

REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES	AGENDA ITEM: 7
DATE OF MEETING:	4 MARCH 2010	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	KEVIN MASON (EXT 5739) kevin.mason@south-derbys.gov.uk	DOC:
SUBJECT:	TOURISM UPDATE	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: EDS11

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 That Members:

- Note work undertaken to ensure sustained growth of The National Forest as a major new visitor destination and brand.
- Note recent changes to the structure of the National Forest partnership
- Agree terms of current Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Visit Peak District & Derbyshire Destination Management Partnership (DMP).

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To outline recent performance of the tourism sector in South Derbyshire; report on changes to the National Forest partnership; and agree a one-year SLA for 2009/10 with the Visit Peak District & Derbyshire Destination Management Partnership (DMP).

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 In recent years substantial additional funding has been made available for tourism marketing and to improve industry standards, through East Midlands Tourism (EMT) and sub-regional Destination Management Partnerships. To fully access this funding, each DMP must enter into Service Level Agreements with and achieve EMT-specified levels of matched funding from local authorities. EMT and the DMPs are required to achieve ambitious targets focused on increasing overnight stays.

Visit Peak District and Derbyshire

- 3.2 Within Derbyshire and the wider Peak District the official tourism body is 'Visit Peak District & Derbyshire' with a staff of 14. The DMP has been successful in bidding for EMT project funding, particularly for marketing. It also undertakes research, seeks to raise the quality of visitor related businesses, and has assumed responsibility for management of the Destination Management System (DMS). Now promoting itself as 'the tourist board' for the area, the DMP uses the Peak District as its key 'attract' brand with the aim of dispersing visitors across the county. The main marketing tools have been the Visitor Guide, website (www.visitpeakdistrict.com), and the DMS – a database and booking system which underpins Tourist Information Centres, kiosks and websites, and provides valuable statistical information regarding visitors and businesses to assist in marketing and promotion.

- 3.3 Since appointment of a new Marketing Manager in March, there has been a

significant change to the style and focus of the DMP's marketing. Closer working relationships have been forged with existing partners such as this council. New affinity partners such as the AA, East Midlands Trains, the Camping & Caravan Club, and sponsors such as Buxton Water and Yeomans have been engaged. A loyalty card has been introduced with holders emailed regular offers. There is increased emphasis on tourism throughout Derbyshire, and smaller more targeted campaigns are easier for businesses to engage with. "Spookyspire" increased visits in October/ November, and during 2010 off-peak campaigns will focus on markets such as romance & indulge breaks, do something different, walking & cycling etc. An off-peak "On Your Doorstep" campaign will encourage residents to visit local attractions. Much of this increased activity will use digital media. Content of the website is being more regularly refreshed, and will be 'themed' to reflect the monthly campaigns.

- 3.4 South Derbyshire is benefiting from the work of Visit Peak District & Derbyshire, and is expected to benefit even more from the many new campaigns planned. However The National Forest & Beyond remains the key campaign for the district and surrounding areas, and it is therefore more difficult to evaluate the impact of the DMP for South Derbyshire.
- 3.5 The proposed Service Level Agreement for 2009/10 between the DMP and this council is attached at Annexe A. Much content is standard for all councils, though this district's relationship with the DMP differs due to its partnership with The National Forest. The contribution of £6,000 represents good value for money. The Destination Management System, which underpins Swadlincote TIC and the touch-screen kiosk, is funded separately. For 2009/10 these costs can be met from existing budgets.

National Forest & Beyond Campaign

- 3.6 Since 2002 this authority has for tourism purposes worked with partners to establish and develop the "National Forest & Beyond" (NF&B) brand. The campaign has run successfully each year, and uniquely has not been subsumed into DMP guides. The National Forest & Beyond campaign provides the destination's only comprehensive marketing, and remains the primary tourism marketing tool for South Derbyshire. The destination continues to evolve, developing unique selling points such as woodland survival courses and woodland crafts, and it is vital that the destination should be marketed cohesively. Again for 2010 the majority of tourism businesses have chosen to support the National Forest & Beyond campaign.
- 3.7 The partnership has taken the initiative and sought to integrate its work with the DMPs wherever possible, to maximise synergy and cross-benefits. The campaign is continually adapted to reflect changing market conditions and to maximise potential benefits from the work of DMPs.
- 3.8 In 2007 Conversion Research commissioned to assess the effect of the NF&B visitor guide concluded the value of tourism arising directly was £620,000 (giving a Return on Investment of 30:1 or £30 to every £1 spent). The study provided a meaningful evaluation, indicating the partnership is effective and represents good value for money. The National Forest Company hopes to undertake a similar study of the 2009 Visitor Guide, to inform and guide future campaigns.
- 3.9 A review by East Midlands Tourism of how to maximise tourism opportunities recommended stakeholders in The National Forest should establish a clear coherent Vision for tourism. The National Forest Company commissioned consultants who prepared a 20-year Vision "A Vision and Action Plan for

Sustainable Tourism in The National Forest” and shorter term Action Plans. The final report was delivered in June 2009 – the summary is attached at Annexe B. The National Forest Tourism Partnership has since been formed to take forward the vision and action plans, and is essentially an evolution of existing groups, including the National Forest & Beyond partnership. Members comprise local authorities, Destination Management Partnerships, representatives of regional development agencies and major attractions.

- 3.10 There are 5 Strategic objectives and the overarching vision is that: “The National Forest will be recognised and enjoyed as one of the top ten high quality sustainable destinations in the country.” The overall target is to deliver around 3% average annual growth in visitor expenditure with concentrated efforts towards growing the proportion of staying visitors.

South Derbyshire District Council

- 3.11 Tourism is undertaken within the ambit of Economic Development with the primary aim of promoting employment and investment opportunities. The Vision of the Economic Development Strategy 2008-2012 is *“To promote greater economic well-being in South Derbyshire, in order that it becomes a healthier, more prosperous and safer place to live with better jobs and prospects for local people and businesses”*. This is being pursued through three key objectives and a series of Ambitions, of which Ambition 3 is: *“Developing tourism and the woodland economy, maximising the potential of The National Forest to address rural issues.”*
- 3.12 With the creation of the National Forest Tourism Partnership, this authority will seek to achieve it’s tourism aims through implementation of “A Vision and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism in The National Forest” (replacing the National Forest Tourism Strategy referred to in the Council’s Economic Development Strategy).
- 3.13 Enquiries dealt with by Swadlincote Tourist Information Centre (TIC) grew by 4.5% per annum between 2007-2009, and the proportion of visitors to Sharpe’s Pottery Museum using the TIC grew by 15.7% p.a. over the same period. The “What’s On” guide was re-launched in an enhanced format. TIC staff attended the Festival of Leisure and National Forest Wood Fair. The number of business and other records on the Destination Management System is increasing, and Visit Peak District & Derbyshire have complimented our TIC staff on the quality of their records.
- 3.14 Enquiries being dealt with by the TIC enables District Council staff to focus on matters such as business support and development, and product development proposals. A well-attended Breakfast meeting for the sector was held in June 2009 by the Council’s Economic Development Unit in partnership with Business Link. This informed businesses about the availability of opportunities and assistance, and offered guidance in the current economic downturn. Exhibitions have been attended with partners at Bolton and the NEC. The closer relationship with the DMP is generating new opportunities to promote South Derbyshire and The National Forest, requiring increased input by council staff. Tourism content on the internet has been substantially expanded to include information about short breaks, further supporting South Derbyshire businesses in the current economic downturn.
- 3.15 The second National Forest Walking Festival in May 2009 was organised by the Council and Groundwork, with sponsorship from the National Forest Company and assistance from many local organisations. Almost 950 walkers took part in the main programme, a substantial increase from 550 in the first year. Analysis of postcode data shows participants were attracted from a much broader catchment area. Of nearly 600 individual comments made on evaluation forms, almost all were highly complementary.

Economic Impact Research

- 3.16 East Midlands Tourism commission an economic impact study of tourism across the entire region using the 'STEAM' model. Results previously reported for 2003–07 indicated tourism growth in South Derbyshire was much stronger than performance in the Peak District & Derbyshire as a whole, or the East Midlands region. Although 2008 data has yet to be published, draft figures for South Derbyshire indicate a total spend of £131.65M broken down into £35.67M by staying visitors and £95.98M by day visitors.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The membership contribution of £6,000 to the Visit Peak District & Derbyshire DMP for 2009/10 can be met from within existing budgets.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 Economic development and in particular tourism feature as priorities in the Corporate Plan. The Council has recognised how important the attraction of visitors is to the local economy and the emerging National Forest destination. Support for the tourism sector is another way in which the Council can help local businesses through the economic downturn.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 Support for development of the tourism sector in South Derbyshire directly contributes to “sustainable growth and opportunity” in terms of developing and expanding the local economy. Tourism particularly benefits business development and employment creation in rural areas, where much of the growth has been associated with The National Forest.
- 6.2 This will contribute to the sustainable development aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy for South Derbyshire 2009-2029.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 South Derbyshire receives good value for money from Visit Peak District & Derbyshire and is expected to benefit even more in future. Involvement in the National Forest & Beyond partnership in developing and promoting as a new tourism destination has brought a much higher profile to the District's tourism offer. Events such as the National Forest Walking Festival are further increasing the profile of the area.
- 7.2 The Service Level Agreement for 2009/10 between the Visit Peak District & Derbyshire DMP and South Derbyshire District Council should be ratified.

8.0 Background Papers

- 8.1 None.