

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

11 SEPTEMBER 2019

FESTIVALS 2019 CAMPAIGN EVALUATION

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide the Economic Development Committee with an update on the continuing District-wide visitor campaign, 'Festivals 2019'.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Members may be aware that Officers had previously identified that a large and growing number of festivals were planned across the District between May and October 2019. We saw this as an opportunity to collectively promote the events with an aim to increase visits, dwell time and expenditure in support of the visitor economy. The festivals encompassed a wide range of themes including music, heritage, food and drink and literature, thus appealing to different audiences. Several festivals had duration of more than one day providing the valuable opportunity to increase overnight stays in the District.

2.2 We selected 20 festivals to form the main content for a multi-channel visitor campaign. Selection was based on ensuring a good spread of dates, durations, locations in the District, themes and intended audiences. They included some more established events such as Newark Festival, Newark Book Festival, Robin Hood Festival and Southwell Music Festival, as well as the unique European Juggling Convention. We still promote other events outwith the 20 through our usual communications channels.

2.3 The objectives of the 'Festivals 2019' campaign are to:

- i) Raise public awareness of the wide range of festivals on offer across the District among potential day and overnight visitors
- ii) Drive footfall from festival goers including stayovers for multiple events
- iii) Drive increased traffic to our visitor website
- iv) Generate public engagement and interaction in the campaign to gain more followers on social media for our longer-term marketing advantage

2.4 Although primarily a 'Summer' campaign, activities will continue through to the end of October in order to encompass popular events such as The Bramley Festival in Southwell.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 Since its launch on 17 May, the campaign has comprised the following promotional activities so far:

- 7,000 copies of a printed guide to the 20 festivals (with paid-for distribution across Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire)
- Bespoke campaign landing page on our visitor website

- 6-sheet outdoor adverts in Newark (North Gate rail station, Morrison's), Grantham (rail station, Brook Street) and Lincoln (rail station)
- Google AdWords during July (when there were multiple events)
- 256 social media posts including boosted (paid for) posts (as of 2 September)
- Ticket prize competitions (for Newark Festival, Newark Book Festival, Southwell Outdoor Theatre)
- Advert in the Robin Hood Festival programme
- Large window cling at 39A Carter Gate, Newark

3.2 The campaign results so far have been very positive:

- 31,946 unique visitors to our visitor website in May–Aug 2019 compared to 21,163 in May–Aug 2018 – an increase of 51%
- 167,590 social media impressions (on Facebook and Twitter, number of Instagram impressions not available) (as of 2 September)
- 5,426 social media engagements (on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) (as of 2 September)
- More than 25% of these social media engagements came through the ticket prize competitions, most notably for the Newark Festival in June.
- 341 additional social media followers gained since 17 May (as of 2 September)

3.3 The most popular festival webpage views so far have been for Newark Book Festival, The 616 Music Festival and Robin Hood Festival – showing a good spread of interest across the District and among different audiences.

3.4 The campaign is one factor among many in whether people choose to find out more or ultimately attend the festivals, along with event organisers' own promotional activities, the weather etc. However, the above results indicate that it has contributed positively to their success this year:

- “We very much appreciate your choice to support Sherwood Forest in this way. We had a brilliant week throughout the festival and thankfully the weather behaved, except for a few blustery days! The team were kept very busy, with an estimate of over 30,000 visitors attending throughout the week.” **RSPB Sherwood Forest**

3.5 ‘Festivals 2019’ is part of a new plan of promotional campaigns to support the District’s visitor economy. It follows the earlier ‘Newark Wonderland’ and ‘Easter at Sherwood Forest’ campaigns. Others include ‘Late Summer in Southwell’ and ‘Christmas Markets’. Results from each campaign are helping to inform subsequent plans.

4.0 Equalities Implications

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

5.0 Financial Implications (FIN19-20/9881)

5.1 There is sufficient budget available within the annual Promotion of Tourism budget for the costs of the campaign (£7,000).

5.2 Stakeholders, including event organisers and hosting attractions, are actively supporting the campaign by distributing the printed guide and sharing social media posts to their networks.

6.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

6.1 The campaign objectives align with Objective 5 of the Community Plan – Increase visits to Newark and Sherwood.

7.0 Comments of Director

7.1 The ‘Festivals 2019’ campaign has demonstrated how a more coordinated approach to information and marketing can have a far greater reach and impact. I welcome the significant increase in reach and interest, as reflected above. I hope to see this turn into increased visitor numbers and local spend when national data is made available in June 2020. We are already working with partners and stakeholders on new campaigns, which will generate similar updates at future meetings.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the success of the ‘Festivals 2019’ campaign in raising awareness of the wide range of festivals on offer across the District and in increasing visitors and followers to our digital channels for our longer-term marketing advantage be noted.

Reason for Recommendation

Delivery of this visitor campaign performance 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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