

Meeting: Thriving Sub Committee

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Title: Heritage and Tourism Impact

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Service: Culture

Directorate: Regeneration and Economic
Development

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to outline the scale and impact of the existing tourism offer in the Borough and how this is supported by the Council's heritage assets.

2. Recommendations

The committee are asked to note the information contained in the report and presentation.

3. Information

3.1 Introduction

North Tyneside has a successful year-round visitor economy that attracts around 6million visitors a year, generating over £350million and supporting over 3,500 jobs (source: STEAM 2022).

Food and drink is the biggest contributor to the economic impact, accounting for around 40% of employment.

The Council's tourism website www.visitnorthtyneside.com had around 130,000 users in 2022. The site allows visitors to search for the latest events, attractions and accommodation. The Council's visitor Instagram account has almost 4,000 followers.

The borough is further promoted by North Tyneside Council and its partners in a number of ways.

3.2 Partnerships

Partners including NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI), Newcastle Airport and Port of Tyne also promote the benefits of visiting the area.

A recent joint digital initiative between North Tyneside Council, Visit Northumberland and NGI, 'New Adventures', aimed at increasing the number of bookable visitor experiences online, saw 27 new options for visitors, generating 65,000 website views.

As part of the Hadrian's Wall Partnership (HWP) we are connected to a country wide tourism destination with World Heritage Site status and international recognition. While partners in Northumberland and Cumberland are directly linked into the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, there will still be some potential benefits for North Tyneside, as investment in areas such as common signage and transport links become part of Wall wide investment programmes.

We expect to benefit from the new Destination Development Partnership (DDP) arrangements that see £2.5m government support for tourism activities across England, driven by a new collaboration, Destination North East England. This will mirror the LA7 North East LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) area and include the local authorities in the North of Tyne Combined Authority (Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle) and those in the North East Combined Authority area (Sunderland, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Durham).

3.3 Events

North Tyneside is known for its family attractions, award-winning beaches and popular events programme.

The Council organises some of the borough's most successful events including Mouth of the Tyne Festival, 10k Road Race, Tynemouth Food Festival, Wallsend Festival, North Sea Weekender, North Shields Christmas Market and fireworks.

Mouth of the Tyne Festival alone, one of the region's longest running music and outdoor arts events, is estimated to generate over £1million for the borough's economy each year. Events also carry their own reputational benefits for the area.

We support a vast array of third party events including Whitley Bay Carnival, Spanish City Funfair, Fiesta, Sandcastle Competition and many more.

Enabling a system for event organisers to work safely and professionally in our public spaces brings additional visitors and spend into the area that might go elsewhere if it was not so effective.

North Tyneside Council has successfully secured external funding to deliver new events including North Sea Weekender, Mouth of the Tyne Collective and innovative character-driven art trails that saw an exclusive Snowman and Snowdog trail in 2020. The world premiere of Morph's Epic Art Adventure in 2022 attracted around 30,000 visitors to our town centres and coastline in the generally challenging first quarter of the year.

Informal event-related activities like open swimming, surfing, paddle boarding, weekend dips and runs bring consistently high visitor numbers on a regular basis.

3.4 Where our visitors come from

North Tyneside has a history of attracting predominantly day visitors from within the region but also significant numbers from Yorkshire, the North West, Midlands and parts of the South East and Scotland.

Visitor surveys suggest that people are here for our beaches, family attractions, choice of places to eat and drink and our events programme.

Internationally, we attract people from the Netherlands and Germany on the DFDS Seaways route but also from around the world with the Port of Tyne's cruise programme. We have several universities in close proximity and overseas students bring their families to the coast when they visit.

Intelligence on the Dutch and German markets suggest they take a cruise to enjoy the journey, the peace and relaxing with friends and family. They are looking to sample the local culture, food and drink. They are not looking to be particularly active. It is important to build upon this evidence base when considering how to position the appeal of North Tyneside in the market for international visitors.

Along with the Port's cruise activity, the total economic value of this part of the industry is around £57million. Tynemouth in particular sees significant footfall from the cruise ships.

3.5 Key attractions

North Tyneside has a good number of attractions including St Mary's Lighthouse and Nature Reserve, Tynemouth Park, Segedunum Roman Fort and Museum, North Shields Fish Quay, Tynemouth Aquarium, Tynemouth Priory and Castle, Gutterball Alley, Jump 360, ODEON Cinema, Playhouse Whitley Bay, Tynemouth Priory Theatre, Jam Jar Cinema, Stephenson Steam Railway, TVLB, Whitley Bay Ice Rink, Tynemouth Station, Weetslade Country Park, our leisure centres, parks, beaches and open spaces.

The walking and cycling visitor offer continues to develop.

Our waggonway network is popular with locals whereas the national routes including the Coast to Coast cycle route and the Hadrian's Wall Trail attract people looking for a challenge.

Mickeldore Walking and Cycling Holidays offer Coast to Coast and Hadrian Cycleway trips including a stay in Tynemouth.

The recently launched 'Northern Saints Trail' urges visitors to make pilgrimages to the region through the use of six new walking routes, reflecting the journeys of the region's saints and their connections with the North East.

The trails, based on ancient pilgrimage routes, are designed to bring the fascinating stories of the region's saints to life whilst showcasing the best of the North East's landscapes, heritage, attractions and food and drink.

The 62 mile 'Way of the Sea' route (Warkworth to Jarrow) takes six days and uses the existing England Coast Path. It includes a stop at Tynemouth Priory, significant for over 1000 years and loved for its sweeping coastal views.

3.6 Looking ahead

The recent high profile opening of the Tynemouth Castle Inn demonstrates confidence in North Tyneside's visitor economy.

We have been successful in securing external funding to stage another world premiere character-driven arts trail to support our town centres, launching in January 2024.

The Roaming Romans augmented reality app continues to grow and an additional 10 animated soldiers will be added to the Wallsend trail imminently.

Excitement is already building for next year's Mouth of the Tyne Festival with artist announcements anticipated before Christmas.

The borough's annual Easter Sunday 10k Road Race recently saw 1600 places of the 2200 available snapped up in just a few days of going on sale demonstrating the demand for well-organised events.

Plans are already underway for a year of celebration around the 800th anniversary of the founding of North Shields, which should see a range of activities which will both engage local communities, as well as attract visitors to the borough.

3.7 Investment Challenges

In terms of the Council's investment plan for its tourism assets two immediate priorities have been identified by Cabinet and are subject to the development of bids to National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Segedunum Roman Fort, Bath House and Museum, established in 2000 as a Millennium Project now requires significant investment to transform the offer and reinforce its status as part of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site. Initial support through Arts Council England (ACE), Museums Estates and Development Fund (MEND) is addressing urgent repairs but significant investment is required to reshape the offer to promote Segedunum as a regionally significant destination.

A first bid to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) earlier this year for Segedunum was unsuccessful, but a further bid is being prepared for submission in the New Year.

St. Mary's Lighthouse was the subject of an unsuccessful bid to NLHF in 2018 and work is underway to prepare for a submission following the outcome of the Segedunum bid.

Other key assets, including Stephenson Steam Railway and Playhouse, Whitley Bay, require ongoing maintenance support in order to sustain their visitor offer.

4. Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.