

MINUTES OF THE TOWN PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 20TH JUNE, 2017

Present: Councillor S Cudlip (Chair) and
Councillors R Arthur, Mrs J A Bell,
Mrs G Bleasdale, S P Colborn,
Mrs V Cummings, Mrs S Forster,
G N Hepworth, Ms L Kennedy, D McKenna,
K Shaw, T Shepherd, B Taylor, Ms L Willis.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs B E Allen, E Bell, Ms K Brace,
D Cummings, Ms R M Gratton, Ms S Pratt.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR OF TOWN PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE FOR THE ENSUING YEAR

RECOMMENDED Councillor E Bell be appointed Chair of this Committee for the ensuing year.

(Councillor S Cudlip in the Chair)

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR OF TOWN PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE FOR THE ENSUING YEAR

RECOMMENDED Councillor S Cudlip be appointed Vice-Chair of this Committee for the ensuing year.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

4. PRESENTATIONS

Ms Michelle Gorman, Visit County Durham

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Ms Michelle Gorman, Managing Director, Visit County Durham.

Visit County Durham are the Destination Management Organisation for County Durham with a primary aim of growing the County's visitor economy. One way in which this is achieved is by promoting the area as a tourist destination both nationally and internationally as a place to live, work, study, invest and visit.

The 2016 County tourism figures were provided to Members. 19.25m visitors came into the County in 2016 which is a 3% increase on the previous year. The visitor total is comprised of 93% day visitors and 7% staying visitors. 1.43m overnight visitors per annum which is a 0.5% increase on the previous year. The majority of visitors are North East residents on a repeat visit and first time visitors are more likely to be national or international. The age profile of visitors is over 45's visiting as a couple due to the strong heritage product which appeals to that target audience.

In 2016 the economic value to the area through tourism was £806m which is a 2% increase on the previous year. The main sources of income were in the recreation and food and drink sectors with the Vale of Durham area generating the highest income. There is 11,158 people employed directly and indirectly in tourism which is a 2% increase on the previous year.

The breakdown of figures for 2016 for the Durham Coast area were also provided. 3.16m visitors came into Durham Coast which is a 3% increase on the previous year. The economic value generated was £120.7m which is a 3% increase on the previous year and represents 15% of the income towards the County figures. There is 1,592 people employed directly and indirectly in tourism which represents 14% towards the County figures. The main source of income is the food and drink sector.

The coastal area is a key attraction in marketing for the County and in 2016/17 9% of the out of region press coverage was for the coastal area.

Place branding is an activity undertaken to attract businesses or people into a particular area that can help it become an economic success. The scheme targets investors, big businesses and people who wish to live or work in the area. The targeted approach allows for the area to give coherent and compelling offer to people outside of the County, this also helps local residents instil a sense of civic pride. The place branding commenced in 2007 with significant research being carried out from people who had not visited Durham to test perceptions of the County and awareness of what Durham has to offer. The perceptions were negative with feedback indicating the place was seen as depressing, grey and bleak. The awareness was also low with many not knowing where County Durham was located.

Using the research, marketing campaigns were ran to raise awareness and change the perception of the area. The This is Durham destination brand was launched in 2009 and as part of this a marketing campaign was undertaken in 2012 with striking images from the region and slogans were erected around London underground and the rail networks. Following the marketing campaign work began with Business Durham to identify an overarching theme to tell the County's great stories of success. After undertaking research with various audiences the theme of 'light' was established as the strongest brand. The four strands to fit the spectrum of what the area offers were:

- Lighting up days and nights – culture
- Lighting up the past – heritage
- Inspiring our here and now, illuminating the future – business and innovation
- Shining spirits – people of Durham

The brand soft launched in 2015 working with ambassadors and stakeholders to challenge perceptions of the area pushing key points such as:

- Durham is a vibrant place
- A hive of cultural activity
- Somewhere that businesses can thrive
- Well connected to the rest of the UK and Europe/World
- A beautiful place to spend time
- Somewhere to call home

In 2016 the baseline research was again undertaken and it was found people now knew where Durham was located in addition to the attractions and landscapes which the area has to offer. It was noted there is still more to be done and once fully launched the average place brand lifespan is five years.

A promotional video was shown to Members then an opportunity was provided for any questions to be raised and the following comments were made:

- i. A Member queried where the data for the visitor demographic was collected from?

Ms Gorman advised Members a number of pieces of research are carried out on an annual and bi-annual basis, the information provided is a combination of a segmentation study and a visitor survey.

- ii. A Member noted they previously undertook the C2C cycle route from Whitehaven, currently the two official finishing points are Seaburn and South Shields. It was felt Seaham would be an ideal finishing location for County Durham and a positive addition to the County attractions.

Ms Gorman advised she will pursue this suggestion and feedback to the Member with the outcome.

- iii. A Member queried when the brand would be launched to County Durham residents as this would further increase the brands reach?

Ms Gorman informed Members activities were on hold due to the purdah period and they work closely with the marketing and communications team at Durham County Council. It is planned they will work in partnership to be at stage to inform local residents within a couple months.

- iv. A Member asked for further detail regarding the feedback from visitors. Was the feedback favourable? Is there anything which can be improved?

Ms Gorman stated these questions were included as part of the visitor survey undertaken. In areas such as Durham City visitors were unimpressed with the food, drink and retail offer. A destination factsheet has been produced with detailed results, copies of which can be provided to Members following this meeting.

- v. A Member felt a lack of emphasis was being placed on the mining heritage County Durham holds given the impact it has had on generations within the area.

Ms Gorman advised this will be considered for inclusion in future activities and mining art galleries are opening in Spennymoor and Bishop Auckland.

The Chair thanked Ms Gorman for her attendance and the information provided then Ms Gorman left the meeting.

5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 28TH MARCH, 2017

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of this meeting, a copy of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

6. VISIT COUNTY DURHAM PUBLICATIONS

6.1 Wednesday Grapevine

RECOMMENDED the copies of the Wednesday Grapevines dated from 29th March, 2017 to 31st May, 2017 which had been published by Visit County Durham, be accepted.

7. THIS IS DURHAM PUBLICATIONS

RECOMMENDED the latest correspondence which had been published by This is Durham, be accepted.

8. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.