

Flintshire Destination Management Plan 2013-2015

Introduction

A key element of the approach to regeneration in Flintshire is focussed on creating high quality places: places where people want to visit, to spend their leisure time and to work. High quality places attract investment, they are sustainable and they generate their own energy and success.

For visitors, both from outside the area and from within, the focus is on managing the key destinations so that every piece of the jigsaw that represents their experience in Flintshire is a positive one. From their accommodation, to the welcome on the High Street, to the cleanliness of the public conveniences – all of these contribute to the overall experience and determine whether they will return and what messages they will give to their friends at home.

Further, raising the quality of the destination raises its competitiveness. In an age of ever-increasing expectations, destination management is essential to competing in a crowded marketplace. With 4.7 million people living within a 60 minute drive time, the ideal catchment for day visitors, Flintshire has a huge and relatively untapped market close to hand.

The tourism sector is currently estimated to support 3,138 direct jobs in Flintshire. It is estimated to generate £200m annually from 3.5m staying visitors and 2.4m day visitors. (STEAM 2011).

The Destination Flintshire Partnership

The Destination Flintshire Partnership, a sub-group of the Flintshire Regeneration Partnership, brings together the key partners responsible for managing Flintshire as a destination. Representatives from tourism businesses, Flintshire Tourism Association, and Clwydian Range Tourism Group sit alongside Tourism Partnership North Wales, Cadwyn Clwyd, Mold and Holywell Town Partnerships and a range of Flintshire County Council functions: Regeneration, Planning, Transportation, and Countryside Services.

The role of the group is to develop, implement and monitor an effective action plan to improve the management of Flintshire as a destination.

Communication will be vitally important to the group and will include:

- The members of the Partnership are expected to communicate with their wider memberships or stakeholders so that the work of the Partnership is based on a broad information base.
- An annual event with the wider community is held to provide an update on progress and to refresh the priorities for the future.
- An e-bulletin will be distributed to businesses and other stakeholders to keep them abreast of events, new initiatives and wider developments.
- The Partnership will report progress regularly to the Regeneration partnership and will work closely with town partnerships to ensure a complementary approach is taken.

Strategic context

Destination management is wider than the traditional tourism sector but the main thrust for the approach in North Wales is given by the North Wales Tourism Strategy 2010-2015. The Strategy sets out the vision for North Wales:

One of the top 5 UK tourism destinations, internationally known for its natural beauty, dramatic scenery, heritage and distinctive culture. A place you can boast about visiting, easy to get to but rewardingly different. A centre of excellence for adventure sports and the market leader for activity tourism of all sorts. Plenty going on at all times of the year, whatever the weather, with a lively, living culture and thriving arts scene. A place that is often talked about and features in the media for the quality of its food, hospitality and interesting places to stay. A region that is proud of its heritage and culture, cares for its natural assets and welcomes visitors. (TPNW 2010)

The Strategy sets out a number of priorities for tourism and provides a detailed action plan for each area. The actions identified in this Destination Management Plan are informed by and contribute towards the delivery of these actions.

Destination Management is also integrated into the wider Flintshire Regeneration Strategy 2009-2020. The Strategy has three Strategic Objectives and the Destination Management Plan has a role to play under all three of these Objectives:

1. A Competitive Flintshire

Managing high quality places in Flintshire will contribute to the success of visitor economy businesses but also to the wider business community, for example, town centre retailers and service providers, transport companies and hospitality providers. The approach to destination management will need to include action to support visitor facing businesses to raise their quality and to work together to develop new ways to market the County and provide new products to customers. In addition, action to raise the quality of the key places in Flintshire will help to encourage investment into the County.

2. Sustainable Communities

Effective destination management will have an important role to play as part of the wider approach to rural and town centre development. Visitors have a crucial role to play in increasing the viability of rural services and businesses and High Street retailers. The Destination Management Plan will need to identify how customers can be encouraged to visit and return to key destinations in the County, how the value of their visit can be maximised and how the potential impacts on local people minimised.

3. Employment and skills

At present, 3,138 people are employed directly and indirectly in the visitor economy. The sector provides a full range of career options and can play a significant part in supporting people into work and to progress once there. High levels of skills in the sector will improve the success of businesses and improve the experience for visitors. The sector will need to play an active part in tackling the high levels of youth unemployment in Flintshire.

In a period of unprecedented financial austerity public sector resources are going to be very scarce. The role of the Destination Flintshire Partnership will be to line up existing programmes of work to benefit Flintshire as a destination and to use the resources available to the Partnership wisely to ensure that the greatest impact is achieved. These will include future European support for tourism locally, VisitWales resources, Lottery funding where relevant, and other suitable funding such as the Coastal Communities Fund.

The Destination Management Plan

The Flintshire Destination Management Plan is intended to be a practical document setting out achievable and measurable actions. It will evolve rapidly over time to reflect external changes and progress made and will be subject to regular review with stakeholders.

The Plan has been developed around an outcome framework so that there is a clear link between each action and what it is intended to achieve. Indicators are being established for each action to ensure that their contribution can be effectively measured.

The work of the Partnership is intended to contribute towards two outcomes as set out in the table below.

Outcomes	Indicators
All tourism businesses in Flintshire fulfil their potential	Increased occupancy levels
	Increased employment
	Increased business confidence and reported profitability
Visitors report a consistently high quality experience	Increased visitors numbers
	Increased visitor spend
	Proportion of positive feedback from visitors

The Destination Management Plan is designed to be a simple document that can be quickly updated as progress is made and that will be easy for the Partnership and other stakeholders to monitor progress made.

The Plan is divided into five themes, each of which is presented below.

1. Improve the availability and coordination of visitor information that meets customers' diverse needs

Information is crucial to the success of Flintshire as a destination. People living and working in the County and the surrounding area need good quality and timely information to let them know what there is to see and do and to showcase the diverse and ever-changing offer in the County.

For those visiting the area from outside, good quality information helps them to enjoy their visit, encourages expenditure and promotes return trips.

There is already a plethora of information sources present in the County. These will be reviewed and rationalised and gaps in information provision filled. Promotional activity will be left, in most cases, to the sub-regional North Wales Borderlands partnership but where a localised need for sub-regional promotion is identified as part of the wider destination management approach then this will be supported.

Outcomes

Visitors report a consistently high quality experience

Indicators

- Increased visitor numbers
- Proportion of positive feedback from visitors
- Visitor centre enquiries

Key Actions	Lead / Partners	Link to TPNW Strategy 2010-15
a) Review distribution services used by partners to identify options for better coordination and cost sharing	FCC, MAP	Projecting our distinctive strengths Market driven; 2,3,4 Stronger impact; 6,7,8,10,11 Inspiring information; 13,14,16
b) Participate in sub-regional marketing campaigns for walking and geocaching.	MAP, FCC, TPNW, VW	
c) Use social media to increase awareness of the programme of events in Flintshire.	FCC, VW	
d) Festival restaurant trail – link to Mold Food and Drink Festival / Food North Wales	MFDF, FCC, TPNW	
e) Renew displays and improve marketing material at Chester and Cheshire Partnership sites	FCC	
f) Develop new web-based visitor information for towns and sub-regional promotional print to encourage visits.	FCC	
g) Highlight facilities adjacent to the Leisure Tour through signage and web information.	FCC, FTA	
h) Continuously review and enhance services provided by the Visitor Centre in Mold. Improve links between the Visitor Centre and tourism operators	FCC, NWT, FTA, CRTG	
i) Encourage the use of North East Wales branding by businesses to generate greater brand awareness.	FCC, FTA, CRTG	

2. Increase the quality and range of visitor accommodation and attractions

In an increasingly competitive world customer expectations are rising. Good quality destinations are managed so that, wherever possible, all aspects of the customer experience are carefully controlled and their expectation met. There are already significant programmes underway to drive this forward:

- the Town Action Plan programme developing and implementing long-term plans for the main town centres;
- the implementation of key elements of the Talacre and Gronant masterplan to improve this seaside location;
- the development of the Wales Coastal Path and associated infrastructure;
- the work of the Rural Development Plan programme to develop community tourism infrastructure and to increase the availability of local food;
- the support for community events in Flintshire;
- the management and promotion of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB;
- FCC review of core public service and facilities such as street scene, public conveniences and parking will lead to improved management; and
- the development and growth of the Flintshire Tourism Association to support and represent the sector.

The role of the Partnership will be to help to co-ordinate the interactions between these programmes to maximise their benefits.

Generally, whilst there are no truly iconic attractions in Flintshire there are a number of important elements that could play a more important role in the visitor economy in the future. These include:

- the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB and the wider high quality rural landscape of the County;
- the coastal area and the emerging routes along it;
- Flint Castle;
- St. Winefride's Well, Basingwerk Abbey and Greenfield Valley and Holywell town centre itself.
- Mold markets, town centre, Clwyd Theatr Cymru and Bailey Hill;
- Deeside Leisure Centre; and
- Hawarden Gladstone Library.

For each of these, their setting, facilities, access and standards of service ideally need to be at the highest possible level to ensure they can fulfil their potential.

In addition, the Partnership will support the development of new attractions where these have the potential to add significantly to the offer of the area.

The business community has a crucial role to play: as investors; as ambassadors for the County; and in providing many of the front line

Outcomes

All tourism businesses in Flintshire fulfil their potential

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Indicators

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- Increased employment
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- Increased business confidence and reported profitability
- Increased visitor spend

interactions that shape the experience of visitors to the County. The role of the visitor sector is obvious, but town centre businesses, transport providers, rural shops and the large companies who bring so many people into Flintshire all have a vital contribution to make.

Key Actions	Lead / Partners	Link to TPNW Strategy 2010-15
a) Provide guidance to visitor businesses and signpost to relevant support providers.	FCC, FTA, VW	Projecting our distinctive strengths Inspiring information; 15
b) Provide in-depth business advice and business review services.	FCC	
c) Increase business uptake of learning opportunities offered by Deeside College to the visitor sector.	DC, FCC, FTA	
d) Implement works associated with the Talacre and Gronant Masterplan.	FCC	
e) Develop physical and thematic linkages between Holywell town centre, Greenfield Valley and the coast.	FCC	Investing in product excellence Quality accommodation; 17,18,19,20,21,22, 23 Diverse attractions; 24,25,27
f) As part of Flint Masterplan maximise potential of Flint Castle to the town and wider county.	FCC	
g) Implement the Bailey Hill Management Plan.	FCC	
h) In conjunction with operators, review the provision for group travel across the County and improve information and arrival points wherever possible.	FCC, FTA	
i) Implement programmes to improve customer welcome by businesses and at arrival points.	DC, FCC, FTA, TPNW	
j) Encourage businesses to improve and showcase their environmental performance.	FCC, FTA, TPNW, VW	
k) Improve the information available to the business community to showcase Flintshire venues for conferences, corporate hospitality and visitor accommodation.	FCC	
l) Review and improve the physical environment of key arrival points and corridors across the County.	FCC	
m) Identify options to improve parking at Loggerheads County Park.	DCC, FCC	
n) Increase the availability and profile of local produce to visitors.	FCC, CC	
o) Encourage key destinations to self assess and identify areas for improvement.	FCC, TP	

3. Increase the scale and diversity of the activity sector

Theme 2 highlights some of the key strengths of the County. This theme seeks to maximise their value through the development of activity tourism based upon them: from walking in the Clwydians, through; bird watching along the Dee; or spending an evening at the Theatre.

Activity will focus around packaging these assets so that they are easy for visitors and local people to find out about, access and enjoy as well as encouraging and supporting the business community to develop new products based upon them.

Outcomes

Visitors report a consistently high quality experience

Indicators

- Increased visitor numbers
- Increased visitor spend
- Proportion of positive feedback from visitors

Key Actions	Lead / Partners	Link to TPNW Strategy 2010-15
a) Wales Coastal Path – develop new feeder routes onto the path and encourage the development of infrastructure for visitors along it.	FCC , VW, TPNW	
b) Promote the Flintshire walking offer in national and regional media.	FCC , FTA, CRTG	
c) Continue to offer high quality information to showcase walking opportunities.	FCC	
d) Implement the RDP Church Network project with Conwy and Denbighshire.	CCBC , DCC, FCC	
e) Support and develop events to encourage and promote walking in Flintshire.	FCC , FTA, CRTG	
f) Facilitate the development of promotional packages linked to Clwyd Theatr Cymru.	FCC , FTA, CRTG	
g) Encourage and support business investment in facilities for activity-based visitors.	FTA , CRTG, VW	

4. Increase the scale and economic impact of events in Flintshire

Events have a valuable role to play in Flintshire. Large iconic events draw customers from across the sub-region into the county and can make a valuable contribution to the economy of the County. Smaller events help to provide vibrancy and colour for visitors to the area and a reason to return in the future but also provide opportunities for communities and businesses to generate income, attract customers and create social vitality. This is of particular importance in town centres.

The role of the Partnership is to support the development of sustainable events, helping to co-ordinate and network events to maximise their impact and to improve the awareness of events locally and through the sub-regional marketing infrastructure.

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Indicators

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- Increased visitor numbers
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Key Actions	Lead / Partners	Link to TPNW Strategy 2010-15
a) Improve the coverage of events through www.discoverflintshire.com and increase the interaction with users on the Facebook and Twitter pages managed by the Visitor Centre in Mold.	FCC, NWT, FTA, CRTG	Providing an outstanding experience Enriching experiences; 40,41,44
b) Co-ordinate and market events locally – using the improved information base to identify opportunities for joint promotion.	FCC, FTA, CRTG	
c) Develop a database of event organisers and create a network to share information and encourage joint working.	FCC, FTA, CRTG, TPNW	
d) Support iconic large scale events e.g. Mold Food and Drink Festival and town centre events linked to regeneration programmes and help to facilitate their sustainability.	FCC, CC, FTA, CRTG, TPNW	
e) Support local events that will attract visitors or add to the quality of their experience.	FCC, CC, FTA, CRTG	

5. Data Development

The work of the Partnership will need to be measured against the achievement of the indicators suggested in the outcome framework. Gathering the appropriate data to do this will require new ways of working for the County Council and will require the active participation of the business community to fully measure what impact the activities of the Partnership are having.

A number of activities are proposed that will develop the tools needed to measure the progress of the Partnership.

Key Actions	Lead / Partner	Link to TPNW Strategy 2010-15
a) Review the use of the STEAM model and consider alternatives.	FCC, FTA	Working together in Partnership Sound evidence; 63,65,66
b) Undertake audit of current usage by coach/group travel organisers of venues and facilities in the County.	FCC, NWT	
c) Undertake annual visitor and operator surveys.	FCC, FTA, CRTG	
d) Develop an online feedback visitor tool.	FCC	
e) Collate and report findings to other partnerships, stakeholders and service providers.	FCC	

Key

FCC	-	Flintshire County Council	CRTG	-	Clwydian Range Tourism Group
MAP	-	Marketing Area Partnership	NWT	-	North Wales Tourism
TPNW	-	Tourism Partnership North Wales	VW	-	Visit Wales
DC	-	Deeside College	DCC	-	Denbighshire County Council
MFDF	-	Mold Food and Drink Festival	CCBC	-	Conwy County Borough Council
FTA	-	Flintshire Tourism Association	CC	-	Cadwyn Clwyd
			TP	-	Town Partnerships