

CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND LOCAL ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL – SEPTEMBER 2021

FILM:NEW FOREST REVIEW

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Panel note the process of Film:New Forest
- 1.2 That the Panel establishes a Task and Finish Group to consider options for future working relationship with Creative England.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the progress of the Film:New Forest Project and to seek agreement from the Panel to set up a Task and Finish Group to consider options for future working arrangements with Creative England.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting in November 2015, the Panel agreed that the Screen Tourism Task and Finish Group be set up:

‘To consider whether the Council should pay a subscription to Creative England, which would facilitate promotion of the New Forest for film making. If successful, it was hoped the initiative could result in companies wanting to film in the New Forest, with the related commercial benefits to hotels, the hospitality sector and other organisations’

- 2.2 The Task and Finish Group received a presentation from Creative England, and considered a range of evidence. At its meeting of the 17th March 2016 the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed the recommendation of the Screen Tourism Task and Finish Group:

That the Council enter into an enhanced Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Creative England for a four year commitment to include the Platinum level service at an initial cost of £12,000 for the first year to be reviewed after 12 months with a view to a lower cost investment in the subsequent three years.

- 2.3 The ‘Film:New Forest’ project was launched with the primary objective of creating film and television related spend in the local economy. Other objectives of the project are to boost visitor related spend through screen tourism and to provide young people with opportunities to work in the film and television industry by working alongside colleges and universities with specialities in this area.
- 2.3 Through this partnership with Creative England, Film:New Forest has been successful in securing a wide range of appropriate productions including film, documentaries and commercials. Each of these has provided valuable spend on local goods and services.
- 2.4 The Film:New Forest project is managed by the Council’s Economic Development Team.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

- 3.1 Since the project launch, NFDC have hosted a series of events under Film:New Forest branding. These have included information for businesses and residents on being a filming location, local crew networking evenings and educational events for local students to provide advice on securing a career in the film industry. The Crew networking events have benefitted from having an added dimension of training attached to them such as Securing Funding for your Filming Project with Creative England EPA providing access to quality speakers.
- 3.2 As part of the Creative England EPA a dedicated Website has been created www.filmnewforest.com together with a promotional film highlighting the New Forest as a filming location.
- 3.3 Film:New Forest has joined Film Offices UK (FO:UK) which has opened a network of other local authority film offices to enable NFDC to learn from established offices such as Liverpool, Manchester and Bristol.
- 3.4 In 2019 Film:New Forest invested in a new location management system called 'Movie Site'. This system allows for location owners to register properties themselves and to manage their details should any changes occur at the property. Movie Site is also used by several other film offices within the UK, many of whom are members of FO:UK. This system is also used daily by Creative England when it creates location briefs for various productions. This promotes New Forest locations at a national and international level.
- 3.5 Since Film:New Forest was established filming projects have injected over £3.82 million into the New Forest economy. During this time locations across New Forest District have featured in films some examples include 'Star Wars – A Solo Story', ITV's 'Unforgotten' and the Channel 4 documentary 'A Year in the New Forest'. Season 3 of the Netflix drama 'The Crown' was shot at Rhinefield House and on Ornamental Drive.
- 3.6 A project steering group consisting with representatives from NFDC, National Park Authority, Forestry England, local colleges and local businesses support the project. This group has significant value for the project and has helped to overcome the resistance and barriers to delivering filming projects in the New Forest.
- 3.7 New Forest District Council was 'Highly Commended' in the FSB Wessex Regional Local Authority Small Business Friendly Awards 2018 in recognition of Film:New Forest in the category of Most Innovative Small Business Friendly Programme, Campaign or Project.
- 3.8 The New Forest Film Festival took place from 8th to 16th June 2019. The festival celebrated films with a New Forest connection and promoted local talent whilst generating an economic boost to the local economy. The festival saw a total of 46 events held across the district in 15 venues and included the area's first ever Comic Con, workshops, Q&As hosted by local film makers and short-film competitions. Over 3,000 people took part in one or more of the events during the festival. As well as supporting the local talent in the New Forest, it is estimated this activity generated a £15,000 boost to the New Forest economy.
- 3.9 In May 2019, Film:New Forest were invited to be a guest speaker on the panel at the inaugural Creative England Filming in England Summit as a case study of being a proactive local authority who make the most of the film and TV industry to boost the local economy.
- 3.10 In collaboration with FO:UK, Film:New Forest attended FOCUS in 2018 and 2019. FOCUS is an international exhibition aimed at all the creative screen industries – including film, TV, advertising, animation and interactive – and is the only UK trade

event where attendees can meet with content makers, film commissions, production services and locations providers from over 60 countries. This raised the profile of New Forest as a filming destination.

- 3.11 The Pandemic paused filming nationally for a period, active has resumed over the past months.

4. FUTURE OPTIONS

- 4.1 While the current partnership agreement with Creative England ended on 30th September 2020. There are some outstanding elements of the agreement yet to be delivered which were postponed due to COVID. There has continued to be a working relationship with Creative England with a one year rolling Enhanced Partnership Agreement.
- 4.2 Several options have been identified for the future development of the Film: New Forest Project. Considerable momentum has been gathered over the past four years which will need to be reflected in the terms of any subsequent Agreement. As such, these options need to consider how best a new project could add value to the work which has already taken place.
- 4.3 One example of this is that over the last four years, it has become clear that 'interactive entertainment' is an emerging and rapidly growing sector within the creative industry. Creative England has recognised this and the benefits this brings to local economies and a 2019 study by The Entertainment Retailer Association found that at £3.86bn, the UK industry is now larger than video and music combined.
- 4.4 The scope of the interactive entertainment sector is vast and stretches significantly beyond the mainstream game console or PC gaming market. For example, mobile gaming is a rapidly expanding market which often incorporates interaction with the surrounding natural environment.
- 4.5 Development of local skills has emerged as an important component of the Film:New Forest Project. Any future development of the project to incorporate interactive entertainment should consider this to include animation, graphic design, coding and audio engineers. The district's colleges and surrounding universities have strong representation in these subject areas.
- 4.5 Appendix A sets out the 5 options for future development of the Film: New Forest project. These range from no further (EPA) agreement to a dual focused approach supporting Interactive Entertainment and Filming in equal measure. Initial work has been done to identify the case for each option.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There will be financial implications in all but one of the options detailed in Appendix 1. Funding for the EPA has historically come from the Initiative Budget, all options could be funded from this budget.

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Background Papers:

Published Document: Economic

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Development Strategy 2018-2023

**Published Document: Minutes COSP
17.3.16**

**Published Document: Screen Tourism
Task and Finish Group 17th-Mar-2016
09.30 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Panel**

Appendix A

Option	Detail	Advantage	Disadvantage	Cost (Over 4 years)
1	No future Enhanced Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Creative England. This means Film:New Forest will operate entirely independently with no support from Creative England	No costs to be incurred by NFDC	<p>Lost momentum on achievements made to date</p> <p>No ongoing support of existing initiatives (e.g. Crew Nights, Film Festival, Training etc.)</p> <p>Reduced likelihood of attracting key filming projects owing to lower profile of the New Forest as a location resulting in lost income generated for local businesses</p>	£0
2	New EPA with Creative England focused solely on Filming (as per existing arrangement)	<p>Maintaining of the strong relationships with Creative England which have aided the project significantly to date</p> <p>Would enable the project to build on success already achieved, enhancing Film:New Forest as an established brand</p> <p>Would deliver project outcomes which are measurable (e.g. spend generated in the local economy)</p>	Would limit the scope of the project and not allow for support of a quickly emerging and growing sector	£28-30k
3	New Creative England EPA focusing solely on interactive entertainment	<p>Focus on a sector which is rapidly growing and has high value with low environmental impact</p> <p>Ability to engage with local colleges and universities offering qualifications in this sector</p>	<p>Insufficient existing business base to justify full EPA at this stage</p> <p>Lack of measurable outcomes (e.g. spend generated in the local economy cannot be calculated)</p>	£28-30k
4	Two separate EPAs (one each for Interactive Entertainment and Filming)	Would allow equal prominence to be given to both Film and Interactive Entertainment sectors	<p>Cost prohibitive</p> <p>Insufficient internal resources to be able to deliver value across two separate EPAs</p>	£56-60k
5	Single EPA which covers elements of both Filming and Interactive Entertainment	<p>Enables support for both sectors</p> <p>Allows for integration of currently disjointed Interactive Entertainment and Filming sectors which have many commonalities</p> <p>Maintains support for Filming whilst developing the Interactive Entertainment sector which is currently too small to justify its own agreement</p> <p>Works towards achieving aims of Economic Development Strategy (Skills, retention of workforce)</p>	Diluting of the currently very clear objectives	£28-30k