

HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

**Tuesday 29 November
2016**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Destination Management Plan – Action Plan Progress Update

Final Decision-Maker	Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	MCL Marketing & Sales Manager, Laura Dickson
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. This is an update report on the progress on the Destination Management Plan three year action plan for noting.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all –providing a wide range of attractions, accommodation and events for visitors through tourism development
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough –The economic impact of tourism supports jobs and businesses throughout the borough

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee	29 November 2016

Destination Management Plan - Action Plan Progress

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress made against the three year Action Plan relating to Maidstone Borough's Destination Management Plan.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Destination Management Plan was adopted by Committee in July 2015 and the accompanying three year Action Plan was endorsed by Committee. The first update report was presented to committee in February 2016.

There were four working groups set up initially to deliver the Action Plan.

River - River Access Improvement & River Experience
Town - Look, Feel and Do, Access and Visitor Management
Events - The Place for Big Events
Countryside - Explore Further

The DMP Board and working groups are chaired by MBC officers. Cllr David Pickett has been appointed to the DMP Board to represent Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee. In addition the groups have member representation from other Council committees where action requires their involvement.

The purpose of the working groups was to bring together the delivery partners from within the tourism and visitor economy.

An update event 'Maidstone's Tourism Destination Plan - One year On' takes place on 29th November. Stakeholders and partners have been invited to the event which will be facilitated by Visit Kent and include a presentation on the new River Cycle Path.

2.3 Key Successes to Date

A number of key activities were required in addition to the actions by the specific working groups. As detailed in the previous committee report the first activities were:

- The Shared Story toolkit created and available online.
- Creation of an Online Image Library.
- Online Event Planning Calendar created.
- New Historic Interpretation Panels in the town centre designed and installed.

Over the last six months more key activities were added to support the Tourism Destination Management Plan. They include:

- New iconic photography commissioned to support the Shared Story. The photography has been undertaken by a specialist tourism photographer that has previously worked on Visit England campaigns. The work will continue through the winter and spring and early summer of 2017. We have now received the first images and are busy selecting the best ones. These will be added to the image library for everyone to use.
- Commissioned new promotional videos showing the attraction of visiting the borough to support the Shared Story. Themes were identified and the filming has been carried out over the summer including using drones to capture the essence of the countryside and river.

The themes are:

History and Heritage

Food and Drink

Museums and Culture

Parks and countryside

Explore

Shopping

The Two of Us.

Events – still to be filmed.

- Development of a new website, Conference Maidstone to support Business Tourism and the wedding venues. This sector was identified as a key growth market for Maidstone in the DMP. It has the support of the venues locally and will be self-funding. It will be promoted through a regular Conference Maidstone e-newsletter to our conference and meeting planners database.
- Development of a new Museum website. Although this is a more general action it supports the need for high quality information for visitors. The new website is full responsive, and scales the design appropriately for mobile and tablet. It also provides booking for events and children's parties. This is essentially so that 24/7 booking can take place and not just during opening hours and days. New museum photography was commission specifically to enhance the website design.
- Development of accommodation, events and attractions widgets. The events group had already suggested an events widget, so it was logical to produce one for accommodation and attractions too. A widget is a piece of code that can be embedded on any website that then provides a search box. This search box draws the data from the Visit Maidstone website.
Accommodation providers can add the attractions and what's on widgets to their website. It will provide them with the latest up to date information without the need for them to add it themselves.
Event organisers can add the accommodation widget to their site. This was used by the Ramblin Fair organisers on their website this year.

- An application has been made to the Highways Agency to change the signage on the M20 from Park and Ride at Junction 6 to tourism signage but has not yet been given permission. The sign would say Maidstone, Kent's Historic County Town.

2.4 The Action Plan updates can be found in Appendix I.

A summary of the key actions so far are:

River:

- Formation of new Maidstone River Park Partnership
- Proposed signage from new bridge gyratory scheme and cycle path
- New River Park website
- Audit of facilities for visitors completed
- Footpath investment taking place as part of the new river cycle path.
- Identified the ownership of land along river
- Volunteering by McDonalds to clear overgrown areas.

Events:

- Audit of venue facilities and suppliers completed
- Proposed development on Conference Maidstone website to include event venues information, suppliers and dedicated pages for event organisers
- Event Forward Planning Calendar – requires regular updating
- Establishment of Events Expert Group for thematic planning and joint marketing opportunities.
- New themed campaign to promote Maidstone's season of music in 2017
- What's On widgets
- Event suppliers list

Town:

- The Farmers Market in Jubilee Square has now started on the last Friday of the month. Potential to move Saturday general market to the square.
- Public Realm improvements due at North end of Week Street.
- Network Rail investing in Maidstone East with new station and forecourt. Work on realm link, public art and signage.
- Audit of shopfronts at North End of Week Street. Requires next steps and funding. As public realm is being improved it could raise profile and encourage owner to improve their buildings.
- A Heritage Lottery Town Scape Initiative bid has been submitted for Gabriel's Hill which if successful will include themed trails.
- Public Realm design guide has been adopted. Four zones are included: Shopping, River and Green Spaces, Leisure and Culture and Historic and Heritage.
- A Public Art Policy has been adopted for the borough.

Countryside:

- Product and marketing audit of tourism in the rural area. Survey to all parishes, tourism businesses and other organisations such as

Produced in Kent and Explore Kent

- Brown signage audit – redundant signage has been removed.
- Marketing audit - good results and partnership working. Walking routes and maps identified and added to website.
- Video of the area will be used to develop future campaigns.
- Audit of walks and trails are being assessed and providing useful information. Two working groups are now producing cycle routes and a driving tour is in the initial stages.
- 3 locations for rural information points have been identified. Leader funding application is in hand.

2.5 DMP Budget

There is a DMP Budget for 2016-17 of £30,000. The board have approved the proposed budget plan. (See Appendix II)

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 This report is an information update only.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 None

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 None

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 None

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	This work contributes to the priority 'Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all'.	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
Risk Management	N/A	
Financial	None. The action plan will be delivered through a combination of existing related	Head of Commercial and Economic

	budgets, collaboration with the sector and bids for funding to appropriate sources.	Development
Staffing	None. This project is being delivered by the MCL Marketing and Sales Team.	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
Legal	N/A	
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	N/A	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	N/A	
Community Safety	N/A	
Human Rights Act	N/A	
Procurement	N/A	
Asset Management	N/A	

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: DMP Action Plan Progress
- Appendix II: DMP Action Plan Budget

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[**Destination Management Plan**](#)