

**23 April 2012****Agenda Item: 4****REPORT OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR SUE SADDINGTON****REPORT TITLE: TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REVIEW  
FINAL REPORT****Purpose of the Report**

1. To present the findings and recommendations of the Communities and the Environment Standing Committee's review of tourism and economic development.

**Information**

2. The Communities and Environment Standing Committee commenced a review of issues associated with tourism and economic regeneration in September 2011. Matt Lockley (Team Manager, Economic Development) gave an overview of the Council's approach towards tourism and economic development, which is largely handled through the Council's partnership with Experience Nottinghamshire. Jennifer Spencer, Chief Executive of Experience Nottinghamshire, attended to explain the background to Experience Nottinghamshire; its aims and objectives; its funding model and delivery priorities. Jennifer's introduction also covered the national picture and strategic relationships with Visit England and Visit Britain.
3. Experience Nottinghamshire is the recognised 'Destination Management Organisation' (DMO) for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and was established in 2004. The City and County Councils are founding partners and supporters of Experience Nottinghamshire, and both Councils transferred responsibility for their tourism marketing and promotions work to Experience Nottinghamshire when it was created. Both Councils have Service Level Agreements with Experience Nottinghamshire which govern the funding allocated to the organisation. Members

noted that Nottinghamshire County Council was currently in the second year of a three year commitment to provide £118,000 per year to Experience Nottinghamshire (this commitment currently runs until March 2013). Experience Nottinghamshire also manages the Nottingham Tourist Information Centre on behalf of the City Council.

4. Issues relating to tourist information centres across the County were referenced at various points throughout the review. Members agreed that some form of tourist information presence is essential in attracting tourists and advising them of what to see and do in Nottinghamshire, whilst recognising that the costs associated with running discrete centres may not be sustainable in the long-term. Members agreed that partners should work together to set out a longer-term plan for tourist information in the County that reflects new technology and offers a more financially sustainable approach. It was noted that Experience Nottinghamshire is already leading work on virtual and online tourist information, and that an online Q&A and iPhone app would be launched soon.
  
5. In her introductory presentation, Jennifer Spencer described the value of the visitor economy to Nottinghamshire, which is estimated to be in the region of £1.38 billion/year. Over 16,000 jobs in Nottinghamshire are directly linked to the visitor economy, and national targets set by Visit England suggest that the visitor economy has the potential to grow by 5% year-on-year to 2020. Jennifer Spencer also outlined the work she has been doing with the D2N2 (Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire) Local Enterprise Partnership, which has recognised the visitor economy as a key growth sector for the two cities and counties. This work is being led by the Duke of Devonshire.
  
6. The Committee also noted the national and international work being undertaken by Visit England and Visit Britain respectively. Visit England has a specific remit to encourage UK citizens to holiday in England, whilst Visit Britain's role is to attract overseas visitors. Both Visit England and Visit Britain are using the forthcoming Diamond Jubilee and London 2012 Olympics as drivers for growth in the tourism sector. Jennifer Spencer stated that Experience Nottinghamshire had worked hard with Visit England to secure 'attract brand' status for Nottingham and Sherwood

Forest, which had been agreed. Nottingham and Sherwood Forest form part of Visit England's strategy for 14 attract brands across England.

7. The Chair of the Committee invited Jennifer Spencer to attend subsequent meetings in an advisory capacity to Members of the Committee. Members agreed that the review should focus on the economic impact and potential of the Nottinghamshire visitor economy, with a view to visiting some parts of the County to assess the visitor 'offer' first-hand. Members were mindful of the fact that many of the County's visitor attractions were visited as part of the Conservation and Heritage review which immediately preceded this review, and were keen to avoid duplication of effort. Members also wanted to gain a greater understanding of how the County is promoted to visitors, and how local tourism businesses are supported.
8. The second meeting at which tourism and economic development was considered had presentations from Martin Done, the County Council's Service Director for Communications, and Erin Huckle, the PR Manager at Experience Nottinghamshire. Martin Done focussed on the Robin Hood Festival in 2011, and used this as a case study for how the Council's communications team have improved the visibility of the festival and the positive message about Nottinghamshire's visitor attractions. Members noted the significant increase in visitor numbers to the festival as a result of more focussed communications activity, but also raised concerns about some of the feedback from attendees. Members made suggestions about how the festival could be improved, including potential support for a local food and drink event to run alongside the festival itself. Members agreed to invite Patrick Candler, Group Manager Country Parks, to the next meeting to further explore the Robin Hood Festival and its potential to grow.
9. Erin Huckle updated the Committee on recent PR campaigns undertaken by Experience Nottinghamshire, and again used the Robin Hood Festival as a case study. Erin outlined the coverage that Experience Nottinghamshire had secured for the festival in the national press, and stressed the continued strong relationship between Experience Nottinghamshire and the Council's communications team. Erin demonstrated to the Committee further national press coverage that Experience Nottinghamshire had achieved or that was in the pipeline, and explained that Experience Nottinghamshire's PR strategy was focussed on audience segmentation

and targeting through relevant national media and the trade press. This strategy would be expanded further subject to the outcome of Visit England's bid for Regional Growth Fund monies, which Nottingham and Nottinghamshire would stand to get a share of.

10. At its December 2011 meeting, the Committee heard from Patrick Candler, Group Manager Country Parks, who provided more detailed feedback on the 2011 Robin Hood Festival and also outlined plans for the festival in 2012. Members were keen to be involved in planning for the 2012 festival, which has been moved to later in August to avoid clashing with the Olympic Games. Members also suggested greater involvement of the local business community in the festival. It was agreed that this would be facilitated by Economic Development in conjunction with the Country Parks service.
11. Subsequent meetings focussed on specific elements of the visitor 'offer' in the County, with presentations from Bassetlaw District Council and from the County Council's heritage and conservation team on Newark town centre. On a visit to Bassetlaw, Members were impressed by the story behind the Pilgrim Fathers and the enthusiasm of the local story tellers, but they recognised the lack of a defined tourist attraction to act as an anchor for overseas visitors, and the patchy nature of the Pilgrim Fathers Trail. Local signage and cross-marketing and /or the development of tourist packages (i.e. with Boston (Lincs), Plymouth and the Netherlands) were noted as being areas of weakness. The local accommodation and hospitality offer was highlighted as an area of potential growth, particularly if an attraction could be developed which would tap into the American visitor market. Finally, Members noted the proximity of the Pilgrim Fathers trail to more established attractions such as Clumber Park, Thoresby Hall and Sherwood Forest, and agreed that more could be done to package these Nottinghamshire strengths together.
12. Members heard from the County Council's heritage and conservation team about the historical heart of Newark, and its potential to become a major visitor attraction in its own right. A visit to Newark to see ongoing work to develop a Civil War Centre was subsequently cancelled; however Members recognised the significant work undertaken by the County Council to improve the visitor offer in Newark on the back of the town's Tudor and Civil War history, and to improve access more generally

through the new bus station and improved pedestrianisation of the town centre. Newark's position on the river Trent and its potential to act as the gateway to the rest of the County offer was emphasised.

13. Finally, the Committee heard presentations from Keith Laird (Business Development Manager at Experience Nottinghamshire) on how the organisation's membership model works and the benefits that local tourism businesses gain from Experience Nottinghamshire; and Jennifer Spencer, who gave an update to the Committee on Visit England's latest research and priorities, Regional Growth Fund and Experience Nottinghamshire's new strategic themes for marketing and PR.

14. Keith Laird used case studies to demonstrate the exposure that local businesses (including B&Bs, restaurants and attractions) get when they subscribe to Experience Nottinghamshire. Web-based advertising was particularly successful, and QR codes were now being used in print material to link directly to Nottinghamshire's tourism businesses. Keith also described the Experience Nottinghamshire business model and plans to move to a more balanced and sustainable financial position, with greater private sector contributions.

15. Jennifer Spencer updated Members on Visit England's successful bid for Regional Growth Fund monies. Given Nottingham and Sherwood Forest's status as a national 'attract brand', Experience Nottinghamshire will have access to up to £400,000 for marketing campaigns over the next three years. These funds will be used to support four new marketing campaigns under the following headings:

- a. Love local – food, drink, traditions and crafts
- b. What legends are made of – heroes, villains, famous Nottinghamshire authors / artists
- c. Do it outdoors – exploring the County's green estate, country parks and hidden gems. Walks, cycling, horse-riding and sport in Nottinghamshire's quiet countryside
- d. Cultural inspiration – art, heritage, history and events

Local match funding of £220,000 will be required to ensure access to the full allocation. The Regional Growth Fund monies will only be able to be used in

Ashfield, Bassetlaw and Mansfield (and Nottingham City) as these are priority areas for Visit England.

16. Jennifer Spencer outlined ongoing discussions with Nottinghamshire's district councils about the Regional Growth Fund monies and about future delivery of tourism marketing in the County. Most of the discussions had been positive to date. Experience Nottinghamshire is hopeful about establishing stronger relationships with district councils and other stakeholders going forward which will enable a more coherent visitor offer to be marketed in the national and international media and contribute to the future sustainability of Experience Nottinghamshire.

17. The Chair of the Committee requested that special thanks be offered to Jennifer Spencer for her contributions (and those of her staff) to the Committee's review over the past six months. In addition, the Chair requested that the very positive contribution of Sandra Withington to the review and the visit to Bassetlaw also be formally noted.

### **Recommendations:**

18. On completion of the review, the recommendations of the Standing Committee are as follows:

- The County Council should work more closely with District and Borough Councils and the D2N2 LEP to align capital investment plans in key ('anchor') tourist attractions over a five-year time period. Securing additional resources to support the development of these anchor attractions should be a priority;
- The County Council's commitment to Experience Nottinghamshire as the marketing and promotions organisation for tourism in the County should be re-stated. Analysis of performance against Service Level Agreement targets should be robust and new Service Level Agreements should incorporate outputs agreed with the County Council's Communications team [note: copy of 2011-12 SLA and performance against targets will be circulated with this paper]
- The County Council should work with District and Borough Councils to ensure that a balanced contribution to the core costs of Experience Nottinghamshire can be

maintained over a (minimum) three-year period (aligned to the Regional Growth Fund allocation);

- The County Council should support efforts by Bassetlaw District Council to maximise opportunities afforded to the District by the Pilgrim Fathers and Dukeries offers. These should be aligned with the Sherwood Forest offer as closely as possible (including joint marketing initiatives);
- Opportunities to link the use of the Robin Hood Airport with the tourism offer around Pilgrim Fathers and Dukeries should be prioritised and explored with the Airport.
- Experience Nottinghamshire should explore the possibility for themed trails to be developed aligned to the four new marketing campaigns. Opportunities for promotional offers and/or discounted entry to Nottinghamshire's attractions, which could form part of the Experience Nottinghamshire brochure, should also be investigated;
- District and Borough Councils should consider innovative ways of supporting Experience Nottinghamshire, for instance by seconding tourism staff to the organisation to ensure a collective effort and drive economies of scale;
- The County Council should develop, with District and Borough Councils, a forward plan for Tourist Information Centres in the County. Co-location in existing attractions or in libraries and virtual solutions should be explored as options;
- Experience Nottinghamshire should review its investment in printed material on an annual basis, alongside exploring new online and social media marketing opportunities. [*note: further information on the print and distribution costs of the annual Experience Nottinghamshire brochure will be circulated with this report, as requested*];
- The County Council and its District and Borough Council partners should promote membership of Experience Nottinghamshire to the business community, in order to support the organisation's efforts to move away from dependence on public sector funds;
- A more concerted effort should be made to attract school visits to Nottinghamshire's attractions and particularly those with historical connections.

**Councillor Sue Saddington**  
**Chair of the Communities and the Environment Standing Committee**

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**Background Papers**

Nil

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All