

**Item:** Tourism Marketing Update

**Committee:** King's Lynn & West Norfolk Area Museums Committee

**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**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 October 2023. Just as a reminder after my previous note to the committee, the usual two-person team of the Tourism department was without a second member of staff (a Tourism Support Officer who operates our digital assets) from March 1<sup>st</sup> to May 13<sup>th</sup> 2024, with some break in service and the majority of key tourism marketing activity restarting after that 10 week period due to a new member of staff starting within the department from 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024 onwards.

## 2 Printed marketing

The Tourism department aims to adhere to a zero waste principle when it comes to printed leaflets and, as such, we now wait until print stocks have almost run out across the local area before committing to any new print run of leaflets. A consequence of this aim is that popular venues often run out of our leaflets before other venues and locations, and thus have to wait for a longer period of time for a restock of any reprinted version of our current titles.

### 2.1 Discover King's Lynn

The distributed copies of the 2023 edition of this popular leaflet of ours is now almost depleted across the 200+ venues that have been supplied with it. A slightly revised print run of 110,000 copies is now in mid-production for 2024, with a new run of the leaflet to be produced by the end of June 2024, and large quantities subsequently distributed around the area by two distribution companies.

### 2.2 Hunstanton Mini Guide and Downham Market Mini Guide

Copies of last year's mini guides are still available at some venues but when current stock has nearly ran out across the area we will run with another 40,000 copies of the updated *Hunstanton Mini Guide* and another quantity of 12,750 copies of the updated *Downham Market Mini Guide* this summer too. In the meantime, two distribution companies plan to distribute the remaining stock we have of both guides.

### 2.3 Other publications

The Borough Council is supporting the King's Lynn Town Guides once again by having arranged the print and distribution of the *2024 King's Lynn Guided Walks* programme ahead of the spring start of the Town Guides 2024 programme. The department also produced a reprint of the *King's Lynn Maritime Trail* booklet in early 2024.

The Tourism Department is once again planning to support the print of the *King's Lynn Heritage Open Day 2024* booklet later this summer, and the department will also conduct much smaller reprints of The Hunstanton Wolf Trail and The Hunstanton Horticultural Trail this year too.

### 3 Digital marketing

#### 3.1 [www.visitwestnorfolk.com](http://www.visitwestnorfolk.com)

The website **Highlights** section of promotional articles and blog posts highlighting local activities and attractions, all researched, written and promoted by the Tourism Support Officer, is now being updated once again after a 10-week break in service due to the previous staff member leaving the authority.

We were planning on Pay-Per-Click and Google Ads campaigns to heavily promote both the website and our social channels during the three months leading up to Summer 2024. However, with the unforeseen 10-week break in service due to staff leaving their post, such ongoing paid and constantly-monitored digital campaigns will soon commence instead. In summary, we will shortly be running paid ads across our digital portfolio to increase visits to the site and to our varied promotional multimedia promotional content.

#### [www.sailthewash.com](http://www.sailthewash.com)

The Tourism Department is not the lead on the *Sail the Wash* project, though as a marketing and promotions department we have been allocated a budget from that project to continue to help promote the new website for that project. In recent months we have paid for a Sail the Wash advert to appear in the 2024 edition of the Norfolk Coast Guardian, and await collaborative efforts from the other leisure sailing destinations within the project for ongoing future promotion of that website.

#### [www.explorewestnorfolk.co.uk](http://www.explorewestnorfolk.co.uk)

We still promote our Explore West Norfolk website and two related apps in our e-shots and other marketing materials, and we plan on allocating a portion of our budget to help promote this element of our portfolio via digital ads during the Autumn and Winter of 2024. Explore West Norfolk was originally funded, and now seen by our department, as a tool to attract visitors to our area out-of-season / all-year-round and, as such, our small team tends to heavily promote the Visit West Norfolk platform for the spring and summer, and the Explore West Norfolk website and apps for the autumn and winter, though this is not an inflexible rule.

As the Senior Tourism Officer is an active member of the King's Lynn Walsingham Way group, we have added the preliminary draft of the new *King's Lynn Walsingham Way* 29-mile historic trail to the Explore West Norfolk platform:

<https://explorewestnorfolk.co.uk/albums/kings-lynn-walsingham-way-6/>

#### 3.2 Website traffic

The Visit West Norfolk website exceeded our 10% growth KPI projection for 2023 to now surpass pre-pandemic figures (comparison below) and receive roughly a quarter of a million visits to our Visit West Norfolk website for the calendar year of 2023. This figure is based in recent times largely on basic organic growth as opposed to continuous periods of paid promotion for the website. It is too early to tell if the recent 10-week break in website-related digital activity leading up to May 2024 will provide us with a lower number of website visits compared to the same period of time in 2023. The Tourism department did, however, run a modest paid Google Ads campaign for 1 month during November-December 2023 to drive more visitors to the website in the lead up to Christmas.

### Visit West Norfolk - Website Visits:

2019: 212,803

2023: 229,220\*

\* no figures are available from 29<sup>th</sup> June to 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023 due to a changeover from previous Google Analytics to Google Analytics 4, which was a compulsory global update of the analytics system by Google.

### 3.3 Events & Activities

With regards to notable events which were held in recent times, there was a full and varied programme of west Norfolk-wide celebrations and events held for the King's Coronation, though perhaps with more of a community focus than guaranteed visitor appeal to some extent. The Tourism Department made a great deal of promotional material for events throughout 2023, including themed visitor e-shots, lots of posts and activity across the department's social networks leading up to bank holidays and seasonal offerings. Such event and activity-based content included:

- 'New Year's Eve in West Norfolk 2023' blog post [published 05/12/2023]. Highlighted New Year's Eve events and accommodation offers in west Norfolk.
- 'Rainy Day Activities in West Norfolk' blog post [published 08/12/2023]. Featured indoor activities or attractions including museums, historic sites, indoor play areas, cinemas, and art galleries.
- 'Mark your calendars! Unique events in West Norfolk 2024' blog post [published 13/12/2023]. Promoted holiday inspiration and upcoming events in west Norfolk.
- Updated: 'Free Things To Do in West Norfolk | Winter 2024' blog post [02/01/2024]
- Updated: 'Dog Friendly West Norfolk' blog post [05/01/2024]
- Celebrate Valentine's Day in West Norfolk 2024 [published 26/01/2024]
- Mother's Day in West Norfolk 2024 [published 12/02/2024]
- Springtime in West Norfolk – a summary including a highlight of the forthcoming West Norfolk Seasonal Food Festival [published 11/03/2024]
- Visiting West Norfolk for World Oceans Day [published 07/06/24]

The Tourism department produce and post social media posts promoting our blog posts, too numerous to list in this report summary, but at least 50 posts related to our blog posts were posted during the time covered by this report.

### 3.4 Business e-shots

Local tourism businesses and organisations on the tourism department's business database continue to receive a fortnightly e-shot (latest tourism business news in email format) from the department, though with a relative gap in activity during March-May 2024 as previously highlighted. Such business-related e-shots includes:

- Reminder: 'Love Your' Grant Scheme [sent 23/11/2023]
- Book the Hunstanton Observatory for your visitors and last call for Tourism Forum event [sent 29/11/2023]
- KLIC and connect Business Networking Event and Grant Support [sent 07/12/2023]
- FREE Promotion on the Visit West Norfolk website [sent 21/12/2023]
- Leadership Training, Accessibility Toolkit and Recruitment Support [11/01/2024]
- Training Grants, Workshops and Business Awards [sent 26/01/2024]
- National Apprenticeship Week and Festival of Knowledge Event [sent 08/02/2024]
- You are invited to the West Norfolk Tourism Summit 2024 [sent 14/02/2024]
- Last call for the West Norfolk Tourism Business Summit [sent 01/03/2024]
- Support for your employees, business opportunities & survey [sent 04/04/2024]

- Free courses to boost sales, and great opportunity for accommodation providers [sent 10/05/2024]
- Advertise your May Half Term Events, The SEED Creake Abbey opens, plus your Last Chance to join FREE marketing courses [sent 20/05/2024]
- Free KLIC and Connect event, Father's Day advertising opportunities, and have your say on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy [sent 05/06/2024]

### 3.5 Consumer e-shots

The scheduled programme of our regular Visit West Norfolk e-shots sent to prospective visitors (after they have signed up to receive such content from us) is currently one e-shot sent every fortnight. The focus of each e-shot (often themed) being to promote a set of 4-5 events or attractions, accommodation and activities which would take the average visitor at least a couple of days' stay in the area to see and do.

- Festive Events this December in West Norfolk 2023 [sent 30/11/2023]
- Mark your Calendars! 2024 Holiday Inspiration in West Norfolk [sent 14/12/2023]
- Winter Days in West Norfolk 2024 [sent 04/01/2024]
- Dog Friendly West Norfolk [sent 18/01/2024]
- Valentine's Day in West Norfolk [sent 30/01/2024]
- What's On this February Half Term in West Norfolk 2024 [sent 14/02/2024]
- Mother's Day in West Norfolk 2024 [sent 29/02/2024]
- May Bank Holiday and Half Term in West Norfolk 2024 [sent 23/05/2024]

## 4 **Planned activity**

### 4.1 West Norfolk Tourism Development Plan - Actions

Beyond tourism marketing and promotion activity, the Tourism department remains dedicated to working on actions directly related to the six strategic aims found within the previously reported *West Norfolk Tourism Development Plan* for 2022-26. The proposed 5-year plan was informed by key local, regional and national business development plans alongside feedback from local stakeholders. As previously reported, it focusses on six key strategic aims to assist west Norfolk's post pandemic tourism business development, and work continues on resolving actions taken from the aims summarised in a series of Tourism Informal Working Group meetings (held between local stakeholders, councillors and council officers throughout 2023). We aim to provide a full summary of progress with such actions in the next King's Lynn & West Norfolk Area Museums Report.

## 5 **Other developments**

### 5.1 The Hunstanton Observatory

As previously reported, it is the department's aim to help 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. To that end, the Tourism department has recently received SPF funding and supported four events held at the Hunstanton Observatory (a venue dedicated for local tourism businesses to book and utilise for experiential tourism offerings).

- Nature's Glow: A Biofluorescent Night Walk - Mar 18, 2024, 19:30-22:00.
- An exploration of the Skies in Old Hunstanton - Apr 10, 2024, 19:30-22:00.
- Night Exploration and Norfolk Tales - Apr 12, 19:30-22:00.
- Stargazing and Storytelling - Apr 22, 20:00-22:00.

Three of the four events were swiftly fully-booked after being promoted on Eventbrite, with the fourth event also very well attended after being rescheduled due to poor weather conditions.

## 5.2 Development of Coach Tour visits to King's Lynn

### *The Tourism & Travel Show 2024 – Birmingham NEC*

The Senior Tourism Officer supported various practical elements for the King's Lynn Town Guides 2-day trade stand appearance at the leading national Tourism & Travel Show at the Birmingham NEC during March 2024 (This KL Town Guides project being supported by SPF funding). Trade stands at this event aim to attract coach and tour guide businesses to their respective localities. The KL Town Guides aims to attract more coach and group tour companies to King's Lynn as a main destination and itinerary for their guests. A good list of contacts were made from coach tour operators visiting the stand, and the Senior Tourism Officer compiled this new list with an existing active list of coach tour operators for the area. The King's Lynn Town Guides aim to utilise this expanded list of Coach Tour contacts in the near future to promote historic King's Lynn to coach and group tour operators on a regular basis.

The Senior Tourism Officer attended the programme of this 2-day travel show event too, on 20th and 21st of March 2024: [www.tourismshow.co.uk](http://www.tourismshow.co.uk)

## 5.3 Other Shared Prosperity Fund Projects

We are doing ongoing work on a set of SPF funded projects, which include regeneration of items at the West Lynn Pavilion, enhancements to certain Downham Market Town Centre public realm assets, and the formation of a Hunstanton Observatory events programme for a series of four events of varied themes. The West Lynn Pavilion Waiting Room redecoration and minor repairs to the room have now been completed, and there is ongoing work with the Norfolk Museums Services in adding brand new heritage items to the walls of the room, as well as similar information for the three exterior interpretation boards nearby. A draft orientation/interpretation board for an area of Downham Market has also now been completed, with an installation scheduled for imminent installation (as of June 2024).

## 5.4 Software

As previously reported, we have been using the User Generated Content Platform Snapsea ([www.snapsea.io](http://www.snapsea.io)) through our Instagram account to enhance, inform and grow our future promotional interactions with potential visitors to west Norfolk by utilising high quality authentic visitor content of the local area. We are now 6 months into our subscription and have built up a robust collection of user-generated content, which has subsequently been posted across Visit West Norfolk's social media pages.

## 5.5 The Hanse League

Previously being the Vice Chair, the Tourism department has now taken on the Chair and administrator roles for the Europe-wide Modern Hanse League group called the Hanse Sustainable Working Group: <https://www.hanse.org/en/union-of-cities-the-hansa/working-groups/sustainable-hansa>

Our second meeting with the group happened in May 2024, and an 'online event' series of presentations is currently being worked on, focussing on shared best practice and learning on a Europe-wide basis regarding the growth and adoption of sustainable business practices.

The Tourism department is now also a member of both the King's Lynn Hanse Club and the King's Lynn Hanse Festival Committee, with the Senior Tourism Officer also in attendance

at the June 2024 International Hanse Festival held in Gdańsk, Poland:

<https://www.gdansk2024.pl>

## 5.6 West Norfolk Tourism Business Event

After the West Norfolk Tourism Forum AGM (held Wednesday 6th December 2023), The Tourism department finalised the booking of presenters and the full agenda for the first 'West Norfolk Tourism Business Summit '24' event, held in King's Lynn in March 2024 and promoted to local businesses via different platforms including Eventbrite and LinkedIn. The Senior Tourism Officer was the organiser of the Wednesday March 6th West Norfolk Tourism Business Summit evening event, which was presented on the evening by the independent business-led West Norfolk Tourism Forum, was well-attended by local tourism businesses and held in the Guildhall of St George, King's Lynn.

Lots of positive feedback was received from attendees about the event and the four business-oriented presenters, with the hope that this event marks of the first of what could be an annual major tourism business support event.

## 5.7 Partnerships

5.7.1 West Norfolk Tourism continues to work with Visit Norfolk and Visit East of England to promote the county and wider area as one of the 'DMO Coalition' members from across East Anglia. Visit East of England is being supported by the Tourism department and the rest of the existing Norfolk DMOs (Destination Management Organisations) in their current Summer 2024 application to become a nationally-recognised LVEP (the East Anglia Local Visitor Economy Partnership).

5.7.2 The west Norfolk Tourism department continues to work productively with existing and new partners, including being part in the following groups and partnerships, amongst others, across the period covered by this report (October 2023-June 2024):

- British Destinations [VWN being a formal member of this national tourism lobbying group].
- Downham Market Town Council.
- Discover Downham Heritage Centre.
- Film Friendly Norfolk Steering Group.
- King's Lynn Hanse Club.
- King's Lynn Hanse Festival Committee.
- King's Lynn Town Centre Public Realm & Repurposing Project Group.
- King's Lynn Walsingham Way Group.
- Norfolk & Suffolk DMO Coalition.
- Norfolk Coast Partnership / AONB.
- Norfolk Tourism Recovery Best Practice Group.
- Visit Norfolk [Visit West Norfolk/BCKLWN are executive committee members].
- West Norfolk Tourism Forum.
- West Norfolk VENI 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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