lincolnshire, with two Tourist Information Centres being financed by the council.

Members do acknowledge though that some of the local authority attractions will require ongoing investment to maintain their appeal. It is gratifying therefore to see this development and even expansion and a better offer to the community taking place.

The LGA and VisitEngland review – ‘The Visitor Economy – A potential powerhouse of local growth,’ indicated that the visitor economy has huge potential for future growth by getting visitors to spend more when they visit. Key ways local authorities can help achieve this are by giving visitors a

higher value offer; investing in the arts to attract visitors; developing a brand and place image to strengthen the pull of an area; improving access to suitable transport; and working in partnership to improve the conditions for the visitor economy to grow.

Members are of the belief that North Lincolnshire has a substantial commitment to developing and running attractions of different type and visitor services.

The council has a good track record of partnership working. Previous examples included the Northern Lincolnshire Tourism Partnership and also the LEADER programme that was run by the Northern Lincolnshire Rural Local Action Group.

Tourism Strategy

Members heard that on 3 June 2004, Cabinet formally approved the North Lincolnshire Tourism Strategy from 2004-2007. The Strategy set out a vision and direction for tourism in North Lincolnshire from 2004-2007.

It identified strategic aims, strands for success and action plans to enable the industry to meet the challenges it faced. The strategy aimed to reposition North Lincolnshire as a quality short break and day visit destination, focussing on the natural environment, the arts, culture and heritage. It is members’ belief that we have and continued to reap the benefits of this strategy which is responsible in no small part for the renaissance and untypical growth of the North Lincolnshire visitor economy.

However, members were concerned to hear that there was not currently a strategy in place for the ongoing development of the visitor economy in the area. However, it was gratifying to hear that plans are in place to develop these, but this should be actioned as a matter of urgency.

North Lincolnshire is a member of the Greater Lincolnshire Destination Forum and can take advantage of working with the rest of Lincolnshire. The Tourism Team has been responsible for creating the visitor experience in conjunction with local attractions and accommodation providers. Because of the geography of this area, North Lincolnshire doesn't fit neatly into any specific area and so when the Tourism Destination Management Organisations were created a few years ago there wasn't one that was accessible.

North Lincolnshire was a member of Welcome to Yorkshire until three years ago. However, it was decided not to renew our membership due to North Lincolnshire not being part of Yorkshire, and did not fit into their brand image. North Lincolnshire was also a member of Lincolnshire Tourism (now disbanded) but as they were funded through the East Midland Development Agency we often couldn't take part in much of their work, therefore the area was largely left on its own.

Members are acutely aware that the availability of external funding is limited and on occasions may prove difficult to access when competing with areas with a higher tourism profile. Similarly, the area may find it difficult to secure a reasonable share of available resources unless it can make a

convincing case that it is able to develop the visitor economy.

Hull was recently announced as the City of Culture 2017. Consequently, tourism in North Lincolnshire needs to be well placed to take advantage of the opportunities this offers.

Investing in the Arts to Attract Visitors

Members were informed that a strong cultural, heritage, arts and sporting offer is central to creating great destinations that appeal to visitors to stay longer and spend more.

The cultural sector — museums, arts, galleries, theatres and festivals — are a crucial part of North Lincolnshire's visitor economy.

Festivals, museums, galleries and performances are crucial in attracting visitors, encouraging wider spend, and persuading visitors to convert day visits into overnight visits.

Councils currently spend £2.8 billion every year on the arts, heritage, libraries, leisure centres, museums, and other cultural services.

It is essential that the council plays a key facilitator role in working with the local arts, heritage and sporting sector to build and showcase a rich and attractive cultural offer for both visitors and residents. Therefore, the council must ensure it is able to lever funding from all potential sources, including lottery funding, to make the most of cultural tourism.

This investment and leadership in arts and culture has been a successful one.

The 20/21 Visual Arts Centre in Scunthorpe is a high quality and successful addition to the town's cultural offer. Nearby Normanby Hall is a country park of high standard with the quality and capacity to stage indoor and outdoor events of size.

North Lincolnshire Museum made the final shortlist of six in the national 2013 Telegraph Family Friendly Museum Awards and was highlighted in The Observer as one of the five best free museums and galleries for children in February 2014⁷.

Use of Social Media

Research by VisitEngland has shown that visitors are often not aware of the breadth and depth of the cultural offer of the local area.

Local authorities can be a conduit for sharing information and promoting local activities which improve the attractiveness and productivity of the local visitor economy offer.

Digital marketing and social media are bringing about great change to the way potential visitors search for and book holidays. There have also been changes to how people access information about holiday destinations during their stay and provide feedback and reviews about their experience.

The council has set up a visitor website.

Members heard that the council actively promotes its tourism offer. However, members believe that the only reason print should continue to be used is if it supports

economic growth. There is no doubt that consumers are increasingly switching to digital channels to fulfil their information needs.

The increased use of mobile devices and the consumer expectation that they can get the information they want 'anytime, anywhere' means that a website must have a version that is easily used on the move.

Apps are a digital tool that could be used by the council to highlight discounts, deals and special offers and provide self-guided trails and tours. Their purpose is to encourage spur of the moment action by visitors post arrival and give them reasons to stay in the destination longer and spend more money.

Social media drives the increasingly fluid and rapid spread of information amongst friends and peers, representing both a huge opportunity and a potent threat for different tourism businesses.

Social media is also driving another shift in consumer attitudes to leisure – the fear of missing out (sometimes abbreviated to FOMO). The ease with which people can share their leisure activities – both with people they know and with people they don't – increases our exposure to different experiences. This will catalyse a 'fear of missing out' – consumers will want to try these new experiences and will not want their peers to be having more fun than they are.

⁷The Observer – Sunday February 16 2014

Sustainability

The objective of sustainable tourism is to retain the economic and social advantages of tourism development while reducing or mitigating any undesirable impacts on the natural, historic, cultural or social environment. This is achieved by balancing the needs of tourists with those of the destinations. The benefits are clear, saving money, reducing business risk, increasing profitability and accessing an increasing market of customers who have an interest in authentic experiences and sustainability.

Local Enterprise Partnerships

The council has a long tradition of promoting growth and of working in partnership with business and other stakeholders, including through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

LEPs are business led public-private partnerships with the remit of setting a clear vision for the economy of their area by determining local economic priorities and co-ordinating public and private investment in economic regeneration.

The Hull and Humber LEP has identified the visitor economy as one of their priority growth areas in order to deliver economic growth, employment opportunities, inward investment and growth of other business sectors through business tourism at a local level.

Promoting North Lincolnshire's Tourism Offer

Every year the council produces the North Lincolnshire Visitor and Accommodation Guide. This is the Tourism Team's major piece

of print for the year, with 15,000 copies printed in 2014. Leaflets are also produced for Brigg, Barton and Epworth.

The www.visitnorthlincolnshire.com website is also used to attract visitors to the area although this is now quite old and in need of replacement. Some generic advertising is undertaken throughout the year to attract groups in particular or for specific events. The Tourism Team attend the Lincolnshire Show, Waddington International Airshow and Cleethorpes Festival of Flight to inform people about North Lincolnshire and what it has to offer. North Lincolnshire also has visitor information points at all its attractions and at visitor accommodation to give information to visitors on other places they could visit whilst in the area.

North Lincolnshire has two fully networked Enjoy England Official Partner Tourist Information Centres (TICs) and staff at both of these are able to answer queries and direct visitors across the area. North Lincolnshire is also a member of the Greater Lincolnshire Destination Forum and can take part in joint initiatives through this. The TICs are located at the Buttercross, Brigg and Waters' Edge, Barton-upon-Humber. Members noted that in 2010, VisitEngland ranked within its top ten nationally, the Brigg Tourist Information Centre (out of around 300) for quality of service.

From April 2013 to March 2014, 39,250 people used the Brigg TIC. The TIC at Waters' Edge was launched in January 2014 and, during the first quarter of the year, 4,116 people had used it.

Members heard that the council arranged an annual 'Great Attractions Fair' at the Baths Hall. The first Great Attractions Fair' was held at the Baths Hall in March 2013. A total of 38 attractions and local producers exhibited at the event. It attracted about 1,500 visitors.

The event was held again in March 2014. The aim was to increase the number of stalls and attract more visitors. However, on the day, there were only 37 stalls and about 1,000 visitors. Consequently, a change of emphasis was agreed for 2015. Instead of holding the Great Attractions Fair, the North Lincolnshire Excellence in Tourism Awards will be held, which will take the form of a dinner and awards ceremony. It is hoped that this new event will enable those within the tourism sector to feel valued and their efforts appreciated. The Members await the feedback on this event with interest.

The council, alongside partners, must decide on North Lincolnshire's marketing strategy. The fact that the area was previously in a sort of "no man's land" – geographically part of Lincolnshire, but administratively part of Yorkshire had understandably presented some problems in the past. This needs to be addressed.

Members heard that some visitor information boards in North Lincolnshire need to be updated to include relevant, timely material. This should be undertaken and monitored on a regular basis.

CONCLUSION

One in twelve jobs in the UK is either directly or indirectly supported by tourism⁸.

The visitor economy provides direct and indirect employment, supports infrastructure and skills development, and presents inward investment opportunities in local areas.

The council has a critical and strategic leadership role to play in driving tourism by helping to create great places to visit. Planning decisions, providing infrastructure, regulating standards in tourism businesses, protecting and enhancing the local

environment, marketing local attractions and creating key events for visitors can all make a difference.

The council, is, however, making a positive difference to the tourism industry. Visitor numbers to North Lincolnshire continue to buck the national trend, as does employment in the sector. In addition, the council has a proven track record in attracting 'large' scale events to the area. Attracting similar events to the Tour of Britain and the Olympic Torch Relay will only increase North Lincolnshire's exposure both nationally and internationally. .

⁸Deloitte, "The Economic Contribution of the Visitor Economy: UK and the Nations", 2012

APPENDIX 1

Membership of the Places Scrutiny Panel

Councillor - J Evison (chairman)
A Davison (vice-chair)
J England
T Foster
D Oldfield

The panel conducted a number of evidence gathering sessions, speaking to a range of key officers from the council and its partners.

The panel would like to thank them for their valued input and attendance. They also received and considered a range of written evidence, including local and national research, guidance and legislation.

APPENDIX 2

Stakeholders interviewed as part of the review -

- Councillor Briggs - Cabinet Member for Asset Management, Culture and Housing
- Councillor Mrs Redfern - Cabinet Member for Regeneration
- Councillor C Sherwood - Cabinet Member for Customer Service, Sport and Leisure
- Peter Williams - Director of Places, North Lincolnshire Council
- Marcus Walker - Assistant Director Planning and Regeneration, North Lincolnshire Council
- Margaret Price - Principal Tourism Services Officer, North Lincolnshire Council

