

**NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

TOURISM

BUSINESS AND NON BUSINESS

APRIL 2021

Contents

	Page
Chair's Foreword	1
1 Recommendations	2
2 Introduction	2
3 Scope of Review	2-3
4 Method of Review	3
5 Evidence and Research	3
6 Key Findings	3-6
7 Conclusions	6
Appendix 1 – Stakeholders Engaged during the Review	7

Chair's Foreword

I am delighted to present this report describing the work of The Growth Scrutiny Committee. It includes a wide range of information about the work elected Members have undertaken over the past year.

Scrutiny continues to play a vital role by holding decision makers to account; developing and reviewing policy; as well as considering how the Council is delivering on its commitments to the residents of North East Derbyshire.

Over the past year The Growth Scrutiny Committee have welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the Cabinet and Senior Officers as they lead the Council. The Committee has sought to concentrate on scrutinising tourism in the district both in business and non business to provide constructive input in finding ways to improve clarity, growth, monitoring, development of existing policies and support to the Council to produce positive outcomes for residents.

I would like to thank my Vice Chair Michelle Emmens and the committee members as they brought energy and enthusiasm to their involvement. They have provided constructive challenges and recommendations for the Cabinet, Executive Directors and Partners.

I would like to make a special mention of Sue Veerman, Overview and Scrutiny Manager who throughout the year has been there for me as Chair and the Committee when we needed support and sometimes inspiration.

I wish success to the Growth Scrutiny Committee for the next year to help ensure continued improved outcomes for residents and businesses within North East Derbyshire.

Cllr Anthony Hutchinson
Chair of the Growth Scrutiny Committee

Review Panel

The review panel comprised the following members:

Councillor A Hutchinson - (Conservative) – Review Panel Chair

Councillor N Barker - (Labour)
Councillor S Cornwell - (Labour)
Councillor M Emmens - (Conservative)
Councillor J Funnell - (Independent)
Councillor L Hartshorne - (Labour)
Councillor M Roe - (Conservative)
Councillor D Ruff - (Conservative)
Councillor N Whitehead - (Conservative)

1. **Recommendations**

That:

- 1.1 The Council develop a clear brand for Tourism within the District and identifies its key Tourism assets.
- 1.2 The Council consider how it can improve connectivity within the District to help the growth of tourism.
- 1.3 The Council considers how it can expand its offer to local businesses supporting Tourism.
- 1.4 The Council develop a plan for promoting the attractions within the District effectively including working in partnership with Parishes and other neighbouring partners.
- 1.5 The Council produce a set of Performance Indicators that measure the impact of Tourism within the District

2. **Introduction**

- 2.1 At its meeting on 8th June, 2020 the Growth Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of Tourism – Business and Non Business.
- 2.2 The review panel thought it timely to review this area because of the significant potential benefits it could provide economically to the District

3. **Scope of Review**

- 3.1 The review aimed to:
 - To review what the Councils overarching strategy for Tourism and Growth is and whether it is being achieved
 - To understand the economic benefits which will accrue from growth relating to the Tourism Strategy
 - To understand the Districts existing delivery arrangements for Tourism
 - To consider whether the Council is getting value for money from current arrangements
 - To understand the role of the District Council and its partners in promoting Tourism in the District
 - To understand how we can effectively support business in this area

- To identify how do we increase jobs and spending linked to Tourism
- To identify how are we measuring the contribution to the Council's Growth agenda.

4. Method of Review

4.1 The review panel met on six occasions to consider the scope of the review, key issues they wanted to discuss and key people they wished to interview.

4.2 Evidence was gathered in a variety of ways including written sources and interviews with a range of stakeholders.

5. Evidence and Research

5.1 A number documents and evidence were provided to the review panel for consideration. Details are provided below:

- Scene Setting Presentation by the Director of Growth and Economic Development on 6th July, 2020
- Economy Visitor Strategy
- Previous Tourism and Growth Scrutiny Review action plan
- Presentation on the new Growth Strategy

6. Key Findings

6.1 Strengths/Observations

6.1.1 The Director of Growth and Economic Development discussed the new draft Visitor Economy Strategy with the review panel. The consensus of the panel was that the strategy was a good well set out document and recognised the hard work both the Portfolio holder and the officers had undertaken to produce the strategy. The Portfolio holder for Economic Growth provided evidence to the Committee of the Council's vision for Tourism in North East Derbyshire. It identified how the Council was aiming to encourage strong and sustainable growth within the Visitor Economy for the District. The District was geographically well placed and attracted approximately three million visitors in 2017. It also generated 1,949 full time equivalent jobs accounting for the sector being worth £147 million in that year. The Committee were advised that the Council was engaging in closer partnership work to grow the District's tourism and visitor economy, such as partnerships with Marketing Peak District, Derbyshire Tourist Board, Derbyshire County Council and D2N2. The strategy included a number of priorities such as creating a year round visitor economy in the District, developing the visitor offer, developing and promoting the cultural and natural heritage of the area and improving the skills of local businesses.

- 6.1.2 The Committee were also advised that the Council was appointing a dedicated officer for tourism. This had been raised at a previous Scrutiny review of Tourism and Growth and was supported by the current review panel as a positive move. It was hoped this dedicated resource would help the Council to focus on driving tourism growth within the District.
- 6.1.3 The Review Panel had considered the potential of the District as a Tourism area. It was recognised that the District did not have major landmarks within its boundaries such as historic houses like Chatsworth or Hardwick Hall. It was however, well positioned in that many of these attractions were nearby including the Peak District. There was also significant numbers of potential day visitors within easy reach of the District including Sheffield and Manchester. It also had potential in its own right in that it was an attractive rural area with a number of interesting villages and towns, some of which held events such as annual well dressings that proved popular for visitors. Chesterfield canal runs through part of the District and it also has walking and cycling routes through its area and a number of public open spaces and country parks. A number of walking festivals are usually held with yearly within the area.

The Review Panel also considered the newly emerging Growth Strategy that would be submitted to Cabinet in April 2021. Both the visitor economy and business engagement and support were priority areas within the Strategy. Additionally the Council's emerging Local Plan 2012-35 identifies how the planning system could help the sector to grow and provide a benefit to the local economy whilst respecting the rural and tranquil nature of the District. Benefits suggested included increase expenditure, significant employment opportunities if the development of the visitor economy was successful.

6.2 Areas for Improvement/Observations

- 6.2.1 During the review the panel had concluded that one challenge was to establish a clear identify and brand for the visitor economy in the area. There was a consensus that North East Derbyshire should be considered an attraction in its own right but faced challenges in regards to creating a uniqueness for the District. Additionally the potential difficulty in attracting visitors to the area whilst caution remains over the Pandemic was considered.
- 6.2.2 The panel heard evidence of a study in Bolsover which had identified that their area should be based around what it offered, such as cycling routes and networks and not solely about geographic location, such as being located near to the Peak District. The Panel felt this was a useful insight that was relevant to North East Derbyshire. They felt that we needed to undertake further work to develop our brand and create a strong identify that supports Tourism within the District.
- 6.2.3 The review panel heard a number of comments made regarding gaps that existed in connectivity within the District. This included a lack of public transport across the area that may make it difficult for visitors to access different locations within the District easily there was also a need to join up of various walking and cycling trails within the District and beyond. Following this discussion the lack of connectivity was identified as an area that needed to be improved. The Committee also highlighted the

importance of ensuring that key attractions such as cycle routes remained funded, well maintained and accessible. Members concluded that connectivity was vital for a vibrant and sustainable visitor economy. It was recognised that this was a complex area to progress and would need partnership working to maximise its effectiveness. It was suggested connectivity could be improved by working with other Councils including Parishes and Derbyshire County Council if possible. It was felt that there was a need to have proactive conversations with partners if we were to move this issue forward.

- 6.2.4 One interesting interview session was with the Bolsover Countryside Partnership Manager. The Panel heard that the officer worked on a variety of projects involving sustainable tourism in the Bolsover area, with a view to support and enhance the environment, resident's health and wellbeing, the local economy and carbon reduction and sustainable travel. Projects included the 'visit, sleep, cycle repeat initiative'. Funding had been secured to invest in the initiative area which included parts of North East Derbyshire, Bolsover, Chesterfield, Mansfield, Worksop and South Yorkshire. The officer stated that it was important to promote our trails and cycling routes and connect with other trails but also understand they needed to be supported.

The Panel heard evidence that the District lacked infrastructure in country parks and around cycle routes. Two examples provided by members of the panel were small vans serving coffee and food within a country park, which was providing a service that was thriving and encouraging people to be in the park. It was suggested that it would be beneficial to consider how we can support local business provide some of these facilities. An example was also given of the five pits trail where wardens need to be maintained to stop issues like fly tipping which detracted from the attractiveness of the area

In addition the Visitor Economy Strategy also identified that more support to businesses was needed. It stated that the Council and its partners need to work with the businesses to help them growth, providing guidance and support and access to finance. The review panel supported this aim

- 6.2.5 One of the weaknesses identified in the Visitor Economy strategy was that the Council was not promoting the businesses and attractions the District had. Members agreed with this conclusion. The Panel had considered the District's attractions as part of its evidence gathering. This was an area that the Council could improve by identifying the effective ways to advertise what the District had to offer. The Council had its own website which could be developed further to ensure it made the relevant links to the attractions and facilities that North East Derbyshire had to offer. As well as attracting visitors to the area, who might also stay within the Districts accommodation provision, there was also day visitors and local tourism. Co-ordination of events with the parishes of the District could also be highlighted.

6.2.6 The Committee had heard from the Joint Housing Strategy and Growth Manager that during the first lockdown as a result of the Pandemic the Council had launched a Tourism Business Engagement Project. The feedback from the Tourism Business Engagement Project would be used to further shape the Strategy so that businesses were confident that the Plan could assist them. Members were advised that key performance indicators would be included with the Visitor Economy Strategy and would be used to measure the effectiveness of the tourism function at NEDDC. The Committee had discussed a number of KPI's which could be used to determine the success of the plan including overnight visits, events and attractions. The Review Panel felt it was key that a set of meaningful performance indicators were identified.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The review panel heard views from a range of stakeholders during the review process. The review identified a number of measures the Council was taking to support local businesses within the District and promote economic growth in support of tourism.

7.2 However, some areas for improvement which would enhance the current provision were identified around establishing a clear brand for the area, better promotion of the districts tourism attractions and improved connectivity.

Stakeholders Engaged During the Review

- K Apps - Housing Strategy and Growth Manager
- G Callingham - Director of Growth and Economic Development
- A Heath - Derbyshire County Council
- C Renwick - Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth