

Welcoming Visitors

STRATEGIC TOURISM VISION & ACTION PLAN 2015-18

Lewes District Council, September 2014

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SECTION 1 - VISION & STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

We have some incredible tourism, arts and cultural assets in our District. We have good access, stunning rural settings, historic towns and villages with a coastline where the South Downs meets the sea. There are unique attributes with stories of national and global recognition. These include Glyndebourne, Thomas Paine and the *Rights of Man*, Charleston and the Bloomsbury Set and the South Downs National Park which are four compelling foundations for our destination.

Tourism already brings in significant benefit to the local economy from thriving tourism, arts and cultural businesses. However we currently operate in a traditional and less effective way, supporting tourism through two staffed Tourist Information Centres and annually produced brochures alongside a basic online and digital presence supported by a budget-restricted marketing plan.

Our Vision looks to change our current public sector-led tourism and visitor economy support function, moving towards a more business-led, public sector supported role to deliver wider economic growth throughout the year plus bringing benefit to local residents. Specifically, tourism will be spread more evenly throughout the year by generating new visitors at off-peak times. And it will allow the District to be distinct as a destination, recognisable and standing apart from competitors.

By 2018, our Vision is to have a distinctive, well packaged, clearly signposted and well marketed tourism, arts and culture offer where leisure and business visitors come to the area, confident of the choice available and quality of provision. We will work with tourism, arts and cultural partners; seek external funding and support from businesses to achieve this.

By 2018, the value of tourism to the local economy will have grown on average by 3% per year, generating an additional 600 jobs, contributing to the wider Vision to improve the reputation of the District as a place for investment, to live, to study and to visit.

This will be achieved by getting the basics right, increasing our focus on cultural tourism, , having the right infrastructure in place and improving our destination marketing in partnership with our tourism businesses.

Lewes District Council's primary role will therefore be to act as an **enabler, supporter, facilitator** and **advocate** of the tourism sector and wider visitor economy.

Thematic Action Plan 2015/2016 YEAR 2 Key achievements

The Action Plan is built around six core themes:

(1) Visitor Information Provision

How key information about the District's tourism offer is collected and disseminated to visitors and residents alike

- Continuation of face to face services in Lewes and Seaford TIC's and Peacehaven information office. 210,000 recorded visitors (March 2015 – Jan 2017);
- Installation of self -service terminal at Lewes TIC;
- Design and installation of four Visitor Information Points (VIP) across the district (see Appendix 2)*;
- Information maps in Seaford, Lewes and Southease railway stations*;
- Promotion of Lewes district via *Visit Eastbourne* printed brochure (25,000 copies);
- Partnership on Car Free Holidays* printed map (10,000 copies);

(2) Online Destination Marketing (Stay Lewes, Coast & Country)

How the District and its tourism assets are promoted and marketed

- www.staylewes.org promotion and marketing for places to stay and places to visit (60,000 page views per month; 75,000 during summer);
- Re-branded in 2016, annually refreshed and mobile enabled website;
- Increasing twitter following of 4900;
- TIC staff trained in Twitter, and input into daily on line events calendar;
- Wider pan Sussex promotion via www.lovesussex.org.uk

(3) Events & Attractions

How events and attractions can be effectively supported through the Council's position as a strategic leader

- Completion of LDC's Outdoor Events Policy and Filming Policy (2016);
- Infrastructure support and advice for Enchanted Festival and Joy Festival in 2016;
- Successful delivery of LDC's annual Artwave Festival, estimated £1.7m income brought into the district (See Appendix 2);
- TIC's as ticket agency (inc. Love Supreme Festival, local concerts, cinema and events).

(4) Local Business Engagement:

How the Council can better engage with and help support the wider tourism industry

- Database of Businesses compiled in 2016, to include Tourism/Leisure businesses;
- Businesses promoted via advertising on Stay Lewes, Coast & Country website, Twitter and Facebook, plus opportunity for tourism businesses to promote in windows of Lewes TIC;
- Bi-monthly e-mail bulletin to tourism business advertising on Stay Lewes

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- Culture, Leisure and Tourism, and Best Independent Food or Drink Producer Award categories for 2017 Lewes District Business Awards, recognising the importance of the visitor economy and leisure industries in the district;

(5) Wider Partnerships

How the Council can effectively engage with and work with strategic and tactical partners and stakeholders to deliver growth in the visitor economy

- Love Sussex - a promotional portal for pan Sussex destinations.
- Normandie- Sussex – cross Channel promotion across the Channel
- Active members of East Sussex Cultural Advisory Board and East Sussex Arts Partnership
- Ongoing work with South Downs National Park (see * above)
- Active members of Central Sussex Local Action Group – LEADER funding programme for rural projects (including Tourism)
- Financial support for Bluebell Railway's Heritage Lottery Bid, 2016
- Support to Charleston towards their Local Growth Funding bid, 2016

(6) Research & Intelligence

How the Council can support the wider tourism industry through essential research and intelligence gathering

- Annual commission of Economic Impact Study from Tourism South East to assess tourism growth and value to the district
- Contributors to East Sussex Tourism Data Warehouse – industry and visitor data for stakeholders interested in growing value of the visitor economy in East Sussex (East Sussex in Figures – ESIF), 2016

Challenges

There is a limited annual Tourism budget (£17k) and limited officer capacity to significantly build infrastructure development. The budget pays fee for the website coordination, printing, marketing and promotion but excludes Tourist Information budgets and staffing or Project Manager Salary.

New Opportunities

The Joint Transformation Programme with Eastbourne Borough Council will bring exciting new future operations and opportunities including:

- An increased capacity in the officer team, sharing expertise, experience and knowledge which will protect services;
- An increased strategic profile across the two areas;
- Joint working on new projects which may create new jobs;
- Increased promotion of Lewes and Eastbourne as complementary locations to visit whilst maintaining their individual and distinct characters and features.

A full Cabinet Report on the Future of Tourism in Lewes has been scheduled for September 2017, which will identify in more detail the future operations and opportunities.