

Christmas Markets

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction

Summary

The Board will receive a presentation from Nick Rhodes, Chief Executive of National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) Marketplace, on the key findings of the research into Christmas Markets. These findings will be published as a case study guide on 25 January 2018 at a NABMA partnerships conference.

Members are invited to note the findings and consider whether any elements warrant further investigation or activity by the LGA. This would need to take place within the constraints of the existing workplan and budget for the Visitor Economy, or to replace other planned activity.

Recommendation

That the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board members discuss and provide direction.

Action

Officers to progress as directed.

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Christmas Markets

1. The Board identified that it wished to capture some of the key benefits of these markets in a short case-study publication, including:
 - 1.1. the amount of income generated for the area,
 - 1.2. the number of extra visitors,
 - 1.3. the number of jobs (permanent and temporary), and
 - 1.4. an extrapolated figure for the economic contribution of festive markets in England and Wales.
2. NABMA Market Place was commissioned to carry out this research. Eight case study areas were identified and completed a short survey. Additional areas were approached, with a particular goal of including smaller markets, but it was found that these markets lacked the capacity to participate in the research. The findings therefore focus on some of the larger markets in England.
3. Case study areas are:
 - 3.1. Manchester Christmas Market – Manchester City Council
 - 3.2. Birmingham Christmas Market – Birmingham City Council
 - 3.3. Newcastle Christmas Market – Newcastle City Council
 - 3.4. Exeter Christmas Market – Exeter Cathedral
 - 3.5. Bath Christmas Market – Bath Tourism Plus, Bath and North-East Somerset District Council
 - 3.6. Lincoln Christmas Market – Lincoln City Council
 - 3.7. St Albans Christmas Market – St Albans City and District Council
 - 3.8. Stratford Upon Avon Victorian Christmas Fayre
4. The interim findings delivered on 11 December 2017 were used to develop a press release, which is in **Annex A**.

Key Findings

5. In 2016, it is estimated that Christmas Markets generated more than £500 million in visitor spend in the host towns. The research revealed that many markets do not routinely capture key information, so this is expected to be an underestimate.

6. Despite severe weather forcing the early closure of at least three of the case study markets, visitor numbers are estimated to be up by anything between 5 per cent and 57 per cent - the latter reported by Stratford Upon Avon Business Improvement District (BID) Team.
7. UK markets are increasingly able to compete effectively with international competitors and act as visitor destinations. Manchester market was voted the most popular UK market and was placed higher than Christmas destinations such as Dresden, Leipzig and Cologne.
8. The research also revealed that the number of coach tours visiting Christmas markets is increasing, with one case study area receiving over 50 coach tours. Several also feature in destination or travel company magazines such as Flybe.
9. The markets do not only feature representatives from UK or Germany, despite German markets being the most popular theme. One market had traders representing as many as 32 different countries, indicating the extent and influence of these trading events.
10. However, in addition to their international impact, many markets are taking action to ensure local independent traders are able to benefit from the visitors drawn to the market. In Newcastle, this takes the form of turning the stalls over to local traders for a week; while Stratford granted permission for local traders to sell or advertise items outside their businesses for the duration of the market; and in St Albans, BID levy payers are given a dedicated chalet from which to operate.
11. Some markets stipulate that traders should source ingredients from local providers, where this does not compromise the authenticity of a product. Coupled with the purchase of local security and cleaning services, this means that the larger markets can have a significant impact on the wider economy of their host town or city. Many traders also report purchasing their own Christmas presents in the market location, before returning to their own country.
12. Most markets also provide some opportunity for local charities, clubs and good causes to promote themselves in the market.
13. Due to the variation in size of the markets, it has not been possible to estimate average employment levels in a meaningful way. It is estimated that Manchester, as one of the largest markets, employs over 442 people, but Newcastle employs as few as 88 people. However, the economic impact extends far beyond employment.

Key recommendations

14. Councils wishing to host a Christmas market should carefully consider the design of the market. Smaller towns will typically find that a short market of two to three days is most effective, with markets like Knutsford making a more significant contribution than would be expected through this approach.
15. Opening hours of the market are equally important. For instance, a town that has a limited existing night time economy is unlikely to attract visitors to remain in the city centre by providing a market experience.
16. Maintaining the support of local businesses is fundamental, and can be achieved through offering space in the market itself, relaxing trading regulations, promoting local supplier connections, or by designing the market so that routes take people past permanent businesses as well as the market stalls.
17. More resources are needed to properly capture the economic and social impact of the market. Smaller markets, in particular, lack the capacity to collate information. A council wishing to test out a market idea, or identify ways to grow the market, should ensure that effective measures for capturing visitor numbers, spend and impact are put in place. However, several larger markets were also found to have limited data, although a number conducted surveys over the 2017 Christmas period, indicating a growing recognition of the value of this data.

Implications for Wales

18. The WLGA does not commission us to work on wider improvement issues. This service is provided directly by WLGA.

Financial Implications

19. None.

Next steps

20. The publication will be launched at a NABMA conference on 25 January, and published on the LGA website.

ANNEX A

EMBARGO: 00.01 Friday 29 December 2017

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CHRISTMAS MARKETS SEE SURGE TO BRING FESTIVE CHEER TO HIGH STREETS

Christmas markets have brought festive cheer to towns and cities across the country, with some places experiencing a surge in shoppers spending locally.

New research for the Local Government Association, in partnership with NABMA Market Place, reveals that all areas studied have seen an increase in the past 12 months, and that Christmas markets are on track to have broken the record £250 million spent in markets in 2015.

Coach tours and “staycations” have contributed to this seasonal surge, showing that many Brits have preferred to spend their money locally rather than travel abroad to markets on the continent, according to the LGA, which represents 370 councils in England and Wales.

Councils have worked closely with local traders and operators to make sure a variety of stalls and attractions have kept people coming back, in a tradition that stretches back 35 years since the first dedicated Christmas market in England was established.

Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the LGA’s Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, said:

“These findings show that people have embraced new ways to come together and enjoy themselves in our towns and cities at this special time of year.

“Our Christmas markets have grown from strength to strength, rivalling even the long-established German markets as places to visit and spend their time and money.

“Councils have also worked with organisers to bolster security measures, helping everyone relax and enjoy these markets as safely as possible to make the most of the festive period.”

NABMA President, Cllr Chris Rosling-Josephs, said:

“Markets are a key part of the retail offer of a place, not just at Christmas, but many places up and down the country are providing quality events that appeal to families, offer opportunities to buy something different, enjoy festive food and drink, and encourage dwell time in town centres.”

Quality hot food and drink, a diverse range of arts and crafts and a host of family and leisure attractions are just some of the successful ingredients which have seen Christmas markets and their surrounding areas thrive.

18 January 2018

Manchester Christmas Markets have been voted the best in the UK, in a recent online poll to find Europe's best Christmas market. The annual competition, held by travel website European Best Destinations, saw Manchester shrug off strong competition from a list of 100 Christmas markets, and placed higher than stalwart Christmas destinations such as Dresden, Leipzig and Cologne.

Birmingham's Frankfurt Christmas Market is now believed to be the most visited authentic German market outside Germany and Austria (4.6 million in 2016), while Lincoln – home of the very first German-style Christmas market in 1982- was expecting up to 250,000 visitors this year.

In Stratford-upon-Avon, the three-day Victorian Christmas market experienced record numbers of people, with all car parks full by 10am.

Many traders had sold out in Lincoln and Stratford at their markets, despite being forced to close early due to severe weather.

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