

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 24 JULY 2012
title: UPDATE ON WALKING EVENT 'WITCHES WALKS AND MORE'
submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To brief members of the Committee on the forthcoming Walking event
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities
- **Council Ambitions** - To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley
 - **Community Objectives** - To encourage economic development throughout the borough with a specific focus on tourism, the delivery of sufficient land for business development, and supporting high growth business opportunities
 - **Corporate Priorities** - To develop, with relevant partners, measures to support the visitor economy

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council is keen to maximise the potential contribution of Tourism and Events to the local economy and in order to best achieve this, week long programme of walks has been organised which, if successful, could form the foundations for an Annual Ribble Valley Walking festival. Many areas organise walking festivals and they provide a focus for tourism as well as an opportunity for local people to keep fit and discover their local area.
- 2.2 A successful application was submitted for funding to the performance reward grant, the stated objectives of which were:-
- encourage responsible access and walking in the countryside
 - raise awareness and understanding of countryside issues
 - encourage local people to discover their local countryside
 - encourage visitors to the Ribble Valley
 - give local people and visitors the opportunity to learn about the culture, history and natural history of the countryside around them
 - promote the health benefits of walking and being out in the countryside
 - benefit local economies
- 2.3 The reward grant established a target of 15 walks with a total of 300 walkers participating in walks. The budget allocated from the fund is £2,000 to match funded 'in kind' by the authority. The proposed week of walks should exceed these targets.

3 ISSUES

3.1 Witches Walks and more

As there has been significant interest in establishing a walking festival based around Ribble Valley, it has been agreed to use the 400th anniversary of the Pendle witches to explore this concept. A week called 'Witches Walks and More' is taking place between 12th and 19th of August. It will include a walk along the witches trail from Pendle to Lancaster over a four day staggered period. In addition different walks based from different locations around the borough will also take place.

3.2 By hosting a 'week of walks' rather than a promoted 'festival' it will be possible to gauge both the level of public interest as well ensure adequate support by local volunteer walks leaders. To be sustainable in the future any festival would need to community and volunteer support.

3.2 The programme of walks is attached as an appendix to this report and at the time of writing bookings have started to be made. It is anticipated that the 4 day witches walk will be particularly popular given the 400th anniversary of the trial. This event is likely to attract some very positive publicity.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- **Resources** – There are no specific financial implications to this report with the programme being funding from the allocated rewards grant
- **Technical, Environmental and Legal** – No implications identified.
- **Political** – Tourism is highlighted in the Corporate strategy as a key contributor to support economic growth in the Ribble Valley.
- **Reputation** – Tourism is an important part of the local economy and the role of the Council in leading visitor economy enhances its reputation

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Judging by the Interest in this year's event, future similar activities are likely to prove very popular. We must however build sufficient support/capacity in order to ensure the product is of high quality.

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For further information, please ask for Tom Pridmore, ext 4496.