

Great Destinations

A Partnership Approach to Tourism in England's Northwest

September 2004

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Foreword: Partnerships, and a Prosperous Future

Tourism is an increasingly vital part of the overall economy of the Northwest. From skills development, to marketing, to infrastructure, programmes are being developed across the region to build a world-class tourism sector, and an ever-better visitor experience. The Regional Strategy for Tourism provides the strategic framework for this investment, within which local distinctiveness can be built, and solid agreements and genuine commitment made.

There is real potential for growth in the sector, as well as clear strategic logic. Unless we provide a world-class experience to visitors, they simply won't come to the region. Providing a world-class visitor experience requires investments in both product and service quality in order to create more added value, better productivity and greater profitability. As consumers, we are becoming richer, and we are becoming more demanding in our expectations. The logic then is either that we invest to raise quality, or that we fall further behind the competition. Success will bring benefits in terms of jobs, income, and significantly, an improved place in which we can all live and work, and a better place in which to invest.

We will only deliver the vision by working closely with Local Authorities, by recognising and building on their strengths, and by creating strong, effective partnerships between them and the region's Tourist Boards. If we are to achieve the economic, social and environmental benefits that tourism offers, and to enable the new jobs and new business opportunities that flow from these, we must work together.

This document is focused on Local Authorities because they are key partners. It is designed to help make our local partnerships even stronger and to set out clearly the new role that Local Authorities in the region can play in ensuring the success, and prosperity, of our region's tourism sector.

Felicity Goodey, Chair, Northwest Tourism Forum

Executive Summary: Great Destinations

Great Destinations' sets out the thinking of the Northwest Regional Development Agency on how Local Authorities and Tourist Boards within the region can best work together to take forward the ambitious agenda for tourism described in the Regional Tourism Strategy.

English Regional Development Agencies now have strategic responsibility for tourism at a regional level, a responsibility that the NWDA takes very seriously. This document complements the Tourism Strategy itself and two other publications covering marketing and events.

Local Authorities are essential partners in the effort to deliver the vision of a successful, quality-led tourism sector. The engagement between Local Authorities, the five regional Tourist Boards and other stakeholders will be most productive if there are clear, shared objectives and a proper mechanism for ensuring the appropriate management of our region as a series of visitor destinations.

This publication aims to inform and to stimulate thinking about how best to create the clarity of purpose, and of role, that is essential both to effective partnership working and to the best use of what will always be limited resources. Local Authorities play many different roles with respect to tourism, and the roles themselves differ according to the nature of the authority and to factors such as size and location. There can be no single pattern for successful joint working, but there is real benefit to be gained from a better and more explicit understanding of the respective roles of Local Authorities and Tourist Boards.

Tourist Boards are the primary delivery partners for the NWDA when it comes to tourism; they must be centres of expertise and of evidence, and at the heart of sub-regional thinking and delivery. They have a key coordinating and leadership role, but they can only succeed in this with the active support of Local Authorities. This document sets out a series of principles that should underpin decisions about tourism and visitor related activity by Local Authorities. The principles are then developed in a section on guidelines for action covering topics such as the management of place, marketing, communications and branding, local information provision and the effective use of people.

The document concludes by emphasising the importance of the prize being sought; it highlights the value of the prize in terms of prosperity and of jobs, and in making England's Northwest an attractive place to live, to visit, and to invest in.

Context: A New Strategy and a New Way of Working

Tourism was identified as one of the highest-priority sectors of the economy in the Regional Economic Strategy developed by the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and its partners. In common with the other eight English regional development agencies, the NWDA has been given overall strategic responsibility for tourism in England's Northwest. To help guide the continued growth and success of the sector, a tourism vision was published followed by a new Strategy for Tourism that set out the strategic objectives for the sector, and the support network that would be put into place to help it grow and prosper. Two other key documents have since been published, a Strategic Marketing Framework and a Strategy for Major Events.

These strategies were developed and delivered in part through the establishing of a new Northwest Tourism Forum; this was the first in a series of organisational changes and new initiatives that have transformed tourism support in the region.

As outlined in the Tourism Strategy, five new Tourist Boards now provide the clear leadership and strong sub-regional connection that are necessary to take forward the real opportunities for growth in the visitor economy. The new Tourist Boards cover Cumbria; Lancashire and Blackpool; Merseyside; Greater Manchester; and Cheshire and Warrington. Vitally, Local Authorities are a central partner in these organisations – not a supplier or commissioner of services.

The new Tourist Boards mean that there are now new opportunities for Local Authorities to engage with the tourism agenda both strategically and operationally. The continued growth and success of the tourism sector in England's Northwest is a shared objective, and the activities outlined in this guidance report should be conducted in partnership. Indeed, Local Authorities are an essential ingredient in delivering against the new Regional Strategy for Tourism. As experienced managers and marketers of much of our regional tourism 'product', Local Authorities will be vital partners in delivering against the first and primary objective of the five Tourist Boards: a new Destination Management Plan (DMP). The best approach is one where Local Authority tourism staff consider themselves to be a real part of their Tourist Board.

Background reading and information

The following are all available to download from www.nwda.co.uk:

- England's Northwest – A Regional Economic Strategy
- A Tourism Vision for England's Northwest
- A Strategy for Tourism in England's Northwest
- Tourism in England's Northwest, A strategic marketing framework
- A Strategy for Major Events in England's Northwest
- A list of Tourism Forum members
- Destination Management Planning Documents

More information can also be obtained from the five regional Tourist Boards:

Cheshire & Warrington Tourism Board

01244 346543
www.visitcheshire.com
info@cwtb.co.uk

Cumbria Tourist Board

01539 444444
www.golakes.co.uk
info@golakes.co.uk

Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board

01257 226600
www.lancashiretourism.com or www.visitblackpool.com
enquiries@lbtbltd.com

Marketing Manchester

0161 237 1010
www.destinationmanchester.com
info@marketing-manchester.co.uk

The Mersey Partnership

0151 227 2727
www.merseyside.org or www.visitliverpool.com
info@visitliverpool.com

Working Together: Tourist Boards and Local Authorities

The region's five Tourist Boards have the responsibility and expertise to lead the development and the marketing of their destination, working with the Local Authorities, tourism businesses and other stakeholders in their area. They will lead these partnerships in the formation of a Destination Management Plan (DMP) that will direct their activities and those of their partner organisations.

The DMPs for each sub-region will be produced through consultation with key stakeholders and will set out annual priorities for action. They will address product development, market opportunities and targets, cluster development, innovation, quality and excellence, skills needs, marketing communications, performance, and regional and national linkages. The DMPs will identify 'attack' and 'slipstream' brands and will include performance targets.

For each sub-region, its DMP will be vital in helping to interpret the objectives of the Regional Tourism Strategy at the sub-regional scale. Importantly, the DMPs will also define the relationship between the Tourist Board and its Local Authorities; they will set out 'who does what'.

Though the DMPs will draw up the full range of activities to be undertaken by the Tourist Board or its Local Authorities, the remit of the Tourist Boards is very likely to include: leading on the development of the destination; providing a membership offer where appropriate; acting as the primary point of engagement with the sector at a sub-regional level; providing ICT services; providing information through TICs and other means to both visitors and residents; marketing the destination; providing information to visitors, businesses and others; fostering excellence; carrying out research; and providing advice and support. It is essential that there are close links between Tourist Boards and Local Authorities when it comes to local engagement, so that Tourism Officers are effectively acting as an extension of the Tourist Board and are helping deliver the Destination Management Plan.

There also needs to be a high level of integration when it comes to ICT; this is an area where more work is needed to maximise the benefits that new technology. Local Authorities are currently investing significantly in ICT as part of the e-government agenda, while there are also key ICT investments taking place within tourism through the EnglandNet project. Connecting these together must be an area for attention over the next few years.

Local Authorities, with their extensive experience, enthusiasm and expertise, are indispensable delivery partners for the Tourist Boards.

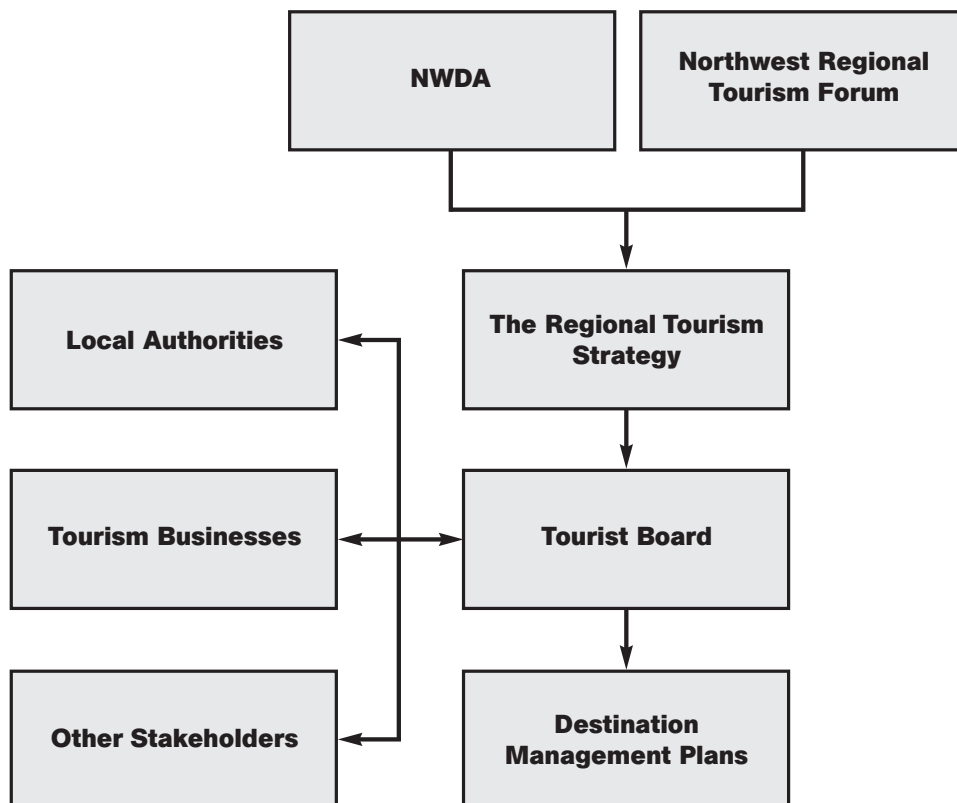
The Destination Management Planning Approach

The destination management planning approach seeks to ensure the effective, coordinated management of our region, as a destination, so that we can provide the highest quality experience to our visitors. Destination management covers everything that impinges upon the visitor experience, including product and business development, the management of the public realm, and marketing and promotion.

The responsibility for delivering what visitors want is divided between many different organisations and companies. Destination management therefore calls for a coalition of many organisations and interests working to a common agenda.

The Destination Management Plan is a key instrument for building partnership and commitment, based on a clear, shared understanding of the opportunities that exist, the resources that are available and the basis for the priorities set out in the plan.

Towards Destination Management Plans



Future Tourism: The Role of Local Authorities

Neither this report nor the wider Strategy for Tourism in England's Northwest contains a blueprint for the relationship between Local Authorities and Tourist Board. The partnership between Local Authorities and their Tourist Board needs to be strong, but flexible, and to be appropriate to the needs of both parties. The destination management planning approach is intended to provide a framework within which partnership working can develop and succeed.

There are, however, a number of areas where the role of Local Authorities is clear and transparent, areas where their activity underpins a vibrant and successful tourism sector.

Local Authorities generally, provide a number of infrastructural facilities and services covering development control, roads, transport, parking, lighting, toilets, street furniture, licensing, and environmental health. Even though many of these activities are undertaken with local residents in mind, they provide a vital contribution to the visitor economy. While meeting the needs of residents does not always mean meeting those of visitors, it will often be the case that the interests of these two groups do coincide to the benefit of all. This can be particularly true in areas where visitors sustain valuable services such as shops, pubs and restaurants.

Local Authorities develop and operate conference and leisure centres, libraries, galleries and museums, they own and manage visitor attractions and open spaces, and they mount cultural and sporting events. Through their care for the public realm they have a real impact on perceptions of place and on the visitor experience. Their responsibilities for community safety have relevance to both visitors and to residents.

All of these illustrate how important Local Authorities are, and how vital it is that all departments within Local Authorities understand their role in creating and maintaining, safe and attractive places for visitors, as well as residents.

Local Authorities are also involved in providing information to visitors and in marketing their locality. In many cases, Local Authority led promotions will be directed principally at the local and sub-regional level, while the Tourist Board will lead on promotional activity to a wider audience. It is vital that these two elements work effectively together. The Strategic Marketing Framework for Tourism in England's Northwest provides a clear framework for such joint activity.

Similarly with information services: information delivery prior to arrival will largely be led by Tourist Boards while Local Authorities have a role in delivering local information services, for example through Tourist Information Centres. The dramatic growth in the use of the Internet means that TICs are being reviewed both regionally and nationally, and the increasing importance of call centres is also likely to impact on the role and operation of TICs in the future as well as on the provision of integrated access to services by Local Authorities to their citizens.

Social inclusion is a priority for all Local Authorities and it underpins much that they do. While tourism does not immediately impact on this area, it nevertheless has the potential to do so. The region's Tourism Vision is of a high value-added and successful visitor economy, based on attractive and first-rate tourism products, a high level of service from well-trained staff and a full-year offer. Such a vision, if achieved, will lead to productive and sustainable jobs for local people, which in turn will contribute to the broader economic well-being of the region. While tourism jobs won't necessarily generate the value added that jobs in manufacturing or others can, tourism can provide flexible, rewarding and enjoyable opportunities and careers for many people.

Principles: Ways for Local Authorities to Make a Difference

This report sets out a series of principles – drawn up through extensive consultation with the region's Local Authorities – that represent the approach and ethos of the Regional Tourism Strategy when applied to the work of Local Authorities. As with the allocation of roles and responsibilities, these principles are intended to be a flexible, adaptable tool to be tailored for use sub-regionally and locally: they are designed to be empowering and should certainly not be considered as a restraint. The principles breakdown into three areas: contextual, operational and management, with the Destination Marketing Plan (DMP) as an overarching framework. The goal is to make optimal use of all the resources that are available, in support of growth in visitor numbers and visitor spending.

Contextual principles

Regional Economic Strategy: The tourist sector contributes directly to the RES goal of creating an environment where jobs and a greater level of prosperity can be created.

Commitment to the Regional Tourism Strategy: With an ambitious goal to become 'A winning destination – the Best in England' the Tourism Strategy is the driving force behind tourism across the region.

The strategic role of Local Authorities: Though tourism support networks may change, the vital and strategic role of Local Authorities is undiminished. What matters is that their role really does contribute to the achievement of the vision; which may involve change.

Guiding principles

The need to be evidence-based: Winning destinations need to be aware of what consumers want, need and expect. We have to invest in order to make sure that we understand current demand, but we also need to anticipate future demand; the customer must be our guide. Good intelligence is the key to success, and is an area of focus of both the Regional Tourism Strategy, and Tourist Boards.

The need to be realistic: No destination can be all things to all people, so tourism in the region must focus hard on the products and markets that will deliver real benefits and real business opportunities. As operators of attractions and providers of visitor services, Local Authorities in conjunction with their Tourist Board have a leading role in helping ensure the destination is market focused. We need to analyse our markets, appraise our products and services, monitor and evaluate the impact of events, and ensure that local aspirations match the reality of the market.

Connected to business: Businesses have to be fully engaged in the development and promotion of the region's tourism sector, through membership of their Tourist Board, and through participation in the development of Destination Management Plans.

The drive for excellence: We have to aspire to excellence in all areas but especially in the areas of design and in the service provided to visitors. We must strive to exceed customer expectations by setting the very highest of standards. Many Local Authorities are already working to improve the skills of outward facing staff, as well as to improve the quality of the tourism product in their area. These initiatives are clearly welcome; they need to be adopted in a consistent and integrated manner if they are to have most impact.

Management principles

Sustainability: Our goal is a fully sustainable tourism sector, in which the impact of visitors on the environment and on local communities is properly managed, while also ensuring long-term viability. Investments should aim to create long-term employment that keeps revenue as far as possible in the local community, through the use of local suppliers for example.

Subsidiarity: Delivery against our Regional Tourism Strategy should be at as local a level as possible, but within a clear, brand led context that is based on what consumers understand, not on administrative boundaries. To achieve this requires Tourist Boards and Local Authorities to work in strong local partnerships, covering tourism development as well as marketing.

Integration: At both a strategic and operational level we need to co-ordinate and integrate our efforts both within Local Authorities but also in our wider tourism partnerships. Such integration cannot be left to chance; it requires active management at a senior level to achieve this. In two-tier authority areas, it will be important for both tiers to work closely together for example.

Partnerships: Working together is the key to success, as is playing to our strengths and creating a supportive, consensual environment for tourism development. One area where this is particularly important now is within Local Strategic Partnerships, where it is essential that tourism interests are properly represented.

Expertise: We need to bring the very highest levels of skill and expertise into our tourism partnerships and develop a flexible but focused attitude to delegation, secondment and skills development so that we develop real expertise and that the best equipped people do the job. We need to be single-minded and professional in our approach.

Smarter spending: We need to be effective and efficient in delivering our Strategy, making the best use of limited financial and other resources. We must reduce duplication of effort. And where others can do a job more effectively then they should be urged to do so.

Managing change effectively: We need to manage changes in tourism openly and honestly while keeping ourselves focused on the potential benefits of our joint activities. Where staff or suppliers are affected by changes in tourism support, we need to work hard to explain the strategic context for those changes.

Guidelines: Putting the Principles into Practice

The challenge now is to put these principles into practice. Over the next few pages are some clear guidelines on how Local Authorities can play a part in making England's Northwest a first class destination of choice.

Management of Place

Visitors expect an attractive environment, and facilities like public toilets, cafés, shops, clear signs, maps and other information, good public transport and easy parking. Some of these aspects of a quality experience are delivered by Local Authorities as part of their statutory responsibility to deliver services for their local residents, but Local Authorities also choose to provide other services on a non-statutory basis. If we truly aspire to have world-class visitor destinations, then all of these activities need to be integrated. The role of Local Authorities in building and development control is particularly relevant. The importance of good design, whether of individual buildings, of master plans, or of public spaces should not be underestimated; Local Authorities have a leading role in setting expectations here.

Other areas of activity, such as crime and disorder, waste collection and recycling, food safety, and health, safety and licensing, are also relevant to the experiences of visitors as well as those of residents.

- Local Authority work in planning, economic development and transport, should **take account of the aims and objectives of the Regional Tourism Strategy**. As plans are being developed in all Local Authority departments, the **implications for tourism should be assessed**.
- For tourism to thrive, services delivered in the name of local residents **should also take into account the needs of visitors**.
- Local Authorities should **make sure that tourism interests are represented** on all appropriate bodies, and in particular, on those dealing with economic development, planning, culture, customer service, transport and inward investment.
- Actions agreed by the Local Authority under the sub-region's DMP should feature in the **strategic and service plans** of the relevant Local Authority departments.

Local Authorities develop schemes directly aimed at the visitor economy whether specifically to promote economic growth, speculatively or to make a local service more viable. Specific activities may include bidding for major sporting events, underwriting cultural activities or providing capital funding for conference centres.

Local Authorities manage and improve the public realm. This can include work on transport plans, signposting, disabled access or information on local facilities. They have responsibility for appearance and cleanliness, including town centre management, landscaping, open spaces, street dressing and furniture, litter collection, graffiti removal and dog fouling. Coastal Local Authorities have responsibility for beach management and seafront services.

- **Investment** designed to capitalise on a perceived growth opportunity should be rigorously **assessed with respect to customer needs** and where investment is designed to generate economic development, consideration should be given to a **realistic appraisal of the potential market**. Investment in infrastructure and new product development should be based on evidence that such investment will **enhance the tourism product and optimise visitor revenue**.
- Local Authority tourism strategies and plans should be consistent with the Regional Tourism Strategy and with those of their Tourist Board.
- **Product development plans** will be an important component of the Destination Management Plan and should be discussed with the Tourist Board, private sector and other partners to gain their support and identify synergistic action.
- **The Tourist Board should be consulted at an early stage** for an assessment of the market potential where investment aimed at attracting visitors is being considered and Local Authorities should take account of visitors', as well as residents', needs when deciding public realm investment priorities.

Marketing, Marketing Communications and Branding

The Regional Tourism Strategy gives a strong and clear lead on the importance of all marketing activity being consumer focused and it sets out the attack and slipstream approach to tourism marketing. This seeks to increase both visitor numbers and the amount they spend within the region by capitalising on the ability of our 'attack' brands to attract visitors to the region.

The responsibility for marketing communications and information provision to potential visitors lies squarely with the new Tourist Boards in each of the five sub-regions. This will help maintain consistency in messages and image. In a limited number of cases Local Authorities may also undertake destination marketing but this is the exception, not the rule, and should closely follow the principles outlined above and the Strategy outlined in the DMP. Forward-looking Local Authorities will want to consider seconding their tourism marketing staff to work alongside staff in the Tourist Board to ensure real synergy in destination marketing.

With regard to branding, the image and branding of attack and slipstream brands will again be the responsibility in the first instance of the Tourist Board, of which Local Authorities will wish to be a key partner. Being market-orientated is a vital principle here, with objective data and market research being essential in informing marketing and branding campaigns.

The Strategic Marketing Framework for Tourism in England's Northwest sets out how Local Authorities can best contribute to marketing campaigns and local area promotions within the context of the Regional Tourism Strategy and the attack and slipstream approach this promotes.

- Marketing activity should be **planned annually as part of the DMP**; Local Authorities should work closely with Tourist Boards to **identify their local area's product strengths and customer demand**. This process should use the market intelligence, information and analysis produced by the Tourist Board, the Local Authority, the NWDA and Visit Britain.
- Where local data and analysis is not available, this should be commissioned within the context of the **regional visitor research and monitoring approach** and co-ordinated with the Tourist Board and NWDA research wherever appropriate.
- To the extent that Local Authorities engage in **marketing activity**, this **should be directed primarily at local residents or at a sub-regional audience**.
- **The Tourist Board will take the lead on branding** for the area in order that a consistent and strong presentation of attack and slipstream brands should be presented. This does not preclude Local Authorities from developing a brand for their own area. Where an area has a strong consumer resonance, **local brands should be encouraged**.
- Local Authorities should **support the Tourist Board in establishing a brand architecture** for the sub-region. This brand message should be used consistently when undertaking promotional activity agreed with the Tourist Board. Where local literature is required, it should reflect this architecture.
- **Brands are more than just a logo**; they are also about establishing the core values of the destination and should include the views of local stakeholders. Local Authorities should try to reflect these core values in the photographs, language and descriptions of the destination used in press releases, brochures, and even interviews given to the Press.
- Local Authorities should **assist in the brand development of England's Northwest** as an attractive place in which to live, work, invest and visit, by including the "England's Northwest" sign-off/logo in their publicity and marketing communications where appropriate.
- Overall, a **high level of professionalism and innovation** should be used in marketing and branding, and Local Authorities should encourage their marketing teams to be fully engaged partners in destination marketing efforts, particularly in areas such as **e-marketing**.

Local Information Provision

Once visitors have arrived at a destination further information needed may include local things to do and see, from walks to plays to galleries. At this level, often led by Local Authorities, it is easy to lose sight of branding guidelines and for there to be a significant amount of duplication of effort or resources. There are also dangers that material may not reflect good market intelligence and audience understanding. Responsibility for information and publicity materials will differ from one sub-region to another. Some Local Authorities have already handed over information provision to their local Tourist Board, while others have merged their Tourist Information Centres with their public services to create a 'one-stop-shop' entirely under their own control. Under the new Regional Tourism Strategy Tourist Boards are responsible for attracting visitors to specific destinations. Details of local information provision will be something that most Authorities will want to work out as part of the Destination Management Planning process.

It is clear that the use of the Internet is growing and that this will have an increasing impact on the way in which information is presented to, and sought by visitors, and that over time the Internet will become a vital sales channel for many tourism businesses. These changes have significant implications for the operation of all Tourist Information Centres. Reviews of TICs are underway both nationally and regionally; Local Authorities need to play a full part in these reviews and to be open to alternative approaches to the operation of TICs and the wider integration of the Internet and phone based information systems.

- There should be clear **agreement** between the Local Authority and Tourist Board on what information the Local Authority will provide, using the DMP as the planning mechanism.
- All printed material, websites and presentation of Tourist Information Centres should **reflect the branding for the destination** agreed with the Tourist Board.
- The provision of TIC services should be to **agreed national service standards** (opening hours, staff training, physical layout, information provided etc).
- **Appropriate local print** should be produced giving information about local facilities and attractions and a **distribution plan** should be drawn up for each piece of print.
- All information aimed at visitors should be assessed within the context of the DMP to ensure it delivers **best value** and has a clear market rationale.
- All electronic data should be stored in a format that is compatible with the **EnglandNet** national tourism database; this will ensure that data is entered and updated once, yet is available at all levels of the e-marketing system. Local Authority website providers should see this as an opportunity to streamline data collection and provide maximum visitor access to area information.

Market Intelligence and Product Data

Good market intelligence and reliable research are key to attracting visitors. Market performance data is gathered at a national level (e.g. the UK Tourism Survey or the International Passenger Survey) and trends data is available through VisitBritain. The collection of regional tourism performance and data is being coordinated through the NWDA, which also plays a leading role in collecting, interpreting and disseminating wider regional economic data. Local Authorities are actively contributing to the collection of performance data through their support of the STEAM model. Any strategic gaps in local data should be identified as part of the DMP planning process, led by the Tourist Board. As for more qualitative consumer data to be used in individual marketing campaigns, this is likely to be carried out at a Tourist Board or regional level. Local Authorities have both a responsibility to carry out research and an interest in doing this; research can cover things like benchmarking or economic assessment for example. Relevant research should clearly be shared with the appropriate Tourist Board. Local Authorities are also involved in data collection, through Tourist Information Centres and other means, and this too, should be shared and coordinated with the work of the Tourist Board. Work on STEAM is a good example of joint working between Local Authorities, Tourist Boards and the NWDA.

- Local Authorities should **collect consumer data in a format** that is compatible with their Tourist Board's database.
- Local Authorities should agree a process with their Tourist Board for **product data collection**, for example around local tourism businesses and key facilities.
- Wherever possible, all research should be carried out in ways that are **consistent over time and across the region**, to enable comparisons to be made. Advice should be sought from Tourist Boards where appropriate, and data and methodologies should be shared.
- Activity should be **monitored and evaluated**, so that impact and effectiveness can be judged - the costs of this need to be built in from the start. Guidance and help in doing this is available through Tourist Boards.

Funding a Thriving Visitor Economy

The visitor economy is of vital importance to communities across the Northwest and this should be reflected in a willingness on the part of Local Authorities to fund its continued success and development. Public investment in areas like infrastructure is essential in ensuring the health of the local tourist market and the economic well being of the local area – hence the clear rationale for Local Authority investment.

Clarity about the amount of Local Authority investment in tourism, and over how and where this investment is being made will help everyone involved in Destination Management Planning to make informed decisions.

Local Authorities have traditionally invested considerable sums directly and through regional tourism bodies; with the establishing of sub-regional Tourist Boards it is vital that their investment levels and commitment are sustained. While direct funding for Tourist Boards will come from the

NWDA, as will funding for regional marketing and development activity, continued Local Authority contributions will be essential. It is worth pointing out that staff and office infrastructure costs are valid forms of investment for Local Authorities to make in Tourist Boards. The point here is that under this new structure for tourism development, it is expected that Local Authorities will commit at least as much support as they have thus far to tourism development and promotion through their Tourist Board, but that this investment will have greater impact from being used more effectively.

If Local Authorities are investing in their sub-regional Tourist Board, the relationship between the two organisations will be critical, as will a shared sense of vision and strategy (as outlined in the DMP) and an assurance for the Local Authority that they are getting good value for money. This assurance can be gained in one of two ways.

Firstly, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) can be drawn up between each Tourist Board and the group of Local Authorities in their sub-region, identifying the returns expected on any investments made. This is a good way to focus the Tourist Board's activities, but there should be sufficient flexibility to allow the Tourist Board to react to ad-hoc marketing opportunities. Any MoU should also reflect Destination Management Plans and Tourist Board's Business Plans and should specify outcomes in strategic terms rather than including specific figures.

The second option is for Local Authorities to accept that the development of a Destination Management Plan, coupled with monitoring discussions and an end-of-year assessment of performance, is sufficient to deliver value for their investment. A less formal approach such as this can reduce bureaucracy but will, of course, rely on a good relationship between the Local Authority and their Tourist Board.

- **Funding provided by Local Authorities to Tourist Boards** will reflect the clearer focus on shared goals, but will ideally remain at the same level as in previous years, or be increased in line with increased ambition.
- Funding agreements with the Tourist Board will preferably include an allocated percentage for **core funding and overheads**, to allow the Tourist Board to function effectively.
- The **funding of the physical infrastructure** will continue to provide local, public realm improvements for residents and visitors alike, including attraction and museum provision.
- Local Authorities should contribute, fully or in part, to the **funding of specific events and campaigns** to a schedule agreed with their Tourist Board during the DMP planning process.
- **Local information** provided by Local Authorities can be used, but in a way that reinforces the agreed branding approach.
- **New initiatives and projects should be supported**, as should product development schemes where specific customer needs have been identified within the DMP.

Effective Use of Skilled People

The role of Local Authority tourism offers has changed markedly over the last few years and whereas once they may simply have produced a visitor guide and some sample promotions, today Local Authority tourism teams can include a number of individuals skilled in areas like marketing or product development and with a wealth of product, business and local area knowledge. The crucial question is how to utilise these people, and their skills, most effectively under the new arrangements.

Of the guidelines and options that follow, it may be that in any given Local Authority different options will be appropriate for different team members. In each Local Authority – and Tourist Board – there will be a need for an audit of skills and a decision on the most appropriate final options for individuals and there will be a need for skills development and training. For smaller boroughs, where there may only be a part-time post for tourism or a Local Authority contracts manager in post, it is important that they are not lost as a link between local stakeholders and the Tourist Board. The options to consider include:

- **Seconding staff to the Tourist Board** subject to individual skills and experience.
- Retaining individuals within the Local Authority, but for them to work closely with the Tourist Board to **act as the ‘bridge’** between the two organisations to ensure co-ordination of Local Authority activity against the DMP. Or individuals could **operate as the tourism “client”** within the Local Authority agreeing and monitoring Memorandum of Agreements with the Tourist Board
- For all tourism staff to **remain within the Local Authority, but with clear responsibilities** such as advice or liaison with tourism businesses, working with clusters of tourism business on specific product developments or new initiatives for example.
- Assigning responsibility to an appropriate member of staff or elected member to be the **tourism “champion”** and manage the relationships among the various departments and with the Tourist Board.
- Giving consideration to other initiatives, such as **joint training, short-term placements, mentoring, shadowing, etc.**, in order to share and extend knowledge and build relationships.
- Ensuring that appropriate people from Local Authorities and Tourist Boards gain expertise in each other's area of work.

Coordination Mechanisms

Good relationships are central to the co-ordinated and effective delivery of the new Regional Tourism Strategy, but the most important formal mechanism to guide joint working with the Tourist Boards will be the Destination Management Plan. It is important that all relevant Local Authority staff are aware of and involved in both planning for and delivering a high quality tourism product. The integration of the different areas of Local Authorities' work into a broader Destination Management Planning framework provides real opportunities for improvement and focus.

The guidelines below include a number of suggestions for ways in which communications and co-ordination could be improved.

- **A strong partnership should be established** between the Tourist Board and the Local Authority, maximising the value of investments and increasing productivity and performance. Local Authorities should be a member of their local Tourist Board.
- There should be **regular meetings and liaison** between the Local Authority and the Tourist Board through a mixture of formal and informal meetings that could be bilateral or that could involve a wider group of stakeholders. The development and updating of Destination Management Planning will provide a structure to this process of engagement.
- **A memorandum of understanding, or a less formal agreement**, should be considered as a mechanism to make clear and explicit the roles, responsibilities and objectives of the Tourist Board and Local Authority respectively. For both parties, this should set clear objectives and targets and define a process for monitoring and reporting back progress on a regular basis.
- The production of a Destination Management Plan (DMP) should identify **strategic priorities, resolve disagreements**, help establish **working relationships** and reduce the opportunities for confusion over who does what, why and when. The DMP should explicitly identify who leads on any given initiative and should include the Local Authority responsibilities and actions regarding tourism.

Representation

Effective working relationships rely on good co-ordination, and on appropriate representation. Local Authorities, who work within a context of democratic accountability, should be effectively represented within their Tourist Board, alongside other key stakeholder groups; it is important to ensure balance between the public and private sectors. This does not mean that every Local Authority should be represented; such an approach is inappropriate and unnecessary.

Equally, Tourist Boards need to be involved in appropriate Local Authority structures, so that effective two-way communication can be achieved. The effectiveness of this communication will be maximised by the creation of mechanisms for communicating both between Local Authorities in a sub-region, and among the different directorates of individual Authorities.

- There should be **Local Authority representation on the Tourist Board**, as major funders of the Tourist Board with a keen interest in its activities. This could be at **member level, member and senior management level or senior management level**, though clearly, not all Local Authorities can be so represented, meaning that one (or possibly more) must act on behalf of others in the sub-region.
- Local Authority representatives sitting as board members of the Tourist Board are there not to represent their area, but to provide **strategic input to the Tourist Board** on behalf of all Local Authorities in the sub-region.
- **Local Authorities should make the most of their representation on other structures** relevant to tourism including the Northwest Tourism Forum, Local Tourism Partnerships, business networks and other private/public initiatives. This representation should be **active and constructive** with Local Authorities taking the lead on appropriate initiatives.

Conclusions

Tourism is too important to this region for it not to be taken, and treated, seriously. The newly acquired strategic responsibility of RDAs for tourism has meant that the sector is now even more important to the NWDA. Our goal, and the vision for the region, can only be achieved with the active help of the region's Tourist Boards and its Local Authorities.

The prize we seek is a clear one, and it is one that will bring benefit not only to visitors and to those directly concerned with serving their needs; if we make our region an attractive one to visitors, we also make it attractive to people living and working here, and to those looking to invest.

It has been forecast that this year, for the first time, spending on services will exceed spending on goods, and that more than half of this spending will be on fun and lifestyle services. Such spending is discretionary and while some of it will always be spent in our region, the pattern of recent years is that increasing amounts are spent overseas. Our challenge is to persuade more people, both within and outside the region, to spend that money in the Lake District, in Manchester, in Liverpool and Chester and in the host of other glorious destinations we have to offer. We will only succeed in doing this if we have a clear sense of purpose, if we know our customers, and if we know our competitors; and we will only succeed if we work closely together in common purpose.

This set of guidelines, following principles like partnership working, market-awareness and a need for strategic focus, are intended as a starting point for the negotiations and discussions that will lead to strong, robust and deliverable Destination Management Plans. They should be followed where at all possible, but as has been stressed at several points, local flexibility will be essential in getting the mix right at a sub-regional and local level.

The new arrangements for tourism in England's Northwest are intended to deliver an efficient, market-aware tourism sector that delivers jobs and prosperity to the region, as well as a quality service for millions of visitors to the region. Local Authorities are an indispensable, central part of this new arrangement and even if some of their roles change, there should be no doubt that Local Authorities hold the key to a successful tourism future.

Tourism in England's Northwest should grow and flourish around a new and productive partnership between Tourist Boards, Local Authorities and local businesses – a partnership for real change.

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