

**BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK**

**CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL**

**Minutes from the Meeting of the Corporate Performance Panel held on  
Wednesday, 1st September, 2021 at 4.30 pm in the Assembly Room, Town  
Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Moriarty (Chair)  
Councillors B Ayres, J Collop, I Devereux, C Hudson, C Morley, S Nash, S Patel,  
C Rose, Mrs V Spikings (substitute for Councillor C Manning) and D Tyler

**Portfolio Holder:**

Councillor Mrs A Dickinson, Finance

**Under Standing Order 34:**

Councillors P Beal, M de Whalley, Mrs E Nockolds and J Rust

**Officers present in the Assembly Room:**

Becky Box, Assistant Director, Central Services/Management Team  
Representative

Lorraine Gore, Chief Executive

Honor Howell, Assistant to the Chief Executive

Wendy Vincent, Democratic Services Officer

**Officers present via the Remote Meeting Room, Zoom:**

Noel Doran, Eastlaw

Ged Greaves, Senior Policy and Performance Officer

Philip Eke, Senior Tourism Officer

Matthew Henry, Assistant Director

Bethany O'Brien, Trainee Tourism Support Officer

David Ousby, Assistant Director

CP31 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Long and C Manning.

CP32 **MINUTES**

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The minutes of the Corporate Performance Panel held on 21 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to Councillor B Ayres being added to the list of attendees.

CP33 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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Councillor C Rose declared an interest as a Member of the Hunstanton Sailing Club.

CP34 **URGENT BUSINESS UNDER STANDING ORDER 7**

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The Chair explained why there was no urgent business.

CP35 **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

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Councillor P Beal for item 8.

Councillor M de Whalley for items 4, 8 to 11, 16 and 17.

Councillor Mrs E Nockolds for item 8.

Councillor J Rust for items 9, 10, 16 and 17.

CP36 **CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no Chair's correspondence.

CP37 **CALL-IN**

There were no call-ins.

CP38 **HUNSTANTON TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE**

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The Panel received a PowerPoint presentation from the Senior Tourism Officer, a copy of which is attached to the minutes.

The Panel was informed that the report highlighted the steady national and regional decline in traditional Tourist Information Centre (TIC) services and the lack of any clear link between an area not having a TIC and the level of tourism income to that area. It was explained that the report also set out the new options which had been set up in Hunstanton with regards to tourism enquiries.

The Senior Tourism Officer presented the report which was in response to a request from Councillor Beal and highlighted the key issues.

The Chair commented that he appreciated the extra work put into the report following the sifting meeting and also since the agenda was

published. The presentation was not included with the Agenda, but the Senior Tourism Officer explained that it was an expansion of the report circulated with the Agenda. The Chair asked if it was therefore possible for Democratic Services to circulate the presentation after the meeting and added that it would have been useful to look at figures prior to meeting as questions may well arise from a closer examination of them.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor de Whalley addressed the Panel and the Senior Tourism Officer responded in relation to questions regarding a staffed TIC as a unique selling point to promote tourism in Hunstanton.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Mrs E Nockolds addressed the Panel and stated that she considered the report to be an excellent report and added that she was aware of the increase in the number of website visitors. Councillor Nockolds commented that she herself was personally a fan of Tourist Information Centres (TICs) and provided an overview of the arrangements which had been put in place during the Pandemic. Councillor Nockolds also informed the Panel of the many different ways tourist information was available, for example, leaflets in Bed and Breakfast/hotel accommodation and from the Tourism Information Points in the Oasis and other venues within the Borough. Councillor Nockolds advised that the staff located at the Oasis had received training to provide specific tourist information to visitors. In conclusion, Councillor Nockolds commented that all businesses, etc in Hunstanton were ambassadors to promote tourism in Hunstanton and emphasised the importance of information being available on line and via leaflets, etc.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Rust addressed the Panel and highlighted the importance of information being available not just on the website, but alternative ways such as libraries, as there were a number of people who did not have access to online services. In response to further questions from Councillor Rust, the Senior Tourism Officer explained that prior to the Pandemic, the TIC in King's Lynn moved to and merged with the Stories of Lynn, which provided a walk in advice service, and a variety of tourist information for the whole of West Norfolk, including Hunstanton.

Councillor Morley commented on the use of statistics and the mapping of the austerity and funding of the Borough Council against the decline of TICs. He asked if there was any evidence available that the internet enquiries relating to West Norfolk were directed to Hunstanton and commented on the importance of having a manned TIC in Hunstanton.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Beal addressed the Panel and read out a report (copy attached to the minutes) from the town of Hunstanton which he stated required scrutinising.

The Senior Tourism Officer responded to questions and comments from Councillor Beal in relation to:

- The steady national decline in traditional Tourist Information Centres and alternative ways of providing tourist information to visitors and the investment in digital ways of communicating.
- Case studies (set out in key issues of the report on page 16 of the agenda) – querying which businesses and associations were approached in Hunstanton regarding the TIC.
- External and internal signage to direct visitors to the Tourist Information Point at the Oasis Leisure Centre. It was reported that the signage had been delayed but was scheduled to be erected imminently.
- Staffed Tourism Information Centre based at the Stories of Lynn, King's Lynn.

The Senior Tourism Support Officer responded to general questions from the Panel in relation to:

- Closure of TIC's in other parts of the country.
- VisitEngland ceasing to accrediting TICs and all official ongoing TIC specific information resources.
- Information available at the Hunstanton Tourist Information point.
- Cost of providing a manned TIC.
- Statistics available to demonstrate the increase in website visitors in the country. The Senior Tourism Officer undertook to share the national statistics with the Panel.

In response to questions and comments from Councillor Mrs Spikings on the figure of 94% internet usage for the elderly and that the figure appeared high, the Senior Tourism Support Officer explained that the data had been obtained from national statistics would share the information with the Panel.

The Chair asked how the Panel would like to take this item forward to ensure that it was not lost.

Councillor Hudson commented that various accommodation venues in the country had leaflets to inform visitors of places to visit and could not see there being a case to afford the staff at a TIC, the cost of employment would be beyond the return.

Councillor Nash proposed that the Portfolio Holder for Business, Culture and Heritage speak to businesses in Hunstanton in order to gauge their view on the removal of a staffed TIC and that in 6 months' time to invite the Portfolio Holder to attend the Corporate Performance Panel to debate the issue and if appropriate set up an informal working group to explore the issues raised. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Morley who added that he would support a group being set

up to explore the issues raised and on being put to the vote this was carried.

The Chair thanked the Senior Tourism Officer for the presentation and report.

**RESOLVED:** 1) The Portfolio Holder for Business, Culture and Heritage be requested to meet with the businesses in Hunstanton.

2) The Portfolio Holder for Business, Culture and Heritage be invited to attend the Panel in 6 months' time to present his perception of those views, and if appropriate set up an informal working group to explore the issues raised.

## CP39 **PROCUREMENT UPDATE**

[Click here to view a recording of this item on You Tube](#)

The Panel received a presentation (copy attached to the agenda) from the Assistant Director, Programme and Project Delivery (Commercial and Housing).

The Assistant Director, Programme and Project Delivery (Commercial and Housing). responded to questions and comments in relation to:

- Officers having membership of Institute of Procurement.
- New Trainee – to graduate upon completion with relevant qualification.
- Towns Fund – civil work contracts.
- Major Projects, for example, Enterprise Zone.
- Major Housing project.
- Competence and skills held by current in-house team.
- Working with partners on important services for the Borough.
- Sharing procurement services and expertise.
- Procurement activity.
- Contract management and multi-discipline approach.
- Breckland hosted service proposal.
- Issues for procurement strategy.
- Borough Council's contract process.
- Lists for preferred suppliers.
- Recognition of a climate emergency by the council and the impact on requirements for the contract tender process and potential burden to businesses submitting bids for work with the council.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor de Whalley addressed the Panel and asked what measures had been put in place to ensure that procurement was resilient to the effect of Climate Change. In response, the Assistant Director provided examples of environmental enhancements included within the Parkway housing development contract, and an overview of the monitoring procedures in place for projects.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for the presentation.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the update report be noted.

CP40

**Q1 2021-2022 CORPORATE RECOVERY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS MONITORING REPORT**

[Click here to view a recording of this item on You Tube](#)

In presenting the report, the Assistant to the Chief Executive reminded Members that a Covid-19 Recovery Strategy was agreed by Council on 8 October 2020. The report, therefore provided an update on the corporate performance monitoring indicators for the Recovery Strategy for the 2021/22 year.

The key issues were outlined as set out in the report.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the following performance indicators:

- 1.8 - % of Business Rates collected against target (cumulative).
- 2.2 – number in employment claiming Universal Credit.
- 2.4 – % of rent arrears on industrial units.
- 2.5 - % of rent achievable on retail/general units.
- 3.4 – total tonnage of commercial waste.
- 4.2 – number of days to process changes of circumstances.
- 4.4 – spend on bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 5.1 – number of crime incidents within the Borough.
- 6.1 - % of Careline alarms installed within 10 days from date of enquiry.

In response to questions from Councillor Devereux on the “red areas” for example that people being supplemented with Universal Credit and the potential impact following the end of the Furlough Scheme in September, the Assistant to the Chief Executive explained that it was difficult to foresee the impact and provided an overview of the factors that could impact upon the indicators.

Councillor Morley commented that it had been an interesting debate on how the external factors could affect the council's Corporate Business Plan and hoped that the new corporate business plan when presented to the Panel on 20 October 2021 would set out the process of delivering services which met the requirements that Councillors had identified, for example, the Direction of Travel and indicators which would set out the outcome of performance in relation to climate change, biodiversity, etc.

The Chair commented that the trends presented interesting information.

The Chief Executive added that the comments made by the Panel would be taken on board when the Corporate Business Plan and performance indicators were refreshed.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive and Assistant to the Chief Executive for presenting the report and responding to questions and comments from the Panel.

**RESOLVED:** The Panel reviewed and noted the council's performance indicators for Q1 2021/22. Performance against these indicators will continue to be reported to the Corporate Performance Panel via periodic updates.

#### CP41 **REVIEW OF THE PERSISTENT COMPLAINANTS POLICY**

[Click here to view a recording of this item on You Tube](#)

The Chair reminded the Panel that Councillors were invited to review the current Persistent Complainants Policy.

The Chief Executive introduced the report and invited the Panel to review the current policy.

Councillor Nash presented his report (copy attached to the minutes) and explained that he had brought this item to the Corporate Performance Panel on 21 July 2021 as his opinion was that the policy was not lawful. However, the council's Monitoring Officer had determined that the council's current Persistent Complaints Policy was lawful. Councillor Nash advised that he had written his own report for the Panel to consider the changes he had identified. Councillor Nash proceeded to read his report to the Panel. In presenting his report, Councillor Nash made reference to the 2013 Persistent Complainants Policy. Councillor Nash outlined his proposed changes to the policy.

The Chair summarised the two points made by Councillor Nash.

Councillor Mrs Spikings asked if legal advice could be obtained on the changes proposed by Councillor Nash.

The Chair stated that the 2013 policy with proposed amendments from Councillor Nash to be brought back to the Panel for discussion and asked that the 2013 policy be circulated to Members.

Councillor Ayres commented that Councillor Nash had undertaken a lot of work on the policy and asked if legal advice could be obtained and then be brought back to the Panel in an understandable context.

Councillor Mrs Spikings concurred with the comments made by Councillor Ayres.

The Chief Executive advised that Councillor Nash would need to make it clear what exactly he wished the Panel to look at in order that legal advice could be obtained.

**RESOLVED:** 1) Councillor Nash to clarify what the Panel were being requested to look at in order that legal advice could be obtained.

2) Councillor Nash to circulate the 2013 policy he referred to the Panel.

3) Item to be considered by the Panel on 20 October 2021 once Members had had an opportunity to consider the changes proposed by Councillor Nash. The Panel to be provided with the following documents in order to consider the proposed changes put forward by Councillor Nash.:

- Current Persistent Complainants Policy.
- 2013 Current Persistent Complainants Policy.
- Legal advice.

#### CP42 **CABINET FORWARD DECISIONS LIST**

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It was noted that the following Cabinet Reports were currently on the Panel's Work Programme:

20 October 2021

- Review of the Corporate Business Plan.
- Update to the Major Project Board Terms of Reference.
- Exempt Report – Review of Legal Services.

#### CP43 **PANEL WORK PROGRAMME**

[Click here to view a recording of this item on You Tube](#)

The following two items were identified to be placed on the list of forthcoming items for the Panel to consider:

- Presentation on the Borough Council's vehicle fleet – types, age, asset values disposal strategy, market residual values, electric parking locations, process used mileage v consumption.
- Review of the Council's working structure to support the Corporate Business Plan. (Organisational chart setting out how FTE had been allocated to service areas to ensure delivery of the Corporate Business Plan).

#### CP44 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Corporate Performance Panel will be held on 20 October 2021.

CP45 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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**RESOLVED:** That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CP46 **EXEMPT REPORT: KING'S LYNN INNOVATION CENTRE REPAYMENT PLAN**

The Assistant Director, Property and Projects provided a verbal update and responded to questions and comments from the Panel.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for the update.

**RESOLVED:** The update report be noted and the published set of accounts for NWES for the year ending 31 March 2020 be circulated to the Panel.

CP47 **EXEMPT REPORT: HUNSTANTON SAILING CLUB ANNUAL UPDATE**

Councillor Rose, the Borough Council's appointed observer provided an annual update to the Panel.

The Chair thanked Councillor Rose for his annual report as the Borough Council's appointed observer.

**The meeting closed at 6.59 pm**

# Post-TIC Tourism in Hunstanton

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Minute Item CP38

The Tourism Department, BCKLWN  
September 1<sup>st</sup> 2021

Borough Council of  
King's Lynn &  
West Norfolk



## In response to the Corporate Performance Panel's question:

*"It is crucial that the only major tourist town in West Norfolk with thousands of tourists visiting every day requires a manned tourist office".*

### And briefly looking at:

- The changing tourism industry over the past 20 years.
- 204 The changing ways within which the general public access information over the same period.
- How the Hunstanton area is provided with tourism enquiry support since the March 2020 closure of the Hunstanton TIC.

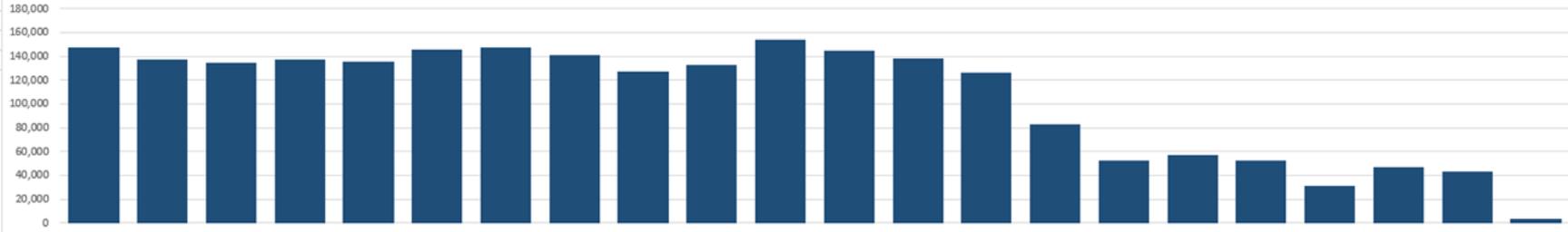


# Hunstanton TIC Visitors 1999-2020

[Common era of home internet use]

Number of Visitors to Hunstanton TIC

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No. of Visitors to Hunstanton TIC:	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
	147,995	137,728	135,026	137,591	135,994	145,625	147,624	140,959	127,092	133,013	153,935	145,146	138,563	126,192	83,196	52,295	56,723	52,671	31,111	46,599	43,266	3,289

<b>Tourism income to west Norfolk (Source: Volume &amp; Value Surveys):</b>	The overall value of tourism to the area in 1999 was an estimated £157.6 million.							The overall value of tourism to the area in 2007 was an estimated £395.4 million.							The overall value of tourism to the area in 2013 was an estimated £462.3 million.							The overall value of tourism to the area in 2019 was an estimated £577.3 million.						
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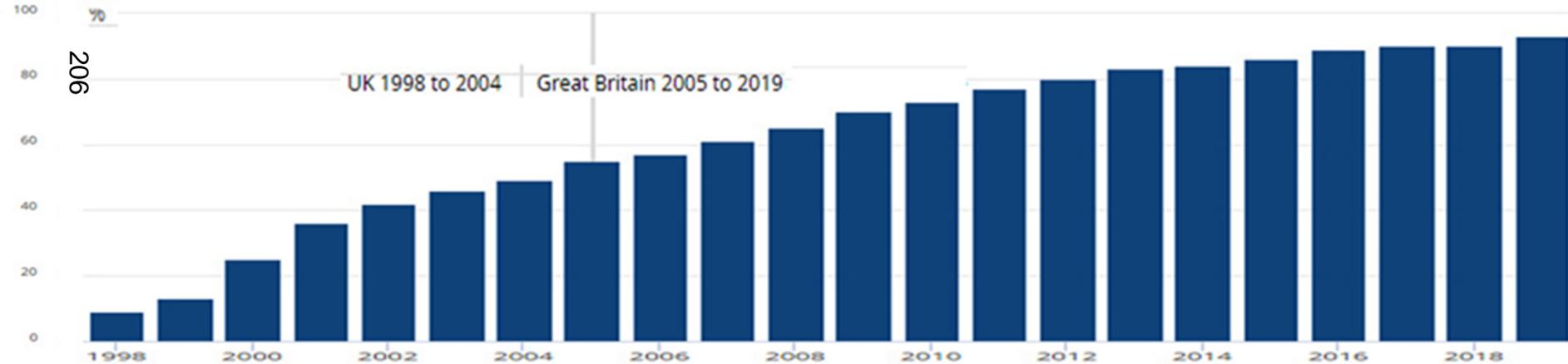
*Inflation: £100 in 1999 is worth £177.77 in 2021.*

<b>Yearly UK/GB Internet Use</b>	35% of all adults used the internet daily or almost every day in 2006 [when comparable records began].							Access to the Internet using a mobile phone more than doubled between 2010 and 2012, from 24% to 51%.							73% of all adults used the internet daily or almost every day in 2013. 20 million more than in 2006.							78% of all adults used the internet daily or almost every day in 2015.							In 2018, approximately half of all households in the UK had an iPhone.							87% of all adults used the internet daily or almost every day in 2019						
<b>Comments of Note (ONS and other sources):</b>																																										

# How the UK now accesses information and booking facilities

Almost two-thirds of households now have mobile broadband access

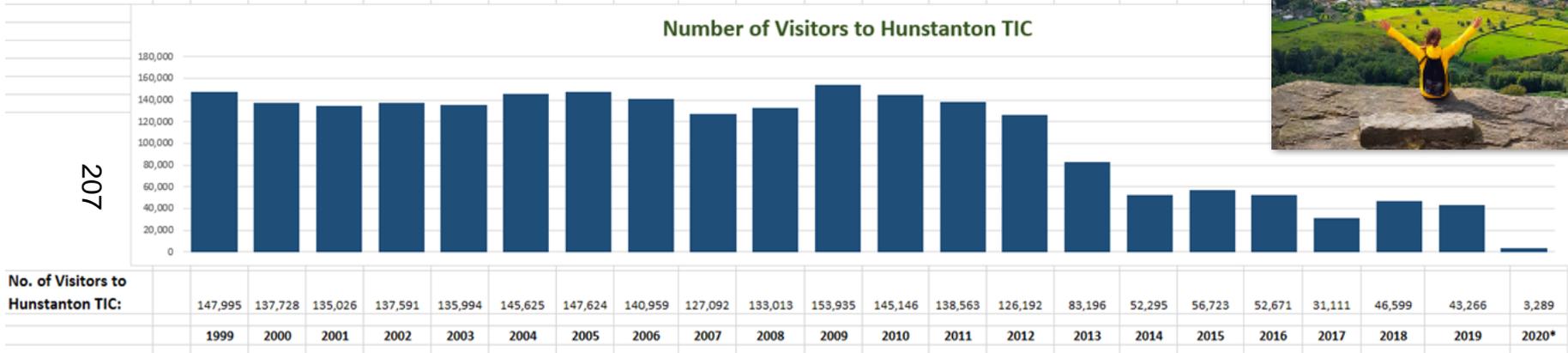
Figure 1: Household internet access, UK and Great Britain, 1998 to 2019



# Comparison between Hunstanton TIC visitors and Visit West Norfolk website visitors

## Hunstanton TIC Visitors 1999-2020

[Common era of home internet use]



Hunstanton TIC Visitors:  
 2018: 46,599  
 2019: 43,266  
 2020: 3,289 [only until March]  
 2021: n/a

Visit West Norfolk Website Visitors:  
 2018: 185,105  
 2019: 212,803  
 2020: 414,648 [pandemic era]  
 2021: 180,141 [only for Jan-Aug 2021]

Visit West Norfolk Total Website Page Visits:  
 2018: 623,578  
 2019: 887,312  
 2020: 2,253,011 [pandemic era]  
 2021: 1,162,737 [only for Jan-Jul 2021]



# The National Decline of the Importance of TICs

**The Guardian** UK edition

Search jobs Sign in Search

NEWS WEBSITE OF THE YEAR

The Telegraph News Politics Sport Business Money Opinion Tech Life Style

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Travel Comment

## An ode to the tourist information centre, a British institution trundling towards extinction

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Manchester Visitor Information Centre is bucking the downward trend with an average of 1,000 people a day. Photograph: Christopher Thomond for the Guardian

They were Britain's response to the package holiday; a network of Tourist Information Centres funded by the government to divert vacationers from

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**BBC NEWS**

Home Coronavirus US Election UK World Business Politics Tech Science Health

## VisitScotland to shut 39 tourist offices

© 12 October 2017

The visitor centre in Portree is among those being extended into a regional hub.

**BBC NEWS**

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## Why are tourists flocking to Scotland?

© 16 March 2015

For the sixth year running, Scotland has outperformed the rest of the UK in attracting visitors to its tourist attractions. Edinburgh is the top UK destination outside London - but the whole country is benefiting from a tourism renaissance. So why is Scotland punching above its weight?

The lure of the big cities

When it comes to the big numbers, it's the cities that are really driving up the stats. London attracted 64 million visitors so it's little wonder it boasts the UK's top 10 visitor attractions in terms of numbers. But the 11th and 12th slots were both in



**Anke Monestel - VisitEngland** May 24th

Hi @Sally Coleman- Leicester/Leicestershire, unfortunately, we no longer support TICs - that resource went a few years ago. So there is no such thing as accreditation. We might be able to dig out branding - I'll email my colleague who deals with branding and cc you.

Borough Council of  
King's Lynn &  
West Norfolk



# Post-TIC Tourism Support for Hunstanton



- The formation from May 2021 of a **Tourist Information Point** at Alive Oasis in Hunstanton.
- The **Tourist Information service** element of the *Stories of Lynn* venue in King's Lynn still deals with email and telephone enquiries for Hunstanton, as well as walk-ins from King's Lynn town centre.
- The independently-run **Visitor Centre at Deepdale Backpackers** provides tourism leaflets to visitors.
- The **Hunstanton Heritage Centre** has a slightly scaled-down version of a Tourist Information Point.
- The Tourism department believes that future plans for the **relocated Hunstanton Library** would include an area specifically for a TIP, with library staff on site.
- Tourism **leaflet distributors** conduct routine deliveries of leaflets around and within the Hunstanton area: having a good level of printed tourist information available is still seen as desirable if possible.
- Visitors to the **Visit West Norfolk** website and our other platforms have increased across the pandemic.
- 40,000 new copies of the Tourism Department's annual **Hunstanton Mini Guide** leaflet were distributed around the area from June 2021 for visitors to pick up and use across the summer, plus our other Hunstanton titles.

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# Conclusion

- From all recent and current sources of evidence within the tourism industry there is a lack of a strong business case for the reintroduction of a traditional TIC service in Hunstanton town, especially with consideration of the current tourism enquiry support options in the area.
- Generally, this situation is in line with the previously evidenced 20-year decline in traditional TIC services in the UK tourism industry (if not in the western world itself) and, as such, not simply a situation specific to Hunstanton (and its March 2020 TIC closure in particular).

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## HUNSTANTON Tourist Information Centre

### Background Notes – March 2020 to March 2021

During the first national lockdown, which began on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020, Hunstanton TIC was closed down. This closure was effected with no consultation or communication with local residents or businesses – not even by email or by letter. Such disregard for local people and their opinions on this matter smacks of total arrogance and contempt for those who pay their Council Tax costs to BCKLWN.

The ‘decision’ to close Hunstanton’s TIC was taken by a small number of BCKLWN representatives and an equal number of Hunstanton Town Councillors, behind closed doors.

No transparency. No note of the meeting, other than the one obtained under an FOI request.

A total erosion of local democracy through the back door of the Covid-19 scenario.

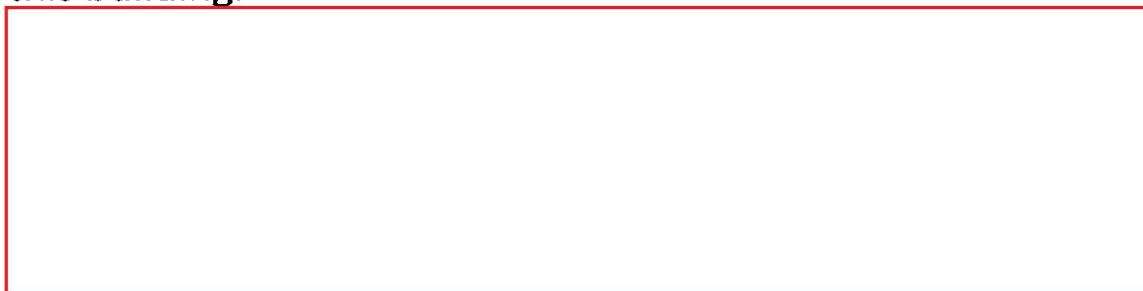
In June 2020, the then Mayor of Hunstanton released a statement announcing the closure of Hunstanton TIC.

Between June 2020 and March 2021 an active campaign by a group of Hunstanton residents, called for a reinstatement of a staffed Hunstanton TIC. They met with Cllr Nockolds, the then Portfolio Holder for Culture, Health and Heritage. She undertook to review the situation. The campaign group were not invited to join the review, and, once again, a decision was simply passed

We do not know the scope of this review nor under which informed evidence it was conducted.

The outcome of Cllr Nockold's review was not to reinstate a staffed TIC facility in Hunstanton but to locate a Tourist Information Point within the Alive Oasis café.

To this very date, the August Bank Holiday 2021, there is absolutely zero signage on the front or the sides of the building indicating the provision of tourist literature within this building.



Alive West Norfolk had no problem putting up a banner advertising their own activities within Alive Oasis over the summer months – but no parallel banner alongside it about tourism information.

This alone speaks volumes of the zero importance attached to providing tourists to Hunstanton with a service of any sort.

The case for not restoring a staffed TIC in Hunstanton centred on the following two arguments by Cllr Nockolds –  
“that everyone has a smartphone these days and that everyone goes online for tourist information.”

Both of these arguments are totally wrong and were used as the justification for the closure of Norwich TIC too.

There is absolutely no evidence to support the view that everyone in Hunstanton and everyone living in or visiting Hunstanton has a smartphone. Even if they did, mobile reception on Hunstanton seafront is so poor that no calls could be made or information retrieved. What has been conveniently overlooked in the midst of all of the posturing about mobile phones, internet etc is that Hunstanton TIC provided information and services for local residents, a larger than UK average proportion of whom are not digitally-enabled, for one reason or another and who do not have family members close by.

At a full BCKLWN meeting held on Thursday January 21<sup>st</sup> 2021, a member of the public asked for a reconsideration of the closure of the staffed Hunstanton TIC.

All Councillors were informed that the costs of operating a staffed TIC in Hunstanton (43.000 pounds SLA) had equated to just 0.1 of 1% of the total annual budget figure for BCKLWN. Hardly major outlay.

Cllr Long, at this same meeting, made a statement to say that the decision to close Hunstanton TIC had been taken by Hunstanton Town Council and not by BCKLWN and he furthermore went on to state that the number of tourists to Hunstanton TIC had 'decreased massively' over recent years. When asked for the evidence behind these words, he failed to produce it.





I quote from Hunstanton Town Council's Report 2019/2020 as follows:

“Hunstanton Town Council received an annual subsidy from the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk to provide the services of a Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in the 2019/2020 financial year for the benefit of visitors and residents.

Popular services have included the processing of parking permits, not only for residents but also for businesses and visitors to the town, ticket sales for local attractions, often at reduced prices and tickets for the popular pantomime held in the Town Hall at Christmas.

The excellent and knowledgeable staff ensure that local businesses are promoted.

A wide selection of leaflets are stocked for hundreds of local attractions as well as bus timetables, Holiday guides, 'Where to go' guides and Hunstanton mini Guide.

Tickets are sold for all local events, whether purchased over the phone or mailed out.”

April 2021 to present date

So.....where are we now?



A Tourist Information Point in a seafront building, with no clear  visible signage whatsoever.

Thousands upon thousands of tourists and visitors will have walked along the prom between April and today's date, totally unaware of any tourism information within the building.

This all smacks of no interest in tourism whatsoever from the BCKLWN, and no forward-thinking at all.

Shame upon officers of this Borough.

Hunstanton is our coastal tourism magnet. Its economy depends on tourism. Lives, livelihoods and family incomes depend upon tourism. Hunstanton is the ONLY seaside town in the BCKLWN portfolio and it certainly deserves better than zero signage for a non-staffed facility.



 What happened to the Wayne Hemingway proposals? Washed out on the tides?



Hunstanton could be, and has the potential to be, a real full-on, all-year round destination resort – but it requires a massive amount of 'thinking outside the box' and an equal amount of creative, innovative thinking, consultation and

decision-making (not to mention funding) to bring the town to life and to put it well and truly on the list of 'must visit' seaside towns in the UK.



Where and when will the process begin? A good start would be for the new portfolio holder for Tourism, Cllr Middleton, along with Philip Eke, to come and engage with Hunstanton's businesses and residents and to really get to grips with designing a fit-for-purpose 21<sup>st</sup> century seaside town with an integrated community hub, incorporated with a staffed services (including tourism information) facility for businesses, residents and visitors alike.

At the risk of stating the obvious, people go into Tourist Information Centres to source information. Information about local attractions and much, much more. This in turn, acts as a driver for local businesses, and, once again, in turn, boosts the town's economy.

For the record, from the survey of 106 of the businesses in Hunstanton carried out in July 2020, the percentage of businesses which highlighted in their comments a variety of negative effects of the closure of the staffed TIC on the town's local business economy as a whole was 70%. 





I totally reject Mr Eke's argument that there is not a business case for a staffed Tourist Information Centre in Hunstanton.

By spending time in Hunstanton engaging with business owners and talking with residents and other stakeholders, Cllr Middleton and Mr Eke could then listen to what they are saying rather than making a 'decision' about what is 'best' for them.

I note that Mr Eke's report has been marked as 'not for forwarding to a Cabinet meeting'.

I hereby recommend that this suggestion be overthrown and that the future of Hunstanton's tourism be a priority for debate and development at both BCKLWN level and at local level in Hunstanton.



Just because other town and cities (often with well-developed and comprehensive signposting and signage) have closed their Tourist Information Centres does not mean that Hunstanton has to fall in line and do the same.

Let's 'buck the trend' and showcase what a thriving Tourist Information Centre can do – for businesses, residents and visitors alike.

Where there is a political will to do so, there IS a way.

I am ready and willing  to be an active, working member of the task force which I have just outlined and look forward to getting started.

B Cllr Paul Beal

## **Unreasonable Complainants Policy CPP 01/09/2021**

Following a 2018 complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, the response to which was published in August of that year, it was deemed by the Ombudsman that the use of the Unreasonable Complainants policy as it is now known by the Borough Council against a complainant had been “*unjust*” with particular reference to the requirement for an appeal. It was further recommended by the Ombudsman that the Council review its policy annually in order to ensure that the policy remained fit for purpose.

Although there was no requirement by the Ombudsman to necessarily change the policy at every review, the policy was reviewed and revised in September 2018 albeit with no amendment to the appeals process.

The intentions of the March 2013 policy being reviewed at that time were essentially good. It is indeed important to maintain such a policy in order to protect Council officers from abuse and also to reasonably limit the use of Council resources. It is important to note that there is also a duty of care upon the Council to deal appropriately not only with complaints, but also the individuals making those complaints in a fair and transparent manner. Looking at the wider picture, there is in fact a very great benefit to the Council in ensuring that alleged service failures have been appropriately addressed.

There are essentially two routes of complaint through the Council. Complaints against councillors are dealt with through the Standards process as defined in law, and where those complaints follow a lawful process, a councillor and a complainant alike can have a reasonable expectation that a fair hearing will ensue under the auspices of the Independent Person and the Standards Committee. Councillors would be the first to complain if complaints against them were dealt with behind closed doors, the outcome being reached through a process that fails to meet any test of impartiality. Complaints against Council services terminate to this day in just such a potentially partisan manner contrary to part 2, section 13.04 of the Council’s Constitution which states:

*quote “The Council, councillors and officers, when acting as a tribunal or in any other quasi-judicial capacity or deciding or considering the civil rights and obligations or the criminal responsibility of any person, shall (rather than simply giving advice) follow a process which respects the requirements of natural justice and fair trial in accordance with Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights” unquote*

In this respect, a very important legal doctrine was quoted by Cllr. Dark at the CPP meeting of October 2019:

*quote “justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done”. unquote*

In view of this doctrine and the Council’s own Constitution, the debate at the CPP meeting of October 2019 addressed to good effect the matter of appeal. No longer would Council officers be faced with the difficult task of making a judgement over their work colleagues. Whilst it was deemed to be acceptable for officers to be involved in a decision to invoke the policy against a complainant in the first instance, the final arbiter on the matter was agreed to be the Standards Committee. A concern was raised at the October 2019 meeting that the remit of the Standards Committee might not extend to this role, so for reference, section 54, paragraph 3 of the Local Government Act 2000 states:

*quote “A relevant authority may arrange for their standards committee to exercise such other functions as the authority consider appropriate.” unquote*

Whilst the use of the Standards Committee for this purpose was recommended by the CPP at the October 2019 meeting, this recommendation was not carried forward to Cabinet.

At the October 2019 CPP meeting, Cllr. Morley proposed the use of a flow chart to explain to all concerned the process of the Unreasonable Complainants Policy. Flow charts are used by various organisations such as the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency to very good effect, providing clear and concise guidance to all concerned; this recommendation was also not carried forward to Cabinet.

At the October 2019 CPP Meeting, it was suggested that a time limit be inserted into the policy in order to draw a line under a complaint. Where the Council invoke this policy against an individual, whilst that policy remains in place, the Council in respect of the responsibility afforded to it under the “presumption of regularity” rule ought to remain open to any new evidence whenever that evidence is presented. Whilst a study into the method to introduce new evidence was suggested by Cllr. Dark during the discussion, a time limit to new evidence was not agreed and yet, a time limit was taken forward to Cabinet.

The use of the Council’s Localism Act, section 28 Independent Person as a part of the appeals process was discussed at the October 2019 CPP meeting but the recommendation was not adopted. On further study of the role of the Independent Person, that individual can be appointed to roles that are commensurate with their primary function but under such circumstances it must be ensured that both parties would be able to discuss the complaint with the Independent Person as is required when dealing with councillor complaints and that those discussions, as per the law in councillor standards investigations, would take place before any judgment on the appeal is reached by the Council. Whilst this may seem obvious, it has historically not been the case and therefore the process by which the Council would use their Independent Person would need to be formally agreed.

Essentially, where an appeal is conducted in a fit and proper manner, service deficiencies within the Council where they exist can be addressed to the benefit of all concerned. Where an appeal is overturned, the Council will be able to demonstrate that they have behaved reasonably.

It is my proposal that with the addition of a robust appeals process, the Unreasonable Complainants Policy be returned otherwise to that as agreed in March 2013. The 2013 policy was in the main copied from the Local Government Ombudsman’s website at that time but the Council had made two significant and questionable changes requiring amendment, namely:

- The scattergun approach had been extended by the Council to include anybody that a complainant might be reasonably expected to rely on in such a potentially complex event; for example: a Member of Parliament, a solicitor, the police and in contradiction of the Council’s own Complaints Policy, a councillor!
- Where it is stated that a complainant refuses to accept the decision on a complaint, the Council had removed the text “unless new evidence is provided”. This text clearly requires reinstating.

Thank you Mr. Chair.