



Committee and date
Enterprise and Growth
Scrutiny Committee

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Item

6

Public

DELIVERING SHROPSHIRE'S VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGIES THROUGH DESTINATION PARTNERSHIPS

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1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Scrutiny Committee members on the Visitor Economy Team's approach to supporting the tourism sector and, as requested, on progress in working with the Destination Partnerships and delivering the Visitor Economy Strategies in northern Shropshire, Shrewsbury, Shropshire Hills & Ludlow, and Bridgnorth.

In tourism, where the 'product' consists of a number of different and differently owned elements, collaboration is the key to great visitor experiences and successful, competitive destinations. The Visitor Economy Team seeks to help develop and sustain strong partnership structures through which the sector can move forward strategically and together to increase visitor spend, economic growth and jobs. The team also works on county wide projects such as research with a focus on those activities that benefit the overall destination but for which individual tourism businesses often lack capacity to coordinate and/or invest in. This report focuses on the Destination Partnerships.

The Destination Partnerships are based on locality working across areas which are recognised by the consumer and within which stakeholders can work together on strategic issues and opportunities. The Visitor Economy Team works with all the Destination Partnerships as a major partner and facilitator. The precise role of the team varies between Destination Partnerships according to the needs of the area and involvement of other key stakeholders including tourism businesses, public and voluntary organisations.

A detailed progress update for each partnership is given in the Background section of the report. In each case the actions reflect the work of various partners and stakeholders not just Shropshire Council.

We have also taken the opportunity to set out some research and statistics on current visitors, and on volume & value of tourism in Shropshire. The main volume and value figures are summarised below and show the importance of tourism to Shropshire's economy and employment. A summary of the Visitor Survey findings for northern Shropshire and Shropshire Hills is attached as Appendix A.

We envisage that a large part of our work in the future will be focused on maximising the tourism opportunities from EU and other external funding programmes in Shropshire. We see our role as bringing together partners and projects into packages which fit with the programme themes, can draw down funding, secure match funding and help to deliver the priorities of the Visitor Economy Strategies. The Destination Partnerships will be important in this process as illustrated in recent guidance from DEFRA on the types of activity that the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) can support. A significant amount of EU funding will be channelled through DEFRA. Their guidance cites "working together to increase the attractiveness and accessibility of the destination through Destination Management Plans and Partnerships".

We are also working with our Marches LEP partners in Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin to maximise investment and growth in the tourism sector.

Economic Impact of Tourism in Shropshire *

	Shropshire Borderlands	Shrewsbury	Shropshire Hills, Ludlow & Bridgnorth
Total no. of tourist trips	3,321,000	3,207,000	5,015,000
No. nights stayed	947,000	1,081,000	1,647,000
No. of day trips	3,004,000	2,845,000	4,510,000
Total Visitor spend	£137,096,000	£139,918,000	£211,497,000
Total FTE jobs supported	2,676	2,867	4,403

*Economic Impact Study 2011/12 carried out by The Research Solution using the Cambridge Model, commissioned by Shropshire Council on behalf of Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, Herefordshire Councils. Funded by the local authorities and The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

2. Recommendations

To note the progress made

To support a continued approach of delivering the strategies by working with the Destination Partnerships.

To support the proposed approach of focusing Shropshire Council resource to maximise opportunities from external funding to deliver strategy priorities through partnership working

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

There is a risk that even working with partners we do not succeed in drawing significant external funding into Shropshire's tourism sector. The work done so far to establish partnerships and strategies puts Shropshire in a strong position to maximise opportunities from external funding. Guidance so far received suggests that much of the activity in the strategies is a good 'fit' with forthcoming funding programme priorities. Realistically however not all projects will be eligible or capable of producing the required outputs and expectations need to be managed.

The risk of not continuing to work to strategy and in partnership is that Shropshire's tourism sector will not maximise available funding through lack of evidence, coordination and capacity. An additional risk is that existing resources will be dissipated, not focused in the most effective way, and Shropshire will not compete effectively with other UK destinations.

4. Financial Implications

There are no additional financial implications for Shropshire Council

5. Background

In 2011 Enterprise & Growth Scrutiny Committee set up a Task & Finish Group to look at tourism, in particular the role and work of the three Destination Development Partnerships which had been established in Shropshire.

With the help of partner funding and input Visitor Economy Strategies were completed or well underway in Shrewsbury and in Shropshire Hills & Ludlow. It was clear though that without the same availability of big partner support the northern area was lagging behind.

The Task & Finish group concluded that a member working group from across the northern area should be created to support development of strategy and partnership structures for the northern area. The working group was instrumental in bringing additional resource to bear and enabling a Visitor Economy Strategy for Oswestry and north Shropshire to be completed. The Strategy was launched to stakeholders at the end of 2012 and subsequently endorsed by Scrutiny and Cabinet.

The following report updates on progress on the three strategies and on the development of a further partnership and plan for the Bridgnorth area.

The Coalition's Government Tourism Policy (Government Tourism Policy March 2011) supported Shropshire's strategy to support and facilitate public/private sector partnerships that are more than just marketing organisations. Draft guidance on future EU funding streams also indicates that strategies developed and supported by private/public partnerships will be key to successful funding bids and delivery.

Shropshire Borderlands (North Shropshire & Oswestry)

The Shropshire Borderlands Visitor Economy Strategy has ten strategic aims. The prime aim is to increase the number of visitors and value of visitor spending by 5% each year. The aims are supported by an Action Plan with ten priority actions and a structure comprising three Delivery Groups working to an Executive Group. The Executive Group reports twice a year to the full Destination Partnership. Membership of the Executive Group and the Delivery Group leads are appointed by the full Partnership. Membership of the Partnership is open to any tourism or tourism related businesses and organisations in the Shropshire Borderlands area (including near neighbours across the borders).

There are three Delivery Groups, Marketing; Market Towns; and Business & Product Development, focused on 'doing' and tackling most of the priority actions. This section of the briefing paper looks at the work of these groups.

Priority Action	Progress on Action	Issues	Opportunities
1. Collaborate to Compete Working together and with cross-border partners	DP structure & delivery groups established. Working cross borders on major projects and smaller initiatives.	Maintaining momentum. Staying focused on strategy. Reducing public resources. Large & diverse area	Major projects - Meres & Mosses, Montgomery Canal Partnership & Pontcysyllte WHS. Walking with Offa. Private sector cross border working
2. Who Do You Think You Are? Identifying the personality and visitor offer of the Shropshire Borderlands and	Visitor survey supplemented by research on words and images carried out by Shropshire Council's Research & Visitor Economy	Lack of money for a full commercial branding exercise. Future funding for materials (photographs, writing, design) to	Develop & encourage use of image bank. Improve writing about the area to reflect consistently what consumers find

<p>expressing this to the visitor.</p>	<p>teams. Results used to commission new photos of the area now available to stakeholders free of charge and copyright – stored on the web.</p>	<p>enable strong consistent messages to reach the consumer. Getting consistent messages out.</p>	<p>appealing. Increase & improve presentation of area in partner promotions and other promotional material - websites etc...</p>
<p>3. Memorable Marketing</p>	<p>Oswestry Borderland Tourism redesigned their brochure for 2014 and adjusted distribution to more effectively target consumers. OBT took into account the visitor & image research undertaken. Brochure and distribution funded by OBT through business advertising and membership. Some pleasing media coverage of area particularly Meres and Mosses, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site, Llanymynech</p>	<p>No equivalent piece of print for businesses in the eastern side of the area. Identifying and funding effective, targeted distribution. Sustaining quality print. Often overshadowed by other areas in media coverage</p>	<p>Maximise resource for all interested parties to best effect. Further use of development projects, events and anniversaries to raise the destination profile of Shropshire Borderlands through the media. Explore digital opportunities</p>
<p>Priority 4 Focus on Market Towns</p>	<p>Five town plans now completed. Shropshire Council's Community support officers and Visitor Economy officers working with each town - at different stages. The plans helping to embed</p>	<p>Keeping focus and momentum. Identifying resources – time and money</p>	<p>To deliver priorities through forthcoming funded programmes if match funding can be secured. 'Joining up' to maximise resources.</p>

	tourism within wider planning.		Working with Town Councils & stakeholders
<p>Priority 5 Better Business</p> <p>Activities to promote Business Improvement and Growth</p>	<p>B & B start-up training days held to address perceived shortage of serviced accommodation. Social media and customer care skills identified as next training priorities.</p>	<p>Identifying resource for bespoke tourism training & support.</p>	<p>Current and future small grant schemes. To deliver some priorities through forthcoming EU funded programmes. Use of best practice and expertise already within the area.</p>
<p>Priority 6 Sharing Our Shropshire</p> <p>To increase knowledge of the area amongst tourism businesses and organisations.</p>	<p>Programme of Learning Journeys planned and two well attended Learning Journeys held. Very positive feedback from businesses.</p> <p>Web based visitor itineraries prepared and disseminated as easy to print downloads from main destination websites.</p>	<p>Time pressures on partners/businesses</p>	<p>To harness stakeholder enthusiasm & expertise for continued programme of activity. Exploit digital media</p>
<p>Priority 7 Surprising Specialisms</p>	<p>St. Michael's Church, Llanyblodwel supported in building tourism into successful Heritage Lottery Bid. Initial look at links with other churches – e.g. Meverley – to encourage church tourism.</p> <p>WW1 anniversary projects funded through HLF/Arts Council</p>	<p>Finding resource for product development.</p> <p>Weak/patchy product opportunities in some areas.</p>	<p>Encourage joint working between sites & with Parishes.</p> <p>Other special interests and anniversaries</p>

Priority Action 5 Welcoming Walkers This priority action point is addressed mainly by groups already established and through the work of Shropshire Council's Outdoor Recreation Team.	Major developments in walking trails and footpath access launched in the Meres and Mosses. - All Access trails, history trails, plus extensions to Shropshire Way. Good media coverage.	Resources. Relatively few walking routes on east side of area.	Niche tourism – accessible outdoor experiences. Walking with Offa Project phase 2 Health agenda
Priority Action 9 Access All Areas	Less progress except in Walking developments see Priority Action 8 above.	Consumer resistance to alternative transport. Major capital funding requirements.	Improve & promote offer if funding can be secured.
Priority Action 10 Extended Experiences	Less progress	Variable offer evenings and Sundays.	Events. Improve offer if funding can be secured. Cross border working.

Shropshire Hills & Ludlow Sustainable Tourism Strategy

The Shropshire Hills & Ludlow Sustainable Tourism Strategy has seven strategic action areas which form the basis of the following update. The Strategy is delivered by partners overseen by a Board comprising representatives of tourism organisations and the private sector. The Shropshire Hills AONB is a lead partner.

Priority Action	Progress on Action	Issues	Opportunities
1 Raising Awareness	Destination logo designed and rolled out. New image library reflecting the core destination values started. On-line	Few joint marketing campaigns and out of season & family promotion. Getting marketing	Continued roll out of logo and development of image library. Implement on-line strategy & align activity. Social

	marketing strategy completed. Annual marketing print produced. Outdoor writers' weekend hosted & good media coverage generated.	activity aligned across sector	Media. Merge accommodation & events print. Improve PR coordination. Further develop walking activity.
2 Delivering the Hills Experience	Farmers supported to obtain agri-environment grants. Walkers are Welcome towns collaborative promotion. Extensive programme of new walking routes, interpretation, trails, & business training in development. New cycling routes & bridleway routes developed. Range of wildlife & geology events. Young people's trails. First Shropshire Hills Arts week.	Limited cycling routes. Outdoor activities promotion needs to be more 'joined up'	Next stage of Walking with Offa development. Continue to develop offer & deliver priorities through forthcoming EU funded programmes. On demand access to outdoor experiences. Dark Skies initiative. Collective promotion. Guided walks.
3 Delivering the Market Town Experience	Town websites in place. Bishops Castle Town Hall development. LAR redevelopment. Walking with Offa Days Out published linking countryside & towns	Events listings need to be 'joined up'. Funding	Encourage wider use of logo by towns. Support heritage links to tourism Coordinate events especially off season.
4. Delivering the Local Food Experience	Media visits to Ludlow Food Centre. Open Days to food & drink providers plus range of Buy Local & Local Food websites. Grow,	Funding Limited use of Buy Local website	EU & other funding programmes More coordination

	Cook, Learn at SHDC		
5 Orientating and Informing Visitors	VIC new arrangements progressing. Destination Partnership bulletin issued & partners issuing email updates. Viewranger used to promote walks.	VIC changes impact on visitors. Signage reviews needed. Lack of resource.	Ambassadors scheme
6 Promoting Sustainable Access & Management	New coach drop off in C.S. Walking with Offa Days Out. Shuttles Days Out & Rail Walks. All with public transport connections. Sustainability event held. Piloted donations request from event.	Reduced public transport provision.	Develop Visitor giving scheme.
7 Supporting Local Enterprise	Sustainable Business Scheme. B & B Start-up training held. Social Media Training offered. Networking meetings. Innovative tourism product developments – HF Holidays, Clee Hill Heritage.	Lack of research & cost/benefit analysis	Forthcoming EU funded programmes

Destination Shrewsbury

Destination Shrewsbury was the first of the partnerships to be established (in 2010) and works to the Visitor Economy Strategy which was launched in 2011. The Strategy has three main action areas.

Priority Action	Progress on Action	Issues	Opportunities
<p>1. Effective Marketing</p>	<p>Marketing Strategy completed.</p> <p>Brand developed, launched and rolled out throughout main visitor promotion material</p> <p>Main brochure, website & town map print redesigned on brand & advertising financed.</p> <p>New Visitor research being undertaken</p> <p>Media visits & coverage.</p> <p>Coach & Travel Trade promotion re-established.</p>	<p>Finding funding/time resource.</p> <p>Use of brand is currently limited beyond main marketing channels</p>	<p>Deliver some priorities through/with support of Shrewsbury BID Programme.</p> <p>Deliver some priorities through externally funded programmes.</p> <p>Build on findings of visitor research.</p> <p>Use new developments & awards to get attention</p> <p>Direct London-Shrewsbury rail service</p>
<p>2. Enhanced Visitor Experience</p>	<p>Economic Impact studies of festivals completed.</p> <p>Diverse & successful new events established.</p> <p>Wayfinding Phase 1 completed.</p> <p>New Town Centre Toilets built and open.</p> <p>Church Trail leaflet published.</p> <p>Interactive Town Map developed</p>	<p>Finding funding</p> <p>Complexity of traffic, signing and access issues – different interests.</p> <p>Non eligibility of retail/catering & town centre businesses, for some funding programmes.</p> <p>Postponement of Riverside retail development.</p>	<p>New Music Hall & Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery.</p> <p>Recent investment & enhancement at St. Mary's.</p> <p>The Flax Mill development.</p> <p>Deliver some priorities through externally funded programmes</p> <p>Deliver some priorities through/with</p>

	<p>and available on line.</p> <p>Redeveloped Music Hall & Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery completed & open.</p> <p>New interpretation & visitor facilities at St. Mary's</p>		<p>support of Shrewsbury BID Programme.</p>
<p>3. Effective Leadership & team approach</p>	<p>Shrewsbury BID voted in and established.</p> <p>Mayor's Awards incl. tourism awards established.</p> <p>Shrewsbury in Bloom Gold Awards</p> <p>Coach Friendly Award achieved 2012/13</p> <p>VE funded Flood Recovery Business Support workshops held.</p> <p>Flower Show stand showcasing Destination Shrewsbury.</p>	<p>Reduced public sector resource.</p> <p>Time constraints on private sector partners.</p> <p>Maintaining focus on Strategy.</p>	<p>Enthusiasm for Shrewsbury amongst stakeholders.</p> <p>Shrewsbury BID</p> <p>External funding opportunities</p> <p>Capitalise on awards</p>

Bridgnorth Area Tourism Action Group

The Bridgnorth Area Tourism Action Group was the last of the Destination Partnerships to be formed. Consultation on a new Tourism Strategy was carried out during 2013 and the Group first met in November 2013.

The Group is chaired by Bridgnorth & District Tourist Association Chairman Anthony Webb and brings together representatives of the towns, tourism organisations and attractions, two principal local authorities (Shropshire Council & Telford & Wrekin) and others with an interest in a flourishing visitor economy.

The Group is action focussed and is monitoring and co-ordinating what partners deliver under the 8 strategic priorities which are as follows:-

1. Raising the awareness of the Bridgnorth area destination
2. Making the most of market towns and villages
3. Maximising the benefit of Bridgnorth's many and varied attractions
4. Delivering the distinctive experience that the Bridgnorth area can offer
5. Supporting the local food and drink offer
6. Informing and orientating visitors
7. Promoting sustainable access and management
8. Supporting local enterprise

The Group meets 2-3 times per year. At the last meeting in June one of the main topics for discussion was the new opportunity from the extension of the Shropshire Hills LEADER area over the Bridgnorth district.

The formation of the Group involved the Visitor Economy Team in consultation visits to the various towns in the area. A consequence of these visits was the formation of a new Tourism Group in Shifnal as a body sitting within the framework of the Shifnal Economic Forum.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Visitor Economy Strategy for North Shropshire & Oswestry

A Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism in The Shropshire hills and Ludlow

Destination Shrewsbury Visitor Economy Strategy

Bridgnorth Area Tourism Strategy and Action Plan

All the above strategies can be downloaded from:

<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/economic-development/tourism-reports-and-industry-information/>

Human Rights

There are no human rights issues associated with this paper

Environmental Appraisal

The environmental impacts of activity have been considered in the development of each of the Visitor Economy Strategies.

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Councillor Steve Charmley, Portfolio Holder for Business Growth, and Councillor Tina Woodward, Deputy Cabinet member responsible for Tourism.

Local Member

Appendices

Appendix A Summary of Visitor Survey findings