

Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson, Executive Director – Place

Report to:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	25 February 2020
Subject:	Tourism Sector Deal

Summary:

Announced in the summer of 2019, the Tourism Sector Deal sets out how the government and industry will work in partnership to boost productivity, develop the skills of the UK workforce and support destinations to enhance their visitor offer. In addition there will be five Tourism Zones allocated by competitive process that would be enabled to operate more innovatively and ambitiously. The timetable is somewhat delayed, but the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) has advised Greater Lincolnshire to use this time to agree our partnerships and prepare for bidding.

Actions Required:

Members of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee are invited to:

- review the work that has been done to date on the Tourism Sector Deal;
- support the preparation of a bid for Greater Lincolnshire to become a Tourism Zone;
- Agree to receive a further report on the results of the consultation with the tourist industry and bidding progress.

1. Background

Sector Deals are partnerships between the government and industry on sector-specific issues, to boost productivity, employment, innovation and skills. Tourism will be the 10th sector deal and will see the tourism sector recognised as an industry of the future, backed by national government and able to compete globally. In addition five Tourism Zones will be allocated via a competitive bidding process.

We feel that securing a Tourism Zone for Greater Lincolnshire would be a game-changer for the industry. Government has said that those with the broadest reach and ability to speak with one voice are the likeliest to achieve Tourism Zone status. The process has been somewhat delayed due to the election, but we have met with the Head of Tourism at DCMS and were advised to use this extra time to get ourselves into a state of readiness to bid, identifying the challenges that face our visitor economy and how we would use the Tourism Zone to resolve them.

The following insights were also gained:

- Should be innovative and ambitious
- Activity and support must last longer than a year.
- Partnership, collaboration and a collegiate approach is crucial
- The bid must be in line with the Local Industrial Strategy
- Tourism Zones must be built around pre-existing transport hubs such as train stations
- Potential tourism zones must be able to demonstrate that tourism is a dominant part of the local economy and is a recognisable entity to the consumer.
- To increase productivity TZ's must tackle seasonality
- Needs to be evidence based and supported by real time data
- Skills – the bid must include ideas to up-skill the work force
- Continued investment in Infrastructure particularly accommodation
- Accessibility in all its forms is important, as is sustainability
- Bids need to be delivered by teams combining businesses, Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Local Authorities.
- Importance of digitisation, packaging, overseas and business tourism

Since the announcement of the proposed Tourism Sector Deal there has been much discussion, particularly by the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP) Visitor Economy Board and by all the Lincolnshire Tourism Officers. It is felt that Government are looking at the visitor economy in such a joined up way, from big picture to the smallest detail and that this is to be welcomed.

It is felt that we need to demonstrate that we have the ability to deliver. Lincolnshire can show through examples like Lincoln Castle and North Sea Observatory and the work that has been undertaken to encourage hotel investment, that we have good track record.

DCMS recommended that we be open and honest about the challenges that still face us. We think that for example investment in Gibraltar Point and North Sea Observatory has highlighted the rarity of other facilities on the natural coast. Broadband is an issue for many Lincolnshire tourism businesses and equally so for their customers. There is no doubt that we have fallen behind the curve in terms of digitisation of our offer and that we are not promoting Lincolnshire enough. There is too much seasonality of the visitor offer and when we provide year round good quality facilities they are popular.

The Tourism Sector Deal encourages us to look at the visitor economy in its widest sense. Local authorities are involved in many areas which are impacted by visitors. Sometimes, like Heritage Services, the relationship is very direct; but visitors also use our highways and cycle paths, follow our signs, notice the cleanliness of our street and visit our parks and nature reserves, walk our footpaths and park in our car parks. Do we always calculate this and take it into account? We believe that through a Tourism Zone there is almost a 'tourism dividend' to be achieved. This requires smarter thinking and less silo mentality but is perfectly achievable. So

whilst we believe that tourism businesses have a strong part to play, so too do local authorities.

Through our bid we will need to inspire and show how we could use a Tourism Zone to resolve our challenges and deliver a forward looking visitor economy which understands how important it is to Lincolnshire's overall economy. Tourism Officers feel that the cycling, walking, bird-watching, natural offer of Lincolnshire still has enormous potential to lengthen the tourism season and is a good selling point.

We have also been looking at our structures and whether these are appropriate for running a Tourism Zone. It is very likely that the GLLEP's Visitor Economy Board would become the lead in managing the Tourism Sector Deal. The Board has been looking at its structure, membership and skills to make sure that it is ready to lead, provide direction and be a decision maker. Tourism Officers have suggested to the GLLEP's Visitor Economy Board that there should be four interlinking groups sat beneath the Board that between them would cover all the Tourism Sector strands: these would be Skills, Infrastructure, Product Development and Marketing. Further work is ongoing on the detail of how these would operate. In addition, before Easter five or six Tourism Sector Deal workshops are to be held with tourism businesses to gain their buy-in.

2. Conclusion

A successful bid would show that we have all bought into the vision, demonstrating that we can work together and innovate and that we are thinking of our audiences. There is no doubt that the process to become a Tourism Zone will be extremely competitive nationally, but the opportunities it could bring for elevating the productivity of the Lincolnshire visitor economy and 'future proofing' could make it well worth the effort. Regardless of the opportunity, commitment to and closer working with Local Authority partners and less silo mentality could develop a stronger visitor economy sector.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

N/A

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Mary Powell, Tourism Commissioning Manager, who can be contacted on 01522 550612 or Mary.Powell@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

This page is intentionally left blank