

Item: Tourism Marketing Update

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

Date: 20th December 2023

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 from October 2023 to 20th December 2023.

2 Printed marketing

2.1 2023 Where to Stay in West Norfolk

The 2023 edition of the *Where to Stay in West Norfolk* booklet of local accommodation was published in April 2023, ahead of the summer season, and has had one small further batch of copies printed since that time. Though this booklet 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, it seems that the demand for such a printed accommodation brochure is at an all-time low. However, the booklet remains in a rolling (yet modest) print run to meet this diminishing demand (with entry updates made during early Spring each calendar year). It is still free for west Norfolk accommodation businesses to appear in the booklet during this time, and the amount of accommodation entries continues to slowly grow over time due to the entries being free-of-charge.

2.2 Discover King's Lynn

There is slightly less than a quarter of the 2023 edition stock of this popular leaflet left in storage for circulation ahead of the next edition in Spring 2024. The print run for next year remains at 160,000 copies due to its popularity.

2.3 Hunstanton Mini Guide and Downham Market Mini Guide

A small amount of both titles remain in stock to cover the out-of-season period until work begins on updates for 2024 editions of both titles in April 2024. As highlighted in each of our reports our department waits for almost total stock clearance of all of our leaflets across the area as we aim to have zero waste of stock with our printed titles – as a consequence, some local area tourism venues may have run out of our leaflets for a while before we decide to go to reprint.

2.4 Other publications

Festival of Margery Kempe - The Tourism Department gave financial and practical support to the printing of the new *Festival of Margery Kempe* leaflet in October 2023, ahead of the November festival held within King's Lynn town centre, led by the True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum.

Downham Market Gingerbread Town Trail – from February to December 2023 ongoing discussions and joint working between Discover Downham, Downham Market Town Council and the Tourism department for a town-based trail with high casual visitor appeal have resulted in the first proof being completed of this A5-sized town trail booklet. With a final proofread planned in early 2024 by the Discover Downham Heritage Museum stakeholders for final tweaks, arrangements will be made for a suitable launch event of this new trail booklet in Downham Market around March 2024.

3 Digital marketing

3.1 www.visitwestnorfolk.com

'Visit West Norfolk...Naturally'

The department's initial 10-month-long paid digital marketing green tourism campaign continues to the end of the calendar year, to attract new environmentally-conscious visitors to our website and to help cultivate responsible tourism within the west Norfolk area in general. Following on from *Visit West Norfolk...Naturally* 'brand awareness' digital radio spots being commissioned for airing on radio stations in London and in the North-East of the UK across the 2023 springtime period, the tourism department paid for a similar radio spot with some enhanced sounds of the natural environment – which aired throughout October 2023 (this time targeting affluent areas of London only).

As highlighted in the previous report, this campaign's '*...Naturally*' brand mirrors the region-wide shared-branding with the rest of the East Anglia tourism marketing network led by Visit East of England.

www.explorewestnorfolk.co.uk

We continue to promote our Explore West Norfolk website and two related apps in our e-shots and other marketing materials, with plans to add brand new trails to the digital platform in 2024. The Android version of both of the apps related to this platform have hit a technical (coding) issue, currently preventing that version of them from being downloaded from the Google Play Store. The external administrator of our apps is currently working on a solution to this issue.

3.2 Website traffic

Website figures for the whole calendar year of 2023 will, as usual, be included in the first report of 2024 (March 2024) with comparisons made to the previous years from 2019 onwards to show any level of progress in website visits. We remain confident that our level of website visits for 2023 has at least increased in line with our annual KPI target this year (10% growth in site visits in comparison to the preceding year).

3.3 Events

Amongst many local area events, some notable highlights which happened around west Norfolk in recent months include a range of events happening throughout the Halloween season. In an attempt to support out-of-season tourism in a stronger way this year, a great deal of seasonal multimedia content for the Tourism department's Halloween 2023 campaign was created, featuring a wealth of family-friendly content as well as a totally separate series of more adult-themed seasonal content under the umbrella of "Fear and Haunting in West Norfolk".

Fear and Haunting in West Norfolk - Visit West Norfolk's new organic promotional campaign ran throughout October and included our own shot video content, imagery and/or text of the following events:

- Lady Chillers & Open Mike Event - at Discover Downham.
- The Wonder Room Exhibition - at the King's Lynn Custom House.
- Casting the Runes - at Westacre Theatre.
- Lady Chillers: The Female Gothic (More Deadly Than the Male) - at Discover Downham.
- The Bench – A Tale From Paradise Heights - at the Princess Theatre Hunstanton.

- The Ghosts of King's Lynn & West Norfolk – 2nd Edition book release (online promotion).
- Fear in the Fens Festival 2023 - at the King's Lynn Corn Exchange.
- Do You Believe in Ghosts? A Haunting Night of Theatre - at the Princess Theatre Hunstanton.
- Ghost Stories by Candlelight - at St. George's Guildhall, King's Lynn.
- The Serial Killer Next Door - at the King's Lynn Corn Exchange.

Festival of Margery Kempe – an event run by True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum.

To celebrate the 650th birthday of a famous medieval mystic from King's Lynn, True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum and Stories of Lynn worked with St George's Guildhall to tell the life stories of Margery Kempe, one of the few female preachers of the 15th Century, in this festival which was held in the town across November 2023.

A wealth of Christmas activities, pantomimes, festive events and 'switch-ons' were held in the area across the November-December of 2023 and dominated much of our recent promotional activities, social media posts and e-shot contents.

3.4 Business e-shots

Local tourism businesses and organisations on the tourism department's business database continue to receive our fortnightly e-shots, and the department continues to expand its 'Tourism Industry' section of the Visit West Norfolk website for local tourism businesses.

The latest commissioned 'Economic Impact of Tourism for West Norfolk' report (for calendar year 2022) was released in November 2023 and is now included as a download from this 'Tourism Industry' section of the website: www.visitwestnorfolk.com/tourism-industry

The tourism department continues to proactively engage with both established venues and new west Norfolk tourism businesses to add to our tourism database for future communications.

3.5 Consumer e-shots

The scheduled programme of our regular Visit West Norfolk tourist-facing e-shots continue to be sent out to prospective visitors every fortnight - the content of each e-shot being a mix of themed content and promotions of a small set of events or attractions, accommodation and activities:

[October 2023] Autumn Days in West Norfolk 2023

[October 2023] Halloween Events in West Norfolk 2023

[November 2023] Firework Weekend | Fawkes in The Walks 2023

[November 2023] Christmas Events in West Norfolk 2023

[December 2023] Mark your calendars! 2024 Holiday Inspiration in West Norfolk

4 **Planned activity**

4.1 Snapsea UGC

The Tourism department's brand new 1-year subscription to the Snapsea platform began at the start of December 2023, with hopes that this User Generated Content platform will increase engagement across the department's social media channels and provide a host of great authentic user content from their visits to west Norfolk. A more in-depth report regarding this social media user engagement software will be provided in the future.

4.2 Some other key actions planned by the Tourism Department include:

4.2.1 The Hunstanton Observatory - www.hunstantonobservatory.co.uk

After the Tourism department's successful funding application for the creation of an observatory for local tourism business use and the installation of the venue earlier this year, the department is in ongoing communication with some leading local accommodation providers and event organisers to create a series of first-quarter 2024 events to continue to showcase the venue to local tourism businesses and the general public. A sensible diversity of all-year-round pre-booked observatory events for experiential tourism is encouraged.

4.2.2 Norfolk Coast: Myths & Legends

Design and production of this large-scale cross-Norfolk coastal trail book continues - the department's aim to soft launch this trail to coincide with the opening of the Norfolk Coast Path section from King's Lynn to Snettisham (a section soon to be completed by the NCC Norfolk Trails team).

4.2.3 King's Lynn Walsingham Way

As an active partner of this project (headed by The King's Lynn Minster Parish Trust charity) to establish a new trail and waymarker posts from the town to Little Walsingham, the Tourism department has now created a GPX map file of the whole route with added digital waymarkers of major religious locations along the extensive 29-mile route. This digital route file, in draft form, will be uploaded to the Explore West Norfolk website and the accompanying app in January 2024, so that the general public can see and follow the route for the first time, ahead of any funded physical waymarking phase of the project. Parish council stakeholders have been invited to a face-to-face project update meeting by the KLWW project leads, to be held in January 2024.

4.2.4 West Lynn Ferry Pavillion - Interpretation Boards and Waiting Room Refurb

The Tourism department are currently undergoing tender processes for new interpretation boards and a modest refurbishment of the public waiting room inside the West Lynn Pavillion, which will include a collaboration with Norfolk Museums Service team members to provide some historical content for the boards and waiting room interior historical information. All work should be completed on-site by April 2024.

4.2.5 Downham Market Town Centre Public Realm Enhancements

The Tourism department and Downham Market Town Council are currently undergoing tender processes for the refurbishment of three major visitor-facing town centre street assets. All work should be completed in town by April 2024.

4.2.6 Hanse League

In December 2023 a member of the Tourism department became the Vice Chair of one of the Modern Hanse League's official Europe-wide working groups – 'the Sustainable Hanse Working Group'. This group meets periodically online and at each International Hanse Day event in Europe to discuss and raise issues across the Hanse network in support of the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). <https://shorturl.at/pCIV8>

4.2.7 West Norfolk Tourism Business Summit 2024

The Tourism department is currently putting together an agenda of speakers and content on behalf of the West Norfolk Tourism Forum, for a major business support and networking event to be held in March 2024.

4.2.8. British Tourism & Travel Show (Birmingham NEC) 2024

The Tourism department is actively supporting and joining the King's Lynn Town Guides for their trade stand appearance at the national group and coach tour travel trade event held from 20th -21st March 2024. The aim is to bring more coach and group tour operator trips to King's Lynn and the surrounding area.

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, often including bi-weekly marketing meetings with its 'DMO Coalition' of members from across the region. This regional coalition continues to utilise an ongoing marketing pot, primarily created from Visit Suffolk and Visit Norfolk funds, to help promote the East of England (including to inbound overseas visitors to the area).

5.1.2 The west Norfolk Tourism department continues to work productively with existing and new partners, including being part in the following groups and partnerships across the period covered by this report (October – December 2023):

- British Destinations.
- Discover Downham Heritage Centre Tourism [bi-monthly meetings].
- Downham Market Town Council Tourism [periodic meetings].
- Employer Engagement Network [Norfolk-wide, includes regular *Skills Network* e-shots].
- Film Friendly Norfolk Group.
- Good Journey County Campaign (NCC).
- King's Lynn & Norfolk LCWIP Group.
- King's Lynn Town Centre Public Realm & Repurposing Project Group.
- King's Lynn Walsingham Way Group.
- Norfolk & Suffolk DMO Coalition.
- Norfolk Marine Partnership Group [Norfolk coast focussed].
- Norfolk Tourism Recovery Best Practice Group.
- Visit Britain [via periodic DMO calls].
- Visit Norfolk [Visit West Norfolk/BCKLWN are executive committee members].
- West Norfolk Tourism Forum.

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.

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