

**NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

TOURISM AND GROWTH

APRIL 2018

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Chairs Foreword

I am pleased to present this report on behalf of the Growth Scrutiny Committee. It details the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Committee from its review of Tourism and Growth.

The review panel found this review interesting and felt it was timely given the focus on growth within the Authority. This was a subject area the Committee had previously reviewed and it was useful to revisit Tourism and consider its links with growth. I would like to thank all members of the Committee for their input and support during the review.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the officers, who took the time to speak to members of the Committee, for their advice, support and cooperation provided through the review process.

Finally I would like to say thank you to Sue Veerman, the Scrutiny Manager, for the planning and organising done on the Committees behalf. Thanks also to Democratic Services for the support they have provided.

Councillor J Windle

Review Panel

The review panel comprised the following members:

Councillor J Windle	-	(Labour) - Review Panel Chair
Councillor S Boyle	-	(Labour)
Councillor S Cornwell	-	(Labour)
Councillor C Cupit	-	(Conservative)
Councillor A Powell	-	(Conservative)
Councillor B Rice	-	(Labour)
Councillor R Smith	-	(Labour)
Councillor C Smith	-	(Labour)
Councillor K Tait	-	(Conservative)

1. Recommendations

That:

- 1.1 The Council fully recognise the significant potential Economic Impact that Tourism can bring to the area.
- 1.2 The Council considers the reinstatement of a dedicated Tourism Officer.
- 1.3 The Council identifies a specific Cabinet portfolio for Tourism.
- 1.4 The Council develops a clear brand and identifies what its offer is and what are its key Tourism assets.
- 1.5 The Council considers holding an event with key partners to discuss the development of the Authority's Tourism Strategy including the items identified in recommendation 1.4.
- 1.6 The Councils website be developed further to ensure it has clear links to the attractions and facilities available within North East Derbyshire including the co-ordination of events taking place in parishes of the District.
- 1.7 The Council examines the value for money being obtained from the Service Level Agreement.
- 1.8 A benchmarking exercise with a comparative authority be undertaken on their Tourism service.
- 1.9 Further work be undertaken to engage people mentoring new businesses within the Tourism sector.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 At its meeting on 20th July 2017 the Growth Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of Tourism and Growth.
- 2.2 The Committee felt that it was timely to review this area because of the potential significant benefit it could provide economically.

3. Scope of Review

- 3.1 The review aimed to:
 - Review what the Councils overarching strategy for Tourism and Growth is and whether it is being achieved

- Understand the Districts existing delivery arrangements for Tourism
- Consider whether the Council is getting value for money from current arrangements
- Understand the economic benefits which will accrue from growth relating to the Tourism Strategy
- Understand the scale of Tourism in North East Derbyshire
- Identify any areas for improvement

4. Method of Review

- 4.1 The review panel met on five occasions to consider the scope of the review, key issues they wanted to discuss and key people they wished to interview.
- 4.2 Evidence was gathered in a variety of ways including written sources, desktop research and interviews with a range of officers. At the first meeting of the panel the Assistant Director of Growth provided an overview of the current position and answered questions from the panel.

5. Evidence and Research

A number of documents and evidence were provided to the review panel for consideration. Details are provided below:

- Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire – Visit Peak District and Derbyshire DMO
- Visitor Economy Review and Investment Study – D2N2
- Housing and Economic Development Strategy – NEDDC
- Tourism Action Plan – August 2016 –Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
- Tourism Action Plan – One Year On – Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
- Briefing note provided by Chesterfield Borough Council on the service provided including the Chesterfield Area Tourism Group Work Plan
- Steam Final Trend Report for 2009-2016 – Peak District and Derbyshire
- North East Derbyshire STEAM Report 2012
- North East Derbyshire Scrutiny Review of Tourism 2014
- Review of Tourism in Derbyshire March 2017 – Derbyshire County Council

6. Key Findings

- 6.1 The Committee recognised the value and economic potential of Tourism to the District. At a national level in 2016 1.6 million jobs at all levels were attributed to the UK's Tourism Industry. Its contribution to the economy was measured at over £62.4 billion. The Visitor Economy was also identified by D2N2 as a key sector within Derbyshire and as having real potential for Growth. The opportunities it presented were seen as both short and long term investment opportunities to help accelerate economic recovery

Within the Chesterfield area visitor spend is £163.88 million with visitor numbers of 3.527 million. However, 91% of these visitors do not stop overnight so there is potential to encourage some of this percentage to stay overnight. The industry supports 2066 full time jobs.

In relation to North East Derbyshire specifically the 2012 steam report quantifies the economic impact generated to be £120.11 million. The analysis by Sector of Expenditure is (£millions) Accommodation 3.29, Food & Drink 21.35, Recreation 8.66, Shopping 29.68, Transport 11.59 equalling a total direct revenue of 74.57 million. A further £30.63 is achieved through indirect expenditure plus VAT of £14.91 million. Tourist numbers are 2,944.5 thousand and the employment supported by Tourism Activity is 1,794 full time jobs.

6.2 Strengths

- 6.2.1 The Council, along with their strategic partner Bolsover District Council, were currently part of a Service Level Agreement with Chesterfield Borough Council for the delivery of Tourism. Evidence was provided by the Tourism, Museum and Events Manager for Chesterfield Borough Council of various initiatives that were provided including the production of an area guide, a walking festival and festival website, a Destination Management System and Visit Chesterfield website and some limited research.

The Council contributes £4,000 into the Chesterfield Tourism Group as does Bolsover District and Chesterfield Borough. This group undertakes joint work on behalf of the partners, although without a Tourism Officer for North East Derbyshire and Bolsover, Chesterfield state that they are currently doing this work. At one time North East Derbyshire and Bolsover had shared a dedicated Tourism officer but this resource had been deleted and it was felt that the SLA had enabled the Council to provide Tourism facilities with reduced resources. However, following the loss of this post the panel were informed that quarterly meetings of the Chesterfield Area Tourism Group were no longer being held. In addition to the sum mentioned above the Visitor Information Centre in Chesterfield promotes all three council areas and is operated by Chesterfield Borough staff. North East Derbyshire and Bolsover District Councils also pay £4,000 each to fund this element

- 6.2.2 The rural location of the District and its position as a gateway to the Peak District was seen as an asset. It was acknowledged that the area did not have numerous iconic landmarks within its boundary. However, it was well

positioned for visiting historic houses such as Chatsworth House and Hardwick Hill which sat near its boundary. Additionally it was located close to Sheffield City which provided a range of facilities and also offered a significant potential catchment area.

- 6.2.3 Tourism assets that were identified within North East Derbyshire included Renishaw Hall, a number of attractive villages and beautiful countryside for walking. Many of the villages also take part in a local tradition of dressing wells including Ashover, Heath and Barlow. Sailing facilities and water activities are to be found at Ogston Reservoir and Rother Valley County Park and a section of the Chesterfield Canal runs through part of the Districts area.
- 6.2.4 The review panel also heard evidence of the growth of the Cycling network within the District. A number of new cycling routes were being developed and they formed part of a wider strategic network for cycling across the Chesterfield area being driven by Derbyshire County Council. It was hoped that this would help to accommodate additional traffic generated by new developments, including within the Councils area, the Peak Resort, The Avenue and housing at Clay Cross. A scheme at Dronfield and Unstone funded from D2N2 Local Growth Fund grant would also provide segregated routes alongside the B6057 providing facilities for travel between Dronfield and the Peak resort and onwards.
- 6.2.5 The review panel also heard about the opportunities presented by the Peak Resort. This resort was an integrated leisure, health, sport and education resort to be built on the 300 acre Birchall Estate at Unstone. It is intended that it will be a major visitor attraction to the North West of Chesterfield on the boundary of the 500 square mile Peak District National Park and will become one of the UK's flagship tourist attractions.

The all year tourism destination will be open to day and staying visitors, offering all-weather activities, events and a digital retail experience. It was proposed that there would be a 150 bed five-star hotel, a university campus specialising in leisure, tourism and hospitality and a gateway building to meet the demands of day and staying visitors. Later phases of the development would provide 250 woodland lodges, healthcare facilities and climate controlled spaces for water and adventure sports and mountain bike trails.

Whilst it was still in the early stages work had commenced on the enabling infrastructure and new public footpaths and bridleways, with connections to cycling, walking and horse riding routes in to the national park, Chesterfield and Sheffield. The Resort will be built in three phases and is forecast to create 1,300 FTE new jobs.

- 6.2.6 The review panel heard from one joint stakeholder about a recent initiative at Bolsover District Council which involved the production of promotional videos for the area. A bid for £25,000 of funding had been successful and this had supported the creation of marketing and leisure videos. The panel questioned whether this could be replicated at North East. The officer said this could very easily be done and the results so far from the production for Bolsover had

been very positive. The package also included free updates of Bolsover's videos until 2022. He recognised that whilst digital was a prime source for marketing other methods still had a place. Bolsover also produces general tourism leaflets and more specific ones for each of its market towns.

- 6.2.7 The review panel received evidence regarding how the Economic Development Team were approaching tourism. The panel heard from the Economic Development and Growth Manager about work that was currently taking place to support businesses within the Councils area including as part of this the support of Tourism development. It was also felt that support for businesses and productivity had the potential to support tourism by increasing accessibility. Development of websites in different languages was also seen as important, particularly in countries where there was a large potential for attracting tourists to the area. Reference was made to the Developers Forum that had been developed for businesses and the links this had with Tourism.

6.3 Areas for Improvement/Observations

- 6.3.1 The spend analysis shows that the visitor economy is an important sector for the area. It also presented real opportunities to drive local growth. This could take many forms from encouraging new local businesses, creation of jobs, development of skills and bringing much needed revenue into the District. The different initiatives that Economic Development were progressing for business support, contact with universities, apprenticeships and the major development and housing schemes the authority was engaged with were all very positive. It was also considered important to undertake further work to engage people mentoring new businesses. However, with all the work taking place in these areas and the reduced resource available, the review panel felt that Tourism had not been a priority. The panel felt we need to ensure that the potential Economic Impact from Tourism is fully recognised by the Council.
- 6.3.2 The panel had heard evidence regarding the Service Level Agreement it had entered with Chesterfield Borough Council. It was advised that this arrangement had enabled the Council to maintain its Tourism service following the loss of key staff and reduction in resources. However, the panel were concerned that the Council was not getting the level of focus it would like to see if Tourism is going to be maximised to drive growth within the area. They felt the Council needed to have a fresh look at this service and consider whether they were getting Value for Money and the right amount of focus on the service which they had previously when they employed a joint officer. It would be useful to undertake a benchmarking exercise with a comparative authority

The panel, whilst understanding how the Council had come to depend on the Service Level Agreement for Tourism delivery, felt that the Authority would benefit from a dedicated officer. As part of the last review of Tourism in 2014 several members of the panel had considered the role of this officer and felt that it was a useful post. They felt that if the Council was to be able to contribute the effort needed in this area a dedicated resource was necessary.

- 6.3.3 With the pressures of competing areas and reducing resources the panel felt it would be a statement of intent if the Council dedicated a specific Cabinet Portfolio for Tourism. They heard from a joint officer of the clear allocation of this role to a particular Cabinet member at Bolsover District Council and that this provided clarity of responsibility.
- 6.3.4 The review panel quickly realised that there was various levels to the delivery of Tourism within Derbyshire and the Destination Management Organisation was a key overarching body. Chesterfield Borough Council were also promoting a brand that attempted to include North East Derbyshire. However, having heard evidence of the work being undertaken the panel were of the view that the Council needed to develop a clear brand specifically for North East Derbyshire. They considered we were not clear about who we are, what our offer is and what assets we have. It was felt currently that the Council had no real voice in relation to Tourism. It was understood that we were part of a larger network but if the growth of the visitor sector is a priority for the Council we need to be clearer in our identity to ensure it is recognised and well known by visitors or tourists locally and nationally. It was suggested by one stakeholder that we needed to be more aspirational and bold.
- 6.3.5 The panel would like to see more development of the Council's website for Tourism. It could provide visibility and promotion of what we have to offer. Currently the Council is on the whole reliant on Chesterfield Borough Council. It recognised that the methods of viewing information have changed. Increasingly digital methods were the way people wished to access information. It was felt we could utilise these methods more effectively to attract visitors and advertise events. There was still room for Tourism Information Centres but the main source used for information was the internet. We need to ensure that wherever we are promoting North East Derbyshire there needs to be clear links to the attractions available as a package which highlight both the attractiveness and ease of visiting and staying within the area. This variety would encourage people to visit and stay longer. This should also demonstrate how easy it is to access other neighbouring attractions. Part of this would be effective liaison with parishes to link into their offer and events they are holding. It was suggested that this could make a future item for the District/Parish Forum to encourage participation by Parish Councils.
- 6.3.6 The panel felt there was a need for some type of forum for Tourism either as a one off meeting or if the members felt useful ongoing. One suggestion was that the Developer Forum the panel had heard evidence about might hold a one off event for Tourism and businesses with invitations to all partners, retailers and other relevant people being invited to a round table discussion. Items for discussion could be the development of our Tourism Strategy, North East Derbyshire's brand and how this links with other partners' strategies. This interaction with partners is important as this appeared to have become diminished in the area of Tourism and needs to be improved.
- 6.3.7 The panel discussed the issue of Transport connectivity and the strategy to deliver this. A number of stakeholders had commented on the gaps that exist

in public transport across the area that potentially could discourage visitors from getting around the various locations. The opportunity to travel easily from the train station in Chesterfield to the area and into the national park was raised as a barrier. Again the panel recognised that this was a complex area and that we were part of the whole. However, the panel had heard from a number of stakeholders about developments that were taking place to try and solve this difficult problem. To support this it was felt the Council needed to consider connectivity within the area and onwards to attractions. This included the potential for a Clay Cross station and an extra station say in Hasland and other ways in which the opportunities being created within the District from new developments could be maximised. It was felt this would aid in the dispersal of visitors by improving this provision. A suggestion was made that this vision ought to be clearly reflected in the Councils Growth Strategy. The development opportunities that might arise from HS2 were also discussed.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The panel had only a limited time to look at how the service was working but this review had followed on from a previous review on Tourism in 2014. The review panel heard from a mix of officers at North East Derbyshire District Council, Chesterfield Borough Council and joint officers at Bolsover District Council. It was recognised that this was a multi layered arena in which many partners had a role to play. It had also been impacted by the reducing resource available to the Council.
- 7.2 However, the panel felt that Tourism presented opportunities for the Council as part of the growth agenda and identified a number of areas for improvement around promotion, engagement with partners and more fundamentally the creation of some key strategic documents such as a Tourism Strategy.

Appendix 1

Stakeholders Engaged During the Review

- Alyson Barnes - Tourism, Museum and Events Manager - Chesterfield Borough Council
- Scott Chambers - Communications, Marketing and Design Manager
- Julian Cosgrove - Economic Development and Growth Manager
- Neil Johnson - Development and Growth Manager - Chesterfield Borough Council
- Allison Westray-Chapman - Assistant Director – Economic Growth