



Visitor Economy Strategy

Lancashire Visitor Economy Strategy
and Destination Management Plan

2016 - 2020

www.lancashirelep.co.uk

Produced by

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Foreword



Tony Attard OBE DL
Chair - Marketing Lancashire

Lancashire's visitor economy has a leading role to play in the future prosperity of our county. It already supports our local communities with over 56,000 jobs and contributes £3.7 billion to Lancashire's economy through the 63 million visitors that are welcomed each year. Our tourism businesses and organisation form a key part of the county's wider economic narrative by providing a vast array of leisure opportunities that help to tell Lancashire's story through the rich quality of life they deliver.

Lancashire offers a rich and diverse mix of visitor experiences, whether for a short break, holiday or day out. With its stunning rural landscapes and outdoor offer, including cycling and walking; rich cultural heritage and extensive calendar of festivals and events; its coastal plains and resorts and its reputation for locally produced food and drink, Lancashire has the strong foundations for delivering outstanding visitor experiences. To attract more visitors, we need to ensure that Lancashire's offer is a compelling and competitive one and that our investment and resources are targeted to the greatest opportunities for growth.

This new Visitor Economy Strategy and Destination Management Plan for Lancashire sets out to identify how the sector will achieve strong and sustainable growth, set against an ever increasingly competitive marketplace that must not only meet, but exceed, the expectations of our visitors. It lays down a blueprint for action that demonstrates how Lancashire intends to grow the volume and value of its visitor economy, seeking to grow visitor numbers to 70 million per annum, with an accompanying increase of an additional £650 million economic impact by 2020.

As the designated Destination Management Organisation for the county, Marketing Lancashire will take a strategic lead in steering the delivery of this strategy but no one body or organisation can successfully deliver the actions set out within this strategic plan; the county's visitor economy comprises thousands of businesses from a host of sectors and not just those that obviously serve visitors, such as accommodation and visitor attractions. The industry and its supply chain is complex and multifaceted and therefore partnership working and collaboration is at the heart of this approach.

There is much progress already with the delivery of a new Taste Lancashire, food and drink campaign underway to champion our abundance of outstanding food and drink producers alongside our award winning places to eat and drink. A cultural tourism initiative has also started to build closer collaboration between cultural and tourism sectors to create a clearer and more coherent proposition that will help to amplify our cultural voice and grow Lancashire's profile as a cultural tourism destination in its own right.

Whilst our primary focus is on increasing the number of domestic visitors to the county, we will also maximise opportunities to raise the profile of Lancashire to overseas markets through cross boundary working and partnerships with English Heritage Cities and across the North of England to showcase our strongest assets to international visitors and entice them into exploring our rich culture and heritage further.

By focusing on the priorities set out in this Visitor Economy Strategy and Destination Management Plan we have the potential to help Lancashire strengthen its positioning as one of the leading visitor destinations in England. Whilst the main impact will be to create new jobs and wealth in the county, its effects will be more far reaching – places that welcome visitors are also desirable places in which to live, work, study and invest.

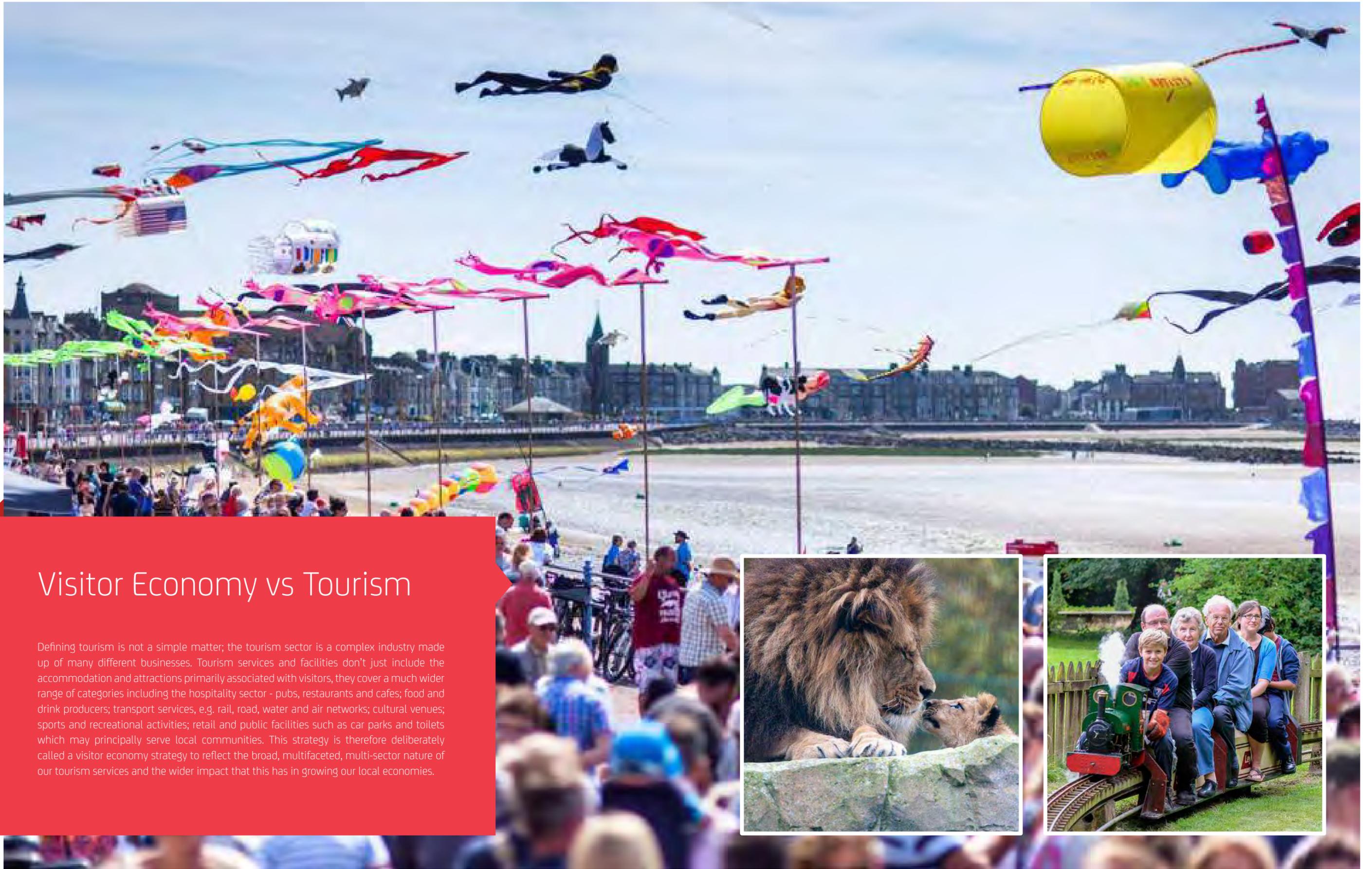


The Visitor Economy of Lancashire is one of seven key business sectors that the county has identified as a provider of jobs and wealth in the future. It currently represents 7% of the county's GVA and employs one in ten of the working population who service 63 million visitors a year. The economic impact of these visitors is £9.3m a day, or £3.7bn a year. Its value has grown by 15.5% since 2011.

The impact of Lancashire's visitor economy is valued at £9.3m per day.

Its value has grown by 15.5% since 2011.

63 million visitors a year.



Visitor Economy vs Tourism

Defining tourism is not a simple matter; the tourism sector is a complex industry made up of many different businesses. Tourism services and facilities don't just include the accommodation and attractions primarily associated with visitors, they cover a much wider range of categories including the hospitality sector - pubs, restaurants and cafes; food and drink producers; transport services, e.g. rail, road, water and air networks; cultural venues; sports and recreational activities; retail and public facilities such as car parks and toilets which may principally serve local communities. This strategy is therefore deliberately called a visitor economy strategy to reflect the broad, multifaceted, multi-sector nature of our tourism services and the wider impact that this has in growing our local economies.

The Visitor Economy as an Economic Driver

Lancashire's visitor economy is recognised as a catalyst for change and a creator of wealth. It already supports jobs; provides employment and up-skilling opportunities for local people; improves and protects the built and natural environments; and creates demand for new and high quality businesses and services as well as better infrastructure and transport networks. Nevertheless, there is considerable scope for improvement and for the benefits of the visitor economy to be spread more widely across the county. The visitor economy needs to work harder and deliver more if the county is to achieve its economic goals.

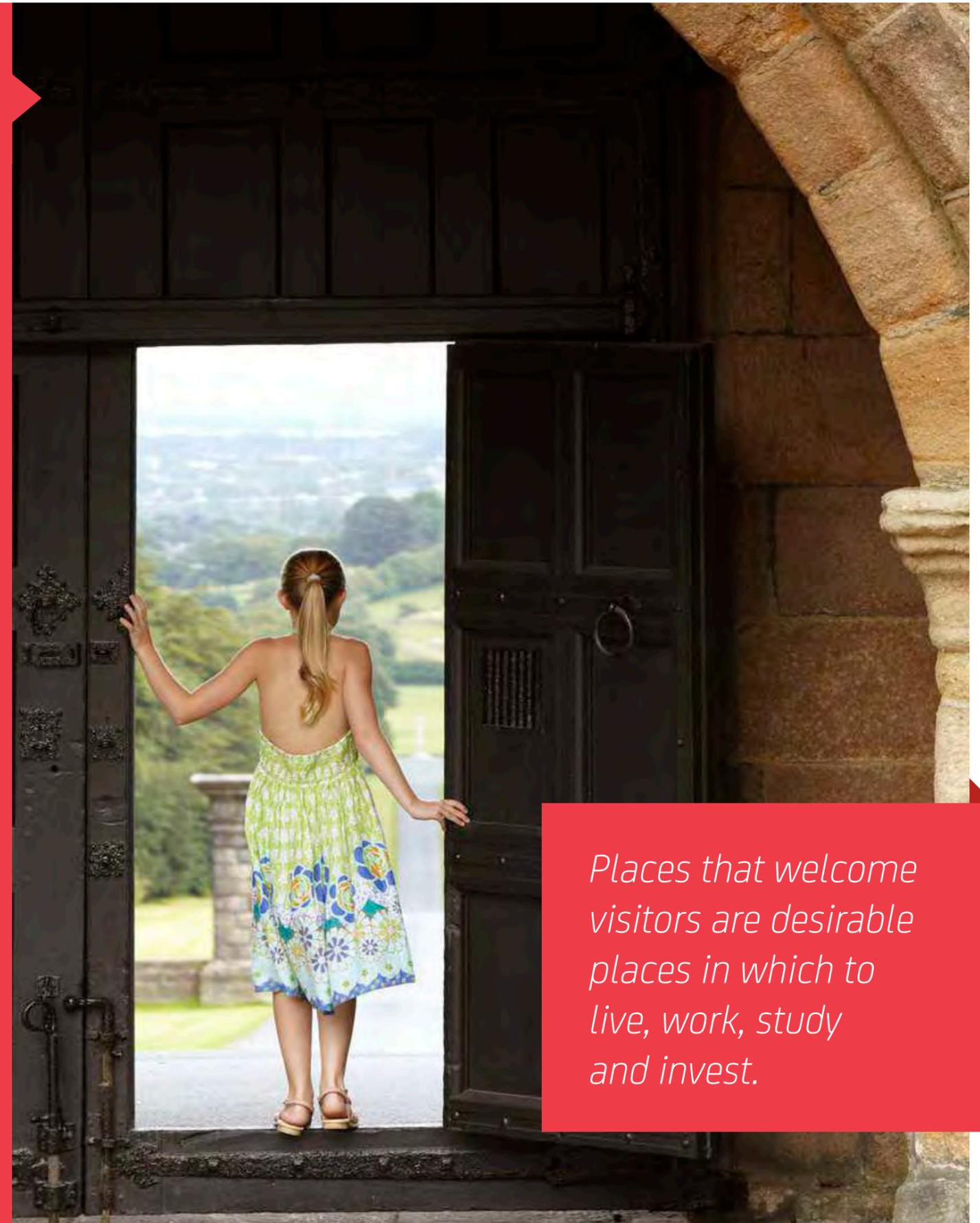
Across the UK, the visitor economy creates new jobs fast in both career and entry-level jobs. In 2014, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated that tourism was the fastest growing sector in the UK in employment terms, responsible for almost one third of the net increase in jobs between 2010 and 2013 and growing at a rate of nearly double that of other industries. Nationally, 32,000 new apprenticeships were created in hospitality during 2013.

Tourism businesses account for 10% of all businesses in the UK. ONS commented in 2013 that the sector is a significant incubator for entrepreneurs - nationally 26,875 businesses started up in the sector that year. The visitor economy attracts and supports small business entrepreneurs; it creates opportunities for businesses to diversify and supports rural economies and traditions.

The visitor economy delivers inward investment in hotels and attractions as well as creating and sustaining demand for restaurants, distinctive shopping experiences and cultural venues that are also enjoyed by local communities. As well as its own direct supply chain it supports other supply chains including those for the creative sector, agriculture, food production and the construction industry.

The impact of growing Lancashire's visitor economy will be to create more jobs and wealth in the county.

Whilst the main impact of growing Lancashire's visitor economy will be to create more jobs and wealth for Lancashire, its reach will be much further as it will also make a major contribution to providing services and facilities that will benefit local communities and improve their quality of life.



Places that welcome visitors are desirable places in which to live, work, study and invest.

Strategic Context

This Visitor Economy Strategy is Lancashire's statement of how it will contribute to the national strategic framework for tourism in England. In May 2015, the government set out a Five Point Plan, 'Backing the Tourism Sector' which outlined the need to support a better co-ordinated sector; skills and jobs; common sense regulation; transport and an improved visitor welcome, in order to help boost sector growth.

In addition, the following priorities for England have been set out by Government for the three year period commencing 2016/17:

- 1 Developing the English tourism product through the delivery of the £40m Discover England Fund
- 2 Supporting business visits and events in England
- 3 Providing additional business facing and supporting activities, including statutory research

The national tourism authority comprising VisitBritain/VisitEngland are the designated delivery channel for leading initiatives to support these goals. They play a unique role in building England's tourism product, raising Britain's profile worldwide, increasing the volume and value of tourism exports and developing the visitor economy nationally. Working with a wide range of partners in both the UK and overseas, their mission is to grow the volume and value of inbound tourism across the nations and regions of Britain and to develop world-class English tourism product to support these growth aspirations.

Private sector investment has increased as the business community signals its growing confidence in the county's future.

Delivery of the £40m Discover England Fund not only seeks to drive inbound visits and spend but aims to support growth in the domestic market through the delivery of world-class, stand-out, bookable tourism products. The programme is managed by VisitEngland who maintain distinct activities to develop and market English tourism.

The Lancashire LEP has identified the visitor economy as one of seven key business sectors pivotal to the county's wider economy

Local authorities in the county place considerable importance on the visitor economy as a driver of jobs and a contributor to quality of life. A range of core strategies produced by district and unitary councils all reference the visitor economy as relevant to their future economic wellbeing and at least two authorities have dedicated visitor economy plans. Local authorities are also investing in the visitor economy; a multi-million pound proposal for a new museum and attraction in Blackpool; £100m to produce the new Blackpool tramway, £40m of public realm improvements in Preston town centre, and £25m on improving the Cathedral quarter in Blackburn are just a few of the schemes that are completed or underway.

The county has been successful in securing investment from national funding programmes for infrastructure improvements that support visitor economy development: the Coastal Communities Fund is putting almost £1m into developing cycling experiences, improving the welcome for visitors and supporting events in the Morecambe Bay area; the Sustainable Transport Fund is also helping to develop cycling facilities in the county through £1.2m of investment; and £2m funding from Arts Council England is helping to transform the canal corridor through Pennine Lancashire as part of the Super Slow Way project.

The national and local context for Lancashire's future growth is relatively positive. Strategic plans recognise the visitor economy as important to the county. Investment is being made in infrastructure and products that attract visitors and provide services for them. People and organisations in the county recognise that a proactive approach is needed to ensure the visitor economy is competitive. However, with public finances continuing to tighten and consumers becoming ever more discerning and demanding, Lancashire must continue to prioritise the visitor economy and invest so that the county can compete effectively in local, national and global markets.

Lancashire's offer

This strategy takes, as its starting point, the existing assets and facilities that the county has to offer the visitor and seeks to build upon them. This section provides a summary of the county's current offer, both its strengths and gaps.





Accommodation and Venues

Lancashire has circa 3,000 accommodation establishments providing approximately 137,000 bed spaces. 54% of the bed spaces are in serviced accommodation (hotels and bed and breakfast) and 46% in non-serviced (self catered properties, caravans, camping sites, chalets, hostels). The majority of serviced accommodation, almost half of the bed stock, is in establishments with between 11 and 50 rooms. In the non-serviced accommodation sector, the majority of bed spaces, just over half, is in static caravans and chalets with the rest evenly split between touring caravan and camping sites and self catered properties.

The bed stock is not spread evenly across the county. 74% of serviced accommodation is in Blackpool. 70% of non-serviced beds are spread between Blackpool, Lancaster and Wyre (the coastal area to the south of Blackpool). Feedback from operators and visitors suggests that in rural Lancashire and particularly the east of the county, demand for accommodation outstrips supply.

There are no up-to-date statistics to indicate how each sector in Lancashire is faring in terms of occupancy. Latest Visit England statistics (May 2014 – May 2015) for England show that hotels averaged 73% occupancy with guesthouses and self-catering at 55% and 52% respectively. The figures for location types show an average occupancy of 78% for cities and large towns, 65% for small towns, 61% for seaside accommodation and 59% for rural areas. If Lancashire reflects the national picture it can be assumed that the county's resorts and large towns are enjoying healthy occupancy levels due to the dominance of serviced accommodation in these locations, though bed and breakfast providers will be less busy. It is also possible to speculate that accommodation in rural areas has lower occupancy generally, though the lack of bed spaces may result in higher occupancy rates than the national average.

A core objective of this strategy is to increase the ratio of staying to day visitors; whilst they represent just 13% of all visitors to the county they generate a much higher spend per trip value, accounting for just over half of all visitor expenditure.

Cultural Events, Heritage and Attractions

The attractions in Blackpool receive by far the highest numbers of visitors which reflects the resort's popularity generally; the resort accounts for almost 27% of all Lancashire's visitors. A handful of Lancashire's attractions have a national reputation: Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Blackpool Tower, Blackpool Illuminations and Lancaster Castle are the best recognised, though geographical areas and features such as the Ribble Valley and Pendle Hill have growing profiles. Some product areas such as gardens or national parks are weak compared to competitor destinations.

Lancashire's rich, diverse and distinctive heritage is reflected across a wide range of historic properties and museums that visitors enjoy; examples include Samlesbury Hall, Hoghton Tower, Browsholme Hall and Towneley Hall Museum, to name but a few. The county is also home to a limited number of National Trust properties - Gawthorpe Hall and Rufford Old Hall and four English Heritage sites - Goodshaw Chapel, Sawley Abbey, Warton Old Rectory and the Whalley Abbey Gatehouse. However, set against a total of c. 400 English Heritage sites nationally, this reflects a wider need for Lancashire's heritage tourism offer to strengthen its profile if it is to drive more visitors and stand out in an increasingly competitive market.

There is an opportunity to refresh and reinvigorate our heritage stories and assets in a way that will inspire visitors and spark their imaginations – from the infamous Pendle Witches trial of 1612 to the knighting of Sir Loin at Hoghton Tower and collections of national and international significance including the largest collection of Tiffany glass in Europe housed at the Haworth Art Gallery, to the traditional fine art of the 19th century displayed at the Harris Museum & Art Gallery, including water colours by JMW Turner and Samuel Palmer.

The county is blessed with numerous attractions where visitors can experience the great outdoors. Centres such as WWT Martin Mere Wetland Centre, RSPB Leighton Moss and Brockholes have some of the highest visitor footfall numbers in North West England. Additionally, the county has 18 nature centres and 6 sculpture trails for visitors

to follow. Lancashire's inland waterways, such as the Lancaster Canal and Leeds & Liverpool Canal, provide great experiences for visitors. As a group, the county's outdoor attractions have great potential to become key drivers of the visitor economy and are currently underutilised.

The county stages an enormous number and range of events each year, from vintage seaside to walking and cycling festivals, from events celebrating our canals and industrial heritage to venue based events including circuses, comedy festivals and science events. Visitors discover the majority of the county's events while they are on a visit and as a consequence leave the county feeling that they have had an authentic Lancastrian experience. A relatively small number, staged mainly in the summer season, are known outside of the county and attract visitors in their own right: they include Vintage by the Sea Festival, the Illuminations Switch On, Lytham Festival, the Dukes annual promenade theatre performances, Light Up Lancaster and Clitheroe Food Festival. However, the county lacks a signature event with a national profile, for example, a major music festival such as Bestival on the Isle of Wight or a major sports event such as the Great North Run in Newcastle Gateshead.

Cultural activities are increasingly being developed as a leading driver for tourism; for example, Blackpool's renaissance builds on the resort's extraordinary entertainment history, with high quality cultural events and developments at the heart of its transformation. The resort boasts a strong track record of consistently delivering signature events that attract tens of thousands of visitors: Lightpool and Blackpool Illuminations, Blackpool Dance Festival, Gordon Young's Comedy Carpet, Showzam and the Blackpool Air-Show. Alongside the development of new events, plans for a new multi-million pound Blackpool museum. Blackpool's cultural ambition forms part of a greater aspiration across Lancashire to amplify our voice and secure widespread recognition for our centres of excellence in cultural activity, clearly placing them as key drivers within visitor markets both nationally and internationally.



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Food & Drink

Lancashire has a strong reputation for quality food and drink. It is home to a Michelin Star restaurant and adjoining cookery school at Northcote as well as many award winning businesses such as the Freemasons at Wiswell, listed amongst the country's Top 50 restaurants within the Waitrose Good Food Guide and crowned Best Food Pub of the Year in the Great British Pub Awards. The county boasts 4 gastro pubs within the UK's Top 50 Gastropubs Awards whilst the Times listed both the Cartford Inn and Inn at Whitewell amongst Britain's Top 20 Best Pubs for Foodies.

A vast array of Lancashire produce is also championed through our top quality food producers, suppliers and retailers whose strength is in the quality, freshness and flavour of their locally grown and prepared produce. For example, there are ten Lancashire cheese makers all within 10 miles of the Forest of Bowland AONB, 23 micro-breweries and renowned local specialities including Goosnargh chicken and Morecambe Bay potted shrimps which have been produced by Royal Warrant since 1867. Its exceptional quality means that you will find Lancashire produce on display around the Country including Borough market in London.





Connectivity

Ease of access is a key ingredient in the decision to visit a place and in this respect Lancashire is well placed. The county benefits from an excellent transport infrastructure due to its geographical location and is highlighted as a strategic opportunity within the Northern overhouse.

The county's road connectivity is first class, with the M6 forming the north-south spine of our road network while the M65, M55, M61 and M58 form east-west links to East Lancashire, Blackpool and the Fylde Coast, Greater Manchester and Merseyside. Through these links, Manchester and Liverpool airports are easily accessible.

Rail links are equally efficient; Preston railway station is one of the most important stations on the West Coast mainline and one of the busiest stations used by Virgin trains in the North West, with trains to London taking just over two hours and direct services from Scotland and from London to Blackpool. Electrification of the railway lines between Blackpool North and Preston and between Preston and Manchester/Liverpool, will increase availability and capacity as well as reducing journey times.

The road and rail links North/South are particularly helpful in connecting the county to major centres of population from which to source visitors, specifically the South East and Scotland and makes visiting the county for a short break or longer stay attractive in terms of ease of access.

Though Lancashire doesn't have its own international airport, it is located close to three major international gateways: Manchester International Airport, John Lennon Airport and the Port of Liverpool. Manchester in particular provides global connectivity for the North West. The Port of Heysham also offers direct access to the county from Isle of Man.

Within the county the ease of travelling around, particularly east-west, is perceived as poor with few opportunities for visitors to arrive, park the car and use public transport during their stay. Public transport infrastructure in rural areas is a particular issue, in common with many rural areas in England. The road infrastructure around major towns and the coast is improving with the recent opening of the new M6 to Heysham link road and over £430 million investment through the county's City Deal scheme to expand transport infrastructure in the Preston and South Ribble area; new transport options are also coming on stream, for example, the new tramline in Blackpool.

Countryside, Coast and The Great Outdoors

Among a wealth of locations, areas that have the ability to attract visitors from outside the county include The Forest of Bowland AONB and Bowland Fells and the rural showcase of the Ribble Valley. The Lune, Rossendale and Colne valleys, as well as Pendle Hill and the surrounding forest, have potential to add to Lancashire's rural offer and attract more visitors from out of the region.

Blackpool is the most well known of Lancashire's coastal communities and continues to be the UK's favourite seaside resort. The county's wider 137-mile coastline is mainly visited for its tranquility, beauty and opportunities for engaging with nature. The Arnsdale & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the wider Morecambe Bay area is highly valued by visitors who like to relax and refresh themselves and pursue activities such as cycling and walking. The Fylde and Wyre coastlines, though less developed, are dotted with seaside towns and villages that attract visitors for days out and family holidays, as well as hotspots of national excellence such as championship golf courses in Lytham St Anne's.



Walking and cycling are product strengths for Lancashire. No less than eight national cycle routes pass through Lancashire with an additional ten locations where designated mountain bike trails are available, including red and black runs. The Adrenaline Valley at Rossendale hosts championship cycling events and facilities at Rivington Country Park, near Chorley, were the venue for the 2002 Commonwealth Games outdoor cycling events. Accessible cycling is a strong niche product for the county and a potential point of differentiation. There are seven long distance walking routes in the county including the 137-mile footpath following the whole coastline between Merseyside and Cumbria, and the Lancashire Witches Way between Barrowford and Lancaster Castle.

Lancashire has the raw materials for a range of country and coastal pursuits that make an active holiday in the county a good choice. It has 240 miles of bridleways. The main ones are the Pennines Bridleway (part of a long national trail), the West Pennines Moors Bridleway, the Mary Towneley Loop between Rochdale, Burnley and Hebden Bridge and the North Lancashire Bridleway in the Ribble Valley. There are six water sports centres and ten sailing clubs in the county, plus eight fisheries that offer a range of types of fishing from coarse to pike fishing.

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Lancaster, a small city with a built heritage that gives it potential to be one of England's best Heritage Cities.



Resorts, Cities and Major Towns

A seaside resort for decades, Blackpool has retained its place as England's most popular seaside destination, famous for its tower, illuminations, entertainment and as the internationally recognised home of ballroom dancing. Blackpool is reinventing itself and has embarked on a programme of investment in its facilities, events, services and accommodation stock and has recently delivered a number of new national promotional campaigns, Blackpool's Back and Blackpool Has It All. The resort continues to welcome over 16 million visitors each year and, in the North West, Blackpool is second only to the Lake District in terms of consumer's consideration for a visit. It also performs well against other resorts, coming second to Bournemouth in appeal among consumers nationally.

At the upper end of the county sits the historic county town of Lancaster, a small city with a built heritage that gives it potential to be one of England's best Heritage Cities. Like most similar cities, its universities are important to its development and promotion. As the heritage centre of the county, with its Georgian roots evident in its architecture, it is a place that provides a quality environment for people that like history, independent shopping and cultural experiences. Through its collaborative approach as a member of the English Heritage Cities Group, the city has the opportunity to develop and promote its offering on both national and international platforms. However, it has identified some actions that need to be addressed to help it fulfil this potential, in particular a lack of accommodation options and a dispersed heritage offer in need of interpretation. Nevertheless, it is one of the county's biggest opportunities for growth.

Blackburn and Burnley are the heritage centres in East Lancashire. Their location positions them as good bases for staying visitors interested in exploring the county's inland countryside and waterways and both have a growing set of events and activities that provide visitors with things to see and do on a trip.

Preston is the administrative heart of the county and is undergoing a major transformation through the City Deal agreement and UCLAN's £200m Masterplan. It has significant potential as a hub for business tourism and because of its transport links North/South, just 2 hours from London, it is an important orientation point for visitors to the county.



Seasonality

Like most of England, Lancashire suffers to some extent from seasonality, though this is more acute in rural and less developed coastal areas than in the urban centres and resort hotspots. The county's main season begins at Easter and draws to a close at the end of August, with additional peaks in the school half terms. Lancashire can address its seasonality by focusing on a number of factors.

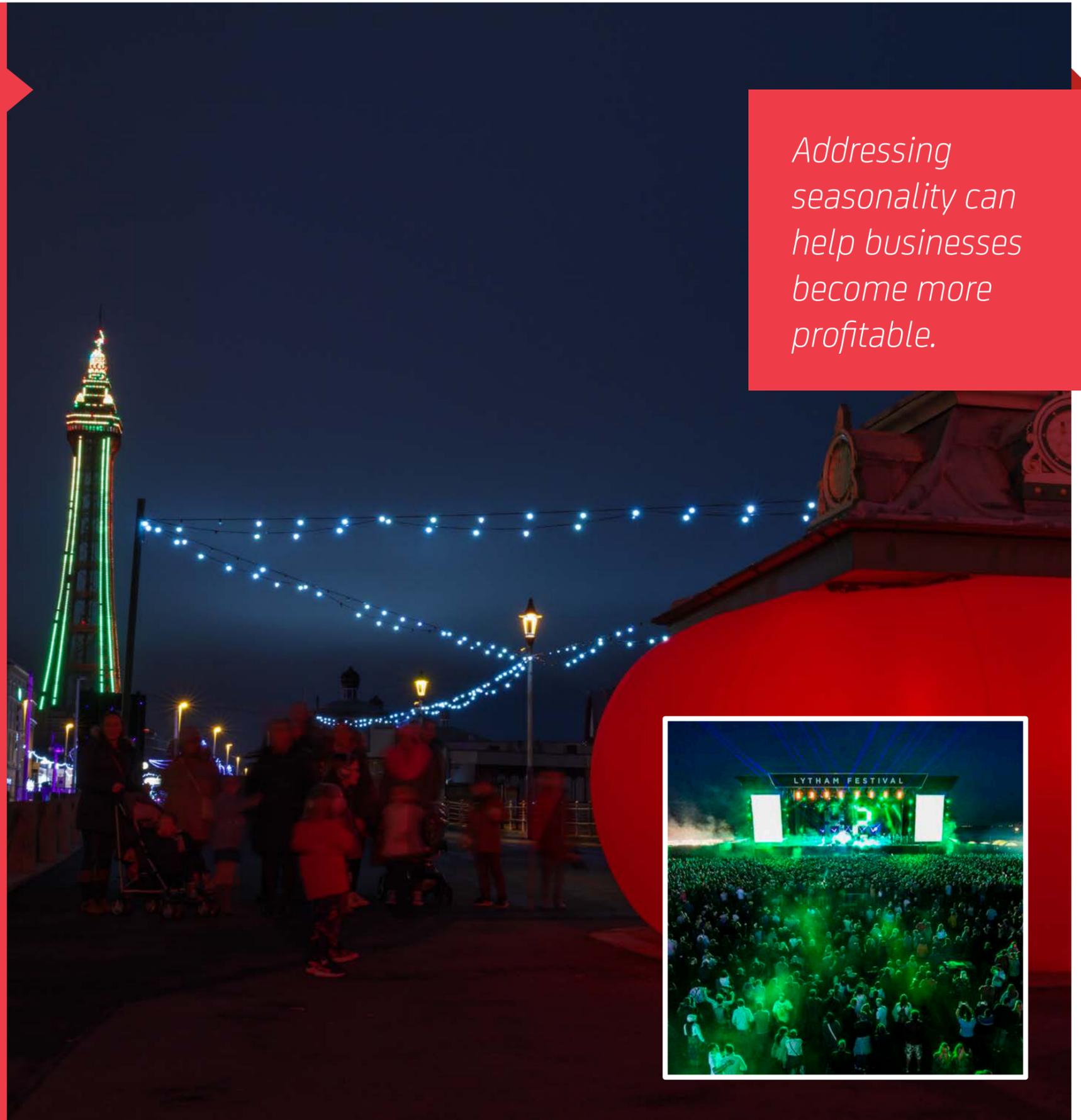
Events can help counteract seasonality, providing reasons to visit outside of high days and holidays. Many of Lancashire's big events take place in the main season and are growing in popularity. However, in recent years, more are taking place in the autumn shoulder season and over Christmas to drive business at traditionally quieter times. While some of the shoulder and off-season events are growing, including Light Up Lancaster, the Lancaster Music Festival, Lancaster LitFest and Showzam, Blackpool, there is further potential to develop a stronger year-round events programme.

Destinations that have a strong business tourism sector tend to suffer less from seasonality because the nature of the sector is year round and midweek. The traditionally busy times for both corporate and association conferences is the spring and autumn shoulders and many conferences fill bedrooms Sunday to

Thursday, plugging the gaps that leisure tourism leaves. Lancashire has a long history of attracting conferences in its seaside resorts and the conference offer is receiving investment. However, beyond that, the business tourism offer is at an early stage of development and isn't, yet, making a major contribution in tackling the county's seasonality challenges. There is opportunity to address this through a growing number and variety of smaller conference and meetings venues which offer a unique and distinctive backdrop to business meetings and events, from an array of boutique hotels, cultural venues, museums and historic properties to the award winning, floating conference centre at Brockholes nature reserve.

The presence of four strong universities across Lancashire (Lancaster University, UCLan, Edge Hill University and Cumbria University with a campus in Lancaster) attracts students from across the country and from overseas through their unsurpassed reputation for educational excellence and vibrant urban centres. They can also help counteract seasonality by boosting the visiting friends and relations market. With their own calendar of events and celebrations, such as graduation and enrolment, Lancashire's universities can provide reasons for extended families of students to visit outside of the main season and school holidays.

Addressing seasonality can help businesses become more profitable.





Many of the county's thematic clusters need stronger supply chains.

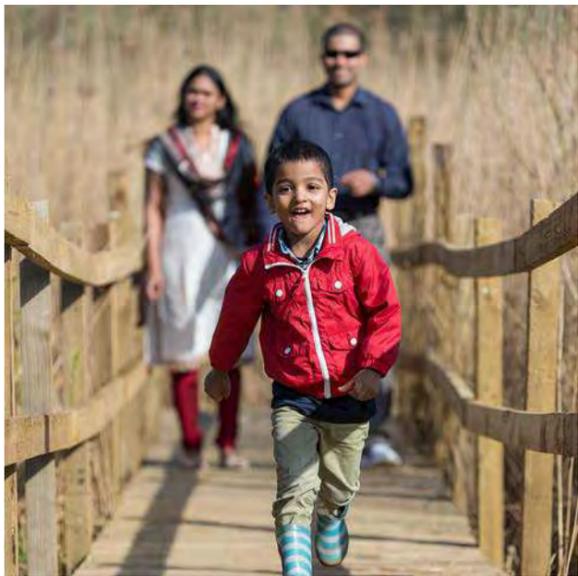
Services, Facilities and Quality

In terms of its services and facilities, the county has some outstanding businesses that are award winning and popular. For example, the Freemasons at Wiswell, Clitheroe has received the gold award for Tourism Pub of the Year at the national tourism awards, and the Woodland Spa won Global Spa of the Year 2016.

Many of the county's strong product clusters need stronger supply chains if they are to realise their potential. For example, the county's 240 miles of bridleway are serviced by a relatively small number of centres for pony trekking; the wealth of cycling routes lack adequate cycle hire businesses. Other ground handling services, for example luggage transfer, need development if the county's rural assets are to become drivers of the county's visitor economy.

Information about how Lancashire compares in its customer service standards is anecdotal and suggests that, like most destinations, there are pockets of excellence and areas for improvement. The warmth of welcome is well known and is a point of differentiation for Lancashire, as it is for much of Northern England.

The status of facilities and services and the quality of the offer is generally measured through feedback via visitor surveys. It can also be judged through user generated content on review sites. For Lancashire, up to date intelligence on visitor perceptions and visitor satisfaction is lacking. What is known from national research is that consumer expectations rise year on year and that continual investment in infrastructure, people and experiences help destinations to compete in a global market place.



Lancashire today has a lot to offer the visitor.

Lancashire's Offer In Summary

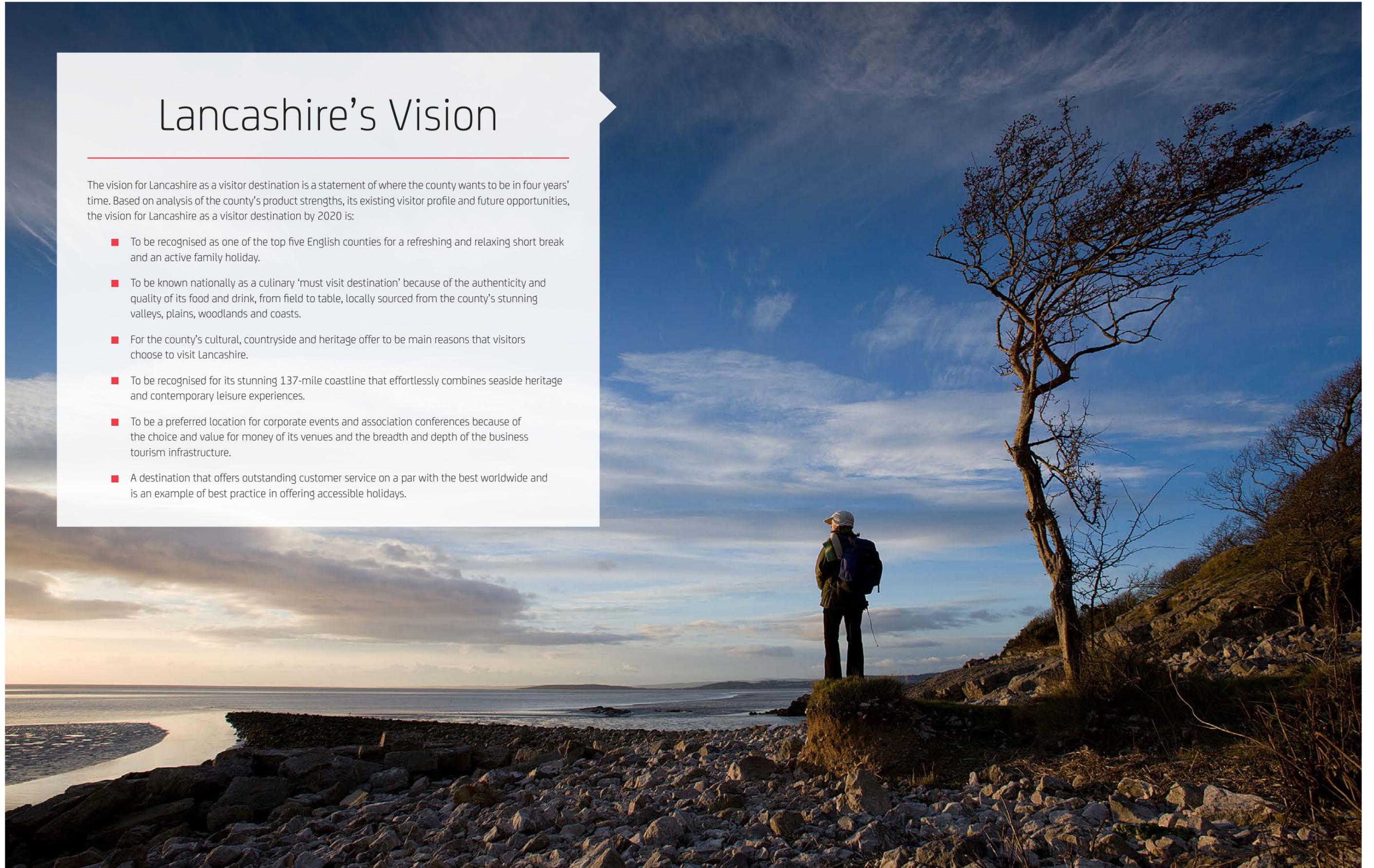
Lancashire today has a lot to offer the visitor. There are strong foundations on which to build, in particular its outdoor offer, cycling and walking, its culture and heritage - both built and natural landscapes, its coasts and resorts and its reputation for good food and drink - the products that are most likely to appeal to visitors both nationally and internationally. Lancashire also has many of the

challenges which are common to English destinations: the range and quality of its services and facilities; gaps in its accommodation base; gaps in its core attraction offer; its ability to differentiate itself and gain national profile against global competition; and its ability to keep pace with consumer demands and expectations.

Lancashire's Vision

The vision for Lancashire as a visitor destination is a statement of where the county wants to be in four years' time. Based on analysis of the county's product strengths, its existing visitor profile and future opportunities, the vision for Lancashire as a visitor destination by 2020 is:

- To be recognised as one of the top five English counties for a refreshing and relaxing short break and an active family holiday.
- To be known nationally as a culinary 'must visit destination' because of the authenticity and quality of its food and drink, from field to table, locally sourced from the county's stunning valleys, plains, woodlands and coasts.
- For the county's cultural, countryside and heritage offer to be main reasons that visitors choose to visit Lancashire.
- To be recognised for its stunning 137-mile coastline that effortlessly combines seaside heritage and contemporary leisure experiences.
- To be a preferred location for corporate events and association conferences because of the choice and value for money of its venues and the breadth and depth of the business tourism infrastructure.
- A destination that offers outstanding customer service on a par with the best worldwide and is an example of best practice in offering accessible holidays.



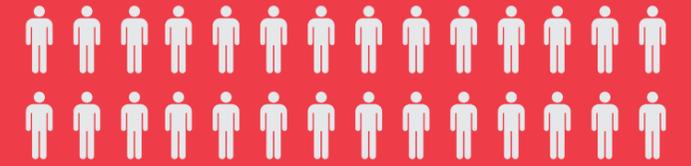
Lancashire's Objectives

The county's objectives are the hard economic targets that a successful visitor economy will achieve by 2020. They are based on past performance and potential and are designed to be realistic but stretching.



To attract an additional

6.3 Million visitors



To achieve a **ratio of 80:20** between new day and staying visits:

1.3 Million
additional staying visitors



5 Million
additional day visitors

To deliver an additional visitor spend of

£650 Million



To support an additional

5,000 FTE jobs

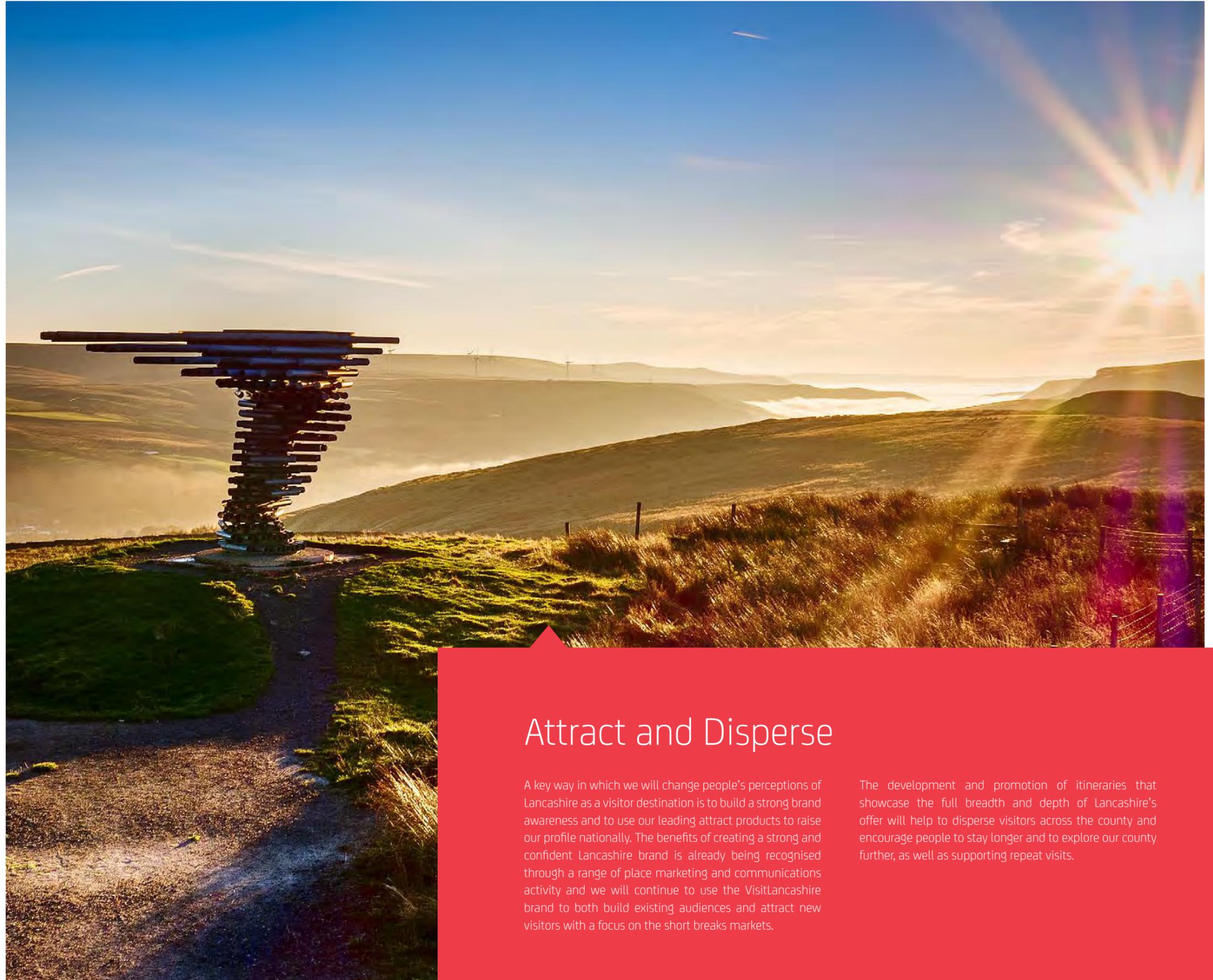


Lancashire's Strategic Approach

This section of the Lancashire Visitor Economy Strategy describes the broad approach stakeholders in the county are going to have to take to realise the vision and achieve the objectives. It can be summarised as: evidence-based, customer focused, and built on the principles of sustainability (WISE growth) and attract and disperse.

Lancashire will lead with its product strengths to attract people to the county and when they arrive they will be encouraged to explore the county and discover more. Investment will be targeted to fill product gaps so, that in the future, the county appeals to a broader set of audiences. Promotional activity will be aimed at people that will like what Lancashire has to offer (target segments) and, where it makes sense, partnership working will make resources stretch as far as possible. The needs of businesses, visitors, the community and the environment will be kept in balance so that growth is achieved in a way that is acceptable to all. Destination marketing and visitor economy development will leverage and support the emerging county brand to increase the county's profile at home and abroad.

More overnight visitors is a key aim. This will increase the value of the visitor economy and spread the benefit as widely as possible.



Attract and Disperse

A key way in which we will change people's perceptions of Lancashire as a visitor destination is to build a strong brand awareness and to use our leading attract products to raise our profile nationally. The benefits of creating a strong and confident Lancashire brand is already being recognised through a range of place marketing and communications activity and we will continue to use the VisitLancashire brand to both build existing audiences and attract new visitors with a focus on the short breaks markets.

The development and promotion of itineraries that showcase the full breadth and depth of Lancashire's offer will help to disperse visitors across the county and encourage people to stay longer and to explore our county further, as well as supporting repeat visits.

Customer Focused

Using the evidence base, the needs and expectations of our visitors will be prioritised in promotion and development activity. The aim is to attract more people to visit and give them a great experience, so that they recommend Lancashire and return in the future.

Being customer focused means understanding who is visiting the county currently and who the county wants to attract in the future. Lancashire's leisure customers fall into three broad segments:

Independent Explorers - a group that contains families with children aged 7-14 and people over 30 that travel with groups of friends. They take multiple short breaks and spend their money on attractions, activities and accommodation. They plan in advance to some degree and are keen on insider tips. They are also interested in food.

Connoisseur searchers - people that travel as couples and with friends and are age 35+. They take regular leisure breaks, UK and overseas, and are therefore well travelled and have high expectations. They look for quality and authentic experiences; these are a strong motivation to visit.

Entertainment Seekers - a group that contains many families but also groups of friends. They are looking for fun and entertainment. They like to plan ahead, take trips around special occasions and are motivated by events and big names.

Going forward, investment will be focused on the products that are of interest to these groups of people. To ensure that they know about the Lancashire offer, the messages and marketing channels that are most likely to reach them will be used so that they put Lancashire on their 'must visit' list.

Ease of access and duration of travel can be important deciding factors for visitors. As well as being clear about who Lancashire is aiming to attract, promotion will be focused in areas of the UK where there are good transport links with the county and in areas from which we already draw visitors.

The county currently draws the bulk of visitors from the North West, Yorkshire, and the West Midlands and Lancashire will continue to be promoted in these areas. In addition, people in priority segments that live further away in the large population centres of South East and Western Scotland will be targeted. Lancashire already draws 16% of its visitors from these areas. By positioning Lancashire as a short break destination with people that are slightly further afield, the county is more likely to achieve a ratio of two in ten first time visitors staying overnight.

Being customer focused in terms of business tourism requires a very different approach. Conference buyers are looking for a combination of flexible facilities, locations that are easy to get to and destinations that appeal to their delegates. They are attracted to places where there are good examples of business best practice or academic research in their sector and look for specialist support for their events. Lancashire will need to provide a personalised and tailored approach to prospective buyers in order to grow this market.





Leveraging the County Brand

The Lancashire brand offers a real opportunity for visitor promotion. The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership is committed to raising the profile of the county as a destination of choice for new businesses and investors as well as supporting the effective marketing of Lancashire as one of the UK's leading visitor destinations. Alongside a targeted marketing and communications strategy, a new economic narrative has been developed that articulates our strengths and assets and tells Lancashire's story in a more ambitious and confident way, aspiring to

make Lancashire a place that is better understood, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Positioning the county nationally and internationally to attract investment and talent adds credibility and weight to visitor marketing. Equally, destination marketing provides a strong platform from which to attract more people to the county to live, work and study as well as visit. These two approaches will therefore be closely aligned to maximise our impact and reach.

The Lancashire brand offers a real opportunity for visitor promotion.



Market Intelligence

The existing evidence base will be maintained and continue to receive investment. Over time, current gaps in market intelligence will be filled, for example, visitor perceptions and satisfaction levels, sector studies - specifically accommodation needs - the potential of niche product such as eco-tourism and robust occupancy data.

This will ensure that investment is made wisely and future success can be measured. More emphasis will be placed on knowing and understanding Lancashire's visitors so that future development responds to their needs and expectations. In this way, more people will be encouraged to visit and their experience will exceed expectations so that we secure them as ambassadors for the county.

Investment, development and promotion will be based on evidence; this will ensure good decision-making.

Partnerships

The county's visitor economy comprises hundreds of businesses from a host of sectors and not just those that obviously serve visitors, such as accommodation and visitor attractions. The industry is complex and multifaceted because visitors use such a wide range of services and facilities when they are away from home, from pubs and newsagents to taxis and car parks. So much of what is important to local people contributes to an enjoyable visit: good transport, clean streets, public toilets, theatres and cinemas, swimming pools and sports facilities, cafes, shops and events. Producing a successful visitor economy requires partnership working by all the organisations, businesses, individuals and communities in the destination; they all have a role to play.

No one can deliver a successful visitor economy on their own. Partnership is essential.

With a county as large and diverse as Lancashire, partnership cannot be taken for granted. As the designated Destination Management Organisation for the county, Marketing Lancashire will take a strategic lead in developing and building the partnerships needed to help deliver this strategy.

In particular, Marketing Lancashire will seek to strengthen those strategic partnerships that can add value to Lancashire's visitor economy through their supporting activity, investment and goals, for example, English Heritage, Arts Council England, DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), Northern Powerhouse, VisitEngland and VisitBritain. Proactive collaboration between the 15 district, unitary and county councils is necessary to coordinate public-sector development and promotion whilst the private sector must come together to share intelligence, pool resource

and support county-wide messaging and marketing. Public and private sectors must work hand in hand to avoid duplication and provide clarity, both in terms of investment and promotion. Partnership is, therefore, at the heart of this strategy.

Working with partners beyond the county boundaries will help us increase the volume and value of visitors to Lancashire and, at the same time, ensure that resources go as far as possible and work as hard as possible.

Partnership is particularly important for international marketing which is prohibitively expensive for the county to do alone. Going it alone is also unlikely to produce results: making an impact in overseas markets is very challenging when overseas visitors know so little about the country and want a more substantial offer than a single county to make visiting worthwhile. Working with others to grow the volume of international tourism to England and then positioning Lancashire favorably within the England offer is a pragmatic and sensible approach. Nationally-managed-programmes such as the Northern Tourism Growth Fund and the Discover England Fund are examples of vehicles that Lancashire can use to its advantage.

Manchester International Airport, John Lennon Airport and the Port of Liverpool are the North West's international gateways. Developing partnerships with these gateways is another way to increase Lancashire's international profile.

Developing strong product can often be achieved by working collaboratively, particularly where Lancashire shares landscapes across administrative borders. Morecambe Bay is an example where Lancashire and Cumbria have worked together to create an outstanding environment that attracts visitors. Lancashire is fortunate in having two strong business tourism destinations close by: Manchester and Liverpool. Lancashire can work with them to increase knowledge, develop skills and win business for the county's existing and emerging conference locations.

A photograph of two young women wearing large black headphones, looking intently at a large digital display screen. The woman in the foreground is pointing at the screen with her right hand. The screen displays a website interface with various elements, including a header with the text 'WHAT IS A PIPE ORGAN' and 'The Lancaster Organ & Pipe Organ'. The background is dark and appears to be an indoor setting with wooden paneling.

Working with partners will bring Lancashire to the attention of more consumers than the county could reach on its own.



A focus on quality includes the standards of customer service and the warmth of the visitor welcome.

Quality

Lancashire has spots of outstanding quality, in particular its nature reserves, its walking and cycling offer, its Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, its championship golf courses and many others. It also has product that needs improvement including public realm in town centres, the accommodation offer - particularly in its resorts, the transport infrastructure in rural areas, the water quality in coastal areas, customer service, signage and gateways.

Feedback from visitor surveys and national benchmarks will be used to drive up the quality of its offer so that Lancashire is regarded as a place that provides quality whatever your interest and budget. It will focus on ensuring that existing quality is maintained, for example, food and drink with strong local provenance, and that products and locations with strong potential to attract new visitors receive investment.

A focus on quality includes the standards of customer service and the warmth of the visitor welcome. Customer service and the people who provide it can create real impact and lasting memories of a holiday. While visitors may remember good service, they rarely forget it when it is bad. Going forward the county must ensure that the skills of those in the tourism and hospitality sector match customer expectations. The visitor economy sector skills action plan produced by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) articulates the opportunities and solutions that the visitor economy needs to embrace.



We will actively seek to balance the needs of community, environment, business and visitor.

Responsible Tourism

Sustainable growth doesn't mean limiting the volume of people coming to spend time in Lancashire; in fact, the plan is to increase the volume of visitors by 10% over a four-year period, generating an additional 6.3 million visitors. What it does mean is that the county will be proactive in balancing volume and value.

Lancashire currently attracts many more day than staying visitors - almost 9 out of 10 visit for the day. Yet, on average, staying visitors spend five times more. They also use more services and more sustainable forms of transport, particularly during their visit. The county's approach therefore is to grow overall numbers but adjust the current balance so that more people stay overnight and at quieter times. This will be achieved by promoting the county nationally as a short break destination and investing in sectors that can even out visitor patterns, specifically business tourism and visiting friends and relations. If the county is successful, the value of the visitor economy will increase and the benefits will be spread as widely as possible while the negative impacts of tourism will be mitigated.



Strengths, Opportunities and Challenges

Auditing and research has revealed that Lancashire has considerable strengths. Much of the product is well developed and the county provides high quality as the basis of promotional activity to attract new visitors.

In the medium term, resources will be targeted towards product and partnerships that already exist, offer opportunities for growth and need support.

Many of Lancashire's challenges need to be addressed over a longer timeframe because they have a long lead in for planning, require high investment or take several years to change; for example, increasing the number of bed spaces in places where demand outstrips supply. Over time, new challenges will emerge as the county gains a better understanding of the needs and expectations of its visitors.

Strengths

- Inland and coastal landscapes including ancient woodland, tranquil waterways and open plains.
- Entertainment and conference hub at Blackpool.
- A quality rural showcase in the Ribble Valley and Forest of Bowland AONB.
- The heritage city of Lancaster.
- A growing programme of events, some with national potential.
- A wide range of outdoor activities, particularly the range of cycling experiences for all ages and abilities, and hotspots of excellence such as championship golf courses in Lytham St Anne's.
- Good North/South connections, both road and rail.
- Proximity to the international gateway of Manchester International Airport and other regional airports and ports.
- The range and depth of quality food producers and eateries sourcing locally.
- Brand Lancashire and a new economic narrative for the county.



Opportunities

- Existing arrival points and gateways that can provide a better welcome and a stronger sense of place.
- Accommodation, facilities and experiences for people with accessibility needs.
- Flexible, accessible and customised training programmes and business advice particularly for small tourism businesses.
- Emerging heritage assets, particularly in East Lancashire.
- Emerging partnerships between the tourism industry and Lancashire's universities, Edge Hill, UCLAN and Lancaster, to grow business tourism and maximise the value of the visiting friends and relations market.
- A clear and supported Skills Action Plan that addresses skills and employability issues within the sector.
- Lancashire's centres of educational excellence from which to grow a hospitality workforce for the future.
- The Lancashire narrative which provides clarity on the county's offer, strong messages for attracting visitors and a platform to raise the county's profile at a national and international level.
- An emerging business tourism offer at Preston.
- New museum development in Blackpool.
- Emerging niche products such as eco-tourism and accessible cycling.
- Product groups and external partners, e.g. England's Heritage Cities.
- Public funding programmes to invest in product improvements such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and Coastal Communities Fund.



Challenges

- Quality of the accommodation base.
- Quantity and variety of the accommodation base in specific areas.
- New business-oriented accommodation and venues.
- Skills and employability issues.
- Weak public transport and outdated rural road infrastructure east to west.
- Gaps in white on brown tourism signage.
- Evening economy.
- Gaps in the evidence base, particularly accommodation supply and demand, visitor perceptions and awareness and the opportunities for growth of niches such as eco-tourism and cultural tourism.
- Partnership working across administrative and product boundaries.

Delivering the Lancashire Visitor Economy Strategy involves building on strengths, making the most of opportunities and addressing challenges. The Destination Management Plan (DMP) (page 55) provides more detail about how the county will go about this over the next four years. It also indicates where the DMP links to strategies that outline how Lancashire is going to develop a range of products and sectors that are not exclusively visitor focused but which will help create new product and enhance the visitor experience.



Future Investment and Resourcing

Investment in the visitor economy will come from a variety of sources. Nationally, the proposed Discover England Fund may offer an opportunity to attract investment to develop our product, particularly if we can find partners to work with.

Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) investment in developing the Lancashire brand, as well public and private sector investment in the work of Marketing Lancashire, will help the county deliver some of the co-ordination, market intelligence and marketing activity that is needed. Working pan-Lancashire will help to secure investment in the visitor economy, for example, working with national bodies such as the Arts Council England and English Heritage to make a stronger impact and deliver projects on the ground.

Sources of public sector investment, such as the Growth Deal and the European Structural Investment Fund (comprising the European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development), will be important for Lancashire to realise the potential of its product, as will private sector investment in the services and facilities that visitors rely on.

Crucially, this strategy sets out a clear set of priorities for everyone in the county to focus on. Being clear where investment is needed and ensuring that money is invested in a focused way, will produce more jobs for local people and create wealth for Lancashire and its communities.





Lancashire's Destination Management Plan

The Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Lancashire sets out a series of priorities and actions that will contribute to achieving the aims and objectives of Lancashire's Visitor Economy Strategy over a four-year period, 2016-2020. It is the blueprint for all stakeholders to work from and helps to focus attention, time and investment on activity that will make a difference. It is an action plan that the whole county can implement.

The plan identifies 7 priorities and a set of actions under each of them. It also suggests who is best placed to lead on an action and who can provide additional support. It is linked to a range of strategies including the Lancashire's Walking and Cycling Strategy and the Lancashire Skills and Employability Framework, all of which describe how the county is developing a product or experience that is not exclusively for visitors but may be consumed by them.

The plan is intended to be a live document that will change over its lifetime from 2016-2020. Marketing Lancashire is the county's agency that will manage and monitor delivery of the DMP and support partners to play a proactive role.

Priority 1

Raise the profile of the county nationally so that it attracts more visitors, particularly staying visitors.

Promotion will be led by Marketing Lancashire, the county's identified marketing agency for all external audiences. It will provide the plans and the tools for effective marketing, including a digital marketing strategy that will support businesses and partners across the county to reach more customers. The actions under priority 1 are for everyone to support and invest in and will focus on growing the volume of first time visitors staying for short breaks.

Action	Detail	Timeframe	Lead	Support
Invest in destination-wide integrated campaigns, based on the county's product strengths, that promote the county for short breaks	Deliver one Lancashire short break campaign per year in the autumn shoulder	2017, then annually	Marketing Lancashire	Tourism businesses, Local Authorities
	Deliver one Lancashire-wide thematic campaign per year on: heritage or walking and cycling or food and drink	2017, then annually, linked to opportunities	Marketing Lancashire	Tourism businesses, Local Authorities
Use events to attract national media attention for Lancashire	Identify up to three events with national pulling power and focus promotion around them	Dependent on events	Marketing Lancashire	Event owners
Use local and national awards to highlight the county's product strengths to national audiences	Review and agree a list of awards and accreditations for use in promotional materials	2017	Marketing Lancashire / Local Authorities / Tourism Businesses	
Invest in partner marketing that will grow Lancashire's profile nationally and internationally	Participate in nationally funded marketing programmes	When available	Marketing Lancashire	Tourism Businesses, Local Authorities
	Take a proactive role in the legacy of the Northern Tourism Growth Fund programme by working with partners across the North of England	When decided	Marketing Lancashire	
	Participate in England's Heritage Cities promotional activity	Ongoing	Marketing Lancashire on behalf of Lancaster City Council	
	Work closely with transport providers and gateways to promote the county nationally /internationally for short breaks	Ongoing	Marketing Lancashire	
Embed relevant themes from the Lancashire narrative into destination marketing activity	Review all tourism focused promotional tools and adapt to include messages and product linked to the Lancashire narrative and the Visitor Economy Strategy, specifically short breaks	2017	Marketing Lancashire/ Local Authorities/ Tourism businesses	LEP

Priority 2

Create and maintain a robust evidence base for decision making.

A robust evidence base will help everyone, who is part of the visitor economy, make good business and investment decisions. The evidence base will comprise a series of regular assessments and one off studies that cover the economics of the visitor economy, its main sectors and the perceptions and experiences of visitors to Lancashire.

Action	Detail	Timeframe	Lead	Support
Conduct annual assessments that quantify the volume and value of Lancashire's visitor economy	County level economic impact study using STEAM model	Annually	Marketing Lancashire	District/borough councils
	Tracking destination performance against comparable English destinations (TRIM)	2017, then annually	Marketing Lancashire	Visit England
	Benchmarking Lancaster with other English Heritage Cities	2017, then annually	Lancaster City Council	Marketing Lancashire
Undertake studies that focus on supply and demand in key sectors and quantify gaps in the county's offer	County-wide study into accommodation needs (supply and demand and market opportunity)	By 2019	LCC Economic Development	Marketing Lancashire
	Map the cultural and heritage assets of Lancashire and evaluate their potential to drive visits	2017	Marketing Lancashire	Local authorities
	Study to define and quantify the potential for sustainable-tourism	By 2018	Landscape partnerships	
Put in place a programme of research that provides intelligence on the visitor perception and the visitor experience in Lancashire	Visitor survey	2016, then at 3yr intervals	Marketing Lancashire	Local Authorities
	Segmentation study to profile Lancashire's visitors	2016, then at 3yr intervals	Marketing Lancashire	Tourism businesses
Track performance of the county's tourism businesses through improved data gathering	Accommodation occupancy tracking	2017, monthly	Tourism businesses	Marketing Lancashire, Local Authorities
	Attraction footfall data	2017, quarterly	Visitor Attractions	Marketing Lancashire, Local Authorities
	Tourism business confidence survey	2017	Local authorities	Marketing Lancashire

Priority 3

Develop the product and supporting infrastructure to increase the county's competitiveness and support year-round business.

Quality is at the heart of this priority ensuring that existing product is upgraded to be the best of its kind and that new product is of high standard. This priority is focused on activity that will tackle seasonality, develop niches where Lancashire already has strengths and develop the county's product so that it can compete as a short break destination.

Action	Detail	Timeframe	Lead	Support
Develop packages to drive short breaks and low season visits	Create one package based on the seaside low season offer	2018	Tourism businesses	Marketing Lancashire
	Create one or more packages based on the rural low season offer	2018	Tourism businesses	Marketing Lancashire
	Create thematic packages based on product strengths supported with trail development	1 per year from 2017	Marketing Lancashire	
Produce location specific plans to grow and improve Lancashire's product focusing on existing strengths i.e. heritage, countryside, coastal short breaks	Review existing destination plans for fit with the Lancashire VES and DMP	2017	Specific to location. Could include Local Authorities, BIDS, town teams etc	
	Support delivery of the current Destination Plan for Blackpool	2017	Blackpool Council	
	Develop a Destination Development Plan for Lancaster to support the city in building its offer as a short breaks destination based upon its role as the leading heritage centre in the county and member of The English Heritage Cities Group.	2017	Marketing Lancashire / Lancaster City Council	Business Sector, universities, Chamber of Commerce, BID. Lancashire County Council
Develop the county's events programme to address seasonality to grow profile.	Develop at least one signature event for the county based on a product strength that can attract consumers from across England	By 2019	Marketing Lancashire	
	Invest in successful events that have the potential to grow in regional / national significance	By 2020	Event managers/Local Authorities/businesses	
	Secure the existing programme of autumn events through investment and promotion	2016 and ongoing	Event owners	Marketing Lancashire, Arts Council
	Develop Christmas markets in the county's visitor hubs	By 2018	Event owners ie BIDs, town teams, Local Authorities	

Action	Detail	Timeframe	Lead	Support
Invest in and develop new and upgraded product offerings	Deliver the new heritage museum for Blackpool	By 2018	Blackpool Council	
Develop the supporting infrastructure for existing strong products, including the supply chain e.g. cycle hire facilities	Develop facilities to meet walkers and cyclist welcome programmes in rural locations	By 2018	Tourism businesses and activity providers	
	Develop outdoor sports experiences to be accessible to the general visitor	By 2020	Sports and activity providers	
	Develop further the infrastructure to support cycling facilities for people with disabilities	By 2018	Tourism businesses and activity providers	
	Support the development of the county's canals as leisure experiences	By 2020	Canals and Rivers Trust/Super Slow Way	
	Utilise product development opportunities provided at a national level e.g. Discover England Fund	2017 ongoing	Marketing Lancashire	
Improve the interpretation elements of the visitor experience	Use Taste Lancashire as the key vehicle for developing and promoting the county's food and drink offer	2017	Marketing Lancashire	
	Work with transport operators to develop integrated ticketing options	2017	Marketing Lancashire	
Improve the interpretation elements of the visitor experience	Review key heritage sites and locations to develop and deliver an interpretation strategy that will attract visitors through creative and innovative ways of telling Lancashire's stories	2017	Marketing Lancashire	
	Improve the interpretation of walking and cycling routes to raise awareness of specific historical and natural features that have the potential to appeal to visitors	2018	Tourism partnerships / businesses / local authorities	
Increase the number of businesses and products holding national quality accreditation	Achieve blue flag status for a Lancashire beach	By 2018	Coastal Local Authorities	
	Review Taste Lancashire as a vehicle for accrediting food and drink businesses	By 2018	Marketing Lancashire	
Use local and national awards to improve the quality of the county's product	Support businesses to enter the Lancashire and England Excellence awards	Ongoing	Local authorities, business support agencies	Marketing Lancashire
Increase the amount, variety and quality of accommodation in areas of Lancashire where demand exceeds supply	See Priority 1 – county-wide accommodation study	By 2020	LEP	Marketing Lancashire

Priority 4

Improve business support for visitor economy SMEs to help them increase their profitability.

Improved business performance is central to growing a visitor economy. This priority identifies actions that can help the county's tourism businesses to access the support and information they need to become more profitable. It focuses on SMEs that have limited capacity and fewer resources to call on but the results will be beneficial to all visitor economy businesses.

Action	Detail	Timeframe	Lead	Support
Improve information and advice resources for SMEs in the visitor economy	Audit existing information to identify existing and gaps in information to visitor economy SMEs	2017	Lancashire County Council	Marketing Lancashire
	Encourage peer to peer learning through a series of business events	By 2018	Business support agencies/Local Authorities	Marketing Lancashire
	Deliver advice and support sessions on tourism quality for small businesses	On going	Local authorities/support agencies	
Provide cost effective marketing platforms for SME and micro businesses to reach new customers	Develop a Lancashire-wide digital strategy and a set of promotional platforms for SMEs and micro businesses to use	2017	Marketing Lancashire	
	Plan Lancashire-wide campaigns so that they have cost effective price points for small businesses	2017	Marketing Lancashire	
	Create a value added/ value for money marketing platform to highlight deals and special offers	2017	Marketing Lancashire	

Priority 5

Increase the value of the existing visiting friends and relations market.

Investing in the visiting friends and relations sector will help the county tackle seasonality and extend length of stay. Universities that draw students from outside the county will lead on this priority.

Action	Detail	Timeframe	Lead	Support
Maximise the county's universities ability to address length of stay and frequency of visit with Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)	Include packaged product in communications to student families	By 2018	Lancashire's Universities	Tourism businesses
	Increase the profile of the wider county in university marketing and recruitment materials	2017	Lancashire's Universities	
	Develop short break packages for students on summer school programmes	By 2018	Tourism businesses	
Maximise the opportunity represented by the alumni of the county's universities and their international programmes as a source of new and repeat visitors	Use packaged product to attract alumni on short breaks to Lancashire	2018	Lancashire's Universities	
	Develop a direct marketing destination campaign for alumni	2018	Lancashire's Universities	Marketing Lancashire

Priority 6

Grow the value of business tourism including conferencing.

Conference delegates and people going to a place for business reasons are some of the highest value visitors for any destination, spending almost double that of an average leisure tourist per day. They also visit outside of the main leisure season. These actions will develop the facilities that conference buyers demand and utilise the networks of Lancashire's academics and business leaders to generate more business.

Action	Detail	Timeframe	Lead	Support
Develop Blackpool, Preston and Blackburn as the county's hubs for business tourism	Produce a destination development plan for Preston and its hinterland as a hub for business tourism	By 2018	Preston BC	Marketing Lancashire
	Refurbish Preston Guildhall as a business tourism venue	By 2018	Venue owners	
	Invest in Blackpool Winter Garden conference facilities to support medium size conferences	By 2018	Blackpool BC	
	Support the development of the Cathedral Quarter in Blackburn	By 2017	Blackburn Cathedral	
Build on the research strengths of the county's universities as a source of new business	Develop ambassador programmes for Lancaster and UCLAN universities	By 2018	The University of Lancaster/UCLAN	
Increase the visibility of the county's conference offer with conference buyers and meetings planners	Deliver a series of Lancashire wide familiarisation visits for agents, PCOs and intermediaries	By 2018	Blackpool	Marketing Lancashire, Preston BC, venues
	Attend industry events to promote Lancashire as a meetings destination	By 2018	Marketing Lancashire	Blackpool, Preston, venues
	Create a digital platform for Lancashire wide promotion of venues and meetings facilities	By 2018	Marketing Lancashire	

Priority 7

Improve the visitor experience particularly visitor welcome and customer service.

The people that serve a visitor often provide some of the most memorable holiday moments. Visitors also respond to places that are attractively maintained and overtly welcoming. Actions under this priority are concerned with customer service, gateways and information services and the management and maintenance of the public realm for visitors.

Action	Detail	Timeframe	Lead	Support
Establish recognised, visitor economy accredited training programmes as the county's benchmark for destinations and businesses	Increase numbers of frontline staff engaging in Lancashire/Blackpool programmes	2017 and ongoing	Visitor Economy Sector Skills Delivery Partnership	
Improve the knowledge of frontline staff about the strengths and experiences for visitors across Lancashire	Support destination specific product knowledge programmes e.g. Welcome to Morecambe Bay	By 2020	Tourism Businesses	Marketing Lancashire / Local authorities
Upgrade physical gateways to provide an improved welcome for visitors	Ensure gateways are included in Preston and Lancaster's destination development plans	By 2018	Local authorities	
	Support Blackpool's gateway plans as detailed in its DMP	By 2018	Blackpool Council	
	Review the county's policies around visitor signage for alignment with the county's DMP/VES	2018		
	Use the visitor survey (see priority1) to identify additional gateways for upgrading	2017	Local authorities	
Develop a county-wide information service for visitors to include map boards, TIPS, in destination digital communications	Review county-wide information provision in existing Visitor Information Centres (VIC)	2017	Local authorities	
	Map visitor patterns to identify main orientation points in Lancashire	2016 part of visitor survey work	Marketing Lancashire	
	Ensure high quality information is available at main orientation points	2017	Local authorities	
	Develop a fully responsive website for use in destination	2017	Marketing Lancashire	

Priority 7
Continued

Action	Detail	Timeframe	Lead	Support
Improve the way marking and accessibility of the county's footpaths, towpaths and bridleways to support development of activity holidays	Audit the current signage in rural areas	By 2018	Local authorities	
	Develop a plan for upgrading way marking for key footpaths, towpaths and bridleways	By 2020	Local authorities	
Maintain urban centres so that they offer a quality environment for visitors e.g. cleaning regimes, street scapes, building maintenance	Content to be identified by location specific destination development plans	By 2018	Local authorities	
Improve public facilities for visitors in rural areas and urban centres e.g. provision of parking, toilets, signage	Content to be identified by location specific destination development plans	By 2018	Local authorities	