

West Yorkshire Application for Local Visitor Economy Partnership Status

Date: 5th June 2023

Report of: Head of Service, Destination Marketing and International Relations

Report to: Martin Farrington, Director of City Development

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

- This report details the West Yorkshire joint application for Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) status under the Visit England/Visit Britain framework.
- Destination Marketing and International Relations contribute significantly to the Best Council Plan, not least through the service's delivery of destination marketing, inward investment, and contribution to the visitor economy. The joint application for LVEP status would enhance the quality of the visitor experience across West Yorkshire and maintain the region's access to Visit England data and assets, ensuring that collectively the five local authorities can work together to capitalise on considerable existing cultural assets (e.g. Science and Media Museum, Piece Hall, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Harewood House) and substantial investments in culture between 2023 and 2025 from LEEDS 2023 and Kirklees Year of Music to Wakefield Year of Culture and Culturedale in Calderdale to Bradford UK City of Culture 2025.
- This also contributes to Leeds inclusive growth engaging businesses with skills initiatives, albeit this is specific to the tourism sector and delivering a business support service that brings together public and private sector partners to provide support and guidance for tourism businesses.

Recommendations

- a) The Director of City Development is requested to approve that Leeds City Council act as lead applicant for West Yorkshire local authorities and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to apply to Visit England for Local Visitor Economic Partnership (LVEP) status.

What is this report about?

- 1.1 This report provides details about a West Yorkshire joint application for Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) status under the Visit England/Visit Britain framework with Leeds City Council acting as lead applicant for West Yorkshire local authorities and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.
- 1.2 Tourism is an important sector in West Yorkshire and is worth an estimated £5bn (Source ONS). The region has significant national assets including the Unesco World Heritage site of Saltaire, Piece Hall, Harewood House and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Our years of culture present an unprecedented opportunity to sell our region to visitors - from LEEDS 2023, Kirklees Year of Music, Wakefield year of culture, Culturedale and Bradford UK City of Culture 2025. Our towns and cities are significant attractions for visitors from outside and inside the region.
- 1.3 Following the closure of Welcome to Yorkshire last year and changes in Government policy around tourism following the De Bois review of destination management support, including the creation of new, Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs), it is important as a region we decide how we support this important sector.

Background information

National Landscape

- 2.1 In March 2021, following the Covid-19 pandemic the DCMS Secretary of State and the Tourism Minister commissioned the 'De Bois' Review to undertake a root and branch review of the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) landscape in England and to make recommendations about how to address any deficiencies found. The review was published in August 2021 and the government responded in July 2022 accepting the majority of the recommendations made in the report.
- 2.2 Visit Britain and Visit England are now implementing the agreed recommendations with the overall aim of providing a more standardised approach to tourism in the UK, using an accreditation process designed to create a national portfolio of DMOs.

The De Bois Review

- 2.3.1 The De Bois review identified that there should be a national portfolio split into two tiers – a top tier of 'Destination Development Partnerships' ('hubs' also known as DDPs) and a second tier of accredited Tourist Boards acting as members ('spokes') called 'Local Visitor Economy Partnerships' (LVEPS).
- 2.3.2 The role of the DDP will be to develop and oversee the delivery of a Destination Development Plan and lead on advocacy, partnership working, funding bids, major events, data and business support. There will be government funding made available to ensure the destination remains sustainable, competitive and responsive to strategic challenges identified by Government (e.g. sustainability, skills, inclusive tourism and levelling up) and a DDP will in turn pass down some funding to accredited Tourist Boards (LVEPs) and work collaboratively with them to deliver a shared vision. The DDP (Tier 1) will oversee the LVEPs and cover the geographical footprint of multiple LVEPs (Tier 2).
- 2.3.3 The idea is for existing DMOs to move across to become accredited LVEPs. DMOs that do not meet accreditation criteria will be considered as part of a 'third tier' and government will

minimise its engagement with them. Visit England is responsible for creating, maintaining and supporting this new tiered structure and will introduce a Tourism Data Hub to allow for better decision-making

2.3.4 The De Bois review identified that DMOs should: -

- Be more collaborative and share best practice
- Seek to diversify their income streams
- Develop the skills of their staff
- Have more diverse boards
- LEPs and local authorities to recognise the importance of visitor economy and that DMOs are best placed to deliver
- LAs to recognise that DMOs need to be public-private partnerships

2.4 The government response to the De Bois Review¹

2.4.1 The response from government was broadly positive. The De Bois review highlighted the important role England's DMOs have to play in recovery and Levelling Up, but that the DMO landscape should be transformed at a local level to allow DMOs to harness their potential to grow visitor spend, with a need to address long-running concerns about the structure, funding models and fragmentation.

2.4.2 The government accepted the majority of the recommendations and agreed with the tiering approach with an accreditation process, which is now underway. To that end, Visit England has received new funding (£2.25 million over 2022-25 period) to develop and administer a pilot scheme. This included the establishment of a regional team to support, and account manage the national portfolio. West Yorkshire has now been allocated a regional account manager through this process.

2.4.3 The government response set out the criteria for the pilot, which will include a single pilot DDP in Newcastle² and 40 pilot Local LVEPs across the country (yet to be confirmed). To be included in the pilot LVEPs should evidence visitor economy growth potential, including opportunities for improvement in tourism products, such as attractions and transport links, wider product development increasing visitor numbers and spend.

2.4.4 The government agreed that Visit Britain and Visit England should have minimal engagement, if any, with 'third tier' organisations.

2.4.5 The pilot will need to prove the concept for a future national roll-out of the DDP model to occur including a case for funding.

What does the proposed future structure of the DMO landscape look like?

2.5.1 When the pilot has finished in 2025, there will be between 15 and 20 DDPs established, and an expected 40 LVEPs in total accredited and supported by Visit England. Being an LVEP as part of the pilot scheme does not preclude an organisation from becoming a DDP at the end of the pilot. The remainder will be non-accredited DMOs, which will be positioned as Tier 3 with minimal support from Visit England. There is no funding available for LVEPs during the pilot, but it is envisaged that once the pilot has finished DDPs will have devolved funding from Visit England, which in turn will be made available to LVEPs.

What are the criteria and process for achieving LVEP status as part of the pilot?

¹ [Government response to the De Bois Review](#)

² [DDP Established in Newcastle](#)

- 2.6.1 Ahead of the launch of the formal application process Visit England set out the criteria applicants will need to meet to achieve LVEP status and invited Expressions of Interest. To achieve LVEP status an applicant must:
- i. Cover an important geography (such as county or city region) and avoid overlap with other LVEPs (as the aim is to create a national portfolio)
 - ii. Have a destination management plan or tourism strategy developed with local partners
 - iii. Engage in destination 'management', not just marketing
 - iv. Be well integrated with other important local and regional actors such as key attractions and local government LEPs
 - v. Show demonstrable commitment from local authorities that DMO is lead body in this area (incl. public funding)
 - vi. Demonstrate an ability to raise funding from the private sector
 - vii. Have capacity of organisation needs to be reflective of the size and importance of destination
 - viii. Be working in partnership with other DMOs in their wider region
 - ix. Show commitment to expanding their commercial income and other funding streams
 - x. Show commitment to staff skills development including digital, international travel trade, bid writing and distribution
 - xi. Demonstrate governance, which should reflect visitor economy it represents, be focussed on impact and outcomes and show diversity
 - xii. Have a comprehensive support offer or commit to developing one
 - xiii. Be willing to support national priorities and Government initiatives, including accessibility, sustainability, local research and data
 - xiv. Show commitment to growing membership/partner support model
- 2.6.2 The formal application process to apply for LVEP status opens in waves. The first opened on the 17th February 2023 for a week and the second wave is currently open, with a deadline of the 19th June 2023 to allow applications to be submitted. There is no overall deadline, but most regions are expected to submit their applications during the spring and summer 2023.

West Yorkshire current position

- 2.7.1 There are currently five local authorities in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority area and five publicly funded DMOs with Visit Bradford, Visit Calderdale, Visit Leeds, Experience Wakefield and Kirklees Council.

Following the publication of information regarding the LVEP accreditation process by Visit England in December 2022, Leeds City Council, through Visit Leeds approached representatives from each of the West Yorkshire DMOs to explore the collective appetite to work together towards West Yorkshire LVEP status. A DDN for an expression of interest was approved on 11th February 2023 and the following was agreed at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Meeting on 16th March 2023:

- Existing activity at a local authority level would continue to be recognised and in addition, West Yorkshire proceed with plans to promote and support tourism at a regional level, by making an **application to Visit England** to establish a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for West Yorkshire. Visit Leeds (operated by Leeds City Council) will be the lead applicant on behalf of all West Yorkshire Local Authorities and the Combined Authority.

- **An oversight group** would be established to commission the **Destination Management Plan (DMP)** and determine longer term governance. The application process requires the development of a DMP and an LVEP **governance board**. Although the DMP does not need to be complete by the time of the application, the governance board does need to be in place at the time of the application submission. Leeds City Council has allocated funds for the DMP.
- It was recognised that activity to support the tourism and hospitality is broader than support from Visit England (for example, Combined Authority investment in business support and culture). It was agreed that we consider a governance model over and above this appropriate for our region and that the **Mayor of West Yorkshire would chair** the Governance board for the LVEP at a West Yorkshire regional level. This was originally supported by West Yorkshire Chief Executives on the 23rd February, 2023 and formally agreed at the WYCA board on 16th March, 2023.
- It was proposed that **WYCA** support this approach to the visitor economy, including allocating potential **funding**, which would enable work to be progressed on tourism at a West Yorkshire Level. WYCA funding would allow the region to potentially enable the region to achieve tier one status, which would create a Destination Development Partnership, attracting significant funding from Visit England, when the two year pilot has ended. It would also allow the region to go beyond the pooling of existing resources, delivering greater impact.

2.8.1 Visit England has indicated that at the end of the LVEP pilot, given the geography of West Yorkshire, there is a strong possibility that DDP status could be awarded. A DDP will attract funding at the end of the pilot and given there is potential for additional DDPs in South Yorkshire and North Yorkshire, this could give rise to greater funding potential for Yorkshire as a whole. Were West Yorkshire to achieve DDP status after 2025 the current understanding is that each of the five DMOs could then choose to apply for LVEP status as part of the 'hub and spoke' model or operate as a Tier 3 DMO within the DDP.

2.8.2 It is proposed that WYCA support, at the regional level, an approach to the visitor economy including potential funding, which would enable work to be progressed on tourism at a West Yorkshire Level.

2.8.3 Aside from the Visit England pilot WYCA funding would also ensure that collectively the five local authorities can work together to capitalise on considerable existing cultural assets (e.g. Science and Media Museum, Piece Hall, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Harewood House) and substantial investments in culture between 2023 and 2025 from LEEDS 2023 and Kirklees Year of Music to Wakefield Year of Culture and Culturedale in Calderdale to Bradford UK City of Culture 2025.

What impact will this proposal have?

Both business and leisure tourism affects all wards across Leeds.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 3 The Leader of the Council, Councillor James Lewis (27th March 2023), and the Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education Councillor Jonathan Pryor (27th March 2023), Leader of the Conservative Party, Councillor Alan Lamb (5th June 2023) Portfolio holder for the opposition, Councillor Dan Cohen (5th June 2023) and Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party, Councillor Stewart Golton (10th May 2023) have been consulted and are supportive., West Yorkshire Chief Executives and Directors of Development were consulted at the West Yorkshire Chief Executives meeting on 23rd February, 2023 and Directors of Development meeting on 6th January, 2023. A paper was subsequently considered and approved at a meeting of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority on 16th March. Regular updates are being shared throughout the development of the application. Regular consultation has also taken place with Visit England.

What are the resource implications?

- 4 There are presently no staffing implications directly arising from this report.
- 5 However, the Destination Management Plan may indicate additional resource requirements to deliver a programme of works. The pipeline development priorities paper that went to the Combined Authority meeting in February 2023 outlined indicative funding of £500,000 for the West Yorkshire tourism workstream from gainshare to support the annual delivery plans of the DMP. Subject to a robust business case and the CA's assurance framework, this funding could enable the implementation of the regional DMP, as well as facilitate partnership development between local authorities, WYCA, and the private sector.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 6 The key risk is if one or more local authority DMOs disengage with the LVEP once accredited, but consultation with Visit England has ensure that unless all five local authorities pull out, the LVEP will stand for West Yorkshire.

What are the legal implications?

- 7 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 8 Leeds City Council could have applied in isolation, but currently does not meet all the criteria required for LVEP status.

How will success be measured?

- 9 KPIs will be determined once the DMP is complete to ensure that progress and growth can be monitored by Visit England.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

- 10 The deadline for the LVEP application process is 19th June 2023 and an outcome will be communicated in July 2023.
- 11 The Application form comprises of applicant details; how the LVEP meets the core criteria; how the LVEP intends to meet the growth criteria (including income generation opportunities); how the LVEP meets the business support criteria in the tourism sector, and other supporting evidence including:-
- Letters of Support
 - Organogram
 - Income and Expenditure
 - Destination management plan (showing it is in train)
 - Map of the region the West Yorkshire LVEP covers.
- 12 The destination management plan for West Yorkshire is currently in development. Leeds City Council commissioned RJS Associates in May 2023 to develop a five-year plan for West Yorkshire working with the West Yorkshire Authorities and WYCA. It will represent the whole of the LVEP geography that we are proposing and the completed plan will be available from September 2023.
- 13 A stakeholder mapping exercise is underway to ensure that all of the region's key stakeholders are consulted during the development of the Destination Management Plan (DMP). The consultation process will include a mix of one-to-one conversations, workshops and online surveys.
- 14 The DMP will have annual delivery plans, which will be delivered through a public / private sector collaboration.

Appendices

- 15 There are no appendices.

Background papers

- 16 None.

Related documents

[The De Bois Review](#)

[Government response to the De Bois Review](#)

[DDP Established in Newcastle](#)

[West Yorkshire Combined Authority - West Yorkshire Tourism paper](#)