

The visitor economy: A potential powerhouse of local growth





Local councils, the LGA and VisitEngland share an ambition to maximise tourism's contribution to the economy, employment and quality of life in England. Achieving this means different things in different parts of the country.

People visiting England's outstanding countryside such as the Yorkshire Dales or the Peak District may be looking for a different experience to people visiting our historic towns, urban centres or seaside resorts.

Understanding the unique characteristics of a place and creating an authentic experience for the people who want to visit it are key to good destination management. Local authorities are at the heart of this focused and place-specific support to the tourism sector. Ultimately, tourism needs great destinations – and supporting the creation of great places for communities and business to thrive is what councils are there to do.

England's Tourism Strategy – The Strategic Framework for Tourism 2010 – 2020 has been developed with public and private sector partners across England to highlight the growth opportunities the visitor economy represents for us all. The Framework sets out priorities and actions for growth that can be locally adapted to focus the efforts of local authorities, businesses and other organisations in destinations.

In recent years local government and tourism have been increasingly working together to help unlock the benefits of investment in the visitor economy. The role of tourism in driving economic growth and increased employment is becoming better understood. VisitEngland welcomes the commitment made by many local authorities to supporting and developing our sector.

I am delighted that as Chairman of the national tourist board we will be working closely with the LGA to support local areas to grow their economies through tourism and provide a world class, competitive visitor experience.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Penny Cobham". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive font.

Viscountess Cobham

Chairman, VisitEngland

VisitEngland is the country's national tourist board. VisitEngland works in partnership with the industry to develop the visitor experience across England, plan national tourism strategy, grow the value of tourism in England and provide advocacy for the industry and our visitors

More information can be found on: www.visitengland.com and www.visitengland.org

Chair's foreword



We know that in a tough financial climate councils are committed to capitalising on all opportunities available to them to drive local growth. This publication highlights the opportunities on offer by galvanising the

often under-realised local growth potential of the visitor economy. We also know that each local area is different; different physical landscapes, communities' needs with individual strengths and challenges. The visitor economy allows councils to showcase this unique local identity to spearhead local growth and deliver wider local benefits from helping young people and parents into work to supporting small local businesses and creating great places to live, work and visit.

To help achieve this local authorities not only offer much needed financial investment but also act as a conduit for local partnership working to create attractive places for residents and visitors alike. The inspiring case studies in this publication share with you how councils are playing a strong leadership role in driving the growth with encouraging results, but we want to go even further.

Our analysis, based on speaking to members up and down the country, shows us that there is untapped growth potential if we can increase the productivity of our offer through delivering the higher quality that visitors now expect, ensuring convenient transport which gets visitors to where they want to go, making sure potential visitors know what is on offer locally, and working alongside partners such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

This publication sets out some of local government's key asks in order to fully unlock the growth potential of our local visitor economies. By strengthening these avenues I have no doubt the visitor economy will continue to be a powerhouse for our economy; fuelling economic growth now and in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Flick Rea". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cllr Flick Rea

Chair of Culture, Tourism and Sport Board,
Local Government Association

Contents

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	6
A potential powerhouse of local growth	7
Councils' leadership role in driving local growth	9
Improving quality of offer	11
Investing in the arts to attract visitors	17
Developing and promoting a brand and place image	21
Increasing access to suitable transport	26
Working in partnership with LEPs	29

Executive Summary

The visitor economy has huge potential for future growth and to deliver on many local government and Government priorities such as employment and skills opportunities.

Councils are playing a key leadership role in capitalising on their local visitor economy's growth potential through creating the conditions for it to thrive and ensuring a rich cultural offer to attract visitors.

However there are opportunities to further drive this growth through increasing productivity. This means getting visitors to spend more when they visit.

Key ways local areas are helping achieve this are through: giving visitors a higher-value offer both in traditional tourism services but also the wider destination, investing in the arts to attract visitors, developing a brand and place image to strengthen the pull of an area, improving access to suitable transport and working in partnership with their LEPs to improve the conditions for the visitor economy to grow.

The LGA is calling for councils to be given the tools required in order to enable local areas to fully realise their future growth potential of the local visitor economy.

In summary we are asking for:

- Increased and appropriate support for small and medium sized businesses to improve their quality of offer and enable local areas to secure increased inward investment.
- Making local authorities and their partners the lead in setting local priorities for 16-24 skills provision driven by employer demand in local labour markets such as the visitor economy.
- Greater devolution of major transport funding, joint local and national decision-making on investment in the Strategic Roads Network and more of an influence in deciding future rail franchises and the targeting of funds held nationally.
- Introducing a complementary approach to lottery funding that recognises the work being undertaken by councils locally and nationally to support a strong arts and culture offer to visitors (and residents), and reduce unnecessary complexity of national funding streams.
- In an increasingly digital age, local areas rely on sufficient broadband access in order to promote their local brand to visitors and provide them with information. Councils are leading the rollout of the nation's broadband programme and we are urging Government and telecommunications providers to work with us to ensure value for money and local flexibility over infrastructure.

Introduction

Local government has made a significant contribution to deficit reduction and played a major role in promoting growth. In the current Spending Review period (between April 2011 and March 2015) local government funding will fall by 33 per cent in real terms. Councils are keen to promote growth and generate the business rates that will help protect front-line services through galvanising all available opportunities in their area, including unlocking the local growth potential of the visitor economy.



Brunel's SS Great Britain, Bristol - © VisitBritain - Pawel Libera

A potential powerhouse of local growth



The visitor economy is the UK's sixth largest industry and in the current climate of economic uncertainty it is one of the few sectors seeing substantial growth – it contributes around £115 billion¹ to the UK economy (almost 10 per cent of GDP) and the long-run Gross Value Added (GVA) growth rate of the visitor economy is forecast to be 3.5 per cent per annum over the period 2010 to 2020 which is well ahead of the 2.9 per cent forecast for the economy as a whole.

In 2012 there were 126 million overnight trips by domestic visitors generating £24bn (£190 per trip that averages 3.1 nights)². From this holidays generated £13.8bn and £4.5bn on business trips.

Day visits, which are an important part of the mix, generate £57bn from 1.7bn domestic trips (average spend of £33 per trip)³. We also welcome just over 31 million overseas visitors. Around 12 million of these are leisure tourists spending £7.5 billion, and 6.8 million business tourists spending £4.15 billion. The average spend per visit is £600 and the average length of stay 7.4 nights⁴.

This demonstrates real opportunities to grow the visitor economy through increased productivity, especially business tourism which has a higher average spend per visit.

1 Deloitte, "The Economic Contribution of the Visitor Economy: UK and the Nations", 2012

2 International Passenger Survey 2012

3 Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS) 2012

4 GB Day Visits Survey (GBTS) 2012

The Government has shown high level support for the potential for economic growth through the visitor economy.

The Government's tourism policy aims to help the tourism industry achieve its potential as a central part of Britain's growth strategy through:

- Co-funding a marketing campaign with the private sector to attract four million extra visitors to Britain over the next four years.
- Increasing the proportion of UK residents who holiday in the UK to match those who holiday abroad each year.
- Improve the sector's productivity to become one of the top five most efficient and competitive visitor economies in the world.

We recognise that the visitor economy offers opportunities to deliver on many Government and local government priorities. One third of all new jobs created between 2009 and 2011 were in tourism.⁵ The sector directly employs over 1.3 million people (twice that of the education sector) with many of these jobs being entry level or part time jobs, offering much needed opportunities for 16-24 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEETS) and parents of young children looking to return to work.

The visitor economy not only makes a direct contribution to a local economy but also provides an invaluable indirect economic impact through supporting businesses in the supply chain.

One in twelve jobs in the UK is either directly or indirectly supported by tourism⁶; for example it employs a large amount of accountants and property managers, supports over 15,000 transport businesses and the UK economy receives over £13 billion each year through taking overseas students into educational establishments.

Its wide reaching remit helps create attractive places to both live and work in addition to wider benefits to local communities; an increased choice of facilities such as places to eat out, local shops, events and exhibitions, as well as conservation of local heritage and the natural landscape from castles to museums and beaches.

⁵ Analysis of ONS employment data 2012. Employment Characteristics of Tourism Industries 2011.

⁶ Deloitte, "The Economic Contribution of the Visitor Economy: UK and the Nations", 2012

Councils' leadership role in driving local growth

Local authorities are taking advantage of the visitor economy's local growth potential through playing a strong leadership role and catalyst for growth; creating the conditions for it to thrive through easier-to-understand and more proportionate regulation, consolidating planning reforms, investing in infrastructure, improving skills and incentivising inward investment.

Councils also ensure there is a rich cultural offer to attract visitors, pulling in visitors through holding events and spending around £800 million every year in our arts and museums infrastructure. They also play a crucial role along with the Destination Management Organisation in helping co-ordinate the activities of stakeholders across the destination.

Most of the future growth potential of the visitor economy lies in higher productivity – getting visitors to spend more when they visit. This can be achieved through converting day visits into overnight visits, increasing the duration of overnight stays, attracting more business tourism and securing the durability of the “staycation” phenomenon even once the economy recovers. For example in Brighton & Hove, a popular visitor location, 60 per cent of the income from tourism comes from just 17 per cent of the visitors. Improving productivity is key to the tourism industry being able to attract new and repeat visitors and being resilient to fluctuations in visitor numbers, wider economic trends and the unpredictable British weather.



Lowestoft Seafront Air Festival, Lowestoft
© Waveney District Council

In order to improve the productivity of the visitor economy, local areas are working hard to:

- give visitors a higher-value offer both in traditional tourism services but also the wider destination
- investing in the arts to attract visitors
- develop a brand and place image to strengthen the pull of an area
- improve access to suitable transport
- work in partnership with their LEPs to improve the conditions for the visitor economy to grow.

The case studies throughout this publication showcase the commitment and creativity of councils to work in partnership with other local stakeholders such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), businesses and their local community to drive this growth⁷ in each of these areas with encouraging results. In many cases local authorities work closely with Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) who are partnerships of the public and private sector that take a lead role in the management and development of tourism in a destination.

In many areas local authorities in partnership with DMOs have invested in developing a vision that all of the partners in those places can work towards. A Destination Management Plan (DMP) is a shared statement of intent to manage a destination over a stated period of time, articulating the roles of the different stakeholders and identifying clear actions that they will take and the apportionment of resources.

But councils want to do even more and go even further to spearhead growth. If more of the growth related tools and levers that are currently held nationally were devolved to local areas they could achieve this. The economic challenge and local tourism economy varies from place to place which means local solutions are needed – there are measures that the Government can take that will assist local government to drive growth through both the visitor economy and the wider local economy more effectively.

In the 2013 Budget, the Government responded positively to the LGA's call for Local Growth Deals to be made available to all areas. This commitment needs to be followed through with devolution of skills policy, a robust single pot of growth related funding and capacity to reinvest the proceeds of growth in a local area. We are calling for greater local discretion over change of use in the planning system to ensure that councils are able to respond to residents and business priorities and concerns to shape their high streets and encourage growth that supports the visitor economy.

The current skills system is failing to train people for jobs available; in 2010/2011 more than 94,000 people completed hair and beauty training courses for just 18,000 jobs in the sector – of these more than 60 per cent were 16 to 18 year olds. As we know the visitor economy offers many level entry jobs and its future growth will create even more employment opportunities for young people with the right skills.

Local government is best-placed to flex provision around employer demand in local labour markets, using local labour market intelligence, and help ensure both local businesses and people benefit from the employment opportunities the visitor economy has to offer. In addition, we set out some further asks of Government in order to enable councils to improve the productivity of the visitor offer throughout this publication.

⁷ Please note, throughout this report statistics have been provided by local authorities and/ or destination organisations on the economic impact of tourism within their own geographies, therefore the methodologies used by each may differ.

Improving quality of offer

In order to make a destination an attractive option to visitors there needs to be a quality offer at every stage of the visit starting with the inspiration to match consumers' rising expectations. The case study of High Peak Borough Council in partnership with Derbyshire County Council is a good example of councils investing in a high quality offer to open up a new high scale market and overnight stays and as a result increase visitor spend.

High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council

High Peak Borough Council, in partnership with Derbyshire County Council, are developing its distinctive Georgian spa town of Buxton. The scheme will focus on refurbishing Buxton Crescent, and the adjoining Natural Baths and Pump Room, into a luxury five star 79-bedroom hotel and spa with accompanying visitor centre, shops and restaurant.

This is an investment in a town's unique selling point, in this case Buxton's rich architectural legacy and its source of thermal natural mineral water.

The £35 million project which is a public-private partnership also involves funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage.

The project is forecast to increase visitor spend in Buxton by 7 per cent per annum and will bring in a new upscale market for spa treatment which is already well developed in continental Europe and elsewhere.

The new visitors, many from overseas, will be able to combine the attractions of the spa with actively enjoying the surrounding Peak District countryside. It is hoped this will encourage overnight visitor stays because this has been a constant challenge for the Peak District. This is because many visitors just make day trips from the urban centres such as Manchester, Birmingham, Derby and Sheffield which are just a short distance away.

This development is the culmination of a programme of heritage led regeneration in the town totalling over £70 million. The project plans to increase productivity in the area and generate spending not just in the new shops and restaurant but in existing attractions such as the Pavilion Gardens venue which holds over 75 fairs, events and markets a year, Pavilion Arts Centre and Buxton Opera House.

It is estimated that the wider programme will have created over 650 jobs in Buxton once the Buxton Crescent and thermal spa project is completed.



Artistic Impression of new Buxton Crescent Hotel, Buxton © High Peak Borough Council

The tough financial climate has seen an increased number of people deciding to start up their own business⁸ and the tourism sector offers many the opportunity they have been looking for with an estimated 80 per cent⁹ of tourism businesses small and medium sized businesses (SMEs).

This means a far greater proportion of spend stays within the local community¹⁰ compared with other industries. However, it also means that these smaller businesses' turnover is more fragile and likely to fluctuate as a result of factors such as the economic downturn, staffing, cost of complying with regulations and consumer confidence. This means they can often struggle with the money or skills required to improve their quality of service.

To help achieve a quality offer it is imperative that it is underpinned by a robust quality assurance system. Local government understands that visitors to an area wish to have absolute confidence in the quality and safety of the food they are eating, the accommodation they are staying in or the attractions they visit. We have seen the devastating impact that an outbreak of food poisoning or other illness can have on the visitor economy in an area.

An effective, but proportionate, regulatory offer can be critical in enabling businesses to thrive while sustaining the high standards that promote consumer confidence.

A quality offer is equally important to create an attractive destination for business tourism, which typically demands a higher quality across a range of services but delivers a higher yield and more all year round business. This helps sustain permanent employment in an area and bring in inward investment, trade opportunities and showcases an area to business visitors who may return at a later date with family or friends.

Local authorities are working with local stakeholders to identify opportunities and create attractive offers for business tourism. As part of this partnership working, councils are assisting local SMEs by equipping them with the understanding, skills and resources required to drive up their quality of offer, including regulatory advice. For example, Leicester and Leicestershire, and Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEPs have developed the "Better Business for All" scheme which aims to help SME start up and grow their business by making regulations easier to access and understand.

They have developed business packs and a single point of contact both by telephone and online where local businesses can put forward a question which is passed onto the relevant agency to answer it. Due to its success at making the regulation regime easier this has now been rolled out to 12 more LEPs.

8 Barclays Capital, BDO article, <http://www.bdo.uk.com/business-news/more-people-setting-up-own-business-says-bank>

9 Supply side of tourism report, office for national statistics, 2012

10 Tourism Alliance, Tourism for Growth.

City of York Council

City of York Council and Visit York raised awareness of the city as a corporate venue with both local and overseas businesses at a 'York Minster to Westminster' speed networking event.

21 private sector partners were present to showcase their York-based hotels, conferences venues and attractions to over 60 high profile buyers and event organisers from across the UK and Europe.

Furthermore due to a partnership with East Coast trains buyers had the added incentive of being given a free first class return ticket if they attended the event.

East Coast realised the benefits of bringing more business tourists to the Yorkshire region and wanted to encourage the buyers to see the Yorkshire venues first hand.

To showcase to the national and overseas businesses taking part how accessible York is to London, as well as capitalising on the popularity of London's tourist attractions, the event started with Afternoon Tea at the House of Commons, hosted by York's two MPs.

This was then followed by delegates heading to the Intercontinental Hotel for the speed networking sessions between the York exhibitors and event buyers.

The event cumulated with a Yorkshire-themed dinner to showcase the area's traditional cuisine and allow informal networking. All costs were covered by private sector partners as they understood the advantage of promoting their business at this event.

The event was a huge success and new partnerships between local businesses with those further afield have already begun to take shape.



Calderdale Council

The majority of Calderdale Council's tourism offer is delivered by small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) such as bed and breakfasts, restaurants and local attractions. Calderdale Council recognise the importance of supporting these businesses to deliver a quality offer to encourage higher spend per visitor and a high quality experience to both leisure and business visitors.

The Council support more than 50 tourism SMEs directly through one to one advice over the phone or face to face. This support ranges from advice on setting up a business, marketing services to other formal quality assessment support.

Calderdale are also running regional training sessions. For instance, one training session was delivered to both Calderdale and Kirklees businesses outlining the results of the regional visitor survey. The session discussed the commonalities between the areas and how they can share information and cross their geographic boundaries to promote the wider tourism offer.

The Council is also currently rolling out its ambassadorship training programme. This initiative, which will cater for up to 200 taxi drivers, acknowledges that taxi drivers are often the first or last people to meet visitors to an area.

By recognising how important these first and last impressions are; the interactive training will focus on equipping these drivers with the skills and knowledge on how to offer a friendly welcome and promote what the local area has to offer.

It is hoped the drivers will raise awareness of the area's hidden gems, know the events and festival programme, tell visitors a few quirky facts and provide some general tourist information. The scheme aims to encourage repeat visits, visitor recommendations and higher spend in the area.

Broadland District Council and Norfolk County Council

Broadland District Council has delivered a training programme called 'Trading Up' to small and medium enterprises operating in their rural visitor economy. The programme was funded by Norfolk County Council.

The training was directed towards any business that wanted to attract more visitors to Norfolk. Participants included bed and breakfasts, cafés and taxi operators. The programme found that often small businesses, as well as lacking finances, lack the skills, awareness and understanding of how to improve their quality of offer.

The programme offered a course of free training sessions covering key tourism aspects including customer service, marketing, business and consumer law, IT and internet skills.

The skills, knowledge and networking opportunities offered during the training meant business owners were more confident and able to improve their visitor offer themselves and in partnership with other small businesses in the locality.

Birmingham City Council

Marketing Birmingham is Birmingham's Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO). This is supported by some 360 partners and commercial members, ranging from Birmingham City Council, tourist accommodation to universities, accountancy firms and commercial property developers. The DMO connects the council with the private sector, facilitating action on their joint interest in the success of the visitor economy. Thus regeneration and promotion of Birmingham's visitor economy are two of Marketing Birmingham's key priorities.

On average over 200,000 conferences and 320 exhibitions are hosted in Birmingham every year and it has maintained its position as the most popular UK regional events destination in the British Meetings & Events Industry Survey 2012/13.

This is partly through the significant investment into the City's infrastructure, connectivity and civic development.

This includes the new £600 million New Street train station, a £65 million runway extension at Birmingham Airport and the new £189 million Library of Birmingham.

In addition Birmingham also uses effective marketing to develop itself as a well renowned destination for business tourism both at home and abroad.

Marketing Birmingham has, in partnership with The NEC Group and Birmingham City Council, undertaken research that quantifies the number of conferences in the international association sector that broadly match Birmingham's sectorial focus from a wider inward investment and economic development perspective.

The subsequent development and implementation of a targeted sales strategy has been successful. In 2012 Marketing Birmingham secured five new international events and 10 new national events with an approximate economic impact value of over £13 million.



Congress at The ICC, Birmingham - © Marketing Birmingham

We call for

- Making local authorities and their partners the lead in setting local priorities for 16-24 skills provision. This is driven by employer demand in local labour markets such as the visitor economy, and being the default commissioners of all programmes seeking to get the most disengaged young people up to 24 years back into work, training and education.
- A commitment from UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) to work with localities to develop a compelling local offer for securing inward investment, which may also require start-up funding or specialist support.
- Work with Department for Education and Department for Business Innovation and Skills to increase the flexibility of apprenticeship schemes for seasonal workers. This would particularly assist SMEs operating in the rural visitor economy who are adversely impacted upon by having to give their apprenticeships time off during the summer months when there is an increase in visitor numbers.
- To consider fair access to funding for SMEs to move up the value chain and address the barriers to SMEs accessing commercial loans. This could include encouraging larger businesses which are often international to support SMEs through some form of sponsorship role.
- Making it easier for businesses to get the advice they need to operate safely and legally, and for councils to set fees, including discounts for responsible businesses that reflect the cost of delivering the service locally.



Investing in the arts to attract visitors

We know that a strong cultural, heritage, arts and sporting offer is central to creating great destinations that appeal to visitors to stay longer and spend more.

The cultural sector – museums, arts galleries, theatres and festivals – are a crucial part of England’s visitor economy.

Building upon this recognition, the Government have administered the UK City of Culture programme which was inspired by Liverpool generating an additional £176 million pounds in tourism as a result of being named the European capital of culture for 2008.

The programme builds upon the knowledge that investment in, and promotion of, a strong cultural offer can have a huge impact upon driving growth of the local visitor economy. The programme compliments the winning area’s already strong cultural offer and gives the opportunity to boost visitor numbers by hosting a year-long arts programme and having the chance to host events normally confined to London such as the Turner Prize, the Brit Awards, and the Baftas.

VisitEngland and Arts Council England are working together to support local areas grow the visitor and cultural economies. Work has already commenced on joint initiatives to encourage greater collaboration at the national and local level, including a strategic partnership statement, ensuring funding from both sectors goes further and that places can make the most of their cultural offer.

As well as a principal funder, local government plays a key facilitator and management role in working with the local arts, heritage and sporting sector to build and showcase a rich and attractive cultural offer for both visitors and residents. To make the most of cultural tourism it is imperative that local authorities can lever funding from all potential sources, including lottery funding.

Barnsley Council

Barnsley Council is developing its visitor offer by capitalising on its heritage.

On average, Barnsley’s museums attract one million visitors a year, contributing in excess of £13 million a year to the local economy. But Barnsley plans to improve these figures by securing funding to maintain and improve its museums.

Cannon Hall Museum, a flagship attraction, has around 500,000 visitors each year. The interpretation of the park and gardens are being transformed following a grant of £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. A further £100,000 of European funding will enable improvements to be made to the Hall itself. Future plans include a major £3.5 million funding application to restore and transform the Park, Gardens and Lakes. Should this be successful, work is hoped to start in 2014/15.

Elsecar Heritage Centre currently attracts 325,000 visitors per year and these visitors support 38 businesses on site employing around 200 people. Visitors are attracted to the industrial workshops of the Earl Fitzwilliam and the wider village that he directed the creation of from the 1790s. Elsecar has been described as being one of the most important industrial heritage sites in the world. Therefore £500,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage has been secured to realise the immense potential of the site. This money will focus in particular on the conservation of the world-famous Newcomen Engine.

Finally, a new multi-million pound museum, Experience Barnsley, opens in summer 2013. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and ERDF, this promises to be a major attraction right in the centre of Barnsley, directing footfall and spend to businesses in the town centre. It will be a signpost for visitors to the town to discover what the rest of the Borough has to offer.

Cornwall Council

Cornwall Council is building on its arts and cultural attractions to boost visitor numbers and promote local growth.

A budget of £6 million was agreed by the Council for investment in the priority transformational projects. These include the extension to Tate St Ives and a major new Cornwall Archive Centre in Redruth. Further to this, Porthmeor Studios & Fishermen's Cellars, probably the country's oldest artist studios in continuous use and Grade II listed, recently underwent a £4 million refurbishment on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk Register. The Council used £250,000 of capital to match applications from Sea Change, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England, the European Regional Development Fund and European Fisheries Fund.

Investing capital to lever inward investment in culture and building on the success of cultural assets are ways in which local authorities can shape and reap the benefits of cultural tourism, creating a more financially sustainable cultural sector and increasing visitor spend in the local area, boosting local growth.

In St Ives, a town with a population of 12,000 people, one and a half million visitors are attracted each year. The main contributor to this is Tate St Ives which, since its opening in 1993, has attracted four million visitors. This gallery alone is estimated to contribute around £12 million per year to the local economy.



Porthmeor Beach, St Ives © VisitBritain - Adam Burton

Leicester City Council

Leicester City Council has capitalised on the recent discovery of Richard III's skeleton in a car park by putting on a number of related attractions to showcase the area's cultural offer.

The Council opened a dedicated exhibition, entitled 'Richard III: Leicester's Search for a King', at The Guildhall in February 2013 and has welcomed over 58,000 visitors since opening. The figure is even more impressive when compared to the same period last year, where only 7,000 people visited the museum and total annual visitors last year were approximately 35,000.

Furthermore the Richard III guided walks programme has enjoyed large numbers, resulting in extra sessions being put on to meet demand, and whilst having a captive audience is an opportunity to illustrate other areas and activities in the city to visitors.

The impressive growth in visitor numbers has had a knock on effect throughout the city. Between February and March 2013 alone, there has been a 45 per cent increase in footfall in the Visit Leicester tourist information centre; and Leicester Cathedral has had estimated 31,600 people through the door compared with around 2,400 in the same period last year.

Research by BDO international accountancy network stated that as Leicester gained exposure hotel occupancy increased by 20.5 per cent and that on the back of this the city also experienced a good rooms' yield increase of 16.9 per cent.

The economic impact of tourism in Leicester in 2011 was £474 million, up from £472.5 million in the previous year as the city welcomed just fewer than ten million visitors.



Richard III exhibition at The Guildhall, Leicester © Leicester City Council

Waveney District Council

The traditional seaside resort and port of Lowestoft, Southwold and the southern area of the Norfolk Broads are part of Waveney District Council area and have welcomed visitors for more than 100 years.

Waveney District Council decided to grow this further through holding a range of popular cultural festivals which have exhibited the strong local cultural offer and as a result attracted repeat visitors.

Successful events include the two day Lowestoft Seafront Air Festival which has previously attracted over 400,000 visitors and generated a net income of £13.5 million for the local economy. Furthermore, the Latitude Festival music festival has a daily attendance of 35,000 and spreads over four days.

In total, the area welcomes approximately four million visitors a year including around 500,000 overnight stays. Overall, tourism is worth around £250 million a year and supports 6,000 jobs. It is estimated that tourism comprises 13 per cent of all jobs in Waveney.

We call for:

- Local government want to work with Government and lottery distributors on a shared mission to discover philanthropy in the arts around the country. We suggest that this can be achieved by introducing a complementary approach to lottery funding that recognises the work being undertaken by councils locally and nationally to support a strong arts and culture offer, and reduce unnecessary complexity of national funding streams.



Latitude Festival, Southwold - © Waveney District Council

Developing and promoting a brand and place image

As the previous section shows, councils' investment in the arts pays dividends in growing the visitor economy. However recent research by VisitEngland showed that visitors are not aware of the breadth and depth of local areas' strong cultural offer.

Alongside local partners such as destination management organisations (DMOs), councils are a conduit for sharing information and promoting local activities which improve the attractiveness and productivity of the local visitor economy offer.

The following case studies demonstrate that councils are using innovative approaches and galvanising technology to develop and advocate a strong brand and place image.

Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Warrington Councils

Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, and Warrington Borough Council, have been working in partnership with local small and medium sized businesses through the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) Marketing Cheshire, to develop a local food brand for the region through Tourism Connect and Food Connect projects.

Tourism Connect aims to increase the competitiveness and productivity of the tourism industry in the rural areas of Cheshire.

It plans to improve performance in 22 businesses over a three year period by improving accommodation and conference facilities, raising awareness of local food procurement and evaluating uptake within the businesses supported. Over just 18 months the Tourism Connect project has supported 13 businesses, by creating seven new businesses and upgrading six. From just £650,000 of grants over one million pounds of private sector investment has been made, creating 17 and a half jobs and increasing overnight visitors by 3.6 per cent.

Food Connect aims to increase the competitiveness and productivity of the food tourism sector through improved marketing of local food businesses. The scheme hopes to increase the turnover of local food tourism businesses, create collaborations between local businesses to meet visitor needs and help market their services.



In the first nine months results were seen as there were 3,700 unique website visitors as well as 15 local suppliers taking up work with new hotels and restaurants.

The two projects complement one another and have helped create small clusters of high quality accommodation and food providers. This contributes to the development of a quality brand for the area and the improvement of the overall visitor offer. This should draw in an increasing number of visitors and encourage them to stay for longer and return again.

Canterbury City Council

Canterbury City Council has utilised technology to improve accessibility of information for visitors and as a result bring benefits to local tourism businesses. The historic city brings in four million day visitors a year attracted by the history of the city and increasingly by the quality of the broader tourism offer. The re-opening of the New Marlowe Theatre in the city centre in 2012, following a £26 million rebuild, provided an opportunity to reinforce the broader cultural offer and raise the profile of tourism.

A key part of the work done was thinking about creative solutions for delivering a visitor information service. This led to the district becoming the second destination in England to introduce a mobile visitor information site which is specifically designed to be accessed using hand-held devices, incredibly useful for the visitor on the go.

Further creative solution-focussed working saw the relocation of two coastal visitor information centres in Herne Bay and Whitstable into the council's divisional offices where the face-to-face service is now provided by the council's customer contact team. This delivers well for local people but alternative information points were also needed for visitors.

This was achieved through developing 'touch screen' information points and kiosks in areas of high visitor footfall, for example, museums, the chamber of commerce building and a mobile information trailer to deliver visitor information in situ at events and festivals.

In addition, the council has instigated three significant visitor information projects.

In Herne Bay, the old visitor information centre building, the Bandstand, has been re-let to a commercial operator who have transformed it into a contemporary coffee and ice-cream bar with wi-fi access. The council has been given a large area in the building for information racks and is currently considering installing an information kiosk.

This model benefits both the local business whilst promoting the wider local visitor economy offer - visitors looking for information generate footfall to the coffee bar and the council achieves a 'free' information outlet in a key location. The coffee bar owner is considering offering a ticket sales service as well, which will reinforce its dual role.

West Dorset District Council

West Dorset District Council are working to maximise the benefits to the area from ITV1 drama Broadchurch. The detective series, starring David Tennant, showcased the striking natural landscape and heritage of the area by being set on the coast in Dorset, with a small town near Bristol doubling as the series' fictional town of Broadchurch.

On the Visit Dorset website there are dedicated pages to the area, making the links with Broadchurch, and the tourism team has carried out web marketing campaigns, including social media and an email campaign to 50,000 contacts.

The team has also worked with local accommodation providers to offer viewers the chance to win breaks in Dorset as well as exclusive props used in the filming of the series.

Nearly 7 million viewers watched the first programme of the series and many used social media sites to ask where it had been filmed. The Visit Dorset website received a significant peak in traffic with 100,000 unique hits reported in March compared to 31,000 the same time last year.

The West Dorset District Council tourism team leads on the marketing of rural Dorset on behalf of the Visit Dorset Tourism Partnership made up of district and borough councils in the area.



Broadchurch advertisement, West Dorset - © West Dorset District Council

Victoria Business Improvement District (BID), Westminster

In 2012 the Victoria Business Improvement District (BID) took part in the national Purple Flag Week¹¹. Purple Flag is a scheme to help raise the standard of the night time economy in local centres and promote the area as a safe and vibrant place to visit at night to help overcome any negative public perceptions that may exist by visitors and residents.

To mark the start of Purple Flag Week in September 2012 a local jazz band began performing their upbeat music against the

iconic backdrop of popular local tourist attractions such as Westminster Cathedral as well as giving free give-aways to cause lively and fun celebrations for visitors and passers-by.

Local visitor attraction businesses demonstrated their support and capitalised on the Purple Flag branding by presenting offers and 'going purple' featuring purple themed cocktails, flowers, products and displays.

Social media and website analytics show increased activity and it was great opportunity for the local businesses to network.



¹¹ For more information about the Purple Flag scheme, visit <http://www.purpleflag.org.uk/>

Historically the UK has lagged behind other countries in the quality of its welcome. The UK was ranked third overall in the Anholt-GFK Nation Brands Index (2011), but fell to 12th when welcome was measured.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Brighton & Hove City Council recognised that a friendly welcome is crucial as part of an attractive and quality local offer and the council and its partners have been working to get all sectors of the community on board with this.

It has launched one of the UK's first city based 'Greeters' scheme. The scheme is a worldwide initiative by the Global Greeter Network (GGN) which is growing rapidly with more than 30 cities worldwide offering the service in May 2013.

The project is based on local volunteers providing a bespoke, pre-booked, introduction and welcome to the city on a two to four-hour walking tour. The scheme is a way of securing greater community involvement in welcoming visitors.

The volunteers are trained, 'branded' and operate out of the VisitBrighton Tourist Information Centre. These enthusiastic volunteers share their passion and local knowledge with visitors to create a unique welcoming environment for visitors.

They also provide a visible reminder of the importance of tourism, helping local people to understand its value and spread the benefits of tourism throughout the city.

A dozen volunteers are currently involved delivering around 20 pre-booked visits each month, and the number is rising month by month.

Building on the visitor's welcome is one part of the broader visitor offer which improvements with work also being done on destination management and improving Brighton's cultural and events programme. Brighton's target for 2020 is to become known as 'Europe's best meeting destination', 'Britain's first world-class seaside destination' and 'England's favourite creative city'.

The city already attracts around 8.5 million visitors a year, including about 1.4 million overnight visitors. The total value to the local economy is estimated to be £722 million and supports over 13,500 full-time equivalent jobs.

We call for:

- In an increasingly digital age, local areas rely on sufficient broadband access in order to promote their local brand and the provision of information. Councils are leading the rollout of the nation's broadband programme and we are urging Government and telecommunications providers to work with us to ensure value for money and local flexibility over infrastructure.

Increasing access to suitable transport

Domestic overnight spending has increased on average by 3.7 per cent year on year since 2007 whilst spending on transport by visitors has averaged 5.8 per cent over the same period. This suggests that rising transport costs may be limiting the amount that visitors have to spend once they reach their destination. Worse still given the times of austerity some families may decide they cannot afford to travel as far for trips and instead visit places closer to home, or in some cases not make a trip at all.

The majority of all domestic trips are by car and trips to the countryside are more heavily reliant on cars as rural areas struggle with public transport as a viable alternative. With rising fuel prices and tightened household incomes this makes British destinations vulnerable to even the most mobile domestic visitors.

On the other side of the coin are the inbound visitors, the majority of which are reliant on public transport once they arrive in the UK. As well as rising costs for drivers, those who use public transport are also facing increased costs with rail fares having gone up an average of 3.9 per cent between 2012/13.

During the same period an off-peak day return between Bristol and St Austell in Cornwall has risen in price from £53.10 to £75.60 - a rise of 40 per cent.

As well as inbound visitors being heavily reliant on public transport to go on trips, so too are younger people. There is a huge opportunity for local growth through increasing domestic tourism in the UK; at present only 5 per cent of 16-34 year olds take holidays in the UK.

Councils understand the importance of suitable local transport as part of a strong local offer to both visitors, as well as people who work in the local tourism sector.

The below case studies show how councils through their leadership role are investing in improving accessibility to suitable transport in imaginative ways. However without the necessary levers available to councils they can only go so far and lack of access to suitable and reliable public transport is preventing the visitor economy realising its full potential to boost local growth.

In rural areas this is further exacerbated by the current mismatch between the Government's national policy focus of sustainability and local rural areas trying to make it easier for visitors to travel around rural destinations.

Councils in rural areas are doing a large amount to improve their transport offer but can only go so far when this mismatch is reflected in many funding opportunities available to councils for new transport investment.

Rutland County Council

Rutland has been named the most rural county in the entire country and like many rural areas its potential growth is limited by poor public transport links and high car dependency. This has prompted Rutland County Council to develop their transport service to improve the tourism offer and links to employment sites. The council was successful in bidding for £4.8 million of government funding to improve public transport in three main areas.

Firstly, Worklink, an Employment Shuttle Bus service, hopes to address the high dependency many employees have on their cars for transport to work when working shift patterns.



Cycling at Rutland Water, Rutland
© VisitBritain - Tony Pleavin

The proposed bus services will run early in the morning and late in the evening to link employees to those hard to reach sites throughout the county at times that previously were unavailable on public transport.

The buses will run to and from the nearby employment centres of Melton Mowbray, Stamford and Corby. All of which sit just outside the county border.

The second measure relates to Rutland's large tourism sector, which contributes 10 per cent to the local economy. Shorelink, a specific tourism bus service, is now up and running and connecting the large market towns of Oakham and Uppingham to the popular destination of Rutland Water.

The bus will run seven days a week, with an, almost hourly circuit linking the three destinations. The service is also configured so the buses can carry bikes between sites, so cyclists do not have to travel by riding on major roads.

The final element of the project will see Rutland's roads improved to make them more accessible for cycle users; along with the creation of new cycle routes. Furthermore a new transport interchange will be opened in Oakham to improve the bus infrastructure and links to the railway station and cycle hire.

Rutland is situated in the south east of the East Midlands and is defined as the most rural county in the entire country. The county attracts over 1.6 million visitors each year; mainly due to Rutland Water which is the largest reservoir in the United Kingdom and a major attraction for bird-watchers, cyclists, walkers and water sports enthusiasts.

Suffolk County Council

Suffolk County Council has developed its own solution to the common lack of suitable accessible transport faced by many rural areas. The Suffolk Links Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service is driving growth of the local visitor economy by opening up local areas and attractions to visitors and residents, which other public transport offers previously did not.

The almost taxi-like service picks both residents and visitors up from areas with no direct access to public transport. To book a journey passengers simply call the relevant Suffolk Links phone number before they wish to travel and the bus will then pick them up at the point agreed.

Passengers are then able to choose where they want to go within the defined area. Furthermore, each journey is charged at bus fare rates and each vehicle is fully accessible with low steps, hand rails and a lift for wheelchair access.

The service carries over 60,000 passengers a year, with each vehicle conducting, on average, 120 journeys a week. The majority of these journeys are connections to other bus and rail services.

We call for:

- Greater devolution of major transport funding, joint local and national decision-making on investment in the Strategic Roads Network and more of an influence in deciding future rail franchises and the targeting of funds held nationally.



The Suffolk Links DMT service, Suffolk © Suffolk County Council

Working in partnership with LEPs

Councils have a long tradition of promoting growth and of working in partnership with business and other stakeholders, including through the newly-created Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

These LEPs are business led public – private partnerships with the remit of setting a clear vision for the economy of their area through helping determine local economic priorities and enabling the improved co-ordination of public and private investment in economic regeneration.

Nearly all LEPs have shown an interest in the visitor economy or identified it as one of their priority growth areas in order to deliver economic growth, employment opportunities, inward investment and growth of other business sectors through business tourism at a local level. The following case studies are examples of some of this good partnership working taking place.

Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (D2N2) has identified the visitor economy as a key area of economic focus as part of its emerging Growth Plan.

Elemental Force, funded by the Arts Council and supported by D2N2 LEP, is a major project aimed at developing cultural tourism across the region by showcasing the unique heritage of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire through a series of four unique outside light and music events in 2012 to grow the local visitor economy. Launched by the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth House in December and delivered by Deda Producing of Derby, the series of free events used historic locations as the backdrop to an exciting mix of film, music, light and pyrotechnics delivered on a grand scale.



Elemental Force event, Nottingham - © ExperienceNottinghamshire - Maria Falconer

Nottingham Castle, Derby Silk Mill and Newark Castle all held similar displays by Elemental Force attracting over 5,000 visitors in total and creating an estimated economic impact of just under £1 million.

Building upon the highly publicised success of Elemental Force, D2N2 are now working on an in depth review of the Visitor Economy across the two counties with the intention of publishing an long term investment plan to develop the sector to its full potential. Partnership working between the LEP, the sector and the local authorities will be key to its success.

Liverpool City Region

Liverpool City Region's visitor economy is already a thriving industry which generates visitor spend of £3.1 billion a year and is estimated to support 43,300 jobs.

Interest by visitors in the area has further increased as a result of Liverpool City Region's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) running a month long television advertising campaign last year.

The Liverpool specific 10-second advert ran for one month in 2012 (and was part of the UK Holidays at Home are Great campaign).

The ad introduced people to the destination, highlighting Liverpool's culture and heritage offer through classic and contemporary landmarks and attractions.

It was broadcast in terrestrial areas outside of the Granada region to maximise interest further afield, and was also shown on a number of digital channels. It totalled over 2,000 screenings throughout the UK.

Following 54 days of campaign activity visits to the VisitLiverpool website increased 120 per cent with 500,000 total visits.

The campaign's success was also reflected through VisitLiverpool's social media channels as the number of 'Followers' on their Twitter account and the number of 'Likes' on their Facebook page increasing by 40 per cent.

Subsequent campaigns including a national Christmas retail marketing campaign saw 20,000 unique visits to the website and 5,000 new contacts signing up for the monthly Visit Liverpool consumer e-blast.

Another £50,000 national marketing campaign to further promote Liverpool's retail offer launched in the Spring 2013.

The 2012 Autumn Statement set out a very positive signal about the Government's intentions for a broader devolution of growth-related funding and policy to LEPs in 2015 and we hope local areas will soon be equipped with the levers that they need to drive local growth through customised local growth deals that can be rolled out on a non-competitive basis across the country.



The Museum of Liverpool, Liverpool © VisitBritain - Rod Edwards



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