

Cabinet

21 October 2015



**Economy and Enterprise Overview
and Scrutiny Review of tourism
marketing activity undertaken by
Visit County Durham**

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose

1. The attached report presents the key findings and recommendations of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Review Group report of tourism marketing activity undertaken by Visit County Durham (VCD).

Background

2. At a special meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 January 2015 members agreed the terms of reference for the review with the aim of investigating the performance of VCD in marketing County Durham as a visitor destination and to determine how future marketing will continue to build upon recent success. It was agreed that the review would focus on:
 - the role and responsibilities of VCD in marketing the County as a visitor destination.
 - the work of other key partners in marketing Durham as a visitor destination, how they work in partnership with VCD and their views of the role and work of VCD, to include members of the Strategic Marketing Partners Group: Durham University; Durham Cathedral; Durham County Cricket Club; Durham Business Improvement District Company; Beamish and The Bowes Museum.
 - the performance of VCD in marketing the County as a visitor destination, with a focus on the 'This is Durham' brand.
 - the future marketing plans of VCD and identify any future challenges in marketing County Durham as a tourism destination.
 - a case study of a recent marketing campaign undertaken by VCD (VCD's national marketing campaign).
 - examine with representatives from key visitor economy businesses their views on the work undertaken by VCD in marketing County Durham.
3. A review group of ten members was established from the membership of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Evidence was gathered over a period of six meetings and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the

committee attended a meeting of the Visit County Durham Board on the 23 June 2015 to see how the Board carried out business.

4. The review group's key findings are attached at appendix 2 and have resulted in the formulation of the following recommendations:
 - In relation to the partnership approach to marketing, VCD seeks to extend its work with partner destinations and the Durham Strategic Marketing Partnership and also use major events to attract out of region visitors to raise the profile of the county as a visitor destination.
 - That VCD continues to develop and redesign the 'thisisdurham.com' website and ensure that it remains responsive to the increasing and changing information demands resulting from developments in technology.
 - That VCD continues to research and identify national marketing campaign opportunities which benefit partners within the DSMP and wider tourism industry and promote County Durham as a tourism destination.
 - VCD ensures that robust performance targets and monitoring procedures for all online and offline marketing activity are in place.
 - That the performance evaluation of the effectiveness of marketing activity undertaken in relation to the national marketing campaign is promoted and reported to the County Council as part of its performance management process.
 - That VCD maximises all identified future marketing opportunities for 2015/16 including:
 - The use of major events and developments at attractions in County Durham.
 - The Northern Tourism Growth Fund, promoting northern destinations to overseas markets.
 - Championing as a future priority with the NECA the importance of the visitor economy.
 - That a review of this report and progress made against the recommendations will be undertaken six months after the report is considered by Cabinet.

Service Response

5. The report was shared with the Regeneration and Economic Development (RED) Management Team and was well received. RED Management Team accepted the key findings and recommendations detailed in the report. The report highlights the partnership approach used by Visit County Durham (VCD) working with key tourism partners nationally, regionally and locally to market County Durham as a 'Destination of Distinction' for existing and new visitors. The Service Grouping will provide a response to members by the agreed timescale to the various recommendations contained within the review report.

Recommendations

6. Cabinet is asked to note the recommendations in the report attached (Appendix 2, pages 6-7) and to formulate a response within the six month period identified in the report for systematic review of the recommendations.
7. That the report is shared with the County Durham Economic Partnership.

Background papers:

Scrutiny Review Report of tourism marketing activity undertaken by Visit County Durham – 2015.

Contact: Stephen Gwilym

Tel: 03000 268140

Author: Diane Close

Tel: 03000 268141

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None

Staffing – None

Risk – None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – The necessary Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared concerning the review report.

Accommodation – None

Crime and Disorder – None

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None

Procurement – None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications - None