

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: WEDNESDAY, 22 MAY 2013

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT

SUBJECT: TOURISM IN FLINTSHIRE

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To inform and update Members regarding the approach taken to promoting Flintshire to visitors and to managing the County as a destination.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The visitor economy is estimated to support 4,200 jobs in Flintshire or 6.5% of the total workplace jobs (NOMIS 2008 figure). Although Flintshire has a relatively low profile as a visitor destination, the County has a highly attractive landscape and a good stock of high quality accommodation providers and smaller attractions.

2.02 Nationally, the sector is expected to grow over the next few years due to an anticipated increase in domestic tourism and in visitors from overseas. However, tourism is a very competitive industry and the expectations of visitors are gradually increasing, putting an increased onus on destinations and businesses to offer a consistently high quality experience. Flintshire has a very large potential visitor market due to its proximity with North West England and has 4.8 million people living within one hours drive time.

2.03 The sector has seen considerable public sector investment in recent years through the Rural Development Plan programme and this is likely to remain a priority sector for the Welsh Government in future rural programmes. Investment to date has been largely focused on community-based tourism activity, small scale business improvements and heritage and cultural based tourism. The priorities for funding in the new programmes remain unclear but an increased emphasis on creating employment opportunities is likely.

2.04 Delivery of tourism activities by the Council has always been delivered through a partnership with businesses in the visitor economy sector, in particular the Flintshire Tourism Association and more recently the Clwydian Range Tourism Group. This is seen as a strength which offers both cost effectiveness and responsiveness to business needs.

- 2.05 The approach to supporting tourism in Flintshire is steered by the “Tourism Strategy North Wales 2010-2015” developed by Tourism Partnership North Wales (TPNW). TPNW also fund the Destination Management programme in each County and the sub-regional marketing campaigns. A number of specialist marketing campaigns are also run by TPNW at the North Wales level, such as walking promotion.
- 2.06 Promoting Flintshire as a good place to visit also has the effect of raising awareness of the County as a place to invest. Good quality of life is now a very important consideration taken by potential inward investors.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

Activities to date

- 3.01 Flintshire Tourism Strategy 2006-2013 identified a number of work streams to improve the quality of the visitor experience in Flintshire and to get greater value from the environmental, cultural and heritage assets of the County. Key achievements in the period of the Strategy have included:
- Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) figures have shown a gradual increase in the value and volume of tourism in the County from £182.1m (2.7m visitors) in 2006 to £200.2m (3.2m) in 2011. Other areas have seen a decline over the same period.
 - Provided mentoring support to 94 businesses to enable them to review their performance and plan improvements.
 - Support the Flintshire Tourism Association to increase its role as a co-ordinator for the tourism sector and as a promoter of the County. Membership increased from 25 to 75.
 - 102 projects supported through the Rural Development Plan (RDP) programme to interpret, promote or increase access to heritage and cultural assets and to support events and tourism activity.
 - The Town Action Plan programme has had a strong focus on the visitor experience in a number of towns and has seen the development of visitor facilities, environmental improvements and new attractions such as heritage trails.
 - Creation of Wales Coastal Path and current development of Pilgrim’s Way from Holywell to Bardsey Island provide new opportunities for the County.

- Development of Talacre master plan and current implementation of a number of projects to improve the appearance and facilities in the area through RDP funding.
- 3.02 The promotion of Flintshire to visitors to date has largely been achieved through the sub-regional promotional campaign North Wales Borderlands, delivered in partnership with Denbighshire and Wrexham Councils and supported by Visit Wales. The future approach to sub-regional promotion is currently under review to ensure that it links to wider collaborative programmes and to maximise value for money.
- 3.03 The Flintshire Regeneration Partnership established a new sub-group in early 2012. The Destination Flintshire group brings together key stakeholders in the visitor economy and public sector to manage Flintshire as a destination for visitors and local people. Destination management involves identifying the different facets of the visitor experience, such as accommodation, transport, environment and facilities, and ensuring that these meet visitor expectations, especially in the most popular areas.
- 3.04 The Partnership adopted a Destination Management Plan in February 2013 which is appended for information. The Destination Management Plan for Flintshire includes five key priorities:
1. Improve the availability and coordination of visitor information that meets customers' diverse needs.
 2. Increase the quality and range of visitor accommodation and attractions.
 3. Increase the scale and diversity of the activity sector.
 4. Increase the scale and economic impact of events in Flintshire.
 5. Data development to monitor the impact of the Plan.

Future actions

- 3.05 The key areas of action over the next twelve to eighteen months are:
- Complete the review of sub-regional marketing activity and launch an integrated promotional package across North Wales targeting inward investment as well as visitors.
 - Deliver a targeted promotional campaign to showcase Flintshire and North East Wales attractions, accommodation and events to people in North West England.
 - Improve the appearance and appeal of town centres in Flintshire used by visitors through the Town Action Plan programme and improve the promotion of the town centres.
 - Support the development of the Destination Flintshire partnership and implement the Destination Management Plan for Flintshire.

- Implement projects to improve access to the coastline and to improve the quality and range of facilities.
- Complete the Rural Development Plan-funded improvements to the environment of Talacre and Gronant.
- Develop electronic media resources to enable visitors to access information on events, trails and businesses.
- Increase the availability and visibility of locally produced food to visitors and local people.
- Support the development of the Roman Fort project in Caergwrle.
- Promote the area to regional coach operators to encourage greater uptake.
- Support the development of sustainable high quality events in Flintshire.
- Continue to review the role of the Flintshire Visitor Centre in Mold to ensure it offers value for money.
- Develop a robust monitoring framework to measure the impact of this programme of work relying more upon real-time business feedback than previously.

Tourism Partnership North Wales (TPNW)

3.06 TPNW will be attending the Scrutiny Committee meeting to provide a brief presentation of their work. The purpose of the organisation is to:

“Tourism Partnership North Wales is one of four Regional Tourism Partnerships in Wales, with partners drawn from the public and private sector. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) devolves resources to the Partnership to enable it to undertake its main objective, i.e. to enable the delivery of the Regional and Action Plans contained within its Tourism Strategy North Wales - “Tourism Strategy North Wales 2010-2015”.” (TPNW 2013).

A summary of the “Tourism Strategy North Wales” document is appended.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 To note the progress made and the future approach to promoting Flintshire to visitors and managing the County as a destination.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 The Council provides an annual service budget for tourism activities of £65,000. This is used to lever in funds from TPNW, external funding bodies and the private sector. It is anticipated that an additional £110,000 will be secured for 2013/2014.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 As a sector that employs an estimated 4,200 people, the visitor economy has a role to play in offering employment opportunities in Flintshire.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 There are a number of potential positive impacts from the sector:

- Encouraging people to spend time locally rather than travelling further afield will help to reduce energy use.
- The sector is well-placed to showcase local food and reduce food miles.
- Encouraging use of the developing infrastructure for walking and cycling in the County will help to increase less carbon intensive forms of recreation.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The sector helps to support rural services and small businesses – helping to ensure their sustainability for use by more vulnerable people in these communities.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 An ongoing dialogue is maintained with tourist businesses and in particular with the Flintshire Tourism Association and Clwydian Range Tourism Group. The Destination Flintshire Partnership also provides a forum for discussing and agreeing future programmes of work.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Summary of Tourism Strategy North Wales 2010-2015

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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