

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	6 December 2023
Subject:	Tourism & Destination Marketing Progress Report 2023 & 2024 Objectives		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. Tourism & Destination Marketing Review 2023		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present a progress report (Appendix 1) on the Tourism & Destination Marketing Function against the draft objectives outlined in the Tourism and Destination Marketing Draft Objectives issued in October 2022 (see background documents, or appendix 1, section 3) to Cabinet for information/comment and endorsement of progress.
- 1.2 To approve updated Tourism & Destination Marketing objectives ahead of 2024 (see appendix 1, sections 6 and 7).

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) the updated Tourism & Destination Marketing objectives for 2024 be approved;
- (2) the Tourism and Marketing Progress Report be noted, and that the progress made against the Marketing Plan in 2023 be endorsed.

3.0 Updates to Tourism & Destination Marketing Objectives for 2024

- 3.1 The Destination Marketing Plan is written each year in December for the following year, based on a overarching set of objectives. Due to a staffing gap between the outgoing and incoming Tourism & Destination Marketing Manager (October 2022 to January 2023), the Marketing Plan's objectives for 2023 were adopted only in draft format by the Council. These draft objectives were consulted on by the Destination Marketing Steering Board and agreed by that Board in October 2022. These objectives were as follows:

1. Continue to work to build back Gloucester's core inbound audiences.
2. Bring Gloucester's Place Branding to the fore. Continue to support businesses and other council departments to use elements of the Place Brand in their designs.
3. Support the growth of Gloucester's Visitor Economy through providing promotional support, advice and research for the industry.
4. Grow Gloucester's domestic audience base and increase engagement with our online audiences through delivering exceptional B2C communications.
5. Working with our partners and stakeholder to deliver two major seasonal marketing campaigns in Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter
6. Create content that promotes sustainable travel in and to the city.

3.2 For 2024, to reflect changes in needs by visitor economy businesses in Gloucester, changes in the tourism industry context for the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO), Visit Gloucester, with the emergence of the Cotswolds+ LVEP, and to explicitly specify the DMO's support for City Festivals & Events, the draft objectives outlined in 2022 for 2023, have been updated for 2024 for approval by the Council. These objectives more truthfully articulate the work that the DMO is doing to support Visitor Economy businesses across the city. The updated objectives are as follows:

1. Continue to work on rebuilding Gloucester's core inbound audiences to pre-Pandemic levels.
2. Fully embed the use of Gloucester's Place Branding through full adoption by the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO), Visit Gloucester, across all channels.
3. Ensure that Visit Gloucester is a central partner of the newly proposed Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for our region.
4. Support the growth of Gloucester's Visitor Economy through the provision of signposting and digital business support.
5. Grow Gloucester's twin domestic audiences (visitors and residents) through enhanced engagement across all digital channels.
6. Embed sustainability messaging across all our published output.
7. Directly support the marketing of major city Festivals & Events, either through direct or commissioned delivery.

4.0 Tourism and Destination Marketing Progress Report 2023

4.1 The Progress Report provides information on the campaigns and event promotion delivered by the Tourism and Destination Team including information on:

- Knife Angel Event Promotion (appendix 1, section 4.1), the National Monument for Serious Violence and Aggression, a major public artwork installed throughout February outside the Cathedral.
- Royal Photographic Society International Photography Exhibition paid media campaign (appendix 1, section 4.2), assisting the Museum of Gloucester reach a wider audience for the final three months of this major exhibition.
- The Coronation of King Charles III (appendix 1, section 4.3), where Visit Gloucester implemented a Coronation hub webpage featuring events and

activities from across the city, amplified the Lamprey Pie presentation event and developed a city-wide interactive digital trail called Royal Connections to connect visitors with visitor economy businesses.

- Three Choirs Festival online promotion support (appendix 1, section 4.4), amplifying the festival through heavy featuring on Visit Gloucester's homepage, blog and social media.
- Hi Street Fest Marketing Campaign (appendix 1, section 4.5), a multi-channel campaign to generate a significant audience for this Historic England-backed celebration of the High Street Heritage Action Zone (also known as Cathedral Quarter).
- #GlosSummerPics (appendix 1, section 4.6), a seasonal activation campaign for the summer months, and method of enabling word-of-mouth promotion across events and attractions.
- Gloucester History Festival social media take-over and content marketing (appendix 1, section 4.7), designed to bring the festival to the predominantly younger audience of Visit Gloucester's Instagram and TikTok channels.
- Gloucester Goes Retro multi-channel marketing campaign (appendix 1, section 4.8). We rebuilt the website to make it search-engine optimised and mobile-oriented and developed a huge amount of new content including interactive maps, better methods of capturing feedback and contact details. We also delivered a large-scale campaign across print, digital, and social, and launched for the first time on-the-day maps to navigate the festival.
- Gloucester Believes (appendix 1, section 4.9), our umbrella Christmas campaign which is being worked on, to be launched in November 2023 across print, digital, paid media, social media and organic social promoting the city's Christmas offer, including Bright Nights, and key stakeholder offers across hospitality, accommodation, and entertainment.

4.2 The Progress Report also provided information on the 'always on' (appendix 1, section 5) activity the Tourism and Destination provide for the city. This activity is crucial for the recovery of the city but as it runs in the background, can be missed by our stakeholders:

- Each month we send out two e-newsletters (appendix 1, section 5.1 and 5.2) - one consumer-facing 'What's On' guide to our subscriber base of nearly 3,000 people (this has grown by 50% in the last 9 months, with an aggressive target of 100% growth by April 2024). The second newsletter has a steady audience base of over 160 visitor economy businesses in the city and provides them with activity updates and opportunities from the team.
- We have made a number of website improvements (appendix 1, section 5.3), including implementation of the new Place Branding across it, and streamlining the navigation and removing out-of-date information. We have also moved the site to Google Analytics 4, and integrated its backend database into SimpleView's mailing product MailMinder to streamline our comms with both visitor economy businesses and consumers.
- The team has kicked-off the process to replatform the Visit Gloucester website to our web provider's new Content Management System, a process which includes a full review of the site's products and content, and building in an integration with Cultural Services' new ticketing platform TicketSolve.
- We have also invested in rebuilding the additional web platforms we control, including Gloucester Tall Ships, Gloucester Goes Retro and Bright Nights. The first of these rebuilds, Gloucester Goes Retro, has resulted in a 78% increase in

visitors to the website, 271 newsletter sign-ups and a 25% increase in engagement with web content. The second, Bright Nights, has just gone live.

- We have completed the setup of Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), alongside our partner DMOs, and in July gained accreditation from Visit England/Visit Britain (appendix 1, section 5.6). This major partnership project has brought together five DMOs, Cotswolds National Landscapes, the local authorities and county council for Gloucestershire, and West Oxfordshire District Council to share expertise and advocate on a wider regional level for the visitor economy. Visit Gloucester is key partner in the LVEP, which unlocks deeper links into the Cotswolds visitor markets, bringing one of the world's most valuable tourism brands even closer to the city.

5.0 Social Value Considerations

- 5.1 The total value added created by tourism, total employment in tourism, cost savings of potential unemployment, quality of life of residents generated by tourism, and environmental infrastructure of tourism cannot be underplayed. Also, the role the team have played in promoting cultural activities to the local and regional community is increasing in importance as Gloucester has become an Arts Council England Priority Place, and as residents look to cultural provision for not only entertainment but health and wellbeing. Tourism contributes to the appreciation of Gloucester's built and natural environment by highlighting the importance of our architecture and green spaces, and we can encourage our residents to consume their local leisure facilities and care more deeply about preserving them for the future. Tourism can be a catalyst for strengthening a local community by raising pride in their place. Events and festivals of which residents have been the primary participants and spectators are often rejuvenated and developed in response to tourist interest.

6.0 Environmental Implications

- 6.1 The team promote all aspects of the city's cultural offer as well as encouraging green forms of travel. There will be some limited impact on the environment, however, as increased tourism, event attendance and movement of people will increase emissions. This year, Visit Gloucester has become a core partner in the Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), which works in partnership with Visit Gloucestershire and Cotswolds National Landscape to encourage a more joined-up approach to mitigating the environment-degrading effects of tourism. Air travel does undoubtedly contribute to climate change especially the long-haul market. This market is one that is crucial to the full recovery of Gloucester's Tourism Industry.
- 6.2 Building on previous years' approaches, Gloucester and Gloucestershire is a target destination for 'slow travellers'. Slow travel is an approach to travel that emphasises connection: to local people, cultures, food, and music. It relies on the idea that a trip is meant to educate and have an emotional impact, in the present moment and for the future, while remaining sustainable for local communities and the environment. We will be looking for audiences who are more eco-conscious and we will be signposting sustainable transport solutions, green places to stay and the natural world in and around the city, so people can visit in the most sustainable way.

- 6.3 We are changing our approach to written content on our website so we encourage active travel and sustainable transport, and de-prioritising messaging about carbon-intensive transport like driving and flying.

7.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 7.1 Objectives for the Destination Marketing Plan have been created in consultation with and responding to the needs of our partners (visitor economy businesses in the city), via forums including the Destination Marketing Steering Board (now superseded by the Strategic Events & Marketing Group). The 2024 updates to the wording of these objectives are designed to better articulate ongoing work, and as such, any new or alternative objectives, not outlined in this document, would require further consultation with those partners.

8.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1 The report shows the team's progress in promoting the city and supporting our visitor economy businesses in 2023.

9.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 9.1 It is likely that a Destination Management Plan (DMP) will be created for the Cotswolds Plus LVEP in the next few years. As a core partner of the LVEP we are well placed to shape this so that it reflects the needs of Gloucester's visitor economy. The Growth Plan for Gloucester is also in development, the aims of which will be reflected in Gloucester's contribution of any future DMP, or in any Gloucester City-specific DMP.

10.0 Financial Implications

- 10.1 None directly arising from this report.

11.0 Legal Implications

- 11.1 None directly arising from this report.

12.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 12.1 The risk of the 2024 objectives not being approved is that the team are delayed in starting work on the detailed Destination Marketing Plan for 2024, as well as prevented from continuing actions laid out in 2023's plan that will continue into 2024.
- 12.2 The risk by the Progress Report not being endorsed is that the continuing actions as the in 2023 plan may have to stop, leading to delays in delivery and reputational damage. The actions in both the 2022, and 2023 Marketing Plans, as well as in the Tourism and Destination Marketing Service Plan lays out quite a demanding set of actions, so any delay would impact the ability of the team to deliver against all the actions outlined.

12.2 As the objectives were created in liaison with our key stakeholders, we would have to talk to our stakeholders to let them know about any suggested changes and delays that may be incurred by the report not being adopted. This may affect the excellent relationship the team have built with the tourism businesses in the city, with LVEP partners and with other major visitor economy partners.

13.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

13.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact relating to this report or the updated objectives in section 3.2 of this report. Therefore, a full PIA was not required.

14.0 Community Safety Implications

14.1 None

15.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

15.1 None

Background Documents:

- Tourism and Destination Marketing Draft Objectives 2023
- Destination Marketing Service Plan 2023
- Visit Gloucester – Approach 23-24
- GGC People Impact Assessment – TDM Progress Report 2023