

Item: Tourism Marketing Update

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

Date: 08th March 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 June 2022 to 1st March 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 will be published in late April 2023, 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, with the TIC staff checking for any updates from these businesses before we go to print each time.

2.2 Discover King's Lynn

The 2023 edition of this popular leaflet of ours is currently in print production, to be published and circulated from April 2023. The print run is 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 2023 editions of both of these titles is currently in mid-process. Copies of both mini guides are still available at some venues but when current stock has basically depleted we will run with another 40,000 copies of the updated *Hunstanton Mini Guide* and a slightly increased quantity of 15,000 copies of the updated *Downham Market Mini Guide* this spring too. Our department now waits for almost total stock clearance of all of our leaflets as we work towards zero waste with our printed titles – as a consequence, some tourism venues may have run out of our leaflets for a while before we go to reprint.

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 *2023 King's Lynn Guided Walks* programme ahead of the spring start of the Town Guides new programme of walks (alongside our support with some of the Town Guides promotional materials too). Having already produced a reprint of the *King's Lynn Maritime Trail* booklet in early 2023, the Tourism department also plans to support any production of a *King's Lynn Hanse Day 2023* leaflet for the early-summer event, assuming the festival event goes ahead in the town.

The Tourism Department is planning to give its usual support to the print of the *King's Lynn Heritage Open Day 2023* booklet later this coming summer and the department will also conduct reprints of The Hunstanton Wolf Trail and The Hunstanton Horticultural Trail when necessary.

3 Digital marketing

3.1 www.visitwestnorfolk.com

As highlighted in the previous report to the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Area museums Committee, the new version of our main visitor website (Visit West Norfolk) launched on May 17th and, across the months since that time, continues to see regular changes and refinements to all aspects of the design, coding and content to better match the expectations of the modern visitor in the future.

The website has begun to feature example experiences in relation to **Group and Tour Visits to West Norfolk** (with initial focus on attracting group visits to King's Lynn, but with requests to both Hunstanton TC and Downham Market TC for local group experiences from their towns). Related to this work we have once again paid for a full-page advert for King's Lynn in a groups feature in *A Grand Day Out* (Feb 2023) as well as a King's Lynn section and set of e-shots to group tour operators via the *We Want Groups* business (Oct 2022 – Mar 2023) - both sets of adverts and advertorial to help attract more interest in the town from groups and coach tour operators.

Website Campaigns: 'Greener West Norfolk' and 'Visit West Norfolk...Naturally'

We are running a 10-month-long paid digital marketing green tourism campaign from March 1st 2023 to the end of the calendar year, to attract new environmentally-conscious visitors to our website and responsible tourism to the west Norfolk area in general, the campaign branded initially as 'Greener West Norfolk', with radio spots being commissioned for airing on radio stations in London and in the North-East of the UK across the 2023 springtime period, in time to attract domestic tourism to the area for the summer season.

The tourism department has also created a wide range of new content for this 'Greener West Norfolk' campaign, including downloadable guides related to both responsible tourism for visitors and sustainable tourism tips for businesses.

This campaign will utilise the existing collection of tourism promo video material in our archives (such as those all-year-round video clips commissioned in 2022 by ourselves), as well as new externally-commissioned photography in the late summer ready for September 2023 - when our 'Greener West Norfolk' campaign morphs into 'Visit West Norfolk...Naturally' – part of a region-wide shared-branding with the rest of the East Anglia tourism marketing network led by Visit East of England.

www.sailthewash.com

The tourism department is not responsible for the development of this digital platform, though we helped advertise the site and its leisure sailing offer in 2022 for this project. Such paid advertising of the website is being repeated again in the Norfolk Coast Guardian publication for 2023, and the Tourism department will meet with the Sail the Wash project group in late March 2023 to gain more of a steer regarding the types of sailing industry publications the project group wants future Sail the Wash promotions to be part of.

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, and we have plans to add brand new trails to the platform throughout 2023-24. Such trails include:

Norfolk Coast: Myths & Legends – a cross-Norfolk-boundaries major trail project led by the tourism department, including aspects of Lord Nelson's local history and the more

colourful aspects of our coastal history for cross-demographic appeal. This large-scale trail is currently in the starting process of its design and our aim is to launch this trail as a celebration of the Norfolk Coast Path section from King's Lynn to Snettisham, soon to be redeveloped by the NCC Norfolk Trails team in the future.

King's Lynn Walsingham Way – The Tourism department is an active partner of this locally-led project (headed by Canon Mark Diamond of King's Lynn Minster) to establish a new trail and waymarker posts, from the town to Walsingham, and there has been positive recent contact with local parishes who feature along the proposed route, ahead of external funding options being explored by this group.

Downham Market Town Trail – As from February 2023 some initial discussions have started between Discover Downham, DMTC and the Tourism department for a town-based trail with high casual visitor appeal.

3.2 Website traffic

Due to the combination of factors including the launch of a brand new version of the main website in late May 2022 (with the resulting loss of Google rankings for the previous site's webpages and the necessary rebuilding of site ranking in general search results), a probable negative consequence of the cost-of-living crisis and perhaps even a negative impact from the fuel crisis of the time, we recorded only slightly higher page views and site visitors for 2022 compared to the previous year.

Total Website Page Visits:

2019: 887,312

2020: 2,253,011 [pandemic era]

2021: 1,511,885

2022: 1,659,271

Total Website Visitors:

2019: 212,803

2020: 414,648 [pandemic era]

2021: 351,173

2022: 385,877

3.3 Events

2022 witnessed an almost complete return of a regular annual events programme to west Norfolk, including the return of largescale festivals such as King's Lynn Festival (now running for over 70 years) and Festival Too. There have been reports to Visit West Norfolk that footfall has been good at many of the returning events in west Norfolk, but that the numbers could be much improved. Some notable events around west Norfolk in recent months include the 'Luminate Sandringham Winter Light Trail 2022' (10th November 2022 – 18th December 2022) and Houghton Hall's packed programme of 2022 exhibitions, which included sculptures by artist Ryan Gander, an exhibition of North Sea painting by John Virtue and, most recently, The Houghton Oak Project (which featured sculptures crafted by Ernst Gamperl out of a 300-year-old dying Oak from the Houghton park grounds). The Houghton Hall programme ended on September 25th 2022, with this year's main exhibition being from April 23rd – October 29th 2023: 'Sean Scully – Smaller Than The Sky'.

The return of the superb King's Lynn Heritage Open Day 2022 last October (postponed from September) attracted a great deal of footfall to the town's historic venues on that Sunday, with 990 people recorded as visiting the Stories of Lynn attraction in town that day

alone). After a wealth of recent Christmas-related activity in our towns, the tourism department is looking forward to the forthcoming season of local festivals and events (as well as town-based King's Coronation events), including an increasing number of community engagement opportunities being planned at King's Lynn's Guildhall of St George.

One forthcoming event we believe to be of note for the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Area Museums Committee is the following:

King's Lynn Civic Society is planning to host a '**Heritage Volunteers Day**' at the Town Hall in a bid to attract new supporters for key heritage and environmental groups in the town. The event will take place at King's Lynn Town Hall on Saturday 17th June 2023. It will run from 10am-4pm. This June date has been selected to coincide with National Civic Day – an annual event promoted by Civic Voice to encourage communities to celebrate their area, encourage civic pride and to encourage active participation in local groups and activities.

3.4 Business e-shots

Local tourism businesses and organisations on the tourism department's business database continue to receive our fortnightly e-shots (latest tourism business news in email format) and the department now has a 'Tourism Industry' section of the Visit West Norfolk website for local tourism businesses to find an archive of our e-shots, latest news and downloadable tourism reports. The tourism 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 tourist-facing e-shots continue to be sent out to prospective visitors every fortnight. The content of each e-shot is usually a mix of themed content and promotions of a small set of events or attractions, accommodation and activities.

4 **Planned activity**

4.1 The Tourism department's completed ***West Norfolk Tourism Development Plan 2022-26*** can now be downloaded from the Tourism Industry section of our website. As previously reported, this 5-year plan has been informed by current key local, regional and national business recovery plans alongside ongoing feedback from local stakeholders. The six key strategic aims, stated in the plan to assist west Norfolk's post-pandemic tourism business recovery, are currently being reviewed in themed workshops throughout the first half of 2023, such sessions externally facilitated, and attended by officers, members and key stakeholders from the local tourism industry. The aim of the series of six workshops being to come to a consensus with regards to targets and actions related to the strategic aims stated within the aforementioned tourism development plan.

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

4.2.1 The Launch of the Hunstanton Observatory

After the Tourism department's successful 2021 application for funding for a Hunstanton Observatory building (funding from the European Regional Development Fund and Interreg), the subsequent planning application – submitted in early autumn 2022 - was deemed successful in February 2023 and the construction of the observatory build at the Hunstanton clifftop pitch & putt site began on March 6th 2023. As previously reported, it is the department's aim to make west Norfolk a great hub for off-season Dark Skies-type astronomical events in the future, in a bid to further help support an all-year-round tourism

economy for the local area. The site will be pre-bookable for events being held by a variety of local groups beyond the interest of Astronomy, including those groups wishing to study the local environment and the history of the local area. A website link dedicated to this observatory site, as well as booking information and local amateur night-sky photo competition will all be launched via the Visit West Norfolk platforms at the same time as the springtime launch event for the site. A sensible diversity of all-year-round pre-booked observatory use is encouraged, as the night-sky astronomy season is only at its best from October-March annually.

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

As previously reported, the Tourism department continued working with the EXPERIENCE Norfolk team at NCC on another project up until recent times, 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. The ‘BeNorfolk’ website has been recently launched and aims to help catalogue and promote local bookable sustainable tourism experiences and businesses throughout the Norfolk county: <https://benorfolk.co.uk>

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 VEE and its ‘DMO Coalition’ of members from other areas of the region. As previously reported, 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).

5.2.2 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 (June 2022 - March 2023):

- British Destinations.
- Downham Market Town Council Tourism [periodic meetings restarted from Feb 2023].
- Employer Engagement Network [Norfolk-wide, includes regular *Skills Network* e-shots].
- EXPERIENCE Norfolk [NCC – the project soon coming to an end].
- Film Friendly Norfolk Steering Group.
- Good Journey County Campaign (NCC).
- 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 Tourism Recovery Best Practice Group.
- Visit Britain [via semi-regular DMO calls].
- Visit Norfolk [Visit West Norfolk/BCKLWN are executive committee members].
- Visitor Pressures Steering Group [Norfolk coast focussed].
- 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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