

REPORT TO: PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting: Thursday 9 June 2016
Report of: Project Officer, Economy
Title: Filming in Exeter

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive. This report is for information only.

1. What is the report about?

1.1 To inform Members about progress on promoting Filming in Exeter since the report of 22 January 2015 was discussed.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Place Scrutiny Committee notes the report and comments on the progress made by the Economy team in handling film enquiries and promoting the area as 'film friendly'.

2.2 For the Officer within Economy who responds to film enquiries to continue largely as before with the handling of film enquiries, taking advantage of changes in circumstances and opportunities as and when they arise and to proactively promote the city as film friendly, working with Creative England.

3. Reasons for the recommendation

3.1 To inform members of the progress made promoting Exeter as being film friendly, the amount spent in Exeter by film production companies and to continue to pro-actively promote Exeter as being film friendly.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources

4.1 There are a number of implications as a result of this report. The handling of film enquiries is undertaken by a Project Officer within Economy. Working on the number of enquiries received in 2015/2016 (60) and an average of 2 hours per enquiry.

4.2 Economy financially supports Creative England at a cost of £1,000 per annum to ensure Exeter receives exposure and promotion through their promotional channels and links with buyers, agents and film production crews. This annual contribution is met from existing budgets.

5. Section 151 officer Comments

5.1 There are no additional financial implications contained within this report.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 None identified.

7. Monitoring officer Comments:

7.1 This report raises no issue for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Economic benefits of filming

8.1 In the previous report, statistics were included to show the value of filming to Exeter with an explanation that financial benefits are of two types:

- the amount spent by a film crew when they are on location
- the secondary tourism benefits when the programme or film is shown on TV or in the cinema

During a typical year, benefits derived from having film production companies in the city (spending money in hotels, restaurants, on car hire etc.) will be between £40,000 and £60,000. The 2015/6, the annual total was approximately £47,200. This figure will always be approximate due to the possibility of film production crews simply pitching up and filming without permission. Also, not all production companies will release their spend figures so estimates have to be made.

8.2 The table below details the number of enquiries handled by the Economy Project Officer and the subsequent spend by production companies whilst filming in Exeter.

Year	Number of film enquiries handled	Amount spent by production companies in Exeter
2003	16	£512,000
2004	40	£42,900
2005	31	£28,600
2006	29	£32,400
2007	35	£55,300
2008	36	£275,000
2009	28	£31,000
2010/2011	20	£22,300
2011/2012	36	£37,500
2012/2013	56	£49,800
2013/2014	41	£63,000
2014/2015	53	£77,592
2015/2016	60	£47,200

*Whilst many figures are based on information received from film production companies, some are estimates so all figures in this report should be treated as approximate.

8.3 During 2003 and 2008 FFP Media were located in Exeter, so income to the city greatly increased. FFP Media, a German film company, made several films for television with a typical audience 9m per episode. These figures exclude the consequent secondary spend which has been significant in some areas.

8.4 In addition, films that were made in the area have fostered a new type of South West tourism - Rosamunde Pilcher tours - which have brought substantial financial sums to the city in the form of secondary tourism benefits. Overseas visitor spend within Exeter totals £174m within the last 5 years, as shown in the table below. Filming has played its role in the number of people who visit the area and their subsequent spend, which

demonstrates that filming can significantly improve an area's fortunes, making sense to promote yourself as 'film friendly'.

	Overseas visitor spend	Overseas visitor trips
2014	£35,152,000	52,000
2013	£48,394,000	64,000
2012	£38,737,000	45,000
2011	£30,200,000	51,000
2010	£21,595,000	46,000

9. Recent Success Stories

- 9.1 **Balcony TV** – We became aware of Balcony TV during this financial year. It is a leading daily online viral music show that features bands, musicians and other variety acts on balconies around the world, organised locally by Matthew Calder. He auditions and selects local music artists to perform on the balcony at Samuel Jones, a pub on Exeter Quayside.
- 9.2 There are only two cities in the UK represented on this online video streaming which means that those people around the world accessing this website have an opportunity to see Exeter videos alongside those posted by BalconyTV London and other major cities throughout the world. The videos show Exeter in a very good light with swans and rowing boats appearing as a backdrop to the musicians. It is hoped that this will attract visitors from around the world.
- 9.3 Tourism (Visit Exeter) are sponsoring BalconyTV Exeter for one year at a rate of £120 per month. This assists with organising BalconyTV Exeter and has given us the opportunity to change the Exeter description and include Visit Exeter branding on their website and social media accounts. Videos for Exeter can be viewed via www.balconytv.com/exeter
- 9.4 **Collaboration with Exeter College** – The College's Centre for Creative Industries provides media students with state-of the art modern film production facilities within a professional film studio. The standard of teaching is very high. Exeter City Council has forged a close working relationship with college lecturers and students. Noreen Medland has given a seminar at Exeter College giving advice on best practice when filming in the city.
- 9.5 **Relationships with local hotels** – It is in the hotels' best interests to be 'film friendly' but film crews do have particular demands and requirements, often working very long days and therefore expecting meals at odd hours. Getting the relationship right brings its own rewards. The concept of being film friendly has been discussed at meetings attended by the main hotels located in Exeter. Keeping a good relationship with local hotels is beneficial to Exeter City Council so that we can work together on large film projects – when we receive them.

10. How can Exeter attract more film production companies

- 10.1 **Creative England**
Exeter City Council contributes £1,000 per annum to Creative England to ensure that Exeter is promoted through their channels and networks. Through

our annual contribution to Creative England, the City Council receives in return:

- An annual report on activity delivered to support production filming in the Local Authority area, including the economic value production has generated.
- Advice and guidance on appropriate fee structures to charge production companies for access to Local Authority services.
- A bespoke web-page for the Local Authority website on filming highlights in the area and contact details of who productions need to speak to for filming enquiries.
- Opportunity to work towards signing Creative England's Film Friendly Charter which is a recognised signal to the film and TV industry of a local authorities 'film friendly' credentials.
- Expert advice offered to Local Authorities on filming facilitation best practice, and support on exploring screen tourism opportunities.

10.2 Images of selected city locations were uploaded onto Creative England's online database, which is used by industry professionals seeking locations and venues. Whilst additional locations have been added to the Creative England database, this does not automatically guarantee a greater number of films being made in Exeter. However, it does increase our visibility.

10.3 **Exeter Film Pack**

In the previous report, the Project Officer planned to investigate options for a one off project to be carried out by an intern, to improve Exeter's presence on national film websites and to develop a film pack on the city. This was developed during the summer 2015 and spring 2016.

10.4 The film pack describes what filming has previously occurred in Exeter, to identify suitable locations and buildings for their project, and to understand how Exeter City Council and others can help with their film enquiry. This professionally-designed PDF can be downloaded from the Business section of the Council's website, will be promoted on social media and available through Creative England.

10.5 **Post release of films**

Creative solutions are considered and developed (as budgets allow) to boost the presence of Exeter being featured on a feature film or significant TV production. For example, if a themed drama was filmed in Exeter, events related around the theme were developed, such as talks, walks and film nights.

10.6 **Film Devon**

Exeter City Council have recently met with Film Devon, a group of independent actors, local film producers, screen writers and others connected with filming based in Torquay.

10.7 It is too early to say whether Film Devon will be effective but as they share common aims with us of wishing to attract more filming to the area – away

from the London-centric film scene – we will keep a watching brief and respond to concrete proposals as and when they arise.

8. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

8.1 Exeter's film support service contributes to 'Building a stronger sustainable city' and the main purpose of 'Help me run a successful business in Exeter' in promoting the city as a great place to do business and supporting the local economy.

9. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

9.1 Limited risk arising from this activity.

10. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults; economy; safety and the environment?

10.1 Support is provided to members of the film industry free of charge regardless of race, age, gender or orientation.

10.2 The potential impact on the economy could be significant due to secondary tourism benefits detailed in 1.3. Economic benefits including job creation would result from a growing Creative Industry sector in Exeter.

11. Are there any other options?

11.1 Ceasing activity is not a recommended option as current support is largely reactive and location managers and film makers will always approach Exeter City Council for help. Significantly increasing levels of activity is not currently an option due to budget constraints and available staff resources. Continuing a relationship with Creative England and other agencies, and the good use of an intern, can make a beneficial difference and has done so in this case.

Noreen Medland, Projects Officer

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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