

Rural Herefordshire Sustainable Destination Management Plan 2018-2022



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development: Europe
investing in rural areas

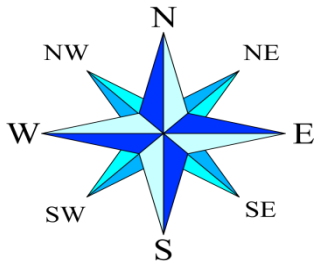
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Section One

Purpose

Creating the future for a vibrant Destination Herefordshire



This destination management plan will help act as a compass to develop new, innovative and agile ways of working together and to lead, manage and influence all aspects, qualities and values that contribute to making things happen.

It will manage the reputation of Herefordshire as a MUST BE place of interest where visitors come. This will require integrating the needs of the visitor, businesses, residents and the environment we all share. To ensure success the quality of experience, product and memories must be truthfully delivered in the promise to visitors.

The development of the Rural Herefordshire Sustainable Destination Plan is to create an essential agreed working tool and structured process with the outcomes of:

- financially sustainable development and growth of Herefordshire as a tourism destination and the sustained growth of the visitor economy.
- developing a year-round visitor offer
- improving the range and quality of rural tourism products to create new jobs and economic growth.

Context

Why do this and why get involved?

In the 2016 tourism call under the RDPE (Rural Development Programme for England) Growth Fund, the **Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)** identified that a priority was to develop a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Herefordshire.

In response the **Herefordshire Sustainable Food and Tourism Partnership (HSFTP)**, after consultation with Visit Herefordshire, submitted a bid to create a unique rural 5-year DMP which draws tourism, farming, food and drink, culture and heritage together. The Brightspace Foundation, a member of HSFTP, acted as the Accountable Body and were successful in the competitive bidding process.

HSFTP recognises that these sectors offer significant growth potential for the wider economy within Herefordshire. The diverse business and community sectors represented within HSFTP are the engines of the local economy, woven into the life of the thriving and living rural communities of the county.

Formed in 2014, HSFTP as a partnership of key individuals, organisations and networks committed to providing strategic oversight for the development and delivery of sustainable food and tourism strategies. Members include the Duchy of Cornwall, National Farmers Union, Visit Herefordshire, Herefordshire Rural Hub, the Rural and Farming Network, Herefordshire Council, the Brightspace Foundation and the Country Landowners Association. The strengths of the partnership are its proven opportunity to communicate at all levels, build networks and relationships and work collaboratively to drive competitive advantage for the rural businesses of Herefordshire.

The “core group” meet every two months and is augmented by a wider reference group together with task and finish groups as required. Administrative support has been provided by Herefordshire Rural Hub, the Duchy of Cornwall and the Brightspace Foundation.

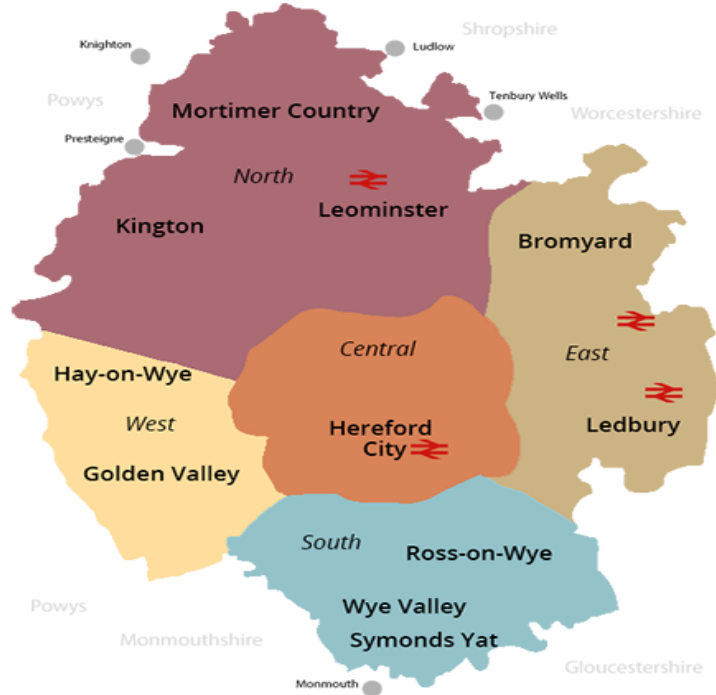
Informing the Plan – Methodology

The first objective was to undertake contiguous research and consultation with partners and stakeholders to establish:

- National, Regional, Local Authority and Public Realm Tourism Policies and Strategies influencing the development of the Destination Management Plan.
- An audit of Herefordshire as a Destination.
- A benchmark of Herefordshire to comparable rural destinations.
- A series of consultative group and face-to-face meetings. (Appendix 1)

Section Two

Seeing the bigger picture for tourism in Herefordshire



A Destination can be defined as:

“A geographic area consisting of all the services and infrastructures necessary for the stay of a specific visitor or tourism sector.”

Or:

“A place of interest where tourists visit, typically for its inherent or exhibited natural or cultural value, historical significance, natural or built beauty, offering leisure, adventure and amusement.”

(Source: World Trade Organisation)

Herefordshire as a Destination

The visitor economy is very important to the prosperity of the county. In 2015 over 5m visitors contributed £442m to the economy which supported 6,688 jobs. Although tourism helps to provide prosperity for the wider economy the benefits of a thriving and growing industry are not just economic.

Wise growth and sustainable management of the values and assets enjoyed by visitors to the county, including: our cornucopia of wild life rich landscapes; lifestyle choices; our market towns, historical significance and heritage; green routes and country pursuits; delicious local food, drink and cuisine; diverse cultures and creativity, all help to make Herefordshire a Great Place that visitors, communities and residents can both enjoy and be proud of.

The 3 Key Elements that Visitors look for when choosing a Destination are:



With the key factors visitors look for within the destination being:

- Quality
- Competent employees/businesses
- Creation of products and services
- Compatibility with need
- Accessibility
- Public amenities

Since 2010 Herefordshire has been without an operational Destination Plan. Hence understanding the changes, trends and new opportunities nationally, regionally and locally was an imperative in the development of this plan.

EU, National, Regional and Local Strategic Tourism Priorities

These include both EU strategies:

- European Tourism Strategy and Plan 2015 – 2020
www.ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism
- EU Charter for Sustainable Tourism
www.europarc.org/nature/european-charter-sustainable-charter

And UK-wide approaches:

- Building our Industrial Strategy
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/building-our-industrial-strategy>
- Defra's 10 point plan for boosting productivity in rural areas
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/towards-a-one-nation-economy-a-10-point-plan-for-boosting-rural-productivity>

Tourism is a devolved matter. **Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland** all have independent tourist boards. **Visit Britain**, which incorporated Visit England, is a non-departmental public body tourism agency funded by the [Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport](#) (DCMS) and is tasked with the role in building England's tourism product, raising Britain's profile worldwide, increasing the volume and value of tourism exports and developing England and Britain's visitor economy. Working with a wide range of partners in both the UK and overseas, its mission is to grow the volume and value of inbound tourism across the nations and regions of Britain and to develop a world-class English tourism product to support growth aspirations with the aims of:

- Maintaining distinct activities to develop and market English tourism.
- Continuing to market Britain overseas to drive growth in international leisure and business tourism.
- Building our Industrial Strategy

Regional and Local tourism initiatives include:

Midlands Engine <https://www.midlandsengine.org/>

The five themes are:

- Midlands Connect – transport connectivity
- Innovation

- Skills – tailored to employer demand
- Finance for Business
- Promotion – regional branding proposition. This includes a consumer-focused campaign for the visitor economy which will promote the highlights of the Midlands, including our heritage, culture, sport and food and drink offer. Attending international exhibitions and business tourism events generating leads that will drive overseas business footfall and visitor expenditure.

Marches Local Enterprise Partnership www.marcheslep.org.uk

The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (MLEP) was formed in 2011, by the [Department for Business, Innovation and Skills](#) to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within the local areas. MLEP is driving economic growth across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin through investment in innovation, higher level skills, housing and business sites. It is led by the private sector “working in partnership with business, education and the three local authorities, to deliver thousands of homes and jobs across one of the most enterprising regions in the UK”.

The Marches LEP aims to “develop a vibrant regional economy, putting business at the heart of our work and removing the barriers to growth through investment in our key projects”. Whilst recognising that the Marches cultural, heritage, landscape and tourism infrastructures are fundamental assets of the visitor economy sector and provide a strong offer. Investment in both the rural and urban context has the potential to deliver significant SME productivity outputs, improving the visitor experience and increasing the desire to visit and spend. Relevant to Destination Management activities are:

- Developing, expanding, upgrading and protecting strategic tourism facilities, sites and corridors (such as recreational routes) including cultural heritage, green and blue visitor infrastructure and significant access improvements.
- Supporting destination management, experience, product development and marketing including the promotion of strategically important tourist projects.
- Increasing business competitiveness and enhancing visitor experience and information delivery through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

These are funded through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the Information, Communication and Technology activities are relevant to the development of rural tourism.

In Herefordshire

Extracts from the relevant tourism policies:

Herefordshire Council Core Strategy 2011-2031 www.herefordshire.gov.uk

“Tourism 5.2.20 The Herefordshire STEAM Report **2011** shows that tourism makes an important contribution to the county’s economy.

Herefordshire has many historic and natural assets which are of national interest for example the Mappa Mundi and the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Hereford, the market towns and rural areas are popular destinations for a range of different types of visits and activities. Tourism in Herefordshire can help to strengthen the economy through diversification and new business development in both urban and rural areas. “

“Policy E4 – Tourism in Herefordshire will be promoted as a destination for quality leisure visits and sustainable tourism by utilising, conserving and enhancing the county’s unique environmental and heritage assets and by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. In particular, the tourist industry will be supported by a number of measures including:

1. Recognising the unique historic character of Hereford and the market towns as key visitor attractions and as locations to focus the provision of new larger scale tourist development;
2. The development of sustainable tourism opportunities, capitalising on assets such as the county’s landscape, rivers, other waterways and attractive rural settlements, where there is no detrimental impact on the county’s varied natural and heritage assets or on the overall character and quality of the environment. Particular regard will be had to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
3. Retaining and enhancing existing, and encouraging new, accommodation and attractions throughout the county, which will help to diversify the tourist

provision, extend the tourist season and increase the number of visitors staying overnight. In particular, proposals for new hotels in Hereford will be encouraged. Applicants will be encouraged to provide a 'Hotel Needs Assessment' for any applications for new hotels;

4. Ensuring that cycling, walking and heritage tourism is encouraged by facilitating the development of long distance walking and cycling routes, food and drink trails and heritage trails, including improvements to public rights of way, whilst having special regard for the visual amenity of such routes and trails, and for the setting of heritage assets in their vicinity;

5. The safeguarding of the historic route of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal (shown on the Policies Map), together with its infrastructure, buildings, towpath and features. Where the original alignment cannot be re-established, a corridor allowing for deviations will be safeguarded. New developments within or immediately adjoining the safeguarded corridor will be required to incorporate land for canal restoration. Development not connected with the canal that would prevent or prejudice the restoration of a continuous route will not be permitted.

5.2.21 By encouraging more overnight stays and associated increased expenditure, there is potential for revenue from tourism to make a greater contribution to the county's economic well-being. The provision of new accommodation and the enhancement of existing accommodation will help achieve this goal. Many visitors to the county come to enjoy the beautiful countryside and there is likely to be a demand for new facilities and accommodations associated with this. Whilst some small-scale tourism associated development may be appropriate in rural areas, any significant new development for accommodation and facilities should be focused in Hereford and the market towns to maximise sustainable transport opportunities and to protect environmental amenity."

Herefordshire Council Local Plan

5.2.22 The disused Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal corridor is the subject of a long-term restoration project with the aim of re-opening the canal link between Hereford and the Severn at Gloucester, terminating in a canal basin in Hereford. Some sections have already been restored. The recreation,

tourism and economic potential of the project are recognised and the canal corridor will continue to receive protection from development through Policy E4.

5.2.23 Policy E4 recognises the contribution that tourism makes to the Herefordshire economy and seeks to ensure that this continues and is enhanced through new developments which are of an appropriate scale, type and location.

5.2.24 Policy E5 encourages appropriate town centre investment in Hereford and the market towns of Bromyard, Ledbury, Leominster, Kington and Ross-on-Wye.

Herefordshire Council Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note E34 – Tourism

Extracts from Note 34:

The wide-ranging nature of tourism is such that numerous chapters within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are relevant. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development is underpinned by Government's belief that planning has a number of roles to fulfil including economic, social and environmental roles:

- Economic role – contributing to building a strong economy that is competitive and responsive, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation;
- Social role – supporting and involving strong, vibrant and healthy communities, and
- Environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

It can be argued that tourism is reflected in these roles and, at para 28, the NPPF advises that local and neighbourhood plans should support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that 'benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside'.

These guides were also clear that the provision of essential facilities for visitors is vital for the development of tourism in rural areas. This can largely be attributed to the idea that tourism can:

- Be a key element in rural and farm diversification;
- Help to revitalise market towns and villages;
- Support important rural services and facilities; and
- Underwrite environmental schemes and improvements to the built and natural environment.

Many parts of Herefordshire and villages within the AONBs in particular, have had increased tourism related developments over the past few years. There will continue to be a need to balance the potential social and economic benefits of these proposals with protecting the countryside during the next plan period through Neighbourhood Development Plans. The planning system can aid relevant proposals to ensure that neighbourhoods secure appropriate developments without causing environmental problems. The NDP process can also encourage particular proposals through the use of Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders

Both the existing and emerging planning policy frameworks support the promotion of tourism across Herefordshire. There are, however, a number of specific ways in which Neighbourhood Development Plans can help deliver Tourism, not least through sites allocations and/or locally specific planning policies

Relevant policies should ensure that developments are compatible with neighbouring uses, including the siting, scale and design of the proposal and the likely level of traffic and noise that will be generated. Equally, policies concerning new-build visitor accommodation within open countryside will have to be just as exacting as they are for other types of development.

Examples of the themes which policies can cover include:

- Visitor accommodation (both small and large scale) - The provision of visitor accommodation such as new hotels, boarding houses or self-catering accommodation can bring benefits to your parish in terms of boosting local

spending and helping to support local facilities. In addition, proposals for accommodation associated with walking, cycling and horse-riding, such as bunk-barns and hostels, can contribute to the Local Plan's strategy of encouraging modes of transport other than the private car.

- Static caravans, chalets, camping and touring caravan sites – Static caravans and chalets remain on site all year round and can lead to the provision of other facilities such as swimming pools, club houses, car parks, on site shops and areas for tennis and other sports. Touring caravan and camping sites tend to require a lower level of infrastructure and associated built development and their seasonal nature means that their impact may not be so significant. The need for new facilities should be reconciled with the protection and preservation of those environments that attract tourists in the first place.

Sites for holiday chalets or static holiday caravans are often located in areas where the provision of permanent residential development would be contrary to the provisions of the Local Plan - Core Strategy. As such chalets and caravans are occupied for temporary periods; they do not require the level of infrastructure associated with a permanent residential environment. Consequently, different planning considerations should be applied and allowing the conversion of a tourist facility to a permanent residential one must not come at the expense of a policy aimed at providing accommodation for visitors and supporting the rural economy.

- Rural and farm tourism development – Development which aims to meet the needs of visitors who are attracted to the countryside can help to diversify the rural economy and provide a boost to farm incomes. However, relevant policies should ensure that such developments will be sensitive to the local environment in terms of design, scale and location, so that the environmental impact and associated visitor management problems are minimised, and meet the broader aims of the Core Strategy.

Herefordshire LEADER Programme 2014 - 2020 – www.herefordshire.gov.uk

Support for rural tourism, micro and small enterprises and farm diversification, culture and heritage activity.

Understanding Herefordshire – A Sense of Place



John Masefield described Herefordshire thus ‘I know no land more full of bounty and beauty than this red land, so good for corn and hops ... the great cattle and cider trees.....where nearly everyone lived on and by the land.’



Herefordshire’s resident population is 188,100 in an area covering 842 square miles. It has a sparse population with the fourth lowest overall population density in England. Just under a third of Herefordshire residents live in Hereford, with about a fifth in the five market towns of Leominster, Bromyard, Ross-on-Wye, Kington and Ledbury and nearly half in the surrounding rural areas. Despite other counties having a lower overall population density, Herefordshire is unique in that it has the greater proportion of its population living in ‘very sparse’ rural areas (25%).

The county contains 3 Natural England designated National Nature Reserves www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england/about. The Wye Valley AONB <http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk> is an internationally important protected landscape passing through Herefordshire and the border between England and Wales. It is one of the most dramatic and scenic landscape areas in southern Britain. It is also historically important as one of the birthplaces of the modern tourism industry. The Brecon Beacons National Park www.breconbeacons.org, Shropshire Hills AONB www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk and the Malvern Hills AONB www.malvernhillaonb.co.uk all lie on the borders of Herefordshire.

Understanding Tourism in Herefordshire

With effect from April 2011, the responsibility for the delivery of economic growth, product development, marketing and promoting tourism activities for the county was contracted out from Herefordshire Council to a Destination Management Organisation called Visit Herefordshire (a Company Limited by Guarantee). Over a 5-year period of reducing financial Local Authority support the aim was for Visit Herefordshire to be a fiscally sustainable membership organisation. In September 2015, after going into voluntary liquidation, any remaining assets, branding and intellectual property rights of Visit Herefordshire were transferred to Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, whom with very limited resources continue to administer reduced Visit Herefordshire activities.

Annual Impact of the Visitor Economy in Herefordshire (Source: Herefordshire STEAM report 2014, published 2015)

- Generates £442.81m in the local economy (Food & Drink 35%, Visiting Friends and Family and Self Catering) 25%, Shopping 15%, Transport 7%, Serviced Accommodation 6%, Recreation 5%)
- 5.04m customers of which 4.2m are day visitors
- 6,688 Full Time Equivalent employees

The previous STEAM report was published in 2011 when £446.73m was generated into the local economy by 4154m visitors and employed 6,973.

STEAM - Scarborough/Scottish Tourism Economic Impact research tool used to quantify local impact for a tourism destination.

International Visitors to Herefordshire (source Office of National Statistics – based on 3 year average for 2011 – 13, published 2014 www.nomis.co.uk)

Of all overnight stays in Herefordshire (including business and study) **18.2%** are by international visitors (including business), of which **56.1%** are VFR's (visiting friends and family).

Total nights stayed by inbound residents as a % of nights stayed by all inbound visitors		Total spend by inbound residents as a % of total inbound visitor spend		VFR inbound visitor spend as a % total of inbound visitor spend	
USA	13.9	USA	13.9	USA	30.9
EU	45.4	EU	47.5	EU	53.6
Australia	10.6	Australia	8.8	Australia	76.2
Others	30	Others	29.7	Others	56.1

Total Nights stayed as a % of all nights stayed by inbound visitors to Herefordshire			Total spend by overseas residents as a % of total inbound visitor spend in Herefordshire		
USA	Holiday	44.7	USA	Holiday	33.9
	VFR	35.9		VFR	30.9
	Business	18.9		Business	35.1
	Other	0.5		Other	0.2
EU	Holiday	18.5	EU	Holiday	16.8
	VFR	53.6		VFR	34.3
	Business	9.7		Business	25.5
	Other	18.2		Other	23.4
Australia	Holiday	18.5	Australia	Holiday	34.4
	VFR	76.2		VFR	46.4
	Business	4.6		Business	15.6
	Other	0.8		Other	0.6
Other	Holiday	18.2	Other	Holiday	18.7
	VFR	56.1		VFR	27.5
	Business	6		Business	10.4
	Other	19.7		Other	29.1

Anecdotal observations indicate that of the EU visitors to the county a high % are from Eastern Europe visiting friends and family who are employed in food manufacture, agriculture and horticulture.

Employment in tourism expressed as a % of tourism workers based on main job (Source: Annual Population Survey, 2013)

Age	16-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70+
%	12.1	10.7	10.7	8.1	5	11.6	11.7	8.2	6.8	7	4.4	3.6

Skills level in tourism expressed as a % of tourism workers based on main job (Source: Annual Population Survey, 2013)

Degree	19.4
Higher Education	4.4
GCE A level or equivalent	21.8
GCE Grades A-C	27.6
Other	4.2
No qualifications	22.5

Tourism, Food and Drink Business Assets

Establishing the scope and scale of tourism, food and drink businesses in Herefordshire was difficult. The most reliable source is the SIC (Standard Industry Classification - MINT <https://www.bvdinfo.com/en-gb/our-products/data/national/mint-uk>) codes. Farm tourism diversification, where the prime business is agriculture, was problematic to assess. Herefordshire ‘Where to stay’ and ‘What to do’ guides relied upon income from advertisers. An audit of these since 2010 indicated a significant reduction in businesses relying on printed guides for marketing. Interestingly, community tourism groups retained and grew a wider business membership and continue to publish a ‘local’ guide for use by visitors whilst in the area. All have a web site and social media communication. All reported a sharp rise in the use of on-line booking agencies and customer review sites for informing visitors. Consumer

driven recommendation and review websites were interrogated and data compared with SIC Codes.

	Source: SIC Codes	Comparison On line research + or – 10%
Hotels	29	39
Guest Houses/B&B	149	263
Self-Catering	56	336
Caravan /Leisure Parks	95	
Camping/Glamping	21	
Museums/Heritage	18	27
Churches Tourism		92
Theatre/Cinema	5	
Festivals/Events		237
Outdoor Activities/Attractions	42	128
Transport	201	
Food and Drink Manufacture	92	
Local Producers	21	
Local Producers- farm based	22	
Farm Shops	25	
Food/Drink Retail	81	
Restaurants	118	579
Take Away	107	
Pubs and Bars	205	116
Food Service Activities	10	
Event Caterers	21	

The variation for Guest Houses/B&B and Self Catering possibly reflects farm diversification. Currently there is a growth of on-farm or country estate ‘glamping’ and ‘life style’ businesses.

The variation for restaurants is difficult to assess but may reflect that on some review sites the term ‘restaurant’ includes any establishment serving food.

Herefordshire set in the context of rural tourism

Traditionally the intrinsic Unique Selling Points (USPs) of Herefordshire are the River Wye, one of the finest in Britain (Wye Valley AONB), diverse landscape, high environmental and historic features, food and drink and the value of the culture that has created the communities and traditions of Herefordshire.

(Arkenford 2011 Herefordshire Perceptions and Awareness Research). These qualities appeal to a growing number of visitors of all ages and societies.

With the market towns of Ross on Wye, Leominster, Kington, Ledbury and Bromyard the county is full of countless places and hidden gems in which time seems to stand still. There is still a feeling of tranquillity with silence too rare a luxury. With its longstanding farming traditions, Herefordshire continues to be a leading agricultural producer. Yet people are happy to chat and share their experiences and feelings of their home county.

Herefordshire is perceived by large and small groups of visitors to be a central location in England for families and friends to meet for short breaks; to participate in both leisurely and active pursuits; and a starting point in which to appreciate a slower and more natural pace of life. With the focus on walking for health and well-being the walking festivals of Herefordshire, Kington Walking, Ross –on-Wye, Mortimer Country and the Mortimer Trail and Herefordshire Trail are all increasingly attracting day and short stay visitors of all age groups to the county. On the western border of the county with Gwent and Powys there has been, and will continue to be, interaction with the Offa's Dyke National Footpath and Walking with Offa.

The county has a wealth of 'hidden gems' from natural and created landscape, venerable trees', flora and fauna, geological and water features to creative artists, potters, 'makers'. The heritage of historic buildings (many which have stood at the heart of the community for over 1,000 years), literary and musical connections (Masefield, Kilvert, Elgar, Mike Oldfield, Phil Rickman), and food and drink all contribute to the wealth of hidden gems to be discovered. Herefordshire will never attract a mass market of visitors but offers opportunities to grow the visitor economy and jobs potential gradually and naturally with due respect for the physical and environmental impact on the county and its communities.

The challenges facing Herefordshire

Over the past decade Herefordshire, as with many other rural areas, continues to experience underlying challenges to its ways of life and social fabric, as traditional land-based occupations are in decline and younger and better-educated rural residents move to cities for better work, social and cultural opportunities. Managed wisely, rural tourism offers a potential solution to the problems related to lost economic opportunities and population decline that come with the changes in traditional agriculture. Rural tourism has frequently been found to **take longer** and under-deliver in terms of expected economic growth benefits and job creation.

Adding to these challenges, and particular to Herefordshire, was that over the past three years, whilst lacking strategic direction, leadership, governance and destination management, the key messages to stakeholders, partners and visitors have become fragmented.

Audit of Destination Herefordshire



Initial research and consultation indicated a destination with no financial resources, lacking drive, cohesion or direction, timely communication and confidence.

Herefordshire as a destination resembles an ill-fitting jig-saw driven by the motivation, marketing and promotional needs of individual businesses and 'mini' destinations within the county through on line booking services.

With the current structure for managing the visitor economy being:



Findings of auditing Herefordshire as a destination

Best Practice Evidence	Situation in Herefordshire
Leadership and integrated management	<p>No strategic imperative, leadership, integrated management, limited national or local public realm or partnership engagement.</p> <p>No adequately funded destination visitor management partnership/organisation.</p> <p>Impact on business confidence.</p> <p>Key messages to stakeholders, partners and visitors fragmented.</p>
Accountability, business planning structures in place	<p>No policy, destination plan, business plan, marketing and PR plan, accountability or monitoring/evaluating return on investment.</p>
Professional staff and services	<p>No financial resources to support.</p> <p>Impact on business confidence.</p> <p>Impact on raising the profile of Herefordshire in the market place.</p>
Possess extensive local knowledge	<p>Fragmented. Un tapped wealth of knowledge within businesses, residential communities, public realm and local partnerships.</p>
Expertise	<p>Outdated digital imagery and impact</p> <p>Confused messages for the visitor</p> <p>Conflicting and weak brand</p>
Resources	<p>No public sector investment</p> <p>Private sector investment limited to paying for marketing benefits.</p> <p>Chasing funding to exist</p> <p>No public amenities for visitors</p>

Benchmarking 'Destination Herefordshire' with comparable destinations

The criterion was to compare a range of landlocked rural destinations with a cathedral city and/or predominantly agriculture and tourism economic sectors with the focus on leadership and Integrated management, accountability, business planning and resources.

These included Shropshire, Worcestershire, Cheshire, Gloucestershire, Rutland, Leicestershire, Northumberland and Powys. Methodology employed desk, telephone and face to face research (commercial in confidence)

Findings

- All expressed concern as Local Authority funding is reduced how this will impact on future sustainability.
- 6 currently receive Local Authority financial support ranging from £10,000 to £150,000 per annum to deliver economic Key Performance Indicators.
- 4 received Local Authority officer 'support' either from economic or enterprise development; this included sourcing and distributing dedicated funding for the destination. 1 had officer support from the Chamber of Commerce.
- Leadership, integrated management, accountability, business planning structures, expertise and local knowledge together with rising the profile of the destination in the market place was the responsibility of a traditional industry led Destination Management Partnership/Organisation (DMP/O). Two of the larger geographic destinations had up to three 'independent' DMO's.
- The structure, leadership, management and performance of each DMP/O varied considerably. Telephone and face to face discussions indicated that DMP/O's driven and sustained by voluntary leadership/management and business membership performed less well. Part of the reason being vested interests, introspection and a reliance upon decreasing public funding to sustain current projects and themes. The need to change and recognise the call to resolve conflict simply to keep up with the rapid changes in visitor management had not been addressed.
- Local Authorities continued to provide public amenities for visitors with the provision of Tourism Information Centres being under review.

Destination marketing profile research indicates that Herefordshire is average with no strong identity or particular draw for visitors. With NO sustainable funding support, leadership and integrated management, accountability, business planning and resources the investment needed to deliver and generate growth will be challenging. It is the businesses of Herefordshire that keep the visitor economy at the current level of activity.

Herefordshire will continue to perform well below its optimum level unless a robust and maintainable source of income is available to drive forward the step changes needed for tourism growth in the county. To achieve this financially sustainable destination funding model presents a real opportunity for Herefordshire.

Tourism Business Improvement Bid (TBID) www.britishbids.info

TBIDs offer the potential of a step change away from tourism sector support mechanisms which are frequently reactive and short term in nature and deliver programmes that are decided on an ad hoc basis, to that of a sustainable and strategic alternative that is built on genuine and binding mutual dependencies, partnerships, and has a real business focus.

In England there are a small number of non-urban coastal destination TBIDs in operation. In Scotland, Visit Inverness and Loch Ness are funded through a very successful rural focused TBID. www.LNITBID.co.uk . The TBID excluded the Inverness City Centre BID area. To inform decision making for the Herefordshire Sustainable Destination Plan a fact-finding visit was made to Visit Loch Ness and Inverness to better understand the bidding process, the costs involved, and the income required to support the organisation and marketing of the destination, its impact on the visitor economy and succession planning.

Section Three

Agreeing to Plan Together

Sharing thoughts and vision

Over a period of 4 months 90 strategic national, regional and local partners, stakeholders (including farming and food production, tourism associations, specialist groups, food businesses) were met.

The aim being:

To share thoughts and vision, by working together to make things happen in managing the reputation of tourism in the county whilst truthfully delivering a promise to visitors.

During meetings debate considered the principles of what might be required to shape the future to:

- Improve the visitor economy to support wider sustainable economic and jobs growth.
- Ensure that **people and relationships** are front stage at all times. Put people first in raising the profile of Herefordshire in the marketplace
- Develop a 'content with substance' strategic plan and future proofing as a key part of a financially and environmentally sustainable local sharing economy.
- Support the commercial interests of local partners and stakeholders to build support.
- Boost competitiveness to provide distinctive quality experiences and places to visit.
- Identify and involve partners, business and local communities to develop and sustain; 'evergreen', new and future 'products and services' to build brand 'Herefordshire' around and to engage prospective visitors.
- Become commercially sustainable and sustain and finance investment in both product and experience.

- Gain business confidence and encourage private sector investment with a realistic return on investment.
- Achieve inward investment
- Achieve ultimate flexibility as the dynamics of Herefordshire as a destination moves.
- Think values and not demographics.
- Raise the awareness of and present a consistently positive image of Herefordshire's rural offer through robust communication.
- Leverage our local strengths and assets
- Be nimble in response to what people are looking for. It is **not what we have but what we do with what we have that counts.**

Consultation Feedback included:

- The need for leadership, management, central co-ordination, central marketing and PR.
- Source public funding to financially sustain Destination Herefordshire
- Businesses at ease with marketing themselves but felt that there is a strong need for 'they' (undefined) to be responsible for raising the profile and growing the visitor economy of Herefordshire through strategic marketing.
- Create a marketing strategy for Herefordshire based on – quantifying its DNA/uniqueness – getting people to Herefordshire – reality of rurality – quality of food and produce/countryside/rivers/natural environment/cultural heritage. Demonstrate the outcomes for businesses adopting and promoting the plan.
- Identify USP of Herefordshire and why different. Identify what competitors are offering.

- Beautiful area in the middle of the country. At the axis of the north/south A49 and east west A44. Within 2 hours drive from major urban conurbations.
- Geographically raise awareness – drive times from ‘gateway’ airports, major cities. Anecdotal evidence of coaches of inbound tourists passing through Herefordshire en route to Wales and using supermarkets on the periphery of Hereford city or large retail outlets for toilet and refreshment facilities.
- Build a digital library of new images of the county.
- Create an on-line depository of information.
- For consistent brand values: revisit and grow ‘here you can’ and look into how more organisations can adopt a shared BRAND.
- Central Depository of information resources.
- National Advertising – Prime Time TV.
- Self-supporting viable businesses.
- Central website – accessibility – current and up to date.
- Funded by direct business contribution.
- Improved infrastructure – use cycle networks/rights of way from town to country side.
- Improve signage and signposting
- Low population but produce great food and drink.
- Raise awareness between the farmed landscape and what we eat.
- Good digital responses required.
- Authentic experiences – ‘Quintessential’.
- Encourage new younger talent.

- Signposting – themed digital curating – physical sign posting for countryside access – verbal signposting with ambassadors.
- Segment the experiences for different ‘groups’ – age – activity levels – life stage. Arts and creativity – food and drink – nature and outdoor activity – heritage and building - health and well being
- Blue Badge Guide Training to encourage more visitors to use a trusted guide.
- Review and utilise rural projects with tourism potential originally developed by public realm and voluntary partners in isolation from the tourism/visitor sector.
- Potential collaborative project ideas - Digital Imagery Library. Green Routes – old railway tracks, drover’s ways, rivers, horse trails, cycling. Heritage, landscape, woodlands and wildlife. Fishing in wild rivers. Food and Rural Heritage Centre (with permanent farmers market and restaurant). Farming - Food and Drink. Outdoor Activities/Extreme Sports/ Country Pursuits. Plynlimon – Chepstow Wye Co-operation Project.

Setting the direction and creating a vibrant future for Herefordshire

The key drivers for the Herefordshire Destination Plan required to achieve economic and job growth are:

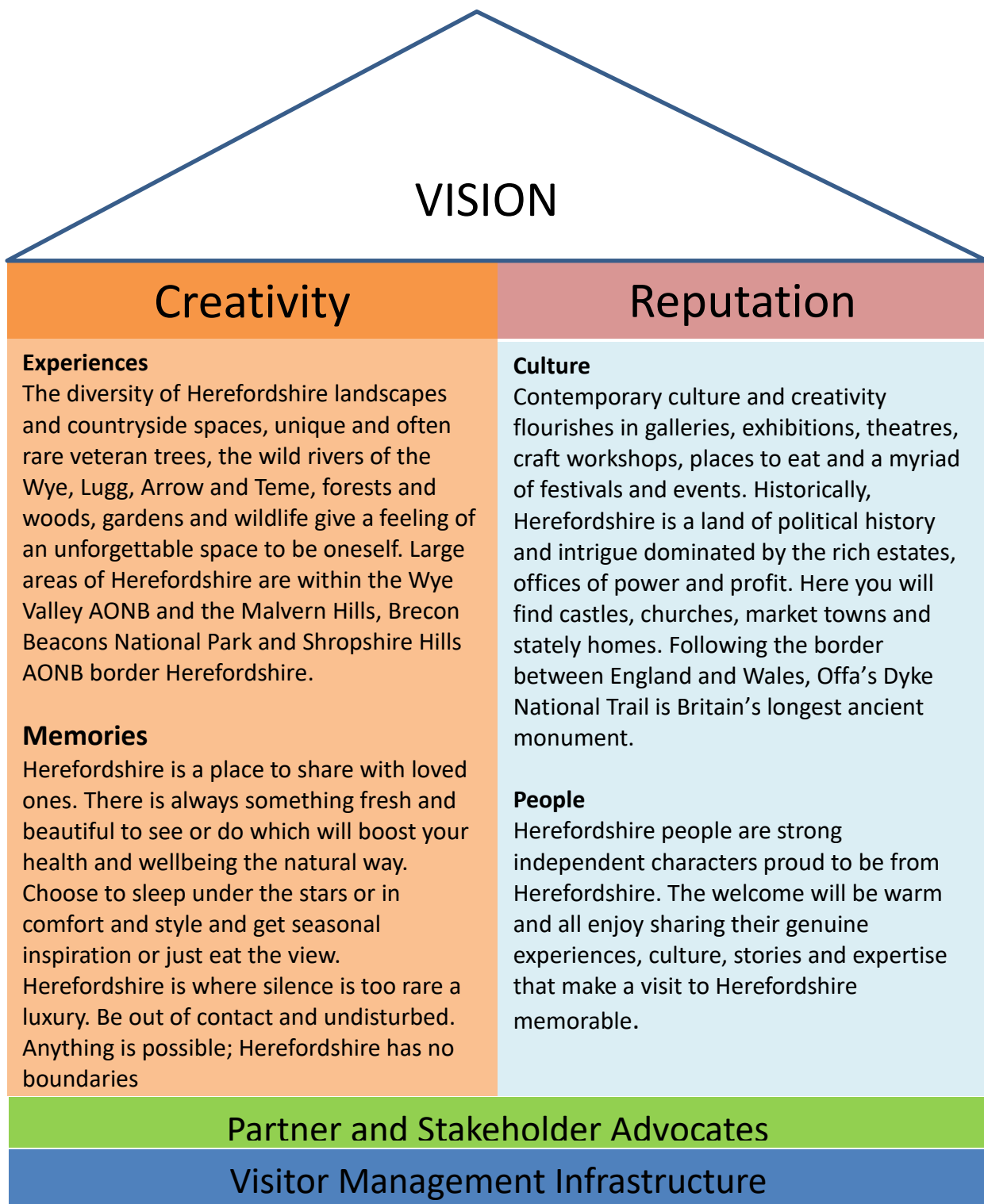
- Sustainable strategies for business and customer loyalty to face challenges.
- Image, quality, attribute and overall satisfaction of customer loyalty.
- Loyalty fosters economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development.

This destination management plan will help Herefordshire to develop new innovative and agile ways of working together. To lead, manage and influence all aspects, qualities and values of Herefordshire that contribute to making things happen in managing the reputation of the county as a MUST be place of interest where visitors come. This will require integrating the needs of the visitor, businesses, residents and the environment we all share. To ensure success the quality of experience, product and memories must be truthfully delivered in our promise to visitors.

The Herefordshire 'brand' is the way visitors perceive the county. It promotes recognition. It sets Herefordshire apart from competition. It tells people about how the county acts and behaves. It helps visitors know what to expect and represents Herefordshire and its promise to customers. The brand must also provide business value. In partner and stakeholder discussions there was agreement that we should keep and grow the ethos of 'here you can'.



The 4 columns of the destination model **Experiences, Memories, Culture and People** describes facets of Herefordshire that can make a distinctive visitor destination.



The plan will encourage everyone in Herefordshire to find their own way of expressing that Herefordshire is a great and unforgettable place and help to create an authentic and memorable experience so that visitors will return over and over.

PRIORITY ONE - GROW HEREFORDSHIRE AS A VISITOR DESTINATION

Put the structures in place that develop the assets and image of Herefordshire, strengthen the visitor experience and improve its branding position and market share.

Actions

- Create the framework for a transition period during the TBID process.
- Apply for a Tourism Business Improvement Bid
- Develop a Destination Management Partnership and Organisation to achieve a successfully performing Destination Herefordshire with ultimate flexibility as the dynamics of the destination and market move. (Appendix 2)
- Encourage sustainable accessibility and public amenities that are compatible with visitor need.
- Promote sustainable and responsible tourism. Develop a Sustainable Tourism Charter for Herefordshire.
- Support proposed key developments across Herefordshire that will, if fully realised, add value to the visitor economy. These will be predominantly capital investment in terms of buildings and infrastructure (for example Hereford University, Interpretive Heritage Centre, Hereford to Gloucester Canal, Rural Food Centre) but also include green transport routes and continued superfast broadband investment.

PRIORITY TWO – GROW HEREFORDSHIRE’S SHARE OF VISITOR MARKETS

Improve the image of Herefordshire by using the counties strongest assets, explore new communication methods, encourage dialogue and feedback through the rapidly changing world of digital media. Reach new niche growth markets that will allow Herefordshire to differentiate from competitors as a destination and strengthen the visitor experience that Herefordshire is for everyone.

- Review current target markets and develop new markets.
- Review the current visitor branding and strap line for marketing Herefordshire.
- Market with Herefordshire’s strongest assets, particularly those that have the potential to sell Herefordshire’s most effectively and distinctively in the marketplace.
- Create, develop and implement a creative Marketing Strategy. Annually review as the plan unfolds.

- Focus on relationship marketing to build stronger loyalty and long- trusting rapport with visitors that will drive word-of-mouth promotion long after a visit or stay, and lead to on-going generation of business.
- Maximise the growth potential of digital marketing techniques and new media channels for better access to reach new growth markets and the right conditions for networks and services to flourish.
- Deliver integrated Herefordshire campaigns with appealing content that make guests and visitors feel connected and tempted to keep coming back. Focus on minimal high quality short and to the point messages. Less is more.
- Focus on outdoor, health and wellbeing tourism trends by encouraging visits to Herefordshire by walkers, cyclists, riders.
- Tell the story of farming. Create great seamless farming and food experiences in both product and involvement.
- Focus on major events across Herefordshire that offer something special and distinctive to drive new visitors from target markets. Work with partners to create a truly cohesive and co-ordinated approach to enhance existing events. Encourage new events and festivals that have the vision for economic growth, are environmentally sustainable and attract new markets.
- Work with Herefordshire is a Great Place in developing a digital library of new and creative images of Herefordshire.
- Support Herefordshire’s creative industries by working with the Cultural Partnership and Rural Media to enhance Herefordshire as a leading rural location in England for filming by attracting more TV and film productions to the county as well as wisely promote locations used to visitors.
- High quality, small scale business and corporate tourism support the local visitor economy. Develop innovative marketing campaigns which play to Herefordshire’s strengths - quality venues, location and proximity to urban areas – for short courses and team building.
- Work closely with Visit Britain and other key partners to encourage curated experiences for domestic and international visitors

PRIORITY THREE: DEVELOPING GREAT RURAL EXPERIENCES AND MEMORIES

Sustain, encourage and grow evergreen and new products and events that truthfully showcase the wide diversity of the natural assets, culture and heritage of Herefordshire.

- Focus on the evergreen products – such as Herefordshire Walking Festival, Flavours of Herefordshire - and experiences and evaluate their contribution to the visitor economy.

- Working with the Wye Valley AONB, Local Nature Partnership, Cultural Partnership, CLA, NFU, Herefordshire and Market Town Councils, identify new visitor products and experiences and assess their potential to be customer-driven.
- Invest in both authentic rural products and experiences delivered by people
- Encourage experiences which add value to medium and low season tourism.
- Use research information to 'drive' additional experiences at decision making stages of the visitor journey, as an opportunity to extend the value of a visitor trip.
- Encourage more local people to enjoy experiences on their doorstep as an important element to delivering economic growth targets.

PRIORITY FOUR: DEVELOPING PEOPLE

Develop competent and motivated employees and businesses who act as advocates to promote their business and Herefordshire.

- Encourage and nurture new younger talent by promoting tourism as a first-choice career.
- Encourage partners and businesses to participate in the World Host programme (<http://www.people1st.co.uk/customer-excellence/worldhost%C2%AE/worldhost-training/>)
- Encourage local residents and communities to recognise and perform an ambassadorial role for Herefordshire to encourage visiting friends and relatives.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Key Performance Indicators below will be supplemented by an annual Action Plan responding to the sustainable strategies needed to review the objectives for business development and marketing.

What	How	When
Increase number of visitors to Herefordshire	Bi Annual STEAM report	5% by 2022
Increase value of visitor spend	Bi Annual STEAM report	6% by 2022
Increase number of people employed in tourism	Business Register and Employment Survey	10% by 2022
Increase visitor spend influenced by Herefordshire marketing activity	Website analytics and visitor surveys	£8m per year
Improve Business Profitability	Business Survey	55% showing increase
Improve rating amongst 'most loved' destinations	Visit England Survey	To be in top 25
Improve Visitor Satisfaction with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall visit • Quality of attractions • Quality of accommodation • Variety of things to do • Accessibility • Customer service 	Customer Survey On line booking quality forums	90% would recommend 90% good or very good 90% good or very good 95% good or very good 80% good or very good 90% good or very good
Improve perception of tourism as a first choice career - Participation in World Host	Survey of students and part time employees Number of participants	To be developed To be developed

See Development and Implementation Plan (Appendix 2)

Appendices

APPENDIX 1 – Consultees

Graeme	Ambrose	Visit ILN
David	Bailey	National Trust
Andrew	Black	Visit Herefordshire
Andrew	Blake	Wye Valley AONB
Bill	Bloxome	Herefordshire Council
Ben	Boswell	Herefordshire Council
Evan	Bowen Jones	Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
Carol	Brewer	Farmstay
Jay	Brittain	Small Breeds Park & Owl Centre
Bryan	Casbourne	Wigmore CIC Project
Heidi	Chamberlain Jones	Eat Sleep Live Hereforshire
Ruth	Christopher	Golden Valley & Black Mountain Experience
John	Clark	Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
Averil	Clothier	Brightspace Foundation
David	Curtis	Duchy of Cornwall
David	Curtis	Country & Landowners Association
Christian	Dangerfield	Project Consultant, Herefordshire
Ken	Davies	Woodside Lodges
Roger	Davies	Woodside Lodges
Jackie	Denman	Big Apple
Robert	Dewar	Old King Street Llama Farm
Gill	Ding	Leominster Tourism
Ann	Edwards	Kington Tourism Association
Joe	Evans	Country & Landowners Association
Simon	Evans	Wye & Usk Foundation
Katie	Foster	Consultant - Shropshire
Simon	Foster	Savills
Carole	Gandy	Councillor for Mortimer Ward
Rob	Garner	New Leaf
Tim	Gilbert	Court Farm
Clare	Greener	National Farmers Union
Martyn	Hammond	Hereford & Worcester Chamber of Commerce
David	Harlow	Herefordshire Council
Bobbie	Heavens	Callum Associates
Jo	Hilditch	Country & Landowners Association
Liz	Hill	Rural Concierge
Christine	Hope	Golden Valley & Black Mountain Experience
Geoff	Hughes	Herefordshire County Council
Charlotte	Ibbs	Duchy of Cornwall
Andrea	Jackman	British Horse Society

Andrea	Jackman	British Horse Society
Ian	Jardin	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
Moira	Jenkins	Earth Heritage Trust
Bella	Johnson	Lebury Tourism & Cycling
Glenn	Jones	Discover Parks
Rachel	Jones	Herefordshire Council
Arthur	Lee	Ramblers Association
Jude	Leitch	Visit Northumberland
Julie	Lewis	Tourism and Marketing Manager Powys CC
Ashley	Lilley	Savills
David	Littlewood	CLA (Eastnor Estate)
Marcelle	Lloyd-Hayes	Herefordshire Council
Dave	Marshall	Cultural Partnership
Joyce	Marston	Herefordshire Churches Tourism Group
Rich	Matthews	Rural Media
Nigel	McDonald	Shropshire Hills AONB
Nigel	Mears	Holly Lodge Holidays
Nic	Millington	Rural Media
Claire	Minett	Natural England
Roger	Morgan	Hereford Cultural Partnership
Glyn	Morgan	Hereford Cathedral
Paul	Newman	Herefordshire Council
Andrew	Nixon	Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
Clare	O'Reilly	Ross on Wye
Benjamin	Pardoe	Eastnor Castle
Liz	Pullin	Visit Herefordshire
Nick	Read	Brightspace Foundation
Lisa	Richardson	Herefordshire Walking Festival
Tracy	Ricketts	Herefordshire Council
Mark	Slater	Cycling UK
Kim	Smith	Mortimer Country Ltd
Georgia	Smtih	Hereford BID
Ann	Stanier	Dragons Orchard
Norman	Stanier	Dragons Orchard
Terry	Stevens	Stevens & Associates
Simon	Taylor	Golden Valley & Black Mountain Experience
Maggie	Taylor	Whitney Toll Bridge
Helen	Thomas	Westons Cider
Dawn	Turner	Herefordshire Council
Richard	Tyler	Brecon Beacons National Park
Yolande	Watson	Ross on Wye Tourism Association
Clare	Wichbold	Hereford Cultural Partnership
Rob	Widdicombe	Herefordshire Council
Liz	Womack	Leominster Town Council

Ann

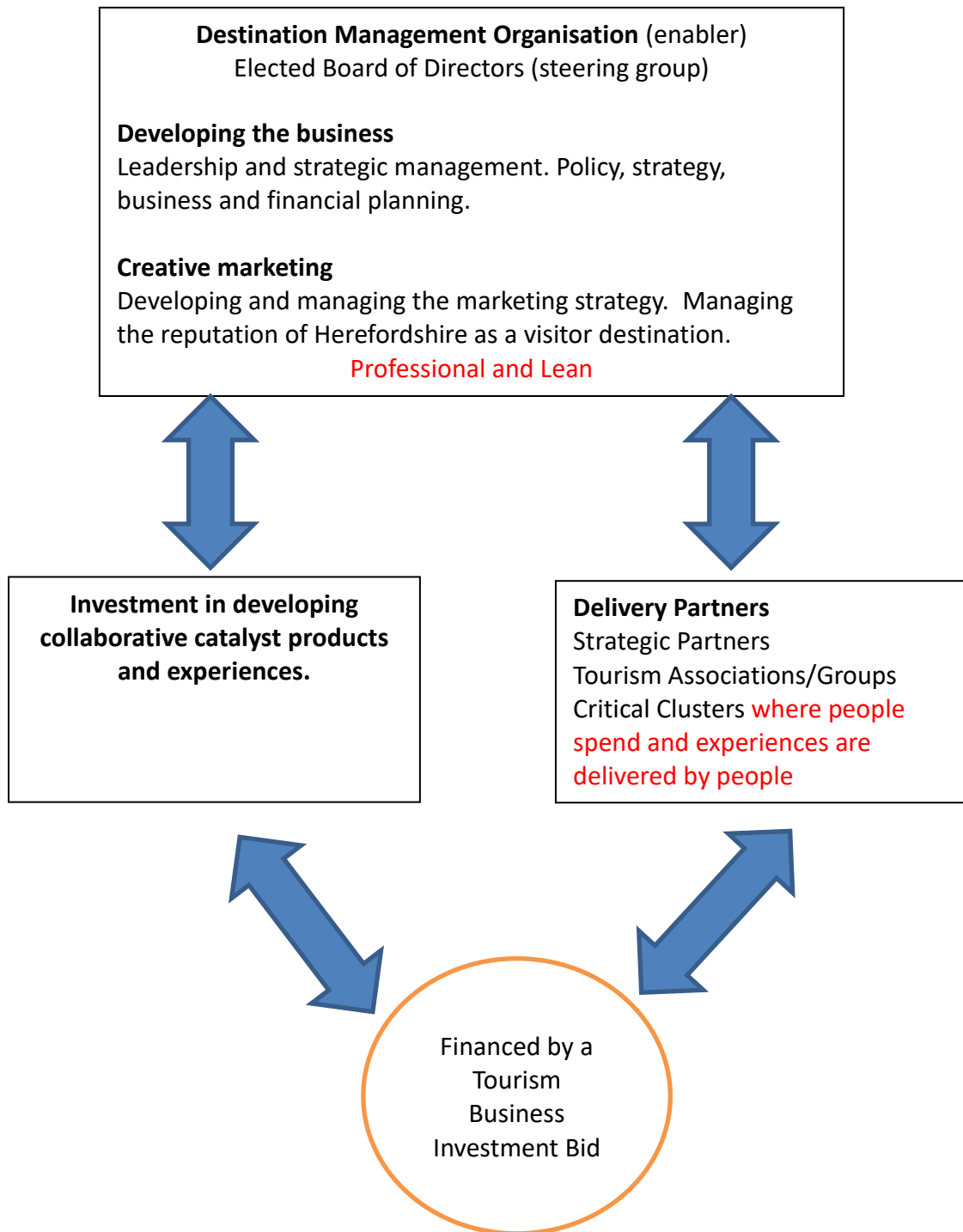
Wynne

Wynnes of Dinmore
Ross on Wye Tourism Association

Appendix 2

Destination Management Organisation – proposed model.










Shared visions, central co-ordination and ultimate flexibility managing the reputation of the visitor experience for Herefordshire.



APPENDIX 3

HEREFORDSHIRE DESTINATION PLAN 2018 - 2022

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Priority	Action	Originator	Completion Date					Funding	Measurement
			2018	2019	2020	2021	2022		
One Growing Herefordshire as a visitor destination	Ongoing								Economic Growth and Jobs
	Create the framework for a transition period during the TBID process	HSFTP + Task/Finish Group							Transition Group Formed Jan-18
	Apply for a Tourism Business Improvement Bid	Transition Group							
	TBID Development and Implementation	Transition Group Herefordshire Council						UKBids	Generation of Income to develop and sustain Destination Herefordshire
	Put in place a Destination Management Partnership Organisation (DMO)	TBID						TBID Income	DMO in place
	Develop and implement TBID for 2023 - 2028	DMO							Succession TBID in place
	Encourage sustainable accessibility and public amenities compatible with visitor need	HSFTP Partners Stakeholders							On going
	Develop a Sustainable Tourism Charter	HSFTP						Partner Investment	Charter Developed
	Support key developments	DMO							Number supported

Two
Growing Herefordshire's
share of the visitor market

Ongoing

Develop and implement a creative Marketing Strategy incorporating bullet points 1 - 10 in Priority 2

Transition Group
 DMO

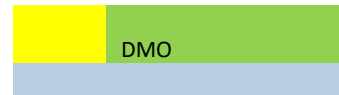


RDPE
 Programme
 Herefordshire
 Council

Annually review
 STEAM Report 2018 2020 2022
 Increase in campaigns

Development of a digital library of new and creative images

Transition Group
 Herefordshire's a
 Great place Project



DMO
 Resources
 Partners

On line Digital Images
 Library

Support creative industries

Transition Group
 Cultural Partnership
 Rural Media



DMO
 Resources
 Partners

Number of TV and film
 productions attracted

Develop marketing campaigns to support small scale business and corporate business development

DMO



DMO
 Resources
 Stakeholders

Increase in business sector
 income

Work closely with Visit Britain

Transition Group
 DMO



Three
Developing great
rural experiences
and memories

Ongoing

Evaluate experience and contribution to visitor economy of evergreen products

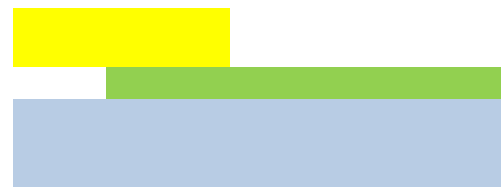
DMO



DMO
 Resources

Identify new sustainable visitor products and experiences

Transition Group
 DMO
 Wye Valley AONB
 Local Nature
 Partnership







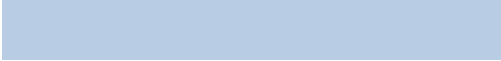





DMO
 Resources
 Partners
 Stakeholders

Number of new products
 STEAM Report 2018 2020 2022

Invest in authentic rural products and

**Four
Developing People**

experiences delivered by people Add value to medium and low season tourism	CLA NFU Market Towns Herefordshire Council		
Research to 'drive' additional experiences to extend the value of a visitor trip	DMO		DMO Resources
Encourage local people to participate	DMO Partners Stakeholders	 	Visitor Survey
Encourage businesses, employees local residents and communities to act as advocates for Herefordshire	Transition Group DMO Partners Stakeholders	  	Survey
Promote tourism as a first choice career	DMO Stakeholders Schools Colleges Training Agencies Job Centre People First	 	DMO Resources National Employment and Skills Statistics Herefordshire Council
Encourage partners and businesses to take part in World Host	DMO		TBID Marches LEP Business investment No.'s participating