

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY**

**18 JANUARY 2007**

**DEVON DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To inform Members on the progress with the establishment of the Devon Destination Management Organisation.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 During 2004, the majority of the regional tourist boards throughout England became the responsibility of the relevant Regional Development Agency. Tourism is worth more than £8 billion annually to the South West economy, involving some 26 million visitors and providing employment for over 300,000 people. Analysts predict these numbers will continue to rise and that in order to fully exploit the potential benefit in jobs and amenities for the area, more careful management and direction will be required. Recognising the challenge, South West Tourism (SWT) and the South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWERDA) jointly undertook a review of the industry in the region and prepared a ten-year plan.
- 2.2 The tourism strategy for the South West – ‘Towards 2015’, published in 2005 by South West Tourism, recommended substantial changes to the organisation of tourism in the South West. As yet, the role of South West Tourism within the recommended changes for the delivery of tourism development initiatives has not been finalised, in the context of the reorganisation of how the industry works at a sub-regional level. Services which they may deliver include quality development, research, e-tourism, business support and marketing the South West generally as a visitor destination.
- 2.3 The main recommendation for those involved with this very fragmented industry is for more emphasis on strategic development and organisation of the industry based upon recognised or emerging identifiable destinations. These destinations are expected to develop a number of ‘Destination Management Organisations’ (DMOs), which do not necessarily correspond to administrative sub-regions, that will provide the basis for a more joined-up approach to tourism promotion and development, combining resources and removing duplication of effort. In Devon, as in other parts of the South West, groups have been formed to explore the option of establishing formal or informal DMO’s covering recognised geographical areas.

**3. DEVON DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION**

- 3.1 The working group for developing a Devon DMO which will cover the old county area, including Plymouth and Torbay, is currently determining where

there is sufficient common ground and benefit to be gained from joint working beyond existing sub-regional arrangements. The existing sub-regional arrangements are undertaken by informal and formal Area Tourism Partnerships such as the Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership, North Devon Marketing Bureau, English Riviera and Dartmoor Tourist Association. The principles underlying this approach are the same as those behind the City Council working successfully in partnership with others in the Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership.

- 3.2 Strong partnerships have been running in Exeter with neighbouring areas for a number of years. Both the public and private sector see the advantages of working together and pooling resources, both financial and personnel, as appropriate to achieve common aims.
- 3.3 The City Council is participating in the Devon DMO working group, representing the Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership, in order to determine whether a formal involvement or otherwise is likely to produce benefits for the area represented by the Partnership. The working group also comprises of West Devon, Torridge and Teignbridge District Councils, Dartmoor Tourism Association, Visit Plymouth, Devon County Council, Devon Association of Tourist Attractions, Torbay Development Agency, Exeter and the Heart of Devon Hotels and Restaurants Association, Visit Exmoor, North Devon Marketing Bureau, South West Tourism, and the South West Regional Development Agency.
- 3.4 The proposed roles and responsibilities of the Devon DMO whilst at the development stage, are based on the following:
  - marketing and reinforcing the 'Devon' brand
  - customer response/call centres – IT development
  - pan Devon product development
  - pan Devon research to support marketing and product development
  - Devon wide themed marketing, complementing specific, more localised initiatives to include food and drink, walking, watersports, wildlife, gardens and family.
  - provide a stronger voice for lobbying on behalf of the industry
  - co-ordinating business support and training
  - co-ordinating activity where economics of scale reduce costs and provide efficiencies
- 3.5 Participation and comments from many of the participants on the working group has been on the basis of supporting the broad principle and advantages of establishing a DMO which complements, but does not supersede existing successful sub-regional partnership arrangements.
- 3.6 The proposal is to establish the Devon DMO as a company limited by guarantee, with a Board comprising 15 members, 3 public sector and 12 private sector representatives. There would be six or seven Area Tourism Partnerships, each of whom would be represented on the Board, along with the County Council, Devon Association of Tourist Attractions and Devon Farms. The Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership, which is actively supporting and

jointly managed by the City Council would be one of the Area Tourism Partnerships. In addition, there would be representatives for South West Tourism, Devon and Cornwall Business Link and the South West Regional Development Agency.

- 3.7 Involvement of the wider tourism industry would be by means of a membership scheme through the Area Tourism Partnership. Organisations would pay different levels of annual subscription and, in some cases additional payments, according to the extent of the services each wishes to be involved in, firstly through the Area Tourism partnership and secondly through the DMO.
- 3.8 It is intended that the Area Tourism Partnership for this part of Devon is the Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership whose core partners are Exeter and the Heart of Devon Hotels and Restaurants Association, Devonshire Heartland Tourism Association, Axe Valley Promotion, Sidmouth and District Hospitality Association, Mid Devon District Council and Exeter City Council. The City Council facilitates the organisation of the Partnership with direct staffing support from Mid Devon District Council.
- 3.9 Recognising the visitor experience is ultimately delivered at the destination level, the anticipated role of the Area Tourism Partnership is an ambitious and challenging one, namely to:-
- develop and implement the Area Tourism Strategy
  - work collaboratively with the other Devon ATP's to develop a strategy for Devon tourism on matters appropriate for consideration at historic county level.
  - encourage sustainable tourism development
  - develop and implement effective destination marketing campaigns
  - embrace the primary aims of achieving a total quality experience covering quality of service, retail, attractions, food and drink, management and workforce, accommodation, attractions and reliability of infrastructure
  - provide a conduit for e-communication from and to tourism businesses with key agencies
  - establish a membership structure to encourage wider involvement of tourism businesses and raise funds to enhance the activities of the Partnership.
- 3.10 The Devon DMO Working Group are currently undertaking a consultation exercise among the many organisations and businesses in Devon on the approach above. The objective is to establish the new DMO by April 2007.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Council has until this financial year made a £2,700 membership contribution to South West Tourism, which has entitled the Council to representation on the South West Tourism Consultative Committee, participation in the election of a district council representative on the Board of Directors, discounted rates on participation in promotional and other

campaigns, TIC networking and strategic activities such as policy development. It is intended that along with other District Councils and the County Council this contribution will now be paid to the DMO towards its core operational costs.

- 4.2 Further City Council contribution to the DMO would be on a project by project basis where economies of scale reduce costs and provide efficiencies, yet to be agreed.

**5. RECOMMENDATION that:-**

- 5.1 Scrutiny Committee support the development of a Destination Management Organisation for Devon and the proposed roles and responsibilities it would undertake, as stated within this committee report.
- 5.2 Scrutiny Committee supports the City Council's role in working with the Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership to establish a membership structure to encourage wider involvement of tourism businesses to enhance the activities of the Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership.

**RICHARD BALL  
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**ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE**

**Local Government (Access to information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

Background papers used in compiling this report:

1. South West Tourism, "Towards 2015" – produced in 2005