

Visitor Economy Strategy

2022



Executive Summary

Our Visitor Economy Vision
Action Plan Themes

The West Lindsey Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan is about adding value and stimulating the growth and development of the visitor economy. The aim is for West Lindsey district to move forward as a visitor destination with the engagement and support of key stakeholders, deliver actions to attract more visitors and encourage people who are already visiting to stay longer, explore further and spend more during their trip.

Delivery of the plan will be a collaborative process involving key stakeholders representing the private and public sectors leading to actions to guide management and investment in West Lindsey.

The district has a significant opportunity to respond to tourism and post-Covid trends and a key focus of the Visitor Economy Strategy and Plan will be to enhance and develop the visitor products in such a way that attracts a wide market, introduces new visitors, extends the season, extends stays and increases visitor spend.

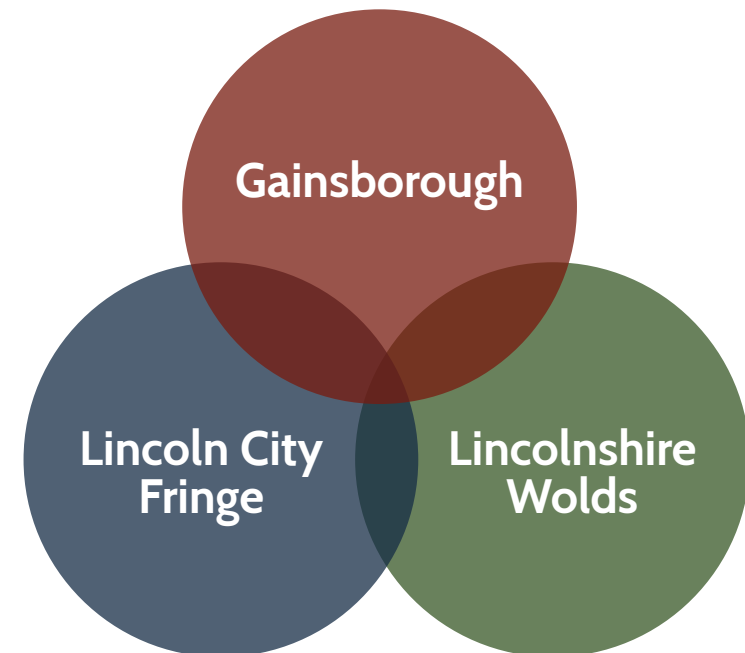
Where are we now?

The visitor economy is a significant and growing sector within West Lindsey. The area is an attractive, peaceful rural area which combines an outstanding natural environment with historic villages in close proximity to the City of Lincoln. Within its administrative boundary lies part of the Lincolnshire Wolds, the market town of Gainsborough (with its impressive Old Hall) and a wide variety of historic villages and heritage buildings including many characteristic churches.

	Day Trips	Staying Trips	Staying Nights	Revenue (£m)
West Lindsey	2.3m	240k	897k	£143
Lincolnshire	17.82m	3.61m	15.064m	£1,656
Greater Lincolnshire	30.78m	4.66m	19.278m	£2,494

The headline figures show positive growth at a local and regional level. West Lindsey makes up a relatively small proportion of the County total but nevertheless tourism is an important sector for this predominantly rural district.

West Lindsey has a number of ingredients to develop as a successful and prosperous visitor destination: a broad heritage offer and a range of attractions and activities; a strong food, hospitality and retail sector; including Marshalls Yard in Gainsborough, family-friendly attractions such as Rand Farm Park and Woodside wildlife Park and Forestry England's Willingham Woods. However, it is widely acknowledged that the focus for the tourism sector should link to the key spatial attractors rather than the administrative boundary. The three main spatial 'brands' have been identified as per the graphic below and these provide a clear profile to feed in to other initiatives including Visit Lincoln and Visit Lincolnshire:



What do we want to achieve?

Our research and consultation confirms that tourism matters; it is a growing sector which makes an important contribution to West Lindsey's overall economic growth. In the process of Covid-19 recovery, there is a real opportunity for West Lindsey to position itself as a safe, accessible destination with a strong focus on distinctiveness, sustainability, social well-being, health and outdoor based activities.

The Visitor Economy Plan is underpinned by key principles and objectives, which remain vital to the success of the District:

- Visitors must have a positive rewarding experience; they will want to share with others
- Residents must benefit from the Visitor Economy
- The District's Environment must be protected
- The Visitor Economy must be continuously developed



Our vision to maximise, in a sustainable manner, tourism's contribution to the quality of life, economy, employment and local community development that develops, refines and presents an authentic responsible tourism product. The area will be known as a safe, accessible destination of choice, where visitors will receive a genuine welcome and enjoy outstanding experiences of our countryside and heritage. The area will have an enhanced reputation with and support from its neighbouring destinations - both city and coast - who appreciate and benefit from its complementary offer.

We recognise that visitors have the potential to provide a significant boost to our local economy, diversifying the range of businesses available to our residents and providing much-needed jobs.

We also recognise the potential for visitors to develop a strong affinity with a place, forging a place-based self-identity which can be instrumental in their choosing of a location to live and to raise a family. This directly supports West Lindsey District Council's core objective of housing-led economic growth. This will be achieved not only by expanding the amount of housing and the concordant number of residents present in our district, but also by creating a place that is attractive to new residents and can retain old residents alike. This has the serendipitous effect of raising living standards and boosting the viability of our local housing market.

The Visitor Economy will add a substantial amount of 'value-added' to our local economy. Our strategy strongly affirms our commitment to a place-based approach to our local Visitor Economy, investing in the development of the appropriate infrastructure for its development and supporting independent high streets and businesses to grow.

The tourism sector will strive to balance in a sustainable way any growth opportunities with the continued enjoyment of the District's rural, quiet spaciousness that is at the heart of the area's appeal.

The Action Plan sets out a long-list of actions based on our strategic priorities. The actions present a suite of detailed interventions and initiatives which respond to the vision to create a community-led destination that develops, refines and presents an authentic responsible tourism product with a focus on integrating sustainability and community benefits in full alignment with the Sustainability, Climate Change and Environment Strategy and the Economic Recovery Plan for West Lindsey. This Visitor Economy Strategy is a living document, which will be updated as the funding landscape and market conditions change.

Theme 1: Product Development

We need to create additional “attractors”, which will encourage people to visit and stay in the area (and encourage repeat visits) by targeted investment in the tourism ‘product’ particularly those areas where we have a clear USP.

Theme 2: Destination Basics

We need to ensure the basics are right – the nuts and bolts of destination management – to ensure that visitors have an experience that exceeds expectations and will be motivated to visit again.

Theme 3: Marketing and Promotion

We need to facilitate marketing and promotional activities to put West Lindsey on the map. This will be done in close collaboration with Visit Lincoln, Lincolnshire Wolds AONB and other town groups, who will be responsible for campaign design and delivery.

Theme 4: Partnership and collaboration

This theme is about developing partnership and collaboration to ensure that all stakeholders and partners, including the private sector, buy-in to the strategy and play an active part in delivering the action plan. An important action is to establish a West Lindsey Visitor Economy Partnership Group to engage and involve businesses, local communities and stakeholders in the delivery and review of the Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan.

The role of the District Council will be to work with a range of stakeholders as a facilitator and help provide supporting infrastructure, including supporting destination marketing. It will be the role of the private sector and local community organisations to be responsible for the ongoing operational delivery of the projects. The District Council will coordinate a growth-led approach to working with tourism businesses to secure sustainable growth. Visit Lincoln will be supported as the official destination marketing organisation with responsibility for area marketing and promotion

Measuring Success:

We will establish a monitoring framework comprised of baseline data and targets for the period 2022-2025, which will capture key visitor economy metrics:

- Number of businesses and employees in the sector (STEAM)
- Number of visitors to West Lindsey (STEAM)
- Number of overnight stay (STEAM)
- Increased spend into the district economy (STEAM)
- Better awareness of West Lindsey as a visitor destination
- More tourism businesses investing in product development
- More businesses investing in green technologies/environmentally friendly/ethical practices

STEAM is a tourism economic impact modelling process using local supply side data and tourism performance, and visitor survey data collection.

A photograph of two cyclists riding away on a dirt path through a lush green forest. The path is in the foreground, leading into the distance. The trees are dense and vibrant green, creating a canopy overhead. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

Introduction:

Background
Emerging from Covid-19

Background

The West Lindsey Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan is about adding value and stimulating the growth and development of the visitor economy. The strategy builds on the 2020 draft and includes practical recommendations on actions to develop the sector and increase its resilience.

The plan sets out the tourism context and profile for West Lindsey and outlines strategic priorities and actions for the whole district. The aim is for West Lindsey district to move forward as a visitor destination with the engagement and support of key stakeholders, and deliver actions to attract more visitors and encourage people who are already visiting to stay longer, explore further and spend more during their trip.

It is acknowledged that the plan is on behalf of the District Council; however, delivery of the plan will be a collaborative process involving key stakeholders representing the private and public sectors leading to actions to guide management and investment in West Lindsey.

The plan takes account of the needs of the visitors themselves, local residents, businesses and the environment. It embraces the idea of sustainability i.e. tourism which brings economic benefit, is sensitive to the environment, is welcomed by the community and results in satisfied visitors. Delivering a quality experience to the visitor is a priority, across all 'touch points', before, during and after a visit.

Visitor management includes the planning, development and marketing of a destination as well as how it is organised and maintained physically, financially, and operationally. Destination management is about communication, involving all stakeholders in planning and decision-making through partnership working as well as communicating with visitors to monitor success and consulting residents to evaluate impacts. For West Lindsey, the two tiers of local government and the activities of Visit Lincoln (DMO) means that communication and co-ordination are even more critical.

The visitor economy is a complicated industry involving the public, private and third sectors - and the local community. The private sector is fragmented, comprising many businesses, most of them small. Working alone, enterprises cannot manage and sustain tourism across a destination. For example, they cannot provide or maintain the necessary infrastructure, market the whole area or train and develop a skilled workforce without some assistance. Similarly, there are many public agencies that contribute in different ways to tourism development and management along with a plethora of third sector parties and economic development projects.

The Climate emergency and the move towards more sustainable land management and farming practices offer positive growth opportunities for Eco-Tourism, Agro-Tourism and also Gastro-Tourism. A largely rural area such as West Lindsey is in a good position to benefit from evolving consumer preferences and emerging trends towards more sustainable visitor impacts. Sustainable tourism is an important thread to run through all future tourism actions for the District.



The visitor economy in England (and indeed throughout the world) has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite extensive UK Government financial interventions, the recovery of the sector is not going to be easy. Visit England estimates that there will be a 48% drop in domestic tourism during 2021 and that international visits are unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels before 2023 at the earliest. Undoubtedly it has changed the emphasis of initiatives arising from the Tourism Sector Deal e.g. proposed Tourism Zones, Discover England Fund initiatives etc from added value and growth to survival and recovery.

We are now entering our second winter and the Covid-19 virus remains with us. This has impacted on the recreation, hospitality and tourism sectors, the impacts have been significant in the immediate term, although the longer-term implications remain unknown.

The success of the vaccine programme in the UK is positive news for the tourism, and recreation sectors along with the wider visitor economy although indoor based attractions are going to face ongoing challenges.

We also need to recognise that Covid-19 has impacted on the availability of funding from councils and other organisations. The crisis and virus-induced reality of a continued economic downturn is leading destination organisations and the hospitality industry to apply a new perspective on destination development and community involvement. One of the key features that most industry professionals agree on is the need (and opportunity) to build recovery through the domestic tourist and visitor market with a further boost for the staycation market in the UK. The role of the District Council will be critical in shaping the response and providing a coordinated programme of actions with support for appropriate development and infrastructure, where applicable.

It is important to note the migration to rural areas in the immediate aftermath of the Covid-19 emergence as working from home has become more commonplace and more widely permitted by employers. This will inevitably place pressure on some local services and infrastructure but will also increase the visiting friends and relatives' market and the 'close to home' short break and mini-break sector.

In the post Covid recovery period and 'era', the key growth areas overall are likely to be:

- Domestic tourism overall
- Strong Visiting Friends and Relatives' (VFR) market with likely growth as people stay where they feel secure and safe
- High demand for self-catering (offers greater flexibility and individual 'control' of the visitor environment)
- Greater demand and appreciation of outdoor based experiences in terms of activities and the natural environment
- Stays in a pub (authentic experiences)
- Dog friendly travel
- More coastal and rural breaks (compared to city breaks at least in the short term)

West Lindsey benefits from its rural character and lack of congestion where visitors can maintain a degree of social distancing and breathe 'clean air.' The district has a significant opportunity to respond to tourism and post-Covid trends and a key focus of the Visitor Economy Strategy and Plan will be to enhance and develop the visitor products in such a way that attracts a wide market, introduces new visitors, extends the season, extends stays and increases visitor spend.



Context: Setting the Scene

Policy Alignment
Greater Lincolnshire
Lincolnshire and Destination Management Partnerships
West Lindsey

Tourism is an important and growing sector which is seen as having potential to provide a further boost to the local economy, diversifying the range of businesses available to our residents and providing much-needed jobs. It is important to ensure that the Visitor Economy Strategy aligns with policy and programme support at a national, regional and local level to boost the role and value of tourism in the local economy as well as contributing positively to placemaking and the distinctive sense of place.

National Context:

West Lindsey tourism will benefit from aligning its activities within the national framework to be able to take advantage of future recovery plans from Visit Britain/Visit England funnelled through Destination Management Organisations and local authorities. The Tourism Recovery Plan sets out the national programme to support a growing, dynamic, sustainable and world-leading tourism sector reaching its full potential.

The aim is to:

- Recover domestic trips volume and spend to 2019 levels by the end of 2022 and inbound visitor numbers and spend by the end of 2023;
- Ensure that the sector's recovery benefits every region with visitor staying longer (particularly out of season) and high levels of investment in tourism products;
- Greater use and application of innovation maximising the potential for technology, data and insight;
- Contribute to the enhancement and conservation of the country's cultural, natural and historic heritage;
- Return the UK swiftly to its pre-pandemic position as a leading European destination for hosting business events.

Even before Covid-19 hit, the Visit Britain/Visit England strategy was predicated on increased dispersal of tourism benefits to the countries and regions, alongside overall growth and increased productivity. Through stepping up domestic marketing activity, the emphasis is on encouraging more people to holiday at home, particularly younger customers (aged 18-34), whose domestic tourism activity is in decline, and families, who are both essential for the long-term growth of the industry.

Working in partnership with Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), the emphasis is to extend the season and grow visits and the value of leisure and business travel across England. The strategic drive is on regional and seasonal dispersal increasing volume and value of short breaks in the shoulder season.

The outcome of the UK Government's independent review of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) to help strengthen the domestic tourism sector post-pandemic may have implications for West Lindsey both in terms of resources and destination management.

Also the government response to 'Julian Glover's Landscape Review' of England's protected landscapes report which was published in January 2022, consider the next steps to protect National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in England with a commitment to protect 30% of our land by 2030 and boost biodiversity. This may reinforce further the role of the Lincolnshire Wolds as a sustainable tourism destination and key contributor to support the climate change and levelling up agenda for rural areas. While further guidance is awaited from Government, it is also important to consider the opportunities that may be presented through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The visitor economy is identified as a priority sector, worth over £2.39bn per annum to the Greater Lincolnshire economy, supporting over 30,000 full-time equivalent jobs (pre Covid) with long-term growth potential. Recent investments continue to raise the profile and quality of the visitor economy, including £22m investment in Lincoln Castle, which has doubled the number of visitors to the castle and strengthened its role as a major UK centre for short breaks. Other investments include the development of Lincoln Cathedral and improvements at the International Bomber Command Centre.



The Greater Lincolnshire Plan for Growth, coordinated by the Greater Lincolnshire LEP, sets out a strategic plan for action that will drive the revival of the region's economy post Covid-19, including a short-term recovery plan to drive investment in the sector. A Visitor Economy Board has also been established to support the sector and shape and influence the future of the visitor economy in Greater Lincolnshire. The Group has developed the Greater Lincolnshire & Rutland Tourism Action Plan 2021-2025 (City, Coast and Countryside) which sets out a comprehensive programme for expanding tourism over the next five years. The plan outlines 10 key priorities set out as 5 Visitor Themes and 5 Delivery Tools:

Visitor Themes:

- Sustainable Tourism
- Extending the Season
- Enhancing the Product
- Increasing Productivity
- Improving Infrastructure

Delivery Tools:

- Investment in Skills
- Marketing
- Customer Insight
- Supporting Local Businesses
- Partnership Working

The overall objective is for re-imagining, repurposing and re-targeting the visitor offer to bring about a step-change in tourism provision. Many of the themes and priorities are relevant to West Lindsey, specifically the ambition to establish the area as an exemplar location for sustainable tourism and extending the tourism season.

The Visitor Economy Strategy closely aligns with the Greater Lincolnshire Tourism Action Plan and the District Council will look to strengthen its voice within the Visitor Economy Board.

Lincolnshire and Destination Management Partnerships:

Lincolnshire County Council continues to play an important role in supporting the tourism sector, with a clear focus on product and experience development. The Council has recently committed £500,000 over the next 18 months to lead and strengthen the county's tourism sector. As well as major campaigns to promote the county and to help businesses access the workforce they need, the funding is strengthening environmentally friendly tourism by producing a green tourism toolkit for businesses. The County Council is also providing resources to refresh and relaunch the new visitlincolnshire.com website through the City, Countryside & Coast brand.

Visit Lincoln (VL) is the strategic 'lead'/Destination Management Organisation for the area, which has over 250 private sector partners which are mainly in the city, but a number are located further afield. Although VL has a strong focus on the city, it is increasingly looking to support, market and promote the rural hinterland.

Further clarity is needed in terms of the role and relationship between the two marketing platforms used to promote the area:

- www.visitlincoln.com
- www.visitlincolnshire.com

West Lindsey District Council will continue to work closely with the County Council and VL to maximise impact for tourism through the effective use of limited resources particularly to help and support businesses during the pandemic and ensure that it benefits from promotional and marketing activities towards the domestic market.

West Lindsey District Council is a key partner on the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB, which includes a number of the district's market towns such as Caistor and Market Rasen and smaller communities like Tealby, Walesby and Nettleton. The Destination Management Plan sets out a clear vision for tourism in the Lincolnshire Wolds and market towns:

By 2025, the Lincolnshire Wolds and market towns will be recognised nationally for its rural beauty and tranquillity and is a destination of choice where visitors enjoy an authentic and welcoming experience and is a place that they desire to visit again.

The vision is supported by three guiding principles:

- Developing the Lincolnshire Wolds and Market Towns Branding
- Putting the visitor first
- Working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders.

The Love Lincolnshire Wolds brand has been important in developing the visitor economy in the AONB. In terms of moving forward, West Lindsey District Council will play a more proactive role in collaborating with core partners including East Lindsey to help strengthen the sector and visitor experience.



Having a successful visitor economy and tourism industry is an important component of the District Council's vision and corporate priorities. The 20 year vision for West Lindsey is to create a resilient and diverse rural district which embraces sustainable growth whilst retaining its quality, heritage and character for the benefit for all. A strong visitor economy with an extensive leisure and cultural offer attracting visitors from around the world as well as serving the needs of the local community is identified as a priority objective.

The visitor economy is also recognised as one of the key sectors in the recently produced West Lindsey Economic Recovery Plan (2021-2024), a post pandemic revival pathway which sets out the key themes and actions that will help implement and deliver the Council's ambitions to rebuild a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient economy in a post Covid-19 world.



Neighbourhood Plans:

Neighbourhood planning is a relatively new way for communities to have a say in the future of the places where they live and work. It gives local residents a say in a plan with real legal weight that helps to shape development in your local area. Neighbourhood plans focus on where new homes, shops and offices are to be built and it is important that they also consider the visitor economy impacts in the area and aim to create a coordinated, balanced sustainable framework for any future tourism-based developments and initiatives.

Planning and Regeneration:

The planning and regeneration context is set out within the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. A review and consultation took place between June and August 2021 and it recognises the visitor economy as one of the most important sectors of Central Lincolnshire's economy. The rural area makes a significant contribution to the visitor economy, with many visitors attracted to the waterways, walking and cycling routes, aviation attractions and other attractions across the area.

The city of Lincoln is the key driver for the visitor economy and the continued growth in population, investment by businesses, fast growing universities and rejuvenation of tourist destinations will continue to attract increasing numbers of visitors to the area.

- Policy S42: Sustainable Urban Tourism promotes development and activities that will deliver high quality sustainable visitor facilities, including visitor accommodation, which is recognised as being deficient in Gainsborough.
- Policy S43: Sustainable Rural Tourism provides a supportive planning policy framework to deliver high quality sustainable visitor facilities which respect the natural and built environmental qualities of the area.

The Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan will need to utilise three 'opportunity areas', which offer potential to broaden and enhance the tourism product in the district:

- The **“Thriving Gainsborough 2024” initiative** including the £17.57m Levelling-Up funding support provides opportunities to enhance the appeal of Gainsborough as a visitor destination building on the retail offer (Marshall's Yard) and the 500 year old Gainsborough Old Hall.
- The **Lincolnshire Showground** is an important asset, attracting large numbers of visitors at certain times of the year. The design and development of a new masterplan for the site needs to ensure that the tourism opportunities are maximised including provision of visitor accommodation, enhanced conference facilities and augmenting the range of events and services leading to increased overnight stays in the area.
- The decommissioning of **RAF Scampton** in 2022 provides an opportunity to enhance the aviation product. Future plans need to protect, promote and enhance the heritage assets in recognition of the important role RAF Scampton has played both in terms of military and social history.



A photograph of two cyclists riding away on a dirt path through a lush green forest. The path is flanked by dense trees and foliage, creating a canopy effect. The lighting is soft, suggesting a shaded forest environment. The overall tone is natural and serene.

Tourism Profile

Background and Performance
Destination Product

Background and Performance

The visitor economy is a significant and growing sector within West Lindsey. The area is an attractive, peaceful rural area which combines an outstanding natural environment with historic villages in close proximity to the City of Lincoln. Within its administrative boundary lies part of the Lincolnshire Wolds, the market town of Gainsborough (with its impressive Old Hall) and a wide variety of historic villages and heritage buildings including many characteristic churches.

The 2019 STEAM data results provide a comparator with 2018 and a benchmark for the last 'normal' year before the impacts of Covid-19 in 2020 in respect of economic impact, employment and visitor profile, origin and purpose. The headline figures are as follows:

	Visitor Type		
	All Staying Visitors	Day Visitors	Total
West Lindsey	230k (2018) 240k (2019)	2.24m (2018) 2.3m (2019)	2.47m (2018) 2.54m (2019)
Lincolnshire	3.54m (2018) 3.61m (2019)	17.42m (2018) 17.82m (2019)	20.95m (2018) 21.42m (2019)
Greater Lincolnshire	4.59m (2018) 4.66m (2019)	30.33m (2018) 30.78m (2019)	34.92m (2018) 35.44m (2019)

The headline figures show positive growth at a local and regional level. West Lindsey makes up a relatively small proportion of the County total but nevertheless tourism is an important sector for this predominantly rural district. It is interesting to note the predominance of day visitors which reaches above 90% within West Lindsey District. This immediately points to an important strategic priority to develop and enhance the volume and value of overnight tourist stays in the District.

	Visitor Days		
	2017	2018	2019
West Lindsey	3.063m	3.089m	3.197m
Lincolnshire	31.157m	32.051m	32.884m
Greater Lincolnshire	48.056m	49.101m	50.058m

In terms of visitor days, the number of recorded visitor days is in excess of 3 million per annum in the district. The figures again show a positive growth trend over the past three years (and indeed over a longer period).

	Visitor Numbers		
	2017	2018	2019
West Lindsey	2.468m	2.472m	2.544m
Lincolnshire	20.542m	20.954m	21.421m
Greater Lincolnshire	34.3m	35.441m	24.92m

In terms of visitor numbers, while Greater Lincolnshire dipped slightly between 2018 and 2019, West Lindsey and Lincolnshire have experienced year on year growth from 2017-19.

The average length of stay (of staying visitors) in West Lindsey is above 3.5 days which partly reflects the range of attractors for a multi-day trip.

	Economic Impact		
	2017	2018	2019
West Lindsey	127m	133m	143m
Lincolnshire	1,474m	1,579m	1,656m
Greater Lincolnshire	2,244m	2,387m	2,494m

The economic impact mirrors the growth in days and numbers for West Lindsey District with a total value close to £150 million in 2019 (£143m).

The daily spend levels are lower in West Lindsey (£44.57 per day) which appears to be as a direct consequence of the lower proportion of staying visitors compared to the wider geographic areas. The daily spend levels are £50.43 per day in Lincolnshire and £49.82 per day in Greater Lincolnshire.

Tourism represents an important employer in the district with in excess of 1,800 FTE positions.

	Employment (Tourism FTE's)		
	2017	2018	2019
West Lindsey	1,707	1,784	1,827

Whilst the levels of tourist and visitor activity are low compared to Lincoln City, coastal and other areas, overall tourism is an important and growing sector in the district.

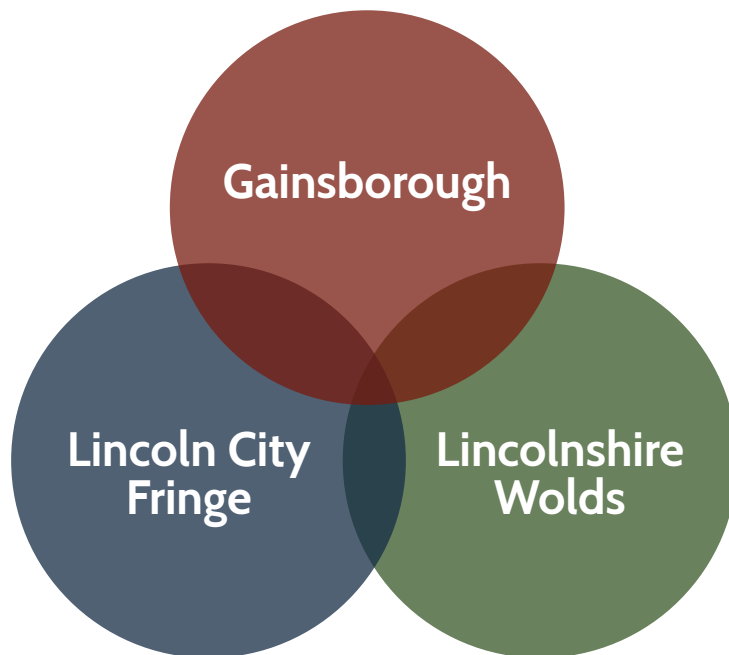
	Summary Profile			
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However, there are some structural issues as a high proportion relates to the day visitor market and accommodation spend is low as a proportion of overall revenues in West Lindsey District.



West Lindsey has a number of ingredients to be a successful and prosperous visitor destination: a broad heritage offer and a range of attractions and activities; a strong food, hospitality and retail sector; including Marshalls Yard in Gainsborough, family-friendly attractions such as Rand Farm Park and Woodside Wildlife Park and Forestry England's Willingham Woods.

However, it is widely acknowledged that the focus for the tourism sector should link to the key spatial attractors rather than the administrative boundary. The three main spatial 'brands' have been identified as per the graphic below and these provide a clear profile to feed in to other initiatives including Visit Lincoln and Visit Lincolnshire:



Getting to and around West Lindsey:

West Lindsey is relatively easy to travel to with access to a large and affluent catchment population. It has good connectivity from cities in East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside.

Lincoln, Gainsborough and Market Rasen enjoy mainline rail connections. Lincoln Central railway station is located in the south of the city centre and is a branch off the main London to York route.

Direct connections are provided by LNER, East Midlands Railway and Northern Rail which operate daily services from and to Gainsborough as well as to Sleaford, Nottingham, Leicester, Sheffield, Doncaster and London. Market Rasen also has mainline rail links to Grimsby and Cleethorpes as well as south through to Lincoln, Peterborough and London. The potential reintroduction (2023) of the LNER service from London to Cleethorpes also provides opportunities to promote to a new catchment area.

Whilst macro access by road is good, concerns have been expressed about east-west connectivity within the District and certain pockets of traffic congestion in and around Lincoln, particularly during peak hours.

Places to Stay:

The data shows that there is a lack of hotel and visitor accommodation supply in the district and this is broadly accepted to be the case by local stakeholders.

Within the district there are:

- 137 establishments
- 4,256 beds
- Serviced: 13% bedspaces
- Non-serviced: 87%
- Over 45% growth in bedspaces over the last 10 years
- ...but deficiencies in accommodation provision in scale and type

Based on the information available, the visitor accommodation schedule indicates the following:

- Existing hotel provision in and around the district caters reasonably well for the budget hotel market and this has been increasing in recent years (including a Travelodge in Gainsborough, two further Travelodge hotels in and near Lincoln and two Premier Inns in Lincoln city).
- Current accommodation supply in the district also includes a number of small B&Bs and guest houses.
- Non-serviced accommodation includes a limited supply of self-catering accommodation.

The accommodation operations in West Lindsey offer a strong product for those wishing to use the area as a touring base for exploring the district and wider areas including Lincoln, the coast, the wider Lincolnshire Wolds and other parts of the region.



Things to Do - Attractions:

There is a limited number of 'large' attractions in the district however it does host some 'attack' brands, including:

- Heritage (Gainsborough Old Hall)
- Aviation
- Environment and landscape (walking, cycling and equestrian)
- Key events (West Lindsey Churches Festival, Lincolnshire Wolds Outdoor Festival)

As mentioned, West Lindsey is also characterised by a range of niche attractions and it has a wealth of attractive, unspoilt market towns and villages with historic street markets and a rich 'supply' of historic churches.

Among the top things to do in Lincolnshire according to TripAdvisor, Gainsborough Old Hall is the main attraction with other notable centres at RAF Scampton and Hemswell Antiques Centre (reportedly the largest antique sales centre in Europe).

It is also important to highlight the renowned heritage attractions nearby:

- Lincoln Cathedral
- Lincoln Castle
- International Bomber Command

Gainsborough Old Hall is one of West Lindsey's key heritage attractions. The town also has Gainsborough Heritage Centre which houses exhibitions and artefacts on local history. Caistor Arts & Heritage Centre also provides information on the history of Caistor. The area is limited in terms of the number of large attractions; however, there are some including Rand Farm Park and Woodside Wildlife Park. The district also accommodates a vast range of smaller attractions including Gainsborough Model Railway Museum, Broadbent Theatre, Trinity Arts Centre and Hall Farm Park - just to name a few. In addition, there is a growing sector related to local food in the district with a number of cafes, pubs and retail outlets offering quality local produce.

Destination Basics and Amenities:

While Lincoln's role as a cathedral city is very evident and remains a core driver for West Lindsey as a neighbouring district, the surrounding countryside has its own appeal as an attractive place to visit and stay.

Key aspects for the further development of the tourism product are already in place but offer scope for further expansion including:

- Established walking routes:
 - Wolds Walks
 - Lincolnshire Gateway Walks
 - Viking Way
 - Water Railway
 - Town walks (e.g. Walkabout Caistor)
 - The Lindsey Trail
 - Willingham Woods
- Good cycling to suit all abilities (NCR 1 Market Rasen)
- Growing events and culture programme
- Lincolnshire Showground
- Market Rasen Racecourse
- Trinity Arts Centre
- Caistor Arts and Heritage Centre
- Hemswell Antiques Centre
- Sports and active leisure (including fishing, horse-riding, golf)
- Wildlife sites
- Shopping and markets (including independent shops, artisan workshops, art galleries and street markets)

The appeal of West Lindsey is about its history and historic associations, the unspoilt and attractive countryside and the range and quality of its places to visit within easy reach including villages, churches and recreation trails (as well as access to the east coast).

West Lindsey does not have any recognition or reviews on Trip Advisor which further adds weight to the lack of any rationale behind referencing the district within tourism organisations and marketing activities.

The wider county offers a range of iconic attractions including Lincoln Castle and Cathedral, International Bomber Command Centre and a cluster of family and entertainment facilities in and around Skegness and Cleethorpes.



Branding and Marketing

Branding
Priority Markets

The district of West Lindsey is an administrative brand, which is in itself largely illegible to visitors - local authority boundaries are rarely synonymous with visitor destinations. We will seek to promote our core destination assets: Gainsborough, the Lincolnshire Wolds and the Lincoln fringe area. These will act as three core brands which will sit at the forefront of our marketing portals, therefore becoming the focus of our plan for the Visitor Economy.

- **Visit Lincoln** - West Lindsey District Council is a member of VisitLincoln and within this context, we work in partnership and seek to use the successful VisitLincoln digital offer (including website and social media) to promote all three aspects of our core strategy.
- **Discover Gainsborough** - A place-based offer that covers Gainsborough and the surrounding villages that emphasises the town's heritage assets and lifestyle offer. We will work with local businesses to create a range of bookable products with the overall goal of increasing both the number of overnight stays and the amount spent per day per visitor. This element will complement the 'Invest Gainsborough' programme, a lifestyle offer which will seek to promote Gainsborough as an attractive place to live, work and invest.
- **Love Lincolnshire Wolds** - A business-led partnership with East Lindsey District Council, established in 2016, we work in partnership to support place-marketing outputs through the development of the website, digital marketing campaigns and PR opportunities as well as looking to develop the visitor product.

The above three brands will work together to raise the profile of the West Lindsey area supporting local businesses and visitor attractions on their respective websites. Some businesses may fall under more than one brand which will increase our exposure to potential new visitors, building a positive image of our product offer. It is intended that these three brands will not work in isolation and we will work with our partners to encourage the cross promotion of all three brands to improve our digital presence.



In the post-covid environment, West Lindsey will need to respond to tourism trends and meet the expectations of visitors. Some key trends include:

- **Reassurance post-Covid:** Visitors are looking for reassurance from destinations and businesses that it is 'safe' to visit. They seek places that are close to home, convenient, clean, well-managed and with lots of open space. They also want reassurance about flexible booking/cancellation policies and, for many, good value for money will be important.
- **Staycations:** This trend looks set to continue through 2022 and beyond, with many travellers fearing foreign holidays and plane travel and preferring instead to book themselves into some coastal or countryside accommodation in the UK. They are looking for 'lots to do and experience' and want easy-to-find information at their fingertips.



- **Multigenerational and group travel:** Groups of friends, multi-generational groups and differently shaped, non-linear families are all increasingly prevalent. This was on the up before the pandemic, but 2020/21 has highlighted the importance of getting together with family and friends. Large group and multi-unit accommodation will be popular in the coming years.
- **Wellness:** Physical and mental wellbeing is high on the agenda. People are looking for places where they can escape into nature and enjoy a range of experiences that are good for body and mind such as wild swimming, hiking, biking, yoga and spas.
- **Technology:** Social media is increasingly prominent in travel planning and sharing. Video is gaining in popularity and people will also expect technology to help control health risks whilst on the move with features such as virtual check-in, online reservations and touch free payments.

- Ethical and Green Tourism: Millennials in particular are keen to ensure that visitor impacts are appropriate and sustainable and this signifies choosing operators and businesses with strong and recognised eco-credentials. This includes the ability to shop local, buy local produce and visit local street markets.

The focus is to drive regional and seasonal dispersal increasing volume and value of short breaks in the shoulder season with an increased focus from one to two target audiences to address long term growth and short-term opportunity, including overseas travel. Clearly defining the target markets for West Lindsey will inform and improve content development and marketing activity, maximising effort and spend. The family market accounts for most visitors in the busiest months of the year. It is vital to increase the spend of these visitors and extend the appeal of the region into the shoulder months and even winter months. There is also the opportunity to introduce West Lindsey to new audiences, those on a mini-break to Lincoln, a special interest in certain sports and activities and business travellers.



Using the Visit England Visitor Segmentation model, our target markets are:

- Country-loving traditionalists: Empty nesters with traditional values, they are likely to have recently taken a countryside break in England. Good quality, secure accommodation is a priority when booking.
- Free and easy mini-breakers: More likely to be young, free and single taking advantage of Lincoln's growing reputation as a city-break destination.
- Active family-fun: Family-orientated summer holidays, where post-Covid there is a desire for a broader active outdoor experience other than just a beach holiday.
- Special interest groups (eg ramblers, ornithologists, food lovers, specialist shops and markets).

Consultation and Benchmarking

Consultation (Market/Marketing, Products,
Visitor Management, Organisation)
SWOT Summary
Benchmarking

As part of the preparation of the visitor economy strategy we undertook broad consultation with a range of stakeholders, Councillors, businesses and other interested parties. The consultation was carried out through a combination of one-to-one discussions, workshops and online email exchanges.

As one would expect, some consultees have differing views on the priority and preferred marketing routes, development initiatives and lead themes. We summarise below the broad range of topics covered:

Market/Marketing:

- Brands and assets don't work in isolation - widely acknowledged. Strong support for the themed approach rather than the administrative district boundary for market development.
- Actively support the Visit Lincoln/Destination Lincolnshire DMO as the primary tourism 'ecosystem.'
- Acknowledge the distinctive appeal of the different areas within the District (not a homogenous offer).
- The legacy of the Mayflower Project has potential to continue to have significant market reach.
- Liaising with Visit Lincoln as it moves to Destination Lincolnshire and has an important focus beyond the Lincoln city limits to encompass areas within West Lindsey.
- Develop the digital presence and capacity of the area and among individual businesses

Products:

- Important to consider wider Climate Agenda/Net Zero in respect of new tourism projects and initiatives within the area.
- Important to acknowledge longer term aspirations to include ways to grow events/conferences and business functions.
- Look to establish each of the three spatial areas as offering strong Green Tourism credentials including working in close collaboration with Love Lincolnshire Wolds.
- Encourage further development in the self-catering product offer which suits the 'family adventurer' market.
- Work with parishes particularly in term of common aspects within Neighbourhood Plans which provide amenities for locals and visitors.
- Build on the niche offer of listed churches to showcase the area's rich history.
- Consider opportunities to develop 'dark skies' related initiatives to appeal to visitors.

Visitor Management:

- Adopt a 'visitor first' approach
- Nature impact - strong opportunity for nature conscious visitors, including use of volunteers (seen as an important strand of wellbeing).
- Recognise the need for better connectivity for visitors including walking and cycling route infrastructure as well as public transport.
- Understand opportunity to promote many areas in West Lindsey as an excellent base for touring this area and also to extend stays to visit the wider region from this base.
- Provide support for initiatives related to enhancing the trail network including possible upgrade of Viking Way to a National Trail

Organisation:

- Fully recognise the importance of partnership.
- Important to work with the farming and landowning communities and to look to opportunities for diversification where applicable.
- Work with Destination Lincolnshire on its ongoing long term specialist market research programme and respond to its findings (including detailed information on pricing, quality standards etc). Also look to build on recent County Council led research into non visitors and look to address market opportunities.
- Seek to develop online bookability with partners to include training and upskilling programmes where applicable.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural space • Rich history and heritage • Aviation heritage • Uncrowded, unspoilt nature • Some quality B&Bs • Local produce • Established events and festivals (West Lindsey Churches Festival, Lincolnshire Wolds Outdoor Festival) • Existing rail connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively remote location • Lack of larger attractions • Day visitor dominate • Limited accommodation • Poor Wifi connectivity • Seasonality • Lack of visitor profile • Limited private sector investment • Limited resources with WLDC
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism trends post Covid-19 - visitors looking for new, attractive outdoor space • Sustainable/green tourism • Green infrastructure and linkages - developing walking and cycling trails • Growth of Lincoln as a mini-break destination • Town Centre improvements, including Gainsborough • Events programme building on existing established activities • Lincolnshire Showground • Enhanced activities of Visit Lincoln • Dark skies related visitor offer • Community tourism • Independent shops and businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resurgence of Covid-19 • Competitor investment • Lack of uniqueness and distinctiveness • Lack of collaboration and partnership working • Rise of fuel and cost of living

An important component of our work has been to understand how other destinations management organisations are managing and developing the tourism profile of individual destinations, particularly in terms of addressing challenges and opportunities. From this, it is possible to draw out lessons which may be applicable for the development of tourism in West Lindsey. Please see three case examples as Appendix One based on two district authorities (Chichester and Exeter) and one nature-based tourism initiative (Yorkshire Nature Triangle).

Organisation:

- Developing strong and effective working partnerships between all organisations and businesses involved in tourism is critical.
- It is really important to put in place effective mechanisms to secure strong representation from businesses to provide a 'voice' as well as a coordinating 'platform' for the visitor economy sector and related companies. Without the backing and trust of tourism businesses, implementation and change can be difficult.
- A number of DMOs also include membership schemes to bolster income streams to cover both core costs and project delivery. The case examples have strong support and commitment from the local authority.
- There is a need for clear communication and agreement to determine who is best placed to assume responsibility for aspects of the DMP action plans and who leads on any specific activity. It is important not to duplicate effort between the DMO, the BID (where applicable) and the local authorities.
- As organisations, some DMOs are working around the 'Talent' element - delivering programmes related to 'liveability' of their destinations which then reflects positively on the tourism sector.

- The DMOs often need to create internal groupings to reflect the range of interests of the membership and extent of activities undertaken. This can include for example sub-divisions by product sectors (accommodation, retail, catering etc) and/or by theme (branding, the Customer Experience, Industry Partnerships). This needs to be carefully structured to ensure plans are cost effective and efficiently delivered.
- There is a benefit derived by making sure the organisation is lean and agile - able to be more responsive and freer of political influence.

Marketing:

- Prioritising and targeting visitor markets is important both in terms of effectively using limited resources and building on tourism assets. Visitors need a reason to choose a destination over other destinations. Strengthening visitors' awareness through a strong brand position is seen as being key.



Vision and Strategic Priorities

Principles
Priorities

The research and consultation confirms that tourism matters; it is a growing sector which makes an important contribution to West Lindsey's overall economic growth. In the process of Covid-19 recovery, there is a real opportunity for West Lindsey to position itself as a safe, accessible destination with a strong focus on distinctiveness, sustainability, social well-being, health and outdoor based activities. Post Covid-19 'drivers', which will help shape the Action Plan include:

- A need for flexible accommodation including self-catering and 'glamping'.
- A need to highlight the wide-open spaces, views and outdoor activities including cycling and walking (and dark skies, where applicable).
- A need to ensure food, shopping and attractions are high quality, and above all, immaculately clean and well presented.
- Stand out events to attract new audiences.
- 'New' product to attract attention and raise profile through media stories.
- Ensure the offer is genuinely high quality as competition from other UK destinations for staycation is very strong.
- Ensure walks/cycle routes are well maintained and signposted.
- Local shops, local produce in the smaller towns and villages. People want to support local producers, street markets, crafters, artists etc.

The ambition is to develop exemplar sustainable (low carbon) visitor economy through indigenous and organic growth. Our destination ambition and agenda for the Visitor Economy is set out below.

The Visitor Economy Plan is underpinned by key principles and objectives, which remain vital to the success of the District:

Principles:

- Visitors must have a positive rewarding experience; they will want to share with others.
- Residents must benefit from the Visitor Economy.
- The District's Environment must be protected.
- The Visitor Economy must be continuously developed.

Priorities:

Our Strategic Priorities that underpin the Action Plan are:

- Create a sense of place and raise the profile of the three spatial areas as quality, sustainable visitor destinations.
- Improve and enhance the Visitor Product with a focus on increased accommodation provision and outdoor recreation.
- Deliver an exceptional Visitor Experience.
- Develop and maintain improved planning and communication between key Stakeholders and Partners.
- Introduce mechanisms to ensure effective monitoring and up-to-date customer insight.

Action Plan

Timescales
Action Plan
Monitoring Progress

The Action Plan sets out a long-list of actions based on the strategic priorities. This is a living document, which can be updated as the funding landscape and market conditions change.

In terms of the action plan the role of the District Council will be to work with a range of stakeholders as a facilitator and help provide supporting infrastructure, including supporting destination marketing. It will be the role of the private sector and local community organisations to be responsible for the ongoing operational delivery of the projects. The District Council will co-ordinate a growth-led approach to working with tourism businesses to secure sustainable growth. Visit Lincoln will be supported as the official destination marketing organisation with responsibility for area marketing and promotion.

Consideration will need to be given into potential cost implications for both capital and revenue funding for each of the actions:

Priority/Timescale:

- Short term - up to 18 months
- Medium term - 18 to 36 months
- Long term - over 36 months

The Climate Change/Sustainability themes and deriving implications will be integrated across all visitor economy activity in full alignment with the Sustainability, Climate Change and Environment Strategy for West Lindsey.



Product Development:

The product offer is a core component of the 'destination.' There is a need to create additional "attractors", which will encourage people to visit and stay in the area (and encourage repeat visits) by targeted investment in the tourism 'product.' The focus is on identifying and supporting the development of existing and new products and services that add to the offer.

The prevalence of mainly low-key tourism in a predominantly rural area suggests there is not a strong need or potential fit with 'big-ticket' flagship new facilities however there is nevertheless scope for varying forms of product development some of which have the potential to be transformational to the profile and value of tourism in the district.

Action	Who?	Timescale
As part of the new emerging masterplan, assess the potential to refresh the aviation heritage experience at RAF Scampton. RAF Scampton is a strong candidate for a high-profile visitor offer as part of the emerging wider development plans for the site. The Red Arrows story resonates with a wide audience and has the potential to provide a visitor offer alongside the existing aviation heritage sites nearby and around Lincolnshire including International Bomber Command.	WLDC, LCC, Visit Lincoln	Short
Seek to attract new hotel and self-catering accommodation investment to West Lindsey subject to market	WLDC, LCC, Visit Lincoln	Ongoing

capacity and encourage existing accommodation providers to invest in and broaden their product offer. Subject to funding, there is strong merit in updating the earlier Hotel Study for the District to provide more up-to-date market data and attract appropriate investment.		
Support the provision of quality self-catering accommodation by providing a toolkit/guide linked to quality grading. Targeted at: 1. Farmers/landowners considering diversifying to introduce innovative self-catering units (wooden pods, tree tents, shepherd's huts) 2. Rooms in pubs 3. AirBnB and similar	WLDC, Visit Lincoln	Short/Medium
Refresh the masterplan focus at Lincolnshire Showground on helping to work constructively with Showground Operators as a premier location for small/medium sized meetings and conferences and possible new accommodation provision.	WLDC in collaboration with Showground owners	Short/Medium
Working with partners to consider opportunity areas based on visitor offer and events programme at Market Rasen Racecourse which could also act as a driver for overnight stays.	WLDC in collaboration with The Jockey Club	Short/Medium
Seek ways to encourage culinary innovation in recognition of the local produce and food sector as an	WLDC with industry representatives	Ongoing

important 'thread' of the overall visitor appeal of the area. Objective is to build a strong and coherent network of 'suppliers' to present easily accessible product information for visitors and residents (including restaurants, bars, farm shops, breweries, specialist outlets and cafes) and to boost the evening economy.		
Review and develop an Events Plan in conjunction with Visit Lincoln to ensure key events fit within broad annual calendar without clashes of timings.	Visit Lincoln, WLDC	Ongoing
Help to build the profile and prosperity of street markets in West Lindsey as attractors for visitors, building on the existing offer for Market Rasen, Gainsborough and Caistor. This has potential to have strong synergy with culinary innovation in the area alongside local producers/operators.	WLDC, Parish Councils, Local Businesses	Short/Medium
Develop walking and cycling network links which connect the main hubs within the District with rural communities, attractions, places of interest and heritage and natural features. Also develop the off-road network wherever possible to enhance attractiveness for families. Include signage at key arrival points and additional trail signage linked to location mapping and interpretation	Visit Lincoln, WLDC, Sustrans	Medium

(where appropriate including inland waterways). Follow Sustrans guidance on network development. Ensure accommodation supply is able to match needs of users in terms of type and location. Pro-actively engage with landowners and farmers to encourage further special interest accommodation stock.		
Develop and promote the cultural & heritage offer building on planned investment in Gainsborough in respect of the cinema and multi-leisure offer, adding to the Trinity Arts Centre to create a broad cultural offer, appealing to residents and visitors and contributing to the night time economy locally. Seek to spread the benefits across the district by helping to 'package' the wider cultural and heritage offer including within Caistor and Market Rasen. The potential interest in street markets could provide one common thread and theme for such packages along with churches and other built heritage.	WLDC, Town Team	Ongoing
Develop the waterfront at Gainsborough along the tidal section of the River Trent to include public realm, wayfinding and improved amenities and services (such as waterfront bar and catering offer(s), as well as possible provision of moorings.	WLDC, Town Team	Medium

Look to work alongside private developer to help enable project at Riverside Gateway Marina to go forward if viable.	WLDC, Town Team	Long
Scope potential for a medium scale new outdoor attraction, e.g., family-friendly attraction potentially including outdoor adventure experience.	WLDC	Medium/Long
Develop a Community Tourism Toolkit to support community groups develop new products, services and marketing campaigns for their area that will encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more. This could build on the 2022 Green Tourism Toolkit being developed by the County Council.	WLDC	Medium
Incentivise and prioritise tourism products that deliver a sustainable offer.	WLDC	Ongoing
West Lindsey offers a range of opportunities for a touring base by car or motor home/campervan. To develop this growth market, it would be desirable to identify and scope out a potential roadside 'aire' site to offer specialist facilities in safe, quiet locations.	WLDC, Town and Parish Councils	Short/Medium
Explore opportunity to bring together and package a range of sites of nature interest with public access across the area (including all or part of Lincolnshire Wolds, Willingham Woods, Witham Valley etc.) and	WLDC, LCC, Visit Lincoln, Lincs Wildlife Trust, Forestry England and other agencies	Medium/Long

consider a form of destination similar to Nature Triangle in Yorkshire (Please refer to: Yorkshire Nature Triangle – Wild Yorkshire Welcome to Yorkshire and Case Example 3 in Appendix One).	as appropriate	
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Destination Basics:

Action	Who?	Timescale
Build on visitor orientation infrastructure with coordinated signage and self-led themed routes across the district and beyond. This could also be App based as a secondary stage.	WLDC	Medium
The above initiative could include a focus on West Lindsey Villages which use technology for interpretation of artefacts, points of interest and special historic items associated with each settlement. Please note, Great Limber Parish Council already have proposals underway along these lines and a similar approach could be followed more widely with historic settlements such as Tealby, Walesby and Nettleton.	WLDC, Town and Parish Councils	Medium
Consider support to include the visitor economy impacts as part of the criteria within the proposed Lincolnshire Wolds AONB boundary review.	WLDC, NLC, Town and Parish Councils	Short/Medium

Alongside the drive for a more sustainable and green tourism product there needs to be encouragement for packages and itineraries which encourage use of public transport. It will be beneficial to work with public transport providers to create a more sustainable method of transport into and around the district, particularly routes between key sites (some on a seasonal basis).	WLDC, Tourist Operators and Tour Companies, Transport providers	Ongoing
In addition to supporting the public transport network, it is important to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is in place for modern electric vehicles with adequate charging points for cars and electric bikes.	WLDC, Energy Providers	Ongoing
Where possible help to lobby to ensure mobile connectivity to support tourism providers and visitors as part of wider policy for improved online access in rural areas.	WLDC	Ongoing
Promote training and funding opportunities across the sector.	WLDC, LCC	Medium
Improve mechanisms for maintaining up-to-date visitor research building on STEAM data in partnership with Visit Lincoln.	WLDC, Visit Lincoln	Ongoing

Marketing and Promotion:

WLDC will facilitate marketing and promotional activities in close collaboration with Visit Lincoln, Lincolnshire Wolds AONB and other town groups, who will be responsible for campaign design and delivery.

Action	Who?	Timescale
Continue to promote and build on three core destination assets of Gainsborough, the Lincolnshire Wolds and Lincoln fringe. In terms of marketing this signifies supporting and partnering with Discover Gainsborough (and Invest Gainsborough), Love Lincolnshire Wolds and Visit Lincoln rather than follow an overall brand based on administrative boundaries (which is acknowledged as 'illegible' to visitors).	WLDC, Visit Lincoln, Love Lincolnshire Wolds, Discover Gainsborough, Business 'stakeholders'	Short/Medium
Develop itineraries and packages specifically tailored to core target markets including Country-Loving Traditionalists' and 'Aspirational Family Fun.'	WLDC, Visit Lincoln, Business 'stakeholders'	Short/Medium
Strengthen links with neighbouring destinations and attractions for mutually beneficial collaboration and itinerary packaging (e.g. city escapes and coastal retreats).	WLDC, ELDC, Visit Lincoln	Short/Medium
Continue to build on the interest and programmes which have formed part of the Mayflower 400 programme	WLDC, Visit Lincoln, LCC	Ongoing

<p>exploring interest with the area's connections in Gainsborough and elsewhere to the origins of the historic pilgrimage (including targeting US and other overseas markets).</p> <p>Continue working with local partners to develop an online (including the PilgrimAGE digital campaign) and events programme of activities that will tell the story of the Mayflower Pilgrims and their connections to Lincolnshire and the Pilgrim Roots region.</p>		
Increase familiarisation visits for trade and group organisers to get them to into the District.	WLDC, Visit Lincoln	Short/Medium
Carry out an audit of visitor marketing collateral to review messaging and identify product gaps.	WLDC, Visit Lincoln	Medium
Provide appropriate content to key visitor websites (www.visitlincoln.com) to ensure it is inspiring, concise and targeted with appealing, energetic content and imagery.	WLDC	Short
Undertake a social media campaign to gain coverage in national and regional titles to raise awareness of the destination, the new developments and activities.	WLDC	Ongoing

Partnership and Collaboration:

Action	Who?	Timescale
Prepare an Executive Summary of the Visitor Economy Plan to communicate and secure buy-in across the sector.	WLDC	Short
Establish a West Lindsey Visitor Economy Partnership Group (to meet at least twice a year) to engage and involve businesses, local communities and stakeholder in the delivery and review of the Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan.	WLDC, Tourism and Hospitality Businesses, Visit Lincoln	Short
Develop a West Lindsey Responsible Tourism pledge, setting out the destination's expectations to businesses, residents and visitors.	WLDC, Visit Lincoln	Short/Medium
Ensure WLDC has representation on the Greater Lincolnshire Visitor Economy Board.	WLDC	Ongoing
Consider the resource implications for undertaking a more proactive role in the funding and delivery of the Love Lincolnshire Wolds Destination Management Plan.	WLDC	Ongoing
Help to encourage and support local settlements and communities to adopt a balanced and sustainable approach to their Neighbourhood Plans. This should aim to include the agreed	WLDC, Local Settlements & Communities	Ongoing

approach to tourism development in their locality and to create a coordinated framework for any future developments or initiatives.		
Identify potential funding opportunities to help strengthen the sector and develop new market opportunities as identified in the Visitor Economy Plan.	WLDC	Ongoing
Overall strong officer representation for the local visitor economy sector within local partnerships.	WLDC	Ongoing

Monitoring Progress:

A key task will be to establish a monitoring framework comprised of baseline data and targets for the period 2022-2025. This will need to capture the following data sets:

- Number of businesses and employees in the sector (STEAM)
- Number of visitors to West Lindsey (STEAM)
- Number of overnight stay (STEAM)
- Increased spend into the district economy (STEAM)
- Better awareness of West Lindsey as a visitor destination
- More tourism businesses investing in product development
- More businesses investing in green technologies/environmentally friendly/ethical practices

The Action Plan presents a suite of detailed interventions and initiatives which respond to the vision to create a community-led destination that develops, refines and presents an authentic responsible tourism product with a focus on sustainability and community benefits. It is important to emphasise that the Climate Change/Net Zero targets/Sustainability themes will be integrated across all visitor economy activity. The Action Plan is a 'live' document to be reviewed and updated annually.

The view is that actions need to be taken forward across each of the themes to position West Lindsey as an exemplar sustainable destination.

This strategy is predominantly based on the approach for West Lindsey District Council although it has been created with extensive consultation and its implementation does necessitate effective and ongoing partnership working among other stakeholders and businesses serving the visitor economy.



Appendix: Comparative Review

Case 1: Exeter
Case 2: Chichester District
Case 3: Yorkshire Nature Triangle



Visit Exeter, is partially funded by the Council and participating tourism businesses in Exeter also pay a membership fee. To some degree it acts like a mini-Destination Management Organisation. Interestingly, businesses within approximately 10 miles of Exeter can become members which helps allow some coastal and rural tourism businesses to be incorporated.

Tourism sits within the Communications Directorate which includes tourism, the arts and culture. Tourism is a key driver of the economy of Devon, but Exeter is not as popular as you would think it would be given the importance of tourism within the wider county.

Exeter is different to Devon. The market is very day visitor based - either as a resident living in or holidaymaker staying in Devon, people tend to come into Exeter for a leisure day visit or cultural experience.

The conference market is growing as Exeter is the economic hub within Devon. Some of the conference facilities and hotels have grown in the last two years particularly around the university area. However, the city has struggled in the international conference marketplace and this is being addressed by further investment at Sandy Park (rugby stadium complex).

The County showground at West Point is being used for outdoor concerts, but the number of events is limited from a planning perspective. The showground also hosts exhibitions.

Similar to Canterbury, events are viewed as an important part of the visitor economy and the city has been awarded City of Literature status by UNESCO, which will drive a programme of literature-based events in the quayside area (which is a leisure destination within the city).

In terms of gaps within the product portfolio whilst there are a number of smaller theatres, which support cultural activities, Exeter does not benefit from a major/large-scale theatre. There is an appetite to develop a multi-purpose venue which can host cultural performances along with other uses (to create a financially viable venue). Additionally, the city does not benefit from an architectural and signature building similar, for example, to the Bull Ring in Birmingham or The Sage in Gateshead.

In terms of brand positioning, the cathedral is vitally important in attracting the 'traditional' market and the heritage and history is critical in terms of drawing in the international marketplace.

However, the City Council commissioned a rebranding exercise three years ago and a new business brand was launched - 'Liveable Exeter', which is still being implemented across the City and externally. A number of businesses are using it e.g., Football and Rugby Club (which now have it on their kit) and the university etc.

This is a 'boom time' for estate agents in Devon. The wider county is attracting people to relocate to Devon, whilst working remotely (not so much Exeter) but the coastal and rural towns.

Key channels to market for the visitor economy include digital, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the main Visit Exeter website. Again, similar to Canterbury, events are also used to help raise awareness of the city and draw people in.

In March 2020, the Council quickly recognised the need to provide support to businesses because of the impact of Covid-19. They set up a number of recovery groups for example the Business Recovery Group supporting businesses in Exeter through to the Visitor Economy Group which is planning the future tourism offer within the city.

In terms of support for businesses this is focussed on providing grants for businesses in the tourism, hospitality and retail sectors, which have been particularly hard hit by Covid-19. There is a real push by the Council to encourage businesses in these sectors to apply for these grants. Part of the Additional Restrictions Grant funding of some £1m (along with other Council funding) has been earmarked to help the businesses innovate, change the business model etc to recover from Covid-19. City centre businesses (retail, hospitality) have further suffered because of a decline in footfall from other businesses located within the city (offices have closed and these office workers have not returned).

It is important to acknowledge the role of universities in helping to sustain a vibrant city centre (once we emerge post Covid).

The Council uses its own property portfolio in the city centre to offer subsidised rents to encourage temporary workspace, retail and licensed spaces (on a start-up or similar basis).





The Destination Management Plan was instigated by Visit Chichester and the District Council has provided some funding to Visit Chichester. A critical objective of the DMO is to increase the level of overnight stays within the district.

“Positioning the district as more than a day visit across all channels. Work with key product themes to engage the consumer in different ways.”

Through the Chichester Vision, which includes a range of partners (e.g., businesses, organisations and West Sussex County Council), the aim is to work with Visit Chichester to help deliver some of the projects identified in the Vision Action Plan.

The Vision is seen by the District Council as an important ‘living document with defined actions across multiple departments.

It sets out 3 key themes with an aim to balance a nice place to live and work with the visitor economy:

- Theme 1 - An Accessible and Attractive City ... Supporting ambitions and initiatives
- Theme 2 - A Vibrant and Growing Economy ... Supporting ambitions and initiatives
- Theme 3 - A Leading Visitor Destination ... Supporting ambitions and initiatives

Visit Chichester is going through a process of rebranding to the “Great Sussex Way” (but this has not been launched due to Covid-19). The rebranding is to demonstrate that the DMO is about the district and not just Chichester. There is a perception that Visit Chichester was focused on city and not the whole of the district, which is not the case as in reality the DMO has always covered the whole of the district.

There is also a focus on highlighting ‘what a good (and safe) place it is to live around here’ to encourage inward investment.

Arising directly from the DMP, was a requirement to establish additional funding streams for the DMO. Substantial work has been undertaken to evaluate options with a decision to establish an in-house ‘tiered’ membership scheme whereby putative members could buy-in the scheme at a number of different levels and receive a range of increasingly comprehensive benefits.

Chichester District benefits from a diverse visitor product - from the South Downs (attractive countryside) and a range of beaches. Chichester Cathedral is a critical partner and helps to draw in a significant number of visitors to the city. The Council is looking at how they can enhance the cathedral area via pedestrianisation to create a more attractive ‘space’.

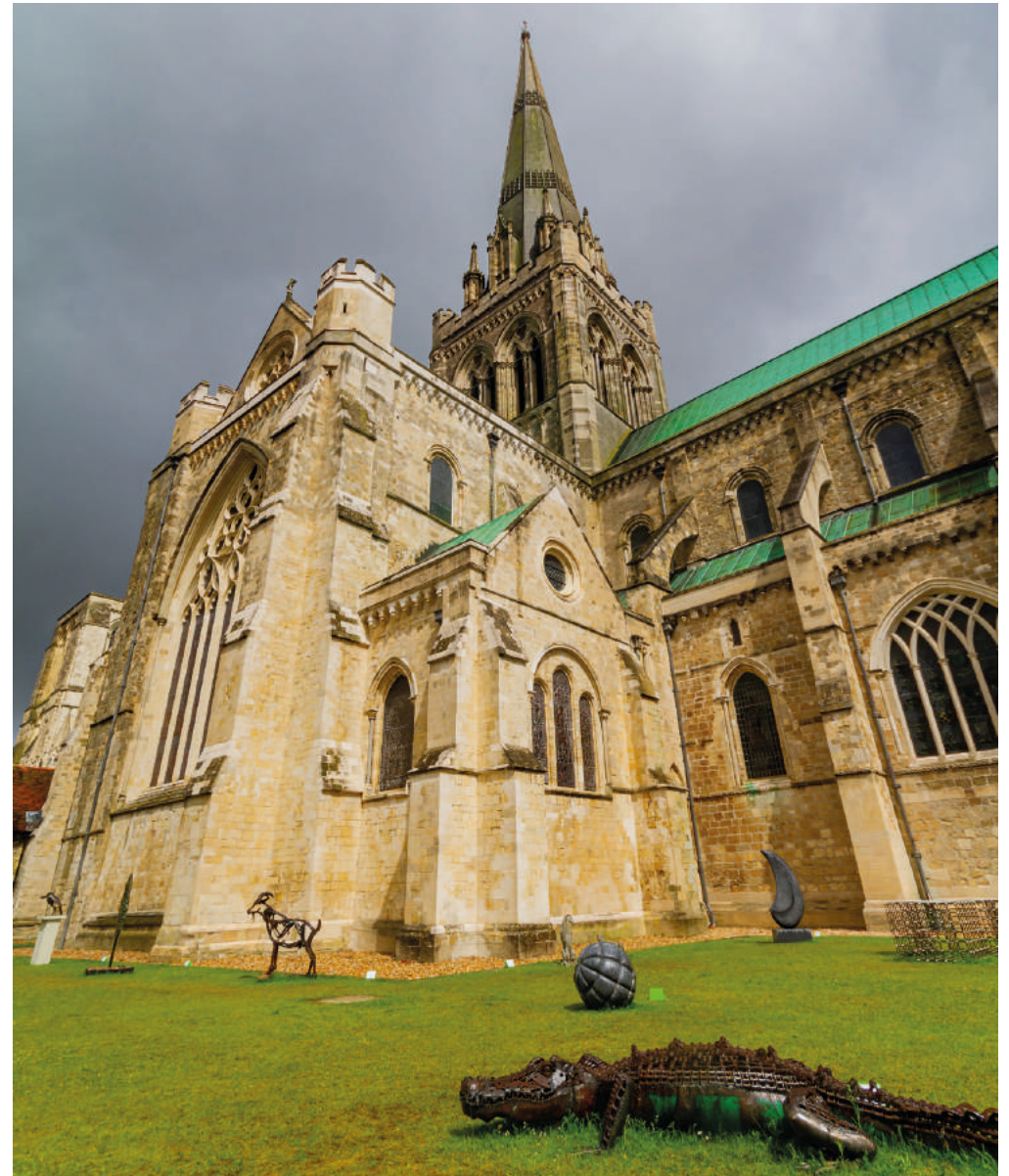
As key cultural resources Chichester Festival Theatre and Pallant House Gallery also help to draw visitors into the city. Goodwood has a dual role in terms of being an important part of the visitor product, but at the same time it also helps to attract inward investment (i.e., businesses relocating to the district). Cowdray is also located in the north of the district. Events play a critical role in helping to draw in visitors, they also present a range of PR opportunities and help to raise the profile of the district. The Council has invested in developing an events policy and event strategy with the aim of drawing people into the city centre. Events such as Summer Street Party and Pub in the Park have been supported by the District Council but have been put on hold with Covid-19.

There are key gaps in terms of the visitor product and these relate to the available hotel accommodation bedstock, particularly within the city itself. There is also a recognised lack of provision in respect of serving the evening economy.

In terms of the visitor economy, the majority of the marketing is delivered through Visit Chichester. Whereas the Council has focused on marketing to the local community e.g., shop local and social media is a key channel to market. The district council works in closely partnerships with the town and parish councils who have a role to play in destination development. For example, Selsey Town Council is developing a destination website.

In terms of recovering from Covid-19 Chichester District Council has produced a range of recovery plans (for different department within the Council) with key actions to be carried out. They have established a £500,000 Covid-19 recovery grant for community groups and businesses.

The Council is keen to develop more of an itinerary option for visitors and to package different activities for different lengths of stay. This is mostly based on staying guests in the city centre.





“The Yorkshire Nature Triangle was established as a destination marketing initiative to bring together East Yorkshire’s key wildlife watching sites and nature reserves. The geographical area covers Filey and the Flamborough Headland down to the coast to Spurn Point, along the Humber Estuary and across the Yorkshire Wolds.”

This nature-based initiative was introduced in three planned phases. Building on the outstanding landscape of the AONB and other rural assets, there is potential in West Lindsey to create a similar possibly smaller scale ‘project prototype’ (and appropriate neighbouring areas) subject to partner interest. In terms of developing ‘nature experiences’ it is important to introduce a range which can appeal to different ‘market segments’ - from visitors beginning their journey into nature and through to experienced birders.

We describe the Yorkshire Initiative below:

In 2010, it was estimated that nature tourism was worth approximately £9.6m to the economy in the study area. Between 2010 and 2018 investment was targeted at marketing and product development, including but not limited to:

- Steps installed at Thornwick Bay
- Nature Tourism Conference
- Bird hird at Hornsea Mere
- Spurn Migration Festival
- Living Seas Centre
- Filey and Flamborough Wildlife Festival
- Education facility/visitor hide opens at Tophill Low
- Visitor guide refreshed
- Wayfinding introduced at Paull Holme Strays
- Cliff Cam goes live
- Business Toolkit refreshed to cover the full region

Development has been phased and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust were the lead partner. Other partners included the RPSB, Yorkshire Water and East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

- Phase 1: Marking out the Triangle
- Phase 2: Building the Triangle
- Phase 3: Connecting the Triangle

Phase 1: Marking out the Triangle

“European LEADER funding (2010–2013) enabled Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to launch a pilot project, learn from international case studies and understand the value of nature tourism to the local economy (£9million annually). A commissioned report by Leeds Metropolitan University mapped out a plan to grow the nature tourism market to £29million by 2020.

This platform provided an exciting opportunity to engage with local businesses, tourism organisations and Local Authorities on senior level. Being at the helm, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust were able to advise how such developments could benefit both people and wildlife.”

Key Outputs:

- Creation of a blueprint for nature tourism development in East Yorkshire
- Setting the scene at an international nature tourism conference
- Providing training and advice to 100 businesses

Phase 2: Building the Triangle

“Coastal Communities Funding (2015–2017) supported the development of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserves. Other organisations were also busy breaking ground and creating new visitor experiences. Suddenly there was lots more to shout about! New visitor guides, a dedicated website and social media channels were launched along with our ‘Nature Tourism Business Toolkit’. Festivals and events added to the buzz; helping to organise the first ‘Migration Festival’ at Spurn National Nature Reserve. Initiation of the ‘Flamborough Marine Wildlife and Seabird Festival’ paved the way for the ‘Yorkshire Puffin Festival!’”

Key Outputs:

- Significant investment into nature reserves and visitor experiences
- National media coverage - igniting interest from businesses
- Relationship building with wider tourism sector

Phase 3: Connecting the Triangle

“Advocating East Yorkshire’s wildlife within the wider promotion of the region has been a cornerstone of the ‘Triangle’. Further support from the Coastal Communities Fund (2017–2019) enabled the creation of seasonal itineraries and now ‘wild days, wild weekends and wild weeks’ encourage people to visit, explore further and stay longer! A new marketing e-toolkit was launched for businesses. Our research revealed that visits to nature reserves have more than doubled and the value of nature tourism in East Yorkshire has increased from £9 million to £24 million annually between 2010 and 2018 (Leeds Beckett University).”

Key Outputs:

- Widening wildlife appeal to new audiences
- New itinerary-based resources and business training
- Sustainable solutions to maintain elements of the project long-term



Research in 2018 based on interviews carried out at different sites identified:

- 83% of visitors were aged 45+
- 80% of all visitors were in a group of two or more people
- 61% of people were in a family group and 13% visiting with friends
- In terms of the purpose of visiting the area birdwatching and walking are the most frequently mentioned responses - 40% and 30% respectively. Interesting to note the figure for birdwatching declined from 49% (the responses differed at individual interview sites)

Similar to West Lindsey, the visitor economy of East Yorkshire is dominated by day visitors and 59% of visitors interviewed were on a day trip from home and 6% of visitors interviewed were transiting through the area. One third of visitors were on holiday in the area.

In terms of the tourism market and their visitors to specific nature sites, the majority only travel a short distance from their accommodation to reach the sites. The sites need to invest in creating and marketing their USPs to encourage holidaymakers staying in the area (and neighbouring areas) to explore nature-based products further afield from their accommodation.

The more specialist birding sites (North Cave Wetlands and Tophill Low) generate high levels of repeat visits 24 trips/year on average.

The 2019 report Review of Nature Tourism in East Yorkshire, 2010-2018 has helped to identify the impact of investment in the Yorkshire Nature Triangle and nature tourism - it is estimated, using nationally-sourced engagement figures, that there was £18 million in direct spending on trips associated with viewing nature and wildlife in East Yorkshire.

Average spend per head at the different sites (excluding accommodation) has increased. For example, the average spend per head at Bempton Cliffs in 2015 was £19.94 and by 2018 it had reached £27.46 (a 38% increase), at the Living Seas Centre spend over the same period increased from £9.24 to £25.00 (a 171% increase) and at Tophill Low spend increased from £7.14 to £21.16 (a 196% increase).

Investment in products and marketing helped to increase visitor numbers at specific sites within the Nature Triangle.

Nature tourism can be used to help encourage out of season visits to specific areas by sensibly marketing wildlife spectacles from bird migrations through to seal pupping, which can occur outside of the main season.

Whilst the 'project' has officially drawn to a close (in 2019), the physical infrastructure and investment in the visitor product is a legacy, alongside other activities and events such as the Puffin Festival. Individual partners continue to take forward their own projects within the 'Nature Triangle.'



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