

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 September 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 with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee also attending a meeting of the Visit County Durham Board on the 23 June 2015.
4. The Review Group's key findings are attached at Appendix 2 and have resulted in the formulation of the following recommendations (see pages 6-7 of report):
 - 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. That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree the report of the Scrutiny Review Group looking at the marketing activity undertaken by Visit County Durham and attached as Appendix 2.
7. That the report of the Scrutiny Review Group is submitted for consideration by Cabinet at the meeting on the 21 October 2015.

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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