

REPORT OF THE GROUP MANAGER, COUNTRY PARKS & GREEN ESTATE**THE ROBIN HOOD FESTIVAL 2013****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report provides an overview of the 2012 Robin Hood Festival and sets out the proposed organisational and funding arrangements for the 2013 Robin Hood Festival.

Information and Advice

2. Prior to this year's event, there was an extensive marketing and promotion campaign coordinated by the Communications and Marketing Team. A summary report on the media campaign for the event, including the national and international PR gained by the festival for Nottinghamshire is attached at **Appendix 1**, and there is no doubt that this very proactive work has contributed to the success of the 2012 Festival.
3. This was the 28th year of the Robin Hood Festival which was scheduled later in August than normal, to avoid clashes with the running of London 2012.
4. The Festival has grown from a modest weekend to a week long event and is now one of the biggest free entry festivals in the region. It is held at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre near Edwinstowe and is organised by the Country Parks Service on behalf of the County Council. It is the largest public celebration in Britain of the Robin Hood legend and consequently attracts a very large amount of public and media interest.
5. The format of the Festival remains largely similar to previous years, though following on from the experiment of holding a five day event in 2011, we reverted back to a seven day show. This was undoubtedly a positive move from the perspective of the public, entertainers and organisers.
6. The Festival is not a historical re-enactment, aiming instead to provide family fun during the school summer holiday. A well prepared programme of events over the duration of the Festival includes a variety of live entertainment across the forest site, ranging from strolling jesters and jugglers to a medieval jousting contest. All the facilities on the National Nature Reserve site are fully utilised in and around the Visitor Centre buildings, and in the forest at the Major Oak.
7. The event attracted 25,000 people with nearly half being first time visitors. Of these, 22,000 people arrived by car and 3,000 by coach or walking.

8. Overall, visitor satisfaction with the event was high. However, as is inevitable with events on such a scale, and given the extreme unpredictability of the summer weather, there were some complaints about queuing for catering and toilets at peak times.
9. For example, having considered the views expressed by the former Scrutiny Committee after the 2011 Festival, it was decided that it was neither organisationally practical nor financially viable to hire additional toilets near the Major Oak (some 15 minutes walk from the main Visitor Centre facilities).
10. However, additional catering was provided via a hog roast (locally sourced) and this helped to reduce the length of queues experienced in recent years.
11. Contact was also made with the Edwinstowe Business Forum to discuss how they might wish to be involved in the Festival, but after an initial interest, they were only able to take limited advantage of the offer. It is hoped that this will be built on in 2013.
12. Swinecote Road was closed to through traffic during Festival hours on the recommendation of Police and Highways to enable safe crossing of pedestrians from the overflow car park to the main event site. It is acknowledged that the closure causes some irritation and inconvenience for local residents, but is felt to be the only practical solution to the safe mass movement of visitors. In addition this year, and in response to resident requests, a number of residential streets adjacent to the Festival site were coned off to prevent on-street visitor parking that would inconvenience those residents.

Proposals for 2013

13. Looking ahead to 2013, event debriefings have been held, highlighting the strengths of 2012, but also those areas which need further attention. The advance planning for 2013 is already under way. Dates have been fixed for 5–11 August 2013, main performers have been provisionally booked and a communications strategy is being developed.
14. It is anticipated that the operator of the new Visitor Centre/Attraction will want to be involved in the planning and implementation of the 2013 Festival. Although it is not yet known at what stage their planning application plans will be, the Festival would provide an excellent starting point for them to promote and publicise their proposals.
15. The Festival Planning Group will therefore work closely with the new operator to ensure a seamless and coordinated event for 2013.

Other Options Considered

16. For operational and public accessibility reasons, it was decided to hold the 2012 event over a seven rather than five day event. This proved to be a very successful approach as the final Saturday and Sunday saw record attendances, which helped to make up for some the poorer attendances on the wet weather days earlier in the week.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

17. This report recommends that the Committee approves the outline organisation arrangements so that a Robin Hood Festival can take place in August 2013.

Statutory and Policy Implications

18. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

19. The Robin Hood Festival is designed and planned to be as attractive to visitors as possible. However, it is recognised that at peak times on very busy days there will inevitably be lengthy queues, especially as people try to access and exit the site at the same time.

Financial Implications

20. The net income (excluding VAT), generated by the 2012 Festival was £119,000, a 28% increase on 2011, but which reflects a seven day event rather than five.
21. The additional preparatory, operating and wind down costs, excluding regular staffing, were £130,000.
22. A proportion of these costs are budgeted to be met from the income received, but £56,000 will need to be drawn down from the Country Parks Reserve budget for 2012/13, primarily to pay for the direct organisational arrangements, e.g. hire of performers/artistes, first aid cover, highways closure.
23. A similar arrangement is proposed for 2013 where the advance costs are estimated at £65,000. The main reason for the increase is likely to be the fees payable for artistes and performers.

Equalities Implications

24. In order to ensure that visitors with mobility restrictions can enjoy the event, Fair Mobility will be invited to provide mobility scooter hire. Provision will be made for blue badge holders to have priority access to the main visitor car park.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

25. The siting of the Festival within the National Nature Reserve is subject to consent by Natural England as in previous years and great care is taken to ensure that the significant increase in visitors over the Festival does not damage the site.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Committee:

- 1) notes the success of the 2012 Robin Hood Festival;
- 2) agrees that the Robin Hood Festival for 2013 takes places on 5 -11 August 2013, organised by the Country Parks Service in conjunction with the operator of the new Visitor Centre;
- 3) notes that an advance sum of £65,000 will be required from the Country Parks Service Reserve Account to help underwrite the organisational costs;
- 4) notes that the special event car parking fee will be held at £5 for all visitors;
- 5) notes that the road closure and local parking restrictions carried out this year will be repeated in 2013.

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Constitutional Comments (NAB 02/11/12)

26. Subject to £65,000 being available in the Country Parks Service Reserve Account, Culture Committee has authority to approve the recommendation set out in this report.

Financial Comments (NDR 12/11/12)

27. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 20 to 23 of the report.

Background Papers

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0120

MARKETING CAMPAIGN EVALUATION**Annual Robin Hood Festival - August 2012****Background**

The 28th Annual Robin Hood Festival was held at Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire from Monday 13th August – Sunday 19th August 2012. The festival is the largest event in authority's calendar and one of the biggest celebrations of the Robin Hood in the world, attracting visitors from around the country and globe.

A large and comprehensive marketing and communications campaign took place from July to August 2012 aiming to inform previous visitors and attract new visitors. The campaign's strongly designed creative featured on a range of materials and channels. Key activity included leaflet distribution, banner advertising in Sherwood & Rufford Abbey country parks, various digital activity including an e-shot to last year's visitors, a bespoke Facebook page, a life-sized Robin Hood with QR code and a number of 'Ye Olde Tweets'. A heavy-weight PR Plan included timed press releases, targeted photo-call opportunities and media interviews with a local, national and international focus underpinned and supported all the activity.

Campaign Headlines

The campaign was challenged by visitors being influenced by bad weather forecasts for the week and some festival days suffering heavy downpours, however by working together in an integrated way, the Communications & Marketing Team were able to achieve the following results:

- the seven-day festival was attended by 25k visitors compared to 20k in 2011's five-day festival (a 25% increase / target was 10%)
- 53% of visitors were from outside Nottinghamshire County (target was 40%). This works out at between an estimated £396,970 and £2,763,022 financial benefit to the local economy (based on 53% of 25k visitors being 13,250 visitors and using STEAM data figures that the average day visitor brings £29.96 and the average overnight visitor brings £208.53 to the local economy, to work out the minimum and maximum estimated amount of economic benefit through tourism to the festival)
- 49% of survey respondents were first time visitors
- 97% of survey respondents rated the event as either 'Very Good' or 'Excellent'
- 76% of survey respondents knew the event was organised by NCC
- a 28% increase in total income was generated (£148,989 in 2012 compared to £116,332 in 2011)
- 89% of survey respondents travelled to the festival by car resulting in a 43% increase in car parking income and generating £40,560 (compared to £28,188 in 2011)

- there was a £24.32 return on investment and £5.63 income generated per visitor
- campaign spend amounted to £6,511 (26p per festival visitor attracted) taken from the central communications and marketing budget (£5,411 design & print and £1,100 advertising).

Channel Evaluation

- evaluation of survey respondents indicated visitors became aware of the festival as follows:
 - 30% word of mouth
 - 28% leaflets & posters
 - 25% website
 - 15% What's On guide
 - 14% press and media
 - 13% banners/signs
 - 10% have seen before
 - 8% Facebook and Twitter
- this year's festival also saw high press and media attention, eight proactive press releases were released with 20 positive and one reactive media enquiry received. As a result, 25 positive features on & offline covered the festival, as well as listings in a range of press and media:
 - **pre-festival** - media interviews included Robin Hood and Friar Tuck appearing on Radio Nottingham's afternoon show, BBC News Online, Nottingham Post, Gem 106FM, listings in a range of What's On magazine titles nationally
 - **during the festival** – ITV Central Tonight, BBC East Midlands Today, Radio Nottingham, Country File, Big Issue magazine, Mansfield Chad, Gem 106FM and Mansfield 103FM covered the event, it was also featured on ITV's 'This Morning' as part of a piece of free events taking place around the country
 - the festival was attended by **6 international journalists** from Dubai, Russia, South Africa and London who were in the country reporting on the Olympics Games (organised by Experience Nottinghamshire)
 - **post-festival** – various local media articles reporting the event with photographs, including a spread in the Nottingham Post, articles in the Mansfield Chad, Newark Advertiser and the Worksop Guardian, plus a front page picture of Robin Hood in the Retford Times.
- this year's festival embraced the most digital channels in its history, as follows:
 - over an eight week period the Robin Hood Festival **web page** received 36,380 visits (compared with 27,974 in 2011 - a 30% increase / target was 20%) and 29,562 unique visits (compared with 21,493 in 2011 - a 31% increase)
 - circa 860 visits to the Robin Hood Festival webpage were as a result of **Facebook advertising** and a further 6,133 visits were generated via **Google Adwords**
 - two key e-shots were issued, 50% of recipients opened the first (announcing the dates), whilst 43% opened the second (announcing the event programme)

- a new Robin Hood Facebook page was created attracting 204 'likes' in 3 weeks, 70 were as a direct result of scanning a QR code on a life-sized Robin Hood placed onsite at the Festival
- 21 tweets (including 12 'Ye Olde Tweetes') were issued.
- Partnership working resulted in a variety of FREE and reciprocal marketing activity as follows:
 - **Nottingham City Homes:** FREE activity including - article in tenant and leaseholder newsletter circulated to over 30k homes, flyer distribution in eight city housing offices, articles on the website & staff intranet site and messages via Twitter
 - **Nottingham Playhouse:** reciprocal activity included a banner stand in reception area, half page colour advert in the 'BBC's CBeebies Grandpa In My Pocket' programme, 1k flyers to exiting audience members, link on their website, staff intranet and Facebook, a tweet to over 4,700 Twitter followers, an e-shot to 14k people on their mailing list, flyer e-shot to 2k Infish staff and flyer on E-On's staff intranet
 - **Nottingham City Council:** reciprocal activity including a half page advert in their What's On Guide, re-Tweets of Twitter messages and a note on the staff intranet
 - **Experience Nottinghamshire:** FREE e-shot and website advertising, FREE PR activity aimed at the national and international media, FREE half page advert in 'All About Tourism' e-magazine, listing on Visit England website.
- 483 visitors completed the Festival Visitor Survey: of the parties visiting 58% were male whilst 42% were female, 93% of respondents were white
- Mosaic analysis reveals two key visitor groups: **Group J:** *Owner occupiers in older-style housing in ex-industrial areas* and **Group B:** *Residents of small and mid-sized towns with strong local roots*
- 61% of respondents said they would like to be kept informed in the future about similar events (235 email addresses were gathered, with permissions)
- a variety of visitor feedback was received which is available from the service.

This year's festival benefited from a strong integrated marketing campaign whose success will be replicated and built upon next year.