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Cllr Nick Wilkinson
Lancaster City Council
Dalton Square
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Dear Cllr Wilkinson,

Lancaster Museums

I write further to your discussions regarding the feasibility of establishing a Lancaster wide organisation to develop and manage the museums offering across the city centre.

The Lancaster district receives over 7 million visitors annually (Source: STEAM 2014), making the second highest contribution to the total number of visitors (63 million) welcomed across Lancashire. It performs equally as high in terms of visitor spend, generating £415 million in economic impact (11% of the Lancashire total) and supporting 5,878 FTE jobs (10% of all visitor related jobs across the county). Web statistics for Visitlancashire.com also demonstrate a strong visitor interest in the district with annual page views for the Lancaster district having nearly doubled over the last year to reach over 1.2 million page views between April – December 2015. The district is clearly a key contributor to the prosperity of the county's visitor economy, playing an important role in bringing visitors to Lancashire.

The historic county town of Lancaster, a small city with a built heritage that puts it in England's top flight, potentially, provides a heritage centre for the county. The city offers product experiences that have national standout e.g. the UK's largest walkabout theatre in the England at Williamson Park, Lancaster Castle and a top 10 university and provides a quality environment for visitors interested in its history, independent shopping and a range of cultural experiences. Indeed, the city's cultural offering has a key role to play in helping to establish the county as a recognised, year round cultural destination through our plans to deliver an Arts Council funded initiative in 2016 that will closely integrate arts and culture within the visitor economy and amplify Lancashire's cultural voice to engage and develop wider audiences.

Marketing Lancashire has helped to strengthen Lancaster's positioning as an historic city by securing its membership of England's Heritage Cities Group alongside leading visitor destinations such as Durham, Chester, York and Bath. The group collaborate, share best practice and raise the profile of the cities to secure funding, recently being awarded monies

from the UK Challenge Fund to develop promotional campaigns targeting overseas visitors (French and German) with a heritage interest.

Alongside discussions around future development of the castle and continued investment in the city's cultural offering, including leading events such as Light Up Lancaster, now part of a wider 'Lighting Up the North' series of light festivals featuring seven festivities across the north of England, the city is one of the county's biggest opportunities for driving growth. However, the city's future growth potential is limited by a number of challenges, in particular a lack of accommodation options and its heritage offer is dispersed and in need of interpretation.

The Lancashire Visitor Economy Strategy 2015-2020 and accompanying destination management plan sets out to determine how sector growth can be supported over the next five years, with a primary focus on consolidating and strengthening Lancashire's positioning as a short breaks destination. It recommends that a specific development plan for the city is considered to evaluate how Lancaster can drive its role as one of England's Heritage Cities and as a leading visitor destination within Lancashire for short breaks.

To this effect, Marketing Lancashire is sponsoring the process of producing a Destination Development Plan (DDP) specifically for Lancaster; this will be led by a designated Steering Group and involves working very closely with the stakeholders in the city including the business community, particularly businesses involved in the visitor economy, community groups, the public sector and the voluntary sector. With this in mind, we would encourage the future role of Lancaster's museums, as a key element of the city's cultural heritage offer, to be reviewed as part of wider stakeholder discussions. This includes the potential for greater collaboration and co-ordination in building resilience and growing audiences through a visitor focused approach to development.

We look forward to hearing of your progress in reviewing management of the city museums and to understanding how the visitor experience can be further developed to help realise the wider goals and aspirations for Lancaster as a leading visitor destination within the county.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Connor', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ruth Connor
Chief Executive