
REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: II
DATE OF MEETING:	27th JANUARY 2005	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	KEVIN MASON EXTN 5739	DOC: U:/tourism/Derbyshire tourism marketing group/church tourism/EDS 27-1-05.doc
SUBJECT:	DERBYSHIRE CHURCH TOURISM PROJECT	REF: ED/TOUR/3.4
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: EDS11

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Committee resolve that this authority should participate in and contribute to the funding of the Derbyshire Church Tourism initiative.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To seek Members approval of a project being developed by Tourism Officers across the whole of Derbyshire. This report has been discussed with the authority's values and attitudes champion and further investigations undertaken. In order to achieve the intended March 2005 launch of the project a decision is necessary.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Derbyshire's tourism officers have worked closely together on many projects for more than a decade and are always looking for new projects to increase the benefits of tourism to the county's economy. In early 2004 it was decided to investigate a Church Tourism initiative following the success of similar projects in Lincolnshire and elsewhere. The county has a strong product and it was felt a project could be developed at a relatively low cost which would add to the overall 'mix' of the tourism product as well as helping to move visitors around the county. Growth of tourism associated with genealogy is a further incentive to develop church tourism. South Derbyshire would benefit from increased awareness and movement of visitors from churches in the tourism 'honey-pots' in the north of the county.
- 3.2 An initial meeting was held in March 2004 to which a presentation was made by the Lincolnshire Church Tourism officer. Local authority tourism officers attended plus Church of England's tourism development officers for Derbyshire – they are seeking to increase tourist use of ecclesiastical properties, and responsible for the majority of architecturally and historically important buildings of this type in Derbyshire.
- 3.3 From a tourism perspective the county has a strong product, these essentially being buildings of architectural, historical and social importance that happen to be 'religious' buildings, though by which particular religion the buildings are owned is not important or relevant in this context. The March 2004 meeting agreed to investigate

the feasibility of a project for Derbyshire, with the aim of launching the project in Spring 2005. As a first step, Tourism officers were to identify major church buildings in the county, using the criteria that these should:

- Be of architectural, historical and social importance/interest such that visitors would feel the journey to make a visit had been worthwhile
- Open daily, easily accessible, and providing appropriate signing, interpretative material etc
- Providing or having nearby, local visitor facilities such as parking, toilets, places to eat and drink, and associated places of interest to visit

3.5 About twenty churches were initially identified by tourism officers and reported back to the next meeting. All buildings identified as of sufficient historical interest and/or architectural importance to sustain tourism and also open daily, were in fact buildings belonging to the Church of England – which is also the experience of other similar projects. Visits to all of these by the local tourism officer and CoE tourism development staff took place during the Summer, in order to ascertain whether they met the criteria and were prepared to participate in the project. Ten were identified, including Melbourne and Repton within South Derbyshire.

3.4 The project will comprise a leaflet with 50-word entries and a photograph of each church together with a map of Derbyshire indicating their locations. In each church will be a free-standing display board including leaflet holders. Leaflets will be displayed in Tourist Information Centres and participating churches. Producing 100,000 copies of the leaflet together with a display for all ten of the churches will cost about £3,500 – this authority's contribution based on two churches in the district will therefore be £700, which can be met from existing budgets.

3.5 A second phase of the project will identify smaller, secondary church buildings typically clustered around each of the ten main churches, which are also worthy of visiting. It is envisaged this could further assist in spreading benefits of tourism into rural areas. Again South Derbyshire has a potentially strong offer, which could include Dalbury (oldest stained glass figure in Derbyshire), Marston-on-Dove (oldest bell and surviving organ case in the county), and Foremark (possibly the first Restoration church in the country and little changed). The aim would be to implement this phase, consisting of a leaflet for each cluster together with displays in secondary churches during 2006. However this is likely to have to be funded by the appropriate local authority, and a service development bid would be necessary.

3.6 In order to ensure an approach which complies with this Authority's equal opportunity and diversity policies, the project has been discussed with the values and attitudes champion (Cllr. Isham) and two concerns were raised. These related to the authority's involvement in an initiative that could be construed as promoting a single religion on the basis that it includes only 'Christian' buildings; and whether the use of a proposed logo featuring a cross could be offensive to those of other faiths and deter future participation in the project by other faith groups.

3.7 These issues have been investigated further, including seeking the views of partner local authorities, the ethnic minority office of the Church of England, and a representative of the Sikh community in Derby. Due to a change in the contact at the Hindu Temple in Derby it was not possible to get their view. No other concern has been forthcoming regarding either the lack of non-Christian buildings or the use of the cross in the logo. The other partners in the church tourism project are however prepared to accept modifications to the logo if that satisfies the concerns being expressed. The only reason other faith group buildings do not currently feature in the project is that they do not fulfil the criteria (set out earlier in the report). Indeed so

long as it can be open daily to the public, the proposed Buddhist Temple at the Tara Centre within South Derbyshire would qualify for inclusion in the project when constructed, as it would be probably the largest and most important non-Christian religious building in the county. It's hoped for future inclusion would then further strengthen the importance of the project to the District.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Phase 1 can be met from existing budgets though additional funding would be required to implement phase 2 (in 2006 or later).

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 None.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 Tourism can help to support valued local services and facilities. This project can assist in spreading such benefits into the most rural parts of South Derbyshire, where dependence upon the declining agricultural industry is greatest and opportunities for diversification fewer..

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The Derbyshire church tourism project represents a relatively low-cost option to grow tourism in the county and in particular within South Derbyshire. The District has a stronger church tourism product than many other parts of the county and is therefore expected to be one of the main beneficiaries of this project, which offers the opportunity to increase the tourism profile of Melbourne and Repton, as well as presenting an option extend the economic benefits of tourism into rural parts of the District that are currently lacking a visitor focus. Matters raised by the Authority's values and attitudes champion have been sought, taken into account and discussed by the wider partnership involved in the project. Members approval to participate in and contribute to the funding of the Derbyshire Church Tourism initiative is sought.

8.0 Background Papers

None.

