

**West Yorkshire
Destination Management Plan
2023 - 2028**

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1. Introduction

The visitor economy in West Yorkshire is at an exciting point. Prior to the Covid pandemic, it generated over £2.2 billion of direct expenditure to our economy. While the last few years have seen enormous change and uncertainty that have impacted (and continue to impact) on our visitor economy – Covid, Brexit, the cost of living crisis and inflation - we are emerging strongly from it. We have all the ingredients to not only recover, but to grow substantially.

There are many positive changes taking place across West Yorkshire. We have achieved the status of a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) from VisitEngland – a recognition of our importance as a visitor destination. The partnership across West Yorkshire Local Authorities and the Combined Authority sparks new opportunities and allows for a strategic, regional approach.

As a region, we are building to Bradford UK City of Culture 2025 and beyond with a series of events right across West Yorkshire in 2023 (Kirklees Year of Music and Leeds 2023) and 2024 (Calderdale Year of Culture and Our Year – Wakefield District 2024). These events are showcasing, and will continue to showcase, our exceptional cultural offer.

We are Yorkshire's cultural and vibrant heart. But more than that - West Yorkshire is an area of unique landscapes that resonates with our proud past and our heritage, it's a major conference and business destination, and a renowned film location. We have three National Museums, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Saltaire) and a UNESCO City of Film (Bradford).

This Destination Management Plan (DMP) provides a galvanising framework for the whole of West Yorkshire to move forward together, building on our collective and individual strengths. This plan focuses on the priorities and collaborative activities that, at a West Yorkshire level, will build a better and more productive visitor economy sector. It is intended to complement (but not duplicate) the more detailed plans that exist for our individual areas – Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield.

2. Current Situation

IMPACTS



Approximately 53 million visitors (2019)



3.1m staying visitors and 9.7m bednights



Visitors spend £2.3bn across West Yorkshire



Over half a million international visitors

BENEFITS

Our visitor economy:



Enhances our image and profile not just as a place to visit but also as a place to move to, invest in, or study.



Supports a wide range of facilities that enhance the quality of life for our residents.



Develop a sense of place and community pride amongst our residents.



Supports a range of businesses (from micro to multi-national); jobs with different skills and creates entry level employment

2.1 The Impacts and Benefits of the Visitor Economy

The value of our visitor economy is considerable. The following table summarises the estimated economic impact of the visitor economy to West Yorkshire in 2019 (the last full year of available data).

The Economic Impact of the Visitor Economy to West Yorkshire - 2019				
	Visits ('000)	Nights ('000)	Spend ¹ (£m)	% total spend
Domestic overnight	2548	5981	391	17.1%
International overnight	506	3,718	228	10.0%
All Overnight Visitors	3,054	9,699	619	27.1%
Tourism Day Visitors	50,100		1,665	72.9%
All Visitors	53,154		2,284	

Source: GBTS, IPS and GBDVS.¹

other areas.

2.2 Our Markets

Our visitors come in many guises and for many reasons: someone coming for work, business or a meeting; an international academic coming for a conference; a sports fan going to the football, cricket or rugby; a family visiting one of our many museum or gallery; someone visiting for a gig, show or play; a couple visiting the sights for a day or a week; a shopper to our unique retail experiences; friends on a night out.

They come from all areas – from within West Yorkshire itself; from the rest of Yorkshire and Greater Manchester; from Scotland and the rest of England; and from overseas.

Our visitor economy, in 2019, generated £2.3bn of direct expenditure. The majority of this was generated by day visits (from home) – 73% of expenditure (and 94% of trips).

This expenditure spreads far and wide – from our city centres to our local high streets and towns, and from direct spend on hospitality, retail, and entertainment, through the supply chain and - via the people employed in the sector - into numerous

¹ At a district level, local impact is available for Bradford, Calderdale, and Wakefield (through the Cambridge Model) and Leeds (through STEAM) but not Kirklees. Data from IPS and GBDVS is not available at a district level.

Some key points about our visitors:

- Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) accounted for the highest proportion of our overnight trips (47%) and spend (35%) in 2019. The market accounted for 42% of international spend.
- Business visits are an important market for us – they accounted for about a fifth of overnight trips (19%) and spend (22%) in 2019.
- West Yorkshire’s holiday market, while significant, is not as well developed as other destinations in the UK. They accounted for a third (31%) of domestic trips and a quarter (25%) of international trips compared to an England average (of 47% and 41% respectively).
- However, we underperform in overseas markets - in 2019² domestic visitors accounted for 83% of overnight visitors with international visitors accounting for 17% (compared to 27% at an England level).

2.3 Our Offer

The following table summarises our destination offer in a series of broad experiences or themes.

Experiences	Our Product
Discovery and enrichment	<p>This is arguably our strongest theme with a breathtaking portfolio of museums, heritage and cultural attractions. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Arts and cultural attractions like the Bronte Parsonage Museum, Leeds Art Gallery, Henry Moore Institute, Yorkshire Sculpture Park and The Hepworth Wakefield. ● Heritage / industrial heritage like Saltaire, and the Piece Hall ● National museums - including the Royal Armouries, National Coal Mining Museum and the National Science and Media Museum. ● Historic houses and sites – e.g. Harewood House, Kirkstall Abbey (both Leeds), Cliffe Castle (Bradford), Nostell Priory and Pontefract Castle (Wakefield) and Shibden Hall (Calderdale) and Oakwell Hall (Kirklees).
Places Immersion and sense of place	<p>We have some great and distinctive places that are a draw for visitors. They include Haworth, Ilkley, Saltaire (a World Heritage Site), Hebden Bridge, Holmfirth and Otley.</p>

² Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS) and International Passenger Survey (IPS). Based on a three year average of data (i.e. 2017 -19)

Experiences	Our Product
<p>Family Time and fun with the family</p>	<p>Many of our ‘discovery’ attractions (above) have a strong family appeal but other family related experiences include the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, Eureka!, Lotherton Hall (Lotherton Wildlife World), and Xscape.</p>
<p>Performance & Entertainment Visiting for theatre, concert, show, or a sporting event</p>	<p>Live entertainment is a key motivator for many visitors – the hook is the particular performance they are interested in. Facilities include: theatres (like the Alhambra Theatre, and Leeds Playhouse, Theatre Royal Wakefield); music / concert / comedy venues (e.g. Bradford Live (due to open in 2024) Huddersfield Town Hall, First Direct Arena, Northern Ballet, O2 Academy); and sports (football, cricket, racing, rugby league).</p>
<p>Events</p>	<p>We have a wealth of regular events with strong cultural, media and music themes including Bradford Literature Festival, Bradford Science Festival, the Halifax Piece Hall summer music and events series, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, , Light Night Leeds, Leeds Fest, and Leeds International Festival of Ideas. Food (like Huddersfield Food and Drink Festival, Pontefract Liquorice Festival, and Wakefield Rhubarb Festival) and sports events are also important, World Triathlon and Test Cricket (Leeds), Horse racing (Wakefield), Tennis (Ilkley) supplement regular Rugby League and football matches across the region and we have a record of success in cycling.</p> <p>Bradford City of Culture 2025 and the build years (Kirklees Year of Music 2023, Leeds 2023, Calderdale Year of Culture 2024 and Our Year – Wakefield District 2024) are major high profile one-off events.</p>
<p>Shopping</p>	<p>While Leeds is the key shopping destination we have a range of other opportunities - local high streets, independent special interest ‘destination’ shops (like Salt’s Mill, the Mill Outlet Batley, and Redbrick Mill).</p>

Experiences	Our Product
Social Fun Fun trip with a group of friends for an evening or night out	Like shopping, there are food and drink opportunities throughout the area. Potential differentiators are curry in Bradford, and Leeds city centre with its concentration of bars, clubs and independent restaurants.
Niche & special interest	There are some niche / special interest offers in West Yorkshire with the capability of generating visits (or contributing to the decision to visit). Increasing screen tourism is one of them – particularly in Calderdale and Kirklees with a strong TV presence with ITV Studios and Ch4 in Leeds.
Active Outdoor and fitness related activities	We have distinctive rural areas - the Pennine areas of Calderdale and Kirklees and notable sites like Ilkley Moor, Top Withens in Haworth, and Marsden Moors. There are opportunities for walking, cycling, climbing (indoor and outdoor).
Conference Tourism	There are a range of conference and meeting venues across our area and the conference market is an important one, particularly in Leeds which hosts a number of larger multi-venue conferences.

2.4 Current Delivery Arrangements

The visitor economy in West Yorkshire is complex and has **many stakeholders**. These include our Business Improvement Districts, trade organisations like the Leeds Hotel and Venues Association, strategic groups like the Calderdale Tourism Board, area and town based groups like the Bronte Country Partnership, and local Civic Societies. Reflecting our product offer, there are also a huge range of individual operators, including our hotels, attractions, tours, conference venues, bars and restaurants, nightclubs, breweries and distilleries, music venues, event organisers, universities, our high streets and retailers. Some of these are wholly visitor focused, others have interests that overlap the visitor economy.

As an official Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), we work with Visit Britain and Visit England on national (and international) promotional activities and development.

Each of our **Local Authorities** takes a lead on the visitor economy in their respective areas – effectively acting as the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) leading on leisure and conference tourism. The size of dedicated teams and their resources varies. Other functions within our Local Authorities also

play a role in the visitor economy teams: filming support, running museums, galleries, parks, venues; developing, managing and bidding for events; providing business and skills support; and city centre, place and World Heritage Site management.

The **West Yorkshire Combined Authority** does not currently have a specific visitor economy function but does interact with the sector through different agendas, e.g. as the passenger transport executive for the region, its growing culture, heritage and sports workstream, and devolved business support and skills and employment functions. They are also proactive in promoting West Yorkshire to certain audiences – particularly potential inward investors – and fund (along with the Local Authorities) the area’s Business Growth Service which provides support to SMEs.

3. Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

3.1 Our Strengths

As a destination, we have considerable strengths:

- We are a key part of the **Yorkshire brand** which has strong associations, images and a sense of place, particularly Pennine West Yorkshire (enhanced by our TV, film and literary connections).
- We have very **strong products** with national museums, a World Heritage Site, iconic cultural and historic sites of international stature. These enhance the area’s distinctive architecture, reinforcing our sense of place.
- Our range of **well-established events** – many with distinctive audiences that are drawn from all areas of the globe. We have momentum and profile in our cultural events and facilities, and have particular strengths in music (Kirklees), literature (Bradford) and food (Kirklees and Wakefield) with the local culture reflected strongly in a number of events such as the Lamplighter Festival.
- A reputation for hosting **large scale sporting events** e.g. the Rugby League World Cup across multiple venues and previous cycling events including the Tour de France Grand Depart.
- A track record in location work **for TV and film**. We are featured regularly on high profile programmes (Gentleman Jack, Happy Valley, Last of the Summer Wine which is still popular internationally) showcasing West Yorkshire on screens across the world.
- A reputation as a **LGBTQIA+** destination (particularly Calderdale and Leeds).
- Our **conference** tourism offer (Leeds).
- Our **diverse population** adding to a rich cultural heritage and our huge resident population (we are the fourth largest conurbation in the UK with 2.3million residents) – day visits and visiting friends and relatives are our two largest visitor groups.
- Our excellent road and rail **transport** communications (with direct links to London from Halifax, Bradford, Leeds and Wakefield), with good access to international airports.

- **Commitment** across the area to developing our visitor economy.

3.2 Our Challenges

However, we do face a number of challenges:

- A **lack of critical mass** in any one place (except Leeds City Centre). Our ‘must do’ experiences are dispersed across the area (which impacts on the way people visit, or do not visit, the area) with transport around the area a potential barrier.
- In relative terms, our **holiday and international** markets are under-developed.
- Inconsistent (and sometimes limited) levels of **private sector engagement** and investment. Our regional working, whilst strong, is in its infancy compared to competing destinations (e.g. Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle). The legacy of previous regional approaches and our tendency to have worked separately in the past has led to some duplication of approach and activity with a destination / product focus to marketing – as opposed to a consumer focus.
- Our **funding** for developing the visitor economy is currently limited (and well below our competitors). Allied to this, private sector investment in destination programmes is limited – partly a result of the make-up of private sector operators (with few large commercial attractions and an accommodation supply dominated by branded chains).
- **Place perception** – some areas have low awareness among consumers, and perceptions are sometimes negative (i.e. northern and industrial). West Yorkshire is a relatively meaningless concept to consumers (who tend to think of either Yorkshire or individual places/products like Holmfirth, Bradford etc.).
- **Limited hotel** capacity/variation outside of Leeds (exacerbated by a number of hotels currently unavailable due to Government contracts).
- A lack of a purpose built **convention** centre of any capacity in Leeds limits the events the city can attract and its profile.
- **Competitor** destinations – we have strong competitors– e.g. Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and York for city breaks, culture and business events, the Yorkshire Dales and Moors and Peak District for rural / outdoor experiences.

3.3 Our Opportunities

Looking forward, we have a number of exciting opportunities:

- Becoming an accredited **LVEP** for west Yorkshire formalises and strengthens the existing collaborative relationship of partners. LVEP status affords us the opportunity to develop strategic West Yorkshire approaches and build stronger partnerships, leading to better co-ordination (e.g. an events clash-

diary, cross-selling products) and stronger economies of scale for certain activities (e.g. consumer marketing, research, product development, ambassador programmes).

- Bradford UK **City of Culture** 2025, and the build years (Kirklees Year of Music 2023, Leeds 2023, Calderdale Year of Culture 2024 and Our Year – Wakefield District 2024) represents a huge opportunity to raise our profile- regionally, nationally and internationally. There is also the exciting opportunity to learn from the experience and develop legacy events.
- Exploration for the development of a legacy '**signature**' event such as the Manchester International Festival or Liverpool Biennial, potentially across the whole of West Yorkshire (or more peripatetic moving from area to area), which could develop to eventually achieve national/international status.
- Major **new developments** coming on stream – e.g. Bradford Live, Tileyard North, Wakefield Exchange, potential development of Huddersfield art gallery and museum, and new hotels in Leeds, Wakefield and Huddersfield which will increase capacity and appeal at a destination level.
- Developing a private sector/attractions **consortium** right across the area, bringing together the most outstanding products/experiences, to generate investment and a compelling offer that generates overnight visits.

4. Our Strategy

4.1 Our Vision

Our vision is:

To develop a strong and proactive LVEP that brings together the West Yorkshire visitor economy into a compelling and powerful partnership – that adds real value, delivering exciting new projects, economies of scale, and which engages in creative ways with visitors to support the tourism sector across the region.

4.2 Aims and Priorities

This Destination Management Plan, and the work of the West Yorkshire LVEP, has two primary **aims**:

- To use the visitor economy to continue to develop and enhance the **appeal and image of places** in West Yorkshire to a range of audiences.
- Generate more (and longer) **overnight** stays to benefit the economy and support jobs.

A third (underlying) aim is to:

- Enhance the quality of life and social value for residents of West Yorkshire through the visitor economy.

This will be achieved through the delivery of three priorities (in no particular order):

- Priority 1: Increase awareness and appeal of West Yorkshire as a destination;
- Priority 2: Develop our product and places;
- Priority 3: Manage our visitor economy effectively.

4.3 Strategic Drivers

Underpinning these aims and priorities, there are a number of strategic drivers. These include:

Regional and Local Partnerships – partnership will be key to the delivery of this DMP. We will strengthen partnerships at the national level with VisitEngland and VisitBritain through the West Yorkshire LVEP. The LVEP will form the basis of a stronger regional working relationship between our Local Authorities and the Combined Authority which will provide the basis for delivery of many of the actions in this DMP (see sections 5&7). At a local level, we have individual partnership arrangements, and we will look to strengthen these to meet our local priorities.

Resources – at present, the resources to deliver an ambitious growth plan are not well enough developed or co-ordinated across our area. Collectively we need to develop new (and sustainable) resources to enable us to compete with other destinations and grow our visitor economy. We will need to invest time in this process (see section 6).

Sustainability – sustainability will be central to everything we do - a fundamental part of the way we approach developing our visitor economy. Elements of this will include prioritising value over volume (through encouraging a greater length of stay and spend), encouraging efficient use of energy and resources among businesses and visitors, encouraging use of public transport, spreading visitor benefits through the region’s economy and communities, whilst recognising and mitigating against negative impacts on our communities and natural environment.

Accessibility, Inclusivity and Diversity - we will work towards a shared vision of making West Yorkshire a truly accessible and welcoming destination for all. We will, where possible, make our marketing and communications, place and partnership working accessible to all and work with our partners to raise awareness of the social and legal obligations to provide services and facilities that are as accessible. Encouraging the development and promotion of accessible information, business and product development, customer service and physical facilities throughout the region.

Target Market Groups.

We have many markets and different types of visitors. The core ones that we will proactively focus on (through either regional or local activity) will be:

Market Group	Description
Our Events	We have some excellent events that are West Yorkshire ‘owned’ – e.g.– Bradford Literature Festival, the Halifax Piece Hall summer series, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Light Night Leeds and the Wakefield Rhubarb Festival - that generate business and profile for our destinations. Each event has a different market, but we need to build on these and develop their profile to help build awareness and develop reasons to visit in the off-season. We have an opportunity to work together to attract more ‘bid for’ events, both Sports and cultural.

Market Group	Description
Conferences	While primarily a Leeds market, conferences positively impact on the whole of West Yorkshire in many ways – spend, profile, and potential investment. We will focus on multi-day conferences that attract national (and international) delegates and corporates.
City breaks	City breaks are a key market. While Leeds is likely to be the focus of visitor demand (given its accommodation base and wider product), this market has the potential to impact across the area and we need to focus on showcasing the best of the region. This is likely to be a ‘couples or groups of friends’ market, primarily travelling by public transport -corresponding to the Project Lion Free & Easy Mini Breakers segment ³ .
Rural holidays	Short breaks to West Yorkshire are not just city based. There is an opportunity to generate more rurally based visits, potentially involving longer stays. Motivations for these visits will be around not only our heritage and cultural attractions, but also our places and outdoor offer. This market will be more likely to be travelling by car, and slightly older than the City Breaks market corresponding to the Project Lion Country-loving Traditionalists.
Visiting friends and relatives	Our VFR market is an important, but secondary, audience – typically with a lower spend. The focus is less on promoting reasons to visit but more showcasing the breadth of the West Yorkshire offer when they are here. Core Project Lion segments include Aspirational Family Fun and Fuss-Free Value Seekers.

³ Project Lion is a VisitEngland segmentation approach – see <https://www.visitbritain.org/visitor-segmentation> for more details.

Market Group	Description
Our residents and day visitors	Residents and day visitors are an important market, particularly for our attractions and places. They are less of a focus at a West Yorkshire level but will be an important part of the market mix at the local level.

4.4 A Phased Approach

This DMP will be delivered and developed in two broad phases:

- **Phase 1: Foundations** (2023-2025). The plan will focus on building the foundations – developing our LVEP partnerships and delivery structures across West Yorkshire, implementing new programmes of activity and beginning to develop more sustainable funding and resources.
- **Phase 2: Development and Delivery** (2026-2028 and beyond). We will consolidate our partnerships, deliver sustainable funding streams, enhance our delivery and activities, and look to maximise our opportunities for growth.

5. Priorities for Action

The following sections outline our objectives. For each objective we outline the rationale for why this is important and the longer-term aspirations and needs. We also outline some of the action areas that will be taken forward during the DMP period.

5.1 Priority 1: Increase Awareness and Appeal

Rationale and Approach

There is mixed awareness of West Yorkshire as a destination and our visitor economy offer. For those in the know, views are strongly positive, for others, perceptions are simply neutral or just limited, and for some negative.

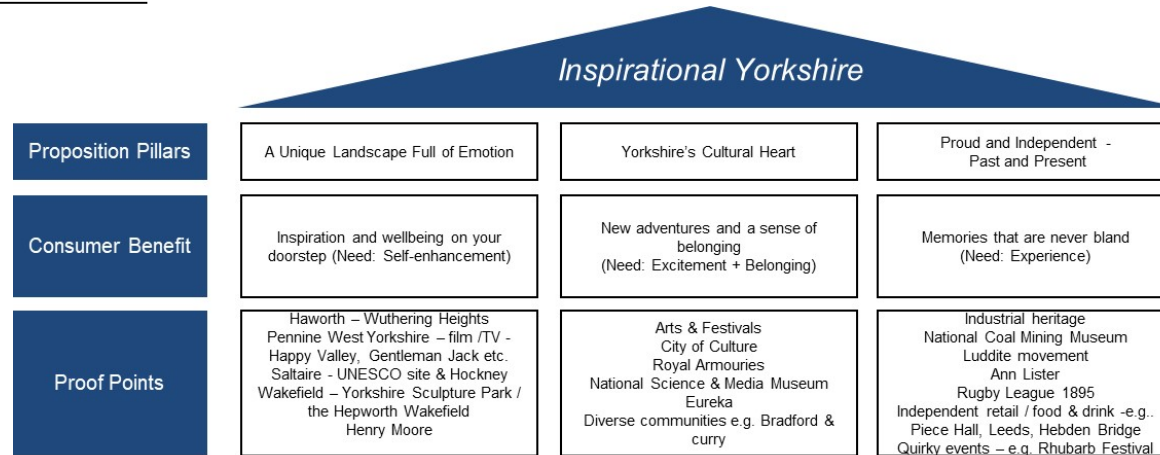
An exciting opportunity, resulting from working together across a West Yorkshire geography is that we can develop powerful consumer focused promotions that showcase the best of our collective offer. To generate added value over current activity, which takes place at a local level and is delivered by individual operators, regional activity needs to focus on markets that lie beyond our immediate catchment area; that we cannot reach individually; or markets that we can develop further by working together. Activities will not revolve around traditional destination campaigns that focus on the collective West Yorkshire offer. Instead they should be a suite of targeted promotions that speak to particular audiences, promoting clear experiences and events (see Priority 2).

The chart below illustrates a potential overarching proposition for West Yorkshire and associated themes. The working title for our proposition is 'Inspirational Yorkshire', which we feel captures the spirit of the destination and capitalises on the Yorkshire brand. West Yorkshire has inspired people for centuries – artists, inventors, writers, musicians, industrialists, creators and sports people - and today it continues to inspire its residents and visitors in new and exciting ways. The proposition also communicates a clear consumer benefit – that our landscapes, people and culture will leave you feeling inspired in your daily life. This is supported by three key pillars that each address a core consumer need:

- A Unique Landscape Full of Emotion – many parts of the West Yorkshire landscape are globally unique. The combination of rolling moorland, industrial heritage, characterful villages and towns and modern cityscapes always leaves our visitors feeling something leading to inspiration and wellbeing.
- Yorkshire's Cultural Heart – West Yorkshire excels in all aspects of culture and does it with true Yorkshire warmth and a welcome. It is never elitist or snobby – our cultural attractions are for everyone to explore and experience.
- Proud and Independent – Past and Present – in West Yorkshire we inspire, we have an independent outlook that is evident in our heritage, culture, people, local businesses and way of life.

Under each proposition pillar, we have given some example 'proof points' of experiences that might be used in support. These are not intended to be exhaustive but an example of how West Yorkshire's products could be communicated through the framework.

Potential Proposition for West Yorkshire



It should be noted that this framework has not been market tested and this is a critical next step before any marketing activity is developed. We need to research our primary target audiences and identify the key messages and concepts that will motivate them.

Once developed, the proposition framework could form the basis of marketing campaigns centred around partnerships of our key players and extend the reach of the West Yorkshire offer beyond the work of the individual destination campaigns. These would be supported by appropriate on and offline assets such as content, digital advertising, a fully optimised and accessible website, social media channel support, and PR activity).

Underpinning this proposition, there is a tremendous diversity of experiences that appeal to both broad and niche audiences. Key theme areas that support our core proposition include film, literary, visual art and sculpture, heritage and industrial heritage, city culture, and festivals, cultural events and performance. At a more local level, there is a clear opportunity for us to work individually (and together) on developing these themes and featuring them strongly in our own promotional activity. This can be taken forward by an individual area, a collective of areas, or a consortium of operators (like, e.g., the Yorkshire Sculpture International).

Allied to a West Yorkshire promotional campaign, there is a need to develop more bookable products – for both group travel and individual consumers – through specific itineraries that tie into our promotional themes (above) with potential distribution through TXGB and other channels. There are huge economies of scale and opportunities for working together within group markets – for both, building products for group tour operators (day trip and staying

visitors) and creating inspirational content for group organisers from a diverse range of backgrounds to create exciting opportunities for their members and partners.

The internal resident audience of West Yorkshire presents a significant opportunity to further grow the value of tourism, through a more formal approach to the cross-marketing of experiences and events between our individual destinations. This approach offers important benefits:

- It extends the reach of local experiences and events and ensures greater inclusivity for West Yorkshire’s resident population.
- It amplifies the existing work done by our individual destinations.
- It taps into the sizeable ‘Visiting Friends and Relations’ (VFR) market, increasing the range of products and experiences for VFR visitors.

Moving forward, we propose that a formal cross-marketing network is created that identifies which channels each destination can use to promote neighbouring areas to its local resident population. A process should then be put in place for distributing content and monitoring usage.

Conference tourism is an important market group for us – business tourism generates over a fifth of spend in the area and, in 2022, conference tourism in Leeds was estimated⁴ to have generated 32,600 conferences and meetings, approximately 2.5 million delegates and £412.6m of direct expenditure.

Conference Leeds is the only dedicated business tourism body in the region. Their marketing effort and activity is largely focused in and around Leeds although their online database does feature venues from across West Yorkshire. While primarily impacting economically on Leeds at the moment (although large events like UKREiiF impact much more widely), there are West Yorkshire conference tourism benefits (e.g. profile and investment) and opportunities, including the opening of Bradford Live (and the opportunities for attracting larger destination conferences to Bradford), expanding the Leeds Ambassador programme to potentially include West Yorkshire ambassadors, and possibly developing a portfolio of regional character, bespoke venues focused on smaller events (team meetings, corporate away days etc.).

West Yorkshire Action Areas

Action area	Description	Phase
Proposition Scoping	Research and market testing of potential leisure concept to identify interest, markets and refine messaging	Foundation

⁴ Leeds Conference Impact 2022 - (RJS Associates – 2023)

Action area	Description	Phase
Partnership and campaign development	Identify and develop 2-3 core campaigns, implement and monitor impact. Likely to include the core cultural offering	Foundation / Development
Cross marketing	Create a local channel network, distribution process and monitor impact	Foundation+
PR	Collaboration to support campaigns. Specialist PR resources to support existing teams (e.g. WYCA)	Foundation+
Itinerary development	Development of itineraries and bookable products	Development
Group marketing	Audit the current group offer by individual destinations and identify opportunities to extend reach	Foundation/ Development
Conference - development marketing	Scoping expansion of the Ambassador programme and explore a Venues of Character portfolio.	Development

5.2 Priority 2: Develop our Product and Places

Places are core to the visitor experience – they drive interest, satisfaction and spend. Across our area we have some great places with strong appeal, a sense of place, ambience and an infrastructure that generates spend. However, some of our places (including major city centres) have less appeal and are blighted by issues that impact on many of the UK’s towns and cities – anti-social behaviour, poor perceptions and safety concerns, slightly run-down high streets with declining footfall and a functional retail offer, and a bland bar and restaurant offer. This is a ‘chicken and egg’ situation – while the visitor economy can play an important part in this regeneration of our places it cannot work in isolation – people will not visit an unwelcoming place.

Across the area there are some excellent initiatives that are making a significant difference: the work of our BIDs and City and Town Centre Management teams in creating footfall, animation and ambience, and safe, clean places for visitors and residents alike; the spirit of our entrepreneurs developing exciting food and drink outlets; and major investment schemes and developments that will have a transformational impact. These include: the Piece Hall in Halifax; Bradford Live; Tileyard North and Wakefield Exchange in Wakefield; Leeds City Square; and the Light in Kingsgate and Our Cultural Heart development in Huddersfield. This process of improvement and investment will need to continue as visitors become ever more demanding and have increasing options.

The needs of visitors should be embedded in local regeneration plans, and place making initiatives (including attractive gateways, transport, signing, interpretation, urban realm, regeneration, animation).

The welcome our places and visitor experiences afford visitors needs to be not only physically accessible and inclusive to a diverse range of visitors, recognising and addressing different needs and interests where appropriate. While a lot of good work has taken place, we cannot be complacent and need to ensure this continues. Achieving this welcome will be delivered through a range of action streams – collaborating with planning departments, , master planning and urban realm development, programming and events (see below), our marketing and itineraries (see Priority 1) and working with businesses (see Priority 3).

West Yorkshire is a large but polycentric conurbation; our product is dispersed, and public transport (particularly for a visitor) can be a barrier. Addressing this is a long term undertaking but one we should not collectively shy away from. In the short term, we need to work with our existing provision and ensure that it is more legible to visitors. Tying into our core principles of sustainable, accessible and inclusive visitor economy development, we need to focus on promoting easy public transport connectivity to our core experiences and integrating them into itineraries (see Priority 1). There may also be an opportunity to develop a Visitor Pass for West Yorkshire that combines public transport, attractions, and possibly food, drink and retail options. These work well in destinations like London, New York, and Barcelona but the feasibility would need examining for our area.

We have a good, varied accommodation stock in Leeds city centre, with additional capacity coming on stream across the area (proposals for Leeds, Wakefield and Huddersfield) in the near future. However, we would benefit from expanding the provision of accommodation across the rest of the area. In our rural areas and smaller towns, accommodation development may take place organically with the emergence of self-catering, glamping and small serviced establishments in line with market demand. However, in our larger towns and cities a more strategic intervention maybe required to identify and support the development of larger serviced accommodation properties. This is an opportunity for the area that requires an assessment of our current provision and demand, gaps, opportunities for growth and potential interventions.

While we have a variety of conference venues across the area, with a particular concentration in Leeds city centre, our larger capacity ones tend to be multi-functional e.g. the First Direct Arena Leeds Town Hall, or the Royal Armouries. They are not always available for conferences. Our dedicated (and purpose built) conferencing spaces tend to be smaller – typically in hotels and our universities (which offer dedicated conference space like Cloth Hall Court).

An additional venue with dedicated availability and capacity (with associated exhibition space) would strengthen our offer and provide an opportunity for Leeds and West Yorkshire to bid for larger conferences. New hotel developments might increase the number of venues but will not diversify the offer. A purpose-built centre (either dedicated or a good multi-purpose venue – see above) represents an opportunity and would enhance our offer but its potential viability needs to be assessed. While primarily a Leeds project, this would have wider West Yorkshire benefits – in terms of profile, potential investment, related activities, employment and legacy.

Events are fundamental to our visitor economy. Participants and organisers in sports events fill our hotel bedrooms and restaurant tables. Attendees to gigs, festivals and concerts, our performing arts and cultural events also contribute massively to business levels across our area – generating footfall and spend. Events bring people into the region who might not have visited West Yorkshire or our destinations. They showcase the area, support our brand(s) and profile, and typically enhance the quality of life for our residents by providing opportunities to be involved.

Our events take many forms and have many different organisers – we have had high-profile multi-destination events like the Tour de Yorkshire, district or city wide events like Leeds 2023 or Pontefract’s Liquorice Festival, special interest events like WOVEN in Kirklees, and local events that animate a town centre. They are all important and work in different ways and it is integral to our visitor economy that they continue.

In general, our events are organised and delivered at a district or local level by a range of players – our Local Authorities, BIDs, sporting venues and cultural institutions. At a West Yorkshire level, there are opportunities for collective work but these, it needs to be recognised, are subject to resources. Area wide opportunities include bidding, or trying to attract, major events to West Yorkshire – e.g. the Tour of Britain or National/International Music Awards. We will continue to investigate these as opportunities arise.

We lack a signature international scale cultural event (like Liverpool’s Biennial or Manchester’s International Festival). While there is a potential opportunity to develop something like this as a legacy from 2025 and the build years, there would be significant challenges in terms of viability and potential resourcing, and it would require careful consideration.

At a West Yorkshire level, a more realistic opportunity will be to take our collective events programme, identify common themes or audiences (e.g. music, visual arts, heritage, particular sports etc.), amalgamate those and present them to the market place as a series of ‘highlights’ packages and /or showcase those events that will strengthen our consumer facing campaigns (See Priority 1).

West Yorkshire Action Areas

Action area	Description	Phase
Regeneration	Maximise pipeline of major projects by cross promoting	Foundation
Public transport	Embed public transport options into visitor marketing and itineraries	Foundation
Visitor Pass	Investigate the feasibility	Development
Accommodation	West Yorkshire accommodation investment study	Foundation
Conference centre	Feasibility study for purpose built (or multi-purpose) conference centre	Development
Events	Collate and present the regional events programme based on themes/content rather than geography	Foundation
	Commission a separate events strategy	Foundation
	Consider ways to attract/develop flagship event(s)	Development

5.3 Priority 3: Manage our Visitor Economy Effectively

Rationale and Approach

Our visitor economy is complex. It involves many players from the private, public and third sectors. Co-ordinating our activities and developing partnerships is a key priority for the delivery of this DMP. There are numerous partnerships that link to the visitor economy and these typically exist at a district or local level. Our engagement will continue on this basis, but we recognise we need to be more proactive as we emerge from the Covid years and as we pick up from the vacuum left by Welcome to Yorkshire. While stakeholder engagement will be primarily a responsibility of the LVEP partners at their respective levels, there will be a need for area wide coordination at the West Yorkshire level – particularly to develop our consumer focused campaign (Priority 1), (potentially saleable) itineraries (Priority 1) and possible Visitor Pass (Priority 2) but also the possibility of area wide stakeholder events – for example an annual conference and / or awards ceremony (providing a pathway for our businesses to be recognised nationally). We already have private sector engagement on the LVEP Governance Board and will consider how best to both widen and deepen that engagement across West Yorkshire.

Engagement and developing relationships with stakeholders will help us develop campaigns (see above) but also create the opportunities and the means to deliver a range of other priorities (see below).

Across West Yorkshire, LVEP partners provide an extensive business support offer. WYCA’s Growth Hub, which is regionally managed and locally delivered, acts as an entry point into the business support eco-system for businesses and entrepreneurs across the region. This focuses on supporting businesses to become more resilient, grow, improve productivity, and become more sustainable. The Combined Authority also delivers the Adult Education Budget for West Yorkshire, to engage adults and provide them with the skills needed for entering and sustaining work, an apprenticeship or other learning. Existing regional and local business and skills support touch on the visitor economy in varying ways. There is an opportunity, through our stakeholder engagement, to ensure that we make the connection between our existing support and stakeholders. However, we need to ensure the needs of our businesses are truly reflected and we will investigate options with stakeholders where appropriate – examples include recruitment (arguably a more pressing issue than skills) and the development of tailored training courses that address particular needs to be delivered at a West Yorkshire or local area.

Sustainability, in terms of a wider move towards a net zero economy, but also considering a fair and just transition for our communities and residents, accessibility and inclusivity are core principles of this DMP. These will be partly addressed through our place and product welcome (see Priority 2 above) but also through working with our stakeholders and businesses to raise awareness of the issues and barriers, provide solutions and facilitate their own implementation through e.g. showcasing good practice and adoption of certification schemes like Green Tourism or Green Key. Developing our stakeholder relations will be key to this element.

Improving our intelligence and knowledge is also key to improving our destination management and to support our independent stakeholders with their plans. Currently the regional data picture is inconsistent. For example, we have conference performance data from the UK Conference and Meeting Survey, occupancy and Airbnb data for Leeds, some data on our visitors for Leeds and Bradford, and economic impact modelling data for the whole area⁵. Early intelligence priorities at a West Yorkshire level will be about understanding how visitors and non-visitors perceive us, identifying target audiences, and developing a campaign concept that will reach consumers (see Priority 1). We also need to understand the dynamics and performance of our accommodation – not only from the perspective of potentially developing new accommodation but also to help monitor performance. At a local level, understanding our audiences, their characteristics, behaviour and motivations will be important.

Developing and evolving our LVEP will be a key priority – it will be an enabler of action delivery (see section 6 below).

West Yorkshire Action Areas

Action area	Description	Phases
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⁵ NB with the exception of Kirklees. This is also based on slightly different approaches (STEAM and Cambridge models).

Action area	Description	Phases
Private sector engagement	Develop private sector engagement at most appropriate geography, and develop West Yorkshire coordination and relationships	Foundation / Development
Business Support	Research and identify business needs and explore options for intervention where required	Foundation/ Development
Sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity	Showcase and rollout of national schemes and good practise through existing networks	Foundation / Development
Intelligence	Establish regional group to develop consistent approaches to data (e.g. standardising economic impact models) Invest in accommodation related data and perceptions/target market research	Foundation
LVEP	Development and evolution of delivery structures	Foundation

6. Implementation

6.1 Our LVEP Partnership and Responsibilities

The West Yorkshire LVEP Governance Board will oversee the activities of the LVEP and the delivery of this DMP. Chaired by West Yorkshire's Mayor Tracy Brabin, the Board will bring together members from the public, private and third sector with vested interest in the region's visitor economy. Our LVEP is a partnership of equals, but that partnership will need co-ordination which will need to be identified.

We will also have a number of working groups to co-ordinate specific activities and agendas (see organogram below). These working groups will report to the board through the co-ordinator and the combined chairs. Our partnership is relatively new, experience will dictate the eventual structure. Each group will be chaired by the most appropriate partner, with representation from all local authorities within the region. We will investigate attracting private sector attendance, supplemented by specialist advice from key public sector agencies e.g. the Growth Hub. Initial responsibilities are expected to be as follows.

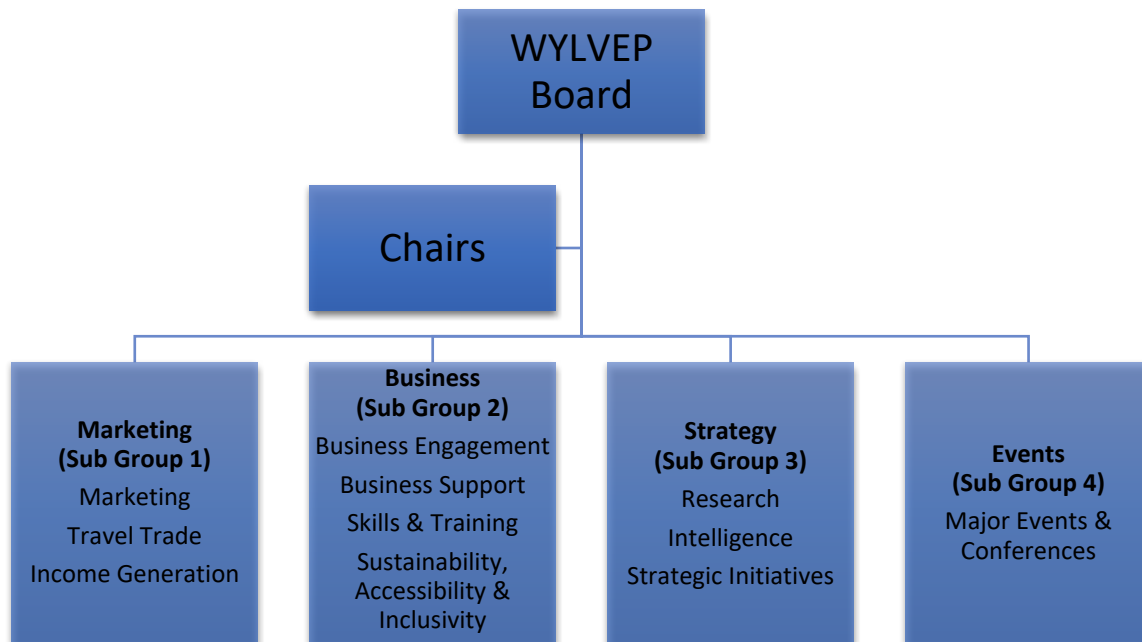
The Chairs will concentrate on developing the agenda for, and ensuring strong two-way communication with, the LVEP Governance Board.

Marketing: Sub Group 1's remit is largely promotional and outward facing, it will lead on all marketing aspects (excluding conferences/business tourism) and also consider income generation opportunities to support marketing activity.

Business: Sub Group 2 will lead on business engagement including an eventual awards programme. It will work with partners to advocate, develop and signpost appropriate business support, skills and training initiatives for visitor economy businesses. The Group will also consider the critical agendas around sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity.

Strategy: Sub Group 3 will lead on a coordinated approach to research and data across West Yorkshire, ensuring consistent and comparable evidence to support the LVEP's work. The Group will also take an overview of strategic initiatives e.g. the accommodation development programme, heritage and cultural projects.

Events: Sub Group 4 will concentrate on two key priorities: Major events (i.e. those that take place and/or generate impacts at a WY level) and business tourism/conferences. It will also maintain a major events clash diary and work with key partners e.g. the Cultural Leads, Sports bodies, on developing the event programme for the region.



6.2 Investment and Funding

Our existing resources are limited, particularly in comparison to some of our main competitors. This impacts on our ability to deliver activity for the LVEP. We cannot realistically grow the visitor economy without additional investment. A budget proposal for the foundation period West Yorkshire LVEP is being taken through the Combined Authority's Assurance Process. In the medium term, the LVEP and LVEP partners will need to develop more sustainable financial resources to avoid losing momentum and /or a potential cycle of short term activity to meet available funding criteria.

