

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

13 JANUARY 2021

AUTUMN 'STAYCATION' 2020 CAMPAIGN EVALUATION

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide the Economic Development Committee with an update on the performance of the district-wide autumn 'Staycation' campaign delivered in October 2020.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Members will recall that in October 2020 we ran an autumn 'Staycation' promotional campaign to support the district's tourism and hospitality sector after our major campaigns in 2020 had been cancelled previously due to COVID-19.

2.2 The campaign placed less emphasis than usual on direct response and driving footfall due to the changing COVID-19 situation. Rather, the main objectives were to:

- i) Raise public awareness of Newark, Southwell and Sherwood Forest as ideal day or short break autumn destinations
- ii) Generate public engagement in the campaign to drive increased traffic to our visitor websites and gain more followers on social media for our longer-term marketing advantage.

2.3 The campaign was postponed from its original schedule in late August – September 2020 due to a local spike in COVID-19 infection rates. The majority of activity was then scheduled to run for 5-31 October but ceased slightly earlier than intended on 28 October due to the district moving into Tier 3 restrictions ahead of the national restrictions from 5 November. Although the prize draw competition continued up to and including 30 November, we stopped actively promoting it from 28 October.

2.4 '*Who knew?*' was the lead strapline of the campaign, supported by interesting facts about the destinations, designed to catch the audience's attention and inspire them to think 'That sounds like somewhere different and interesting for our next trip!' Partners across the district fed in their ideas for the interesting facts.

Engagement was driven through a prize draw competition for a weekend break for two at Newark Lodge Guest House. Entrants had to answer 3 questions based on 15 'Who knew?' facts on the competition webpage.

We also aligned our campaign with Visit England's £5million '*Escape the Everyday*' campaign that had launched in late September, particularly their 'Discovery' and 'Freedom to Explore' themes.

2.5 The media channels we selected reflected the greater emphasis on the longer-term awareness-raising objectives of this campaign:

- Google AdWords
- Regional press advertising (East Midlands, Yorkshire)
- Online editorial
- Campaign specific landing page (<https://visitnewark.co.uk/whoknew/>) and competition page (www.whatson.visitnewark.co.uk/competition)
- 84 social media posts
- Zena's Suitcase (social influencer)
- Visitor websites blogs

Please see some examples at **Appendix A**.

3.0 **Proposals**

3.1 Despite the changes to the timing of the campaign and its earlier than planned cessation due to COVI-19 measures, the campaign results were very positive:

- a) Google AdWords
 - 1.3 million impressions
 - 8,787 click-throughs to website
 - Most popular click-throughs: 'Places to eat and drink' 3,153 clicks; 'Places to stay' 1,921 clicks; 'Rufford Country Park' 1,458
- b) Regional Press Advertising
 - Print circulation: 176,792
 - Online impressions: 183,000
- c) Online Editorial
 - Travelblog.org: 3 blogs to 200,000+ members
 - Nottingham Local News: 95,000
- d) Websites
 - Total number of unique visitors in October and November 2020: 22,582 (an increase of **+44%** against the same period in 2019)
 - 11,891 (53%) of those unique visits were to the campaign specific landing page (<https://visitnewark.co.uk/whoknew/>) and competition page (www.whatson.visitnewark.co.uk/competition)
- e) Social Media
 - Total impressions: 367,369
 - Total reach: 147,608
 - Total engagements: 5,688
 - Total increase in followers: 204
- f) Zena's Suitcase (social influencer)
 - Total impressions: 27,049
 - Total reach: 19,790
 - Total engagements: 3,371
 - Video views (Instagram Reels): 3,102

g) Prize Competition

- Number of entrants: 3,901
- Randomly selected prize winner was from Rochester in Kent

3.2 As with our 'Festivals' campaign in 2019, the prize competition drove a significant amount of public engagement. This time, the nature of the competition also aligned clearly with the '*Who knew?*' campaign theme. Working with a social influencer was also successful, broadening our reach and driving further engagement. This is something we will look to incorporate in future campaign planning. Our alignment with Visit England's £5million '*Escape the Everyday*' campaign gave us further exposure at national level.

4.0 Equalities Implications

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

5.0 Digital Implications

5.1 None

6.0 Financial Implications - FIN20-21/8267

6.1 None. The annual Promotion of Tourism budget was used to cover all costs of the campaign.

6.2 Our network of attractions and businesses in the district's tourism and hospitality sector actively supported the campaign by sharing social media posts and links to our landing page among their own networks.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

7.1 The campaign objectives align with our vision in the Community Plan 2020-23 ("...to enable local residents and businesses to flourish and fulfil their potential as well as encouraging more visitors to enjoy all that Newark & Sherwood has to offer") and the objective to "Deliver inclusive and sustainable economic growth".

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the success of the district-wide Autumn 'Staycation' campaign in raising awareness of our visitor destinations and in increasing website visitors and followers to our social media 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 mb. 07866 008748.

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