

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 8

meeting date: THURSDAY, 13 JUNE 2019
title: REVIEW OF CURRENT TOURISM MARKETING ACTIVITY
submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To receive an update on current tourism marketing activity.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives – To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley
- Corporate Priorities – To encourage economic development throughout the borough, with specific focus on tourism
- Other Considerations – To develop, with relevant partners, measures to support the visitor economy

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council views Tourism as a primary strand of its economic development and that has been the case for many years. Tourism has many different facets ranging from day trips and attendance at events, to weddings and short breaks. All contribute in some way substantially to the economy of the Borough.

2.2 In order to best achieve this, the Council works primarily through the private sector via a variety of partnership arrangements. In addition, the Council itself provides the Tourism Information Centre at the Platform Gallery, the museum and the many public open spaces, including Clitheroe Castle, and Edisford River Bank.

2.3 The other aspects of the work the Council does to contribute to the general environment which is a significant attraction for visitors as well as residents includes the amenity cleansing to remove litter and fly tips for example, as well as grounds maintenance of Council-owned land, some parish council land, and work on the highway verges for the County Council.

2.4 Overall this variety of work contributes to and enhances the natural environment which is such a feature and an attraction for the many visitors which Ribble Valley enjoys annually.

3 ISSUES

3.1 Tourism is flourishing in Ribble Valley and the number of visitor-related businesses achieving recognition, awards and accreditation, increases each day. These successes are not just in dining but also attractions, accommodation and retail. Visitor awareness continues to grow, with some recent examples of media coverage being achieved in national newspapers and magazines. Public interest levels are

high, and at the recent 'Times Destination Holiday Show' in Manchester, the Ribble Valley stand was once again one of the most popular destinations at the whole event. Tourism businesses are refurbishing and reinvesting, and there are a many exciting new developments locally.

- 3.2 Latest statistics show that the value of the tourism and hospitality to the local economy is growing steadily, and what is particularly heartening is that, whilst economic income is showing rapid growth, visitor numbers remain manageable; thereby ensuring that tourism doesn't have a negative impact on the landscape and on the local communities living here. Moreover, Tourism is providing new opportunities and employment.
- 3.3 The work of the Council is carefully managed through a 'Destination Management Plan' which clearly states priorities in tourism promotion and a programme for future development of target markets. Copies of the plan are available on request. A major part of this Ribble Valley success story is the result of businesses working together, and with the Council.
- 3.4 The nationally recognised model for tourism figures and the economic impact is STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic activity Monitor). These are produced annually in arrears and the latest set we have are for 2017. The day visitor market remains constant, as we would hope, but significant growth is evident in the number of 'staying visitors' at +9.3%, also of 'staying visitor days' at +13.3% and in 'overall economic impact' at +14.2%. These all suggest a successful strategy for tourism, and in some cases, the performance increases are in excess of Lancashire averages. A growth of 4.9% in tourism jobs locally is also welcome news, showing that the tourism economy continues to perform strongly as it has for the past decade and more.

4 CURRENT INITIATIVES

4.1 Supporting External Marketing Activity

4.1.1 The Council has a subvention agreement with Marketing Lancashire, which is County wide body which seeks to promote the County both nationally and internationally. They receive a payment annually from us which is a contribution to the wider work they do, to promote Lancashire (they have a website which has links to our own) as well as booklets promoting different aspects of the tourism offer in Lancashire, for example food and drink. The subvention for 2019/20 is currently under review after the council withheld part of the payment for 2018/19

4.2 Working in Partnership

A. Ribble Valley Tourism Association

4.2.1 The Ribble Valley Tourism Association held its Annual General Meeting at Holmes Mill Clitheroe, during which the annual 'Stars in Tourism' Awards were presented.

4.2.2 The awards celebrate innovation and achievement in tourism and hospitality in Ribble Valley, and specifically aim to shine a light on some of the lesser known 'Stars of Tourism'. Earlier this year, members of the public and local businesses were invited to submit nominations. The popularity of the Stars in Tourism awards grows each year. They do not necessarily celebrate 'the best

of sector categories, as other schemes, like the Lancashire Tourism awards; the Ribble Valley Tourism Awards recognise a number of very specific areas for example, 'Rising Stars', being young people who show great promise and potential in the hospitality sector. Another important award is 'Unsung Heroes', whose contribution can be very important to the success of any business. Other areas targeted for awards are for new enterprises, innovation and voluntary contribution.

- 4.2.3 The awards also recognise individuals who have overcome particular challenges, or who, over the past twelve months, have made a significant contribution in their sectors. This year's awards were kindly sponsored by Harrison and Drury Solicitors and the Council helped organise the event.

B. Ribble Valley Wedding Partnership

- 4.2.4 This pioneering tourism programme, celebrates its fifth anniversary this year. The partnership of licenced wedding venues in Ribble Valley is believed to be the first of its kind in the UK, where venues work together, with the local authority, to develop a brand, based on the reputation as 'the perfect place to get married'. The Ribble Valley Wedding Heaven Partnership has in its membership, the majority of venues in the area together with numerous supplier members.
- 4.2.5 The success of the group may be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the strong brand identity of Ribble Valley, a place with great landscapes and a reputation for quality. Next, a local authority committed to partnership working. Then, the group has recognised that, by working together, any wedding in Ribble Valley could potentially benefit any partner, whether that be through dining experiences or overspill accommodation, and that working collaboratively has great potential. Finally, each wedding venue in the partnership is different; therefore the options available to customers are very wide from castles to abbeys, country house hotels to barns. Whilst each is unique, they share values of quality and outstanding customer service.
- 4.2.6 Since its inception, the group has launched a new website, hosted a visit by specialist wedding journalists, and attended many national wedding fairs. It has organised the first valley-wide wedding fair, as well as hosting joint open wedding evenings, called 'One Night in Heaven' enabling prospective customers to be able to visit several venues in one visit. Most recently the group have met with Lancashire County Council's registry officer.
- 4.2.7 As well as its website, the Partnership produces a high quality publication, which is particularly useful to potential customers, as it offers a one stop shop for Ribble Valley venues.
- 4.2.8 Weddings are a powerful tool in stimulating tourism, as they not only provide a significant number of first time visitors to stay in the area, but evidence also suggests that many such visits are converting to repeat visitors. Having enjoyed their time, experiencing the fantastic hospitality, great countryside and amazing dining experiences, wedding guests are returning for independent holidays.

4.3 Promoting Careers in Tourism and Hospitality

4.3.1 For many, working in the tourism and hospitality sector can bring a fulfilling and successful career path, whilst for others it can provide the opportunity to acquire valuable life skills for other occupations. Given its importance to the local economy, we are keen to raise the profile of working in the tourism and hospitality sector and we have teamed up with Springboard, a national organisation to pursue a number of initiatives. We are keen to improve the image of the sector and to work more closely with young people studying at local colleges, to help them launch their career in this sector. We are also keen to raise the profile of specific skilled roles and occupations.

4.3.2 In the first instance we are promoting three programmes –

- GEMS: a mentoring scheme to support young people who aspire to work in the industry
- Future Chef - Ribble Valley: Given the importance of food tourism in Ribble Valley we have chosen to highlight the valuable role that Chefs provide in the locality, and to support Springboard's Future Chef Competition and need your help.
- Springboard Ambassador: In order to highlight the importance of the Tourism and Hospitality sector we need champions to promote the industry. We are therefore supporting the Springboard Ambassador programme'

4.4 Visitor Guide 2019 and 2020

4.4.1 The 2019 Love Ribble Valley Visitor Guide was launched recently. The popular self-funded guide has grown in size once again by eight pages, and it is also available on line and as a download. The photographic content has improved greatly over recent years and now includes the work of many local photographers who took part in a competition, in addition to some professionally commissioned work.

4.4.2 The new guide has been produced in a full colour quality format which very much reflects the quality of Ribble Valley. The guide is distributed nationwide to targeted tourist information centres and sent direct mail to regular valley visitors. It is also distributed locally, as well as at numerous promotional events, and many local accommodation providers now use it as a bedroom browser.

4.4.3 The guide showcases Ribble Valley's many attractions, including its award-winning food and drink, art, heritage, weddings, countryside and even its night skies. The Guide, called Love Ribble Valley focuses on businesses with a real story to tell offering authentic visitor experiences around themes for which the borough is famed, such as food, outdoor pursuits and weddings'.

4.4.4 The guide has been enthusiastically received and is distributed locally to tourism outlets as well as throughout the UK using a targeted distribution service, where demand has been very high. Work has now begun on the 2020 edition.

4.5 Promoting in Partnership

4.5.1 Each year Ribble Valley is promoted at a number of key events and wherever possible the Council works with businesses keen to get involved in our promotional activities. Such involvement can come in the form of practical help, such as loan of equipment and in some cases shared investment, and we are always keen to have the involvement of staff, whose product knowledge is always invaluable when dealing with customers visiting our stand. Here is what is currently planned or taken place:-

- Great Harwood Show 27th May 2019
- Ribble Valley Wedding Show at Stonyhurst 2nd June 2019
- Myerscough College Country Fair 9th June 2019
- Longridge and Goosnargh Show 6th July 2019
- Garstang Show August 3rd 2019
- Clitheroe Food Festival 10th August 2019
- Lancashire Game and Country Festival 7th 8th September 2019
- The Times Destinations Holiday Show 16th – 19th January 2020

4.6 Walks with Taste

4.6.1 Walks with Taste, have been developed in partnership with several local businesses, and feature a series of walks through some of the area's most spectacular countryside taking in some of its best inns and hostelries. The walks feature self-guided routes with maps and descriptions, and are different in distance, duration and terrain, ensuring there is something for all tastes and abilities.

4.6.2 Walking is a great way to keep fit and work up a healthy appetite, and visitors to the area frequently enquire about the best walks and food. Walks with Taste have other benefits, too. By using the car parks of featured hostelries as a starting point, parking congestion in country lanes is minimised and businesses along the walks are also showcased.

4.6.3 The walks have been co funded with each participating venue and walking footwear specialist Whalley Warm and Dry, which sponsored the folders. Individual walks are available from participating businesses, and whole sets are available from the Platform Gallery and Information Centre in Clitheroe, Whalley Warm and Dry, or can be downloaded from visitribblevalley.co.uk.

4.6.4 Current walks feature the Assheton Arms, Downham; Aspinall Arms, Mitton; Foxfields Country Hotel, Billington; Higher Trapp Hotel, Simonstone; Holmes Mill, Clitheroe; Spread Eagle, Sawley; and Waddington Arms.

4.6.5 Four more walks, the Calf's Head, Worston; the Inn at Whitewell, the Shireburn Arms, Hurst Green; and the Derby Arms, Longridge, are in the pipeline and it is hoped to eventually increase the number to around twenty, so we are keen to hear from any new venues. We are also looking at the possibility of creating bespoke walks from accommodation venues such as campsites and cottages and are keen to hear from suitable operators.

5 RISK ASSESSMENT

The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – The cost of marketing activity is contained within existing budgets, but boosted significantly through the gearing achieved by partnerships formed with the private sector.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – None in the context of this report.
- Reputation – The partnership activity significantly enhances the work of the Council.
- Equality and Diversity – None.

6 **CONCLUSION**

The Committee is asked to note the report, and further progress will be reported to future meetings of the Committee.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS None

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RIBBLE VALLEY'S VISITOR ECONOMY 2017

4.09 million

Tourism Visits, equating to 6% of all tourism visits to Lancashire

365,000 visits were made by visitors **staying in the Ribble Valley** as part of a holiday or short break, generating **1.455 million nights** in accommodation across the county

3.728 million tourism visits made by **Day Visitors** to the district



Total bedstock in the Ribble Valley is 7,709 beds

Comprising 5,905 non-serviced and 1,804 serviced beds



A total of **£243.031 million** was generated within the local economy through visitor and tourism business expenditure

Day Visits generated **£129.188 million** for the local economy of Ribble Valley in 2017

In total, **staying visitors** generate a **total economic impact of £113.842 million** for the businesses and communities of the Ribble Valley



Visitors to the Ribble Valley support **3,262 full time equivalent jobs**



More than **5 million Visitor Days and Nights** generated by visitors in 2017



Economic Impact rose by 7.6% between 2016 and 2017

Visitor Numbers increased by 0.6% between 2016 and 2017

RIBBLE VALLEY'S VISITOR ECONOMY 2017

	2016	2017	YOY Variance
Total Visitor Numbers (000s)	4,070	4,094	0.6%
Day Visitors (000's)	3,736	3,728	-0.2%
Staying Visitors (000's)	334	365	9.3%
Total Visitors Days (000's)	5,020	5,183	3.2%
Visitor Days – staying visitors (000's)	1,284	1,455	13.3%
Total Economic Impact (£000's)	225,914	243,031	7.6%
Economic Impact day visitors (£000's)	126,189	129,188	2.4%
Economic Impact staying visitors (£000's)	99,726	113,842	14.2%
FTE Jobs supported	3,109	3,262	4.9%
Accommodation Stock	6,763	7,709	14%
Serviced Accommodation Stock	1,683	1,804	7.2%
Non-serviced accommodation stock	5,080	5,905	16.2%