

Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny

DATE	16/03/2023
REPORT OF	Carolina Borgstrom, Director of Environment, Economy, and Infrastructure
SUBJECT	Discover North East Lincolnshire Tourism Campaign 2023 (UK Shared Prosperity)
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

Tourism and the Visitor Economy are important sectors for North East Lincolnshire (NEL) and fundamental in their contribution to place-making and achieving a Stronger Economy and Stronger Community. Place-making is one of the four cornerstones of NEL's Economic Strategy 2021, and at the heart of the council's commitment to ensuring that our towns are great places to live, work, visit and stay. A key objective is to raise awareness of North East Lincolnshire as a destination for visitors from outside the area and for local people. By promoting the tourism offer and encouraging more people to visit and stay in the area, there are economic impacts that local businesses can benefit from, helping to make the sector more resilient.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report includes an update regarding the Discover North East Lincolnshire (DiscoverNEL) Tourism Campaign for 2023, funded by UK Shared Prosperity Funds (UKSPF) and how the campaign, along with other activities, support local tourism, retail and hospitality businesses.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

The DiscoverNEL Tourism Campaign for 2023 is presented to scrutiny to provide an outline of the value of marketing and promotional activities in helping to deliver NEL's Tourism Action Plan and for panel members to provide feedback.

1. DISCOVERNEL TOURISM CAMPAIGN 2023

A total of £30K has been allocated from the Council's UKSPF to support a tourism focused marketing campaign for the forthcoming 2023 tourism season.

1.1 Tourism Objectives

Aligned with the Council Plan 2023, the Economic Strategy 2021 and the Tourism Priorities/Action Plan, marketing and promotional activities are key to achieving our tourism objectives. By working with local tourism businesses and attractions the focus is on ensuring that there is a strong tourism offer for local people and visitors. Three of the six objectives support the Discover Cleethorpes Tourism Campaign 2023 by:

#1 Raising awareness of North East Lincolnshire (NEL) as a visitor destination.

Branding and marketing through a range of social media channels are key to attracting footfall and a public/private coordinated approach is required to ensure the 'offer' is both attractive and visible locally and further afield. Well-advertised and promoted events and activities generate increased footfall and longer stays. Using online advertising and

'Search Engine Optimisation', targeted marketing opportunities can be delivered to raise awareness of NEL as a visitor destination.

#3 Increasing overnight visitor numbers.

Through promotional campaigns, people are signposted and directed to the DiscoverNEL website (www.discovernortheastlincolnshire.co.uk), which includes an 'Inspire Me' and a 'What's On' section. By suggesting different itineraries, offering 'something for everyone', people are encouraged to come and stay in the area.

#5 Supporting tourism businesses to enable them to grow and create jobs.

An increase in day and overnight visitors results in economic benefits for local restaurants, bars, and accommodation providers etc. In addition to the council providing regular Government and sector updates, businesses can have their events and activities promoted free of charge through the DiscoverNEL social media channels and the monthly newsletter. Through collaboration with businesses and by helping to promote their services, products, and events, the DiscoverNEL brand is then introduced to their respective network of followers, thus widening our reach.

1.2 Target Markets and Campaign Scope

The DiscoverNEL Tourism Campaign 2023 will focus on attracting out of area visitors to come and visit or stay in NEL, with target areas including the Humber, Greater Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire, and the East Midlands.

This campaign will take a multi-pronged approach which will appear in various locations from March 2023 onwards. It will include activities for outdoor advertising, a social media campaign and some potential print options.

The key strapline to be used for this campaign is '**COAST LOVERS WANTED**' with a variety of calls to action (depending on the image) – see Appendix 1 for some examples. The adverts showcase NEL's wide tourism offer, targeting various audiences including families and 'empty nesters' (that is, a parent whose child has grown up and left home), to highlight a range of activities, for families, nature, water sports, food & drink, and events as well as the opportunity to target niche markets such as dog lovers, cyclists, and walkers.

The adverts will include the 'Year of the Coast' logo, to help tie into this national campaign encouraging people to 'Explore, Embrace, Enjoy England's Coast in 2023. QR codes will be included where appropriate which will link to a landing page on the DiscoverNEL website, and this will allow some monitoring of how many people have 'clicked through'. There is an opportunity to include a link to a short, online visitor survey to try and gain some qualitative information to help inform future marketing campaigns.

1.3 Outdoor Advertising and Print Campaign

The outdoor campaign will feature city centre digital screens, bus stop shelters, shopping centre screens, supermarket entrance screens, phone boxes, train station print sites and Humberside Airport. Digital screen options enable the playing of multi-images thus showcasing NEL's tourism offer, for example, beach images showing families, dog lovers, water sport users, dining options and events.

Locations include Clear Channel's digital screens that are in high footfall areas in

Sheffield city centre and Meadowhall shopping centre, Nottingham, Lincoln city centre, and Doncaster Frenchgate shopping centre. Train stations at Grantham, Newark, Retford for print ads, and selected supermarket stores in Rotherham, Barnsley, Doncaster, Newark, and Retford. Information boards will be utilised at Sheffield, Nottingham, and Newark stations, all of which have train routes through to Cleethorpes.

A **print publication**, the Lincoln City & Countryside guide, will feature the campaign in collaboration with other areas across Greater Lincolnshire. We are also participating in a 'Year of the Coast' digital campaign, representing the Greater Lincolnshire coastline.

1.4 Digital Campaign

Following an open tender process, a Lincoln-based digital marketing agency has been appointed to look at how the Search Engine Optimisation on the DiscoverNEL website can be improved and carry out some online advertising to improve search rankings. The agency will also be putting together a paid advertising campaign using social media channels which may offer opportunities for PR and video options. The new social media campaign will align and complement the outdoor advertising 'Coast Lovers Wanted' campaign. An increase in the number of social media followers means that it is possible to extend the reach to people locally and out of the region, and promote the area, events and activities taking place here.

1.5 Supporting Businesses

The new outdoor and social media campaigns will support local tourism, retail, and hospitality related businesses by attracting visitors to the area who will spend locally. Aside from the new campaign, the tourism team continues to support local businesses with advice and support. A tourism business event is being hosted by the council on 22 March at Docks Academy inviting businesses to come along for an update plus promotion through the DiscoverNEL social media channels, website and eNews such as the following:

- **Valentine's Date Ideas**, featuring 22 places to eat, 5 overnight stay ideas and 4 couple's experiences.
- The half-term web page was refreshed to promote '**February Family Fun**' with lots of ideas for things to do.
- We will be '**Springing into March**' with features on Great Grimsby Charter Day (11/3), Mother's Day (19/3), Discover Lincolnshire weekend (25/3-26/3) and a spring flowers webpage.
- All forthcoming activities through third party organisers will be highlighted and promoted for free through the DiscoverNEL newsletter which currently has more than 1,500 subscribers.
- Businesses have been encouraged to consider how they might like to take part in the Lincolnshire-wide 'Discover Lincolnshire Weekend'. Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre will be offering discounted entry and possibly a café special (Stokes Coffee & slice of Lincolnshire Plum Loaf). These can be promoted via Destination Lincolnshire/Visit Lincoln and Visit Lincolnshire.

1.6 Measuring Performance

Although measuring the success of these campaigns is not straightforward, we are required to capture outputs for UKSPF. We will therefore continue to:

- Monitor footfall data to highlight any increases which correlate with events etc.

- Collect STEAM data to give useful insights and trends for the Tourism Dashboard including economic spend, number of day visits and overnight stays etc.
- Monitor the number of social media followers and newsletter subscribers.
- Use QR codes to link to a landing page to help measure the number of 'click-throughs'.
- Create an online survey to further capture qualitative data to help inform future campaigns.
- Collect qualitative information from visitors (via the Resort Team questionnaire).

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

2.1 With the current popularity of staycations, there is an opportunity to positively promote NEL's tourism offer to visitors from outside the area, encouraging them stay over for longer in our area, thus creating economic benefits for businesses and the local community.

2.2 The distinctive Victorian seaside town of Cleethorpes remains a major draw for the area, attracting not only holidaymakers from its traditional South Yorkshire/East Midlands catchments but also residents, and other visitors seeking to experience its mix of niche independent shops and evening economy, alongside a range of attractions and burgeoning water-based activities, outdoor and active experiences.

2.3 There is a risk that because of the cost of living crisis people will not be able to afford to visit and stay. These risks could have a detrimental effect on the recovery of local businesses and attractions.

2.4 There is a risk that people who have never been to the area before are affected by negative perceptions and therefore do not visit. The tourism campaign will help to mitigate against this by promoting a positive and attractive tourism offer.

3 REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

The promotion of the tourism offer for NEL will positively enhance the status of the area as a place to invest, work, visit and stay. We will continue to engage and consult with key stakeholders, businesses, and the public to ensure that their aspirations for the future of NEL have been fully considered in our campaigns, and promotional activities.

4 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

All promotional activities and campaigns are financed through an annual tourism revenue budget and there will therefore be no call on council reserves. For the DiscoverNEL Tourism Campaign 2023, we are utilising UKSPF. By increasing visitor numbers to NEL there will be economic benefits for the whole area, including businesses and third-party suppliers, event organisers and accommodation providers.

Through the promotion of the tourism offer for the area, attractions such as the Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre and the Time Trap, benefit in terms of creating income generating opportunities for the council.

5 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct or material implications arising from this report for children and young people. The tourism campaign outlined supports the council's overriding priorities and will provide further health and well-being, social, and economic opportunities for young people. By enhancing the place, our objective is to make NEL a more attractive area for children and young people to work, live, visit, stay and engage in cultural events and activities.

6 CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The place agenda, and promotion of tourism and the visitor economy for NEL considers the council's published commitments on climate change and the environment, particularly within the context of the resort and beach areas having special ecological designations such as the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Consideration is given to the green agenda and recognition of the council's nature stewardship obligations as documented in Cleethorpes' Habitat Management Plan. From a tourism and visitor economy perspective we seek opportunities to improve green spaces and connectivity between sites to promote walking and cycling, promotion of biodiversity, natural habitats and integrating energy and water efficiency into conservation management.

7 MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance, or physical assets). As a result, no monitoring comments have been sought from the council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

8 WARD IMPLICATIONS

All Wards in NEL will benefit from the promotion and delivery of events and activities, thereby making the area one that is attractive to work, live, visit and stay.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Campaign Images

11 CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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NAME

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Draft Campaign Images
(contains images of 'coast lovers' posters)

