

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

21 October 2013



Update on 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 The Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee has received on a regular basis updates on the development of the tourism offer within County Durham with the last update considered by the Committee at the meeting on the 24 September 2012. Members will recall that at the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 24 June 2013 the work programme of the Committee was agreed which identified as a future item for consideration by the committee an update on the Tourism offer within County Durham.
- 3 It was therefore considered timely for members to receive an update at the meeting on the 24 October 2013 and arrangements have been made for Melanie Sensicle, Chief Executive, Visit County Durham to attend the meeting to give a presentation.

Durham Tourism Management Plan

- 4 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.

- 5 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.
- 6 The Durham Tourism Management Plan (DTMaP):
- Converts local, regional and national market research and strategies into a county-based plan to grow the county's visitor economy.
 - Is for all organisations and individuals in County Durham, and, where relevant national bodies to help them understand what is being done, what needs to be done and how they can contribute to our success.
 - Is managed by Visit County Durham, the organisation that coordinates the development of the visitor economy and manages and markets the destination.
- 7 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 Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It has been identified as an example of national best practice by Visit England.

Current position

- 8 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.
- 9 The new Durham Tourism Management Plan 2012-2016 identifies eight priorities that will deliver a more vibrant visitor economy:
1. Manage and maintain the public realm for visitors;
 2. Increase the contribution of Durham's rural areas to the overall value of the county visitor economy;
 3. Increase spend by implementing a step change in the quality of the visitor experience post arrival;
 4. Optimise the potential of Durham City making it a viable 48 – hour stay;
 5. Develop local distinctiveness in line with the destination brand;
 6. Tackle seasonality by focusing on events and business tourism;
 7. Grow the profile of the county regionally and nationally;
 8. Extend length of stay by optimising the potential of the county's market towns and town centres.

- 10 The revised plan confirmed many exiting priorities and was strongly informed by extensive visitor, market and product research and intelligence and is endorsed by:
- The Durham Tourism Management Plan (DTMaP) Committee made up of private and public sector visitor economy stakeholders from across the county.
 - The Visit County Durham directors drawn from the private and public sectors from across the county.
 - The tourism industry.
 - A range of institutional partners including Durham University, Durham Cathedral, Durham County Cricket Club and Durham County Council.
- 11 The plan is refreshed annually to take account of new and completed projects. In order to support delivery of the plan by the County Council, a Tourism Officer Working Group has been established which meets quarterly. The Working Group has representation from across the County Council and is focusing on priority 1, managing and maintaining the public realm for visitors as well as residents. Subjects under discussion for potential action include: long stay parking in towns, the city's riverbanks, evening economy facilities for visitors, litter in the countryside and transport.
- 12 In July Visit County Durham's performance for 2012-13 was presented to the Board. Targets for income, leverage, media coverage, visitors to the destination website and businesses supported were all exceeded. The half yearly report on 2013-14 will be presented to the Board in November. It is on target to achieve them all.
- 13 Quarter 1 performance 2013/14 information presented to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 24 September 2013 for the County showed an increase in the number of visitors to the main attractions in County Durham (April – June, 2013 – 1,326,220) compared to data for 12 months earlier (1,265,775). Occupancy in commercial accommodation is also showing an increase on 2012-13.
- 14 This upturn is partly based on the staging of two prestigious events in 2013, the Lindisfarne Gospels, a world-class exhibition staged on Durham's World Heritage Site which is now sold out, selling 97,208 tickets against an original estimate of 80,000. The Emirates Durham International Cricket Ground in Chester-le-Street held the first Ashes test and it has been hailed a huge success, with more than 70,000 spectators attending. Both events have brought major benefits to the regional economy and businesses are already reporting the benefits of an influx of visitors. Visit County Durham led on the marketing communications work for the Lindisfarne Gospels and supported the cricket club by manning an information desk for the event and supporting with materials for the media work. It has also ensured the County is profiled using the place brand at the Emirates ground.

- 15 It was thought timely that the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive an update on the development of the tourism offer within County Durham. The discussion on the 21 October 2013 will focus upon the following:
- The vision for County Durham.
 - Durham visitor economy priorities.
 - County Durham's Tourism offer – What this includes?
 - Gaps and challenges with the County Durham visitor offer.
 - Next steps.

Recommendations

- 16 Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment upon the information provided during the presentation.
- 17 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 Papers

- Cabinet Report – 30 May 2012 – Durham Tourism Management Plan – 2012-2016.
- Economy and Enterprise OSC – 24 September 2013 - Quarter 1 Performance Report.

Contact:	Stephen Gwilym, Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Tel:	03000 268 140 E-mail: Stephen.gwilym@durham.gov.uk
Author:	Diane Close, Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Tel:	03000 268 141 E-mail: diane.close@durham.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Implications – Taken from the Cabinet Report on the 30 May 2012.

Finance – None

Staffing – Relevant staff now serve on the Tourism Working Group which supports and co-ordinates activity within DCC to develop the visitor economy.

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