

Item: Tourism Marketing Update

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

Date: 13th January 2025

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 June 2024 to present day. To note, the department had a temporary Tourism Support Officer in post from May 2024 until early November 2024. Since that time the Tourism department is down to one member of staff.

2 Printed marketing

As regularly mentioned in our reports 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 they thus have to wait for a slightly longer period of time for a restock of any reprinted version of our current titles.

2.1 Discover King's Lynn

110,000 copies of the 2024 edition of this popular leaflet were produced during the early summer of 2024 and subsequently distributed across 200+ venues (both local and regional venues) by two distribution companies.

2.2 Hunstanton Mini Guide and Downham Market Mini Guide

In early Spring 2025 we plan to run another 40,000 copies of the updated *Hunstanton Mini Guide* and another quantity of 12,750 copies of the updated *Downham Market Mini Guide* at that same time.

2.3 New publication: Downham Market Gingerbread Trail

The Tourism department launched a new self-guided trail for Downham Market town centre in July 2024, with a well-attended public launch event held at the Discover Downham Heritage Centre. In an ongoing rolling production, copies of the full-colour booklet are mainly available from the heritage centre and downloadable online, with copies often also found at the Downham Market Town Hall and the Downham Market Train Station when available. It has recently undergone a third reprint, and a fresh design of the front cover is to happen later in the year.

New publication: Norfolk Coast - Myths & Legends

The Tourism department held a pre-public launch event during the *Fear in the Fens* Festival in King's Lynn in late October 2024 for its new *Norfolk Coast: Myths & Legends* booklet. The department has been working on this distinctive booklet for over 18 months, with both the creative presentation (using sound, video and narrative performance elements) and the booklet itself received very positive feedback from the festival attendees during that weekend in October 2024. After learning from that trial launch event, the Tourism department plans to hold a trilogy of public events across the Norfolk coast in the late winter and early spring for this new high-quality booklet, dependent on finding the right venues to present the audiovisual elements. The booklet itself focusses on out-of-season tourism across the atmospheric Norfolk coast, touching upon folklore, dark history and Lord Nelson.

2.4 Other publications

The Borough Council is supporting the King's Lynn Town Guides once again by soon arranging the print and distribution of the *2025 King's Lynn Guided Walks* programme ahead of the Easter 2025 start of the new Town Guides walks programme.

The Tourism Department once again supported the print of the *King's Lynn Heritage Open Day* booklet during the summer of 2024, leading up to the very successful early September 2024 event for the town.

3 **Digital marketing**

3.1 www.visitwestnorfolk.com

We use the website content for our promotional articles and blog posts highlighting local activities and attractions, all researched, written and promoted by the Tourism Support Officer and/or any interim support in place of that post. The Tourism department ran a one-month paid Facebook Ads campaign during October 2024 to boost our website's "free and low-cost things to do in west Norfolk" content.

www.explorewestnorfolk.co.uk

We still promote our Explore West Norfolk website in our e-shots and other marketing materials on an ongoing basis, such as within the new *Downham Market Gingerbread Trail* booklet. However, Explore West Norfolk was originally funded as a tool to attract visitors to our area during out-of-season times and, as such, we tend to heavily promote the Visit West Norfolk website for the spring and summer, and the *Explore West Norfolk* website for the autumn and winter.

www.sailthewash.com

The Tourism Department is not the lead on the Sail the Wash project though, as a marketing and promotions department, we will once again soon fund a Sail the Wash advert to appear in the 2025 edition of the Norfolk Coast Guardian and we encourage collaborative efforts from the other leisure sailing/mooring destinations within the project for ongoing future promotion of the website.

3.2 Website traffic

The Visit West Norfolk website continues to exceed our 10% growth KPI projection and received well over a quarter of a million visits to our Visit West Norfolk website for the calendar year of 2024. Our Explore West Norfolk website (devoted to walking/cycling trails and rural exploration) is also seeing very good growth in website visits, again with well over a quarter of a million visits for the same calendar year. These figures remain based on basic organic growth as opposed to continuous periods of paid promotion for the website. As mentioned elsewhere in the report, the Tourism department did, however, run a very modest one-month paid Facebook Ads campaign during October 2024 to boost our "low-cost things to do in west Norfolk" content.

3.3 Events & Activities

With regards to notable events which were held during the period covered by this report, there was a full and varied programme of festivals held across west Norfolk, with one of the last summer-season events of year being the Heritage Open Day event held around King's Lynn town centre with a classic car show too (subsequent reports of fantastic attendance figures for the whole event), and west Norfolk-wide Christmas and New Year's Eve events. Autumn period festivals included the 27th-29th September 2024 Literary Festival and the

sold-out late October 2024 'Fear in the Fens' weekend in King's Lynn celebrating folklore and folk horror.

The Tourism department produce, post and repost social media content promoting such events and activities, and we made a great deal of promotional material for events for our themed visitor e-shots, blog posts and activity across the department's social networks leading up to bank holidays and seasonal offerings. Such event and activity-based content included: low-cost and 'rainy day' activities in west Norfolk, Halloween events for all the family, dog-friendly venues, Norfolk Food Week content, etc.

3.4 Business e-shots

Local tourism businesses and organisations on the tourism department's business contacts database continue to receive a fortnightly e-shot (latest tourism business news in email format) from the department, though with a gap in activity during March-May 2024 as highlighted in a previous report, and from November-December 2024 – both periods of time due to staff shortages within the department. Such tourism business-related e-shots often include: grant schemes and other relevant funding news, sponsorship opportunities, free or low-cost staff training events, networking opportunities and business events, tourism industry-related themed weeks of promotion, etc.

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) remains one e-shot sent every fortnight. The focus of each e-shot (often themed) being to promote a set of 3-4 events or attractions, accommodation and/or activities which would take the average visitor at least a couple of days' stay in the area to see and do. Such tourism consumer-related e-shots often include: seasonal promotions (such as Christmas events), walking trails, events and festivals, travelling advice and accommodation offers, etc.

4 **Planned activity**

4.1 West Norfolk Tourism Development Plan - Actions

The Tourism department remains dedicated to working on actions directly related to the six strategic aims within the *West Norfolk Tourism Development Plan* for 2022-26. The 5-year plan has seen ongoing evaluation by businesses and councillors and, in Autumn 2024, has had its agreed actions formally accepted by the borough council. As previously reported, it focusses on six key strategic aims to assist west Norfolk's tourism development, and work continues on resolving actions taken from the aims. To take examples from two aims within the strategy, the Tourism department is to take action to support **the development of the cultural product** for west Norfolk (some actions include the formation of a brand new self-guided trail for visitors to Downham Market, the creation of a primarily out-of-season Hunstanton and wider Norfolk Coast tourism product which includes content on Lord Nelson, and ongoing support for King's Lynn's Hanseatic connections and opportunities), and to take action on supporting **innovation and tech** in west Norfolk, such as guiding Discover Downham Heritage Centre's use of AI-driven image upscaling software for their archival work.

5 **Other developments**

5.1 Shared Prosperity Fund Projects

The Tourism department are doing ongoing work on a range of current SPF funded projects, which include the final stage of work on the regeneration of items at the West Lynn Pavilion (specifically the fitting of three exterior interpretation boards), a brand new exterior

interpretation board devoted to King's Lynn's medieval connection to the Hanse League (to be placed on the South Quay) and the department supporting the creation of a Hanseatic art mural to be created in the town centre in March 2025 to help celebrate the town's 20th Anniversary of rejoining the Hanse League.

Another SPF-supported project which the Tourism department is currently working on is an online e-learning version of the West Norfolk Ambassadors Course - and will give a more detailed report on that project in the next King's Lynn & West Norfolk Area Museums Committee report.

5.2 Software

We continue to use the content gained through our use of the User Generated Content platform Snapsea (www.snapsea.io) software through our Instagram account to enhance, inform and grow our future promotional interactions with potential visitors to west. We are now towards the end of our initial 12-month 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.

Due to our extensive experience in using image upscaling software (primarily Topaz GigaPixel 6.0) we also plan to support the Discover Downham Heritage Centre in their use of the latest iteration of the software for re-evaluating their extensive image archives, in-house exhibition content boards, and nurturing interest in that AI-driven software from young student placements at the heritage centre.

The World Trade Market, Excel London, October 2024

The Tourism department went to the leading WTM tourism event in London in October 2024 and attended the conferences there which focussed on tech and software for the Tourism industry. The main conclusions taken from the event were that AI has become the main Tourism industry tool in driving marketing and promotion for visitor growth (including 'good' bots mining websites such as our own for use on other main tourism platforms and portals: that our own content is read by AI as authentic answers to user questions and reach a much wider audience that way), alongside AI-assisted sustainable tourism aims and growth in such business practices.

The Explore West Norfolk Apps – to be discontinued in 2025

After six years on the app stores, our two apps on the Explore West Norfolk platform reach their end-of-life state later in 2025 after much updating of their code over the years to meet the changing requirements on the Android and Apple app stores. As the accompanying website (built utilising Web 2.0) has the exact same content as both of those apps (including an interactive itinerary builder on the website), and with the website performing more consistently than the apps, the department does not see this natural end of the two apps in a negative way.

5.3 The Hanse League

The Tourism department, as Chair and administrator for the Europe-wide Hanse Sustainable Working Group, organised an online 'peer learning event' in September 2024, which included three speakers from across Europe who outlined a range of their innovative sustainable business practices (the event theme being 'water') to all attendees. Feedback from the event was very positive and a follow-up online event, this time devoted to sustainable business practices focussing on 'energy', is planned for the Spring of 2025.

The Tourism department remains a member of both the King's Lynn Hanse Club and the

King's Lynn Hanse Festival Committee, the Senior Tourism Officer also in attendance at the annual International Hanse Festivals held in Hanse cities across northern Europe during June every year, to represent the Hanse town of King's Lynn.

5.4 West Norfolk Tourism Business Event

After the forthcoming West Norfolk Tourism Forum AGM (to be held in mid-January 2025), the Tourism department will finalise the booking of presenters and the full agenda for the 'West Norfolk Tourism Business Summit '25' event, held in King's Lynn in March 2025 and promoted to local businesses via different platforms including Eventbrite and LinkedIn. The Senior Tourism Officer was the organiser of the inaugural March 2024 West Norfolk Tourism Business Summit evening event and aims to build upon the positive feedback received from that first summit event.

5.5 Partnerships

5.5.1 West Norfolk Tourism continues to work with Visit Norfolk and the Visit East of England LVEP (the Local Visitor Economy Partnership) to promote the county and wider area as one of the 'DMO Coalition' members from across East Anglia.

5.5.2 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 (June 2024-January 2025):

- British Destinations.
- 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 Walsingham Way Group.
- Norfolk & Suffolk DMO Coalition.
- Norfolk Coast Partnership / AONB.
- Norfolk Tourism Best Practice Group.
- Visit Norfolk [Visit West Norfolk 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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