

Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Building a Strong Economy

5 December 2005



Tourism – Paper from One North East

This paper will form the basis of a discussion with One North East.

The Regional Agenda – NorthEast England

Regional Responsibilities

In April 2003 the English RDAs were given strategic leadership responsibility for tourism in their regions. As part of this remit they were charged with reviewing the existing delivery arrangements for tourism.

Following consultation, negotiation and review supported by independent consultants One NorthEast took a series of decisions to radically alter the way in which tourism is delivered in the region. This was in recognition of the duplication, lack of focus and collaboration, lack of investment prioritisation and strategic context that were seen to be preventing NorthEast England from achieving its potential to maximise the visitor economy.

The first step was to take over the role of Northumbria Tourist Board and take the functions in to the RDA. The Agency then restructured the team to make it fit for purpose and better resourced to meet the new strategic agenda.

One NorthEast issued guiding principles in January 2005 to guide partners in the creation of Tourism Network NorthEast.

The new delivery network will consist of the regional tourism team in a policy, coordination, facilitation role and four Area Tourism Partnerships. They will be the tourism delivery bodies at sub regional level, the first point of contact for businesses and partners in relation to maximising the visitor economy.

The network principle is fundamental to the success of the network and is essentially about working together towards shared objectives within the regional framework. It also recognises that each sub region will also have its own issues to address.

The new delivery network aims to ensure collaboration, coordination, reduction in duplication and a clearer way forward for tourism to shared objectives and the directing of resources towards the agreed priorities.

Moving towards the new network, the sub regions have each established a task group to drive forward the creation of their Area Tourism partnership and draft the Area Tourism Management Plans and business Plans for their sub region.

Strategy

One NorthEast inherited a tourism situation without the benefit of a sound evidence base for regional investment and intervention and therefore a weak policy and strategy framework.

The last 8 months have seen the regional tourism team put in motion the means to address these issues whilst continuing to deliver the majority of the operational functions previously delivered at regional level

The regional framework for tourism development, investment, coordination and support stems from the Regional Economic Strategy where tourism is recognised as a priority sector.

The Regional Tourism Strategy launched in February 2005 translates the economic development priorities for tourism alongside the priorities from the sector itself, the environment and the wider visitor economy.

There are several implementation plans underpinning the strategy some of which are in development/nearing completion in the areas of;

- Regional marketing
- Research and intelligence
- Product and infrastructure development
- Business Improvement and Development programmes
- Visitor Information Provision and Tourism ICT
- Tourism Workforce Development

In addition to this, through the area tourism management planning process and several regional pieces of work we are strengthening the policy and strategy framework to identify and prioritise the regions visitor economy investment priorities.

The pieces of regional work include;

- Vision for maximising the visitor economy of the NorthEast Coast (including policy framework and action plan)
- Accommodation Sector Development Needs assessment
- Exploring the relationship between natural assets and the visitor economy in relation to nature based and activity based tourism.

Transportation issues

One NorthEast is working with both airports to encourage them to match routes with our tourism target regions, and working with Port of Tyne to assist in their wish to develop the cruise market. We regularly talk to GNER so that they can take account of tourism needs including information provision. Transport operators such as the bus/coach companies feed into the regional tourism forum.

Tourism Marketing

The Regional Tourism Team has continued to deliver the marketing of tourism for the region whilst also planning the next three-year plan and identifying the key markets for the

future. The budget for regional marketing has been doubled for tourism campaigns, which also benefit from the regional investment in the Regional Image Campaign.

Regional Image Campaign

The 'Passionate people. Passionate places' regional image marketing campaign has been developed in response to the results of MORI research conducted in March/April 2004 which revealed that there was a significant lack of awareness in the UK about the North East and what it has to offer.

Following extensive consultation with key stakeholders a regional identifier brand was developed in order to improve understanding of the region's location and identity. This North East England logo is central to the marketing campaign and is featured in all marketing activity. The 'Passionate people. Passionate places' theme was chosen as it was felt to represent a fundamental truth about the region which would help to effectively communicate the core campaign themes of history and heritage, coast and countryside, city culture, innovative business and people.

The marketing campaign has several strands to it. Adverts are appearing in national quality newspapers, as well as on the London Underground, at North East ports and airports, at stations along the East Coast mainline, on taxi sides in London and in the region. The branding has been used extensively at key regional events such as The Seve Trophy golf tournament at the Wynyard Club and at The Tall Ships' Races.

The campaign has been communicated within region through a comprehensive programme of regional media promotions, features and supplements. The impact of the campaign is also being significantly increased by encouraging regional businesses and organisations to 'adopt' the North East England brand, to use it alongside their own branding and help to spread the word about the region's many great assets.

Activity is also being supported through an ongoing national and regional PR campaign.

£3 million a year for the next three years has been allocated to promote North East England through the Regional Image campaign. Of this sum, £500,000 a year will be channelled through the Northern Way (an alliance of the North West Development agency, Yorkshire Forward and One NorthEast) to promote the region overseas.

As well as the Regional Image campaign, North East England will also be promoted through tourism marketing, which takes the combined spend for promoting the region to £15 million over the next three years.

The next phase of Regional Image activity is currently in planning. A new series of adverts will be developed for roll-out from May 2006 - a similar mix of media to phase 1 will be used in phase 2. Benchmark research will be conducted again in April 2006 in order to gauge opinion shift in the intervening year. The results of this research will shape the future of the Regional Image campaign.

Tourism Technology

The work undertaken by NTB on the Destin-e platform for online booking has been developed and in April 2004 the region will have a fit for purpose e-business platform which will also provide the network with a single content, product and customer relationship

management system. Connecting the ATPs and TIC network with the regional team and individual businesses.

The regional platform will be interoperable with the national platform and drive all NorthEast websites with quality and comprehensive data backed up by on line transaction capability.

Working with the low cost airlines

In January 2006 the Regional Tourism Marketing Team will launch the North East England brand across key European countries identified, through extensive research, as priority markets: Germany, Norway, Netherlands, Italy, Ireland and Sweden. The launches will coincide with the main trade and consumer tourism exhibitions in these countries.

This work will be supported by marketing activity in each key market, working together with England's North Country (ENC) and VisitBritain (VB). Activity will include exhibitions, web activity, direct mail and e-direct mail, press and PR and print advertising. Further information is available in the North East England Tourism Marketing Plan and Summary.

With regard to low cost airlines we have a number of meetings early in the New Year to meet with low cost providers operating within the region. However, in the line with state aid rules this activity will be non-route specific and will include advertising and press features in on-board magazines and familiarisation visits to the region for both press and relevant airline staff.

The Regional Tourism Marketing Team are also working together with American Airlines and Newcastle Airport, via the Route Development Fund, to undertake marketing activity in the New York area. The aim of this activity will be to promote the region as a touring destination to a core target segment, which VB refer to as Anglophiles (i.e. those people who have visited the UK previously and are looking for new UK destinations to discover). The region's strong history and heritage product means that we are well placed to target this market which tends to be high spend and is therefore particularly lucrative.

This activity will be combined with investment and trade activity being undertaken by the Agency around the route, and will commence with a launch event in New York in Spring 2006.

Delivering support to tourism businesses

One NorthEast agrees that tourism support needs to be improved through better coordination and integration with mainstream business support. The ATPs will be responsible for driving this change at sub regional level whilst at regional level business improvement and development programmes are in development to ensure support activity is undertaken at sufficient scale to have the impact required and address the sectors issues.