

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Corporate Performance Panel		
DATE:	16 June 2022		
TITLE:	Discussion Paper: Promoting Sustainable Tourism		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Policy Development discussion		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Business Development		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Duncan Hall		
OPEN		WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
<p>The purpose of this report is to seek views of panel members and aid a discussion. It could lead subsequently to policy or strategy development. The subject area is:</p> <p>Tourism - harmful or helpful? A review of the key qualitative and quantitative factors influencing the future growth of Tourism resourcing, processes, and benefits - do our residents benefit from our approach to promoting tourism in West Norfolk?</p>
KEY ISSUES:
<p>Members of the panel have raised the question of the council's role in promoting additional visitors where the outcomes could be harmful to residents. The report highlights some of these issues, the economic benefits of additional visitors, and how ways can be found to manage additional visitors in order that the benefits can be harnessed, and the harms avoided.</p>
OPTIONS CONSIDERED:
<p>The report covers a number of potential responses to mitigate additional visitor pressures. These include the formation of a county wide group to specifically address some of the concerns highlighted in this report.</p>
RECOMMENDATIONS:
<p>To understand that a proactive and 'positive solution' approach that anticipates continued visitor growth will help to avoid potential issues arising from that growth.</p>
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:
<p>A proactive approach will help avoid problems affecting communities but help a growing tourism economy that plays an important role in job creation and the prosperity of our area.</p>

1.Introduction

Tourism related economic activity is important to the area’s economy. The evidence from regular economic analysis shows that there is continued growth in tourism activity (visitor numbers and spend), and the growth is particularly strong in countryside and coastal areas. There are benefits for businesses to grow and for local employment opportunities.

There are however concerns that issues including littering, anti-social behaviour, parking problems and road jams associated with an increase in visitors – particularly in areas ill-equipped with the infrastructure to support additional visitors could outweigh the benefits to local people.

2. Policy / Strategy Development Report

The benefits of tourism to many aspects of the local community are abundantly clear. From cafes to accommodation, from modern attractions to heritage sites, from book shops to retail, the levels of economic growth and employment benefits that tourism brings are clear. These benefits can be measured to understand the value of these benefits and associated trends.

A yearly data collection and analysis is undertaken on the economic impact, with an annual report produced on behalf of the Council by consultancy Destination Research. The image below shows the economic value of the tourism sector to the borough area in the last two pre-pandemic years.



Economic Impact of Tourism – Year on year comparisons

<u>Day Trips</u>	2018	2019	Annual variation
Day trips Volume	9,730,000	9,976,000	3%
Day trips Value	£302,761,000	£313,826,000	4%
<u>Overnight trips</u>			
Number of trip	502,100	514,600	2%
Number of nights	1,981,000	2,006,000	1%
Trip value	£115,348,000	£119,523,000	4%
Total Value	£559,680,867	£577,344,867	3%
Actual Jobs	10,916	11,286	3%

“Economic Impact of Tourism - West Norfolk Report 2019 by DestinationResearch”

So, in total, tourism brought in **£577,344,867** to the west Norfolk area in the year before the pandemic, supporting **11,1286** jobs.

There has been continued growth of the tourism sector in recent years - the image below shows growth in the countryside and coastal areas only (excluding the towns) where the growth has been at a higher rate reflecting the popularity of the area's natural beauty.

Tourism income and Tourism trips to rural and coastal villages of west Norfolk:

Years	Countryside visits (Number of TRIPS)	Coastal visits (Number of TRIPS)	Countryside visits (SPEND)	Coastal visits (SPEND)
2015	2,148,000	2,577,000	£71,597,000	£76,646,000
2016	2,346,000	2,660,000	£75,171,000	£75,998,000
2017	2,456,000	2,818,000	£76,564,000	£78,251,000
2018	2,652,000	3,096,000	£78,364,000	£81,536,000
2019	2,820,000	3,114,000	£82,328,000	£84,365,000
2020 (COVID-19 era)	1,160,000	1,381,000	£34,835,000	£38,203,000

“Economic Impact of Tourism - West Norfolk Reports, 2015-2020 by DestinationResearch”

The concerns about the pressures and issues associated with additional visitors highlighted in the introduction have not been reported widely or with any consistency across the area. It is recognised and reported that visitor related problems have been focussed on the coastline and particularly within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Visitor Management Group (for the Wash & Norfolk Coast), mainly comprising of the local Marine Partnership, Norfolk Coast Partnership and Norfolk Trails, has recently rebranded itself as the Visitor Pressures Working Group, looks at positive solutions to visitor-related pressures identified along Norfolk county's coastline. The BCKLWN is an active member of this group.

This group have responded to issues arising from new tourist activity several visitors being stranded on Scolt Island and needing rescue, some trespassing along the coast. There is currently no equivalent group which focusses on the countryside areas of Norfolk, and this is something that could provide positive solutions to potential issues relating to visitor pressures.

3. Issues for the Panel to Consider

- Consideration of the benefits that can't be measured - for example (in a counterfactual sense) the pub businesses that sustain the life of a community that may not have remained in business without visitor trade. The importance of tourism to local pubs was well known even before the negative effects of the pandemic hit the nation's hospitality industry, with VisitBritain and the British Beer & Pub Association (amongst many other industry leaders) reporting the importance of tourism to the nation's pubs in the UK trade press just 2 months before the first lockdown hit the

UK:

<https://www.morningadvertiser.co.uk/Article/2020/01/08/How-many-tourists-visit-UK-pubs>

- Being aware of the issues that aren't measured – and don't get reported by residents because they maybe considered inconsequential in isolation, but important when repeated. The need to take a pro-active approach now to avoid the escalation of issues.
- Approaches to marketing the area in a way that emphasises the value of 'responsible tourism' need to be in concert with other organisations including Visit Norfolk, Visit East of England, English Heritage, National Trust, and a whole host of other visitor promotion bodies would still be promoting sites and areas all around west Norfolk.
- Is it reasonable to think that the visitor pressures in the wider countryside areas are going to increase given the identified trends showing increasing numbers visiting these areas (excluding towns) particularly?
- The 'positive solution' approach seeks to accommodate the needs of businesses, visitors and residents.

Potential Mitigation

- In discussion with Norfolk County Council (NCC) colleagues there is appetite to establish a county-wide Visitor Pressures Group to fit in line with the existing coastal Visitor Pressures Group, but covering all rural areas. It is envisaged that a dedicated NCC officer will be employed, with one of the officer's roles being to co-ordinate the work of that group. A new officer-supported group formed could be one of the workable solutions to such visitor-related issues which, in time, could include a recommended set of measures for such rural villages alongside other 'task and action' activities similar in nature to those undertaken in the current coast focussed Visitor Pressures Group.
- In association with partners (all local and regional tourism and visitor-facing organisations) the council can undertake more Responsible Tourism messaging (also in line with future messaging and projects by the Visitor Pressures Group).
- Villages can learn from other parish council approaches to visitor/tourism issues, such as via locally-agreed action plans or documents like the [Heacham Neighbourhood Plan](#), that shows good examples on how to work with local accommodation business growth (for example) and how to work positively side-by-side with visitor accommodation providers (Wild Ken Hill and Searles Camping both gave input to that village Plan).

4. Corporate Priorities

This report is relevant to the following corporate priorities:

- Delivering growth in the economy
- Creating and maintaining good quality places that make a positive difference to people's lives

5. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications

6. Any other Implications/Risks

The report highlights the risk of adverse issues arising from additional visitor numbers in areas ill-equipped particularly with regard to infrastructure to manage additional visitors.

7. Equal Opportunity Considerations

No EIA screening has been undertaken because this report is for discussion purposes and is not a new policy or strategy decision.

8. Environmental Considerations

The subject area for discussion relates to concerns associated with environmental sustainability.

9. Consultation

No consultation as this report is for discussion purposes and is not a new policy or strategy decision.

10. Conclusion

Report is for the purpose of discussion.

11. Background Papers

- The draft 'West Norfolk Tourism Development Plan 2022-2026' – to be considered by BCKLWN Regeneration and Development Panel on July 21st 2022.
- 'Economic Impact of Tourism in West Norfolk' report (latest annual version being 2020) by DestinationResearch. The 2021 edition out in September 2022 with copies of the past nine reports publicly available here:
<https://www.visitwestnorfolk.com/travel/tourism-industry/>