

Cabinet – 10 March 2022

Written question from Matthew Ambrosini to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Business Development and Tourism

As a result of the Council Leader's decision to post a picture on Facebook in November showing her extensive collection of golly dolls - as she acknowledged in a statement referenced in written responses to questions raised at a recent Full Council meeting - the Island has received damaging national media coverage in the Daily Mirror, the Daily Express and the Sunday Telegraph; and on BBC News Online. These stories will have been seen by millions of readers and may signal to prospective holidaymakers that the Isle of Wight is indifferent to the offence caused by these outdated racial stereotypes.

Given the damaging nature of this media coverage, and the potential resulting adverse impact on visitor numbers to the Island, what steps will the Council be taking to pro-actively counter this ahead of the forthcoming tourism season?

Response

It is anticipated that the Staycation market for 2022 will continue with businesses already showing signs of filling up at key booking period and beyond. Research shows that 94% of the visitor economy on the Island is UK domestic. Short haul / near Europe visitors will begin to come back during 2022 also, however the longer haul inbound market is still quite unpredictable with a resumption in 2023 a more realistic return date. The current crisis in Europe will have an impact on short haul visitors.

Visit Britain / Visit England research on consumer sentiment (carried out in late February) shows That 59% of respondents have said they will be taking a UK overnight trips in the next 12 months as opposed to 43% going overseas, a positive trend. However, there will potentially be a "later booking" lead-time for about 21% of respondents.

The messaging that the Isle of Wight will communicate Pre-Easter will revolve around the key messages of "Explore, Discover, Unwind, Adventure, Escape, and Roam" and will be supplemented by a Call to Action "**Come play for the day or book now and stay**" which covers both the staying and day visitor markets.

During March, the messaging will feature in BBC Countryfile Walking Guide, Walk Magazine, Hampshire Life, targeted "Run of Network" digital advertising, Social media activities, primarily over Facebook and Instagram. Bus Shelter Advertising in and around Portsmouth and Southampton, Poster sites at SWR stations and various activities around the Spring Walking Festival including Competition prize of Return foot passenger tickets with Hovertravel, Red Funnel or Wightlink, Free bus travel with Southern Vectis, 2-night stay with One Holyrood, Evening main meal at The Castle Inn in Newport and a Lunch hamper from Bluebells at Briddlesford Farm, promoting that "car-free" approach to visiting the Island.

There will be a 3 week spot-advertising Radio campaign on Greatest Hits Radio, South Coast which will include a competition with presenter endorsements and stings. The competition will feature a break to the island for a family up to 5 (2 adults and up to 3 kids) They will stay for 3 night stay at one of Parkdean Resorts sites on the Island with return car ferry with Wightlink or Red Funnel, an Aqua park session at Tapnell Farm. Dinner at The Cow with a Family ticket to Monkey Haven.

The VIOW team have recently attended the Motorhome, Caravan and Camping Exhibition in Birmingham at the NEC which was exceptionally busy

Next week, the VIOW team are attending a Travel Media event in London where the team have 60 physical appointments with Travel media journalists and many more wishing to meet at the networking events being held.

The VIOW team are attending the Excursions Group Travel event at Twickenham Stadium on 19th March, this event is one of the key group travel events in the calendar organised and operated by Tourism South East

The VIOW team have a presence at the Virtual Explore GB event run by Visit Britain / Visit England over 3 days (22nd – 24th March) where they will engage virtually with tour operators from all over the world.

VIOW are working in partnership with the IWC team to deliver the Marketing & Communications including the on-island business and town / parish council engagement for the Tour of Britain event that will take place on 11th September 2022. This event is a potential “game-changer” for exposure of the Island to a key market of cycling, both the on-road and off-road markets.

The Spring Isle of Wight Walking Festival organised and operated by VIOW working closely with volunteer leaders the IW Ramblers and the National Trust will take place 7th – 15th May and currently has 60 walks to choose from and sign up to so far across the island, still waiting on a few more to be finalised and should end up with maximum 70 walks. This also encompasses the famous “Walk the Wight” event in aid of Mountbatten, very much part of the festival but focused on raising funds for Mountbatten.

In the process of finalising a training programme for front-line tourism and non-tourism workers, such as taxi drivers / bus drivers, Front of House teams and a whole lot more to become Island Tourism Ambassadors, this activity has been supported by IWC and aims to have that amazing Island Friendly welcome that we all know is there for visitors to the Island. More information to come out on this very soon.

Everything that is being communicated very much has Inclusivity, sustainability and accessibility at its heart whilst encouraging visitors to enjoy everything that the Island has to offer as being one of only 7 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in the UK, with over 50% of the island designated as AONB.

Discover Paradise on your doorstep and for Islanders “Love where you live”