

Item: Tourism Marketing Update

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

Date: 13th June 2022

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 2021. As a reminder, most key tourism marketing activity restarted after the May 17th 2021 relaxing of the lockdown enabled travel and staycations, and our production started for a range of printed guides for 2021 whilst also continuing to focus increasing attention on our digital activity, especially the Visit West Norfolk website.

2 Printed marketing

2.1 2022 Where to Stay in West Norfolk

Following on from last year's introduction of this new title to our range of printed tourism literature, the 2022 edition of the *Where to Stay in West Norfolk* booklet of local accommodation was published in late April 2022, ahead of the summer season. 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. The booklet is in a rolling perpetual print of batches of 750 copies (to periodically enable updates and additions). It is still free-of-charge for west Norfolk accommodation businesses to appear in the booklet during this time, the TIC staff checking for any updates from these businesses before we went to print this year.

2.2 Discover King's Lynn

The 2022 edition of this popular leaflet of ours was published and circulated in April 2022. The print run was still 160,000 copies, with large quantities subsequently distributed around the area by two distribution companies.

2.3 Hunstanton Mini Guide and Downham Market Mini Guide

Work on the 2022-23 editions of both of these titles is underway. Copies of both mini guides are still available at some venues but when current stock has nearly depleted 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. We now wait for almost total stock clearance of all of our leaflets as we are working towards zero waste with our printed titles – so, as a consequence, some venues may have run out for a while before we go to reprint at this time.

2.4 Other publications

The Borough Council is supporting the King's Lynn Town Guides once again by arranging the print and distribution of the 2022 *King's Lynn Guided Walks* programme ahead of the spring start of the Town Guides 2022 programme. Having already produced a reprint of the *King's Lynn Maritime Trail* booklet in May 2022, the Tourism department also supported the production of the *King's Lynn Hanse Day 2022* leaflets for the June 2022 event.

The Tourism Department is planning to support the print of the *King's Lynn Heritage Open Day 2022* booklet later this summer and the department will also conduct reprints of The Hunstanton Wolf Trail and The Hunstanton Horticultural Trail this year.

3 Digital marketing

3.1 www.visitwestnorfolk.com

Work has now completed regarding the creation of a new version of our main visitor website (the borough council ICT team led with this rebooted website design) to better attract modern visitors to the area. The new version of the website launched on May 17th after a long period of production, refining and testing, and is very different in style and look when compared to the old version of our website (which existed for nearly a decade without much structural change). The new version of our website is designed to be an 'iterative website' – meaning that it will see regular changes and updates to all aspects of the design and content to best match the expectations of the modern visitor in the future.

The website now contains a new **Highlights** section of promotional articles and blog posts highlighting local activities and attractions, all researched, written and promoted by the Tourism Support Officer (the west Norfolk Tourism Department is a team of two people).

Now that the website has soft launched (with some minimal outstanding tweaks needing to be done to it), the site will soon see a new section plus related new content dedicated to **Group and Tour Visits to West Norfolk** (with a great deal of focus on attracting group visits to King's Lynn). This section of the new website will be the core focus for a paid 2022-23 groups campaign we are currently planning for attracting more groups and coach tours to the area in the future. For 2022, we have also paid for a half-page promotion specifically for King's Lynn in the *CoachTouring 2022 Directory* and a full-page advert for King's Lynn in a groups feature in *A Grand Day Out*, both adverts to help attract more interest in the town from groups and coach tour operators.

We are running a year-long digital marketing campaign in 2022 to attract new visitors to our website, the campaign branded as "Visit West Norfolk: Let's Go Back", with new professional promo videos currently being commissioned and shot all around west Norfolk, to be posted twice each season from summer onwards and into next winter and spring 2023 – all starring two local families with young actors from the local Workshop acting studio – aiming to show that there is so much to see and do in west Norfolk that visitors will want to come back for repeat visits in the future. We will shortly be running paid ads across our digital portfolio to increase visits to the site and to these new promotional videos.

www.sailthewash.com

Though the Tourism Department is not the lead on the rebooted *Sail the Wash* project, as a marketing and promotions department we have recently been allocated a budget from that project to help promote the new website for that project. In recent months we have paid for *Sail the Wash* adverts to appear in travel supplements for The Guardian, The Evening Standard and also in the Norfolk Coast Guardian too.

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 some budget to help promote this element of our portfolio via digital ads for the Autumn and Winter of 2022-23.

A Grand Day Out: Visit Hunstanton

We have just signed-off on a half-page advertisement (with an extra illustrated editorial) for Hunstanton, geared towards attracting more families to the Hunstanton area from Summer 2022 onwards. This material will be for a paid digital feature and e-newsletter campaign run by the *Grand Day Out* family visitor promotions business – such promotional e-newsletters about Hunstanton to be sent to around half a million signed-up UK families during the course of its campaign this year (559,648 Individual signed up families with 83% or 464,507 subscribers being less than 90 minutes travelling distance from Hunstanton).

3.2 Website traffic

Whilst the Visit West Norfolk website had seen a relative boom in more visitors and page views across the first year of the pandemic period compared to any previous year, **the amount of visitors and page visits has since calmed to a more natural progression of site visits, as predicted in the department's last report to the committee.**

Visit West Norfolk Total Website Page Visits:

2019: 887,312

2020: 2,253,011 [pandemic era]

2021: 1,511,885

2022: 288,588 [from Jan-May 2022 only]

Visit West Norfolk Total Website Visitors:

2019: 212,803

2020: 414,648 [pandemic era]

2021: 351,173

2022: 126,329 [from Jan-May 2022 only]

3.3 Events

Though annual events were still slowly coming back to west Norfolk by late 2021 after periods of lockdown or associated restrictions, the start of 2022 onwards sees an almost complete return to west Norfolk of the regular annual events programme, including the return of largescale festivals for the first time since the start of the pandemic, such as Festival Too.

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 jubilee – the Tourism Department making a great deal of promotional material for such jubilee events, including themed visitor e-shots, lots of posts and activity across the department's social networks leading up the bank holiday weekend, and an in-depth section of the Visit West Norfolk website showcasing a great deal of area-wide jubilee events (as can currently be seen here: <https://www.visitwestnorfolk.com/news/celebrate-the-queens-platinum-jubilee-in-west-norfolk/>)

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. The department is working on a dedicated 'tourism industry' section of the Visit West Norfolk website for local tourism businesses to find latest news and reports, with an easy-to-use sign-up form to receive our business e-shots too. New tourism businesses regularly surface and more established tourism businesses in the area increasingly turn to digital promotions, so the department hopes to continue to attract both established and new west Norfolk tourism businesses to our tourism database for future communications.

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.

4 Planned activity

4.1 The Tourism department, with ongoing input from the West Norfolk Tourism Forum, has now completed a **West Norfolk Tourism Development Plan** for 2022-26. The proposed 5-year plan is informed by current key local, regional and national business recovery 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 recovery. A workshop at the November 17th 2021 West Norfolk Tourism Forum AGM event gave more local businesses an opportunity to help shape and inform this development plan document. The final pre-panel draft document of this plan is complete, with a 6-page 'easy read' summary document about to be created too, both documents set to be reviewed by the BCKLWN Regeneration and Development Panel on July 21st 2022 before any revisions are made and copies made publicly available. Regardless of the forthcoming publishing date of the recovery plan, the Tourism department has, for the past year, already been conducting work across several of the key strategic aims likely to remain included within the plan.

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

4.2.1 The construction of a Hunstanton Observatory

After the Tourism department's successful 2021 application for 30k funding for a Hunstanton Observatory building (funding from the European Regional Development Fund and Interreg) and the tendering phase having been complete by February 2022, a planning application is imminent for the observatory build at the Hunstanton clifftop pitch & putt site. As previously reported, it is the department's aim to 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. The project also now has a Working Group formed from local community stakeholders to oversee successful uses of this observatory in the future.

4.2.2 Development of the Norfolk Arts Trail (sculpture on the Boal Quay)

As previously reported, the aim for this new art asset for the town of King's Lynn is to align such a creative way-marker with the start of the Nar Valley Way and Norfolk Coast Path, on the proposed edge of the historic quarter (specifically around the Boal Quay area), whilst also adding further visitor interest in the nearby historic quarter of the town. A shelter-style sculpture design won the artist tender via the EXPERIENCE Norfolk scoring system and the artists held public consultation events within areas of the town centre in early June 2022 accordingly. This project is led by the NCC EXPERIENCE Norfolk team as part of their county-wide Norfolk Arts Trail project, with input and support from the Tourism Department.

4.2.3 Development of out-of-season sustainable tourism offers for visitors

As previously reported, the Tourism department continues working with the EXPERIENCE Norfolk team at NCC on another project, the aim being to enable independent tourism and hospitality businesses from across west Norfolk to link up and provide bookable unique visitor "experiences" together, especially within rural and coastal areas of the west Norfolk. Meetings and Norfolk-wide workshops continued throughout this year, often promoted by the Tourism Department in its business-facing fortnightly e-shots. The EXPERIENCE team is now working to complete a sustainable tourism website and other online content this year

to help catalogue and promote our local bookable sustainable tourism experiences and businesses.

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, including weekly marketing meetings with VEE and its 'DMO Coalition' of members from other areas of East Anglia. Previously named 'Unexplored England' this group renames itself according to the promotions we are all running at any particular time. As previously reported, this regional coalition resulted in an ongoing c£150k marketing pot, primarily created from Visit Suffolk and Visit Norfolk funds to help promote the East of England.

5.2.2 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 2021-May 2022):

- British Destinations [VWN being a formal member of this national tourism lobbying group].
- Downham Market Town Team.
- Employer Engagement Network [Norfolk-wide, with links to YPfe].
- EXPERIENCE Norfolk [Norfolk County Council team].
- Fens Biosphere [future existence unclear at this time].
- Good Jobs Project.
- Hunstanton Observatory Working Group.
- 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 Film Assets Steering Group.
- Norfolk Tourism Recovery Best Practice Group.
- Visit Britain [via monthly DMO calls].
- Visit Norfolk [Visit West Norfolk/BCKLWN are executive committee members].
- Visitor Pressures Working Group [Norfolk Coast].
- 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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