

Crystal visitors staying for less than four hours



The showroom at House of Waterford Crystal.

Approximately half of the tourists who travel to Waterford to visit the House of Waterford Crystal stay in the city for less than four hours, Councillors have been told.

During a recent progress report to the Metropolitan District by the Waterford Viking Triangle Trust, Chairman Brendan Cummins said there was undoubtedly a need to further add to the area's tourism offering, to entice visitors to stay longer.

However Mr Cummins said huge advances had nonetheless been made in the area. "Seven or eight years ago, the area was foreboding and neglected", he noted.

Trust CEO Fiona McHardy outlined the growth in visitor numbers to the House of Waterford Crystal - to 180,000 last year. Attractions such as the Kite Design Studio, the Bishop's Palace, the Medieval Museum and Reginald's Tower were increasingly adding to the draw factor in the area, she added.

Ms McHardy acknowledged that car parking was an issue for visitors, while various public realm issues - such as lighting and paving - were being addressed by the Council as funds became available.

The Trust is also allowed a subvention in the region of €85,000 to €100,000 from the city, which covers the initiative's marketing effort.

Metropolitan Mayor Lola O'Sullivan (FG), paid particular tribute to the welcome ambassador programme within the Viking Triangle for 'giving people a sense of ownership'. The Mayor said she had great admiration for people who gave up their time for this voluntary programme.

Responding to a query from Cllr Davy Daniels (Ind) about how to increase visitor numbers, Mr Cummins said the 2017 programmes of bus tours was currently being compiled and Waterford's Viking Triangle would be on these.

“We didn’t have the ability to have all our ducks in a row two years ago, when the current programmes were being put together”, he said. “But we are there now.”

Mr Cummins said he would welcome further discussion with Cllr Blaise Hannigan (Ind) about the possibility of locating a maritime museum in the city.

Cllr Pat Fitzgerald (SF) welcomed the news that a new marketing proposition for the region – similar to the Wild Atlantic Way – would soon be launched. This will encompass the south east coast and will be launched in April, the meeting heard.

The campaign will have six ‘headline propositions’ based around history and culture, including the Rock of Cashel, Clonmacnoise and Waterford’s Viking Triangle. Cllr Sean Reinhardt said it was essential that all ports and airports were targeted to promote the Viking Triangle.

Cllr Eddie Mulligan (FF) called for increased connectivity between the Viking Triangle and other areas of the city. Mr Cummins said future plans included linking the Triangle with the redeveloped North Quays and possibly an interest in leisure tourism on the river.