

REPORT TO: Cabinet Member - Leisure & Tourism
DATE: 24th March 2010
SUBJECT: Sefton's Natural Coast Marketing Plan 2010 - 2012
WARDS AFFECTED: All Wards
REPORT OF: Graham Bayliss – Leisure & Tourism Director
CONTACT OFFICER: Tony Corfield – Assistant Director of Leisure & Tourism (Tourism)
Ext: 2315
**EXEMPT/
CONFIDENTIAL:** No

PURPOSE/SUMMARY:

To advise Members of the Sefton's Natural Coast Marketing Plan 2010 – 2012. The marketing plan has been developed in conjunction with the Sefton Coast Partnership and aims to develop opportunities for tourism across Sefton by raising awareness of the coastal offer to key target audiences. In so doing the plan focuses on the unique natural environment that can be found on the coast as well as developing opportunities to increase tourism in the borough's coastal towns including Crosby, Waterloo and Formby.

REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:

Alongside Southport, the Sefton's Natural Coast (SNC) destination brand has been used to increase the number of day visitors and tourism day visitors to Sefton since its conception in 2005. Working in partnership with organisations such as the National Trust, Natural England, the RSPB and Sefton's Coast & Countryside Service, the marketing plan structures the use of the SNC brand through the development of promotional activity including coastal publications, PR and web site – seftonsnaturalcoast.com. In recent years, this has afforded Sefton's coastal offer increased visibility in the market place, as well as enabling the creation of visitor products and services that are 'customer facing'. Members are therefore asked to approve the contents of the report in order to sustain the profile of the Sefton Coast as a visitor destination. Members are also asked to approve the contents of the report given the significance of the SNC brand to the successful promotion of the borough's tourism assets including Another Place and the Lakeside Adventure Centre at Crosby Coastal Park.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Members:-

1. Agree Sefton's Natural Coast marketing plan for the period 2010 to June 2012.

KEY DECISION: No

FORWARD PLAN: Not appropriate

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: Following the expiry of the "call-in" period for the Minutes of the meeting.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

Since 2005, the Tourism Service has championed the use of the Sefton's Natural Coast brand following extensive consumer research and consultation with coast land managers including the National Trust, RSPB, Sefton's Coast & Countryside Service & Natural England. The marketing plan attempts to structure a programme of integrated marketing activity with the aim of promoting Sefton's coastline as one unified offer. In leaving the promotion of the coast to individual land managers and coastal stakeholders, it is clear that mixed messages would be sent out to our target audiences, thereby limiting the visibility of the offer as whole. The knock on effect of this would reduce the net inflow of visitor expenditures coming into the borough. It would also reduce exposure of the SNC brand in sub regional marketing initiatives being undertaken by the NWDA and the Mersey Partnership.

IMPLICATIONS:**Budget/Policy Framework:**

Sefton's Natural Coast is the borough's second destination brand. As a result it has a significant role to play for generating opportunities for tourism in the borough outside of Southport and has a growing reputation as a destination for day visits within the North West region.

Financial:

All activity will be funded through existing and agreed budget heads from within the Tourism Service which comprises core funding from Sefton Council and grant funding awarded by the European Union (see report to Leisure and Tourism on 15th July 2009). As a result, Finance and IS Director were consulted and there are no additional financial consequences associated with the recommendations contained in this report.

<u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u>	2009/ 2010 £	2010/ 2011 £	2012/ 2013 £	2013/ 2014 £
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	Yes – 30 th June 2012			
How will the service be funded post expiry?	The marketing plan will be			

	<p>revised in 2012 to reflect the changes in marketing budget following completion of the Tourism Service's European grant funding in June 2012. After that time, it is anticipated that, land managers and the private sector will be encouraged to increase their investment in coastal marketing as a means of sustaining the current level of momentum.</p>
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Legal: N/A

Risk Assessment: N/A

Asset Management: N/A

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS

Consultation for the marketing plan has been undertaken via the task groups of the Sefton Coast Partnership and has been agreed with all of the key coastal land managers including the National Trust, Natural England and the RSPB. The plan has also been developed in conjunction with the Sefton's Coast & Countryside Service.

CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community	X		
2	Creating Safe Communities	X		
3	Jobs and Prosperity	X		
4	Improving Health and Well-Being	X		
5	Environmental Sustainability	X		
6	Creating Inclusive Communities	X		
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	X		
8	Children and Young People	X		

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Sefton's Natural Coast visitor survey completed August & September 2008.

BACKGROUND:

1. Introduction

Following the introduction of the Sefton Coast Tourism Development Plan in 2005, Sefton's coastline is becoming increasingly recognised as one of the region's primary day visitor locations for recreation and green tourism. At the heart of this transition is the Sefton's Natural Coast (SNC) brand which has been used to unify the coastal offer (National Trust, RSPB, Natural England etc) so that marketing initiatives are better able to raise awareness of the coast's key attractions including Formby's red squirrels and Another Place within Crosby Coastal Park. In addition, the SNC brand provides a clear framework that has been used to develop opportunities for tourism in the borough's key coastal towns including Crosby, Formby and Waterloo.

The SNC marketing plan was first developed in 2005 to implement the SNC brand and structure all coastal marketing activity. With the support of the key coastal land managers and the Sefton Coast Partnership, the implementation of marketing activity in this format has increased non Sefton day visitors attracted to the coast that in turn has helped to stimulate investment in the local economy. In addition, this marketing activity has also worked to raise visitor awareness of the environmental pressures and challenges associated with Sefton's coastline that in turn has helped to develop sustainable tourism initiatives aimed at conserving this unique and natural environment.

The new version of the SNC marketing plan will seek to sustain the activity that has been highlighted above as well as supporting initiatives such as the HLF Landscape Partnership programme. It will also work to raise the profile of new leisure tourism attractions located along the coast including the Lakeside Activity Centre in Crosby Coastal Park and their ability to reach regional target audiences. The SNC marketing plan has now been agreed with all coastal land managers represented within the Sefton Coast Partnership and will help meet the quantifiable visitor targets set out with the Tourism Services' Partners for Growth initiative being funded through the European Union.

2. Activity Overview

The focus of the marketing plan is to encourage day visitors to Sefton's Natural Coast from a 1 to 1.5 hour drive and to attract tourist day visitors to Southport and Liverpool. Using this approach, SNC will capitalise on its geographic location between the two main destination brands within the City Region and position itself as a leisure destination for 'mainstream' visitor groups including families and those seeking general recreational opportunities (walking, cycling etc). Whilst the marketing of SNC will target specialist audiences such as nature visitors (bird watchers etc) and walking groups, it is important to recognise that these markets are relatively small and do not yield high levels of visitor spend. Consequently anchoring the offer around high profile attractions such as the Red Squirrels at Formby and Lakeside Activity Centre/Another Place in Crosby Coastal Park, will have more resonance with mass market audiences, who in turn will generate higher levels of spend.

In targeting these audiences, the marketing campaign will include the production of printed literature including the Sefton's Natural Coast day visitor guide, events guide and walking and cycling guide. Given the increasing relevance of PR to raise awareness of the coastal offer among these audiences, specialist support for generating editorial coverage of the coastal offer within regional and specialist press publications will also form part of the campaign. Similarly, continued investment will be made in new media activity including investment in seftonsnaturalcoast.com to improve functionality and our ability to communicate with visitors through mobile technology. Finally a programme of consumer research will be undertaken in conjunction with the coast's land managers to ensure the effectiveness of the marketing

programme can be evaluated and customer opinions can be factored into future marketing and product development activity.

3 Financial Arrangements

The costs associated with the marketing activity set out within the plan are £25.5K. In terms of budget allocation, Sefton's tourism ERDF grant (Partners for Growth) will be used to fund communications activity along with a contribution from the Tourism Services' core marketing budget. In total, this allocation will not be sufficient to fund all of the commitments associated with the campaign and additional funding from other sources has been secured. The specific elements of funding that will be used to fund the marketing programme for the period April 2010 to June 2012 is as follows:-

Sefton Tourism/Partners for Growth	£15K
Southport Cycle Town Initiative	£5K
Sefton Coast & Countryside	£3K
National Trust	£2.5K
Total	£25.5K

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Members:

1. Agree Sefton's Natural Coast marketing plan for the period 2010 to June 2012.