

Subject:	Visitor Economy Strategy	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny	Date:	12 th July 2021
Report of:	Director of Economic Development	Portfolio Holder:	Leader of the Council/ Economic Development
Key Decision:	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: n/a
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to comment on the progress made on the Visitor Economy Strategy since its adoption in December 2020.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To inform members of the Council's performance in relation to the Visitor Economy Strategy prior to its determination by the Cabinet.
- 2.2 For information, members should note that the recommendations to Cabinet are as follows:-
- To note the achievements made in the first 6 months of the new Visitor Economy Strategy for the whole of Rossendale launched in January 2021.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report links to priority 1 of the new Corporate Plan. A vibrant local economy. A key action of this is "Strengthen our offer for visitors to raise the profile of the borough's attractions and develop an improved accommodation offer".
- 3.2 It also links to the Council's 2018 Economic Development Strategy, priority 4: Developing our visitor economy, active leisure and Adrenaline Valley brand and cultural offer. This report links directly to the progress made to achieve this priority.
- 3.3 In December 2020, Rossendale Council approved a Visitor Economy Strategy for the whole of Rossendale (Appendix 1), linking in five key themes:
1. Marketing and Branding
 2. Outdoor Rossendale
 3. Lifestyle Rossendale
 4. Accommodation Rossendale
 5. Creative Rossendale.

These five themes have been identified to grow Rossendale's Visitor Economy achieving this vision; "With a beautiful lifestyle offer, including heritage and cultural experiences set amongst stunning scenery, Rossendale provides the perfect outdoor adventure experience. By 2030, Rossendale will have built an unrivalled reputation as a year-round visitor destination for families and foodies alike."

The following goals have been set:

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By 2023 –

- To restore Economic Impact to pre-covid figures (2018 Benchmark £63.563m)

By 2030 –

- To increase Economic Impact from £63.563m to £78m (3% growth Year on Year)
- Increase employment in the sector from 816 jobs to 1000 jobs
- Increase Visitor Numbers from 1.6m to 2m
- Increase Social Media Followers from 5221 to 10,000
- Improve town centre average footfall counts from 14,387 to 18,000.
- Increase total bedstock of 267 beds to 315.

The Covid-19 pandemic has severely hit Rossendale based tourism, leisure and hospitality businesses with the majority closed for the first few months of the year. The data to measure this impact is not yet available to us. However, Rossendale Council has still been progressing the associated action plan.

3.4 In the first 6 months of the Strategy launching, Rossendale Council has undertaken the following work:

Marketing Rossendale

- Increase in social media followers from 5221 to 5778
- Developed relationship with East Lancashire Railway on a joined up marketing plan
- Information newsletter to Visitor Economy Stakeholders
- Frequent social media posting
- Developed relationship with South Pennines (formerly Pennine Prospect) to be a crucial part of the South Pennines Regional Park with visible presence within town centres
- Website updates and changes
- Progress toward posed / staged photographs in Rossendale for promotional material
- Radio advertising campaign underway to promote Rossendale's assets on Rossendale Radio
- Communications plan developed and in delivery for the launch of the Whitaker

Outdoor Rossendale

- The development of a trailhead centre at Lee Quarry has gathered significant momentum, with work undertaken to identify suitable plots for a trailhead centre.
- An initial expression of interest to appoint a partner to manage and operate a trailhead facility
- Discussions and quotations from specialist trail builders to carry out analyse the current trails and their development to encourage families and less experienced riders to the site, as well as horse riders and walkers, whilst also linking in Stubblelee Park and the Valley of Stone Greenway
- Sport England and British Cycling relationships built and in principle buy-in for the project
- Pro-active involvement with LCC in the LCWIP (local cycling walking infrastructure plan) with particular emphasis on a Rawtenstall to Loveclough cycle route and the Valley of Stone Greenway
- A series of circular town centre walking routes developed in partnership with Rossendale Leisure Trust ready for installation. There are 3 routes per centre developed in Haslingden, Rawtenstall, Waterfoot, Bacup and Whitworth with waymarker signage, digital information and interpretation panels. Key features are

identified and visitors can choose whether to complete a 30 minute, 60 minute or 90 minute walk in and around the town centres.

Lifestyle Rossendale

- Progress on the Haslingden 2040 vision with a bid submission to NLHF (decision pending) and investor discussions for Cockerill Square
- Rawtenstall Town Square upgrade, with costed designs for a multifunctional events space, places for meeting and greeting as well as a planting design agreed. A main contractor tender appointment is in place, ready for summer delivery
- Bacup 2040 Vision progress, including the delivery of the Bacup HS HAZ project and a cultural programme for Bacup
- Position on East Lancashire Railway board utilised to develop a series of collaborations with Rawtenstall based businesses
- Worked with the owner of the Waterfoot Arcade to develop a tourism focus for its future, linking to potential investors
- Secured partnership with Play Market Management at Rawtenstall Market and worked closely with them through the transition and future plans
- Allocated funding to support the latest edition of Rossendale's food and drink guide

Accommodation Rossendale

- Identify suitable campsite facilities in Rossendale
- Progress an expression of interest with potential partners to operate a campsite facility
- Planning letters of support to several glamping pod additions around the Borough
- An expression of interest is being progressed with a suitable hotelier in Bacup town centre
- Business support and advice for Dearden Wood campsite

Creative Rossendale

- Completion on the Whitaker Museum and Art Gallery capital works, renovating the stables and new link way, with a large emphasis on the business opportunities, employment levels and artefacts
- Engagement and feedback in the City of Culture bid
- Commitment on the display of the Irwell Tapestry

The Visitor Economy in Rossendale is growing and with the focus of the Economic Development team now has a clear goal and vision. The next 6 months will see further progress against the above individual projects in addition to the following:

- Visitor Economy Stakeholder Forum meeting in July 2021 and January 2022.
- Discussions with local artists for pop-up art or "artist village" in the town centres, particularly in the Rawtenstall Town Square scheme
- Creation of a food and drink tour, crime walk, heritage walk and TV series walk
- Physical posters and literature on the East Lancashire Railway to promote the Whitaker, The Hill and Rawtenstall Market
- Creation of a "go to" event guide
- Delivery of activity related to the South Pennines Regional Park

4. RISK

4.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

5. FINANCE

5.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

6. LEGAL

6.1 No legal implications.

7. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 No policy or equality implications.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The Visitor Economy in Rossendale is growing in a focused direction. There are many projects in development by the Council that will catalyse this growth even further, leading to many more local residents being employed in this sector, more visitors to Rossendale and greater spend.

Background Papers

Document	Place of Inspection
Full Council Report	Agendas, reports and minutes Rossendale Borough Council