



**Corporate and Environmental Overview &
Scrutiny Committee: 11th October 2018**

Report of: Director of Development and Regeneration

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**SUBJECT: WEST LANCASHIRE TOURISM – THE VISITOR ECONOMY – UPDATE
TO THE CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide an update with regards to actions contained within the report of the Committee entitled 'West Lancashire Tourism -The Visitor Economy' 2017.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Members note the work of officers to date

2.2 That officers continue to work to deliver recommendations contained within the Committee's report 'West Lancashire Tourism-The Visitor Economy'

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 In 2016 the Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee commenced a review on the topic 'West Lancashire Tourism – The Visitor Economy' to gain a greater understanding of the visitor economy in West Lancashire. Following a number of presentations from representatives of visitor attractions, Marketing Lancashire and Council officers, a final report

was prepared on behalf of the Committee and was approved by both Cabinet and Council in 2017.

- 3.2 Following approval of this report, and subject to resources, officers have been working to deliver those actions.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Based on the work undertaken to date to deliver the approved recommendations within the final report entitled 'West Lancashire Tourism - The Visitor Economy' the following update can be provided:

Continue to support West Lancashire as a visitor destination

- 4.2 Officers have been working with key partners to promote West Lancashire as a visitor destination.
- 4.3 Work has been undertaken on both on and offline promotion, including launching and promoting the Discover Ormskirk website, Facebook page, Instagram and press advertisements. Social media channels allow the Council to promote West Lancashire, reach audiences further afield and to showcase the Borough and its wider attractions.
- 4.4 Officers have worked to support and enhance a number of events across West Lancashire including the Ormskirk Gingerbread Festival, the Green Fayre and MotorFest. Officers have worked with Ormskirk Community Partnership to move Ormskirk Gingerbread Festival to a Sunday to make better use of the town centre space and allow the event to expand, the event was a huge success. Moving this year's Ormskirk Christmas lights switch-on to Sunday will provide enhanced opportunities for retailers and others to benefit from the event.
- 4.5 Research is underway to launch a range of souvenirs promoting Ormskirk, as well as creating promotional videos of the Borough to use on social media and Council-owned car parking machines.

Continue to work with Marketing Lancashire for the benefit of promoting West Lancashire

- 4.6 Officers have continued to build strong relations with Marketing Lancashire to ensure attractions in West Lancashire are promoted at a regional and national level. West Lancashire events and attractions are featured on the Visit Lancashire website and included in mailshots, and seasonal/promotional campaigns. A number of visitor attractions were promoted in a double page spread in Marketing Lancashire's 2018 visitor magazine. <https://discoverormskirk.com/news/visit-ormskirk/>

Continue to develop and build on relationships established with the Head of Visitor Economy for the Liverpool City Region in the promotion of West Lancashire

- 4.7 The Council have recently joined Visit Liverpool and are currently working to build relationships and ensure that West Lancashire and its attractions are best promoted. Ormskirk and the Borough's wider attractions are currently being promoted on Visit Liverpool website, "Beyond the City" <https://www.visitliverpool.com/explore-the-city/beyond-the-city/ormskirk>. Officers have also attended Marketing Liverpool events to promote West Lancashire and explore opportunities to link with the wider promotion of the Liverpool City Region as a visitor destination.

Draw on the experiences of Visit Southport and Visit Liverpool to provide something similar for West Lancashire

- 4.8 Officers have met with lead officers at both Visit Southport and Visit Liverpool to explore opportunities to promote West Lancashire. We are also continuing to work with Sefton Council as part of the Visit Sefton and West Lancashire (VISIT) project to promote sustainable means of transport and the visitor economy in both boroughs.
- 4.0 As previously mentioned officers have set up the Discover Ormskirk website and social media channels and are actively working to promote attractions and events through these media channels in a similar way to Visit Southport and Liverpool.

Continue to work with businesses and organisations within West Lancashire to promote projects and initiatives that benefit the local economy.

- 4.10 Officers are continuing to work with businesses across the borough. A number of free Google Garage Expert workshops were offered this year to support businesses online presence including promotion, digital advertising and how to reach new customers. Positive feedback was received from those businesses who attended.
- 4.11 Businesses who meet the criteria are offered a 'submit your business' listing on DiscoverOrmskirk.com, where their business is promoted free of charge.
- 4.12 Some key events have been moved to a Sunday to offer an additional days trade for retailers and to enhance footfall and allow events to grow and make better use of the town centre, as well as take advantage of the free parking on Council-owned car parks. The Council has also supported the development of the Night Markets through a successful application for a licence for alcohol sales and entertainment in the Ormskirk Town Centre.
- 4.13 Following on from feedback from Ormskirk businesses the Council has amended its car parking tariffs to encourage visitors to stay longer in town. The introduction of new car parking machines will allow greater flexibility for payment and offer opportunities for visual promotion and for businesses to

promote offers. Since the introduction of the new charging regime feedback from businesses has been positive.

- 4.14 A revised database of business contacts has been developed to improve communication and to provide relevant information on town centre initiatives and wider initiatives across the Borough. The Let's Talk Business newsletter continues to provide information on business support products and services, good news stories, information on skills and apprenticeships and business case studies. Officers continue to offer a one-to-one business support service to businesses and potential inward investors.
- 4.15 The Skills, Training and Employment Partnership (STEP) has been in existence for seven years and meets quarterly, it enables key parties involved in the skills, worklessness and employment arena to share ideas, best practice and develop new projects.
- 4.16 The continuation of the Skelmersdale Ambassadors Network launched in 2016 promotes and positions Skelmersdale as a key economic driver for the Borough. A large number of businesses are 'on board' as Ambassadors and champion Skelmersdale and the surrounding West Lancashire area, as a great place to invest and do business.
- 4.17 Officers continue to grow strong links with local education establishments to support and promote apprenticeships, encourage business connections to undertake mock interview days and attend careers fairs. Council officers also attend Edge Hill University open days; to actively promote the Borough to prospective students looking to study here.
- 4.18 The Council has supported businesses with apprenticeship grants, via the Council's apprenticeship grant scheme. Since October 2015 a total of 55 apprenticeship posts have been created across the borough.
- 4.19 Links with Social Enterprises continue. The Sewing Rooms were invited to speak at a Skelmersdale Ambassador's event, to inspire and encourage businesses to support social activity to benefit local communities.
- 4.20 Good partnership working continues with other local authorities including Knowsley Council, Sefton Council, LCC and both Lancashire and Liverpool LEP's.

Seek to further improve the promotion of West Lancashire and the importance of gaining customer insight to respond to visitor expectations.

- 4.21 Officers continue to monitor data supplied from Marketing Lancashire - The Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) model, uses locally derived data from a variety of sources such as hotels, attractions, tourist information centres, events and other accommodation to estimate the number of visitors, revenue generated and employment supported by tourism. The model provides the county with a continuous tourism economic impact dataset which reveals trends and helps highlight areas of particular growth or in need of support.

- 4.22 Using data from Ormskirk town centre's footfall monitoring system and social media channels is critical and will assist to tailor future events and provide vital information on visitor numbers.
- 4.23 Working with retail specialists Springboard the Council receives insights and intelligence in relation to the performance of the UK retail sector. Officers use this information to monitor change and adapt our strategies and proposals accordingly.

First impressions for visitors coming into West Lancashire

- 4.24 Google reviews in relation to Ormskirk Market have been increasing and the majority are very positive. Officers also continue to monitor visitor impressions of the place on the Council's social media channels, Facebook & Instagram.

A collaborative approach to promote West Lancashire as a visitor destination

- 4.25 Working with local partners on their events continues e.g. Ormskirk Community Partnership (OCP) on the Ormskirk Gingerbread Festival, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk Business Action (Night Markets). The Council encourages all partners on the Ormskirk Town Centre Management Group to collaboratively promote all West Lancashire events that are jointly worked on by the group. Press releases are also forwarded to Marketing Lancashire.
- 4.26 More recently officers have collaborated with West Lancashire Countryside Rangers, Ormskirk & Aughton U3A & Lathom Park Trust and Lathom Chapel on organising two successful guided walks – the relaunch of the War Horse Walking route coincided with the commemoration of the end of WW1. Both walks attracted over 200 people. The Council is keen to relaunch the Yellow Hammer walking route in Spring 2019 and other walks throughout the borough.
- 4.27 Officers from the Council's Leisure and Wellbeing Service have recently launched a new website to promote work currently being undertaken to improve Tawd Valley Park in Skelmersdale. This collaborative project with partners was set up to improve the environment and encourage more visitors to the area.
- 4.28 West Lancashire events suited to visitor economy requirements can be listed on DiscoverOrmskirk.com free of charge by organisers. A number of organisations have registered and have their own logins, enabling them to upload suited events as and when required. Approval is required from Council officers responsible for maintaining the Discover Ormskirk website.
- 4.29 Use of Ormskirk's and Skelmersdale visual branding is available for businesses across the borough to incorporate or compliment their own brands, with the aim to give a sense of pride and place.
- 4.30 Ormskirk's Chapel Gallery has undergone a major refurbishment, which included the relocation of the café area, now located at the front of the building and the addition of a new lift to increase access for all to the

building. This reconfiguration will allow better use of the existing exhibition space downstairs and further use of the upstairs as additional space to exhibit. The Chapel Gallery has developed a new website, to promote events and exhibitions and which are also promoted via DiscoverOrmskirk.com and its associated Facebook page and is currently working to run a series of exhibitions and events to help encourage visitors to West Lancashire.

Promote the Borough's key specialist heritage sites (including Ormskirk Parish Church, Rufford Old Hall and Moor Hall)

- 4.31 Discover Ormskirk has recently promoted events in relation to Ormskirk and the Parish Church which were organised by a local Historic Society.
- 4.32 Officers are in the process of organising two 'Fam Trips' with both Visit Liverpool and Visit Lancashire, to showcase the Borough's tourist attractions, including visits to Rufford Old Hall and Moor Hall. This will help improve their knowledge and insight when promoting the Borough as a visitor destination via their own marketing campaigns and social media channels.
- 4.33 A photography project was undertaken to gain a good stock of photography of the Borough's wider attractions including its historic sites; to be used for social media promotion, website promotion and, more recently, banner displays in Ormskirk town centre of the Borough's key attractions. Attractions are also promoted as part of West Lancashire's 'offer' both online and in printed media and marketing publications.
- 4.34 WWT Martin Mere and Rufford Old Hall, have both taken up stalls either on a market day or at a town centre event to promote their attractions within Ormskirk Town Centre, with the aim of attracting more visitors. Rufford Old Hall has expressed an interest in attending and supporting the Christmas Gingerbread Market on Sunday 25th November, bringing volunteers to dress as Gingerbread ladies and promoting the attraction by taking up a stall on the day.
- 4.35 Economic Regeneration Officers are researching opportunities to link in with Knowsley's 'Shakespeare of the North' project, with the aim to include Ormskirk and Rufford as part of an itinerary of places to visit for those interested in Shakespeare and who attend the attraction in Prescot, when it opens.

Enhancing the visitor experience (coach trips; specialist canal boat trips)

- 4.36 Officers are researching opportunities around developing a 'better' offer for coach drivers and visitors, to encourage them to visit and extend their stay. Adverts have been placed in coach company magazines to promote the Borough and to encourage them to visit.

Changing and developing the public's perception of West Lancashire as a "gateway" rather than a "drive-through" or "one stop" destination.

- 4.37 Officers are currently researching coach companies to consider expanding their current itineraries to include a "stopover in West Lancashire" experience to incorporate as part of their wider itineraries and a new offer to their customers.
- 4.38 The Discover Ormskirk website, Facebook and Instagram sites continue to gain interest and attract new followers. Officers use a wide variety of vibrant and interesting images of the place to promote and increase perception of West Lancashire as a food and visitor destination. No stock images are used, officers see the value in using 'real' good quality images of the Borough to continue to draw interest from prospective visitors to the Council's social media channels. Data information from Discover Ormskirk's Facebook page tells us that when images are posted they attract the most likes and shares.

Continuance of the research being undertaken, as part of the Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy, into coach travel to increase knowledge and better target visitor groups.

- 4.39 Officers continue to research and discuss options with coach companies to target visitor groups, as part of the Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy action plan.

5.0 FUTURE ACTIONS

- 5.1 The Council will continue to promote West Lancashire as a Visitor Destination to support the wider visitor economy.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report/update and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no significant financial or resource implications arising from this report.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 This item is for information only and makes no recommendations. It therefore does not require a formal risk assessment and no changes have been made to risk registers.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The decision does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Background Documents

There are no background documents included in preparing this Report.

Date

Document

File Ref

Appendices

None