



CABINET – 22ND OCTOBER 2019

LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE TOURISM GROWTH PLAN

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the five-year Tourism Growth Plan developed for Leicester and Leicestershire by the jointly-funded Place Marketing Team following a process of consultation across the City and County.
2. The full Plan is attached as Appendix A to this report and the comments of the Scrutiny Commission on the draft Plan made at its meeting on 4th September are attached as Appendix B.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Tourism Growth Plan is approved by the Cabinet.

Reasons for Recommendation

4. The Plan will provide a framework for the growth of the sector over the next five years. It will help to focus effort, reduce duplication, inform, guide and influence decisions on investment and bring individual partners together to increase their impact. By visualising the area as a single, integrated visitor destination, the sector can achieve more growth, more visitors, more economic value and more jobs. By working collaboratively with Leicester City Council and the district councils, a more joined up approach to developing tourism across the sub-region can be achieved.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

5. The Tourism Growth Plan was considered by Scrutiny Commission on 4th September and its comments and officers' responses to these are appended to this report.
6. The Tourism Growth Plan was considered and supported by the City Mayor at a meeting on 11th September 2019.

7. The Tourism Advisory Board (a public/private sector partnership group which steers the work of the Place Marketing Team's strategic tourism function) considered both the Plan and consultation feedback on 20th September.
8. Subject to approval, the Plan will be launched as part of the Leicester Business Festival on 31st October with the support of Visit Britain.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

9. The Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2018-2022 is focused on a number of key outcomes for the Council, including an economy which is 'growing and resilient so that people and businesses can fulfil their potential'. Emerging priorities that will inform the development of a 'Strong Economy' strategy include promoting and investing in its tourism offer through attractive and accessible places to visit.
10. The emerging Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) for Leicester and Leicestershire is currently being prepared by the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP). It recognises the importance of tourism in achieving 'place making' objectives. One of the challenges likely to be identified in the LIS is a lack of awareness of Leicester and Leicestershire as a desirable destination to live, work and visit. The Tourism Growth Plan, with its emphasis on place marketing, is seen as a key initiative to address this challenge. The increased numbers of visitors and overnight stays, identified as one of the Tourism Growth Plan's indicators of success, are recognised as having value to the economy. The Plan's strategic priorities also align well with ambitions around healthy business, healthy place and healthy people.

Resource Implications

11. There are no direct funding implications arising from the implementation of the Tourism Growth Plan that are not provided for within existing approved budgets.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

12. None.

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PART B

Background

13. Tourism and hospitality is an important economic sector for Leicester and Leicestershire and is recognised as having the potential to become one of the key drivers of the local economy. In 2018 nearly 35m visitors helped boost the economy by £1.88bn and supported over 23,000 jobs.
14. The Place Marketing Team (PMT) is an officer group funded jointly by the City and County Councils, which delivers place marketing, inward investment and strategic tourism services across Leicester and Leicestershire. The work of the Team is overseen by the Place Marketing Co-ordination Group alternately chaired by Tom Purnell, Assistant Chief Executive, Leicestershire County Council and Mike Dalzell, Director of Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment at Leicester City Council. The Strategic Tourism Manager, who is responsible for the Strategic Tourism function of the PMT, is a County Council employee seconded to the team.
15. Among the key priorities agreed for the Team was to devise and deliver a plan to better manage Leicester and Leicestershire as a tourism destination and to develop a strong, clear campaign brand for the destination to attract more visitors.
16. Extensive consultation was undertaken with stakeholders in 2018 to inform this work, including the public and private sectors, visitors and non-visitors. In addition a data capture exercise was undertaken with tourism businesses in February 2019 to record their growth ambitions and perceived barriers to growth, which was then used to shape the framework for a Tourism Growth Plan.
17. The Tourism Advisory Board set up a task and finish group to address the place branding challenge. A new campaign brand called “*Uncover the Story*” was proposed to package and sell the local tourism offer to visitors and build a more distinctive identity for the destination of Leicester and Leicestershire. This was endorsed by the Tourism Advisory Board in April 2019.
18. A Business Tourism Strategy and delivery model has been developed for Leicester and Leicestershire as part of the Tourism Growth Plan work, supported by consultants Leopold Marketing. The Strategy aims to realise the full economic potential of business tourism through a sustainable and collaborative approach that unlocks opportunity for tourism businesses.
19. A business tourism delivery service will be developed based on a tiered private sector membership model and agreed activities include a new website, a dedicated point of contact for both suppliers and buyers, attendance at key trade shows, conference bidding and a curated community of businesses that will benefit from seminars and networking. Seed funding for this initiative was secured from the City and County Councils and the LLEP-administered business rates pool in July 2019.

20. The Tourism Growth Plan incorporates the campaign brand of “Uncover the Story” and business tourism, thereby addressing both the leisure and business tourism sectors.

Framework

21. The Tourism Growth Plan provides a framework for further sector growth over the next five years. It sets down key priorities, activities and projects that partners and stakeholders collectively feel offer the best prospects to increase the competitiveness of the destination of Leicester and Leicestershire as a tourism destination and maximise the wealth the sector can generate.

22. The framework has three strategic priorities:

i. Create a strong, distinctive and visible destination

This outlines the campaign brand of *Uncover the Story*.

ii. Improve productivity

Activities focus on delivery of business tourism support, better packaging and promotion of existing tourism product to extend visitor stays and improved profile on key digital platforms. It also recognises a strategic need to improve the beneficial local tourism impact from East Midlands Airport, mentioning a possible Tourism Action Zone development.

iii. Improve competitiveness through strategic product development

Three activity strands include:

- **Backing our Winners** – Highlights those major tourism growth projects most likely to help us achieve growth targets around jobs, visitor numbers and economic impact.
- **Product development campaigns** – Themes include *King Richard III Discovery Story, Taste the Place, Fit-cation, Creative Edge*.
- **Developing Local Destinations** – Leicester, National Forest and the Forest Town, Market Towns and District Visitor Hubs.

23. The three strategic priorities will be underpinned by four enablers:

- i. People and skills
- ii. Connectivity – communication and getting around
- iii. Places to stay
- iv. A first class welcome.

Tourism in the County

24. The Tourism Growth Plan will support tourism businesses across the County through a range of activities that include:

- a. raising the profile of Leicestershire as a tourism destination of choice at a national and international level,

- b. development of a business tourism service to support hotels and conference venues win more meetings, incentives, conferences and events (e.g. Imago Venues, Bruntingthorpe Events, Hothorpe Venues, Kilworth House) and to better utilise visitor attractions for the corporate market,
- c. creating and promoting more itineraries and bookable tourism product to encourage visitors to explore the area and stay longer in hotels and guest houses,
- d. supporting major tourism growth projects such as Twycross Zoo TZ2030 Vision, Heart of the Forest Vision and Conkers aerial walkway, Great Central Railway Vision, Bosworth 1485 Sculpture Trail, Everards Meadows and Fosse Park development and proposed Melton Rural Food Enterprise Zone,
- e. involving tourism businesses in promotional campaigns to raise their profile such as Fit-cation, Taste the Place and the King Richard III Discovery Story,
- f. supporting the development and promotion of individual visitor destinations and visitor hubs within the wider County area and helping them to amplify and define their distinctive offer including the National Forest and Ashby de la Zouch as a forest town, Visit Harborough, Melton Mowbray, Explore Bosworth, the Charnwood Forest and Loughborough and Everards Meadows and Fosse Park,
- g. a range of enabling activities - supporting the wider tourism skills development agenda, improving communications with tourism businesses to make them aware of development opportunities, championing the area as a tourism destination with national tourism bodies such as Visit Britain and the Midlands Engine, supporting the development of green travel plans at local attractions, pro-active support in creating more places for visitors to stay and undertaking initiatives to further improve the visitor welcome.

Consultation

- 25. **Tourism Businesses** - Open workshops were held with tourism businesses in May and June 2018 to invite input into the development of the Plan, supplemented by an online survey. In February 2019 a data capture exercise was undertaken with tourism businesses to identify growth ambitions and barriers to growth. An ongoing consultation process with tourism businesses has also been conducted through attendance at district and city tourism partnership meetings. The development of the Plan has been steered throughout by the Tourism Advisory Board which meets bi-monthly.
- 26. **Visitors** - visitor and non-visitor research and sentiment analysis was conducted through online surveys in 2018. This activity was undertaken in partnership with East Midlands Airport and tourism market research agency Bluegrass.

27. A draft version of the Tourism Growth Plan was circulated for sector consultation in September. Responses were received from Tourism Advisory Board members and senior officers in the district councils with responsibility for the tourism sector. These comments were added to those of the Scrutiny Commission, given consideration and used to shape the final version of the Plan.

Comments of the Scrutiny Commission

28. The views of the Scrutiny Commission are detailed in Appendix B. Members considered the draft Plan and made a number of suggestions, including that -
- Leicestershire's industrial heritage should be highlighted more,
 - there should be greater focus on attractions in the County,
 - mention could be made of a number of smaller museums and tourist attractions,
 - account needed to be taken of the ways in which tourism was changing, for example, the declining footfall in shops and markets.

The Commission noted that the Tourism Advisory Board would consider the Plan at its meeting on 20 September and asked that the revised draft was circulated to its members once it had been agreed by the Board.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

27. There are no equality or human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report

Environmental Implications

29. The Plan recognises a need to be mindful of the associated carbon impact of sector growth from increased visitor numbers, referencing the Local Industrial Strategy for Leicester and Leicestershire that prioritises clean growth to achieve a healthy place to live and do business in. Support for the low-carbon agenda is referenced around the development of green travel plans for tourism businesses.

Background Papers

Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2018-2022

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/council-plans/the-strategic-plan>

Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held on 4 September 2019

[http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=5698&\\$LO\\$=1](http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=5698&LO=1)

Appendices

Appendix A – Tourism Growth Plan

Appendix B – Issue raised and responses made to Scrutiny Commission comments