

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 12 th July 2018
Report Subject	Tourism Promotion and Destination Management
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Economic Development; and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the approaches taken in Flintshire and regionally to support the visitor economy through promotional activity and managing and improving the customer experience. The report sets out the work of both the Access and Natural Environment and Tourism services as both play a significant and co-ordinated role with opportunities for greater collaborative working in the future following the recent restructure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Members discuss the current and emerging approaches to visitor promotion and destination management.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE APPROACHES TO VISITOR PROMOTION AND DESTINATION MANAGEMENT
	<u>Background</u>
1.01	Although the visitor economy in Flintshire is a relatively small component of the Flintshire economy it remains an important contributor. The sector employs approximately 3,273 people and generates an estimated £252m each year from 3.7m overnight stays and 2.7m day visits. 4.7m people live within a 60 minute drive time of Flintshire giving a large potential catchment for the visitor economy.
1.02	The accommodation in the County is varied with a mix of types and sizes from small guesthouses through to larger hotels, spread across the quality range. In terms of oversight bed spaces, the accommodation base is dominated by the caravan sector located, in particular, in the north of the County.
1.03	<p>The County has a wide range of features that appeal to day visitors and to those looking to explore and experience an area; a growing market segment. These include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural environment - the County is largely rural with an exceptional landscape and with areas of particular appeal including the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Dee coastline and Halkyn Mountain. Particularly important destinations include Talacre and Wepre Park. Good access to these areas is vital and Flintshire has some 1,200 kilometres of public rights of way which includes national routes such as the Wales Coast Path, Pilgrims Way and Offa's Dyke and many other promoted routes which seek out the best the Flintshire countryside has to offer. • Town centres - a number of towns in the County have a high quality built environment and draw visitors from a wider catchment. Mold market is also a popular destination for visitors. Broughton Retail Park is a major retail and leisure destination in its own right. • Heritage and culture - as well as the major attraction of Theatre Clwyd the County also features a number of castles including Flint, Ewloe and Caergwrle as well as Gladstone's Library; Greenfield Valley Heritage Park, Basingwerk Abbey and the well at Holywell.
	<u>The Access and Natural Environment and Tourism Services</u>
1.04	The Access and Natural Environment Service has an important role to play in the context of tourism. The teams manage and maintain some of the best natural spaces Flintshire has to offer and enables access for people to enjoy these spaces. The Sites team has five area based rangers and three assistant rangers; the Rights of Way team has two footpath inspectors and two rights of way officers working county wide. The Countryside team produce and deliver extensive events programmes for Wepre Park, Greenfield Valley and in the wider coast and countryside areas. The Service

	also works in partnership and attracts grant aid to promote and improve Flintshire destinations and develops publicity literature and social media to enhance the visitor experience.
1.05	<p>The Council tourism service is located within the wider business development team. Although there is only a single member of staff specialising in tourism the wider team contribute as needed to supporting the sector. The key roles played by the team include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributing to tourism strategy and policy development at the national, regional and local level; • promoting the County to potential visitors through regional collaborative campaigns both sides of the England/Wales border; • co-ordinating the management of key destinations in the County; • securing and managing resources for both promotion and destination management; and • supporting businesses in the visitor economy sector through advice and facilitating networking and learning.
	<u>Strategic context</u>
1.06	The strategic framework for tourism is provided by the Welsh Government Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020 “Partnership for Growth”. The Strategy sets out the following vision: “Wales will provide the warmest of welcomes, outstanding quality, excellent value for money and memorable, authentic experiences to every visitor.” Regionally, the visitor economy is identified as a priority in the development of economic growth proposals for North Wales.
1.07	<p>In 2015, Welsh Government announced an approach to promoting Wales based on a series of themed years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure 2016 • Legends 2017 • The Sea 2018 • Discovery 2019 <p>The strategy is in response to key challenges in promoting Wales as a destination. These thematic years are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a long-term ambition to grow a stronger and more defined brand for tourism in Wales; • the opportunity to focus investment and innovation in tourism; and • the need to drive an increase in visitor volume and value to Wales each year.
	<u>Promoting the County</u>
1.08	The local authorities in North East Wales adopted the thematic years approach from the outset and have worked collaboratively to successfully develop a series of digital promotions including films, photography, social media and e-marketing campaigns. All campaigns seek to reach new and repeat visitors, increase awareness of the region, strengthen partnerships, challenge perceptions and build a thriving, sustainable tourism economy. The series of films are available on www.northeastwales.wales and released on social media channels at relevant times capitalising on national messages and initiatives.

1.09	The Council also raises awareness of the area through distribution of leaflets to some of the most visited sites across the North West of England introducing Flintshire Towns and Heritage Trails, Great Outdoors & Walking and Leisure Tour. A free distribution service is also available for tourism and hospitality businesses in the county.
1.10	For the first time a collaborative bid by all six local authorities in North Wales was submitted to Welsh Government to develop a North Wales winter tourism marketing campaign. The bid was well received by Welsh Government and approval granted for funds in the region of £150,000 to deliver this campaign in North Wales.
1.11	<p>The project will promote North Wales as the “number one winter destination” by having a focused marketing campaign across the whole region. The authorities want to extend the visitor season in order to make North Wales an all year round destination. They also aim to turn seasonal employment into full time employment which will have a significant economic impact on the area. The winter tourism campaign will focus on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christmas • Events and festivals • Winter adventure • Food, drink and accommodation • Winter lights • Wet weather attractions
1.12	<p>A recent Welsh Government initiative; The Wales Way, is a suite of tourism routes with international appeal which launched in late 2017. The Wales Way is a family of three routes that emphasise experiences rather than simply the journey from A to B. The routes will encourage visitors to stop and visit attractions or areas along their way. The official titles for the three principal routes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A55 – The North Wales Way / Ffordd Gogledd Cymru • A487 – The Coastal Way / Ffordd Arfordirol • A470 – The Cambrian Way / Ffordd Cambria
1.13	The routes will, of course, be open to personal customisation and encourage trips off the main route (e.g. 40 minutes off the main road). This is initially a 10-year programme of activity which will evolve and develop over the next decade. The Wales Way will provide the ideal backdrop of promotion for the winter campaign creating six downloadable guides. The downloadable guides will provide the sector with a better understanding of the Wales Way project to encourage the development of products that use it as a foundation.
	<u>The Destination Management Plan</u>
1.14	Destination Management is the term given to how a place is managed and equipped to be able to best deal with the needs of its visitors. Making a destination work effectively from a visitor perspective is the key to its success. Destination Management requires buy-in from the wide range of stakeholders involved in the delivery of that experience at each destination, working in partnership to make sure that there are no gaps in the provision. Destination Management is essentially about focusing on each visitor to the

	County and their needs being well catered for so that they have an outstanding experience and therefore their expectations are ultimately exceeded.
1.15	Destination Management continues to be a national priority for Welsh Government. Each local authority across North Wales has developed a Destination Management Plan that provides the platform to accessing Welsh Government funding from which Flintshire and North East Wales partners have been successful in securing over £100,000 since 2015.
1.16	The Destination Management Plan is intended as a practical action plan setting out the roles of the key partners in improving and managing the County for visitors and local people. The plan aims to increase the average length a visitor stays at an attraction, maximise opportunities for visitors to stay and spend and achieve a more effective spread of visitors across the County, in order to capitalise on additional tourism revenue within the local economy.
1.17	<p>The plan sets out five priority themes, aligned to the Welsh Government priorities for the sector.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Promoting the Brand <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Promoting Flintshire in North West England; b. Operating a co-ordinated leaflet distribution system; c. Maintaining high quality web materials; d. Playing a full part in promoting the region. 2) Product development <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improving access to the Dee coastline and encouraging the development of small scale visitor infrastructure; b. Develop key opportunity sectors for future visitor growth including group travel and business tourism; c. Support a high quality local food offer; d. Promote and develop Flintshire's quality attractions - countryside, heritage, town centres, and culture. 3) People development <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Grow the network of ambassadors to raise the standard of welcome to visitors; b. Raise skills levels in the visitor sector; 4) Profitable performance <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support and promote events in Flintshire; b. Encourage new visitor activity in the quieter parts of the season; c. Support business clusters. 5) Place branding <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support local partnerships in promoting and further developing the visitor infrastructure and experience in their locality; b. Improve the coverage of brown on white tourism signs; c. Ensure visitors are considered in transport and infrastructure planning.

	<u>Future opportunities</u>
1.18	<p>The recent transfer of the Council economic development and tourism functions to form part of the Planning, Environment and Economy portfolio creates opportunities to further strengthen already well-developed links between the services. From a countryside and tourism perspective this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further developing the visitor infrastructure and promotional activity along the Dee coastline; • collaborative destination management and promotion around the attractions in the Greenfield and Holywell area; • developing links between the regeneration of the County, tourism and the role of green space and countryside; • joint promotion of events and activities; • continued development of Talacre as a destination and in particular ongoing visitor vehicle management; and • promotion of the County as a high quality destination for walking.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
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2.01	There are no new resource requirements arising from this report. All activity highlighted is provided for within core budgets and staff resources or is externally funded.
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3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
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3.01	Both services consult regularly with relevant stakeholders.
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4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
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4.01	The scale of available resources is a challenge to delivering action in the visitor economy. Both of the services have made substantial efficiency savings over time and external funding sources have become scarcer. Managing external expectations therefore remains a consistent risk area.
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5.00	APPENDICES
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5.01	Appendix 1 - Destination Management Plan 2017-2020
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6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
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6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Niall Waller Service Manager (Enterprise and Regeneration)</p> <p>Telephone: 01352 702137</p> <p>E-mail: niall.waller@flintshire.gov.uk</p>
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7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Destination Management - Destination Management is the term given to how a place is managed and equipped to be able to best deal with the needs of its visitors. Making a destination work effectively from a visitor perspective is the key to its success</p> <p>The Wales Way – a Visit Wales promotional campaign based around three strategic visitor routes through Wales. Further information is available at http://www.thewalesway.com.</p>