

**Open Report on behalf of Executive Director for Communities**

Report to:	<b>Executive Councillor for Economic Development</b>
Date:	<b>01 August 2012</b>
Subject:	<b>Visitor Guide</b>
Decision Reference:	<b>02074</b>
Key decision?	<b>No</b>

**Summary:**

Following the demise of Visit Lincolnshire and with the encouragement of the tourist industry, LCC supported the production and distribution of a paper Visitor Guide in 2012. Indications from the industry are that they still feel the need for a 2013 Visitor Guide and this can be produced, such that advertising revenue covers print, design and distribution.

**Recommendation(s):**

It is recommended that approval is given to the production of a 2013 Visitor Guide to Lincolnshire and that this should be done by means of extending the contract with the publisher of the 2012 Visitor Guide who will be responsible for its production and the advertising revenue will fund its production and distribution.

**Alternatives Considered:**

1. Not to produce a paper guide but direct all visitors to [www.visitlincolnshire.com](http://www.visitlincolnshire.com)

**Reasons for Recommendation:**

As many tourism businesses confirm that they still receive 50% of bookings from the paper guide, it would not seem that this is the right moment to move to purely electronic tourist information.

**1. Background**

In February 2011 Visit Lincolnshire, who had a service level agreement with the county council to provide tourism marketing services for Lincolnshire went into administration. LCC decided, with the support of the other Lincolnshire local authorities to purchase [www.visitlincolnshire.com](http://www.visitlincolnshire.com) to ensure its continuance as the

county's official visitor website. Tourism officers from all the local authorities decided to meet regularly to provide a coordinating role and all the districts agreed a one year, followed by a three year commitment to supporting LCC in the running costs of the website. The aim was to run the website for a year and then tender out for a provider to maintain it into the future with the intention of making it self-sustaining. This has now been done and we are in the first of a three year contract.

At the point that Visit Lincolnshire went into administration most 2011 promotional materials were already in place. Communication channels were opened up with the tourist industry and many professed themselves delighted that LCC had saved the website. Preparation of future marketing materials have to be done well in advance, so in mid 2011 it was decided to ask the industry what their view was on the continuance of a paper tourist guide for 2012. Many businesses, particularly those reliant on leisure tourism as opposed to business tourism felt that the split of their business via web and a paper guide was 50:50 and they therefore felt that they still needed a paper guide. There was general acceptance that web bookings would take over, but that we weren't at that stage yet. It appears that visitors are combining a mix of media, so whilst they might search online, they often prefer to book by phone and also to send for a paper guide.

It was agreed that a 2012 Guide should be produced but that the situation should be monitored, both through the industry and through competitor destinations; the tourism officer group were in support of this approach. Production of a visitor guide was tendered for and a 68 page guide with a 60k print run was produced; advertising revenue from 169 advertisers covering its print and design. The publisher provided LCC with a £17k payback which was used for the distribution and included a contribution to an advertising campaign which promoted both the website and the paper guide.

Thus far the UK tourism season has been difficult; the economic situation which in recent years had kept many holidaymakers vacationing at home was spoilt by poor weather conditions which began at Easter and have continued ever since. A feedback survey was instigated of those who advertised in the 2012 Guide so that a decision could be made about 2013.

The majority supported the production of a 2013 Guide and indicated that they would advertise in it. Indications at a recent national tourism conference showed that most comparable destinations were also continuing to produce tourist guides however much they were also embracing the latest online and social media marketing techniques. The Lincolnshire tourism officers group have been consulted and are unanimous in their support for producing a guide in 2013, particularly as depending on how the rest of the 2012 tourist season pans out they may have had a difficult trading year so this wouldn't be the time to remove a tried and tested generator of business.

A 2012 Holiday Guide was tendered for on the basis that the contract could be extended to the following year's guide if the original contract was satisfactorily delivered. It was on the basis of the publisher providing a complete service of selling advertising space and full design; indications are that the payback to LCC would be larger than that for the 2012 Guide. This would fund distribution and

advertising and we would have the advantage of being able to base these campaigns on the results of 2012.

## **2. Conclusion**

We plan in future to phase out the production of a paper holiday guide, however after a difficult trading year in 2012 and taking into account the views of the tourist industry 2013 does not seem to be the year to stop it. A 2013 Holiday Guide can be commissioned from a publisher that will cover its costs.

## **3. Legal Comments:**

The Executive Councillor has the remit to authorise the production of 2013 Visitor Guide provided he has the delegated authority of the Leader.

## **4. Resource Comments:**

Approval of this report will enable the production of a 2013 Visitor Guide for Lincolnshire. The cost of producing this guide will be funded entirely from advertising contained within the publication with any surplus advertising revenue given back to the County Council. The 2012 publication generated a £17,000 surplus which funded distribution costs.

## **5. Consultation**

### **a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?**

n/a

### **b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?**

Yes

### **c) Scrutiny Comments**

Although this specific decision has not been to Scrutiny Committee, previous discussions about tourism have highlighted the Economic Scrutiny Committee's keenness to help businesses promote themselves whilst also selling Lincolnshire.

### **d) Policy Proofing Actions Required**

n/a

## **6. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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