



West Lancashire Borough Council

Report of the Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee
'West Lancashire Tourism – The Visitor Economy'





West Lancashire Tourism – The Visitor Economy Report of the Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee

FOREWORD by the Chairman Councillor Nikki Hennessy



“The Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee carried out a review on ‘West Lancashire Tourism – The Visitor Economy’ in 2016/17. This report sets down the outcomes of the work undertaken by Members of the Committee during that period.

We started the scrutiny project in October 2017 with a presentation from Paula Huber, Economic Regeneration Manager, to assist our understanding of the visitor economy in West Lancashire against the background of the Council’s Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025 and Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015-2020. We have learned from the excellent briefings of Paula who has been very helpful in assisting us to explore the issues.

We would like to thank all those who have been involved in the review in particular those Members and Officers who took the time to attend meetings.

In addition to the information provided by Officers of the Council, we would like to thank External partners who provided detail in respect of the visitor offer both locally and wider afield.”

Ms M M Eames, Head of Partnerships	Marketing Lancashire
Ms E Watson, Head of Multi-Channel Marketing	Marketing Lancashire
Mr P Sandman, Head of Visitor Economy, Liverpool City Region	Liverpool Local Enterprise Partnership
Mr N Brooks, General Manager, Martin Mere Wetlands Centre	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT)

THE REVIEW

BACKGROUND

Following the submission of topics by the public, Members and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the subsequent scoring exercise, the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 13 October 2016 agreed to undertake a review entitled 'West Lancashire Tourism – The Visitor Economy'.

The Project Plan (Appendix 1) was agreed and considered at each meeting.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members of the Committee agreed:

1. To undertake a review entitled 'West Lancashire Tourism – the Visitor Economy'
2. To present a report of the Committee's findings to Cabinet and Council, as appropriate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee make the following recommendations:

- (1)** That the Council (subject to resource availability) work with our partners to:
 - (i) continue to support West Lancashire as a visitor destination.
 - (ii) continue to work with Marketing Lancashire for the benefit of promoting West Lancashire.
 - (iii) continue to develop and build on relationships established with the Head of Visitor Economy for the Liverpool City Region (Liverpool Local Enterprise Partnership) in the promotion of West Lancashire.
 - (iv) draw on the experiences of Visit Southport and Visit Liverpool to provide something similar for West Lancashire to include joining Visit Liverpool to provide something similar for West Lancashire.
 - (v) continue to work with businesses and organisations within West Lancashire to promote projects and initiatives that benefit the local economy, including bringing forward accommodation projects and increasing advertisement of accommodation.
 - (vi) seek to further improve the promotion of West Lancashire and the importance of
 - (a) gaining customer insight to respond to visitor expectations;
 - (b) first impressions for visitors coming into West Lancashire;

- (c) a collaborative approach to promote West Lancashire as a visitor destination;
 - (d) the Borough's key specialist heritage sites (including Ormskirk Parish Church, National Trust Rufford Old Hall and Moor Hall);
 - (e) enhancing the visitor experience (coach trips; specialist canal boat trips);
 - (f) changing and developing the public's perception of West Lancashire as a "gateway" rather than a "drive-through" or "one stop" destination.
 - (g) 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.
 - (h) WWT Martin Mere, Burscough and its links with the community, local schools and Parish Council through initiatives, projects and future development of the visitor attraction.
- (2) That the final report of the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committees review to be circulated to Marketing Lancashire, Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership, Liverpool Enterprise Partnership, WWT Martin Mere Wetlands Centre, Edge Hill University, scrutiny at Lancashire County Council and published on the Council and Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) web-sites.
- (3) That the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee review its recommendations in March 2018.

Membership of the Committee 2016/17

Chairman: Councillor N Hennessy

Vice Chairman: Councillor D West

Councillors: M Barron, S Bailey, T Blane, P Cotterill, S Currie, D Evans, P Greenall, G Hodson, J Kay, D McKay, M Nixon, N Pryce-Roberts and A Yates.

Membership of the Committee 2017/18

Chairman: Councillor N Hennessy

Vice Chairman: Councillor D Evans

Councillors: M Barron, Mrs M Blake, T Blane, P Cotterill, S Currie, G Hodson, J Kay, D McKay, M Nixon, N Pryce-Roberts, Savage, West and Westley.

Substitutes

The following Members acted as substitute Members for one or more of the meetings held when considering the review:

Councillors: C Cooper, T Devine, Mrs C Evans, J Gordon, Ms R Melling, G Owen, R Pendleton and A Yates.

INFORMATION GATHERED

Meeting of the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 October 2016 in the Cabinet and Committee Room, 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk

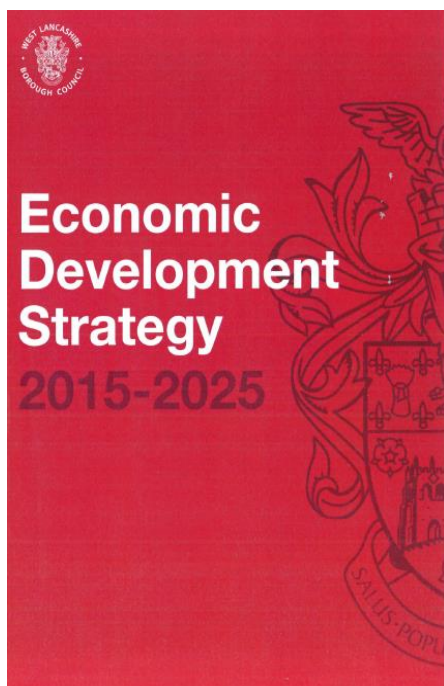
Members agreed to undertake an in-depth study entitled 'West Lancashire Tourism – The Visitor Economy' and confirmed the Project Plan for the review.

Presentation 1 – West Lancashire Tourism – The Visitor Economy

Members considered information presented by the Economic Regeneration Manager. The information presented was supported by a series of slides.¹

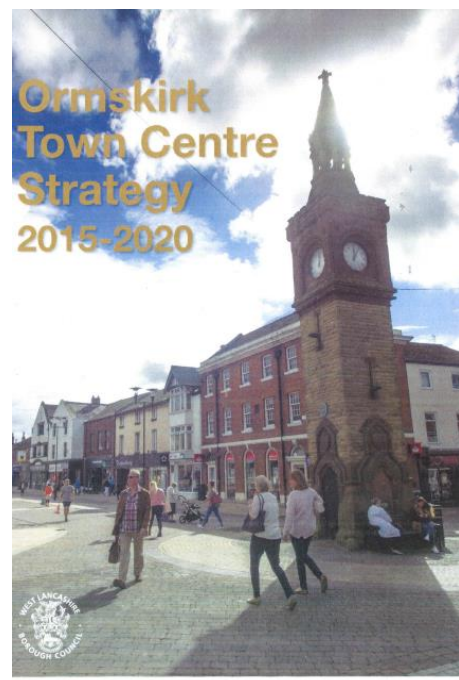
Evidence presented included reference to the following:

- Background to the West Lancashire Visitor Economy



- West Lancashire Strategies: Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025²

- Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015-2020³



Web-page link <http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/more/regeneration-projects.aspx>



- Marketing and Promotion

- Marketing Lancashire
- Beyond West Lancashire and Lancashire boundaries
- Data collection in relation to promotion through the web-site (www.visitLancashire.com), the official Lancashire Tourism website and the campaigns and publications undertaken.

The website statistics (Table 1) for West Lancashire were considered.

Table 1*

Website Statistics

	Page views Apr - Sep 15	Page views Apr - Sep 16	% Change		
West Lancashire					
Accommodation	16,684	19,702	18%		
Destinations	10,261	9,535	-7%		
Events	43,168	41,214	-5%		
F&D	13,474	22,947	70%		
Retail	15,380	18,160	18%		
Things to do	50,611	65,725	30%		
Total	149,578	177,283	19%		



Following conclusion of the presentation, Members discussed, raised questions and comments in respect of:

- seasonal tourism – impact on local attractions;
- accommodation promotion – to encourage overnight stays;
- promotion of ‘newer’ local events - Burscough Heritage Weekend;
- Burscough Wharf – attracting canal tourists (moorings; canal side services - restaurants and promotion of local shops.



Leeds and Liverpool Canal – Burscough Wharf*

*Source: Visit Lancashire

Meeting of the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 December 2016 in the Cabinet and Committee Room, 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk

Presentation 2 – ‘We are Lancashire’

Members considered information presented by Maria Moriaty Eames, Head of Partnerships and Emma Watson, Head of Multi-Channel Marketing, Marketing Lancashire. The information presented was supported by a series of slides.⁴

The presentation included reference to the:

- official visitor brand for Lancashire – “Visit Lancashire – where life feels good”;
- partnerships, including Visit England / Visit Britain and the work being undertaken with the private and public sector;
- opportunities to raise the profile of Lancashire as a “must-visit” destination;
- growth in visitor numbers and increasing the economic impact;
- opportunities to support job creation.

In relation to efforts to increase the visitor economy it was reported that 64.38 million visitors visited Lancashire and the aim was to increase this to 70 million by 2020. (Table 2) In order to achieve this the initiatives to promote the Count, were highlighted.

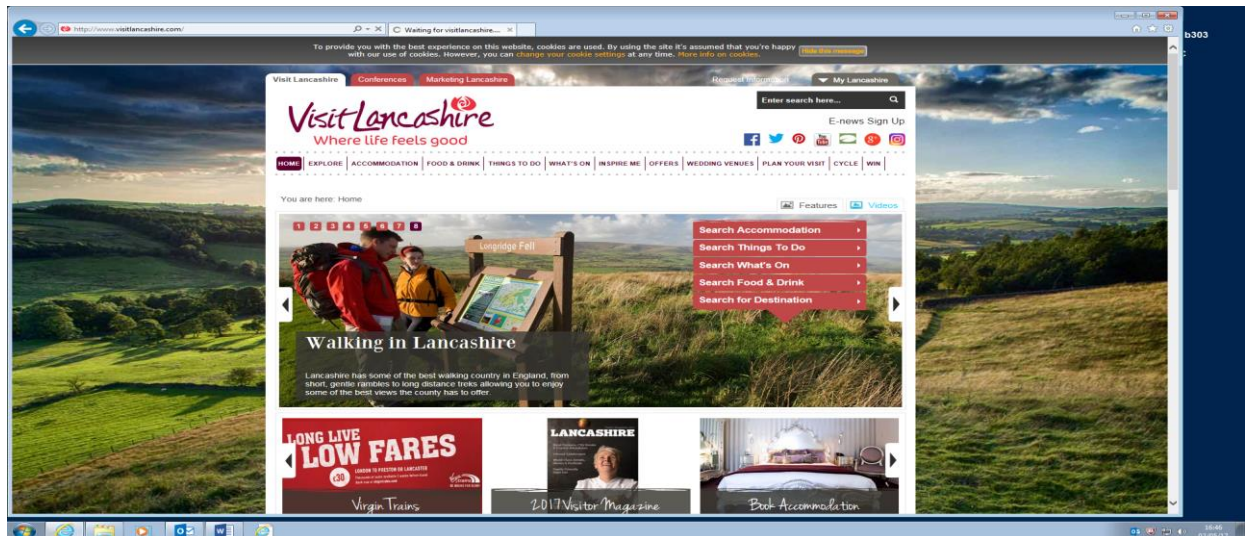
Table 2

Lancashire Visitor Economy – Overview*

NOW	By 2020
64.38 million visitors	70 million visitors
£3.81 billion value to economy	£4.3 billion
56,551 full-time equivalent jobs	+ 5000 employment

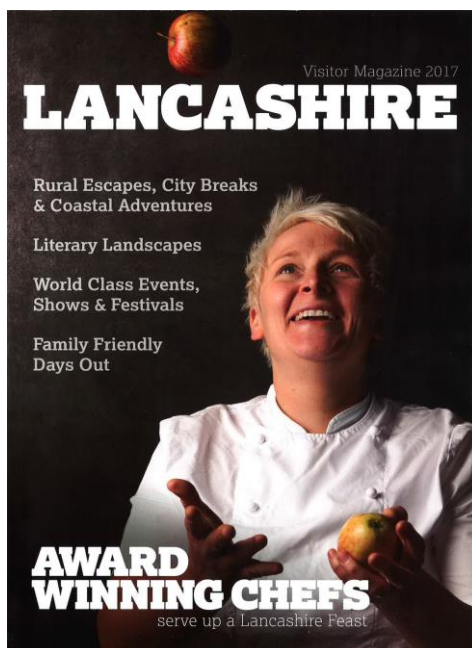
Of particular note was how on-line promotion through the Visit Lancashire web-site was increasing.

Reference was also made to the West Lancashire pages that highlighted things to do and events in the Borough that collectively drew over 325,000 pages views. Data in relation to social media showed 150,000 followers.*



Visit Lancashire – web shot (www.visitlancashire.com)

As well as on-line promotion, the Annual destination guide (Visitor Magazine) 'Lancashire' profiled the lifestyle of the County.

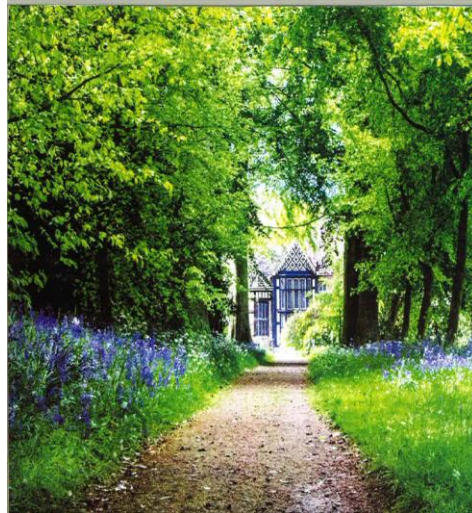


The guide, available in print and as a digital edition, has been distributed to service stations (M6, M62 & M1), railway stations, visitor information centres as well as in major hotels and attractions.* Copies were also distributed at key regional and national events.⁵

The Head of Partnerships highlighted the strategic importance of West Lancashire that included:

- a welcome point to the County;
- as a gateway to capture more visitors / repeat visitors - Edge Hill University;

- product assets in the Borough that have been matched to the County's identified key strengths:
 - "Food and drink" – West Lancashire's importance as a culinary destination, with award winning restaurants and artisan food producers.
 - "Great outdoors" – as a tourist destination (Wetland Centre; canal and cycle routes)
 - Heritage and Culture" – unique National Trust Property (Rufford Old Hall)



Rufford Old Hall*

*Source: Visit Lancashire

In discussion questions and comments were raised in relation to:

- The position of West Lancashire as a visitor destination in the County of Lancashire.
- Ratio of day visitors to overnight visitors.
- Accommodation provision (availability / type / strategies to enhance and encourage overnight / lengthier stays in West Lancashire).
- Lancashire Visitor Economy Data – compilation of data; extracting data to analyse impact; model / sources used.
- Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) – mechanism to feed into the Group.
- Provision of accurate "intelligence" to support visitor experience data.
- Transport infrastructure (updating rolling stock; enhancements to rail network).
- Opportunities to work with neighbouring authorities.
- Promotion of key / unique heritage sites in the Borough (Ormskirk Parish Church; National Trust Rufford Old Hall; Moor Hall).
- Multi-media promotion (Tourist board; Visit Lancashire; media platforms; coach and liner companies)

The representatives from Marketing Lancashire answered questions, providing clarification on the points raised.

As a result of the discussion on the presentation it was concluded:

- Conclusion:**
- (1) Where possible, in relation to visitor economy data for West Lancashire, that data based on postcodes be extracted to ascertain the accuracy of the overnight visitor numbers. (This information was provided during the course of the review.)⁶
 - (2) The importance of gaining customer insight to respond to visitor expectations.
 - (3) The importance of first impressions for visitors coming into West Lancashire.
 - (4) The importance of a collaborative approach to promote West Lancashire as a visitor destination.
 - (5) The importance / promotion of the Borough's key specialist heritage sites (including Ormskirk Parish Church; National Trust Rufford Old Hall; Moor Hall)
 - (6) Enhancing the day visitor experience (coach trips; specialist canal boat trips)
 - (7) The need to change / develop the public perception of West Lancashire as a "gateway" rather than a "drive-through" or "one stop" destination.

Meeting of the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 March 2017 in the Cabinet and Committee Room, 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk

Presentation 3 – Liverpool City Region – Visitor Economy Development

Members considered a presentation by Peter Sandman, Head of Visitor Economy, Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy. The information was supported by a series of slides.⁷

The presentation opened with an explanation of the role of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for the Liverpool City Region (LCR) and its stakeholders.

Mr Sandman then went on to explain the destination management of Visit Liverpool, its membership; the role of the LCR Visitor Economy Board and the composition of its Visitor Economy Networks to promote the international brand of Liverpool.

Information presented included the value of the Visitor Economy to the Liverpool Region, the importance of tourism and the infrastructure. Reference was made to the Visitor Economy Strategy and Destination Management Plan to 2025 and its targets.⁸

The Head of Visitor Economy referred to how Liverpool, since being the Capital of Culture in 2008 had seen an increase in its visitor numbers, both day and staying visitors, and went on to explain the model in terms of visitor spread to attract and disperse visitors across the City and geographically. The importance of an area to play to its strengths, position and packaging a town and area, to attract visitors was highlighted. This could include accessing and assessing: demographics; customer needs; inbound visitors and inbound motivations to visit.**

Table 3

Where Visitors Come From (2015)**

Top overseas markets:	Top domestic markets:
Ireland 4% USA 3% Spain 3% Germany 2% Australia 3% France 3%	London & Southeast 26% Yorkshire 18% Northeast 8% Wales 7% Cheshire 6% Scotland 6%

Source: ** Liverpool Destination Survey 2015 (*extract*)

Members considered the opportunities for West Lancashire. These included:

- Identifying and investing in its key assets – Ormskirk Town Centre; closeness to WWT Martin Mere; Leeds & Liverpool Canal; Rufford Old Hall; strength of the West Lancashire’s rural recreation offer (walking; cycling; barging).⁹
- Customer focus – Packaging and Itineraries.
- Visibility – thematic marketing.
- Ease of access – transport connectivity; journey planning.
- Welcoming Visitors – value of place / location.
- Value of Tourism for West Lancashire – Intelligence & Research.

Potential areas for engagement outside the Borough and joint promotion of the visitor economy included:

- Southport – growth as a visitor destination; marketing opportunities
- Thematic links – Heritage, Wildlife, Local Produce
- Funding opportunities – Discover England Fund¹⁰ – focused on international visitors to Northern Coastal Resorts.
- Cruise Liner Terminal – investment opportunity for excursions.

In discussion comments and questions were raised in respect of the following:

- John Lennon Airport – its importance to Liverpool and connection to the wider region.
- LCR Single Investment Fund – investment in business tourism with a specific focus on Southport – possibly widening scope into West Lancashire.
- Liverpool Enterprise Partnership – packages / proposition promotions / opportunities for joint working.
- Value of technology – digital applications to access / promote West Lancashire
- Visitor Dispersment – District representation (Visitor Economy Board)

Mr Sandman contributed to the discussion and provided clarification on the points raised in relation to his presentation.

Conclusion: (1) Officers should continue to engage with the Liverpool Local Enterprise Partnership to build on the links with West Lancashire.
(2) Draw on the experiences of Visit Southport and Visit Liverpool to provide something similar for West Lancashire.
(3) Explore how West Lancashire tourism can tie-in with the City of Liverpool.

Presentation 4 – The Visitor Economy in West Lancashire – An Update

Members considered an update by the Economic Regeneration Manager in relation to the visitor economy. It was noted that requested visitor data based on postcodes had been provided.⁶

Information was provided in relation to visitor use of the canal network and access of the Borough by coach parties:

Canals

The canals are accessed and used for many reasons, including leisurely walks, dog walking, fishing, canoeing, boating and nature walks.

There are around 40 pubs, cafes and accommodation on or close to the Liverpool and Leeds canal running through West Lancashire.

The Borough has three large marinas:

- Fettle's Wharf, Scarsbrick
- Fettle's Wharf, Rufford
- St Mary's Marina, Rufford

All of the marinas offer a large number of moorings and offer additional facilities for those boaters that are passing through. They each have a café that are very popular with visitors and provide a stop-off for cyclists.

Burscough Wharf is an important visitor destination alongside the canal. The Wharf is host to the Annual Burscough Heritage Weekend. Council owned Burscough Stables is home to a number of business that support the boating community and is a focus point for canal boat users, including acting as a regular mooring for a mobile fuel barge. There are pro-active businesses in the Burscough Stables who are actively working with the Canals and Rivers Trust to develop projects around the Canal at Burscough.

Coach Parties

As a visitor destination Ormskirk is advertised in coach travel magazines and a number of coach companies come into Ormskirk.

As part of the Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy more research will be undertaken into coach travel to increase knowledge and better target visitor groups.

The Visitor Lancashire Magazine 2017 that is being widely circulated features 24 hours In and Around Ormskirk. The article includes reference to many of the tourist attractions in the Borough including Burscough Wharf, WWT Martin Mere Wetlands Centre, National Trust Rufford Old Hall as well as Ormskirk.



Source: Visit Lancashire – Lancashire Visitor Magazine 2017 (*digital edition*)

Meeting of the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 July 2017 in the Cabinet and Committee Room, 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk

Presentation 5 - The Visitor Economy in West Lancashire – An Update

Members considered an update by the Economic Regeneration Manager in relation to the promotion of West Lancashire on the Visit Liverpool and Visit Southport web-site.

It was reported that a listing on the Visit Liverpool website and a presence in the Visitor Guide costs £3,500. Other promotional websites were referred to but it was felt that the joining of the Visit Liverpool website was worth pursuing.

Presentation 6 – WWT Martin Mere Wetlands Centre

Members considered a presentation by Nick Brooks, General Manager of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) Martin Mere Wetlands Centre, Burscough on recent projects and upcoming initiatives. The information presented was supported by a series of slides.¹¹

The presentation opened with an explanation of the year round family-friendly visitor attraction and its contribution to the local economy. Mr Brooks reported that over 200,000 people visited Martin Mere each year and the facility provided employment for 65 people.

Information presented included reference to the wildlife viewing opportunities that brought to Martin Mere a wide range of visitors each year to see the variety of birds that migrate to or inhabit the site.

The General Manager referred to the income generated on-site at Martin Mere where a visitor averaged spending £4 per visit and contributed to the visitor economy in West Lancashire and the wider North West, through travel and overnight stays, estimated to generate £70 per visitor.

Members considered some of the projects and initiatives that were being pursued at Martin Mere. These included:

- A focus on the Whooper Swan, 3,000 of which migrate from Iceland each winter, to Martin Mere. It was stated that this event attracted many visitors and Mr Brooks went on to explain that, in consultation with Burscough Parish Council, they were looking at opportunities to promote the Whooper swan as the possible “symbol of Burscough.”
- Town twinning and educational links – developing closer links with Akureyn, Iceland.
- Linking up with the Yew Tree Farm development – creation of filtration “reed beds” that are known to attract such rare species of birds as the Bearded Tit and Marsh Harriers. It was understood that the proposed reed beds site would be the second biggest in England.
- Cycle Routes – to link Martin Mere with Burscough and the wider rural landscape of West Lancashire.

In discussion comments and questions were raised in respect of the following:

- Excavation of the “reed beds” – investment costs.
- Facilities to encourage visitors to stay overnight or visit other parts of West Lancashire – advertising events to and through Martin Mere; targeting rail, cruise and coach companies; availability of accommodation in and around the Borough.
- Linking visits to two or more tourist sites in West Lancashire.
- Opportunities to attract specialist visitors to Martin Mere – promotion of the rarer migratory birds and habitat; events in the migration period.
- Exploitation of tourist opportunities at Martin Mere – what’s on in West Lancashire
- Involvement of local schools – artwork; special environmental events.

Mr Brooks contributed to the discussion and provided clarification on the points raised in relation to his presentation.

Conclusion: That initiatives that could enhance the visitor experience of Martin Mere and provide a benefit to the wider visitor economy of West Lancashire be supported



Source: WWT Martin Mere Wetland Centre

Other Information

Information that has assisted the work of the review and compilation of this report:

1. West Lancashire Tourism – The Visitor Economy (*Presentation slides – October 2016*)
2. Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025 (*West Lancashire Borough Council*)
3. Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015-2020 (*West Lancashire Borough Council*)
4. Visit Lancashire – We are Lancashire (*Presentation slides – December 2016*)
5. Visitor Magazine 2017 – ‘Lancashire’ (*Visit Lancashire*)
6. Accommodation Stock Dataset – West Lancashire Postcodes (*circulated by email 20 December 2016*)
7. Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy (*Presentation slides – March 2017*)
8. Visitor Economy Strategy and Destination Management Plan (*Liverpool Local Enterprise Partnership*)
9. Wetlands and Waterways Routes (*Visit Sefton & West Lancashire*)
10. Discover England Fund – Visit Britain (*web-site information*)
11. WWT Martin Mere Wetlands Centre (*Presentation slides – July 2017*)

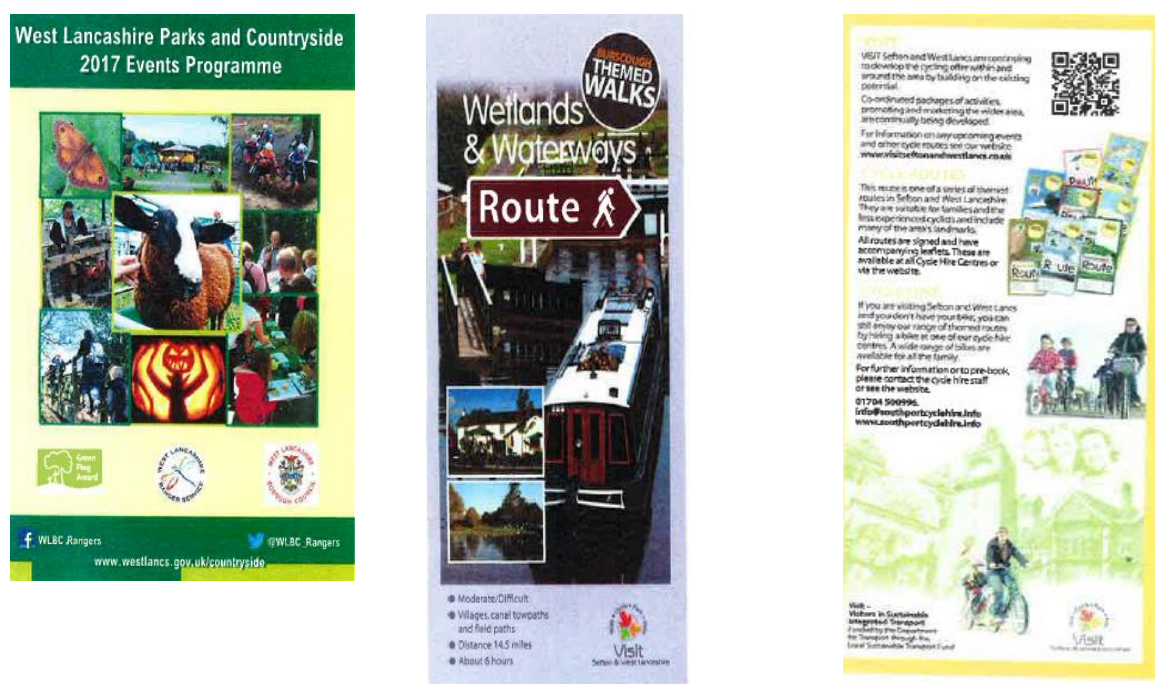
Referenced pictures / data, with thanks to:

*Visit Lancashire

**Liverpool Destination Survey 2015

***WWT Martin Mere Wetlands Centre, Burscough

****West Lancashire Ranger Service and Visit Sefton & West Lancashire



****Source: West Lancashire Ranger Service and Visit Sefton & West Lancashire

Minutes:

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 October 2016, 1 December 2016, 2 March 2017 and 13 July 2017.

Web links:

<http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/more/regeneration-projects.aspx>
<http://www.visitlancashire.com/information/request-information/lancashire-visitor-magazine-2017>
<https://www.liverpoollep.org/growth-sectors/visitor-economy/>
<http://www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/martin-mere/>
<https://www.visitengland.com/>
<https://www.visitbritain.com>
<https://www.visitbritain.org/discover-england-fund-overview>
<http://www.visitseftonandwestlancs.co.uk/>

OFFICER SUPPORT

Lead Officer: Dave Tilleray, Director of Leisure and Wellbeing

Scrutiny Support Officer: Cathryn Jackson, Principal Overview & Scrutiny Officer

Officers Reporting: Paula Huber, Economic Regeneration Manager

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report. There are links to the West Lancashire Economic Strategy that promotes the West Lancashire visitor economy and the Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy developed to help deliver growth in Ormskirk Town Centre. The West Lancashire Economic Strategy aims to address a number of issues that have been looked at, as part of this review and will add to that work and an understanding of the Visitor economy in West Lancashire and also a wider understanding of the West Lancashire visitor economy in the sub-regional context of Lancashire and the Liverpool City Region.

FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are financial/resource implications arising from this report. The actions as set down within recommendation (1) adds to the work already being undertaken at part of the West Lancashire Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025. However, if more significant actions were required to implement the actions, if endorsed, particularly those involving partner organisations and external funding could not be secured, additional proposals would need to come forward for further consideration in accordance with established reporting mechanisms. Recommendation 2, if endorsed, will be met using existing budgets.

RISK ASSESSMENT

If projects, resulting from proposals at recommendation (1) do come forward, if implemented, may require formal risk assessments to assess the impact on local residents, business users and visitors. These would be undertaken as part of that process.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There will be a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders as a result of recommendations that may come forward, if implemented. An EIA would be undertaken as part of that process.

Appendices

- (1) Project Plan

