

Agenda Item 7

Report of the Executive Director for Place, Lincolnshire County Council

Meeting: 1 July 2022

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| <p style="text-align: center;">GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE</p> |
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Collaboration on promoting tourism: update report

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

This report provides an update on the collaboration that Lincolnshire County Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, and North Lincolnshire Council have done on tourism since autumn 2021's JSOC meeting. It shows that substantial progress has been made in jointly marketing the area to visitors and in supporting the strategic leadership of tourism businesses. It explains that work will start to promote the area for business tourism as the next priority, building on the growth of major business sectors such as the renewable sector on the banks of The Humber.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At its meeting in autumn 2021 JSOC agreed that collaboration on tourism should be a priority.

The tourism sector was badly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic which led to tourism businesses needing to adapt their strategies and which also led to the opportunity to promote the area to people looking to take UK holidays. Longer term, business tourism provides an opportunity develop a new and high value tourism market.

As well as collaboration on promotion, business strategy, and business tourism, each authority has also continued to invest significantly in its local tourism product.

3. DETAIL OF OPTIONS/PROPOSAL

Promotion

www.visitlincolnshire.com (vls.com): The opportunity was taken to completely redevelop the website which had formerly been a gateway site for Greater Lincolnshire that led onto individual

authority sites, whether unitary authorities or district councils. Information was key during lockdown and the new website was to both Inspire and to Inform. All local authorities have had the opportunity to shape the content on their area. It is the main consumer website for Greater Lincolnshire and is still operating as that first point of contact gateway. The site has enormous capacity for growth and is still developing with the bird watching area being the latest addition. Much work is being done on search engine optimisation and vls.com is coming top on many searches, people stick on the site as it has variety and quality and leads to bookings. The county council is further developing the video content on the site. A series of heritage videos featuring 'behind the scenes' are being produced and three bird watching videos are already on the site. A Visitor Pledge video is in preparation which will major on the countryside.

Bird Watching Product Development: By way of an example of some of the detailed promotion that follows from the Visit Lincolnshire website, officers have been working with Lincolnshire Bird Club, RSPB, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England and the National Trust a coastal bird trail has been developed and is now on vls.com. This starts at Alkborough Flats in the north and finishes at Frampton Marsh in the south. The USP of the trail is that this is an insider's guide, a where to go, when to go and what to see by the people who really know. Greater Lincolnshire has been under-selling its bird watching offer, not because it has nothing to offer, quite the reverse, but because we have been bad at telling people about it. This is an affluent repeat-visiting market with a great fit with our walking and cycling offer. There will be three further trails: Wolds/Marsh; Fens; Limestone/Trent Vale. The county council commissioned new photography at Alkborough Flats and Far Ings which it has shared with the group; interestingly the shoot at Alkborough Flats picked up a pair of glossy ibis, very rare visitors, proving that Greater Lincolnshire has much to offer. Promotion of the coastal bird trail will start at the Rutland Bird Fair in July.

Business strategy

www.business.visitlincolnshire.com (bvls.com): many businesses in the Visitor Economy struggled with their digital skills, but that their general business skills needed improving too. Business.Visitlincolnshire.com was developed and launched in November 2021. Its strapline is 'Hospitable You: Helping you run your business and stop it running you'. It was to be jargon free and aimed at the visitor economy. Businesses were asked how they liked to learn and it was clear that one size does not fit all, with some liking a video whilst others a factsheet, so both were done. It covers business planning, finance, funding, planning, marketing and digital as well as legislative and industry updates. The site features around 70 masterclass videos using a variety of experts and each was filmed at a tourism business e.g John Wesley's home at Epworth and Normanby Hall. The site is still developing, with the Green Tourism Toolkit being added in March 2022. There are no restrictions to accessing the site, it was felt that open access was important as it is hard enough getting businesses to engage. A social media campaign to promote the site is ongoing.

Hospitable Boost: – Through the work done on bvls.com emerged a further skills training programme called Hospitable Boost. This was developed by the county council and funded by Business Lincolnshire. 29 businesses attended 12 masterclasses over a number of weeks; 5 businesses were from North East Lincolnshire and three were from North Lincolnshire. Initial group sessions were inspired by specially made Lincolnshire video case studies, followed by 1 to 1 support, 1 to few and 1 to many masterclasses. Feedback has been excellent and we already have a waiting list for a second Hospitable Boost series (beginning October 2022), so we're assuming there has been some good word of mouth promotion. *"It has been fantastic. The masterclasses have been brilliant, and all the*

information was very relevant to me and my business. Enjoyed the discussions and engagement with other business owners”.

Green Tourism Toolkit: The county council produced a Green Tourism Toolkit which features case studies from across Greater Lincolnshire. It aims to show how it could benefit their business by: addressing changing consumer trends; attracting and retaining the best staff; reducing operational costs; reducing negative environmental impact and helping ensure their local area thrives. Going greener is daunting, so the toolkit, through a series of small steps is there to support businesses.

Through the Coastal Community Fund we have been able to run a coastal pilot on a Green Tourism Ambassador programme. Representatives from coastal tourism businesses will be trained on how to better implement sustainability over a seven month course. This begins in June and we plan to roll this out across Lincolnshire from October 2022 and we already have a waiting list.

Business Tourism

The promotion and business strategy work will continue. However, a further strand of collaboration will develop, based around the opportunities that business tourism brings.

In the short term this will comprise a Business Tourism area of vls.com and new skills videos relevant to Business Tourism are being filmed and will go on bvls.com. In the longer term it is expected to involve supporting a cohort of businesses to give them tools and contacts to secure conference/incentive tourism opportunities. The work will also help those businesses to respond to the likely increase in technical staff who are working on major developments in the area’s economy (notably but not exclusively the energy sector on the Humber estuary) and who will be staying in hotels during the working week.

4. RESOURCE AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Continued collaboration will require a deepening of the working relations between the three upper tier authorities’ tourism specialists.

5. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES (INCLUDE EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT IF RELEVANT)

The main risks to investment in the tourism sector relate to external factors in the tourism economy.

However, controllable factors include the risk of duplication between different types of organisation with an interest in tourism. The greater Lincolnshire Tourism Officers’ Group has been established to enable officers to collaborate and align their activity rather than risk proliferation.

6. CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT

A Tourism Commission, comprising tourism business representatives from across the greater Lincolnshire area helped to shape these priorities.

7. **GOVERNANCE – DECISION(S) FOR MEMBER COUNCIL’S REQUIRED
(in accordance with the Joint Committee’s Terms of Reference).**

It is expected that this collaboration will not need additional resource and nor will it need individual organisations to take any further formal decisions.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that JSOC:

Notes the good progress that has been made jointly in the fields of tourism promotion and of tourism business strategy development

Supports officers in implementing and delivering a business tourism programme

CHIEF EXECUTIVE/DIRECTOR OF LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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Date: 21st June 2022

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report – *(Provide a list of documents, if there are none state ‘none’. By listing such documents, they must be available for public inspection and retained for 6 years.)*