



Report of:	Meeting	Date
Councillor Peter Le Marinel, Chairman of the Tourism Recovery in Wyre Task Group and Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director Communities	Cabinet	12 January 2022

Tourism Recovery in Wyre Task Group – Final Report

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To report the work of the Tourism Recovery in Wyre Task Group to the Cabinet.

2. Outcomes

- 2.1 Tourism recovers to pre-pandemic levels.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That the council concentrates on the promotion of Wyre as a tourist destination.
- 3.2 That the Discover Wyre website be brought in-house.
- 3.3 That improvements be made to the Discover Wyre website and for it to concentrate on promoting the individual towns within the borough, ensuring all areas are covered equally.
- 3.4 To support the continuation of advertising local businesses on the Discover Wyre website and consider the feasibility of introducing an appropriate nominal fee (per annum) for businesses where they will receive more promotion.
- 3.5 That a digital marketing strategy for the council's various digital platforms be created, in order to benefit the wider tourism strategy. In addition, report the defined objectives of this strategy back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- 3.6** That there is a continued collaborative working relationship between the Tourism, Events and Communication teams.
- 3.7** That coach industries and businesses be invited back to Wyre to see what coach offer/packages Wyre can offer.
- 3.8** That the Garstang and Fleetwood Information Centres continue to be supported, especially as we emerge out of Covid-19 lockdowns.
- 3.9** That the TV screens at the Garstang Information Centre and Fleetwood Information Centre (Marine Hall) be fixed.
- 3.10** To explore options that will enhance the Civic Centre, including the Members Lounge, to make it a more attractive venue for weddings and other events.
- 3.11** To explore the possibility of holding large outdoor-ticketed events to be held in areas such as Marine Hall Gardens, for example.
- 3.12** That the implementation of those recommendations agreed by Cabinet be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee after 12 months.
- 3.13** That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider a further focused review of the theatres (Thornton Little Theatre and Marine Hall) and other council run facilities, with the aim to explore the feasibility of a different business model to help them run on a more commercial basis.

4. Background

- 4.1** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to commission a tourism recovery in Wyre task group in the light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which held its first meeting on 28 June 2021.
- 4.2** The task group's objectives were:
 - 1. An improved understanding of the current tourism offer in Wyre
 - 2. More emphasis on 'staycations' in Wyre in a post-pandemic world
 - 3. An increase in the number and spend of Wyre visitors
- 4.3** Their aims were:
 - 1. To assess how the Covid-19 pandemic may have affected the tourism offer in Wyre
 - 2. To explore the ReDiscover Wyre Campaign
 - 3. To capitalise on 'staycations'
 - 4. To understand Wyre's USP The Great Outdoors and identify enhancements
 - 5. To explore both the rural and coastal offerings including the impact of recent filming in the area
 - 6. To understand Wyre's support for local businesses and identify opportunities

7. To identify areas of improvement particularly with a focus on the Welcome Back Fund
8. To make succinct recommendations to Cabinet on how we can support tourism recovery in Wyre
9. To make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on specific and focused related topics that might be considered for further scrutiny review

4.4 The previous review of tourism was a value for money review conducted in 2012.

4.5 The current review was carried out over five meetings held on 28 June, 20 July, 11 August, 15 September and 4 October 2021. The review group heard evidence from the following representatives:

- Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director Communities and Councillor Lynne Bowen, Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio Holder
- Alexandra Holt, Tourism Development officer
- Emma Lyons, Communications and Marketing Manager
- Vikki Harries, Marketing Lancashire
- Jane Cole and James Carney, Blackpool Transport
- Toni Tester, Contact Centre Reception Area Team Leader
- Julia Robinson, Commercial Manager Waterfront Venues
- Chris Wyatt, Arts and Events Development Officer

4.6 Some members of the group attended a site visit to the Visit Garstang Centre, and updated the group with their findings. The group additionally produced two public surveys regarding tourism, one for local businesses in Wyre and one for visitors to Wyre. The members of the group and the Democratic Services Officer distributed the online version of the survey. Members also carried out a number of face-to-face survey sessions in the tourism hot spots across the borough.

5. Key issues and proposals

5.1 Following all the relevant information that was gathered by the group, it was clear that tourism is an important driver for the local economy of Wyre. In 2018, tourism brought in over 4.8 million people to Wyre in the year 2018, which generated 362 million pounds for the Wyre economy.

5.2 The group highlighted the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the tourism industry and local businesses. Therefore, they aimed to make appropriate recommendations that would help tourism recover and encourage the return of pre pandemic tourism levels and figures.

5.3 Their recommendations aimed to assist the council with its tourism recovery over the next year and into the future.

- 5.4** The review group was confident that the evidence presented shows that that the borough of Wyre needs to be promoted as a tourist destination with the aim for 'Wyre' to be better known to potential tourists.
- 5.5** Members concluded that digital platforms to promote tourism to the area is the way forward and that bringing the Discover Wyre website in-house and introducing a digital strategy for tourism will help facilitate this.
- 5.6** The group identified that introducing a nominal fee for local businesses to have more promotion on the Discover Wyre Website would improve relationships with local businesses and it could be an appropriate way to generate income.
- 5.7** The group found that while the Tourism, Events and Communication teams do sometimes work together, overall they work as three different teams. Members believed that for the successful recovery of tourism in Wyre, these teams must work in synchronisation.
- 5.8** Members welcomed that the coaches are returning to places such as Fleetwood Market and that officers are already doing work such as the creation of itineraries. However, members were of the view that a more personal experience with the coach industries would be beneficial as they can then see first-hand what Wyre has to offer. This can be in the form of inviting businesses to the Civic Centre, for example, and providing them with lunch and a presentation.
- 5.9** Members of the group valued the tourist information centres at Fleetwood and Garstang as they are in prime locations and provide a helpful service for visitors and residents. They did highlight the need for modernisation, such as the replacement or the fixing of the TV screens in both centres.
- 5.10** It was concluded that the appearance of the Members' Lounge was an issue, particularly the outdated furniture and flooring. Members expressed that an improvement to the appearance of the room would assist recovery as it may lead to more bookings resulting in members of the public staying in the area's local hotels and B&Bs. This may even result in them visiting other areas in the borough and potentially returning. In addition, councillors take the view that these improvements may not only increase wedding bookings but may have the potential to host events where groups or companies can book rooms in the Civic Centre, such as the Members Lounge, for meetings or small conferences.
- 5.11** The group believed that big events can draw people to Wyre from across the country and ticketing these events can generate income for the council. These events could take place in areas such as Marine Hall gardens.
- 5.12** The group additionally identified that a focused review of the theatres (Thornton Little Theatre and Marine Hall) and other council run facilities

may need to be looked at by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the future, as they found this did not come under their current scope.

Financial and legal implications	
Finance	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
Legal	There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

risks/implications	✓ / x
community safety	x
equality and diversity	x
sustainability	x
health and safety	x

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	x
climate change	x
ICT	x
data protection	x

Processing Personal Data

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a 'privacy impact assessment (PIA)' is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

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List of background papers:		
name of document	date	where available for inspection
None		

List of appendices

Appendix 1 – Tourism Recovery in Wyre Task Group report – Final.