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| Report to: | TOURISM, RESOURCES AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| Relevant Officer: | Philip Welsh, Head of Visitor Economy. |
| Date of Meeting | 19 November 2015 |

TOURISM PERFORMANCE REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide information on tourism performance between April and the end of the October, using various indicators including number of visits, footfall, car parking, tram usage, satisfaction ratings and events. There is additional information on sales of the Blackpool Resort Pass and on use of Tourist Information services.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To consider the performance of tourism and associated services and to identify any further areas for scrutiny as appropriate.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure constructive and robust scrutiny of the report, which has been requested by the Committee.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

Not applicable

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority are:

- Expand and promote our tourism, arts, heritage and cultural offer
- Attract sustainable investment and create quality jobs

- Deliver quality services through a professional, well-rewarded and motivated workforce

5.0 Background Information

5.1 This report covers performance over the main part of the 2015 tourist season in Blackpool between April and the end of October.

5.2 While the headline visitor numbers for the full 2015 season will not be available until the early part of 2016, this report sets out key indicators that are more readily available including estimated numbers of adult visits during the April to August period and other associated indicators such as sales of the Blackpool Resort Pass, tram usage, car parking, footfall, use of the Tourist Information Centre, and usage of the VisitBlackpool website.

The overall trend for the season, April to October, shows a relatively slow start to the year, gradually building by August to reach what look to be record-breaking figures during October half term. The early part of the summer season was blighted by poor weather and that clearly had a dampening effect on some weeks in June and July.

As a result, the number of visits was behind last year as we went into the main school holidays, but by August Blackpool had attracted the highest number of adult visits (1.06million) for three years. All of the signs suggest that September and October have been exceptionally busy, although we will not get the official survey results for this period until late January 2016. The way in which visitor numbers have grown as the season progressed is clearly illustrated by these indicators:

Town Centre: Monthly Footfall (24hr)

| Month | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| April | 1,888,068 | 1,571,497 | 1,629,541 | 1,433,133 |
| May | 2,008,744 | 1,872,470 | 2,131,019 | 1,945,661 |
| June | 2,012,612 | 1,824,731 | 2,106,542 | 2,084,723 |
| July | 2,459,018 | 2,830,941 | 2,789,242 | 2,532,051 |
| August | 3,056,259 | 3,085,538 | 2,491,717 | 2,572,176 |
| September | 2,174,625 | 2,552,651 | 2,983,718 | 2,726,806 |
| October * | 2,214,782 | 2,654,852 | 2,624,230 | 2,659,827 |
| Total | 15,814,108 | 16,392,680 | 16,756,009 | 15,954,376 |

* Note that the October footfall in 2015 is the highest on record.

Promenade: Monthly Footfall (24hr)

| Month | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| April | 472,846 | 342,751 | 360,433 | 326,932 |
| May | 522,460 | 447,002 | 455,760 | 455,901 |
| June | 426,086 | 372,978 | 488,291 | 482,350 |
| July | 636,137 | 885,797 | 803,904 | 710,355 |
| August | 1,012,123 | 894,354 | 563,184 | 700,496 |
| September | 495,307 | 509,619 | 753,587 | 741,903 |
| October* | 433,967 | 307,623 | 500,031 | 655,771 |
| Total | 3,998,926 | 3,760,124 | 3,925,190 | 4,073,708 |

* Note that the Promenade footfall in October 2015 is also the highest on record

Tourist Information Centre: Monthly Visits

| Month | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| April | 3,297 | 3,646 | 3,298 |
| May | 4,089 | 4,556 | 5,338 |
| June | 0 | 4,861 | 5,324 |
| July | 12,964 | 11,927 | 12,753 |
| August | 20,550 | 34,100 | 34,503 |
| September | 6,078 | 7,012 | 13,022 |
| October | 12,128 | 13,813 | 17,061 |
| Total | 59,106 | 79,915 | 91,299 |

Note: 2015 is on course to be the busiest season that the Tourist Information Centre has experienced since relocating to Festival House

VisitBlackpool.com: Unique Monthly Website Visits

| Month | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| April | 87,927 | 94,452 | 84,366 |
| May | 105,496 | 104,117 | 144,979 |
| June | 112,527 | 123,041 | 131,984 |
| July | 103,761 | 132,102 | 216,076 |
| August | 172,824 | 206,373 | 321,072 |
| September | 116,996 | 137,901 | 279,706 |
| October | 122,778 | 132,056 | 171,163 |
| Total | 822,309 | 930,042 | 1,349,346 |

Note: The VisitBlackpool website has attracted significantly more unique visits in 2015 than any other year – 45% higher in Apr-Oct compared to 2014. This can be mainly attributed to the success of the Blackpool's Back destination marketing campaign which directs people to the www.visitblackpool.com website

Resort Pass: Monthly Sales

| Month | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| April | 572 | 956 | 722 |
| May | 1,137 | 1,082 | 838 |
| June | 1,275 | 1,396 | 1,316 |
| July | 3,621 | 3,529 | 3,379 |
| August | 3,496 | 3,147 | 3,201 |
| September | 1,241 | 1,224 | 1,437 |
| October | 2,081 | 1,517 | 1,921 |
| Total | 13,423 | 12,851 | 12,814 |

Note: Sales of Resort Pass got off to a slow start in line with visitor numbers in the early months of the season, but the volume has gradually increased and by the end of October we were more or less in line with last year.

Monthly Rail Passengers (Inbound)

| Month | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| April (Period 1) | 87,463 | 107,537 | 118,888 |
| May (Period 2) | 91,757 | 96,879 | 100,038 |
| June (Period 3) | 118,477 | 115,317 | 71,741 |
| July (Period 4) | 134,199 | 120,091 | 124,006 |
| August (Period 5) | 160,848 | 179,366 | 174,593 |
| September (Period 6) | 138,484 | 145,657 | 131,666 |
| October (Period 7) | 92,652 | 100,390 | 102,740 |
| Total | 823,879 | 865,236 | 823,672 |

Note: Overall inbound rail passengers are down on what was an exceptional year in 2014. This is largely due to disruption in rail services during this year. This situation is likely to continue for the next two seasons as electrification works continue across the region.

Monthly Tram Passengers

| Month | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| April | 296,441 | 292,159 | 361,406 |
| May | 349,109 | 331,909 | 378,653 |
| June | 382,270 | 332,180 | 374,090 |
| July | 521,189 | 475,058 | 551,591 |
| August | 578,115 | 516,164 | 685,457 |
| September | 502,546 | 531,543 | 627,640 |
| October | 577,716 | 570,947 | *827,064 |
| Total | 3,207,386 | 3,049,960 | 3,805,901 |

- * Tram usage in October soared to record levels. There has been consistent growth across the entire tourism season but particularly during August, September and October.

Council Car Parks: Monthly Ticket Sales

| Month | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| April | 69,458 | 89,114 | 90,253 |
| May | 68,999 | 88,221 | 91,809 |
| June | 70,215 | 79,150 | 78,025 |
| July | 88,769 | 95,879 | 102,264 |
| August | 110,919 | 127,804 | 130,707 |
| September | 87,175 | 111,893 | 119,393 |
| October | 107,095 | 121,385 | 143,735 |
| Total | 602,630 | 713,446 | 756,186 |

Note: Council car parks continue to show excellent growth on the back of vibrant visitor numbers and a strong events programme between August and October. October was the busiest month on record, exceeding August ticket numbers.

- 5.3 This report also sets out the initial findings from the 2015 Blackpool's Back destination marketing campaign – a full evaluation will be completed by the end of the year. Blackpool's Back is a jointly-funded initiative led by Blackpool Council and Merlin Entertainments and includes TV advertising and a wide range of digital and PR activity. It sets out to change some of the negative perceptions of the resort by promoting it as a mainstream family destination. The campaign is now in its second year and has also been supported by other key visitor attractions in the resort.

The table below shows how the PR element of the campaign has resulted in increased positive coverage in print, online and broadcast media.

Blackpool's Back Campaign PR Value

| PR performance YTD | 2014 | 2015 | Variance |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| PR Value | £1,300,000 | £1,900,000 | £600,000 |
| PR Reach | 1,400,000 | 1,200,000 | -200,000 |
| Press Trips | 16 | 24 | +8 trips |
| Press Trips Pieces of Coverage | 44 | 60 | +16 pieces |
| Competitions (Total Reach) | 14,000,000 | 18,000,000 | 4,000,000 |

Note: The value of PR increased by £600k compared to 2014. The overall reach fell by 200,000 people mainly due to the mix of media carrying positive coverage.

- 5.4 Although much of our marketing activity is now predominantly through website and digital channels, the annual Destination Guide continues to generate significant interest, reaching around 60,000 families a year. This year, the guide was re-designed to give it a much more contemporary feel and to create much more of a family-friendly feel. The tables below (derived from a survey carried out among over 3,000 guide recipients) show that the core audience has moved to the 35-45 age group and that the actual design of the guide is changing negative perceptions of the resort.

Destination Guide Survey: Surveyee Age Band Totals

| Surveyee Age Band | Proportion | Count |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------|
| 16-24 | 5.00% | 164 |
| 25-34 | 20.35% | 668 |
| 35-45 | 32.90% | 1,080 |
| 46-55 | 21.75% | 714 |
| 56+ | 20.01% | 657 |
| Total | 100.00% | 3,283 |

Destination Guide: Changing Perceptions of Blackpool

| Changing Perceptions | Proportion | Count |
|----------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Yes | 65.98% | 2,166 |
| No | 34.02% | 1,117 |
| Total | 100.00% | 3,283 |

- 5.5 The Head of Visitor Economy also holds responsibility for producing and delivering the Blackpool Destination Management Plan, a three-year place-making plan that was developed and published at the start of this year. A formal report on progress will be made on the first anniversary of the publication in early 2015.

However, a number of key objectives for 2015 have already been progressed including:

- Completion of Yeadon Way maintenance project ahead of 2015 tourism season
- Opening of four new branded family restaurants in town centre
- Reintroduction of town centre CCTV monitoring
- Rollout of Blackpool Approved entry level accreditation scheme for hotels and guest houses
- Rejuvenation of Blackpool Illuminations (through £2m LightPool investment)
- Launch of updated “Blackpool’s Back” destination marketing campaign

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices: None

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 None

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 None

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 None

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 The 2015/16 events programme has been delivered in line with the Budget allocation. By exerting tight controls on staffing and other expenditure, and by generating additional income, VisitBlackpool has been able to facilitate additional activity including a televised two-part BBC documentary on Blackpool's role in the birth of the Big Band sound (which culminated in a Jools Holland concert in the Empress Ballroom) and a live Children's BBC programme on the Tower Festival Headland during switch-on weekend.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Not applicable

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None