

Item: Tourism Marketing Update

Committee: King's Lynn & West Norfolk Area museums Committee

Date: 18th October 2021

Report from: Senior Tourism Officer, Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk

1 Introduction

The report provides updates for the Area Museums Committee on tourism marketing and development activities since June 2021. Most key tourism marketing activity restarted after the May 17th 2021 relaxing of the lockdown enabled travel and staycations, with production of a range of printed guides for 2021 whilst also continuing to focus increasing attention on digital activity, especially the Visit West Norfolk website.

2 Printed marketing

2.1 2021 Where to Stay in West Norfolk

The 2021 *Where to Stay in West Norfolk* booklet of local accommodation was published on May 17th to coincide with the easing of the national lockdown measures. The publication is primarily made for the King's Lynn Tourist Information Centre to send out upon request and to give out to visitors to their service in the King's Lynn Town Hall. The booklet is in a rolling perpetual print as of current time, printed in batches of 750 copies (to periodically enable updates and additions to it). It is free-of-charge for west Norfolk accommodation businesses to appear in the booklet during this period of tourism business recovery and we take the existing accommodation entries from our Visit West Norfolk website to populate this title, the TIC staff checking for any updates from these businesses before we went to print.

2.2 Discover King's Lynn

The 2021 edition was published and circulated on the same day at the lockdown eased – May 17th 2021. The expanded format of the 2021 *Discover King's Lynn* was continued – including, for the first time, an article about town centre businesses supplied by Vicky Etheridge from the King's Lynn BID. The print run was still 160,000 copies, with large quantities subsequently distributed around the area by three distribution companies.

2.3 Hunstanton Mini Guide and Downham Market Mini Guide

Work on the 2021-22 editions of both of these titles is complete. 40,000 copies of the updated *Hunstanton Mini Guide* were printed and distributed in June, and a quantity of 12,750 copies of the updated *Downham Market Mini Guide* were printed and distributed from September.

2.4 Other publications

Again the Borough Council is supporting the King's Lynn Town Guides by arranging print and distribution of the *2021 King's Lynn Guided Walks* programme. The Tourism department also supported the print of the *King's Lynn Heritage Open Day 2021* booklet and the *King's Lynn Hanse Day 2021* leaflet. The department has also conducted reprints of the following leaflets across this summer: The Hunstanton Wolf Trail, The Hunstanton Horticultural Trail and the King's Lynn Maritime Trail.

3 Digital marketing

3.1 www.visitwestnorfolk.com

Work has continued throughout the year to create a brand new version of our main visitor website (the borough council ICT team are leading with this rebooted website design) to better attract modern travellers. Despite our focus on making this vastly updated modern version of our existing website we also ran a mid-summer marketing campaign to attract new and additional visitors to the website. This Visit West Norfolk summer campaign, ran by Bauer Media Ltd., included the creation of a great promotional tourism video for west Norfolk, which was promoted heavily on Facebook across June-August 2021 to targeted areas and demographics. The Tourism department has now placed the new promo video on Vimeo, though it will feature heavily on the new version of our website when that is launched: [‘Visit This Summer’ promo film] <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/580350482>

3.2 Website traffic

Somewhat surprisingly, the Visit West Norfolk website has seen a great deal more visitors and page views across the pandemic period compared to any previous year, including during times under strict lockdown (when travel was not possible). This is understandable when considering people were generally wanting to be informed about the latest travel guidelines and options, future staycation bookings in place of going abroad, and so on – such high visits to the site seen at least for the first year of the pandemic, and perhaps going back to fairly normal site visit levels this year onwards as the national tourism situation settles down.

Visit West Norfolk Total Website Page Visits:

2018: 623,578

2019: 887,312

2020: 2,253,011 [pandemic era]

2021: 1,299,776 [from Jan-Aug 2021 only]

Visit West Norfolk Total Website Visitors:

2018: 185,105

2019: 212,803

2020: 414,648 [pandemic era]

2021: 219,231 [from Jan-Aug 2021 only]

3.3 Events

Compared to pre-pandemic times, a very reduced amount of events were promoted throughout 2021 (due to lockdown lasting for nearly 5 months of the year), with 189 events currently being promoted on the Visit West Norfolk website as of October 5th 2021. Now, more than ever, we need to continue to encourage more tourism businesses to use the event listings not only to promote their own events, but also for businesses to use it as a resource to promote upcoming events in their locality which may of interest to their customers (helping with cross promotion and overall awareness of local events).

With regards to events that were held in the last quarter, the King’s Lynn Heritage Open Day was a major success for the town in early September 2021. The Tourism department attended the whole event for live tweeting throughout the day, and noted at the time that it was likely to become the busiest ever Heritage Open Day for the town.

3.4 Business e-shots

All local tourism businesses and organisations on the tourism business database now receive an e-shot (i.e. the latest tourism business news in email format) from the department every two weeks, highlighting business support groups, workshops, the latest

grant support information and key forthcoming local events, but also encouraging businesses to forward the e-shots on to their contacts too where relevant. We are always looking to grow our contacts database too, often proactively approaching businesses to register their details – though this growth in our tourism contacts database is continuous and never complete, as new tourism businesses regularly surface and more established tourism businesses in the area increasingly turn to digital promotions.

3.5 Consumer e-shots

The scheduled programme of our regular e-shots sent to prospective visitors began again from 24th June 2021, the focus of each e-shot - sent out to prospective visitors every two weeks - being to promote a set of 4-5 events and attractions or activities which could form the basis of at least a 2-3 night break. Most visitor e-shots are themed and can be tailored to certain types of visitor.

4 **Planned activity**

4.1 The Tourism department, with input from the West Norfolk Tourism Forum, is currently drafting a West Norfolk Tourism Recovery Plan for 2021-25. The proposed 5-year action plan is informed by current key local, regional and national business recovery plans (as well as feedback from local stakeholders) and will focus on six key strategic aims to assist west Norfolk's post pandemic tourism business recovery. There will be a workshop-style element to the forthcoming November 17th West Norfolk Tourism Forum AGM event which will give more local businesses an opportunity to help shape and inform the recovery plan document – the aim being to finalise the draft for internal review by the end of November 2021. Regardless of the publishing date of the recovery plan, the Tourism department has already been conducting work across many of the key aims likely to be included within the plan this year.

4.2 Some key actions to highlight in addition to the ongoing recovery plan work include:

4.2.1 Development of a Hunstanton Observatory

The Tourism department submitted an application for 30k funding for a Hunstanton Observatory building earlier in the year and was notified of the application's success to receive funding from the 'EXPERIENCE Norfolk' project in Spring 2021 (funding to be sourced from the European Regional Development Fund and Interreg). It is the department's aim to make west Norfolk a great hub for off-season Dark Skies-type astronomical events and festivals in the future, in a bid to further establish an all-year-round tourism economy for the local area. The project would soon be entering the tendering phase and will, of course, subsequently go through the planning process.

4.2.2 Development of the Norfolk Arts Trail (sculpture on the Boal Quay)

The Tourism department submitted an application of interest to the 'EXPERIENCE Norfolk' team at NCC in late Spring 2021 for a west Norfolk 'arts trail sculpture' to be erected in an agreed area of King's Lynn (on Borough Council leased land). The aim for this new art asset for the town is to align such a creative way-marker with the start of the Nar Valley Way and Norfolk Coast Path, on the proposed edge of the historic quarter (specifically around the Boal Quay area), whilst also adding further visitor interest in the historic quarter of the town. Work is currently being completed on both the artist brief and a finalised location for the new sculpture, after a site visit between the external creative team and the Tourism department on June 29th 2021.

4.2.3 Development of out-of-season sustainable tourism offers for visitors

The Tourism department has begun working with the EXPERIENCE Norfolk team at NCC on another project, the aim this time being to enable independent tourism and hospitality businesses from across west Norfolk to link up and provide bookable unique visitor

“experiences” together, especially within rural and coastal areas of the west Norfolk. Initial meetings (May 21) and Norfolk-wide workshops (June 21) have already been held by EXPERIENCE Norfolk to gauge local interest and innovative ideas from our businesses to take forward and develop much further. The EXPERIENCE team to plan to engage much more with west Norfolk tourism and hospitality businesses in the near future.

5 Other developments

5.1 Partnerships

5.1.1 West Norfolk Tourism continues to work closely with Visit Norfolk and Visit East of England to promote the county and wider area, including weekly marketing meetings with VEE. Almost since the very start of the pandemic in 2020, the Visit East of England group formed a coalition of 14 Destination Management Organisations, funded by local authorities, and established 'Unexplored England' – the first time all the DMOs and Local Authorities have worked together on a tourism promotion. This regional coalition has resulted in a c£150k marketing pot, primarily created from Visit Suffolk and Visit Norfolk funds to help promote the East of England.

5.2.2 The west Norfolk Tourism department continues to work productively with existing and new partners, including being part in the following groups and partnerships:

Norfolk Tourism Recovery Best Practice Group
Visitor Economy Group (VEG with LEP)
Norfolk Coast Partnership: Reopening the Coast
Downham Market Town Team Group
King's Lynn Hanse Festival Group
West Norfolk Dark Skies Working Group
Unexplored England (Visit East Anglia) Marketing Panel
The Norfolk Film Assets Steering Group
The Norfolk Arts Trail Group
Experiential Norfolk Group (for West Norfolk)
Sail the Wash Marketing Group
Fens Biosphere Steering Group

6 Resource implications

None

7 Policy implications

None

8 Recommendations

The committee is recommended to note the report

9 Access to Information

No background papers

Author of report

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