

# Local Visitor Economy Partnership Programme

**Building Collaboration,  
Enabling Growth**



VisitEngland

VisitBritain/Peter Beavis



# Introduction

**Great destinations are great places to live and work as well as to visit. If they have strong leadership and governance, and are well-managed, they are more likely to generate sustainable growth in the local visitor economy.**

They can drive place-shaping, shift local and wider perceptions of the place, contributing to local pride, as well as attract new investment and increase income.

**The best managed destinations can create value-added jobs, bring in new talent and stimulate innovation.**

VisitEngland is creating a portfolio of nationally supported, strategic and high-performing Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs). LVEPs will provide strong local leadership and governance in their destination. They will deliver robust destination management and planning, ensuring all key public and private sector partners are well integrated into the development of the plan and its implementation. VisitEngland will collaborate across this new landscape on a shared ambition for visitor economy growth and provide targeted support, advice and guidance to enable successful delivery.





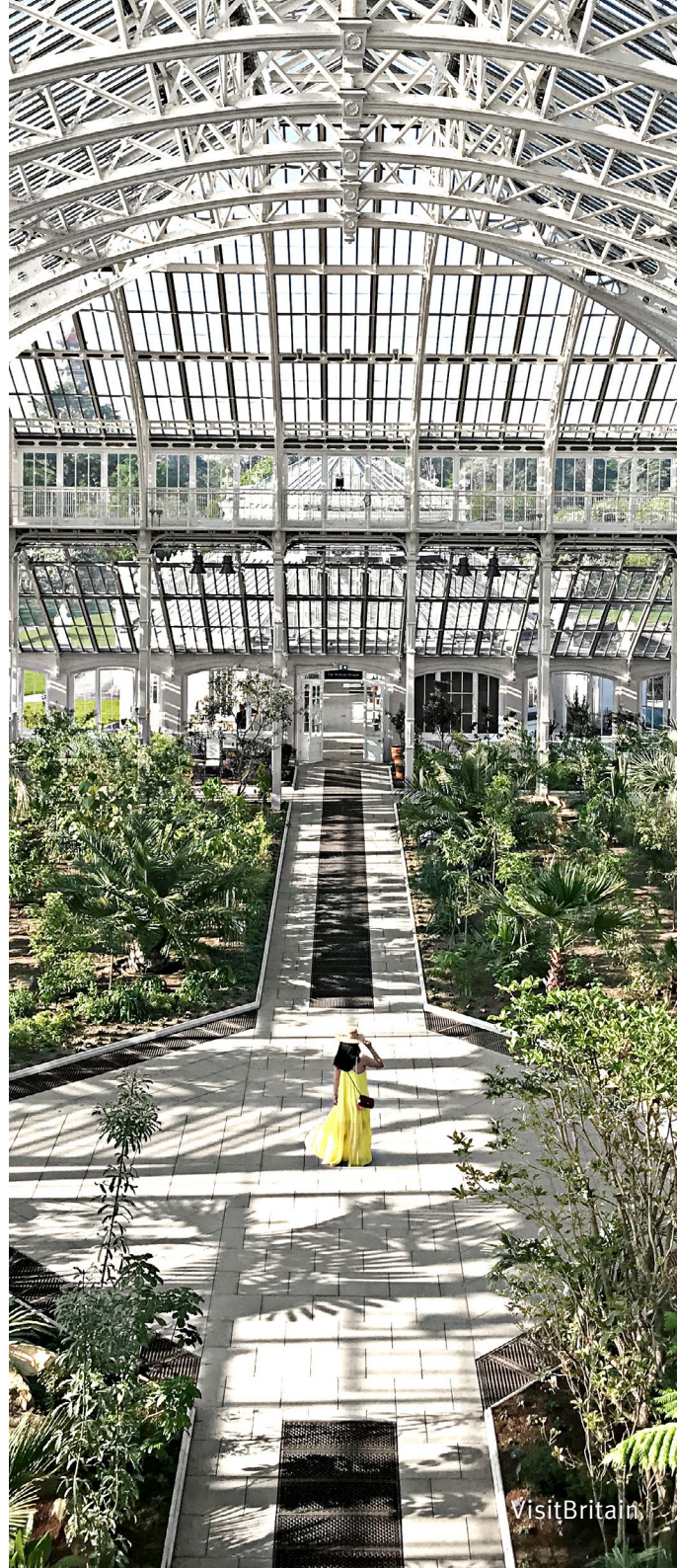
# Background

**The LVEP programme is the implementation of the de Bois independent review of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), in line with the UK government's response.**

Following a thorough assessment of the structure, funding and function of DMOs across England, the review recommended a more efficient and effective model for supporting English tourism at a regional level to maximise the potential of the visitor economy.

The government's response recognised that DMOs are a vital part of England's tourism landscape, but that transformation is necessary to improve their structure, funding models and fragmentation.

As a result, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) tasked VisitEngland to lead, develop and administer a programme to establish this new destination structure in England.



**“VisitEngland welcomes the opportunity to play our part in implementing the recommendations from the de Bois review of Destination Management Organisations in England in line with the UK government's response.”**

**“Destination Management Organisations are a vital part of England's tourism landscape, connecting with local businesses and government agencies to attract investment and visitors across the regions, boosting the visitor economy. We look forward to implementing the LVEP Programme and the Destination Development Partnership pilot, ensuring we have the right national and local infrastructure to enable England to continue to be a compelling destination for domestic and international visitors.”**

Andrew Stokes, England Director

# The New Structure



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## Visitors

### Destination Organisations

Might deliver: marketing of local destinations, contact with tourism businesses, products, services and infrastructure for visitors



### Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (c. 40)

Strategic and high-performing, recognised by VisitEngland  
Lead, manage and market destinations, collaborate locally and nationally



### Destination Development Partnerships (c. 15–20)

Strategic objective-setting in line with national priorities and regional programme delivery  
(Note: only 1 DDP pilot in 2022-25)



### VisitBritain VisitEngland DCMS

Government policy  
and national strategy  
and priorities

The de Bois review recommended, and the government response confirmed, the elements of the new destination structure. VisitEngland is rolling out LVEPs nationally as part of this programme and the Government is supporting one pilot DDP until 2025.



## Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs)

These should set regional priorities for the visitor economy in their geography in line with England's visitor economy strategy and government policy. They would receive government funding to focus

on strategic objectives where greater impact can be achieved through a joined-up approach, such as tourism sector skills, sustainability and accessibility, levelling-up, inward investment, business and major events, product development and data collection and analysis. The DDP would be a partnership of LVEPs across a geography, with one taking the lead (or could, where there is a strong case in a large

enough geography such as a city region, be comprised of one LVEP).

The DDP model is being piloted in the North East of England to prove the concept and the impact the model can have on growing the visitor economy. If the pilot is successful, government will consider setting up (and possibly funding) 15-20 DDPs across England.

## North East of England DDP Pilot

The first regional tourism pilot is receiving £2.25 million from government covering a period to March 2025. The partnership will be led by NewcastleGateshead Initiative on behalf of the region, working alongside Visit Northumberland and Visit County Durham. The aim is to develop the region as a must-visit destination whilst attracting private investment and driving growth.

This is a regional collaboration and an opportunity to unlock growth and the untapped potential in the North East of England, attracting more visitors, developing new experiences, targeting new markets as well as creating jobs and opportunity.

The region will act as a potential blueprint for the rest of England, and will help shape the future landscape, delivering economic growth through the visitor economy across all seven local authorities in the region.

## Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEP)

Recognised by VisitEngland through the LVEP Programme.

These will be strategic, high-performing and represent the destination at local and national level. They will commit to working with VisitEngland and government on a set of growth ambitions over an agreed time period. They will lead, market and manage the destination

in their geography, working in partnership with other destination organisations, local government and businesses. We expect there will eventually be circa 40 LVEPs across England. They will benefit from dedicated support and national collaboration.

The LVEP Programme acknowledges that some areas of the country are more complex. They will need more time and support from VisitEngland to work towards becoming a recognised LVEP. The process has been designed to encourage applicants to come forward when they are ready.

## Destination Organisations

These organisations are likely to be operating below county or city region level. They play an important role locally

through contributing to the management and marketing of destinations, maintaining close contacts with businesses and providing products, services and infrastructure to support the delivery of a positive visitor experience. They will need to

work closely with their LVEP to ensure local needs and priorities are represented in the destination management plan and activities. LVEPs will also need to engage and support these organisations as part of the programme.

LVEPs are unlikely to cover all destinations across England; we expect there will be gaps. This might be because some DMOs don't yet meet the criteria and will need support to work towards meeting it, or there might be gaps where there is no DMO. VisitEngland will review these gaps and work with relevant DMOs and other partners in the region on solutions. We will also be testing, as part of the pilot, how the DDP model can help to plug such gaps.

# The Importance of the LVEP Programme

VisitEngland's strategic, high-performing Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) will be at the heart of transforming the visitor economy landscape, working collaboratively on shared priorities and targets to enable the visitor economy to grow and thrive.

Partnership working across all aspects of the visitor economy and between the public and private sectors is a key ingredient to creating thriving destinations and driving local growth. LVEPs will need to secure the full support of their local public and private sector partners to succeed. They will also need to work closely with other DMOs within their destination geography and beyond. The LVEP Programme will foster local

partnership working for the benefit of the destination and all its stakeholders, generating better outcomes for visitors, businesses, the environment and local communities.

As custodians of place-shaping through economic development and regeneration, infrastructure and transport, local government is integral to visitor economy growth.

## The LVEP Programme Goals:

- Develop a **strong national strategic relationship** between LVEPs, VisitEngland, DCMS and wider government and national agencies.
- Ensure **stability and resilience** through increased income generation, diversifying funding streams, robust destination management and diverse governance.
- **Join up local visitor economy growth priorities** and activities with those at national level, setting clear targets and driving high performance. There will be a strong emphasis on embedding **sustainability and accessibility, growing business support** and working on **approaches to data**.
- Provide a significant **role in place shaping** and economic development, generating better outcomes for visitors, the environment, communities and businesses, through building influential relationships with local government and businesses.
- Develop **skills and expertise** in LVEP teams through access to training opportunities, and the wider sector and SMEs through a more targeted business support offer.







VisitBritain/Andrew Pickett

The LVEP must have the ability to influence decisions impacting on the destination and local visitor economy through a strong relationship with its local government. The LVEP will also need to represent a wide range of local businesses and partners in the destination that make up its visitor offer (e.g. accommodation, experiences, attractions, heritage and cultural organisations) and provide advice, support and activities to secure future resilience and growth opportunities. These strong local connections will help LVEPs secure long-term resources,

funding and support to realise their ambitions.

The full potential of this programme will only be achieved through a collaborative, transparent and supportive approach. The pandemic demonstrated the impact the sector can have when it works together on a shared goal. The programme will build on that experience and drive connectivity between local and national strategy, priorities and targets, including sustainability and accessibility. It will embed a strong national strategic relationship between LVEPs, VisitEngland, DCMS and wider

government and national agencies, brokering new partnership and funding opportunities for the visitor economy.

The programme will recognise the positive action already taking place across destinations in England to collaborate and drive local visitor economy growth. VisitEngland will work with LVEPs to harness, capture and share best practice, for the benefit of the wider landscape and its stakeholders and will provide a range of national support, including skills development, to enable LVEPs to succeed.



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**LVEPs will be at the heart of transforming the visitor economy landscape.**



VisitBritain/Ben Selway



# Programme Benefits

## For programme participants

LVEPs recognised through the programme will be the official local destination partners of VisitBritain/VisitEngland, with the opportunity to help shape and deliver national strategy and priorities. In addition, the role of LVEPs will be promoted and understood across government and national agencies, ensuring the local visitor economy is an active and valued contributor to Levelling Up and the wider economy.

The DMO Review and response set out the potential for the development and national roll-out of government-funded Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs). The £2.25m North East DDP pilot is a major opportunity, and being recognised as an LVEP is an important early step in future DDP development. LVEPs will learn from the pilot and work with VisitEngland and the North East to shape and advocate the model.

LVEP Programme participants will benefit from a direct, focused relationship with VisitBritain/VisitEngland via our team of five Regional Development Leads who will be on-hand to provide strategic advice and support.

### Through the programme, LVEPs will be able to:

- Participate in our initiatives (as appropriate and in line with our strategy), such as ‘always on’ marketing activity, press trips, trade missions and business events.
- Apply for any relevant VisitBritain/VisitEngland grant funding programmes.
- Access VisitBritain/VisitEngland expertise and support in key areas such as distribution, accessibility, sustainability, business support and marketing.
- Contribute to the development and delivery of England’s sustainable visitor economy strategy and consumer brand proposition.
- Collaborate with other programme participants to solve issues affecting destination management, share learnings and best practice.
- Benefit from a nationally recognised official status to strengthen the relationship with local and regional bodies and government departments. This will include use of a logo to show you are recognised by VisitEngland.

**Local Visitor  
Economy  
Partnership**

Recognised by



**VisitEngland**





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## For local government and LEPs

### The new LVEP structure will mean:

- Joined-up strategic thinking, development and management of the local visitor economy across the public and private sectors, ensuring it directly contributes to creating thriving places and communities.
- A clear strategic link from the local to the national level (government, VisitBritain/ VisitEngland and other key national bodies) on all visitor economy related issues, with the LVEP the delivery partner for the local visitor economy.
- Strong and stable partnerships between local authorities / Mayoral combined authorities / Local Enterprise Partnerships and the LVEP to drive forward local priorities and investment.
- The ability to demonstrate the value of the local visitor economy. This will help local government make the case for supporting their LVEP and the local visitor economy.
- Other destination organisations and local tourism teams in the LVEP geography (i.e. those not qualifying as LVEPs) to benefit from national initiatives (via the LVEP) while reducing fragmentation and duplication.

## For businesses and organisations representing the local visitor offer

### The new LVEP structure will bring:

- Access to a strengthened and more targeted business support offer through the LVEP.
- A strong commercial strategy with increased opportunities for engagement and benefit from LVEP and national activity.
- Opportunities to collaborate with, and learn from, other businesses and organisations across the local visitor economy.
- Access via the LVEP to national initiatives including:
  - VisitEngland business support, training programmes and Excellence Awards
  - VisitBritain/VisitEngland digital, PR, marketing and travel trade activities
  - VisitBritain/VisitEngland business events support (where appropriate)
- A clear port of call via the LVEP.
- The confidence of investing in – and supporting – a nationally recognised and resilient LVEP.



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# Criteria

**To be recognised through the programme, applicants have to fulfill two sets of criteria.**

## Core Criteria

Will ensure recognised LVEPs are stable and high-performing, with experience of operating at a strategic level. LVEPs will need to demonstrate they meet all of these criteria and provide evidence in support of their application:

- Covers an important geography (such as county or city region) which avoids overlap with other LVEPs and can demonstrate the importance of its visitor economy.
- Has a Destination Management Plan or tourism strategy, developed in consultation with local public and private partners.
- Is engaged in destination 'management', as well as marketing.
- Is well integrated with important local and regional actors.
- Can demonstrate commitment from local government.
- Has the ability to raise funding from the private sector.
- Is stable and resilient and can administer public funding with probity.
- Works in partnership with other DMOs in its own geography - and beyond with other LVEPs.
- Its capacity reflects the size and importance of the destination.

## Growth Criteria

Will strengthen organisational performance and resilience going forward and enable local visitor economy growth. They align with national strategy and priorities to build collaboration and achieve greater impact. When becoming part of the programme, LVEPs commit to:

- Expanding income and diversifying funding streams.
- Developing the skills of their team.
- Ensuring governance reflects the visitor economy and shows diversity.
- Developing a comprehensive business support offer (directly or through partners).
- Supporting national and government initiatives and priorities, such as Levelling Up, accessibility and sustainability.
- Developing the ability to track the local visitor economy through research and data, gathering and sharing insights and working with VisitEngland on new data models and approaches.

The programme will capture the activities currently being delivered across these criteria to inform joint working and support. Recognised LVEPs will work with VisitEngland to produce a brief joint action plan on an annual basis which sets out delivery against the criteria, how they plan to measure it and how VisitEngland will support.

LVEPs will all be at different stages and with varying levels of capacity and resource; they will not be expected to deliver all growth criteria immediately.

LOCAL VISITOR ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME



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# Tracking Progress, Measuring Success

**Setting KPIs and measures is important to track progress within individual LVEPs and the success of the programme as a whole.**

The insight gathered can provide valuable evidence to help advocate for LVEPs with local and national stakeholders and provide evidence of challenges to delivery that need solutions.

LVEPs will set out how they will measure their agreed activities in their annual growth action plan. This initial bottom-up approach will be good insight on how the local landscape is measuring its success at present and where there are synergies across LVEPs and with VisitEngland. This will feed into the development of a light-touch KPI framework during 2023. Measures could include increased commercial income, more diverse

funding streams, number of businesses receiving support, level of stakeholder engagement, number of LVEP staff trained and an increase in product being distributed.

There will be light-touch quarterly reviews and an annual review of the growth action plan where priorities and KPIs will be set for the year ahead. If the LVEP is not able to deliver agreed actions or KPIs, this can be discussed with the VisitEngland Regional Development Lead to agree the best way forward. In extreme cases, a performance management process would be initiated and could result in the removal of LVEP recognition.

**The insight gathered can provide valuable evidence to help advocate for LVEPs with local and national stakeholders and provide evidence of challenges to delivery that need solutions.**



# Five Stage Process

There are **five stages** in the process which are designed to be simple and transparent. Support and advice is available at each stage from VisitEngland's Regional Development Leads.

All applicants will be provided with the Panel's feedback via their VisitEngland Regional Development Lead.

**Successful** LVEPs sign a collaboration agreement with VisitEngland to agree conditions and benefits of the programme and the commitment and timeframe for developing the brief growth action plan.

In other instances, there will be a discussion on next steps, which could include advice on a resubmission or partnering with another DMO to apply. Unsuccessful applicants also have the right to appeal the decision and will be advised further (through a separate appeals panel and process) if they wish to pursue this course of action.

## 01 Expression of Interest

STAGE

Applicants will need to express interest in becoming an LVEP. They will need to provide basic information including data on the size of the local visitor economy and the geography they intend to cover, as well as key stakeholder support. Please contact [destination@visitengland.org](mailto:destination@visitengland.org) to express interest.

## 02 Discuss with VisitEngland Regional Development Lead

STAGE

They will advise on the proposal and share information on how to complete the full application if they are confident it meets the programme criteria.

## 03 Application

STAGE

Application form completed with evidence and submitted. There will be a rolling timetable which allows applications to come forward at any time and when applicants feel ready.

## 04 Assessment and decision

STAGE

The VisitEngland team will assess applications based on the criteria set out. Recommendations will be considered by the LVEP Programme Awards Panel which includes DCMS, VisitEngland Advisory Board members and VisitEngland. They will decide who is awarded recognised LVEP status.

## 05 Notification

STAGE

VisitEngland Regional Development Lead to notify applicant of decision and advise on next steps.





# Advice and Support

VisitEngland will provide advice and support as part of the programme. This will be tailored to individual LVEPs' needs and requirements and will evolve alongside the programme. It will include:

**Advice and support on strategic development** through the VisitEngland Regional Development Team. They will also hold LVEP progress updates and manage the annual review based on the growth action plan and KPI framework (to be developed). They will broker access to subject expertise as required to support delivery.

**Targeted training programme** e.g. the 'Taking England To The World' trade education programme and new topics such as digital marketing, commercial skills and accessing funding.

**Support for engagement** (where required) with Local Authorities, Mayoral Combined Authorities, Department for Level Up Housing and Communities (via DCMS), Arm's Length Bodies and the Local Government Association.

**National networking** opportunities for LVEPs both virtual and face-to-face.

**Best practice sharing** across LVEPs on important topics including membership models and governance.

**Thought leadership and tools** linked to growth criteria and opportunities:

- Accessibility
- Sustainability
- Data and research
- Distribution
- Marketing and brand
- Business events
- Bid support and identifying funding streams



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**For background information:**

[DMO Review](#)

[Government Response](#)

[DDP pilot announcement](#)

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