

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

20 JUNE 2018

PROMOTION OF TOURISM UPDATE REPORT

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report seeks to update Members on the utilisation of the Promotion of Tourism budget which was introduced in April 2017.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Following the restructure of the Tourism Function in 2016, a budget for the Promotion of Tourism was agreed by the Economic Development Committee which came into effect in April 2017 and was for £98,000 in total.

2.2 The report details activities to date relating to the Tourism Strategy and is line with the Destination Management Plan (DMP) agreed for Newark and, although in development at present, the plans for Southwell and Sherwood. The Aims of the Destination Management Plan for Newark are to:

- ❖ Support the development of a vibrant and successful local tourism industry which within five years is delivering an economic impact more than £30m.
- ❖ Create a long-term tourism product development plan in consultation and partnership with local businesses and other interested parties to provide improved potential to attract overnight visits.
- ❖ Develop a strong 'Newark' brand in the context of the wider Newark & Sherwood offer.
- ❖ Identify and work with promotional partners locally, regionally & nationally to create effective campaigns to tell the stories of Newark through a shared footprint.

2.3 The DMP for Newark also includes within the short term recommendations to:

Immediate (1 -12 months)

- A. Establish high level strategic Newark Management Group (NMG) to include NSDC Committee Chairman, Director and Business Manager, Leader & Clerk to NTC, Markets Manager, Totally Locally, Newark Accommodation Providers. (others may be included subject to early discussions of the group)
- B. Appoint a Business Manager for Heritage, Culture & Visitors to provide a single focus for management of heritage & cultural assets currently managed by two different departments in NSDC and a group within NTC. (this will also help to satisfy HLF's requirements that Gatehouse project is clearly learning from the NCWC project)
- C. Create a new tourism/heritage marketing post, appointing an experience dedicated tourism focused marketing with expertise to understands the visitor and what they are looking for. Supported by an appropriate budget. This post could also work with the sector to better engage the local community in the existing offer e.g. Markets, bars & restaurants which will in turn lead to further product development opportunities.
- D. Develop a detailed Heritage Strategy to cover all town heritage assets as this will be required to enable NSDC/NTC to bid for further grant monies.
- E. A town wide initiative to understand what visitors need/are looking for in terms of experience & service.

- F. Develop a detailed implementation plan for marketing the town's tourism assets and ensure that all future activity is aligned to this or resource reallocated to activity that is in alignment. Focus on cost effective marketing e.g. use of Social media and working with partners to amplify messages.

Points A – C are progressing with the Newark Management Group first meeting taking place on 1 June 2018. Points D – F will be progressed through the Newark Management Group.

3.0 Activities

- 3.1 **Visit Newark and Sherwood website** – the website went live in April 2017 and has evolved over the year. It still requires some further search engine optimisation in order to ensure that the website appears on most searches for the area. The website is updated regularly with events that are happening within the district and is the platform that all the other social media activity refers to.

This year, it became the source for accommodation information in the area, with the redirection of visitors seeking accommodation information on the main council website to the Visit Newark and Sherwood website – see right.

Google Analytics Information - the headline figures for the website over the first 12 months (1/4/17 – 1/4/18) are:

- 35,750 visitors.
- 90.2% of visitors were New.
- 76% of all visitors were from the UK, 18.7% from the US (or a US-based server).
- 61.4% of visitors are female, 38.6% male.
- Average age was 45-50.
- 60.88% viewed the website on a mobile.
- 61.7% of visitors came from Adwords, 11.6% were organic searches, 9.3% came from referrals, 9.1% came direct to the website and 6% came via social media.

Accommodation

Our area includes holiday accommodation in Newark, Southwell, Edwinstowe, Ollerton, Farnsfield, Sutton on Trent, Oxtun and many more surrounding towns and villages.

You can find everything from excellent hotels, guesthouses, bed and breakfast establishments and inns, to farmhouses and delightful self-catering cottages. There is also a youth hostel, a Centre Parcs holiday village, luxury leisure hotels and numerous caravan parks.

Planning your visit in Newark and Sherwood?

For accommodation as well as attractions, shopping and place to eat.

- [Visit Newark and Sherwood](#)



3.2 **Social Media**

Postings are programmed based on research as to the optimal time with up to three postings per day at 9.30, 15.15 and 20.00. The interest has increased considerably over the year and there are now:

Facebook (@visitnewarksherwood) – 954 followers in April 2018, currently 1,209 followers

Twitter (Twitter@NewarkSherwood) – 4,448 followers in April 2018, currently 4,475

Pinterest cycling 297 monthly viewers, currently 564 monthly viewers

Instagram – 687 followers, currently 775 followers

Facebook is by far the largest social media platform available in terms of users and the one that offers the most potential to build awareness of the Visit Newark and Sherwood Brand.

Reach - the number of people who had any content from or about our Page enter their screen – is a key metric relating to building brand awareness on Facebook. Up to end of April 2018, the page has organically achieved reaches varying from a few hundred on a single day, up to 6,000.

In May 2018, we embarked on our first Facebook advertising ad, as part of a three-month campaign to boost posts and further increase reach, and to target the population of the counties surrounding Nottinghamshire where there is potential to attract visitors for staycations and weekends.

Of our current 1,209 Facebook followers, 932 are from the UK, and 352 are from Newark. 76% are female. Of the female followers, 59% are aged between 25 and 54 years of age. In line with the tourism strategy set out in 2017, the Facebook advertising campaign will also target the 54 years and up audience to tap in to the grey pound.

The campaigns will focus on outdoors and family activities, and cultural and heritage sites.

3.3 Partnerships

In 2018, partnerships with local tourism organisations and events were cemented through a programme of social media competitions and new links inward to the Visit Newark and Sherwood website.

The Council received tickets to a range of events, including Newark Festival, special race days at Southwell Racecourse, Forest Live, author events at Newark Book Festival, weekend pass to the Retro Festival and tickets to Simple Minds Grandslam.

Organisations that created links to the Visit Newark and Sherwood website from their own website include the International Antiques & Collectors Fair, the Gateway to Southwell Festival, Southwell Racecourse and Newark Festival. The organisers of Newark Festival and the Grandslam included a link to the Visit Newark and Sherwood website in e-shots about the events.



3.4 Blog Posts

Regular blog posts are now produced on a weekly basis and cover particular items of interest across the district such as King John, Mining, Outdoor Skills, Antiques and Music Festivals.

3.5 Campaigns

In 2017, the following social media campaigns were undertaken successfully with prizes provided by Tourism Businesses in the district. The Inspired by Newark & Sherwood poetry competition was very successful and has led into the Poetry Trail as the campaign for the current year. Tourism businesses and visitors have commended the campaigns.

Campaigns for 2018

Campaign	Period
<p>Newark & Sherwood Poetry Trail - includes Southwell Minster, Sherwood Forest Arts & Craft Centre and Newark Castle as the trail venues, as well as Newark Book Festival and the Byron Festival</p>  <p>NEWARK & SHERWOOD POETRY TRAIL</p>	<p>12 March – 31 August – plus September winner announcement</p>
<p>Robin Hood Portrait Competition</p>  <p>ROBIN HOOD PORTRAIT COMPETITION</p>	<p>19 March – 31 August – plus September winner announcement</p>

The campaigns this year have prizes that promote varied aspects of the region, for example art and jewellery from local craftspeople, signed books from local writers, art supplies from Seawhite of Brighton, which has its warehouse near Sherwood Forest, and a winners' exhibition opportunity from the RSPB. The non-tourism related nature of the prizes is to make the campaigns accessible to all tourism businesses by not promoting a competitive tourism prize.

This has been a successful strategy with Tourism Action Group (TAG) members signing up for hard copies of the Newark & Sherwood poetry trail as well as posters for both competitions. Tourism businesses are using the campaigns to target their own customers and prospects.

3.6 Tourism Action Group

The Tourism Action Group (TAG) now has 43 members from Tourism related businesses. The figures include only organisations that have signed a membership form – other organisations participate regularly but are not members (e.g. RSPB, Southwell Town Council, Nottinghamshire County Council). The Group helps to shape the campaigns, share good practice and provide tailored offers to visitors to the district.

There is also a closed TAG group on Facebook, with 42 members. This facilitates easy sharing of information across the group.

TAG members are emailed regularly to ask if they have any information, news, offers, etc that we can share for them on our social media pages and on our website calendar. This information is also shared at meetings and Visit Newark and Sherwood is not an established digital marketing route for local tourism businesses.

The feedback from the group is positive with people sharing offers and signposting visitors to other attractions in the area.

3.7 The Tourism Brand

With the development of the website last April, the Visit Newark and Sherwood logo was developed. This is used across the website, our pages on social media platforms, the campaigns, TAG communications and PR activity, and where possible includes the tagline 'the tourism brand of Newark & Sherwood District Council'.

This consistent branding is helping to build a visible tourism brand through digital and offline marketing.

3.8 Familiarisation Visit for Coach Tour Operators

The National Civil War Centre has offered tours of Newark for some time. To build on the expertise and maximise the opportunity to gain more visitors into the town, a Familiarisation Visit for a Coach Tour operators was organised to cover the District. The three day visit covered Sherwood, Southwell and Newark, as well as offering evening presentations on areas not covered by the visit, such as Laxton and The Newark Air Museum. Feedback from the Coach Tour Operators was positive and indeed one organisation has already booked a visit to Newark and many new opportunities have been developed with other operators of both UK and International operators. A summary of the initial evaluation forms is provided below. More in depth feedback is now being requested

3.9 Other Activities Undertaken Since April 2017

The Newark Management Group held its first meeting on June 1, following approval of the Destination Management Plan for Newark. Trentbank Consultants, who delivered the DMP for Newark, have been now been commissioned to deliver DMPs for both Southwell and Sherwood in line with the request from the Economic Development Committee in March.

STEAM Data (Tourism data) was purchased last year and will be purchased for the coming years, enabling the District to understand the impact of activities on the Tourism figures

Display Boards and Maps for Newark have been ordered through ViaEM with an imminent implementation date.

New signs have been erected for Vicar Water and pedestrian signs in Southwell are being updated to reflect changes in the Town.

Visitor research has been commissioned and will take place between May 2018 and September 2018, enabling further understanding of the requirements of visitors and the impression the district creates for Visitors

A commitment to the East of England Touring Route (working title) as part of a Visit England project has been made. This is a route designed primarily for the German market, following in depth research. The project will provide opportunities for some local businesses to attend training and receive one to one support to develop their offer to relate closely to the identified market.

Support was provided for the Tour of Britain Cycling Route and the Cycling event held in Newark on the evening prior to the Tour of Britain.

Support is being provided to the Byron Festival by including the festival concert in Newark as one of the venues in the Newark and Sherwood Poetry trail. This is in response to a request from the council grants panel to support the festival and its expansion into Newark via our social media and comms.

4.0 Equalities Implications

4.1 None identified

5.0 Impact on Budget/Policy Framework

5.1 None

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:

- a) the Committee note the activities undertaken since the establishment of the Promotion of Tourism Budget in April 2017;
- b) the Committee support the development of the Tourism offer for the district and in particular the recruitment of the Place Marketing Manager post and actions from the Newark Destination Management Plan; and
- c) The Destination Management Plans for Southwell and Sherwood are progressed with the plans to be presented to the Economic Development Committee in November.

Reason for Recommendations

To provide an update on progress made since the allocation of the Promotion of Tourism Budget in April 2017.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information please contact Julie Reader-Sullivan on Ext 5258

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