

Delivering a World Class Visitor Economy Within Derbyshire: Buxton Tram

Buxton tram has been saved thanks to business support funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). For specialist tour company Discover Buxton, a new link with Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire (MPDD) and access to a business grant via the ERDF-funded Delivering a World Class Visitor Economy Within Derbyshire programme, couldn't have come at a better time.

Managing Director Netta Christie explains how becoming a member of MPDD saved a key area of the business – the operation of their vintage Buxton tram: “We simply wouldn't have been able to operate the tram part of the business without getting the grant. We've used the money towards funding various modifications to the vehicle – making it safe for visitors to use as well as augmenting the visitor experience. From simple steps, such as installing Perspex to separate our drivers from passengers, through to high tech elements to enhance our tours; the funding came at such a key time for us.”

The tram has been showing visitors the sights and sounds of Buxton for over seven years, however with the recent redevelopments of the Buxton Crescent, Netta and the team needed to rethink how to tell story of this iconic area of town, as well as showing the insides of other buildings with restricted access, due to the Covid19 pandemic.



“Improvements to the on-board computer system inside the tram enable us to showcase the inside of buildings that can't currently be seen in the traditional sense,” describes Netta. “We can now offer visitors sat in the vehicle a virtual tour of buildings like the Crescent, with the added element of someone ‘real’ – our driver and tour guide - to interpret what's being shown. The system allows us to show historical photos of ‘then’ and ‘now,’ relating to key Buxton locations as we drive past. It's a wonderful experience for visitors, and thanks to the grant money we were able to get it ready for when we reopened in September 2020.”

Using the expertise of local company Peak Electronic Design Ltd, the computer system and passenger screen are powered by an eco-friendly on-board battery, just like the tram itself.

“Jeremy at Peak Electronic Design is fantastic. He made sure the entire system is easy to control by the driver whilst being absorbing and relevant for the passengers as the tour progresses. A cab-mounted camera enables a view of the driver to be seen by the passengers as a live overlay on the main

presentation screen - a live stream to the guests on tour. The tour experience is so much better now,” says Netta.

Discover Buxton also used the grant money towards the adaptation of its website to be able to take online bookings and offer downloadable experiences and tours, in response to the pandemic. “We now offer online things to do under your own steam - even if everything is closed,” Netta describes. “Thanks to joining MPDD and the funding received, we have adapted the business to offer more than before.”

Discover Buxton received support through Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire's Delivering a World Class Visitor Economy Within Derbyshire programme, which is part funded from D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership's allocation of the European Regional Development Fund.

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