

**Economy and Enterprise
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**



24 September 2012

**Update on the development of
the Tourism offer within County
Durham**

**Joint Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive and
Melanie Sensicle, Chief Executive, Visit County Durham**

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee with information on the development of the tourism offer within County Durham prior to the discussion with Melanie Sensicle, Chief Executive, Visit County Durham.

Background

- 2 County Durham has had a Tourism Management Plan since 2006. It was compiled by Visit County Durham in collaboration with the County's Tourism Industry and a range of partners, including the County Council and the District Councils, and became the blue print for development of the visitor economy in the County. The Plan was based on a series of studies that provided intelligence about the County's product, its customers and its competitive position in England and the UK as well as significant input from across the County.
- 3 The Plan has been refreshed annually since 2006 in the light of new intelligence including Visitor Surveys in 2008 and 2010, annual Economic Impact Surveys, a major Customer Segmentation Study in 2007, a major study into the image and identity of the County to external audiences and benchmarking at a national level through Destination Performance UK.
- 4 The Durham Tourism Management Plan (DTMap) is developed and monitored by the board of Visit County Durham. It has also been the subject of several presentations and discussions at previous meetings of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Current position

- 5 In November, 2011 Visit County Durham embarked on a programme of work designed to track progress against the original objectives of the Durham Tourism Management plan, test the existing objectives and the approach to each to see if they were still valid and to discover if any new priorities had emerged since 2006. The consultation took the form of an industry conference in November 2011, a series of presentations and discussions with relevant organisations and forums and a conference on rural tourism in March 2012.
- 6 Members will recall that as part of the recent refresh of the work programme for the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2012 – 2014, it was identified that an overview be provided of the development of the tourism offer within County Durham.
- 7 Quarter 4 performance information presented to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 6 July 2012 showed a 7% increase in people engaged in cultural events in July, 2011 (56,138 people engaged) with 90% of users feeling that the cultural events were good or very good. Quarter 4 performance data also highlighted that the number of tourism businesses supported/engaging with Visit County Durham had increased significantly since the beginning of the year from 37 in quarter one to 140 in quarter four, bringing the annual total to 358.
- 8 In addition, Visit County Durham has generated over £5 million of positive coverage for the destination in regional, national and international media titles, on and off-line and generated almost half a million unique visitors to the destination website, thisisdurham.com. The volume and value figures for tourism continue on an upward trend with the value of tourism rising to over £700m per annum in 2011 and the jobs supported by the sector to over 11,000.
- 9 The refreshed DTMap was agreed by Cabinet at the meeting on the 30 May 2012 and it was thought timely that the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive an overview of the development of the tourism offer within County Durham. The discussion on the 24 September 2012 will focus upon the following:
 - The vision for County Durham.
 - Durham visitor economy priorities.
 - County Durham's Tourism offer including the Lumiere Festival and the Lindisfarne Gospels.
 - Gaps and challenges with the County Durham visitor offer.
 - Next steps.

Recommendations

- 10 Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the information provided during the discussion.
- 11 That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further progress report on the development of the tourism offer in County Durham at a future meeting of the Committee.

Background Paper(s)

Cabinet Report – 30 May 2012 – Durham Tourism Management Plan – 2012-2016.
Durham Tourism Management Plan – 2012-2016.
Economy and Enterprise OSC – 6 July 2012 – Quarter 4 Performance report.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None

Staffing – None

Risk – None

Equality and Diversity – None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder – None

Human Rights – None

Consultation – The Durham Tourism Management Plan (DTMap) was heavily influenced by visitor market intelligence and also went through a comprehensive consultation process with the relevant stakeholders.

Procurement – None

Disability Discrimination Act –None

Legal Implications – None