Report to:	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	17th May 2018
Lead Member/Officer:	Leader/Head of Planning and Public Protection
Report Authors:	Traffic, Parking and Road Safety Manager / Team Leader - Tourism, Marketing and Events
Title:	Tourism Signage Strategy for Denbighshire

1. What is the report about?

1.1 To provide an update on the initial development of a tourism signage strategy for Denbighshire.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1 In November 2017 a report was presented to Communities Scrutiny Committee regarding the Vale of Clwyd tourist signage project. Discussions took place at the Committee about how a tourism signage strategy for Denbighshire should be developed to complement trunk road tourism signage.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 That the Committee considers the contents of the report, provides observations, and supports the continuation of the work to develop a tourism signage strategy for Denbighshire.

3.2 That the Committee confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment in Appendix A as part of its consideration.

4. Report details

Introduction

4.1 In November 2017 a report was presented to Communities Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on the Vale of Clwyd tourist signage project. One of the items discussed in the November 2017 report is the criteria that the Welsh Government use for signing tourist destinations off their trunk road network. The committee discussed this criteria and the need to develop a tourism signage strategy for Denbighshire which would complement the trunk road tourist signage. A copy of the November 2017 report is provided in Appendix B to this report.

4.2 The purpose of this report is to discuss officers' initial views on the content of the proposed tourist signage strategy, for discussion by the Communities Scrutiny Committee. The intention is that an officer and elected member working group will be formed to develop the tourism signage strategy, taking account of the work to date and the Scrutiny Committee's views.

4.3   As explained in the November 2017 report, it is usually expensive to provide tourism signage on high-speed roads such as the A55 owing to the sheer size of the signs required in order that they can be read by drivers in sufficient time. It is also important to minimise clutter so as not to overload drivers with information. As such, the Welsh Government apply strict eligibility criteria for trunk road tourism signage which, therefore, limits which tourist destinations can be signed off the trunk road network.

4.4   The Welsh Government has recently developed "*The Wales Way*", which is a ten year project aimed at promoting three "core" tourism routes where the focus will be on the experience of the journey itself, rather the journey purely being a means of "getting from A to B". Further details about *The Wales Way* can be found in Appendix C to this report. The three core routes in *The Wales Way* are as follows:

    o   The North Wales Way – following the A55
    o   The Cambrian Way – following the A470
    o   The Coastal Way – following the A487

4.5   The Welsh Government state that one of the principles of The Wales Way is that the core routes will encourage trips off the main route, with an example trip of 40 minutes being given.

Proposed Tourism Signage Strategy

4.6   Taking the above factors into account, there is a real opportunity to develop a tourism signage strategy that can complement trunk road tourist signage. For example, the proposed Vale of Clwyd tourist signing scheme will direct visitors to Denbigh Castle, Rhuddlan Castle and St Asaph Cathedral off the A55 and onto the A525. This will in turn present an opportunity to direct visitors off the A525 and onto other routes and other tourist destinations around the County that would not meet the criteria for being signed directly off the A55 or the other trunk roads.

4.7   With this in mind, and taking account of the aims of *The Wales Way* project, we can build on the proposed Vale of Clwyd tourist signing project to develop "tourism routes" (i.e. tourism trails) that become an attraction in their own right owing to our fantastic local scenery, whilst also providing the opportunity to direct visitors to other, smaller, tourist destinations. These trails could be circular in nature and cross county boundaries as often it would might be logical for them to do so, depending upon the physical routes involved.

4.8   One of the first tasks of the office and elected member working group for the draft tourism signage strategy will be to further develop these potential tourism trails.

Alternative approaches

4.9   It is important to recognise that the proposed tourist signage strategy is also an opportunity to consider alternative approaches to how we can direct visitors to attractions rather than just via traditional brown road signs. These are listed in the following paragraphs.

4.10   New city, town and village name signs are funded by the respective city, town or community council. Whilst the basic layout of such signs is prescribed by the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016, there is still some scope for variation of messages and crests, for example. This, coupled by the fact that the town or village council pays for the sign(s) means that there is understandably some variation in existing name signs across the County. One of the options that officers feel should now be considered is to develop a branding for these signs which would be consistent across the County, and the scope this branding to be consistent with the tourist direction signage. This would require engagement with city, town and community councils to discuss a template.

4.11   The use of technological solutions will need to be explored to better understand what the potential is for alternative methods to direct visitors to tourist attractions (or along tourist trails). One example, of such new technology is "iBeacons". How "iBeacons" works is that beacons are installed in suitable locations which "push" (transmit) messages to people's smartphones, which have been enabled to receive such information. This can be designed to give context-sensitive information which could include information about nearby tourist destinations. It is no longer the stuff of science fiction to consider that we will soon have personal assistants (like Amazon's "Alexa") in our own vehicles which can be asked by voice command to provide instant information such as weather reports, traffic information and information about the nearest tourist destinations.

4.12   Social media and digital marketing campaigns are likely to continue to play an increasing role in terms of raising people's awareness of what tourist destinations exist and where they are located.

       Costs
4.13   It is important to note that brown tourist sign schemes are usually paid for by the operator of the tourist destination. Furthermore, whilst the cost of minor repairs are covered, the Council does not have a budget for the replacement of existing brown tourist signs in the event that one should become irreparably damaged and in need of replacement.

       Summary
4.14   It is proposed that the next step is to form the office and elected member working group and to start developing the proposed trails.

5.   How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1   Environment: Attractive and protected, supporting well-being and economic prosperity. The proposed tourism signage strategy would contribute towards the objective to "Raise the profile of the county as a location to visit, in order to capitalise on Denbighshire's economic potential."

6.   What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1   The proposed tourism signage strategy will be developed by a working group made up of elected members and officers from Traffic, Parking and Road Safety; Tourism,

Marketing and Events; Countryside Services; and Economic and Business Development. Officer costs will be met from existing service budgets at this stage. There will, of course, be costs associated with the various interventions identified by the strategy and it will be necessary to develop those further in the form of a business case as and when they develop.

6.2 There is no indication that the Welsh Government will make any additional funding available as a result of *The Wales Way* project.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1 There are generally very few negative impacts that will result from the proposed tourism signage strategy. There are, however, a number of positive impacts in terms of the potential benefits to the local economy and the potential increase in visitor numbers.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1 The proposal for a Tourism Signage Strategy was generated by discussions at the October 2017 Communities Scrutiny Committee. Presenting this current report at the May 2018 Communities Scrutiny Committee will give another opportunity for members to provide their views on the proposed strategy. The strategy will then be developed further by the formation of an officer and elected member working group.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 The service has confirmed in this report that the development of the signage strategy can be contained within existing resources. However there are no approved resources to fund the implications of the strategy and any requests for funding will need to be considered in the context of reducing funding for the council and the wider council commitment to trying to fund the Corporate Plan.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1 A failure to develop a suitable tourism signage strategy could represent a significant missed opportunity. The proposed strategy will help to coordinate the Council's efforts in regard to tourism signage across services and to help capitalise on the opportunity that the Welsh Government's *The Wales Way* project presents.

11. Power to make the Decision

11.1 Section 7.4.1 of the Council's Constitution outlines Scrutiny's powers with respect to the development of policy.

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