

Mayoral Combined Authority Board

Monday, 05 June 2023

Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for South Yorkshire

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Reason why exempt:	Not applicable
Purpose of this report:	Discussion
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions?	No

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Executive Summary

This paper provides the MCA board with an update on national, regional and sub-regional developments relating to supporting the visitor economy. The MCA Board are asked to approve the development of a formal Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for South Yorkshire. The paper asks the Board to note a set of related programmes of work that will be undertaken to deliver a strong visitor economy in South Yorkshire.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

A stronger and more vibrant visitor economy offer creates more businesses, jobs and visitor spend in the region. Through the work being undertaken at the South Yorkshire and wider Yorkshire level, including the proposal to secure accreditation of a South Yorkshire LVEP, we will position the region more effectively to secure and access funding and support from VisitEngland and Government.

Recommendations

The MCA Board are asked to:

1. Signal their support for the development of a South Yorkshire LVEP, with Sheffield City Council acting as a lead applicant for the submission.
2. Note the intention to commission a Destination Management Plan for South Yorkshire to ensure that form follows function as the Local Visitor Economy Partnership develops.
3. Note that, as further work is completed additional decisions relating to formal governance arrangements, funding and delivery plans will need to be considered and approved by the MCA Board.
4. Note that the MCA has made provision in its 2023/24 budget to contribute to the development of a South Yorkshire LVEP and Destination Management Plan.

Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel

None

1. Background

- 1.1 South Yorkshire has a strong visitor economy offer. The offer has grown in recent years with the development of existing destinations along with new destinations across the region.

The four local authorities across South Yorkshire have largely delivered their visitor economy activities independently. There has been one marketing campaign funded by SYMCA, commissioned as a test bed for the future. This highlighted the synergies of some visitor experiences across the sub-region.

To support the growth of the sector, and in line with wider national changes to how support for the sector is organised and invested in nationally there is now an opportunity for the region to formalise a working partnership. This will allow us to bring together the visitor economy and public sector more effectively and build strong relationships with funding bodies such as VisitEngland.

- 1.2 **National Context: De Bois review of Destination Management Organisations**

In July 2022 the Government announced a new accreditation scheme for tourism boards in England following the independent 'De Bois' review of Destination Management Organisations in England.

The review found that the current landscape for supporting English tourism at a regional level is over-crowded and fragmented. A new tiered system was proposed with the ambition that this will better support businesses and deliver economic growth through the visitor economy.

- 1.3 **The approach being adopted by DCMS and VisitEngland**

Following the De Bois review the Government and tourism bodies are now working on developing and delivering a new more coherent approach in line with the

recommendations set out in the review. This includes establishing a number of new visitor economy partnership tiers, including;

- A top tier of 'Destination Development Partnerships (DDP)' to set regional priorities for the visitor economy in their geography in line with the national visitor economy strategy and government policy.
- A second tier of accredited LVEPs. DMOs across England have been invited to apply for this status. There is no direct funding at the moment which comes with LVEP status but LVEPs will receive support from VisitEngland and access to future funding opportunities. However, the second tier of accrediting partnerships LVEPs will benefit from dedicated support and national collaboration. The LVEP will be able to access expert advice, dedicated toolkits and training programmes from Visit Britain and VisitEngland in areas ranging from commercialisation, distribution, accessibility and sustainability to business support and marketing.
- A third tier of non-accredited destination management organisations which will not have formal relationships with, or receive direct funding via, VisitEngland or the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS).

1.4 **What this means for Yorkshire and South Yorkshire**

The development of a DDP may be the most appropriate Yorkshire wide model to take forward over time. This would include a set of sub-regional Local Visitor Economy arrangements coming together to work on key strategic Yorkshire wide opportunities.

DDP development is underway with the work being led by Barnsley MBC on behalf of the Yorkshire and Humber Leaders with the full support of the South Yorkshire MCA and each MCA Constituent Council.

Across Yorkshire, other sub-regional arrangements, including at the West Yorkshire level, are being developed alongside the wider Yorkshire level work.

DCMS and VisitEngland expect work on the development of an LVEP to be led by an existing established Destination Management Organisation with the capability and capacity to work with regional partners. Sheffield City Council has agreed to act as the lead authority on the development of a second tier accredited LVEP.

An officer working group has been established and is meeting regularly. An early focus of the group has identified a number of potential joint working areas, including on data insights on the visitor economy, major events programming and planning, relationships with Government and funding bodies and joint promotion of complementary assets.

2. **Key Issues**

2.1 **Submission timelines and next steps**

DCMS and VisitEngland are driving a quick process over the course of summer 2023 to formally accredit places with LVEP status. This process provides greater certainty on the scope of future arrangements, without the requirement for detailed plans to have been finalised.

Subject to DCMS and VisitEngland processes it is expected that a submission for accreditation will be made in June 2023; this process does not preclude the MCA and each council continuing to work beyond that formal process on the development of our local arrangements.

2.2 **Development of a South Yorkshire Destination Management Plan**

The LVEP accreditation process acknowledges that form should follow function in terms of how an LVEP will work in practice, and where its focus might be. To inform this process the development of a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for South Yorkshire is required. This piece of work will be led by the officer working group, and will require widespread consultation and engagement with MCA, individual councils, the visitor economy sector and other key stakeholders.

The MCA and officer working group expect to commission the plan over the Summer. This plan will determine local and regional priorities and enable the LVEP to determine appropriate governance models and its strategic focus.

The MCA has allocated resources for the development of the DMP and will ensure that the Board are fully engaged and consulted throughout the development of the plan. The MCA will be asked to formally approve the plan at a future Board meeting.

2.3 **Governance and delivery structures of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership**

South Yorkshire needs to develop an approach that reflects the unique and distinct specialisms and capabilities of South Yorkshire – whilst also enabling us to work better together on major events, data and insights, visitor economy business engagement, transport and infrastructure, planning and investment and skills and business support for the sector.

Although VisitEngland has laid out a requirement to meet a set of criteria, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to structure and governance. The proposed South Yorkshire LVEP will operate in a way that works for all South Yorkshire. Whilst there is currently no funding for LVEPs from VisitEngland, any future grant funding, shared marketing opportunities and development support from VisitEngland will only be accessible to LVEPs.

Being part of the LVEP programme will present all four destinations within South Yorkshire as a partnership amidst a national portfolio of organisations being awarded LVEP status. At this stage LVEP status will formalise rather than change the nature of organisations supporting the visitor economy in South Yorkshire and provide additional opportunity to access funding and support from private sector and central government sources.

The LVEP requires an agreed governance structure but there is no one set form of governance required; however future governance arrangements should have strong private sector visitor economy representation. Once the DMP is complete, we will be able to better determine the model of governance most suitable for our region.

This equally applies to how the MCA and constituent councils may choose to work together in terms of delivering the agreed DMP. This could range from building informal partnerships under the LVEP banner to working collectively on certain projects and programmes or more formal joint delivery structures.

Securing LVEP status does not presume or establish either a new consumer facing organisation or create a new destination brand.

A set of options will be developed for full consideration by the MCA Board as the work develops.

2.4 **LVEP application process**

To enable progress at pace, the DMO overview group will continue to be the leads on the collaboration between the four local authorities and SYMCA. Sheffield City Council (SCC), through its existing structure of Marketing Sheffield, will be the lead authority, with a commitment to submit the application and sign the collaboration agreement with VisitEngland. SCC will manage any service level agreements between partners. Sheffield City Council will be the accountable body of the South Yorkshire LVEP.

The outcome will be to establish a South Yorkshire LVEP recognised by VisitEngland.

The application process & timeline

VisitEngland has introduced a rolling timetable to allow applications to be submitted at any time. At the time of this paper being prepared, 15 LVEPs have been announced. Upon submission of an application, there is a turnaround of 4-6 weeks before accreditation is announced.

The online application process is a mix of narrative and evidence – including visualisations of existing structures and commitment; governance structures and stakeholder networks; letters of support from elected members and Chief Officers of all Local Authorities and SYMCA.

It is the intention to submit the application in mid-June and announcement of successful accreditation by end of July 2023.

3. **Options Considered and Recommended Proposal**

3.1 **Option 1**

As set out in the paper the MCA are asked to support the proposal for an application for LVEP status being taken forward with Sheffield City Council as the lead applicant for South Yorkshire in collaboration with Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham.

3.2 The MCA are also asked to support the development of a South Yorkshire DMP that will determine the next steps on both form and function of the way we operationalise the Local Visitor Economy Partnership.

3.3 **Option 1 Risks and Mitigations**

Pace of submission being driven by DCMS and VisitEngland limits the ability of the MCA and partners to widely engage with a wider set of stakeholders. This issue is to an extent mitigated through a proposed focus on consultation and engagement being focused on developing the DMP. This enables the MCA and councils to focus engagement not on a 'process' but on what we want to achieve.

There is also a risk that the region is unsuccessful in its application. To mitigate this the MCA and partners are working closely with VisitEngland and other MCA areas in the region to ensure the application meets the expected requirements. Both the MCA and Sheffield City Council have engaged support from experienced Visitor Economy and Destination Management consultancies.

3.4 **Option 2**

Do nothing – the MCA and councils could decide to not pursue a South Yorkshire LVEP. There is no legal requirement to apply for LVEP status and in the first years of operation no additional funding purely for LVEPs to flow.

This option is not recommended given the potential of LVEPs to secure existing (rather than additional) resources, to build formal relationships with key funders and to play an effective role in the creation of any other regional visitor economy bodies.

3.5 **Option 2 Risks and Mitigations**

There are limited mitigations of the 'do-nothing' approach.

3.6 **Recommended Option**

Option 1

4. **Consultation on Proposal**

4.1 The proposal set out above has been the subject of considerable consultation across the four MCA constituent councils.

The Local Enterprise Partnership and visitor economy sector were all engaged through 2022 as the De Bois Review and the Government's response to the proposals were made public.

Significant engagement with DCMS (including hosting a DCMS roundtable of senior officials) and regular engagement with VisitEngland has taken place.

Planned engagement from the sector will be a key element of the development of the South Yorkshire DMP.

5. **Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 Sheffield City Council are the formal lead partner (as specified by DCMS and VisitEngland) responsible for the LVEP submission. The submission, determined by VisitEngland timescales is proposed for submission at some point in June.

6. **Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**

6.1 The MCA has made provision in its 2023/24 budget for this programme of work.

The appointment of external support to develop the South Yorkshire DMP and any additional capacity to support the LVEP work will be delivered in line with established MCA and local council processes.

Funding is derived from the Gainshare allocation committed in March 2022.

7. Legal Implications and Advice

7.1 None at this stage.

8. Human Resources Implications and Advice

8.1 None at this stage.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

9.1 None at this stage. The development of the DMP may identify particular opportunities or challenges for the region.

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

10.1 None at this stage.

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

11.1 None at this stage

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice

12.1 Communications support as the LVEP and DMP develops will be important – but the LVEP submission has no direct impact on the delivery of communications and marketing functions in the short term.

List of Appendices Included:

A Local Visitor Economy Partnership Programme Information Pack

Background Papers

None.