



SCRUTINY COMMISSION: 4TH SEPTEMBER 2019

TOURISM GROWTH PLAN – LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Commission on a draft of the Tourism Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire as part of the formal consultation process.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. An update on the Strategic Tourism function of the Place Marketing Team was provided to the Scrutiny Commission on 10 April 2019.

Background

3. The Place Marketing Team (PMT), funded jointly by the City and County Councils, 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 the 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.
4. Among the key priorities agreed for the Team was to devise and deliver a plan to manage Leicester and Leicestershire better as a tourism destination and to develop a strong, clear campaign brand for the destination to attract more visitors.
5. 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.
6. The Tourism Advisory Board, a public /private sector partnership group that steers the work of the Place Marketing Team's strategic tourism function, 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.

7. 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. The area benefits from a central location, good connectivity with air, road and rail links and over 140 business tourism venues.
8. The business tourism delivery service has been developed based on a tiered private sector membership model and agreed activities including 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 LLEP business rates pool in July 2019.
9. The Tourism Growth Plan incorporates the campaign brand of “Uncover the Story” and business tourism, thereby addressing both the leisure and business tourism sectors.

Tourism Growth Plan – Leicester and Leicestershire

Purpose

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

Framework

12. The Tourism Growth Plan proposed 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 better packaging and promotion of existing tourism product through work with the travel trade, creation of more themed itineraries and bookable product, improved profile on key digital platforms and delivery of business tourism support.

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 our 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

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

13. The Tourism Growth Plan will support tourism businesses in the districts through a range of activities that include:
 - a. increasing 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 our 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, Conkers Aerial Walkway, Great Central Railway Vision, Bosworth 1485 Legacy Trail, Everards Meadows development and Melton Rural Food Enterprise Centre;
 - 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, Harborough and Market Harborough, Melton Mowbray, Bosworth and Market Bosworth, Loughborough and the Charnwood Countryside and Everards Meadows;
 - g. enabling activity - 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 like 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

14. **Tourism Businesses** - Open workshops were held with tourism businesses in May and June 2018 to invite input into the development of the plan. These were supplemented by an online stakeholder survey. In February 2019 a data capture

exercise was undertaken with tourism businesses to capture growth ambitions and barriers to growth. An on-going consultation process with tourism businesses has also been conducted through attendance at district tourism partnership meetings and the city tourism forum since April 2019. The development of the Plan has been steered throughout by the Tourism Advisory Board who meet bi-monthly.

15. **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.

Resource Implications

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

Timetable for Decisions

17. The Tourism Growth Plan will be considered by the Tourism Advisory Board on 20th September and by Leicestershire County Council Cabinet on 22nd October. The Plan will be launched as part of the Leicester Business Festival on 31st October with the support of Visit Britain.

Conclusions

18. The views of the Commission are sought on the draft Tourism Growth Plan for Leicester & Leicestershire prior to consideration by Cabinet on 22nd October.

Background papers

19. None

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

20. None

Equality and Human Rights Implications

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

Other Relevant Impact Assessments

22. None

Appendices

Appendix A – Tourism Growth Plan – Consultation Draft

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