

L4L19 SV3 Summary Sheet:

Site Visit Title:

Cultural Elements of Natural Beauty as an Economic and Visitor Asset

Description:

This Site Visit provided learning opportunities around how both the natural environment and heritage visitor sites are managed for visitors. The group visited several examples of both honeypot and fragile sites and listened to talks by those who manage visitors in a natural and historic context, as well as hearing about recent local AONB led projects around visitor development during transfers and general discussion.

At Sutton Hoo, the group heard from representatives from the National Trust who spoke about how they attract and provide for visitors, and their current HLF funded scheme delivering further visitor development work. The group travelled to the Suffolk Punch Trust, for a working lunch during which they heard presentations/case studies, and participated in discussions around how partnership working, and in particular with Destination Management Organisations (DMO's), can strengthen the visitor experience.

The group visited Shingle Street, an ecologically fragile site which is popular with a range of visitors - despite having no visitor facilities – where the local community have been trying to influence visitor behaviour for environmental protection and gain, before taking a walk along the coastline.

Finally, the group travelled to the Dedham Vale AONB, where they visited the Sir Alfred Munnings Art Museum, and heard talks from the museum director and the Field Studies Council Flatford Mill, who spoke about how art heritage is becoming a popular visitor theme.



Themes:

- Managing visitors in both honeypot and fragile sites
- Heritage visitor locations in a landscape context
- Natural environment in a visitor context
- Information provision and working together

Outcomes and Outputs:

Output 1: Production of a single sided summary to be produced by the Leaders on what has been learnt.

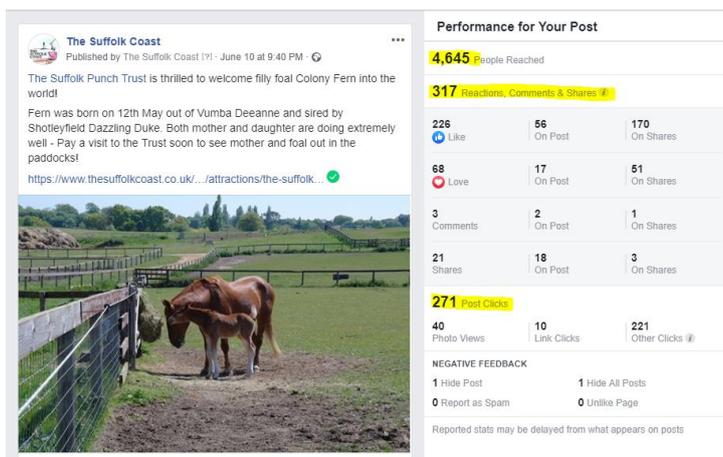
Output 2: Delegates will have seen visitor management in practice at nationally significant and local assets.

Outcome 1: Delegates will have increased understanding of visitor management in natural and heritage locations.

Outcome 2: Delegates will learn about visitor management and have tools to change their work practices considering information learned.

Lessons Learnt:

- The NT advised that in order to be a successful visitor attraction, it's very important to get the basics (such as toilets, parking, access, site infrastructure and facilities)
- Once the basics are in place, partnership working is key in attracting visitors.
- DMOs are industry-led, not for profit, membership organisations that work to boost the visitor economy, develop tourism and support businesses within the an area.
- DMOs can offer huge support in terms of strong branding and digital marketing to promote an area as a visitor destination.
- The Suffolk Coast DMO use one brand to communicate a clear, consistent message, which has raised the profile of the area, attracting visitors to the area – focusing on improving the out of season trade and working to get the tourism businesses noticed.
- DMOs can use social media effectively to engage with huge numbers of potential visitors. Case study supplied of Suffolk Punch Trust, see stats image below:
- In ecologically sensitive areas, the focus should be on influencing how visitors behave, rather than attracting mass tourism. This can be achieved by signage or restricting access.



Quotes:

NT Sutton Hoo said: your DMO is “more than a route to market – it’s a way to shape places and tourism within your area”.

Suffolk Coast DMO said: It’s a no brainer to get involved with your nearest DMO, we all operate differently but the overall objective is the same: to amplify great content about the destination, engaging with potential and existing visitors, encouraging them to come, and shaping the destination at the same time!

Where to find more info:

- Sutton Hoo: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sutton-hoo>
- The Suffolk Punch Trust: <https://www.thesuffolkpunchtrust.co.uk/>
- The Suffolk coast DMO: <https://www.thesuffolkcoast.co.uk/>
- Munnings Art Museum: <https://www.munningsmuseum.org.uk/>
- The Field Studies Council: <https://www.field-studies-council.org/centres/flatfordmill.aspx>