The Leisure, Tourism and Arts Working Group met on 18th December 2014 and 3rd February 2015 and discussed the following main issues. Members’ attention is particularly drawn to any specific recommendations.

1. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY UPDATE**

   The Senior Economic Policy Officer gave a Presentation, which updated members about the Economic Development Strategy and the strong links with Culture and Tourism. A copy of the presentation is attached to the signed notes as Appendix A.

   Members were informed that the Economic Development Strategy was aligned with the local plan (which had just gone to consultation). Over a 15 year period, the aim was to create an estimated 10,000 jobs in Northumberland. The Culture and Tourism sectors were a key vehicle for helping to achieve the economic and social goals of both these Strategies.

   A concern was raised about the potential new jobs in Northumberland, and the issues that might be created if commuting were to reduce. However, members were informed that this was not the intention of the strategy, and that part of the strategy was to connect with Tyneside, which would embrace commuting.

   With regard to the growth network in some market towns in Northumberland, it was stressed that the transport links to these rural areas needed to be improved. Developing transport infrastructure which supports vibrant tourism, culture and leisure activity is essential to encourage local and countywide growth. The Executive Director of Local Services would attend a future meeting to report on progress.

   **IT WAS RECOMMENDED** that:

   1. The role of culture, leisure and tourism in encouraging economic growth be noted

3. The Executive Director for Local Services attends a future meeting to update on transport infrastructure improvements and their relationship to supporting growth in tourism, leisure and culture.

2. CULTURAL EVENTS PROGRAMME

Members received a verbal update about the Cultural Events Programme from the Heritage and Events Development Manager.

It was important to plan ahead for upcoming events in Northumberland to ensure that as many people as possible were made aware. The 2015 Tour of Britain was due to take place in September 2015 and was the largest free spectator sport in the UK, which could be a good PR opportunity for Northumberland. Rolling road blocks would be put in place during the race, in order to cause the least amount of disruption. It was important to make the public aware that the road block was a rolling one, and that delays would be kept to a minimum. It was hoped that this would help reduce the amount of complaints about disruptions, and also allow people to divert if need be, or to come and watch the race. It was important to promote all cycle routes and other events as soon as the official route for the Tour of Britain was announced. A forward plan for anniversaries, commemorations and other significant dates in a diary for the next 3 to 4 years would be presented to members at a future meeting.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED that:

1. Members endorse the report outlined in the verbal report.
2. Suggestions for future significant commemorations and anniversaries be submitted to the Heritage and Events Development Manager.

3. TOURISM INVESTMENT REVIEW UPDATE

Members received a verbal update about the Tourism Investment Review from the Strategic Communications and Tourism Advisor.

She explained that there was a lot of change happening in the tourism industry and in the way tourists used Tourist Information Centres. Many visitors now researched areas of interest on the internet before visiting an area and only used Tourist Information Centres when they were already in the area. Therefore clarification of current levels of investment in the information centres needed to be explored.

Northumberland Tourism received £120,000 from Northumberland County Council. Its work was recognised and it was able to accomplish a lot with this relatively small amount of money. It was reported that further work was being carried out and a report would be submitted to the August meeting of the Working Group.
A member queried what progress had been made on the report regarding wind farms and tourism. It was reported that the issue was being dealt with by the Regeneration Working Group and its report was due to be published in the near future.

It was noted that the Council contributed a lot to the maintenance of Northumberland which would contribute to the overall visitors’ experience, but did not necessarily link directly to tourism. This included maintaining cycle paths and grass cutting. As a result, the Council would have spent more than £120,000 on tourism investment, and it was difficult to quantify exact figures.

**IT WAS RECOMMENDED** that the information be noted.

4. **STRATEGIC TOURISM UPDATE**

A verbal update of Strategic Tourism was provided by the Strategic Communications and Tourism Advisor.

A meeting with Nick Clegg had taken place in Sheffield, at which two representatives from the North of England were present. It was established that £10 million would be invested into the Northern Futures Fund for the upcoming financial year. This area included Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Manchester, Liverpool and Yorkshire. The money was to be used for international marketing only, as it was felt that international visitors contributed a higher spend when visiting the UK, therefore it was important to ensure that the international transport links in the North were of a high standard.

Representatives had been asked to work up ideas for use of the funding by the end of February 2015. Members welcomed news of the additional funding but acknowledged that it was a relatively small amount to be spread over a large area. A supporting paper would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.

**IT WAS RECOMMENDED** that the information be noted.

5. **LIBRARIES SERVICE DEVELOPMENT**

The Senior Performance Officer, Customer and Cultural Services, gave an update on the Libraries Service Development and tabled a document, a copy of which is attached to the notes of the meeting.

The development programme started in September with a ‘visioning day’, where a strong and robust strategic review of the library service took place. This produced a framework, and identified the need for joint working. The Steering Group and Working Groups had been meeting fortnightly, and their success was linked to the fortnightly internal post cards which had been sent out to Library Service Staff. The groups had been populated by a good cross-
range of Services including Information Services, Customer Services and
Tourism.

A joint session had taken place with 4 groups in order to look at any cross-
cutting themes. Business Planning and Workforce Development were identified
as key development areas.

Although communication with Library Service staff was effective and
supportive, it was a concern that there were currently no vehicles for effective
communication with service users. It was planned to put some mechanism in
place to engage with service users county-wide.

It was recognised that the way in which libraries were being used was changing
and that it was important to ensure continuous evolution. Some concern was
raised and it was hoped that there would be no loss of books in the libraries.
Management software was being explored, which it was hoped would control
and manage books more effectively within the service.

The School Library Service was keen to get involved and a business model
needed to be established. Members would receive papers in relation to the
ongoing development at future meetings.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED that the information be noted.

6. CULTURAL STRATEGY UPDATE

The Culture, Heritage and Libraries Service Manager gave a verbal update on
the Cultural Strategy.

Nigel Walsh reported that Northumberland County Council had not had a
Cultural Strategy since 2009, and it was now a good time to start to develop a
strategy covering tourism, leisure and culture. The aspirations of the Core
Strategy were:

- To increase participation in culture
- Enhancing Cultural Opportunities
- To improve the quality of life through culture
- To have sustainable infrastructure
- To support economic growth

A development session was being held at Woodhorn on 27th February 2015 to
which all members of the Working Group would be invited.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED that the information be noted.
7. WORK PROGRAMME

The Culture, Heritage and Libraries Service Manager presented the Work Programme, a copy of which is attached to the notes as appendix B.

The Work Programme had been approved by Chairs Group.

**IT WAS RECOMMENDED** that:

- The Cultural Strategy be added as a standing item;
- The Culture, Heritage and Libraries Service Manager circulate suggested dates on which items on the Work Programme could be considered by Councillors, for their comments
- The following items be added to the agenda for the meeting of the Leisure, Tourism and Arts Working Group on 9 April 2015:
  
  • Funding for Arts
  • Tourism Destination Plan
  • Strategic Framework
  • Role of Local Services in delivering the cultural programme

COUNCILLOR I.P. LINDLEY
CHAIR