



## **SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 22<sup>ND</sup> APRIL 2026**

### **PLACE MARKETING – LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE**

### **REPORT OF THE DRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, LAW AND GOVERNANCE**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Scrutiny Commission on the work of the Place Marketing Team (PMT) for Leicester and Leicestershire.

#### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. The County Council's Strategic Plan emphasises the importance of enhancing Leicestershire's profile as a desirable location to visit, live, work, and do business. This strategy aims to stimulate investment and create a thriving environment for businesses to grow and prosper.
3. The Scrutiny Commission receives regular updates on the PMT's work, with the most recent report having been provided in January 2025.

#### **Background**

4. The PMT has been the primary vehicle for promoting Leicester and Leicestershire as a premier destination to visit, live, and invest in. The PMT is hosted by Leicester City Council and operates through a shared management, funding, and delivery model.
5. The PMT's work across the City and County focuses on three core pillars:
  - Strategic Tourism - Positioning Leicester and Leicestershire as a visitor destination through public and private sector partnerships. To steer this a Local Visitor Economy Partnership Board has been established comprising both public and private stakeholders, which shapes policy and ensures the PMT delivers on the Leicester and Leicestershire Tourism Growth Plan 2026-2031.
  - Place Marketing - The central aim is to promote the profile of the region to attract residents and investors. A Place Marketing Coordination (officer) group brings together various stakeholders to develop and refine place-based strategies, ensuring marketing efforts are cohesive and impactful.
  - Inward Investment - A dedicated account management service to support both domestic and foreign businesses looking to relocate or expand within the

Leicestershire region. This also extends to developers and investors interested in bringing new sites to market. Beyond direct support, the PMT hosts a variety of events and promotional activities throughout the year to showcase the specific opportunities available across the City and County.

## **Strategic Tourism**

### Growth of the Visitor Economy

6. The 2024 “STEAM” report (a model used to measure the impact of visitors on the local economy) highlights a period of significant expansion for the tourism sector in Leicester and Leicestershire. The region’s economic contribution reached £2.4 billion, supported by a 2.4% increase in visitor numbers (totalling 32 million).
7. Notably, the duration of stays has lengthened, contributing to a total of 39.51 million visitor days. This upward trend in engagement has directly bolstered the local labour market; the visitor economy now accounts for 23,133 jobs, reflecting a steady growth of 201 roles since 2023.

### Tourism Growth Plan

8. This year marks a milestone for the sub-regional strategy with the launch of the five-year Tourism Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire. This roadmap is the culmination of a 12-month consultation period, ensuring the strategic direction for the visitor economy is ambitious and developed using local insight and cross-county collaboration.
9. The five-year plan is structured around three core pillars designed to drive sustainable growth and long-term economic value:
  - Destination Promotion - Strengthening the brand identity of both the City and County to establish Leicester and Leicestershire as a premier ‘must-visit’ destination.
  - Leading the Visitor Economy - Developing a close, strategic alignment with Visit England to ensure local strengths are integrated into national tourism priorities.
  - Partnership for Prosperity - Creating a collaborative approach to ensure the visitor economy thrives. This includes a focus on enhancing sector skills, driving local employment, and increasing overall visitor numbers.
10. The strategy was officially launched during English Tourism Week in March 2026, featuring keynote speeches from the Chair of Visit England, the City Mayor, and the Chair of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership Board.

## **Place Marketing**

### **Place Marketing Co-ordination Group**

11. Governance for the PMT and activity continues with quarterly meetings of the Place Marketing Co-ordination Group which comprises representatives from the County Council, City Council, District Councils, Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership, and private sector businesses.
12. Terms of reference are in place to ensure the Group provides strategic direction, with reference to:
  - Confirming strategic priorities in relation to place marketing, tourism and inward investment, including approval of the annual delivery plan.
  - Aligning and prioritising public sector resources and wider policies / services to maximise the economic outcomes of place marketing, inward investment and tourism.
  - Identifying and exploiting collaborative opportunities to jointly deliver better outcomes for less.
  - Reviewing and commenting on quarterly progress reports detailing spend and outcomes.
  - Acting as champions for the Place Marketing Team and provide senior level representation of their organisation on the Board.

### **District Promotion**

13. Partnership arrangements are in place with all of the county districts on a range of campaigns, particularly around promotion of key attractions. For example, the launch of the Bosworth 1485 trail working alongside Hinckley and Bosworth Council and Leicestershire Promotions.
14. Additional, paid, promotional activity was undertaken with Blaby District Council for the Victory Show and Christmas activities in the district. Additional campaigns with North West Leicestershire District Council and Melton Borough Council were also delivered and a successful UK Shared Prosperity Fund bid for ongoing work supporting Oadby and Wigston Borough Council with events, retail and town centre promotions.
15. Social media campaigns for the district councils reached more than 1.2 million people driving 65,000 views of key district pages on the Visit Leicester website. Feedback from district councils was overwhelmingly positive. Regular feedback was given throughout the campaigns which including live dashboards summarising key successes. These can be found in Appendix B.

### **Seasonal Campaigns and Content**

16. The PMT has developed seasonal campaigns and content tailored to peak trading periods, including school holidays, major events, and festive seasons. The 'Summer in the County' campaign drove significant engagement from 17 May to 31 August, encompassing a diverse range of activities across the region including linking Wistow

Maze with the Great Central Railway, tying in with the Railway 200 national event, promotion of and Visit Leicester representation in the main arena of the Download music festival, and coverage of a special event to celebrate 60 years of East Midlands Airport. During this period, social media reach totalled 2.7 million views, while dedicated summer event pages surpassed 62,000 views.

17. Success continued with targeted campaigns for Halloween, Bonfire Night, and Christmas. These initiatives were equally effective, with top Leicestershire-related event blogs on the Visit Leicester website generating 60,000 views.

### Regenerative Tourism

18. "Green Stays, Ways, and Days" was launched in Spring 2025, focused on promoting sustainable travel across Harborough, North West Leicestershire, and Blaby. The campaign featured 12 bespoke case studies and targeted multimedia content designed to drive regional engagement. To date, media efforts have achieved a total reach exceeding 678,000, securing over 21,200 high-intent visitors to the dedicated district landing pages on the Visit Leicester website. Further details are provided in Appendix B.

### Commercial Activity

19. The Visit Leicester team has shifted toward a more commercial mindset by targeting new business leads, improving relationships with established partners, and collaborating with district leads to increase our collective reach.
20. The PMT has worked to improve long-term sustainability by generating independent revenue. This effort yielded tangible results in 2025, including seven private-sector agreements totalling £8,994. Combined with £38,227 from district partnership work, a net commercial total of £47,221 was achieved.
21. The PMT's commercial offer can be found in Appendix B. In summary, it offers 4 packages that aim to enhance visibility for businesses:
  - The Partnership Package - provides longer-term, high-impact digital promotion for major attractions and venues.
  - The Event Support Package - delivers targeted promotion through web listings, newsletters, and social media to drive ticket sales.
  - The Restaurant Promotion Package - focuses on high-quality content creation, including professional reels and a search optimised web page.
  - The Business Support Package - offers organic social media features and permanent search-optimised web listings to boost the audience reach for these businesses.

A presentation on the PMT's commercial offer will be given at the meeting.

### Destination Management Website ([www.visitleicester.info](http://www.visitleicester.info))

22. The Visit Leicester destination management website was launched in May 2025 after undergoing a comprehensive transformation that focuses on user experience, accessibility and a more modern, mobile-first approach. Alongside this, the website has had a 92% reduction in annual running costs, dropping from circa £25,000 to just £2,000. This overhaul also introduced high-impact features such as an AI chatbot, clearer trail and route mapping functionality and more intuitive navigation.
23. The analytics on the website are far more robust, allowing the tracking of users in a much clearer way. This has highlighted a 432% increase in traffic from organic social media, which now accounts for 15% of all site users. General site "actions" such as booking clicks and map views, have risen by 34.82% on the new site, proving that the new design successfully drives meaningful interactions. Additionally, the implementation of streamlined online forms has resulted in higher competition entry rates and an increase in newsletter sign-ups.
24. The site now has powerful data collected via Google Analytics, which allows for the capture of more accurate postcode data and the ability to monitor user interest trends in real-time, showing exactly where visitors are coming from and what they are interested in.

### Audience Growth on Social Media

25. Views and visibility of Visit Leicester social media massively improved from 2024. Post impressions across Visit Leicester channels reached 18.4 million, up 558% from 2024. The follower count (across Facebook, Instagram, X and Threads) at the end of 2025 was 58,666, up 21.8% from 48,158 at the end of 2024. Traffic to the Visit Leicester website from social media went up to 15% of total traffic. This was thanks in part to a considerable improvement on engagement from Facebook, accounting for 138,354 clicks to the website (up 48%).

### Media, PR and Influencers

26. A new media partner, FU Media was secured, delivering articles in the Guardian, Daily Mirror, Daily Express and Independent, plus local television coverage on BBC East Midlands and ITV Central. Between April and December, 34 pieces of County-related coverage were secured.
27. Influencer visits were arranged with Mr and Mrs Yorkshire giving wide coverage to Twycross Zoo and Ye Olde Pork Pie Shop. The aim of this collaborative working with influencers and wider media publications is to attract an audience from well outside the region, as well as outside the reach of the Visit Leicester team's digital communications channels. Examples from some of these partnerships and publications is available in Appendix B.

### Group Travel

28. For the third year running Leicester and Leicestershire were finalists as Best UK Destination for Groups at the Group Leisure and Travel Awards 2025. Promotion was

secured in the Group Travel magazine, and a competition was run in conjunction with these awards. Additional promotion was undertaken to highlight Leicestershire being named a finalist through press releases and online content. Despite not winning the title, this is fantastic recognition by group travel organisers that Leicestershire is an interesting place to visit for group tours.

29. Following an enquiry from the Association for Group Travel Organisers (AGTO) for their annual showcase event, a familiarisation trip was arranged, and this resulted in a confirmed booking for up to 100 delegates for 27 February - 1 March 2026 worth approximately £24,000. Work began on the itinerary for the weekend and securing visits to top attractions across the City and County during the weekend, including Belvoir Castle and Great Central Railway. The primary objective of these trips is to provide a memorable experience for the group travel bookers, encouraging them to subsequently advertise and promote the participating attractions for future group and coach trips.
30. Visit Leicester supported King Richard III (KRIII) and Belvoir Castle at the Excursions Group Travel exhibition at Wembley on 1 February 2025, where 100 group travel guides were distributed. The PMT showcased a Visit Leicester Uncover the Story promotional video on the main video wall throughout the event. Arrangements were also made to distribute another 50 Group Travel guides at the British Tourism and Travel Show in March 2025.
31. Group travel itineraries for the County were distributed to several group travel publications and subsequently appeared in Group Leisure and Travel magazine, Group Travel World magazine, Group Travel today, and the British Guild of Travel Writers monthly newsletter.
32. The Visit Leicester quarterly group travel newsletter is distributed to over 600 subscribers and featured a review of the Harpenden Probus visit from October 2024, KRIII 10th Anniversary activities, Taste the Place experiences, and places to stay for groups. The newsletter continues with strong engagement from subscribers and a 25% open rate. It is an effective communication method for reaching the group travel audience.
33. With confirmation of the AGTO showcase event, the PMT began developing a new version of the group travel guide for Leicester and Leicestershire. A draft layout and new look and feel were developed that would put the top group friendly attractions at the forefront of the guide, together with suggested itineraries and accommodation listings. Previously Visit Leicester has 100% funded the design and print costs for the guide. This time engagement was undertaken with the attractions, businesses and hotels to book a paid for listing paying between £150-£200 for a half or full page. This generated £4650.00, so there was no cost to Visit Leicester, other than officer time needed to co-ordinate the project.
34. A stand space was booked at The British Tourism and Travel Show for 19 March 2026 at the NEC, following partnership enthusiasm to attend. A stand was secured in a prime location to maximise the opportunity for meeting with visitors. Partners included KRIII, Jewry Wall, GCR, Belvoir Castle, Discover Melton, and Visit

Harborough. Work has begun on the administration of the booking and advertising the PMT's attendance.

### **Inward Investment**

35. As the primary point of contact for businesses, developers, and investors, the PMT's investment promotion brand, 'Invest in Leicester', provides a free, impartial, one-stop shop designed to simplify the expansion and relocation process across Leicester and Leicestershire.
36. By offering a dedicated account management service that bridges the gap between the public and private sectors, the team leverages its influence as an enabler and facilitator to promote development and regeneration opportunities. The service provides essential market, property, and site intelligence, while connecting businesses to council services, professional networks, and business support providers. Ultimately, Invest in Leicester aims to drive regional growth by attracting new investment and supporting the expansion plans of existing businesses.

### **Investment Enquiries and Successes**

37. The PMT records key investment metrics for projects it supports to quantify their total impact on the local economy. For a comprehensive overview of the account management services delivered to each project success, please refer to the breakdown in Appendix B.

<b>Investment Metric</b>	<b>Reporting Period: 1 January 2025 – 31 December 2025</b>
No. of Enquiries Converted into Investment Decisions	5
Capital Investment	£15.9 million
Business Rates Generated per annum	£1.58 million
Total Salary Value per annum	£21.2 million
Total Investment Value*	£39.5 million
New Jobs Created	371
Safeguarded Jobs	254
Average Salary (New / Safeguarded Jobs)	£33,400

\*Total Investment Value = Capital Investment + Business Rates + Total Salary Value

NB the financial information provided is commercially confidential and has therefore been aggregated and rounded.

### **Department for Business and Trade (DBT) Funded Strategic Engagement and Investment Framework (SEIF)**

38. In 2025, the PMT successfully secured funding from DBT to provide dedicated strategic account management support to existing foreign-owned businesses through the SEIF, which is a core component of the DBT's mission to drive economic growth.

39. To date, 8 foreign owned businesses within the County are being actively account managed. There has been 2 verified wins, creating a total of 80 jobs, and a financial investment totalling £22.9 million.
40. The SEIF programme ended on 31 March 2026. The PMT will continue to provide quarterly progress reports to the DBT, detailing all company interactions, new projects, investment wins, and job creation.

#### Active Inward Investment Enquiries

41. Appendix A provides examples of projects the PMT is actively supporting, which include -
  - The former Holwell Foundry Works in the Melton borough, which is a £100m advanced manufacturing facility. It is being developed by Saint-Gobain, and it is anticipated that the site will create 250 high-quality jobs in sustainable construction manufacturing.
  - The PMT has partnered with Loughborough University to provide place marketing and investment support to promote the Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park (LUSEP). Key initiatives include creating new promotional materials, scheduled for launch in late 2026, and bespoke documentation for UKREiiF (more detail on which at paragraph 46 below) to unlock development land and drive interest from investors and occupiers.
  - Facilitated by the PMT, Pera and Leicester developer Obstrat are converting a former R&D workshop into a health and wellbeing facility. This re-purposing project will feature padel courts, yoga studios, co-working spaces, and a café, significantly boosting Pera Business Park's regional competitiveness and resilience as an employment destination.

A presentation on projects supported by the PMT will be given at the meeting.

#### Events Programme

42. The PMT drives regional investment by coordinating high-profile events, supported by the Team Leicester ambassador network. This private-sector scheme, where members contribute £2,000 annually, creates a pooled promotion fund. Recent PMT administrative support has further streamlined operations, ensuring a cohesive regional message and more efficient event management.
43. By leveraging the Team Leicester network and external sponsors, the PMT has increased business engagement and bolstered industry confidence. This collaboration has directly resulted in higher event attendance, increased property enquiries, and a stronger sense of regional pride.
44. The Invest in Leicester programme remains a vital platform for aligning local authority development plans with private-sector expertise. The financial impact is clear: in 2025/26, the PMT leveraged £45,400 in private funding from a £12,650 council

investment. This represents a 259% return on marketing and promotional spend, proving the model's efficiency and value.

45. Highlights from the 2025/26 events programme include:

#### UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF) 2025

46. Representing the region at UKREiiF, a diverse delegation from Leicester and Leicestershire brought together local government, academia, and industry leaders. Participants included representatives from the City, County, and district councils, local universities, East Midlands Freeport, and MIRA Technology Park. This collaborative presence was highlighted by four interconnected events coordinated by the PMT.

#### Key Event Highlights

##### UKREiiF Pre-Launch Event

47. Hosted 90 delegates to align key ambassadors with core messaging and showcase regional development opportunities from the City and County Councils. The session featured a presentation from Leicestershire County Cricket Club on its regeneration masterplan. Notably, the event was 100% privately sponsored.

##### Growth Showcase Sessions

48. Conducted two high-impact sessions for 250 attendees, focusing on the roles of innovation, urban regeneration, and infrastructure in regional growth. Attendees were briefed on emerging development opportunities across the City and County, with a specific spotlight on Enterprise Zone sites.

##### Strategic Networking and Investment Launch

49. Facilitated a high-level networking forum for 95 industry directors and senior council officers. The PMT used this platform for French multinational Saint-Gobain to announce a £100m advanced manufacturing investment in the Melton district, alongside the launch of Melton Borough Council's inward investment strategy. This high-profile event was 100% privately sponsored.

50. The UKREiiF events generated several positive outcomes. Following the announcement, Saint-Gobain received numerous enquiries regarding supply chain opportunities, while Melton Borough Council engaged with several high-value inward investment leads. Furthermore, the event's success prompted the Commercial Director of Loughborough University to approach the PMT for place marketing and investment support for the Loughborough Science Park (LUSEP).

#### Leicester and Leicestershire Property and Construction Networking

51. In partnership with the private sector, the PMT coordinates bi-annual networking opportunities that connect senior local authority officers with private sector developers, agents, and architects. These strategic events showcase regional projects and local priorities to accelerate development.

52. In October 2025, 125 delegates received presentations from Harborough District Council and East Midlands Freeport. This directly resulted in new dialogue regarding a boutique cinema for Market Harborough.
53. Upcoming sessions will feature Charnwood and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Councils. Managed by a private operator, these events offer the County Council an excellent return on investment by minimising administrative costs while maintaining full control over the agenda and guest list.

### Partner Engagement

54. The PMT utilises a collaborative network established with Leicestershire's district councils, County Council departments, and external partners to attract and support investment and information sharing. Key successes include:

#### **Property Industry Focused Roundtable**

55. The PMT coordinated the 'Adapting to the Evolving Office Requirements' roundtable, which took place in July 2025. A property market overview was provided by Leicester City Council and CBRE Group with roundtable discussion facilitated by the City and County Councils. A total of 32 stakeholders attended including land/property owners, office occupiers, commercial agents, architects, commercial developers, construction firms, local and national government and government agencies.

#### **Business Insider East and West Midlands Property Awards**

56. In September and November 2025, the PMT reinforced its industry presence by sponsoring and hosting key developers, commercial agents and landlords at major property awards. These events served as a showcase for the region's enterprise and innovation, offering an ideal platform to promote the team's services. The PMT also presented the "Regeneration and Restoration Project of the Year" award, celebrating the vision and skill driving the sector forward.

#### **Built Environment Network**

57. The PMT maintained a strong presence across the property and construction sectors with representation at the Built Environment Network. This event provided a platform to engage with industry leaders and stakeholders. The session focused on how the PMT is strategically showcasing Leicester and Leicestershire to attract high-value investment. A significant portion of the presentation was dedicated to localised opportunities, specifically highlighting the investment potential and development focus areas within the Harborough and Melton districts.

#### **East Midlands Freeport (EMF)**

58. The PMT has implemented a streamlined, two-way enquiry management system with the EMF team. By contributing Leicestershire-specific "place" insights into EMF marketing and hosting the EMF Chief Executive at major sector events, such as the bi-annual property and construction network, the PMT ensures that the region's interests are promoted.

**Resource Implications**

59. Leicestershire County Council provides a revenue contribution of £60,000 to the PMT.

**Conclusions**

60. The views of the Commission are sought on the report together with the presentations provided.

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

61. None.

**Equality Implications**

62. There are no equality implications arising from this report.

**Human Rights Implications**

63. There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

**Background Papers**

Report to Scrutiny Commission on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025 - Place Marketing – Leicester and Leicestershire

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/g7832/Public%20reports%20pack%20Monday%2027-Jan-2025%2010.00%20Scrutiny%20Commission.pdf?T=10>

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**Appendices**

Appendix A - Recent Achievements and Current Activities: Inward Investment  
Appendix B - Recent Achievements and Current Activities: Strategic Tourism

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