

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

21 NOVEMBER 2018

COACH FRIENDLY STATUS

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Economic Development Committee with information relating to accreditation as a Coach Friendly Town, specifically relating to Newark.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The Newark Management Group (NMG) which was recently established as a result of recommendations from the published Destination Management Plan. The NMG discussed the concept of accreditation for Coach Friendly Status during the last meeting in September 2018 and further research has been undertaken regarding this accreditation.

- 2.2 In 2003, in an effort to raise the profile of coaching across the UK, CPT (Confederation of Passenger Transport UK) developed and launched 'Coach Friendly' status. The status has been designed to recognise and reward the commitment made by towns, cities and villages to understanding the requirements of coaches and their passengers, while also providing first-class facilities, access and information for drivers. The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT) is recognised by Government as the voice of the bus and coach industry and the focus for consultation on national and international legislation, local regulations, operational practices and engineering standards.

27 locations across the UK have now achieved the status and the scheme was extended to also include individual visitor attractions. The nearest recognised town to Newark & Sherwood is Chesterfield and many of the locations accredited are in the South of England.

- 2.3 The criteria for applying for the status are as follows:

1. There must be evidence that the destination welcomes coaches and consults with local bodies and the industry on their strategy for integrating group tourism into local plans
2. Clear directional instructions and signs for visiting coaches. This may include special measures for access to city/town centre (use of bus lanes etc.)
3. Adequate capacity for coach parking, drop off and pick up points which are well signposted.
4. Proximity of coach facilities (parking and drop off and pick up points) to visitor attractions and hotels.
5. Driver facilities including provision to rest and for refreshments.
6. Adequate facilities for group comfort (toilets, refreshments, waiting areas etc.).
7. A named representative(s) at the local authority/destination who can be contacted or on hand to help with questions or requirements; and provide information packs in advance.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 Following on from discussions with the CPT, the only aspect where Newark is not up to the required standard is in terms of road signage for coach parking and drop off point(s). Signage at key turn offs (Cattle market roundabout, off the A1 etc.) and thereafter at major turns towards the coach drop off points and then to the Lorry Park would be required. A minimum of 12 new signs would be required and this could also be confusing as the coach symbol would direct to the drop off point and to the lorry park and therefore at some points direct coach drivers in opposite directions at a junction. It is therefore possible that the additional symbols could create a problem, rather than enhance the offer. There is also a considerable cost as the signs would all need to be redesigned and installed. The signage was updated for the opening of the National Civil War Centre. In terms of an approximate cost, including design, production and installation this would be £30,000 for the coach friendly requirements.

3.2 During the familiarisation visit for Coach Tour Operators held in May 2018 and from research undertaken at the Group Travel Show held at the NEC in October 2018, the signs were not of concern to the coach operators. Of concern were the following aspects and on these areas we more than meet the requirements for the Coach Tour Operators.

- ❖ A defined drop off point within easy walking distance of the town centre and attractions
- ❖ A designated coach park where refreshments are available
- ❖ Postcodes(for Sat Navs) and a Map for the Coach Drivers to indicate key locations
- ❖ A meet and greet service
- ❖ Information packs and itinerary planning
- ❖ Added value offers for visitors (the operators particularly liked the Totally Locally Gift Vouchers that were offered and indeed have been taken up by some Group Travel parties that have already visited Newark)

At the Group Leisure & Travel Show, we mostly met smaller group tour operators from across the Midlands so it's worth bearing in mind that they already know their way to Newark and in some cases around it. Larger operators and those from further afield may have other requirements. However, from those we spoke to, their main requirements to be of an immediate practical nature around the following:

- ❖ Central drop off and pick up points close to toilets and refreshments
- ❖ Cost of group tours of attractions
- ❖ Coach parking facilities

To our knowledge, no operator asked about Coach Friendly Town accreditation. Conversations have also taken place with local coach tour operators to understand how they make decisions as to locations for coach tours. Coach Friendly status is not something they directly look for when making decisions, however the three points mentioned above are crucial in their decision making.

Discussions are still ongoing with the CPT (Confederation of Passenger Transport UK) regarding the issue relating to road signage. If it is possible for Newark to apply without the additional road signs then it is proposed that NSDC proceed.

4.0 Equalities Implications

4.1 The drop off points for coaches and the rest area provided for coach drivers are compliant with legislation and provide access to facilities that are DDA compliant.

5.0 Financial Implications (FIN18-19/345)

5.1 If it is agreed to go with the recommendation for Newark & Sherwood District Council not to pursue the accreditation to Coach Friendly status, there will be no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, if this was pursued, there would be a further business case to identify full costs, which is currently estimated to be in the region of £30,000.

6.0 Comments of Director(s)

6.1 As set out in Section 3 of the report, obtaining coach friendly accreditation would require the installation of a minimum of 12 new signs. These signs are likely to create a problem, (for reasons set out in 3.1 above), rather than enhance the offer. There is also a considerable cost as the signs would all need to be redesigned and installed. The signage was updated for the opening of the National Civil War Centre. In terms of an approximate cost, including design, production and installation this would be £30,000 for the coach friendly requirements.

6.2 As stated in 3.2 above, during the familiarisation visit for Coach Tour Operators held in May 2018 and from research undertaken at the Group Travel Show held at the NEC in October 2018, the signs were not of concern to the coach operators and none of these operators have asked for Newark to attain coach friendly status. The expenditure of around £30,000, therefore cannot be justified and does not represent value for money.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the Economic Development Committee do not pursue Coach Friendly Status at the present time due to the cost implications and the feedback from Coach Tour Operators. If, however, on further discussion with the CPT (Confederation of Passenger Transport UK), it is possible to proceed without the signage investment, it is recommended that the application is pursued as there will then be no additional cost.

Reason for Recommendation

Following research with Coach Tour Operators and the requirements for Coach Friendly status, there would not appear to be sufficient benefit in obtaining this status

Background Papers

Nil

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

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