

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 7 JUNE 2007

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE / DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

WIRRAL PENINSULA – DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A WIRRAL COAST AND COUNTRYSIDE BRAND AND MARKETING CAMPAIGN

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To help address the needs of both visitors and tourism businesses a more strategic approach to the marketing of Wirral's tourism offer was developed in 2006. This annual Implementation Plan now helps to drive and focus work, deliver tourism activities and encourage long-term sustainability. The Plan is underpinned by Wirral's Tourism Strategy themes, and steered by the intelligence drawn from the Wirral Existing and Potential Visitor Survey, which was also conducted last year. The results of the research has been shared with Wirral's Tourism Stakeholders and Cabinet Members, and highlights Wirral's beautiful Coast and Countryside as the area's unique selling point. This report updates Members on progress regarding the development and implementation of "Wirral Peninsula" – the new coast and countryside marketing brand.

2.0 RATIONALE

Wirral's Tourism Strategy highlights coast, countryside, culture and sport as key opportunities to promote the peninsula.

The Wirral Visitor Survey conducted by Ipsos MORI last year concluded that Wirral's coastline and countryside is the major attraction, for current and potential visitors, particularly within a 90 minute drive time (ie day visitors), however the awareness of Wirral's tourism offer is very limited within the North West region. The Survey confirms that the peninsula provides superb leisure facilities and gives those living in the surrounding cities (eg Liverpool, Chester and Manchester) the chance to escape their hectic lifestyle. Members are well aware that walkers and cyclists can explore Wirral's country parks, and the more energetic can sail, canoe or windsurf on one of Wirral's marine lakes or sand-yacht or kite fly on the surrounding beaches and parks.

To raise awareness of, and capitalise on, Wirral's coastal and countryside tourism offers it is necessary to develop a "marketing brand" with our partners. A set of guidelines for brand use, together with an integrated marketing campaign, will be used to target future visitors based on the research mentioned.

3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project will create, develop and promote a customer-led Wirral coastal and countryside tourism brand, and related marketing campaign, informed by a comprehensive Wirral coast and countryside asset audit. The study assessed the feasibility of converting the individual niche tourism products into one dynamic visitor destination. The work is supported and guided by the results of the market intelligence already gathered. The Council will manage the project in

partnership with regional tourism partners which include the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, and the newly established Wirral Coast Partnership, which is comprised of landowners, businesses, friends groups, the local authority and other key stakeholders and agencies.

The objective is to create and market the brand, which will be developed in the context of the wider Merseyside waterfront, and promote tourism visitor dispersal around Merseyside and the wider region. This will help sustain the positive media interest in the region, which was generated through the return of The Open Championship in 2006 and, hopefully the European Capital of Culture next year.

4.0 AIMS

Based on the objectives of the Wirral Tourism Strategy, and the results from the consultation with the Wirral Coast Partnership, the strategic aims of the project are to:

- Undertake a Wirral coast and countryside asset audit to establish the current position and potential for future development.
- Create and develop a Wirral coast and countryside brand, as an integral part of the Merseyside waterfront, as well as a set of guidelines for use and an integrated marketing campaign.
- Work with Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, Merseytravel, The Mersey Partnership, Sefton Council and other partners and stakeholders, to develop an Action Plan for related interpretation (eg integrated coastal signage and promotional material).
- Work with Mersey Waterfront, and other partners and stakeholders, to support new and enhance existing coastal and countryside customer-focused attractions, facilities and events that have external visitor growth potential (eg River of Light, European Sand Yacht Championship, etc).

Together with essential market intelligence already mentioned, and full stakeholder consultation, this will help target existing and evaluate potential markets. In the long-term, with the support of the recently established Council Coast and Countryside Strategy Group, Chaired by the Head of Tourism and Marketing, this will help tackle the significant challenges and plan future strategy to enable Wirral to reach its fullest tourism potential.

5.0 KEY MILESTONES AND ACTION PLAN

The Wirral Coast Partnership is now established, and with their support, the Council's Tourism and Marketing Division have undertaken the following:

- Audit of Wirral's coastal and countryside assets (ie completed February 2007).
- Brand Development and Guidelines for Use (ie completed May 2007).
- Implementation of key recommendations from the Asset Audit (ie establishment of the Council Coast and Countryside Strategy Group in May 2007)
- Campaign to help brand and market Wirral's coastal and countryside offers (ie to be undertaken from April 2008).

Taking the Key Milestones into consideration – the Council’s Coastal Tourism Action Plan will:

- Inform and steer new and existing Product Development to continue to enhance the quality and range of Wirral’s coastal and countryside offers (eg Hoylake and West Kirby Regeneration including “The Sail”, Wirral Country Park and Visitor Centre, New Brighton Regeneration, Woodside Development, etc).
- Guide and focus coast and countryside operational and technical services activities, led by the Coast and Countryside Strategy Group, to achieve maximum appeal and efficiency for visitors and residents alike (eg waste management).
- Continue to raise the profile of Wirral’s coast and countryside, as a key visitor destination, and so help regenerate the economy (eg River of Light, European Sand Yacht Championship, pan-Merseyside coastal signage in partnership with Merseytravel and Mersey Waterfront, web-site development, walkabout brochures, etc).
- Identify new, and help enhance existing, coastal and countryside customer-focused tourism products (eg attractions, facilities, etc) that have external visitor growth potential.

6.0 FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional financial or staffing implications as a result of this report.

7.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

The target group for the new Wirral Coastal and Countryside Brand is all existing and potential visitors and tourists, and is fully inclusive. The Council will endeavour that all activities are accessible to everyone regardless of age, ability, social or ethnic background. A number of events/activities will be offered free of charge, and where a charge is necessitated, concessions will be made available. In addition, all events and activities will aim to be culturally sensitive and all embracing.

In terms of those with physical disabilities, accessing events and related activities, provision will be made wherever possible to allow for this. The Council is committed to being an equal opportunities service provider, and as such all static visitor attractions, and public buildings, have accessibility, or are reviewing and improving their accessibility requirements. This relates directly to the duties placed upon it, by the Disability Discrimination Act 2004 (DDA), and in conjunction with the Council’s Access Officer.

8.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no Human Rights implications as a result of this report.

9.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21

The promotion of Wirral’s coast and countryside actively encourages all sections of the wider community, to visit in a sustainable way, to help regenerate the local economy. The project promotes sustainable tourism (eg environmentally friendly waste management, recycling, etc)

and endeavours to reflect the Local Agenda 21 ideal of bringing together environmental, economic and social elements to improve a local area.

10.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

The campaign will support the Council's Community Safety objectives.

11.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

There are no local member support implications as a result of this report.

12.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Tourism and Marketing Division, within the Corporate Services Department, holds background papers in relation to this report including the Wirral Existing and Potential Visitor Survey and Coast and Countryside Asset Audit.

13.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

There are no planning implications as a result of this report.

15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the work to develop and implement "Wirral Peninsula", the new coastal and countryside brand for Wirral, to help market the Borough more efficiently and effectively, to potential and existing visitors, be noted.

J. WILKIE

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services

This report has been prepared by Emma Degg, Head of Tourism and Marketing in the Corporate Services Department, and she can be contacted on 691 8688.