

SCRUTINY PANEL – REVIEW OF TOURISM

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Interview with Jane Singh, Visitor Services and Development Manager - City Development And Cultural Services, Portsmouth City Council.

On 15 December 2014 I interviewed Jane Singh to examine how Portsmouth City Council promotes tourism and discuss any new initiatives planned.

The Purpose of the interview was to ascertain

1. How successful has the Visit Portsmouth initiative been?
2. Is any information about Havant provided in Portsmouth visitor Information Centres?
3. What tourism initiatives do they have in Portsmouth?
4. How important is social media in helping promote tourism?

Portsmouth is a major visitor destination on England's south coast. It is one of VisitEngland's 'Attract Brands' welcoming 8.6million visitors annually, generating £557million for the local economy and supporting around 12,000 local jobs.

Portsmouth is next door to Havant where we have the potential to capitalise on visitors to the Portsmouth area by promoting the borough through the Visit Portsmouth tourism initiative.

If Havant decided to join the Visit Portsmouth initiative it would benefit from the following exposure:

- Marketing support would be provided for Havant Borough Council through the Visit Portsmouth initiative.
- A double/four page spread in the Portsmouth visitor guide (60,000 copies) and a single page of information, plus inclusion of relevant businesses, in listings in the Portsmouth mini-guide. (Number of copies: English 150,000, French 20,000, German 10,000, Spanish 8,000 and Chinese 5,000).
- Promotion through Portsmouth social media channels. Currently the Visit Portsmouth Facebook page has 25,300 likes and the Twitter feed has 5,500 followers.

Portsmouth City Council is currently developing a new responsive Visit Portsmouth website that should go live this summer. This will offer a basic free listing to business who make up the local visitor economy along with a range of charges for enhanced listings and banner advertisements. The aim is to make the site self-financing.

Portsmouth Tourism Statistics from the last 12 months

- 893,483 annual sessions on Visit Portsmouth, up by 50.14%
- 669,337 annual users on Visit Portsmouth up by 48.22%

- 2,737,535 pages viewed on Visit Portsmouth up by 33.69%
- (2,047,657) annual reach on Facebook of 1,390,061 users
- Average monthly reach of 115,838 users
- Portsmouth iPhone App 7,644
- Portsmouth Android 675
- You Tube viewings 54,000

Campaigns

Two campaigns to boost tourism in Portsmouth were run in London last year. The first campaign consisted of 1,000 tube car panels in February. The panels were seen by around 1.6 million tube users and Visit Portsmouth saw a 25% increase in visits compared to the same period in the previous year. Visitors to Portsmouth from the London area saw an increase of 36% in this period.

The second campaign formed part of the Destination Marketing Partnership (DMP); the main season campaign was funded by Portsmouth visitor services (Portsmouth City Council), Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, Spinnaker Tower and Gunwharf Quays. The campaign consisted of four similar designs, each featuring one of the main partners and with Portsmouth visitor services featuring major events and the seafront. This campaign was viewed by 60% of all tube Passengers (approximately 1.5million people).

Advertising in London enables Portsmouth as a destination to be promoted to people living in London, people commuting to London for work and to the millions of visitors to the capital each year.

Portsmouth City Council also run international marketing campaigns in partnership with local attractions, transport providers, other local authorities, Tourism South East (TSE), Visit England and Visit Britain.

During 2013/14 and again for 2014/15 Portsmouth has joined two of TSE's international campaigns, i) Near Europe in partnership with Gosport Borough Council and ii) Go!China in partnership with local DMP members.

The Near Europe campaign targets the group market in Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

The Go!China campaign targets trade and media in China and Hong Kong, with potential additional contacts in India, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

Conclusion

- 1) The Visit Portsmouth initiative is far reaching and could create a lot of exposure for Havant. It is a great opportunity to capitalise on the number of people who visit Portsmouth each year who might be looking for alternative places to visit. Being so close to Portsmouth and with Portsmouth's excellent park and ride system Havant could become a very popular choice for people looking to stay overnight. The council should take advantage of this opportunity.

- 2) Social media is increasingly important as proven by the large number of users on Portsmouth social media sites. Havant already has a tourism presence online with a Twitter feed and the Visit Havant website and this should continue to be progressed. A Visit Havant Facebook page should also be set up.

- 3) The Portsmouth advertising campaign in London has seen a very significant rise in tourist numbers. This probably wouldn't be financially viable for the Council but opportunities to perhaps conduct a campaign on a smaller scale or in conjunction with another authority should be investigated.

- 4) The Council should investigate the possibility of joining a TSE campaign in order to highlight the borough's attractions, such as the excellent water sports facilities at Hayling Island, both domestically and abroad.