

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

27 MARCH 2019

CHRISTMAS RETAIL PROMOTION CAMPAIGN EVALUATION

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Economic Development Committee with an update on the Christmas Retail Promotion Campaign, 'Newark Wonderland', in December 2018.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The need for a retail promotion campaign arose from concerns raised by local retailers and businesses that the disruptive roadworks in the town as a result of the Severn Trent Water works had discouraging customers, adversely affecting trade throughout 2018. There remained a concern among some businesses that customers were slow to return to the levels experienced prior to the disruption.
- 2.2 The Newark Management Group (NMG), which was established as a result of recommendations from the published Destination Management Plan for Newark, discussed the need for a retail promotion campaign at its meeting in September 2018. Members of the Group felt that a campaign should be executed in the run up to Christmas to support the local retail economy, with an aim to help raise profile and footfall during this critical trading period when there was a programme of seasonal events, activities and free car parking offers already planned for Newark.
- 2.3 The objectives of the campaign 'Newark Wonderland' campaign were to:
- i) Raise public awareness of Newark as an appealing destination for shopping and leisure among potential day visitors from a wide catchment area of approximately 20 miles radius, including Nottingham, Mansfield, Lincoln, Grantham and Sleaford.
 - ii) Drive increased footfall from customers within this catchment area to boost retail and hospitality business in Newark specifically in the pre-Christmas trading period.
 - iii) Engage local retailers and hospitality businesses and demonstrate that we are taking positive and pro-active action with a view to increasing footfall and consumer expenditure in Newark.
 - iv) Drive public engagement and interaction in the campaign rather than 'one way' communication.
- 2.4 Given the above objectives, Officers worked with an external specialist PR agency to develop a digital media campaign, with supporting local press and lifestyle publications to deliver the required reach.
- 2.5 The annual dressing of windows for Christmas provided an ideal creative opportunity to make the campaign engaging and interactive for consumers. Hooking into an established, growing and highly visual initiative by the town's retail and hospitality businesses offered greater potential for engagement and response than developing a new activity. Therefore, the 'Newark Wonderland' campaign engaged local businesses in a challenge to create festive window displays that members of the public then voted for.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 The interactive campaign comprised the creation and dissemination of engaging content across owned (Council-related) and earned (media) channels. Specifically, the campaign activity included: Four videos filmed and then hosted on the Totally Locally Newark Facebook page; Content posted on 15 Facebook community pages; Partnership with a social media influencer (Cordelia Hearts); Public voting facility on the Totally Locally Newark Facebook page; Boosted social media posts; Media relations including press releases and an advertorial.

3.2 The campaign results were very positive:

- 43 local businesses entered the Newark Wonderland competition
- The four new videos had a combined viewing figure of 9,393
- The total number of public votes cast was 6,852
- The organic (not paid for) social media reach was 296,743
- The reach of our social media influencer partner was 12,100
- The boosted (paid for) social media reach was 172,476
- The media relations reach was 69,650
- The combined reach of all tactics was **550,969**

3.3 Our engagement through social media revealed an enthusiastic response from members of the public, including visitors from outside the District. Public comments were highly supportive of the initiative and demonstrated an overwhelmingly positive sentiment.

4.0 Equalities Implications

4.1 The campaign followed the Council's guidelines for accessible communications.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 The £10,000 campaign budget was funded by a contribution from the anticipated additional income generated, over the budgeted amount, by the Car Parking Service during the current financial year.

6.0 Comments of Director

6.1 The reach of the campaign and feedback received, notably through social media channels, is positive and welcomed.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that the Economic Development Committee:

- a) notes the success of the Christmas Retail Promotion Campaign in delivering a reach of more than half a million; and
- b) supports the development of additional campaigns throughout the year to raise the profile of Town Centres, including inviting a presentation to a future Committee of delivered and forthcoming activities and events by the Town Centre and Tourism Business units in conjunction with town centre traders and partners.

Reason for Recommendations

Delivery of this reach is to be noted with regard to future campaign planning.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information, please contact Richard Huthwaite, Business Manager – Tourism on Ext 5951.

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