

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**REGENERATION CABINET MEMBER**

**WATERS' EDGE VISITOR CENTRE  
TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE UPDATE**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 In April 2013 it was agreed in principle that we would develop a fully networked Tourist Information Centre (TIC) at Waters' Edge as part of the review of the Planning and Regeneration Service.
- 1.2 This report gives an update on progress and recommends that Waters' Edge becomes an EnjoyEngland Official Partner TIC in October 2013.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 Waters' Edge Visitor Centre is open seven days a week. Set in an 86-acre country park on the Waterfront at Barton upon Humber, it has plenty of free parking, a café, gift shop and toilets.
- 2.2 In April 2013 we agreed to develop a TIC that would be fully networked as part of the review of the service. These TICs are now known as EnjoyEngland Official Partner TICs.
- 2.3 There are over 200 of these Official Partner TICs around England. To achieve this accreditation requires meeting set criteria so that customers know that they will get reliable and inspirational information from experts. As well as their knowledge of their local area the staff need to offer extensive information about the country as a whole. The TICs must prove that they excel in the service they offer so customers can be sure to get the most from their stay.
- 2.4 The first stage was to create a new brochure display area. We did this in July and it is now filled with 180 different guides from across England and Wales. There is also a large section on North Lincolnshire attractions and events, which currently has over 50 leaflets.

- 2.5 The second stage is to train the staff. Colleagues at Brigg TIC have mentored Waters' Edge staff. In early July, we filled a vacant post at the centre on a temporary basis. We made a small change to the job description to meet the new Official Partner requirements.
- 2.6 We are planning a series of after work visits to local attractions for all front line staff in October so that they can be ambassadors for the area and on-sell other attractions.
- 2.7 The IT systems are in place so that we can access the Destination Management Systems and make on line bookings.
- 2.8 We have spoken to EnjoyEngland and they feel that we are now ready to apply for Official Partner TIC status for Waters' Edge. We would like to be able to offer this improved service to our customers now rather than wait for the review.
- 2.9 There are many benefits to being networked. We can then offer more services to our customers like booking tickets and accommodation. We will also be listed on national websites and advertised at no cost to us, which will help to increase the number of visitors.

#### **The effect on visitors to date**

- 2.10 The recent summer period has proven very successful and visitor numbers at the Centre have steadily increased. In July and August over 36,000 people visited the Centre, 8,000 more than the same period last year.
- 2.12 We found that when the Humber Bridge tolls reduced, more people came from across the river. For many it was their first visit to North Lincolnshire. Our customers tell us that they have enjoyed their visit to the Centre and they are keen to explore the area.
- 2.13 We estimate that since the information was put on display at the end of July, we have given out over 10,000 brochures from across the UK. Our records show that we have had over 9,000 people come into the Centre to get information on places to visit in August. People are also starting to e-mail and phone us for information. The front desk has already handled 138 specific enquiries.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 There are two options to consider:

Option 1: To wait for the review later in the year.

Option 2: To improve customer service by making Waters' Edge an Official Partner TIC in October 2013.

#### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Option 1: There is now no need to wait for the review, as EnjoyEngland will accept the Centre with one dedicated staff member as an interim measure.
- 4.2 Option 2: This improves customer service, makes the best use of limited resources and maximises income. As part of the national network the TIC would be extensively publicised by Visit Britain and EnjoyEngland. It has the potential to bring in new customers who are touring through the area, especially on route between Lincoln and York. We can also offer our customers additional services that will bring in revenue.
- 4.3 Option 2 is therefore our preferred option.

#### **5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

- 5.1 Changes to the job descriptions will still be looked at as part of the review. This aims to make savings and provide a better service to our customers.
- 5.2 The harmonisation of front line services will make for more efficient working and cost savings.
- 5.3 The IT systems are already in place at Waters' Edge to deliver this service. There is also a suitable till and card payment machine.

#### **6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

- 6.1 The Integrated Assessment shows no negative effect. We believe that the training given to staff in meeting the needs of customers will help us better meet the needs of all sections of the community. Our preferred option also makes TIC services closer to more towns and villages.

#### **7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

- 7.1 We asked the visitors to the temporary TIC for their comments. These were all positive.
- 7.2 The proposal has also been discussed in staff meetings within the team. Front line staff and their line managers support the development of the new TIC.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the TIC at Waters' Edge applies for Official Partner status in October 2013.

### DIRECTOR OF PLACES

Civic Centre  
Ashby Road  
SCUNTHORPE  
North Lincolnshire  
DN16 1AB  
Author: Christine Edwards  
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#### **Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

EnjoyEngland Guidelines for Official Partners, revised July 2013  
Waters' Edge Visitor Information Centre Provision Regeneration Cabinet Member  
Report, April 2013