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Ward(s) Affected: All
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Title: Update on delivery of the 2018 – 2021 Visitor Economy Strategy

Summary:

This report gives an update of the progress on delivery of the Selby District Visitor Economy Strategy (VES).

The aim of the VES is to grow the economic impact of tourism by 20% over the delivery period. Cambridge Economic Impact Model data for Selby District for 2019 shows the value of tourism to be up 15% on 2018 (to £187.4 million). The impact of Covid-19 on the sector is severe and will inevitably result in the closure of some businesses and a significant reduction in both domestic and international visitors, so a Covid reset of the VES places strong emphasis on product and marketing designed to encourage local people to explore locally and make the most of the attractions and businesses on their own doorstep.

Whilst there are undoubtedly real challenges from Covid, there are also opportunities around the “staycation” market and the new value placed on outdoor activities and green spaces.

Recommendation:

The Committee is asked to note the content of the report.

1. Introduction and background

In 2018 the Visitor Economy Strategy for Selby District was adopted and, in the autumn of 2018, officers were recruited into two new posts (Culture, Visitor & Creative Economy Manager and Tourism Development Officer) with the primary function of delivering the strategy.

The strategy includes an action plan, which sets out the delivery focus. Impact is measured in a variety of ways, including project specific monitoring & evaluation, and annual commissioning of Selby District data using the Cambridge Model, which produces an industry respected tool for measuring the economic impact of tourism in a given area.

Establishing Selby District as a Great Place to Live and a Great Place to Grow means using what sets it apart and makes it special, to attract visitors, to improve quality of life for our residents and to encourage people to invest. Selby District is well-located and has many assets to be proud of, including a unique heritage story. The Visitor Economy Strategy and Cultural Framework put this story at the heart of our plans for regeneration and revitalisation, as we grow these sectors within our economy and enhance the district's image and reputation. Culture is more than a product for the visitor economy: it is capable of changing lives and places for the better, as our neighbours in Hull and Leeds have already demonstrated. Investment in arts and heritage delivers quality of life for our communities and directly enhances quality of Place.

2. Visitor Economy Strategy delivery:

2.1 Selby 950

2019 marked the anniversary of 950 years since the founding of Selby Abbey. A programme of cultural events was delivered to accompany a wide-range of activity delivered by Selby Abbey and many community groups. SDC's programme was funded by Arts Council England (c.£70,000), National Lottery Heritage Fund (£45,000) and Drax plc (£20,000) which, together with SDC's own investment (£5,000 for development, £45,000 for delivery), enabled the delivery of an ambitious programme: a children's song-writing project, with a massed choir in the Abbey; a parade; the installation of a number of personal and historic stories in surprising places across the town centre; a pop-up museum in venues across the town centre, ending in an exhibition in Selby Abbey, which gathered Selby's heritage objects from local collections and regional museums; and the illumination of Selby Abbey.

Selby Sings, the children's song-writing and singing project, was a finalist in the Music & Drama in Education Awards 2019. Selby 950 is a finalist in the White Rose Awards 2020, Arts & Culture category.

Feedback from our audiences and funders was excellent and headlines from the external evaluation of the programme are in section 3. Return on investment was over £3 for every £1 invested by SDC. An infographic with the key findings of the evaluation is attached.

2.2 Exploiting cycling opportunities

2.2.1 Tour de Yorkshire

In May 2019 Selby hosted the finish of the Heritage Stage of the 2019 Tour de Yorkshire, with the Abbey as the backdrop to the outside studio broadcast throughout the day. Whilst 75% of the audience in Selby were estimated to be from the district, TV broadcasts of TdY are estimated to reach in excess of 12.5M people.

SDC delivered a programme of family-friendly activity alongside the TdY, which included a sound stage (in partnership with Minster FM and sponsored by Rigid) and a film screening.

Positive feedback about the event focussed on TdY as an enjoyable and well-organised event, whilst negative comments centred on the weather, some restricted views and the road closures.

Feedback from businesses was mixed, with a majority reporting that their trade was negatively impacted (mainly because of road closures and/or race infrastructure) and a minority reporting an increase in turnover/footfall. Despite this, a majority of businesses were of the opinion that the event had been constructive in terms of its social outcomes – projecting a positive image of the town, bringing the community together and creating a sense of civic pride.

It is estimated that 160,000 people watched the first day of the TdY (which included Doncaster, Beverley and Pocklington), but there was no specific count of the audience at Selby. The external evaluation team estimate that c. 53,000 people saw the race *at some point* along the Selby District part of the route, however there is a margin for error of 16% on this calculation.

Overall, the event appears to have been highly regarded and a positive one for the District to host, being seen as enjoyable and high quality, and contributing to civic pride and community cohesion.

2.2.2 UCI Road World Championships

In September 2019 Tadcaster hosted the start of the para-cycling road races on their first day and the Women's Junior and Men's Under 23 road races passed through the district, taking in Kellington, Monk Fryston, Sherburn in Elmet and Tadcaster. TEMPT, Tadcaster's community events group, delivered a programme of events to accompany the UCI. Heineken also organised a pop-up museum.

The UCI seems not to have engaged people's interest in the same way as the TdY, for example, SDC's Comms team created a Facebook event for the Tadcaster race start as a way of ensuring it remained on people's feeds. For the UCI start this received around 700 likes. The Selby Tour de Yorkshire finish, meanwhile, received 10,800 likes.

The Communities and Partnerships team worked hard to engage businesses and the response was similar to the TdY: a majority of businesses felt negative impacts from the road closures, but others felt that the benefits for the town outweighed this.

2.3 Sector support and business development activity

2.3.1 Visitor Economy Advisory Board (VEAB)

A VEAB has been established with 11 members representing all aspects of the tourism and visitor sectors, including visitor attractions, accommodation providers and hospitality businesses, with geographic representation from across the district. The VEAB's function is to provide oversight and guidance on the VES; exchange information, ideas and advice to support its implementation to ensure maximum impact is achieved; develop a forward programme of opportunities for the sector; act as ambassadors for the district, the VES and its associated actions; encourage active sector participation and provide insights into the sector, sharing intelligence about key trends and opportunities.

The VEAB is chaired by a sector representative and administered by the Tourism Development Officer (TDO).

2.3.2 Support & advice for businesses

A newsletter is sent to over 100 visitor economy businesses, with information and links to initiatives which may be of interest. This has been of particular benefit in ensuring businesses have up-to-date and appropriate information around Covid related matters. One to one support has been given to more than 30 businesses to date. This support has included sign-posting, facilitating new relationships and partnerships, marketing and business development advice and support with funding applications.

2.3.3 Relationships with the travel trade

Pre-Covid good progress was made on market development for German, American and Asian visitors. This included the Explorers Road project (bookable product for specific international audiences, which includes Towton Battlefield, Stillingfleet Gardens and the Parsonage Hotel in Escrick) and hosting Familiarisation Trips from travel bloggers and journalists.

During Covid the emphasis has changed to delivering product to a hyper-local audience and post-Covid/during recovery emphasis is likely to be on regional and domestic travel.

2.3.4 Welcome to Yorkshire

Strong links have been developed with Welcome To Yorkshire, and other regional partners, to ensure that Selby District is part of wider recovery plans and gains maximum benefit from regional awareness campaigns, additional support and training etc. We have a dedicated Area Manager and a strategic support agreement is in place for this year, to ensure that our tourism priorities are understood and supported. The agreement centres on strategic support, regular engagement, PR opportunities, event support, insights and data, and individual tourism business support for the District. An individual programme of focused and measurable activity has also been agreed to include digital, social and offline opportunities.

Welcome to Yorkshire's Chief Executive had been planning to visit the district this month, but this has been postponed to December in line with the new lockdown. He will meet sector business representatives, as well as senior leaders at SDC, to gain knowledge of the area and understand the needs of the sector.

2.4 Visitor place-branding and marketing activity

2.4.1 Niche trails

Three themed Selby District Trails have just been launched (October 2020) to coincide with half-term – Escape in Your Own Back Yard (Nature & Wildlife Trail), Your Home's History (Heritage Trail) and Young – at The Heart of Yorkshire (Family Adventure Trail).

The trails aim to encourage residents and visitors to explore the District and experience our must-see landmarks and attractions, focusing on landscape, green open spaces, heritage stories and family adventure. They will be available in postcard format and, when the time is right, they will be available to pick up across the District, from information points, key attractions, shops and cafes etc. For the time being, they will be available to download via the Selby District Council website.

The trails are accompanied by an interactive map, which shows other businesses (including cafes, restaurants and farm shops) on the route of the trail or near a suggested stopping point. The map is easily updated and we will continue to add businesses as they put themselves forward for inclusion.

2.4.2 HOME campaign

The HOME at the Heart of Yorkshire campaign launched in October 2020 (to accompany the niche trails) and aims to connect residents with the experiences and visitor products on their doorstep. The campaign includes advertisements on 5 buses with routes across the district, two billboards (Selby Railway Station and the A64 at Tadcaster), accompanied by a full media and digital presence.

HOME at the Heart of Yorkshire includes a Christmas campaign (Christmas at HOME) which will help residents and visitors make the most of the District's seasonal offer.

This work is complementary to the ERDF funded Reopening High Streets Safely programme, which includes heritage inspired visuals for each town, as well as a campaign to encourage people to shop local and feel comfortable that local retailers have created a safe environment. This campaign "Let's Get Selby Back to Business" generated strong interaction on social media and via media partners – SDC's Facebook posts reached over 33,000 people, whilst Twitter reached over 14,500.

2.4.3 Visitor Place-branding

Work has begun on a visitor place-brand and a Brand Council is in place with representation from across the sector and the LEP. The brand will be agreed before Christmas, leading to a full marketing plan for 2021 and beyond. This will include a web presence and marketing collateral including copy and images.

A high-quality, memorable and immediately recognisable brand identity will enable us to deliver a compelling narrative around the district's visitor offer.

2.5 Cultural Development Framework

The Cultural Development Framework is a 5 year action plan for cultural delivery in the district. It has been match-funded by Arts Council England (who approached SDC with the offer of support on the back of Selby 950) and will provide a framework for ACE's future investment, and that of other potential cultural funders.

It will deliver across a number of themes:

- Place-making & authenticity (recognising the rich & multi-layered identity of Selby District);

- Opportunities created by Covid, which has placed a new value on “local”; developing the cultural & creative sectors, especially networking and up-skilling to ensure the sector can make a meaningful contribution to inclusive, growth/regeneration, as well as providing adequate creative workspace in the District;
- Pop-up/meanwhile use of buildings to increase the vibrancy of our town centres;
- Projects which engage young people and increase their aspirations;
- Creation of a central repository for heritage (not necessarily a building) which will ensure that voices and stories are not lost (e.g ship-building);
- Work in the public realm, including an events programme which is both hyper-local and grander in scale.

There are a number of projects which are already in delivery or development, such as Unfolding Origins, which is a project delivered by Chrysalis Arts in partnership with the County Records Office, which seeks to encourage more people from Selby to use the archive.

2.5.1 Creative Drivers

A group (12 members) of professional practitioners from across the district has been established. This group includes representatives of many artforms including music, performance, visual arts, craft, design and dance, as well as heritage professionals and venue managers. The Creative Drivers have a similar function to the VEAB and will provide oversight and guidance on the direction and delivery of the Cultural Development Framework, as well as acting as ambassadors for the cultural and creative sector in the district.

The Creative Drivers group is chaired by a sector representative and administered by the Culture, Visitor & Creative Economy Manager.

2.5.3 Cultural Consortium (part of Selby High Street Heritage Action Zone)

The High Street HAZ (HSHAZ) includes a locally devised cultural programme, as well as the opportunity to host nationally commissioned work at a local level. The Cultural Consortium for Selby includes Selby Abbey, Selby Big Local, Selby Civic Society, Selby Library, Performing Arts etc. and SDC.

Historic England have awarded an initial grant of £10,000 for a pilot digital project, which will enable us to work with a team of professional Minecrafters to build Selby Abbey and Abbots Staith in Minecraft. We’ll also be using Minecraft as a tool to enable young people to build the Selby they would like to see in the future.

A larger programme of cultural work is in development for submission to Historic England’s Cultural Programme Local Grants scheme. This will be delivered over the life of the HSHAZ.

3. Impact and outcomes

3.1 Cambridge Model data

The Model produces estimates from existing local and national information (e.g. accommodation stock, inbound trips) which is then translated into economic terms, by estimating visitor spend per trip and the impact of this spend on business turnover and jobs.

The 2019 report (published October 2020) shows:

- c.0.31 million **overnight tourism trips** were made to Selby District (**up by 6% compared to 2018**). Of these, domestic visitors made 93% of trips (285,000) and overseas visitors made 7% (20,800). Compared to 2018, the volume of domestic overnight trips increased by 6% and the volume of inbound overnight trips rose by 3%, resulting in a **net increase of 6%**.
- c.2.4 million **tourism day trips** were made to Selby District in 2019, a significant **rise of 26%** compared to 2018. As a result, **day expenditure increased by 25% to £79.9 million**.
- c. **£129.6 million** was **spent on trips** to Selby in 2019 by overnight and day visitors, **up by 16% compared to 2018**.
- c. **£122.1 million** **directly benefited local businesses** from hotels and restaurants to cafes, shops and attractions. Adjustments have been made to recognise that some spending on travel will take place outside the destination.
- However, further 'additional expenditure' spent by friends and relatives, whom visitors are staying with or visiting, represents a significant additional source of income. This '**additional**' **expenditure generated a further c.£13.5 million** in direct turnover.
- In addition to the **business turnover** generated in those businesses directly receiving visitor income, successive rounds of expenditure, that is spending by these businesses on local supplies (indirect impacts) and spending by employers in the local area (induced impacts), is estimated to have generated **£135.6 million to the local economy** (the multiplier impact).
- The **total value of tourism** activity in Selby in 2019 is estimated to have been around **£187.4 million, up by 15% compared to 2018**.
- This income to the local economy supports c. **3,219 Full-Time Equivalent Jobs**. Many of these jobs are part-time or seasonal in nature and translate into an estimated 4,392 Actual Jobs, **an increase of 15% compared to 2018**.
- These jobs are spread across a wide range of service sectors from catering and retail to public service jobs such as in local government, and not just tourism. According to the Office of National Statistics, there are 36,000 employee jobs across Selby. Based on our estimates, total **tourism related expenditure supported 12.2% of Selby District's jobs in 2019**, an increase of 1.6% on 2018.

3.2 Selby 950 Evaluation report

We commissioned a full evaluation report for Selby 950, which concluded:

- The cultural programming SDC delivered reached an **audience of 20,396**, with **1,303 actively participating**.
- **83%** strongly agreed or agreed that Selby 950 projected a **positive image of Selby as a good place to live**.
- **77%** strongly agreed or agreed that Selby 950 made them **proud to live in Selby District**.

- **82%** strongly agreed or agreed that Selby 950 had a **positive impact on the community**.
- **73% of visitors** (from outside the district) said that Selby 950 had **enhanced their view of Selby as a visitor destination**.
- **75%** said they were **more likely to attend another cultural event** as a result of their experience of Selby 950.
- The **economic impact was £348,500**.

4. The Impact of COVID-19

Covid is having a catastrophic effect on the visitor and cultural sectors nationally and its impact will be felt for many years. We've taken a number of actions to ameliorate this impact and to support the sectors:

- The VES has been "reset" to reorder some of the actions, concentrating immediately on those which develop local/regional audiences and/or make the product/business more resilient
- We've worked alongside visitor sector businesses to help them achieve the Visit Britain "Good to Go" green tick, which 36 businesses have achieved to date.
- We've supported individual practitioners and cultural organisations in applying for emergency Covid support grants through the Arts Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Which has brought in c.£80,000 into the district.

The first 5 Visitor Information Points (eventually there will be 10 across the district) would have been live by this point, but currently businesses are unable to host them as it is too difficult to make them Covid-secure (people inevitably handle, then put back, the literature).

There have been positives:

- Some of the district's campsites are looking to expand the number of pitches they have available, as more people holiday in the UK.
- Our high streets and independent shops have welcomed new customers, in the form of commuters who would normally shop where they work. This group are potentially exploring the local retail offer for the first time.
- Families have been looking for activities and days out which are closer to home, so our green spaces like Barlow Common and Hambleton Hough are being well-used and enjoyed.
- Many of our visitor sector and hospitality businesses have shown real resilience in the way they have tackled the challenges, from offering "drive-thru" to personal delivery.

6. Alternative Options Considered None.

7. Implications

7.1 Legal Implications

None.

7.2 Financial Implications

None. The required investment is in place.

7.3 Policy and Risk Implications

None.

7.4 Corporate Plan Implications

Delivery is in line with Council Plan.

7.5 Resource Implications

None identified.

7.6 Other Implications

Not applicable.

7.7 Equalities Impact Assessment

EIAs are carried out on each element of delivery.

8. Conclusion

Ongoing delivery of the Visitor Economy Strategy is progressing well, with the Covid reset helping us to focus on activity which supports the sector through a turbulent time. Culture has a key role to play in the nation's recovery/transition from the impact of Covid and both the Cultural Development Framework and the Visitor Economy Strategy align strongly to the Towns Revitalisation work. Arts and culture are an essential part of our quality of Place and make an indispensable contribution to our communities' quality of life.

Data evidences increased visitor numbers, increased spend and an increase in the number of visitor sector FTE jobs in the district. Return on investment is good and, along with the obvious economic impact, there are significant social benefits: delivery of activity such as Selby 950 and two international bike races has enhanced the district's reputation, as well as providing great events which our residents and visitors have enjoyed.

Relationships with funding bodies and partners are excellent, with a growing track record for delivery. We've begun conversations about next steps, with a number of programmes of work which will attract more investment into the district.

7. Background Documents

Selby District Visitor Economy Action Plan: <https://www.selby.gov.uk/visitor-economy-strategy>

Appendices:

Appendix A: Infographic

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