

[These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee Scheduled to be held on the 28 November 2017]

## **Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee**

**24 October 2017**

Present: Councillor J Cassidy (In the Chair)  
Councillors L Bell, L Darke, D Drummond, D McMeekan,  
A Newman, P Oliver and A Waggott-Fairley.

Also Present: Councillor E N Darke, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture  
and Tourism.

### **CL12/10/17 Apologies**

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors S Day and K Osborne.

### **CL13/10/17 Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members reported.

### **CL14/10/17 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest reported.

### **CL15/10/17 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 July 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

### **CL16/10/17 Future proofing our Digital Tourism Offer**

The Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee was presented with an outline of the changing pattern of consumer access to tourist information and steps taken to ensure the offer in North Tyneside keeps pace with changing technology.

The focus of the offer was based upon how this digital challenge was being met in North Tyneside, how it would translate this key objective into a local context and updated Members engaged in the scrutiny of the implementation of the tourism strategy.

On 26 August 2016, the government published a *Tourism Action Plan* which included a series of measures with the intention “to help Britain out-compete other major tourism destinations, welcoming more visitors than ever before and see more staycations as Brits holiday at home.” The plan builds upon the previously published *The Tourism Landscape* by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS 2016) which identified key areas for the development of the tourism sector in the UK.

The plan highlighted five areas for particular attention:

- i. Tourism landscape – to encourage more effective co-ordination across the sector;
- ii. Skills and jobs – to develop and retain talent in the sector;
- iii. Common sense regulation – to review regulatory controls in tourism;
- iv. Transport – to ensure tourism and transport link to enhance the visitor offer;
- v. A GREAT welcome – ensuring a warm welcome for overseas visitors.

The plan identified a digital presence as an increasingly important way in which visitors were inspired to visit key destinations, get ideas on their itinerary, book their trips and share their post-trip experiences e.g. on social media.

Analysis has showed a shift in fewer requests for visitor user guides and increased use of the Authority's 'visitnorthtyneside.com' website since its launch in 2013. The factors for this trend included: less Ad revenue; continued growth of mobile platforms and apps; industry and visitor expectation; information demanded wherever you are, whenever you want it; and Tourism Information Centre closures, which was the clear direction of travel nationwide. The current Digital Offer included:

- [www.visitnorthtyneside.com](http://www.visitnorthtyneside.com)
- [www.mouthofthetynefestival.com](http://www.mouthofthetynefestival.com)
- [www.facebook.co.uk/mouthofthetynefestival](https://www.facebook.co.uk/mouthofthetynefestival)
- Visit North Tyneside Instagram
- Surfing in Tynemouth multi-platform app
- ISSUU

In future proofing the Authority's Digital Tourism Offer, the [www.visitnorthtyneside.com](http://www.visitnorthtyneside.com) would be refreshed to make more of the imagery; easier to share information; integration with the likes of Trip Advisor, Open Table, Booking.com; and Mobile-friendly. It was anticipated that the refreshed website launch would take place in January 2018, followed by the introduction of an App in the next financial year.

Following the presentation, Members of the sub-committee asked a series of questions of officers. During questioning members examined:-

- a) The profile of visitors and the marketing tools for attracting the ideal visitor to the area.
- b) Resources available locally, regionally and nationally to help promote the area and attract more visitors.
- c) How events, activities and places of interest in North Tyneside were being promoted in collaboration with regional counterparts.
- d) Planning for overnight visitors and how more multi-day visitors could be attracted to the area e.g. Mouth of the Tyne Festival, by providing an itinerary for places to visit within a 30-50-mile radius.
- e) The use of facebook pages to promote/advertise events and visitor activities.
- f) Ideas for including and promoting the Authority's Digital Offer on the [www.portoftyne.co.uk](http://www.portoftyne.co.uk) website, as a means of attracting international visitors to events in North Tyneside.

### **CL1710/17 St Mary's Lighthouse HLF bid update**

A report was received on the progress of the submission to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the development of St. Mary's Lighthouse and Visitor Centre.

The Bid Team and consultants met with HLF representatives on the 11 October 2017 as

24 October 2017

Part of the formal Round 2 assessment. The key actions arising from this discussion were:

New Interpretation: - Commitment from the Authority to install new interpretation on the headland to alert visitors to the status of site as a Nature Reserve.

Intertidal Habitat Survey: – The Authority must employ someone to undertake a survey of the new intertidal habitat areas 6 months after installation. Natural England had explicitly asked for this. This would be funded from contingency in the bid.

Wardens: – HLF were keen to see a commitment from the Authority to deploy Wardens to monitor use of St Mary's Island following completion of capital works, to ensure increased footfall did not lead to a detrimental impact on the Local Nature Reserve.

With regard to responses to statutory consultees, Fairhurst, ecology consultants EcoNorth, and Officers from the Authority met with Natural England, the Authority's Biodiversity Officer and the RSPB on the 13 October 2017 to discuss queries arising from the consultation and the additional level of detail required.

Further to the meeting, Natural England consulted with their marine mammal expert and provided advice regarding potential impacts to seals during the 'noisy' periods of construction. The main concerns related to the noisy activity such as steam cleaning work that would be taking place on the island during the seal moulting period. The work programme for these works had been amended to time the works outside of the peak period for seals.

Natural England confirmed that the work schedule proposed for the causeway, which would start on the land side and progress across to the island, seemed reasonable. Natural England was satisfied that this mitigation was suitable to reduce disturbance during this time of construction.

A full response to all queries was provided and supported by additional environmental information, which was set out in an updated Environmental Statement (ES) and supporting Habitats Regulations Assessment.

Other consultees included the RSPB and St Mary's Seal Watch, and members of the public who had formally objected to the proposals. Northumberland Wildlife Trust and the Green Party had requested further information. Friends of the Earth raised points of consideration relating to the applications.

Responses in relation to material planning considerations were received and were included in the revised proposals to be circulated via a planning re-consultation.

A revised design for the causeway had been drawn up which involved breaking out the middle 30 metres of the causeway, enabling the new slab to be laid at the existing causeway level for the central 5 metres with a slope to the proposed causeway levels at either end. This meant the time when the central section was submerged would remain the same, as at present. The updated Environmental Statement reflected the new details, accompanied by revised drawings showing the proposed elevations and cross-sections.

Access to the viewing platforms would be free to encourage people to use the site in a controlled fashion. It was expected that this would reduce the likelihood that visitors would walk unsupervised around the Island due to their greater awareness regarding the appropriate use of the Nature Reserve, thus helping to minimise disturbance to wildlife. The Authority had developed a 'Viewing Deck Management Plan' in consultation with Natural England and the Authority's Biodiversity Officer. The plan sets out a management protocol for

allowing visitors to access the viewing decks, monitoring of wildlife, and subsequent measures to be undertaken should any wildlife disturbance arise.

In terms of planning permission, a re-consultation would be conducted to share the details of how the Applicant had addressed the numerous issues raised to date. The key dates were the 21 November 2017 (Planning decision); and the 12 December 2017 (HLF Trustees meeting).

It was **agreed** that the progress of St. Mary's Lighthouse Lottery Fund bid submission be noted.