

Meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee – 9th March 2017

Report of the Strategic Director of Place

Tourism and Visitor Economy

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the Scrutiny Panel with an update relating to the ongoing work to grow the borough's visit economy and in particular to inform members of the development of a draft Tourism and Visitor Economy prospectus which is attached as Appendix A.

Background

2. Dudley has a strong, cultural and entertainment offer, which is unrivalled across the Black Country and is explicitly recognised by the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership. Examples include the Black Country Living Museum, The Canal & Tunnel Trust, Dudley Zoo, Dudley Archives and The Local History Centre, Borough Town Halls, the Glass Quarter, Himley Hall, local parks and nature reserves.
3. The visitor economy has a major role to play in making the borough more attractive for investors and residents, which in turn helps with image, reputation and skills retention. The sector is crucially important to the area's economic success due to the potential to support thriving industries that can help the borough's wealth creation. This is summarised below:-
 - The economic impact of tourism in the borough of Dudley was worth £446.m in 2014.
 - A total of 8,841 tourism jobs support both local residents and those living nearby. 6,906 tourism jobs are directly supported and 1,935 non-tourism related jobs are supported linked to the multiplier spend from tourism
 - The number of visitors across the visitor attractions in the borough of Dudley were just over one million (excluding Merry Hill) in 2015
 - In 2015, the Black Country Visitor Economy was worth £944 million, this confirms the substantial impact which Dudley contributes to these figures.
 - The Black Country is predominantly a day visits destination with around 80% of visitors travelling within a one and a half hour drive time.

4. Our focus working with partners is:-
 - to raise the profile of the borough and increase awareness and appreciation of our visitor attractions amongst local residents, visitors and potential visitors.
 - to increase footfall to the visitor attractions and our businesses across the borough
 - to celebrate the borough and increase the pride of people have for it amongst those who live and work here.
 - to engage with and support local businesses and other stakeholders across the borough, through identifying or supporting new initiatives and joint partnership working.
 - to evaluate and monitor the success of the promotion of the visitor attractions and events across the borough.
 - to add value, quality of life – vibrancy.
5. In 2015 a visitor survey was commissioned by Dudley Council, undertaken by the company 'The Research Solution'. The survey results concluded that 86% of visitors to the borough were day visitors with only 14% staying overnight. More specifically, the day visitors were largely from the local region, with most living within a one-hour drive time of the borough. Our activities will focus on capitalising on the day visitors whilst at the same time working with our attractions, our hoteliers and short trip providers to drive up the number of overnight stays.
6. Our approach is set in more detail in the draft Tourism Prospectus which is attached as appendix A.
7. The Black Country LEP recognises tourism as a sector for the Black Country Economy and Dudley is identified as a cornerstone of that sector. As we move towards the West Midlands Combined Authority there is the real opportunity to position Dudley's Tourism sector as a key plank of the Combined Authority's approach to the Tourism sector

Our Key Visitor Assets

8. Our key visitor assets are described in more detail below:-

Cultural Assets

9. Dudley has a strong cultural, leisure and entertainment offer. Visitors are able to see many high profile comedians who appear at Dudley Town Hall, watch cinema and live streaming of National Theatre productions at Stourbridge Town Hall, visit the Zoo, Canal and Tunnels Trust or spend a day at Black Country living Museum. The relocated Dudley Museum will open to the public this summer within the impressive Archive building and the new White House Cone Museum of Glass is expected to open next year. The Red House Cone visitor attraction continues to attract visitors of all ages.

Borough events

10. Borough events contribute considerably to the visitor economy and provide a 'feel good' factor to visitors. Although there are far too many to list, examples include the Himley bonfire and firework display which tracks in excess of 20,000 people each year, the Under 5s Fun Day at Himley which tracks approximately 2,000 visitors, Armed Forces Day, Craft fairs, Teenage Markets, Borough trails, Fun runs, Band concerts and many more events. Himley Hall also caters for weddings, parties, afternoon teas, conference bookings etc which all resulted in visitors to the venue.

Retail

11. The borough has a number of retail centres including Dudley town centre, Stourbridge, Halesowen and the Merry Hill Centre in Brierley Hill.
12. In the near future, local businesses within the Stourbridge and Halesowen areas will be asked to vote on whether they would like to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) within their area. BIDs are established to promote and enhance areas with the aim of making them more attractive to visitors, shoppers and investors.

Quality Open Space

13. Quality open space is an important component of the Borough's offer. A number of popular, well attended parks in addition to nationally recognised nature reserves make the borough's open spaces wonderful venues for people of all ages to enjoy.
14. In March this year the Council will know whether it has been successful in its application to become a Black Country Global Geopark. If successful, this would create considerable promotion potential on an international basis.

The Way Forward

15. There is a real opportunity to build and expand upon the strength of Dudley's Visitor Economy. Our approach is set out in the attached Tourism and Visitor Economy Prospectus which will be further developed based on feedback from partners and members and launched to our Visitor Economy sector.
16. In the meantime, set out below are the immediate priorities for the Council team in terms of our own attractions and the increasing partnership with Dudley's visitor attractions and private sector tourism businesses

Council Venues

17. Set out below are updates on specific venues sitting underneath the Council's Visitor Economy service:

Venue	2017/18 Objectives
<i>Dudley Museum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Open new museum at Archives Building</i> • <i>Introduce local schools to the new museum</i> • <i>Develop the learning offer by providing excellent exhibitions that align to the school curriculum.</i>
<i>Red House Glass Cone</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase/maximise footfall and diversify audience</i> • <i>Work closely with the British Glass Foundation to promote both the Red House and White House cones.</i> • <i>To identify opportunities to work more closely with Ruskin Mill.</i>
<i>Borough events</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-ordinated events offer across all sites</i> • <i>Prioritise remaining outdoor events budget</i> • <i>Maintain commercial approach</i> • <i>Provide events for all ages and sectors of the community.</i>
<i>Himley Hall and Park</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Aim to increase wedding bookings</i> • <i>Aim to increase the number of conferences and seminars that take place</i> • <i>Work with the World Owl Trust to establish a new, exciting visitor attraction.</i>

18. We will build on the strength of existing relationships with the Borough's non Council visitor attractions to encourage joint working and promotion. By way of example a Castle Hill Partnership has been established between the Council, the Zoo, the Black Country Living Museum and the Canals and Rivers Trust. The initial purpose has been on supporting these visitor attractions to attract external funding to further improve their facilities. As this develops there will be an increasing focus on joint marketing.
19. Joint marketing, discounted tickets for multiple visits across attractions and other initiatives aimed at attracting both new and repeat visitors will all be looked into.

Priorities for the visitor economy service

20. Short term priorities for the visitor economy service are:-

- A borough wide programme of significant events, including partner events.
- Closer working relationship with Castle Hill attractions
- Agree partnership arrangements to support the British Glass Foundation with the operation of the White House Cone - Museum of Glass.
- Create an impressive new Dudley Museum.
- To support businesses in the borough.
- To improve the promotion and marketing of the borough's many attractions.
- To ensure venues that support the visitor economy (e.g. hotels) have appropriate information to provide to visitors.

- To achieve Geopark status and to work closely on this project with neighbouring Black Country authorities.

Finance

21. There are no financial implications to report at this stage.

Law

22. There are no legal implications at this stage.

Equality Impact

23. Any detailed work streams emerging from the contents of the report will where necessary be the subject of Equality Impact assessments

Recommendation

24. It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee note and comment on the content of this report and in particular the draft Tourism Prospectus attached



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List of Background Papers

Appendix A – Tourism Prospectus