

WESTERN LAKE DISTRICT TOURISM PARTNERSHIP

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Portfolio Holder, Councillor Hugh Branney

LEAD OFFICER: Julie Betteridge, Head of Development Strategy

REPORT AUTHOR: Julie Betteridge, Head of Development Strategy

SUMMARY: This report outlines recent discussions and proposals to refresh the existing Western Lake District Tourism Partnership for its next 3 year development plan and SLA with key partners.

Members are recommended to support the approach being taken outlined in section 3 and confirm commitment of our annual contribution of £25k to the WLDTP through the use of the Copeland Employment Fund for 2009-12 in pursuance of this proposed restructure and wider tourism activity focus.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Western Lake District Tourism Partnership (WLDTP) was first established to bring public sector organisations together with tourism operators in the West Lakes area to develop and promote the special attractions of this part of Cumbria. During its lifetime it has had a number of different structures and management arrangements; the most recent involves Cumbria Tourism employing two officers and acting as the 'accountable body' on behalf of the Partnership. Funding is drawn down from Allerdale BC, Copeland BC and the West Cumbria Development Fund which effectively covers the cost of employing the staff, publishing and distributing a Holiday and Short Breaks Guide and Top Attractions leaflet, delivering complementary marketing activity, managing a website and undertaking some PR

1.2 We are now in the third and final year of our current three year SLA. Cumbria Tourism and Copeland and Allerdale Councils have led a review of the WLDTP delivery model in the past three months. A range of discussions have been held about how the Partnership should change to meet the needs of the area and the industry over the next few years.

2. ARGUMENT

2.1 The review has highlighted that whilst the promotional work of the partnership has contributed to greater awareness of West Cumbria within the Cumbria offer, the partnership has found it difficult to engage

sufficiently widely with the tourism industry in West Cumbria. Tourism development has had a low profile within the Partnership over the past three years.

- 2.2 The Northwest Regional Economic Strategy 2006 and its complementary documents focus on the need to diversify the economic base and support sectors with growth potential in West Cumbria (Actions 50 and 51 in particular). Other key policy documents such as the 'Lake District Economic Futures' and the NW Regional Spatial Strategy also recognise the need for tourism investment to be encouraged in West Cumbria both as a stimulus to regeneration and to reduce the visitor pressures on the Lake District National Park. The more recently prepared master plan for West Cumbria – 'Britain's Energy Coast' – identifies the scope for growing the tourism and leisure sectors and strengthening its visitor offer but has not yet earmarked specific resources to take this agenda forward.
- 2.3 The new 10 Year Tourism Strategy for Cumbria (2008-18) and the Cumbria Destination Management Plan 2008-09 have identified the challenges and opportunities for growing the visitor economy of West Cumbria and have highlighted this as a priority over the next decade. Cumbria Tourism has highlighted the importance of this issue in its core funding proposals for the NWDA.
- 2.4 Partners are keen to see restructuring of the Partnership and the delivery arrangements to enable continued marketing activity and focus attention and resource on tourism development activity in West Cumbria.
- 2.5 The Partnership will be working within the framework of the West Cumbria Sub Regional Action Plan which details existing commitments and tourism sector priorities alongside wider economic priorities. The Partnership will expect to be subject to any agreed working arrangements with West Cumbria Vision.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 It will be necessary to raise additional resources to underpin a greater development aspiration for the Partnership.

Proposed Annual budget for a 2009-12 Partnership Plan:

Cumbria Tourism	33,000
Allerdale BC	25,000
Copeland BC	25,000
WCDF	50,000
NDA/Energy Coast	100,000
TOTAL	£ 250,000

- 3.2 In re-shaping the WLDTP, the proposal is to establish a new West Cumbria Tourism Partnership with the executive working alongside Cumbria Vision's area based Regeneration Team for the West Coast. The current West Cumbria Tourism Study has yet to report, due later in February 2009. Partners have agreed that this study should shape the priorities and work programme for this refreshed Tourism Partnership alongside the priorities identified in Cumbria Tourism's Annual Destination Management Plan. Specifically we will ensure that the programme fully links and delivers to our Regeneration Development and Delivery Plan objectives and targets and offers value for money. The Partnership Work Programme will enable clear lines of accountability and delivery arrangements and enable targeted monitoring.

Any revised West Cumbria programme would need to co-ordinate with and compliment the 'visitor welcome' activities (Information Centres, management of museums and attractions, car and coach parking, public realm etc) of the Local Authorities and the wider economic regeneration role of key partners and delivery bodies. Please see appendix 1 for more detail of tourism development and project ideas that could be included within the 3 year work programme and priorities.

- 3.3 An organisational restructure of the partnership will ensure continuity of employment for the existing marketing officer and facilitate the appointment of a West Cumbria based full time Tourism Development Specialist. Cumbria Tourism will maintaining the accountable body role and manage the partnership staff team is appointed alongside the marketing officer to manage and co-ordinate delivery of the programme. The specialist would be able to a) call on the relevant county-wide teams at Cumbria Tourism to assist with skills development, research activity, business support, quality accreditation and thematic marketing activity and b) work closely with Local Authority Service Heads, Regeneration Managers and partners to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of tourism services.
- 3.4 A broader Partnership Board made up of senior representatives, including elected members, from the funding bodies and the private sector will be established to guide the activity of the West Cumbrian tourism partnership. This would meet quarterly to assess progress and direction. An annual meeting of the Partnership would be held for all the relevant agencies and the wider tourism industry in the area to hear about the progress of the initiative. The revised structure will use task groups and bring together business and topic clusters to take forward specific initiatives.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Currently the WLDTP focuses its efforts on marketing and branding activity with a limited amount of PR work. The approach and clearer focus on taking forward some development activity alongside its

marketing and PR work is supported by key funders and partners. The model proposed for delivery of tourism activity in West Cumbria is considered the most practical and effective way forward.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

- 5.1 The existing commitment of £25k per annum to the Partnership has been within the economic development annual grant profile. The annual commitment for 2009-12 SLA, ie a total of £75k, will be met by the Copeland Employment Fund through an annual April transfer of £25k to Copeland Borough Council.
- 5.2 Cumbria Tourism are willing to continue as the accountable financial and HR body for the partnership.

6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The partnership is a key strand of our economic development and regeneration strategy and delivery framework. Support to CBC Member representation on the Partnership and officer involvement will be managed via the Development Strategy function.
- 6.2 The key risk to deliver the anticipated programme for the partnership in the next three years is the availability and offer of all expected funding. The partnership will be managing programme activity through projects and hence risks can be managed through the project management system within the partnership. All key partners will be assisting in embedding a clear system where projects will be strategically directed by the partnership but it is anticipated that most projects will have a clear lead partner.

7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1 This initiative delivers to our prosperity and transformation agenda in the borough through enabling quality developments and improvements to the tourism offer within the borough and its localities and its links to the Cumbria Tourism activities.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Potential West Cumbria Tourism Development Activities

Background Documents

Working papers in reviewing the existing WLDTP

List of Consultees

Deputy Leader – Cllr Cath Giel.
Portfolio Holder – Cllr Hugh Branney.
Corporate Team.

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed. This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	Supports
Impact on Sustainability	Supports
Impact on Rural Proofing	Supports
Health and Safety Implications	None
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	Supports
Children and Young Persons Implications	Supports
Human Rights Act Implications	None
Section 151 Officer Comments	No comment
Monitoring Officer Comments	The format of the SLA/Partnership Agreement should be developed in line with guidelines for Partnerships previously agreed by Executive.

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision YES

Appendix 1: Potential West Cumbria Tourism Development Activities

The programme of activity set out in the Energy Coast Plan and the Cumbria Destination Management Plan is ambitious and wide-ranging. It includes the following (with the current organisations broadly responsible for delivering this agenda in brackets):

Improving Accommodation Quality - through Tourism Connect type grant scheme and extension of a quality accreditation scheme (CT/WLR)

Investment in Attractions – establishment of new attractions, grant support to improve facilities at existing sites, accreditation, ‘Profit through Productivity’ business development support. (CT/WLR/HWH)

Public Realm – Range of environmental Improvement work to public spaces, public art initiatives, toilet and car park improvements, signage etc. (LAs)

Customer Service and Skills – Staff development and training, Welcome to Excellence (Training Providers/BLNW/CT)

Festivals and Events – Financial support and marketing assistance to promote and develop a range of events around the year (LAs, Town Partnerships)

Sense of Place – development of web content and printed material to inform visitors about local places and their distinctiveness (CT, LAs, Town Partnerships)

Walking and Cycling – Development of improved facilities and routes for walking and cycling in the area together with ‘cycle tourism hub’ status where appropriate (LAs, Town Partnerships)

Natural Tourism – work to exploit the scope to use the natural assets of the area (AONB, birdlife, etc) to attract additional visitors (CT, HWH, AONB, Amenity Groups etc)

Coast – develop new facilities and programmes to make more of the coastal attributes of West Cumbria including marinas, coastal footpaths, water-based sports (WLR, LAs)

Hadrian’s Wall and heritage themes – improved facilities, interpretation and stories based around Hadrian’s Wall and the rich history of the area (HWH, AONB, Town Partnerships)

Transport and Communications – improved and extended visitor experiences based around the coastal railway, buses and other forms of transport (Rail companies, Stagecoach, LAs)

Marketing and branding – growth of current marketing and PR activity to raise awareness of the area and its contrasts with other parts of the county (WLDTP, CT, HWH, LAs)