

CITY OF PLYMOUTH

Subject: Visitor Plan for Plymouth
Committee: Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Date: 17 October 2011
Cabinet Member: Councillor Ted Fry, Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Economic Development
CMT Member: Director for Development and Regeneration
Author: Patrick Knight, Head of Place Management
Contact: Tel: 01752 304472
e-mail: patrick.knight@plymouth.gov.uk
Ref: PM/Democratic/CabinetReport13.09.11
Key Decision: Yes
Part: I

Executive Summary:

The Local Economic Strategy 2006-2021 & Beyond (LES) identifies the visitor economy (Tourism and Culture) as a priority growth sector which has the potential to generate 7,000 additional jobs over the next ten years. Tourism is a significant industry in Devon & Cornwall and has been recognised in the heart of the South West (HotSW) LEP prospectus. The Visitor Plan is a key component of the implementation of the LES; setting out a framework for realising the potential of Plymouth's visitor economy to 2026.

The City Council's newly created Economic Development Service has a defined responsibility to support the economic development of the visitor economy i.e. tourism, leisure, hospitality and retail sectors (through Place Management). These sectors support over 30,000 jobs and remain an important part of Plymouth's economy with 3.5m day visitors and 2.4m staying visitors spending £252m per annum.

In April 2010 the City Council approved the Place Management Strategy, which gave Destination Plymouth (DP) responsibility for driving the City's visitor economy.

DP decided that the City needed a Visitor Plan to determine Plymouth's potential as a visitor destination and set out aspirations and the direction of travel to 2026. It has prepared the Visitor Plan using Blue Sail, specialist destination consultants, who consulted widely with visitor economy businesses and other stakeholders.

The Growth & Prosperity Overview & Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and endorse the Visitor Plan to ensure that partner resources are effectively aligned, and that there is a coherent framework for DPs delivery plan.

1.0 Introduction

1.0 In April 2010 the City Council approved the Place Management Strategy, which gave Destination Plymouth responsibility for driving the City's visitor economy.

1.2 Destination Plymouth are developing a citywide Visitor Plan to determine Plymouth's potential as a visitor destination and set out aspirations and the direction of travel to 2026. Destination Plymouth has prepared the Visitor Plan using Blue Sail, specialist destination consultants. This Plan has been developed through a robust process of consultation, analysis and assessment, engaging a wide range of visitor economy businesses and other stakeholders, and endorsement by the Growth Board.

1.3 Destination Plymouth, along with the City Centre Company and Plymouth Waterfront Partnership, will work closely with the Economic Development Service to deliver the Visitor Plan through a 5 year business plan. This will include developing new additional private sector streams and sponsorship to deliver improvements and marketing activity.

1.4 The Visitor Plan responds to the city's Growth Strategy, recognising tourism as a priority sector. It will promote opportunities to positively raise the profile of the city in the UK and internationally, encourage spend and generate jobs and inward investment. It also plays a key role in securing Plymouth's status as the regional city of Devon and Cornwall. These drivers have influenced the levels of ambition and priorities for the Visitor Plan.

1.5 The Visitor Plan is ambitious, though deliverable, but needs a bold response to make things happen. The Council has an opportunity to lead the way and set the pace of change by demonstrating a step change in approach and strongly supporting Destination Plymouth to kick start delivery. This is about wisely committing resources - people, time, skills and budgets - to deliver the plan and importantly to seize opportunity, help nurture partnerships and lever in additional partner funding and sponsorship.

1.6 Destination Plymouth, supported by the City Council, will ask everyone involved in the visitor economy to get behind this Plan support it and take a role in making it happen.

2.0 Visitor Plan

2.1 The Visitor Plan sets out a vision that reflects Plymouth's unique offer as a marine and Waterfront city, that is distinct from the rural and coastal experience that surrounds it:

- By 2020, Plymouth will be the UK's premier marine city and famous for its Waterfront. It will be recognised as unique among UK cities for its natural drama and for its 500-year old history of embarkation and exploration. Plymouth's continuing journey towards a world-leading marine city will support the cultural experiences it offers to visitors who are looking for authenticity and character.

2.2 This supports the City's existing overarching vision, focused on the development of the visitor offer.

3.0 Objectives and Targets

The Visitor Plan sets out ambitious targets, reflecting the scale of the opportunity to drive visitor spend, new jobs and inward investment.

3.1 Delivery of the Visitor Plan targets:

- 25% increase in visitor spend by 2020. This means visitor spend will rise by £63m from nearly £252m to £315m - achieved through increasing numbers of visits and diversification into new visitor markets including growing Plymouth's share of city short breaks.
- 4,000 new jobs in the visitor economy by 2026. The Visitor Plan targets deliver of 2,800 of these new jobs by 2020. (The LES is targeting additional jobs through other activities designed to secure a total of 7,000 jobs within the visitor economy).
- To increase GVA by £84.4m.

3.2 The Visitor Plan will also:

- Raise the national profile of Plymouth as Waterfront city – through targeted PR, new events and activities.
- Strengthen Plymouth's position as the regional centre for Devon & Cornwall – by creating a great day out and evening destination.
- Raise the profile of Plymouth and its positioning as a place to visit and invest - particularly focusing on its outstanding marine credentials.
- Encourage new SMEs by generating demand for more places to eat and drink, distinctive independent shops, quality places to stay and an exceptional cultural offer that local people and visitors can enjoy.
- Create opportunities to lever in more private sector sponsorship to support visitor marketing activity and for major and signature events.
- Everyone involved in the visitor economy needs to get behind the Visitor Plan, support it and take a role in making it happen.

4.0 A Blue and Green City

4.1 The Visitor Plan recommends that Plymouth lead the growth of the visitor economy with its Waterfront and culture. Destination Plymouth will profile this distinct personality and make sure visitors understand what Plymouth stands for and what it offers. Culture and heritage will be integral part of the experience, highly visible to the visitor and part of the reason they choose to visit Plymouth.

4.2 The Visitor Plan asserts that the Waterfront is the city's strongest visitor asset and must be the showcase for the very best of Plymouth and all it stands for. However the City must deliver an all-round urban experience which also depends on an excellent city centre. In addition, the city needs to make more of its links to its green spaces.

5.0 Markets and Marketing

5.1 The Visitor Plan aims to transform the way Plymouth is marketed as a visitor destination. The Plan is based on robust research of target markets that will deliver the best return on investment. It recommends that Plymouth should begin by growing the volume of day trips, by presenting the experience more strongly so that it becomes a 'must do' day trip. In 2-3 years we will develop new and higher value UK short break markets. In the longer-term Plymouth will build on the city's special relationship and associations with the East Coast US market.

6.0 Star Projects

The Visitor Plan identifies a small number of 'star projects' that will inspire visitors to come, help get Plymouth talked about and enrich the city's distinctiveness.

6.1 Star Project (1) - Signature Events

The Plan underlines the potential for 'signature' events to raise the profile of Plymouth, underline key messages and deliver more visitors and spend.

Building on the legacy of the America's Cup, it recommends three signature events that will be based on the Waterfront and embrace Plymouth's marine and cultural heritage:

- Plymouth Waterfront Festival – a new marine, waterfront and cultural signature event for the city linked to the proposed International Marine Festival, and leading to Mayflower 2020.
- Sail Fest – strengthening Plymouth's current programme of sailing events, increasing the number of onshore activities and promoting the event programme under an umbrella brand
- British Firework Championships – further strengthening the opportunities of this event, in particular through new commercial activity.

6.2 Star Project (2) - Telling Stories

The Visitor Plan recommends a joined-up approach to the design of interpretation, pedestrian/cycling signs and trails in the public realm. Creative and innovative interpretation delivers a well-connected and engaging environment and that is a symbol of a successful city. The Visitor Plan will focus on those areas and projects with the greatest impact on the visitor economy which in the first instance will be the Waterfront and its links with the city centre, on trails, and routes along the Waterfront and gateways to the city.

Implementation will be prioritised, staged and divided into projects. Destination Plymouth has already identified potential European partner cities to develop an initial European INTERREG bid to develop Telling Stories interpretation.

It is also recommended that the City works up a Heritage Lottery Fund bid for The Elizabethan House to re-focus on the Pilgrim Fathers story for the 2020 anniversary.

6.3 Star Project (3) - Development Sites

Plymouth will take a joined-up approach to developing the visitor economy-led site opportunities and facilitate inward investment. Map available sites on the Waterfront to create packages for development and take to market.

There are two sites that offer particular opportunities for the visitor economy in the next 3-5 years:

Royal William Yard - work with Urban Splash to raise the profile and develop the potential to make Royal William Yard a mini-destination.

Commercial Wharf – an opportunity to use a series of arches for creative leisure uses; maximize the opportunity to increase independent creative businesses on the Waterfront that further reinforces the city's cultural credentials.

7.0 Other Key Actions

In addition, the Visitor Plan recommends the following:

7.1 Visitor Information

Plymouth will promote a joined up, cost effective, consumer focused visitor information service, using print, digital information, personal contact, and will consider different innovative approaches

New information points will be delivered at visitor venues across the city at gateway sites and tourist attractions. Each venue will have displays, leaflets and access to digital information by using smart phone technology.

It is also recommended that a mobile TIC service be considered which can be used to greet cruise ships, attend major events and provide enhanced customer service where it is most needed.

7.2 Boat Services

- Develop coordinated services and clear digital information on the Waterfront and online.

7.3 Conference Plymouth

- Manage a web portal and an enquiry response service for Conference Plymouth.
- Members of Conference Plymouth to subscribe to a subvention fund.

7.4 Skills Development

- Appoint a Visitor Economy champion.
- Develop an Employment & Skills Action Plan.
- Develop and agree a Skills & Employment Accord to deliver local jobs for local people.

7.5 Monitoring and evaluation

- Commission annual Cambridge Model Visitor Survey.
- Develop and undertake surveys to measure visitor, business and community perceptions and benefits.
- Work with Economic Development Service to ensure visitor economy covered in wider monitoring and evaluation work.

7.6 Destination Marketing

- Appoint dedicated Visitor Marketing Manager to lead on destination marketing delivery.
- Set up a fully interactive, first-class destination website and digital marketing platform.
- Set up a Customer Relationship Management system.
- Build destination PR to start building Plymouth's profile and reputation.
- Develop e-marketing for target markets.

8.0 Events Strategy

DP will lead on and coordinate event marketing, which can partly be resourced through effective sponsorship.

Aligned with the Visitor Plan, and to reflect the prominence of events within it, a separate but linked PCC Events Plan 2011-20 is being produced, that will work in tandem with the Visitor Plan

The development of large scale events and festivals is also embedded in the City's Culture Strategy 'The Vital Spark' as well as being a big driver in the Local Economic Strategy.

The Visitor Plan recognises that there are a range of local events which do not necessarily have high income or investment potential, but are nonetheless very important to the city in contributing towards its community aims and civic pride.

9.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that the City Council:

- 1) Approve the Visitor Plan to be led and coordinated by Destination Plymouth and delivered in partnership with Plymouth City Council and other city stakeholders.
- 2) Approve the Events Plan to complement the Visitor Plan.

Ref: PM/CabinetReport|3.09.11(2)