

Report to: Policy and Performance Advisory Committee

Date: 25 January 2021

Title: Tourism in the District Update (work of Visit Lewes)

Report of: Helen Browning-Smith, Tourism and Arts Manager

Ward(s): All

Purpose of report: To update the Committee on Tourism in Lewes District and the work of Visit Lewes

Officer recommendation(s): (1) The Committee is asked to note the report.

Reasons for recommendations: The report is for information.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee on Tourism in the District and in particular the work undertaken by Visit Lewes.
- 1.2 Visit Lewes is focussing on providing information to local people and supporting local businesses for the time being. When the first lockdown was announced in March, we immediately started work to create a directory of food and drink businesses offering take away and delivery during lockdown. During the spring this generated over 8k page views, and since being updated for the current lockdown, another 1k. This information was then utilised by the Regeneration Team to help develop the Eat Local website.
- 1.3 Via our social media channels, we're encouraging people to continue shopping local, online if need be. We've asked local shops (both bricks and mortar and online) to contact us if they would like a listing added to Visit Lewes. All listings contain links to their websites or Facebook pages where relevant.
- 1.4 Our membership scheme (whereby local businesses pay an annual subscription for an enhanced listing on the site) has somewhat stalled due to the economic uncertainty, but we'll renew focus on this when the time is right, hopefully recruiting a Tourism Officer who can work to show local businesses how Visit Lewes can support them and increase revenue from the site to make it cost neutral and therefore sustainable.

1.5 Looking forward, we anticipate a focus on promoting the area to local visitors for day trips, and visits to family and friends once travel and some level of mixing are deemed safe. We expect an increase in domestic tourism as city residents look to rural and seaside areas for their annual leave instead of jetting away, and our plan is to utilise this market through strategic marketing activity and working alongside partners such as Govia Thameslink Railway and Tourism South East.

1.6 Appendix 1 to this report is the text of an email from Sally Staples (Cultural Strategy Manager, East Sussex County Council) detailing progress of the Sussex Resilience Forum's recovery group for Visitor Economy.

2 Newhaven

2.1 The new Railway Quay development, due to open Easter 2021, will strengthen Newhaven's visitor offer significantly. We are working with the Regeneration team on potential Visit Lewes involvement in the new Railway Quay visitor information centre, and new signage in the town, offering our support where we can.

3 Sussex Gin & Fizz Festival

3.1 The festival usually brings up to 1000 visitors from across Sussex and beyond, and we are fully committed to delivering an event this summer. If some restrictions are still in place, as seems likely, the format will be changed to a more formal seated tasting event, with all food and drink produced locally as usual, informative talks, shopping opportunities and (hopefully) live entertainment.

3.2 In the meantime, we are using the G&F website to promote local drinks producers with recipes and information about deliveries and special offers

4 Artwave

4.1 Moving the event to September in light of COVID worked well last year, and the festival was an overall success, with high sales despite the pandemic. The 2021 festival will take place in September, and we know from 2020's experience that it can be delivered Covid-securely if need be.

4.2 This year's festival will culminate in the Tide Mills project celebration week, which will be a multimedia performance and arts event by LYT Productions, involving local creatives, schools and community groups.

5 Heritage Open Days 2021

5.1 We've been asked to take on Heritage Open Days for 2021, and estimate we would need approx. £5k budget to deliver it. As it's in September, there would be the opportunity to incorporate elements with Artwave, and we would like to extend it across the District with events in Newhaven, Seaford, and Ditchling.

6 Outdoor Advertising

- 6.1 Visit Lewes is currently working with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Highways department to licence a select number of outside advertising locations. These sites can be used to advertise our own events to a wider audience throughout the district whilst also being available for commercial bookings that will generate an income. This is another example of an initiative to make Lewes Tourism sustainable and self-sufficient.

7 Financial appraisal

- 7.1 The report is for noting only and there are no direct financial implications.

8 Legal implications

- 8.1 The report is for noting only and there are no direct legal implications.

9 Risk management implications

- 9.1 The report is for noting only and there are no direct risk management implications

10 Equality analysis

- 10.1 The report is for noting only and there are no direct implications on equality analysis.

11 Environmental sustainability implications

- 11.1 The report is for noting only and there are no direct implications for environmental sustainability.

12 Appendices

Appendix 1 – information via email from East Sussex County Council Cultural Strategy Manager.

13 Background papers

None