

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 9

meeting date: 16th NOVEMBER 2017
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

The Council is keen to maximise the potential contribution of Tourism and Events to the local economy, and in order to best achieve this, it works with the private sector through a variety of partnership arrangements.

3 ISSUES

The period September to December each year is the most active in terms of annual tourism marketing activity; this update provides a summary of progress.

3.1 Supporting external marketing activity

With many external organisation and bodies working on their 2018 programmes the Tourism and Events Officer is responding to requests at this time of year for updated editorial content and photographic images. This means writing new editorial, sourcing new photographs and updating event calendars. One good example is the Room Book initiative, where a private company produces bedroom browsers for hotels in Ribble Valley. The browsers are funded by local advertising and contain a range of local information for visitors. The Room books are bespoke to each hotel and provided at no cost to that the accommodation provider. A relationship has developed with the Roombook company which means we provide the editorial content and photographic images for these browsers. This ensures that they are up to date and relevant to the area.

3.2 Ribble Valley Wedding Partnership

The partnership has expanded in membership and has been particularly active during this period. A new brochure has been launched, the content of which is being replicated on the dedicated website. A new exhibition unit has also been acquired, and two major events have been attended. The first event was particularly noteworthy in that a first Ribble Valley Wedding Fair was established by Little White

Books, a major regional commercial marketing company. Hosted at Stonyhurst, as a neutral venue, the company have recognised the value of the Ribble Valley brand and the turnout for the event was extremely good. Many Ribble Valley based businesses were invited to attend. The second event attended was the National Wedding Fair in Manchester. All the promotional activity, including the new brochure, the exhibition stand and the two events, has been funded collectively by the sixteen wedding venues, fourteen supplier members and the Council. In addition, in-kind support has been received from members of the partnership, in the form of staffing at events and free loan of equipment.

3.3 Go Ribble Valley Group Tourism Partnership

This new partnership, coordinated by the Council and comprising private sector membership covering attractions accommodation and food, has launched a promotional campaign 'Go Ribble Valley'. This is a series of itineraries for groups based around the themes of Heritage, Food and scenery. The partnership has attended two major promotional events, firstly, the 'Group Tour Organisers' show at Southport and attended by group travel organisers from across the North of England. The second was the National Group Travel and Leisure show, at which the new promotional brochure was launched. These events will be followed up with familiarisation trips for target operators and some direct follow up contact, to again target specific groups.

3.4 Discover Ribble Valley Visitor Guide

Work on the 2018 visitor guide continues, the contract for design and print having been won by Creative Council, part of Burnley Borough Council, who already produce publications for other public bodies including the annual Visitor Guide for Marketing Lancashire. Advertising sales for the guide are being undertaken by the Council for the first time in several years.

The features contained within the guide will include:-

- The Great Outdoors
- Heritage Trail
- Where to Stay
- Weddings

The guide will be printed and distributed early in the New Year.

3.5 Ribble Valley Tourism Heritage Trail.

Initial research has begun on producing a Heritage Trail to promote and celebrate the historic places, stories and artefacts that visitors can experience in Ribble Valley. It is anticipated that meetings with heritage partners will begin early in the New Year, with a launch later in 2018. In terms of setting the scene and beginning to create an appetite for the heritage product, specific marketing activity has already begun in anticipation of a new Heritage Trail. The Ribble Valley content in the Visit Lancashire Guide, a double page spread will, for 2018 be dedicated to heritage and the Ribble Valley guide will also contain a similar feature with images portraying the heritage offer. Similarly, the 'Go Ribble Valley' Group travel initiative above also contains a heritage theme. The heritage sections of photographic library will be refreshed to ensure we have the very best images for promotional purposes.

4 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 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

5 **Conclusion**

The Committee is invited 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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