

Title of Report	NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE TOURISM STRATEGY	
Presented by	Cllr Tony Gillard 01530 454555 tony.gillard@NWLeicestershire.gov.uk	
Background Papers	Leicester and Leicestershire Tourism Strategy https://www.llep.org.uk/key-documents/leicester-and-leicestershire-tourism-growth-plan/leicester-and-leicestershire-tourism-growth-plan-2019/	Public Report: Yes
	Tourism Sector Deal https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tourism-sector-deal	Key Decision: Yes
Financial Implications	The potential for an additional budget allocation to implement the tourism strategy is being considered within the budget setting process for 2020-2021 onwards.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications associated with this report.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	Any staffing implications as a result of changes to the way we develop and promote tourism within the district will be dealt with in accordance with our organisation change processes.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	The report outlines the proposed Tourism Strategy for the District and seeks comments.	
Recommendations	THAT COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROVIDES COMMENTS FOR CABINET'S CONSIDERATION ON THE DRAFT TOURISM STRATEGY	

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Tourist Attractions

North West Leicestershire has a number of important tourist destinations with the National Forest having the highest profile and containing within its boundary a variety of opportunities for tourists including the historic market town of Ashby de la Zouch, Conkers, Moira Furnace, Hicks Lodge and much industrial heritage in and around Coalville. The draft Tourism Strategy provides further details. There are also a number of attractions just outside the district including Twycross Zoo and Calke Abbey.

1.2 Tourism infrastructure

Good road links provide easy access for tourists whilst, in principle, East Midlands Airport enables easy access by air to the district. In practice, however, the North West Leicestershire tourist offer is not strong enough on its own to attract international travellers.

1.3 Accommodation

Associated with the airport there are several hotels which can provide accommodation for tourists whereas the hotel offer is limited in the remainder of the district. Studies show, however, that the vast majority of tourist visits to the district are day trips and this means that there is an opportunity to improve and coordinate the tourist offer to encourage longer stays which would significantly boost the tourism economy.

1.4 National strategy

The government's modern Industrial Strategy sets out a long-term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of people throughout the UK. As part of this strategy, "The Tourism Sector Deal sets out the vision for how the government and industry will work in partnership to boost productivity, develop the skills of the UK workforce and support destinations to enhance their visitor offer and increase in visitor numbers. In 2018 the UK attracted 38 million international visitors, who added £23bn to the economy, making tourism one of the country's most important industries and the third largest service export. Current forecasts predict the sector will deliver a 23 per cent increase in inbound visitors by 2025. Domestic tourism is also set to increase by an estimated 3 per cent per annum until 2025. In 2018, British residents took 119 million overnight trips in the UK, totalling 372 million nights away and spending £24bn. The Deal seeks to develop the infrastructure necessary for this influx of visitors. It also creates a framework to position industry to take advantage of new markets as well as leveraging initiatives designed to deliver the Grand Challenges relating to the data-driven economy, clean growth and an ageing society."

- 1.5 "With this predicted increase in visitors, there needs to be investment in the infrastructure to accommodate and entertain them. 130,000 hotel rooms will be built over the next five years, representing the largest hotel investment anywhere in Europe. 75 per cent of these new rooms will be outside the capital, supporting the government's intention that the benefits of tourism should be felt across the whole of the UK. Significant investment will also be made in attractions by the private and public sectors —including investment in both our natural and built heritage, museums and arts. Investment will also be made in the people who work in the sector, so that the growth in visitor numbers can, in turn, create equivalent growth in well-paid employment opportunities. The industry will create 30,000 apprenticeship starts each year and a new mentoring scheme will help 10,000 employees develop their careers in the sector. This will complement a commitment by the government to ensure that our education system supports the industry's needs, including the rollout of two new T level courses."

1.6 Leicester and Leicestershire tourism strategy

- 1.6.1 In 2018, £1.88bn was injected into the Leicester and Leicestershire economy which supported 23,076 jobs. The area attracted around 34.9 million visitors of which the vast majority (89%, over 31 million) were day visitors and only 3.76 million staying visitors - only 11% of visitor numbers but 39% of economic impact.

- 1.6.2 Peak months for staying visitors are December, July and August. A high proportion of overnight trips to the area are visits to friends and family (56%).
- 1.6.3 The strategy states that “The benefits of a thriving tourism industry however are not just economic; they make our area a more attractive place to live, study and do business in. Our rich heritage, beautiful natural landscapes and world-class visitor attractions help create a place that all can enjoy and feel proud of.”
- 1.6.4 The aspiration across Leicester and Leicestershire is “...to become a leading leisure and business tourism destination where visitors are compelled to come and uncover our story, increasing the value of tourism to the local economy to £2.1bn by 2025.”
- 1.6.5 The strategy recognises the importance of Donington Park and National Forest/ Conkers in North West Leicestershire as part of the top 22 tourism offers in the City and County and notes the success of “Timber” in the UK Festival Awards, winning the Best New Festival 2018.
- 1.6.6 Clear messages in the Leicester and Leicestershire strategy are:
- We need to establish a clear identity for the area and promote it through a coherent campaign that is easy to get behind and straightforward for businesses to adopt.
 - All stakeholders understand that the whole (Leicester + Shire) can be more than the sum of the parts.
 - There are some areas of untapped potential including the waterways, the retail offer, food and drink offer and business tourism.
 - There are a range of infrastructure challenges that need to be addressed to underpin the growth of the sector including skills, accessibility and the visitor welcome.
 - Businesses want to see a shift from reliance on local day visitors.
- 1.6.7 The strategy has three strategic priorities:
- Creating a Strong, Distinctive and Visible Destination
 - Improving Productivity
 - Strategic Product Development
- 1.6.8 The priorities are underpinned by four enablers which have ambitious lists of actions:
- People & Skills
 - Connectivity
 - Places to stay
 - A First Class Welcome
- 1.6.9 The key elements of the strategy for North West Leicestershire are:
- The National Forest and the Forest Town of Ashby de la Zouch. The National Forest has been developing as an exemplar sustainable tourism destination for the past 25 years and we want to support its ambitions to further develop the Forest experience in line with the priorities identified in its Tourism Growth Plan. The collective National Forest as a destination provides a critical mass of activities that are distinctive to the Forest and create a strong joined-up offer including walking and cycling trails, the Hicks Lodge Cycle Centre, Conkers family visitor attraction, events and festivals such as Timber. The area also has a rich industrial heritage linked to the former Leicestershire Coalfield with attractions including the Moira Furnace, Ashby Canal, Swannington Incline and Hough Mill. The attractive market town of Ashby de la Zouch is also developing its reputation as a ‘Forest Town’ and

has a good independent retail, food and drink offer with Ashby Castle (managed by English Heritage) a well-known landmark.

- Backing our winners: Heart of the Forest Vision, potentially including the Conkers Aerial Walkway (subject to a satisfactory business case) – a project to create the UK's longest aerial walkway,
- Promoting the National Forest as a sustainable and active short break destination including high quality offers such as E-bike holidays.
- Strengthen partnerships with East Midlands Airport, and other regional destinations, to achieve regional ambitions on inbound visitors and link this to a possible Tourism Zone development as outlined in the Leicester and Leicestershire Growth Plan.
- Use the “Uncover the Story” campaign as a platform to better connect Leicester and Leicestershire’s rich industrial heritage to the visitor economy. The area boasts some of the earliest developments of the Industrial Revolution in canal and rail transport as well as popular visitor attractions such as Abbey Pumping Station, Foxton Locks and Moira Furnace. Planned developments in Coalville and Snibston Park, including the ‘Many Faces of Palitoy’ project, will support the campaign.

2. NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE

2.1 Ambition

The draft Northwest Leicestershire Tourism Strategy’s ambition is that together we will clearly and firmly establish the district within the broader context of the tourism 'destination', attracting staying and day visitors from across the UK and beyond.

2.2 We will aim to deliver:

- An agreed, cohesive ‘script’ for presenting the area’s distinctive tourism stories, increasing understanding and awareness of the assets of the destination
- A solution for the way in which we label and describe the area to a visitor audience
- Increases in the availability of guest accommodation
- The majority of partner businesses promoting online
- The majority of appropriate businesses actively engaged, informed and involved

2.3 The economic impact of tourism

The last measurement of the size of the tourism economy in the district was undertaken in 2016 (using the STEAM model). At that time, the sector was valued at £205m and accounted for 2121 jobs. It is intended that the Tourism Strategy will result in 8% growth in economic activity over 3 years through greater visitor spend.

2.4 Going for growth

- 2.5 The priority of this plan is to develop a strong proposition to put before prospective visitors in order to maximise the return on marketing investment. This is both the physical places and the experiences.

2.6 Rather than jumping right in with the marketing activity, we will take time to strengthen all aspects of the offer and therefore achieve much greater success when the marketing and communications activity commences. We need to ensure that new visitors discovering our area for the first time have a great experience, cover their social media with amazing photos and become champions of our offer.

2.7 Audience research

Recent research for the National Forest Tourism Growth Plan and Leicester and Leicestershire Tourism Growth Plan identified focussing on the following audiences to help to guide and inform marketing and product development:

2.7.1 National Forest Tourism Growth Plan

- Fun Families
- Easy Active Adults
- New Traditionals
- Special Interest Groups

2.7.2 Leicester and Leicestershire Tourism Growth Plan

- Empty-nester couples with traditional values
- Active Family Fun Seekers
- Free and Easy Mini-Breakers

2.8 The Council's consultant did not find anyone who felt that "North West Leicestershire" is an appropriate destination brand for the visitor market. This is how the area has presented itself so it needs to change.

2.9 Our priority locations

- The National Forest and the Forest Town of Ashby de la Zouch – we will work with partners to develop opportunities to grow the National Forest as a tourism destination and to establish Ashby de la Zouch as a Forest Town and 'the forest town' to visit whilst in the National Forest.
- Heart of the Forest - we will support and work with the National Forest and partners to develop a Heart of the Forest masterplan to achieve its aims and outcomes.
- Coalville, Snibston Park and districtwide industrial heritage - we will continue to work with partners to build on the success of industrial heritage initiatives, such as: 'The Many Faces of Palitoy' project, Snibston Park, Moira Furnace and Hello Heritage.

2.10 Accommodating the visitor

2.10.1 Recognising a serious shortage of accommodation supply in the district, an accommodation demand study was commissioned and completed in April 2019. It identified 135 businesses with 5,300 bedspaces providing capacity for 1.9 million overnight stays per year. Hotels account for 53.4% of bedspaces – located primarily around the East Midlands Airport. Touring caravan and camping sites account for 23.4% of bedspaces and there is a small supply of inns of varying standards, 17 guest houses and B&Bs, 39 private rooms let through Airbnb and 54 self-catering properties.

2.10.2 The consultants identified a number of opportunities for improving visitor accommodation including:

- Scope for existing hotels to upgrade and potentially for additional provision in Ashby and around the airport.
- Accommodation development opportunities in Ashby including B&B and inns and restaurants with rooms.
- A variety of appropriate opportunities in the National Forest and,
- Rural accommodation development opportunities beyond the National Forest.
- In Coalville, possibility of a lodge in south east Coalville and upgrading the Hermitage Park Hotel.

2.10.3 The consultants proposed role and priorities for the council are outlined in the study and include working with sub-regional partners as well as specific actions.

2.11 As this strategy demonstrates, tourism in 2020 will require a very different approach to that of 1990 when the primary role of a local authority was to give information to visitors, a role much reduced since the advent of smart phones and the digital era. The tourism strategy seeks to maximise the Council's return on its investment.

2.12 Our priority actions

2.13.1 As a result of the work, three priorities have been identified for action:

2.13.2 Continuing to develop and deliver a tourism blueprint for North West Leicestershire, driving practical activity on the ground through a pro-active tourism partnership,

2.13.3 Continuing to review the role of the district council and resources available to support the delivery of the strategy and priorities.

2.13.3 Following consideration by the Community Scrutiny Committee, it is proposed that the draft Strategy should be finalised and a report should be submitted to Cabinet to seek approval to begin formal consultation.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<p>The relevant Council Priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting Coalville to be a more vibrant, family-friendly town - Support for businesses and helping people into local jobs - Developing a clean and green district - Our communities are safe, healthy and connected
Policy Considerations:	New developments to provide visitor accommodation, attractions or other facilities will need to be in accordance with the Local Plan.
Safeguarding:	No specific impacts.
Equalities/Diversity:	All work to encourage new tourist accommodation or visitor attractions will reflect current equalities legislation as a minimum.
Customer Impact:	Visitors to the district will have access to an improved quality and variety of attractions and accommodation.
Economic and Social Impact:	In 2016 the tourism sector in the district was valued at £205m and accounted for 2121 jobs. The Tourism Strategy aims to increase visitor spend by 8% over 3 years.
Environment and Climate Change:	The key aim of the Tourism Strategy is to encourage visitors to stay longer so that the economic benefit per visit is increased rather than increasing day visits which would increase the amount of travelling into the district. A key partner, The National Forest, is also looking to encourage environmentally sustainable visitor accommodation.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	The Visitor Accommodation study involved consultation by the Council's consultants with the majority of providers. Some key partners in the tourism sector have been consulted informally, including the National Forest.
Risks:	There are no risks directly associated with this report.
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