

**CULTURE, RECREATION &  
TOURISM CABINET  
MEMBER MEETING**

**Agenda Item 59**

Brighton & Hove City Council

**Subject:** Eco-Tourism development  
**Date of Meeting:** 7 February 2012  
**Report of:** Strategic Director: Communities  
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**Wards Affected:** All All

**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 Brighton and Hove is a successful tourist destination; over a number of decades, the city has refreshed and renewed its visitor offer; to create more jobs, to be competitive and to change the visitor profile. The development of a strand of eco-tourism as part of this strategy is key to continuing the city's aspiration to continually develop and refresh its offer. It is also a commitment in the Council's Corporate Plan.

This report outlines the council's commitment to developing, launching and delivering a successful strand of eco-tourism.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member agrees to the launch, consultation around and implementation of an eco-tourism strand of activity for Brighton and Hove.

**3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS**

- 3.1 The city's tourism economy is very significant in terms of visitor numbers and economic impact. The visitor figures are upwards of 8 million per year and the economic impact over £780m. A key part of the ongoing growth and success of the visitor economy has been the city's ability to add to and develop its offer. The city has grown a long way from being a seaside kiss me quick destination. However, the reinvention cannot stop – it must continue, the city must find its next identity, its next market and stay ahead as a destination of choice.

Reinvention, new and unique offers and creating things that are not found elsewhere are all essential to maintaining and improving the tourist industry; to retaining local jobs and supporting local businesses. Very importantly in addition, a healthy tourist economy also creates an offer for local residents that would not be there otherwise.

- 3.2 The Council through its Corporate Plan has pledged to reduce the ecological footprint of the city and to increase employment opportunities for residents as part of a refreshed, sustainable economic strategy. Successful tourism means jobs and thriving businesses, focus on public spaces and cultural and leisure opportunities. However, it is also consumptive. In supporting the ongoing development and success of tourism, there is also a responsibility to address this through more a more sustainable tourism strategy. Eco-tourism is a strand of tourism that seeks to be sustainable inherently and to highlight issues of sustainability. By using a One Planet approach to sustainability, the council can shape this in a way that is good for the local economy as well as reducing environmental impacts.
- 3.3 Introducing and developing a high profile, nationally and internationally marketed strand of eco-tourism provides a response and a solution to these key issues of growth and sustainability. There is an emerging market for an increasing range of choices of places to go and things to do that meet a particular informed consumer demand.
- 3.4 Brighton and Hove is committed to making a bid to gain United Nations designated Biosphere status. One of the key elements of this is the ability of an area seeking the designation to be able to show positive social and economic impacts as a result. A strand of eco-tourism in the city would support the bid, particularly in terms of the economic impact criteria. It would also contribute to the aspiration of the authority to operate according to the ten principles of One Planet Living, the comprehensive framework for sustainability developed by the Worldwide Fund for Nature and Bioregional. Eco-tourism could fit well under two of the principles, Culture & Community, and Equity & Local Economy.
- 3.5 There is already a range of activity in the city that is clearly identifiable as eco-tourism and Brighton & Hove is seen nationally and internationally as one of the most 'eco-friendly' cities in the UK.
- 3.5.1 The city has a range of businesses that put environmental consciousness at the heart of their strategy, including Infinity Foods, Vegetarian Shoes, Due South and Paskins Townhouse for example. The UK's foremost environmental online travel agency; Responsible Travel ([www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com)) is based in the city. Additionally several eco-tourism related schemes operate in Brighton & Hove, including the Green Tourism Business Scheme' - <http://www.green-business.co.uk/> and Sussex Breakfast Scheme.
- 3.5.2 There are a selection of 'stand-out' eco buildings which have national & international recognition; Jubilee Library, Jury's Inn Hotel and Earthship Brighton and the potential for a Sustainable Living Centre in the city is also being explored.
- 3.5.3 Our Visitor Information Services already operate mainly online and the level of print produced is minimal. There are already a number of sections in our online information that highlight aspects of the city's eco-tourism offer.

- 3.6 There is an alignment between developing eco-tourism and other aspects of the city's ongoing economic development such as the focus on the creative and digital media sectors and emerging environmental industries sector. There are the skills and experience in the city to use creative technology to articulate the offer in the most exciting way.
- 3.7 Brighton and Hove is on the threshold the South Downs National Park and much of the city actually sits within its boundaries. This opens up a whole new range of opportunities for the city to explore in terms of its profile and identity and visitor offer.
- 3.8 This development is a natural next step for a direction of travel for tourism. The tie in with other strands of economic development, with the city's health and sustainable food agenda are also compelling. Additionally, there are significant aspects that tie in with education and learning objectives and the development of the offer for families and children. The move can be gradual with much achieved within existing resources, requiring only a change of emphasis or direction. Longer term and more radical shifts will require resources, or invest to save business case development.
- 3.9 In advance of the redevelopment of the city's Economic Strategy and any larger refresh of the Tourism Strategy, there are a number of proposals around the development of eco-tourism that can be achieved in the short to medium term as outlined below. More complex and longer term potential changes that cross portfolio areas would need to come forward as and when they are developed such as those that might involve different uses of our farmland for example.
- 3.9.1 In the immediate term, all existing promotion of aspects of the city likely to engage the eco-tourist can be easily brought together in a more coherent offer. This consolidation would take the form of online activity, with the introduction of targeted social media activity and better signposting.
- 3.9.2 In the short to medium term, there is a range of additional information, offers and opportunities that can be fairly easily developed and created to add to what the city already has. This might be the creation of additional 'trails' or information leaflets or specialist maps and information boards at sites of special interest. Additionally, the relationship with specific journalists and publications would be cultivated alongside the new opportunities.
- 3.9.3 The relationship with the South Downs National Park and the development of a joint offer with it and neighbouring authorities focussing on the wealth of the natural environment visitors to this area have easy access to, is also something for the short term.
- 3.9.4 In the longer term, we may wish to pursue a more radical re-branding of visitor services and the profile of the city as a destination in line with Brighton and Hove as the number one eco-destination of choice.

- 3.9.5 There are also more significant additions to the current visitor offer that could be pursued, such as the development of campsites, glamping or pop up temporary campsites. We could also add to the festivals and events offer with themed events that emphasise sustainability and environmental issues.
- 3.9.6 There is also the opportunity to develop a visitor (and resident) offer which would enhance the city's status as an eco-tourism destination by the development of a city centre interactive biodiversity/environmental interpretation centre. Such a centre could make more of the city's nationally significant geological, biological and archaeological collections- many from the local area and South Downs. Themes which can be explored and presented include environmental change, biodiversity, human origin, migration, ecology. In effect encouraging understanding in relation to stewardship of natural resources. There are also opportunities to use the collections on digital platforms as part of offer to visitors to the South Downs.
- 3.10 The eco-tourism strand will be launched with local partners this year and a range of other opportunities are expected to develop from this consultation.

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 There has been consultation with senior service specific managers across a range of relevant services, the Lead Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism and for Environment.

#### **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### **5.1 Financial Implications**

Any financial implications arising from the proposals outlined as short to medium term would be funded from existing resources. The proposals outlined for the longer term would require more significant business planning and financial modelling and would be included in future budget strategies.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Michelle Herrington*

*Date: 24/01/12*

##### **5.2 Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications to the proposals outlined as short to medium term that are not already covered in the existing business arrangements for our tourism and visitor services. There may be legal implications from some of the more significant longer term proposals in terms of the council's role as landowner in particular and these would be addressed in further reports relating to specific proposals.

*Lawyer Consulted: Bob Bruce*

*Date: 24/01/12*

##### **5.3 Equalities Implications:**

There are positive equalities implications in terms of the support that the tourism industry provides for local employment.

- 5.4 Sustainability Implications:  
There are positive sustainability implications inherently in the development of an eco-tourism strand of delivery that actively seeks to minimise environmental impacts and highlight sustainability issues.
- 5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:  
By making a significant contribution to local employment opportunities, there are positive implications for the reduction of crime and disorder.
- 5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:  
Each specific proposal would have risk management analysis conducted as part of the business planning. As the initiative is launched with partners and increases in profile, it is anticipated that there will be additional opportunities for activity.
- 5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:  
The impact of tourism benefits the city as a whole in terms of employment and expenditure. The strand of eco-tourism additionally offers an opportunity to highlight some of the areas and assets that we have across different areas of the city such as the Elms collection for example

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

### **Background Documents**

None

