

Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny

DATE	26/01/2023
REPORT OF	Carolina Borgstrom, Director of Environment, Economy and Infrastructure
SUBJECT	North East Lincolnshire Provisional Events Calendar 2023
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 enhance the visitor experience and promote civic pride, creating a year-round tourism offer through marketing activities and offering a diverse event and cultural programme for local people and for attracting more people to visit and stay.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report includes an update regarding the events season for the Meridian Showground (MSG) during 2022 and includes the NEL provisional events calendar 2023 for events and notable local anniversaries including the 150th anniversary of the Pier.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

The Provisional Events Calendar 2023 is presented to scrutiny to provide an outline of the value of events and activities in helping to deliver NEL's Tourism Action Plan and for panel members to provide feedback.

1. BACKGROUND

The following key strategic tourism objectives, which are aligned with the Economic Strategy 2021 and the Council Plan 2022, focus on strengthening the tourism offer over the next five years. Although the council does not have a dedicated budget or team to deliver events, it is recognised that events and activities play an important role in achieving some of these objectives. We therefore work with private and third-party event organisers, utilise external funding wherever possible, and carry out effective marketing and promotional campaigns to ensure that there is a year round programme of events for local people and visitors.

1.1 Increasing overnight visitor numbers.

Events, such as the Orsted Grimsby 10K, the Gathering Fest at the MSG and the Armed Forces weekend attract people from outside the area with an overnight stay, which leads to an economic benefit for, amongst others, local restaurants, bars, taxis, and accommodation providers.

1.2 Raising awareness of NEL as a visitor destination.

By promoting events, it is possible to raise awareness of NEL as a visitor destination and for those visiting for the first time, we hope that they will be encouraged to return in the future. In terms of the promotion of events, a hard copy 'What's On' guide was produced and distributed during 2022 to highlight the events and activities taking place in the MSG and throughout the borough. An events calendar detailing up and coming events has a dedicated space on a 'What's On' section on the destination website www.discovernortheastlincolnshire.co.uk (DiscoverNEL). Events have also been promoted for the last 12 months via the DiscoverNEL newsletter which has risen from zero to approximately 1,500 subscribers.

1.3 Extending the traditional tourism season.

The traditional tourism season falls between April and September but having a 'short' season is a key challenge for tourism businesses, especially in terms of the sector's recovery following the impact of the pandemic. To try and counterbalance this issue and to lengthen the season, a year-round events programme helps to attract out of area visitors and the local community to attend, which in turn generates more footfall and encourages local spending.

1.4 Supporting tourism businesses.

During the pandemic the council was able to build stronger communication channels with local tourism businesses. Consequently, as well as providing regular Government and sector updates, we offer more businesses the opportunity to have their events and activities promoted free of charge through the DiscoverNEL social media channels, including the monthly newsletter. There has been a positive upward trajectory of followers for the DiscoverNEL social media channels over the last few years, including Instagram and Facebook. Our social media platforms are grown through collaboration with businesses and key stakeholders because by helping to promote their services, products, and events, we are therefore introduced to their networks of followers.

2.0 Meridian Showground Review for 2022

2.1 Background and statistics for MSG

The MSG, which is managed and operated by the council, was hired out for 49 days in 2021. This was down by 50% from 2019 due to the pandemic and the fact that no events could take place prior to the end of July unless they were deemed COVID safe. The 2022 season at the MSG has been much busier, and the number of events booked, and income achieved has increased (Table 1).

In Appendix 1, slides 1 and 2, there are some examples of the range of events which hired the MSG in 2022. These include, Pop Live, the Gathering Fest, Fake Fest, Pride (a new event for the MSG), the Funfair, the Circus, the Outdoor Cinema, Race for Life, and the Scooter Rally. In most cases, the audience numbers have increased in comparison to 2019.

Table 1

	2019 (pre Covid)	2021 (July onwards)	2022
Number of events hosted and number of days hired	18 events 98.5 days hires	8 events 49 days hired	15 events 97 days hired
Event variety	Fair/circus – 4 Music – 2 Sport – 3 Cinema - 1 Culture/Arts – 1 Private hire – 6 Community –1 AFD	Fair/circus – 2 Music – 3 Sport – 1 Cinema – 1 (2 nights) Culture/Arts – 0 Private hire – 1	Fair/circus – 4 Music – 3 Sport – 2 Cinema – 2 (5 nights) Culture/Arts – 0 Niche – 2 (CleeW, Scooter Rally) Community – 2 Private hire – 0

2.2 Social Media Statistics for MSG

Social media, which is managed in-house by the council's tourism team, has played a developing role over the last few years in promoting events and gathering interest in events hosted within the MSG. Since 2021, the number of followers on MSG's Facebook platform has risen from 5,818, to 6,842 in 2022 which is a 33% increase. There are currently 1,226 followers on Instagram.

3.0 Provisional Annual Events Calendar 2023

The NEL Provisional Events Calendar 2023, Appendix 2, lists events, activities and notable anniversaries scheduled to take place across the borough, including the MSG, Auditorium, council public spaces, and private venues. Smaller scale community and business events are included in the monthly DiscoverNEL newsletter and the weekly 'Hello Weekend' Instagram and Facebook posts.

3.1 Larger Scale Events

Some notable bookings for next year include the Orsted Grimsby 10K organised by Tape to Tape, the Armed Forces weekend run by the Armed Forces Team, the Festival of the Sea and People Power & Partnership by Grimsby Creates, and the GrimFalfest weekend, organised by the Visitor Economy, Services and Retail Group (VESR) and Heritage Lincolnshire.

3.2 Key Local Anniversaries in 2023

Other notable dates include some important forthcoming anniversaries as follows:

August 2023 Peoples' Park (140 years)
 August 2023 Cleethorpes Railway (160 years)
 August 2023 The Pier (150 years)
 2 Sept 2023 Freeman Street Market (150 years)
 Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway (75 years)
 Nov 2023 Release of Michael Jackson's Thriller written by Cleethorpes born Rod Temperton (40 years)

Regarding the Pier's anniversary, some options are being considered to celebrate this important event and discussions are taking place with the owner of the Pier. Council

teams are exploring the possibility of incorporating some of the anniversary activities into the Cleethorpes Heritage Open Days in September, ensuring that the Pier and Railway anniversaries are fully referenced in any exhibitions at the Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre.

4. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 4.1 There is an opportunity to positively promote NEL's events and activities to visitors from outside the area, encouraging them to visit and stay, thus creating economic benefits for businesses and the local community.
- 4.2 There is a risk that because of the cost of living crisis people will not be able to afford to attend ticketed events. These risks could have a detrimental effect on the recovery of local businesses and event organisers.
- 4.3 Events are expensive to deliver and often include significant infrastructure and set up costs to ensure public safety measures are in place. There is a risk therefore that having insufficient artistic or cultural content could result in a poor quality event which will lead to negative comments from the public.

5. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

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

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although the council does not have an events budget or a dedicated events team for the delivery of events across the borough, it utilises funding from external sources whenever possible, for example the Government's 'Welcome Back' and the 'UK Shared Prosperity' funds. All promotional activities and campaigns are financed through an annual tourism revenue budget and there will therefore be no call on council reserves. 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 hire of the MSG and other council owned facilities, such as the Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre and the Time Trap, there are income generating opportunities for the council.

7. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct or material implications arising from this report for children and young people. The proposals outlined support 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.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The place agenda, and promotion of tourism and the visitor economy for NEL, including the delivery of a year-round event schedule, 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

12. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Meridian Showground 2022 Event Statistics

Appendix 2 – North East Lincolnshire Provisional Events Calendar 2023

13. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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Appendix 1 Meridian Showground Event Statistics 2022

Slide 1



Snapshot of 2022

13
Events held at the Showground in 2022 (open to the public)
15 (inc private)

4
New Events in 2022
CLEEW
Planet Circus
PRIDE
Halloween outdoor cinema

What's been on at MSG?
Pop Live
Gathering Fest
Fake Fest
Scooter Rally
CleeW
Pride
Outdoor cinemas
Race for Life
Circus/fair

Ticket Sales/Footfall			
	2019	2021	2022
Gathering Fest	3200	4250	3700
Pop Live	n/a	2200	2000
Fake Fest	1700	0	1292
Adventure Cinema	974	1345	3426
CleeW	n/a	n/a	3000
Pride	n/a	n/a	2100
Race for Life	1500	800	1200



Slide 2



Appendix 2 North East Lincolnshire Provisional Events Calendar 2023

Please note that this is attached separately in an excel spreadsheet format.