

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 29 March 2022

Forever Edinburgh Update

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

Executive
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Policy and Sustainability Committee note the:
 - 1.1.1 Progress report for Forever Edinburgh's *The Story Never Ends* campaign; and
 - 1.1.2 Summary of the Forever Edinburgh Leisure Tourism Marketing Plan 2022.

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Forever Edinburgh Update

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report outlines the results of Forever Edinburgh's *The Story Never Ends* campaign. The report also provides a summary overview of the Marketing Plan for targeting Inbound Leisure Visitors in 2022.

3. Background

Forever Edinburgh

- 3.1 As reported to Policy and Sustainability Committee on [11 June 2020](#), in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Edinburgh Tourism and Action Group (ETAG) developed a city and tourism/hospitality recovery plan '*Resilience, Reboot, Recover*' (RRR). Forever Edinburgh is part of this plan and is the brand which activity now operates under.
- 3.2 As agreed by Committee, www.edinburgh.org and other digital assets have been used to support the recovery plan and Forever Edinburgh replaced *This is Edinburgh* as the main destination brand in April 2021.
- 3.3 After Forever Edinburgh's successful funding applications to the Regional Recovery Fund and VisitScotland's Market Readiness Fund, securing £85,000 and £50,000 respectively, phase 1 of a new visitor campaign *The Story Never Ends* was developed in collaboration by the Council, ETAG, VisitScotland and private sector partners. The campaign went live in April 2021, targeting domestic inbound visitors in Scotland and England.
- 3.4 In October 2021, Forever Edinburgh successfully secured a further £90,000 in funding from VisitScotland's *Destination and Sector Marketing Fund*, providing funding to extend the campaign over winter to March 2022, as well as the creation and launch of the new *Resident Rewards Edinburgh* initiative.
- 3.5 In October 2021, the winter extension of *The Story Never Ends* went live followed by *Resident Rewards Edinburgh* in December 2021.

- 3.6 On [30 November 2021](#) Committee requested a report in two cycles to detail the city's marketing strategy for 2022, including an evaluation of the 'Forever Edinburgh' campaign, acknowledging that any information that may be commercially sensitive be reported via a members briefing instead of contained in the report.

4. Main report

Forever Edinburgh *The Story Never Ends* campaign update

- 4.1 The objectives of the summer campaign were to position Edinburgh as the United Kingdom's (UKs) top city break destination to target segments, convert rural and coastal intenders using Edinburgh's outdoor visitor products, support regional recovery, and reassure visitors that Edinburgh was open and safe to visit. The campaign also aimed to follow the initial Forever Edinburgh ethos to remind visitors and residents alike about their favourite parts of the city and share their experiences using #ForeverEdinburgh.
- 4.2 The summer campaign successfully reached target audiences in Scotland and England and produced shareable content for city marketing and industry partners to use as a legacy, delivering:
- 4.2.1 Six themed promotional films (of varying lengths) showcasing Edinburgh's broad product offer and unique stories. These were served to target audiences on YouTube and social media (Facebook and Instagram);
 - 4.2.2 Visitors to edinburgh.org were re-targeted on key booking websites and other popular lifestyle websites using programmatic display advertising;
 - 4.2.3 A consumer PR campaign delivered three social media influencer visits to Edinburgh and three press trips converted coverage in gold-tier media titles;
 - 4.2.4 A pay-per-click (PPC) campaign targeted users searching specific and generic travel search terms in Google, serving Edinburgh top in the search results;
 - 4.2.5 Radio ads promoted *Story Never Ends* messaging to listeners across Scotland;
 - 4.2.6 An industry toolkit with campaign assets was made available to businesses on the ETAG's Forever Edinburgh content hub;
 - 4.2.7 To amplify paid activity, content was served organically on Forever Edinburgh's channels including social media, consumer newsletter and edinburgh.org;
 - 4.2.8 A new city+ section was added to edinburgh.org to promote regional products and support regional recovery;
 - 4.2.9 A rebranded press pack was created and updated with fresh content, including a new Regions section to support regional recovery; and

4.2.10 New city-wide and regional photography was commissioned to improve Forever Edinburgh channels and provide assets for industry and travel buyers to use in their promotion of Edinburgh.

4.3 The winter campaign is building on the momentum of the summer campaign, with additional focus on converting bookings and engaging residents. As at 31 December 2021, the winter campaign has delivered the following:

4.3.1 Two winter films were commissioned and served on YouTube, Social Media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and embedded in native articles as part of a media partnership with Reach PLC;

4.3.2 Consumer Public Relations (PR) deliverables have attracted global media coverage and attention from activities delivered to date: a new video promoting dog-friendly Edinburgh, a competition prize package with multi award-winning author, Ian Rankin OBE, with further celebrity endorsement, live music and sustainability inspired themed activity still to go live. Participating businesses have reported a rise in bookings as result of media coverage;

4.3.3 The new resident focused initiative *Resident Rewards Edinburgh*, launched in December 2021, with promotion on social and YouTube as well as a partnership with The List and ForthFM. Working in partnership with the city's tourism businesses, residents of Edinburgh can enjoy high-value rewards and discounts with a new business every month. Participating businesses have confirmed positive resident engagement and ticket conversions, an audience they don't normally attract;

4.3.4 Fresh seasonal blog content has been curated and served to target audiences on social media, with referrals from edinburgh.org to bookable visitor products being tracked;

4.3.5 Three seasonal articles have been created and published nationally as part of Forever Edinburgh's partnership with media partner Reach PLC;

4.3.6 A media partnership with The List has served Edinburgh messaging to their audience via solus newsletters, display advertising and social support; and

4.3.7 A partnership with ForthFM has delivered campaign messaging via a schedule of radio ads, presenter endorsement spotlights, website coverage and social support.

4.4 Interim campaign results are outlined in Appendix 1.

#ShopHereThisYear

4.5 In July 2020, the Council secured £40,000 from Scottish Towns' Partnership to support local businesses during lockdown. This funded the #ShopHereThisYear campaign.

- 4.6 From November 2020 – September 2021, Forever Edinburgh’s delivered the #ShopHereThisYear campaign, targeting Edinburgh residents with a ‘Shop Local’ message. Despite a modest campaign budget, the campaign successfully delivered:
- 4.6.1 A new neighbourhood microsite on www.edinburgh.org featuring top things to see and do in the city’s 11 town centres. To date, this section has had 1.06m pageviews with users demonstrating an interest in content across all neighbourhoods;
 - 4.6.2 Eleven (11) new neighbourhood videos were commissioned and served to residents via YouTube and social media. These are now live on Forever Edinburgh’s YouTube channel and feature on each neighbourhood’s landing page;
 - 4.6.3 Eleven (11) Spotlight Weeks were programmed and served, honing focus and raising awareness of each neighbourhood’s unique offer;
 - 4.6.4 Six (6) bespoke neighbourhood competitions and one hero competition generated new local data leads;
 - 4.6.5 The campaign delivered 4.07m impressions, 38,700 website referrals from social media, and 49,100 video views at 100%; and
 - 4.6.6 A new Business Champion Network was created, bringing together representatives from each town centre and Council officers, enabling enhanced communications and support between business networks as well as the Council.

2022 Marketing Plan to inbound leisure visitors

- 4.7 Funding for paid activity will come to an end on 31 March 2022. There have been no new announcements on future funding opportunities, however officers will continue to scope out opportunities and apply for funding accordingly. In addition, private sector partners have expressed an interest in supporting campaign activity and dialogue is ongoing.
- 4.8 The *Forever Edinburgh Leisure Tourism Marketing Plan 2022* is therefore based primarily on organic activity with further consideration to potential paid activity should funding be made available. The 2022 marketing plan comprises the following key elements:
- 4.8.1 Situational Analysis: key findings from an audit of the macro and micro external environment and internal environment, including actions Forever Edinburgh will take in response to these findings;
 - 4.8.2 From the perspective of leisure tourism marketing, a stakeholder map of Forever Edinburgh’s key internal and external stakeholders’ identifies who the team will engage throughout 2022, with an ambition to develop and execute a new business-to-business (b2b) Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan 2022;

- 4.8.3 Audience targeting: the plan identifies two key visitor segments and valuable markets for Forever Edinburgh to target from the inbound domestic market, and the proposed route-to-market for targeting inbound international visitors;
- 4.8.4 Five SMART marketing objectives have been set, and activity outputs will be measured and monitored on Forever Edinburgh's digital dashboard throughout 2022. These are written in direct alignment with the Council's mission statement and the 2030 Edinburgh Tourism Strategy;
- 4.8.5 The marketing strategy explores four strategic options available to Edinburgh, with rationale given for the proposed strategic route Forever Edinburgh will take;
- 4.8.6 Visitor targeting and positioning outlines how Forever Edinburgh will tailor its messaging and content to align with the specific needs, interests and holiday motivations of the target segments;
- 4.8.7 A series of tactics will be used to deliver the plan, utilising city partners to amplify organic activity;
- 4.8.8 The marketing mix has been applied to four Edinburgh destination product brands including: High-Season City Breaks, Winter Breaks, Touring+ and Residents;
- 4.8.9 To measure the success of the marketing plan and using previous year data as the benchmark, digital marketing metrics and KPIs have been set with monitoring mentioned above; and
- 4.8.10 In partnership with ETAG and VisitScotland, Forever Edinburgh will report results to key stakeholders and provide progress updates and forward plans on activity so tourism partners can participate and collaborate.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Officers will continue to deliver the winter phase of *The Story Never Ends* campaign until the end March 2022 and, in parallel, develop campaign ideas in preparation for potential external funding that will align with the national themed year 'Year of Stories'.
- 5.2 There is an ambition to maintain Resident Rewards Edinburgh throughout 2022 so feeding the pipeline of Rewards partners will commence shortly.
- 5.3 Officers will, in partnership with ETAG, develop new campaign partner funding propositions.
- 5.4 The website, www.edinburgh.org, is also under pressure due to its age and the Council approved funding of £0.05m in 2022/23 to upgrade and support the website. Officers are developing plans for this.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The Council has no dedicated budget for *The Story Never Ends*, and the activities set out above have been met by external funding.
- 6.2 As noted above, the Council approved funding of £0.05m in 2022/23 to support the upgrade of the www.edinburgh.org website, which hosts the Forever Edinburgh brand.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Resident engagement is one of the key focus areas for the Edinburgh 2030 Tourism Strategy and has been the foundation for two of the campaigns Forever Edinburgh have focussed on in 2020 and 2021, #ShopHereThisYear and Resident Rewards. Both have been hugely successful and there is an ambition to continue to run the latter throughout 2022.
- 7.2 Officers are exploring the possibility and feasibility of building a Resident Sentiment Tracker that will help monitor sentiment as the city reopens to international and domestic inbound visitors. Initial exploration has commenced to identify whether this is feasible with the resources available.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [2030 Edinburgh Tourism Strategy.](#)

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 - The Story Never Ends and Resident Rewards Edinburgh interim results.

Appendix 1 – The Story Never Ends and Resident Rewards Edinburgh interim results

Website

Edinburgh.org (campaign period):

- Pageviews: +460% increase in pageviews during campaign period April-February (2021 v 2020) and up 87% on 2019/20.
- Users: up 174% on 2020/21 and up 5% on 2019/20.
- 345,000 total external link clicks | 131,000 external links (winter campaign).

Campaign Microsite

- *The Story Never Ends* Microsite – 198,000 pageviews
- Sponsored blog pageviews:
 - 42,000 sponsored blog page views.

Resident Rewards

- 2nd most popular page on edinburgh.org since it launched (December-February).
- 33,000 page views.
- 2279 referral clicks.
- 6225 external link clicks.

Digital

	Impressions	Clicks
Display	7,991,000	21,505
Social	5,289,300	43,201
Google	422,517	32,688
YouTube	12,248,000	77,485
	25,950,817	174,879

Consumer PR

Dog-friendly Edinburgh:

- 1.09B readership
- 922,000 coverage views
- Nine pieces of media coverage
- 39,000 views on EEN Facebook channel

Tour Edinburgh with Ian Rankin competition:

- 247m online readership reach
- 170 pieces of media coverage
- 819,000 estimated coverage views