

TOURISM COMMISSION

Final Recommendations

The Tourism Commission was established for the purpose of making recommendations for an ambitious and sustainable tourism sector in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland which grows, increases in value, and provides jobs, investment, and quality.

By the end of 2025 the Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland visitor economy will be:

A well-known, thriving and attractive destination

Well on its way to flying the 'Green Tourism' flag

Future focussed, adapting to a continually changing audience

Developing a joined up 'New products' selection

Showcasing the quality and sustainability of our region

Taking online bookings for holidays and attractions, embracing digital opportunity

Working hard to attract large scale Investments to continually improve the offer

Creating highly qualified and highly motivated employees

A warm welcome. A place to tell your friends about. A place to come back to.

These recommendations are intended to help the tourism economy of Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland both step up following the end of lockdown and then with more ambitious long term actions.

Tourism is Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland's third biggest industry and worth £2.49bn in 2019. Needless to say the sector has been decimated by the lockdowns and at March 2021 it is unclear on how many businesses will survive through the Government's four step plan to ease lockdown.

The sector had already embraced the Government's thinking around the Tourism Sector Deal and a Tourism Action Plan has been produced after extensive consultation with the industry and based on its key themes of Investment, Product Development, Marketing and Skills. If the opportunity comes up to apply for Tourism Zone status then Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland has every intention of doing so and has been 'putting its house in order' in readiness.

Although there is great concern over business survival rates, the intention moving forward is to see the 'new normal' as a great opportunity. Of how we take the sector forward, creating a tourist industry that embraces quality, bookability and sustainability; that invests in its considerable but undeveloped 'outdoor' offer year round and invests in its staff, who will see tourism as a worthwhile career.

Recovery planning has been divided up into short and long term. Businesses need to recover and to earn money, so that short term (18 months) is all about ensuring that we regain profile and business. The long term is about an ambitious re-investment in every element of the sector to create the right platform for growth. As the economy re-opens, through research and data capture we will need to establish whether visitors aspirations for their holidays has changed temporarily or permanently.

The largely private sector Tourism Commission has met virtually six times between September 2020 and February 2021. At each meeting it has taken a different theme, using the Tourism Sector Deal as its framework and covering marketing, investment, product development and skills.

The commission has not sought to create a new tourism strategy for the area, this exists in the form of the Tourism Action Plan. Instead it has remained focused on specific issues and ambitious in the response that it recommends. Chaired by Councillor Colin Davie, portfolio holder for Economy and Place (which includes the visitor economy) at Lincolnshire County Council, with Vice-chairman Chris Baron from Butlins. Other Commissioners represented all sectors and all sizes of businesses across Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland.

In essence a holiday in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland will be easy and quick to book; we will present ourselves as an inspiring destination that offers great experiences. The welcome is warm and the customer service across the sector is consistent. There is quality in the places to stay, the places to visit and all the spaces in-between.

At the first Commission meeting a Key Line of Enquiry was established for each theme.



1. MARKETING

Key Line of Enquiry:

Who are Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland's visitors of 2025, and how do we make sure they know how great the area is?

The commission felt that Lincolnshire is too little known. Research confirms this, no negative perceptions fortunately, but just 'no knowledge'. The Non-Visitor research confirms that Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland often has the products that potential visitors want, they are just oblivious that we have them. The Commission were keen to stress that customer perceptions will change in the coming years and it is important that both our promotional messages and our technology changes to meet customer interests.

www.visitlincolnshire.com is undergoing a complete redevelopment with some £70k plus investment to date. The Tourism Commission felt that the new website (launch Easter 2021) is critical to marketing; everything will lead from and to it. Its aim is to both Inspire and Inform. It will use the latest technology being responsive on mobile and computer and quick to navigate. It will include online bookability and enable CRM more effectively.

Immediate and Long term vision

Short term: By Easter 2021 the redeveloped www.visitlincolnshire.com website will have been re-launched, providing a high quality digital presence for the area to rival those of other tourism hotspots. It is designed as a platform for growth and to showcase the quality, breadth and depth of our offer to both our residents and visitors. It is the platform that is needed to match the messaging, everything leads from it and to it.

Long term: And by Easter 2025 www.visitlincolnshire.com's reach will go to all of its target markets across the UK and to those foreign markets that will be most interested in Lincolnshire's tourism product. Our marketing campaign and website will be self-financing because it achieves real benefit for operators in the visitor economy, and online bookability will be smooth, intuitive, and the means of booking of choice.

SHORT TERM COMMITMENT	LONG TERM COMMITMENT
<p>During 2021 a major campaign will run nationally, targeted at our main market of over-45s and the family market encouraging them to visit Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland. During 2021 and 2022 further product and packaging will be developed and campaigns run that will attract new markets and strengthen existing ones.</p> <p>Raise the awareness of Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland. It is recommended that investment is made in a major social media and PR campaign (including ground handling service) to give a big push to the launch of www.visitlincolnshire.com</p> <p>Knowledge of the Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland visitor offer by our residents could be much better. It is recommended that an On Your Doorstep campaign with a call to action to move the customer journey along is established. Quality of life feeds into this strategy; we would create a vision and tell the engaging stories. As Covid-19 restrictions become clearer, this campaign can be further developed for regional and national audiences.</p> <p>It is felt that we were behind the leaders in terms of our use of technology. Website and social media require a regular supply of video and it is recommended that a programme of video filming throughout the year to cover seasonality and product strengths is commissioned. This will give us a stock of video that we own and can be edited and re-edited according to need.</p> <p>The importance of the Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland cycling and walking offer amongst all our target markets was important but also under-developed. It is recommended that the website includes branded Cycling and Walking product that is easy to access, geared up businesses and packaged.</p>	<p>Marketing campaigns should continue year on year with no return to the former stop/start, allowing the creation of a continual budget commitment from authorities and businesses alike.</p> <p>Using all available data to make sure that we understand what our visitors want, ensuring that we continue to cater to the changing markets of 2025 and beyond.</p> <p>Continue to invest in the website so that it continues to inspire, has new experiences and product being developed.</p> <p>Continually research the newest available technology for use within the industry, to help keep us on a level or ahead of the rest of the Country, and use this to create an advantage within any marketing campaigns.</p> <p>Improve and expand on the cycling offer, making Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland a prime cycling destination for national and international visitors.</p>
WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in perception, richness of proposition, and reciprocal work with other Lincolnshire providers to broaden the appeal and the richness of Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland. • Moving to fully digital. 	



2. INVESTMENT

Key Line of Enquiry:

What new products will be most attractive to the visitors of 2025, and how will we attract the right finance to create them?

The commission felt that the quality of the Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland product wasn't always good enough and that it needed more packaging. The quality of the existing and new attractions and accommodation; and the quality of the surroundings – roads, paths, public space, beaches, parking, and broadband are all critical to positive experiences.

The commission advised that Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland needed a major new attraction, although it is recognised that this can take 5-10 years. Bearing in mind that the visitor economy is Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland's third most important industry it was felt that the planning system needed to understand quality tourism and the demand for it. Investment in new products should look at working on what people know to be good about the area e.g. food, farming, environment, aviation heritage. The Commission underlined the importance of maintenance of the existing product and investment in Events and Festivals- particularly family friendly ones. They felt the need to differentiate between what is essentially Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland (sparsely populated and deeply rural) and what is unacceptable (poor quality).

The commission recognised The Great Outdoors as a strength of the area –but challenged whether we make enough of it, whether our environment and sustainability credentials are as good as we claim. Also recognised that boutique hotels should be encouraged, the need to upgrade and enhance existing hotels and whether we have product that appeals to teenagers and millennials.

Immediate and Long term vision

Short Term: By autumn 2021 businesses in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland's tourism sector will have been provided with advice and development to enable them to contribute to our ambition of increasing green tourism in the county; a green tourism action plan will set out the steps that strategic bodies will take to support that ambition.

Long term: By 2025 the sector will be on its way to be becoming a 'Green Tourism' destination. Plans will be well developed for a large scale investment, with public and private sector working together to make it happen.

SHORT TERM COMMITMENT	LONG TERM COMMITMENT
<p>Recognition that consumers are increasingly interested in environmental measures. The commission recommended that we should produce a Green Tourism toolkit to help business leaders to make the most of their environmental credentials. A reward and recognition package would follow.</p> <p>The recommendation that economic development agencies make direct contact with new and/or improved visitor attractions, providing them with access to a range of business support products including through improved product knowledge and communication.</p> <p>There should be engagement with the planning authorities on the importance of tourism to Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland and its changing needs, particularly when current provision no longer meets the needs of 21st century visitors. It is recommended that there is a debate with local planning authorities about whether we allocate land in local plans for major tourism investment?</p> <p>The commission wanted to provide opportunities for new businesses to come forward.</p>	<p>Put together a compelling investor case for the sector, demonstrating what a fantastic location Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland is and the wider offer.</p> <p>Work with Team Lincolnshire to promote opportunities for investment in the sector. Our assets that could be exploited include former military bases, stately homes with plans for investment, and countryside and nature parks. We will prepare investment propositions for each of these and target potential investors about these propositions.</p> <p>Create a soft landing to help investors, including: support in finding suitable sites and premises, funding support and advice, access to sector specialists, planning support and advice on skills and recruitment.</p>
WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland has a year round offer of quality attractions and accommodation. • Business start-ups are encouraged. • Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland puts across a sense of being ready for and welcoming to visitors. • Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland working towards carbon neutral. 	



3. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Key Line of Enquiry:

What aspects of Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland's current visitor offer are the ones that visitors most enjoy, and how can we future proof them for 2025?

Does Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland have enough bookable product that is digitally available? Cycling England, Explorer's Road, US Connections and England Originals have all developed bookable product which works well, but this is just a small part of Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland's tourism offer. The commission recognised that the great outdoors and family coast were our strengths –weaknesses around the offer particularly for teenagers and millennial's.

The commission felt there was not enough product knowledge within the sector. The commission recognised the speed of generational change and consumer requirements, hence the importance of bookability and sustainability. Importance of understanding the offer and what visitors of 2025 will expect – wellness/relaxation; multi-generational; design that works for all such as families or women only groups.

Immediate and Long term vision

Short Term: A digital transformation programme will be delivered so that Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland's tourism sector rivals the most digitally advanced areas in the country by late 2022. Digital technology will be used both to increase business productivity and to package up our products to meet changing customer interests –we will establish a packaged approach to green tourism, cycling, walking – and the great outdoors, niche retail, short breaks for millennials and aviation heritage.

Long Term: 2025 will see Greater Lincolnshire Rutland ahead of the game in terms of their digital culture within the sector, with offers for the changing visitor market. We will have great experiences for everyone, while constantly improving and moving with visitor needs and requirements.

SHORT TERM COMMITMENT	LONG TERM COMMITMENT
<p>Digital transformation is needed. Investment in digital training, including workshops stressing the importance of online bookability should be delivered. A benchmark should be set for what a good digital tourism business looks like and this should be promoted.</p> <p>The commission recognised The Great Outdoors as a strength of the area -but challenged about whether we make enough of it, whether our environment and sustainability credentials are as good as we claim. The commission recommended more packaging of products -slicker and bigger than has been done before. All ages, wellbeing, treats and experiences and rooted in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland's strength of The Great Outdoors.</p> <p>It is recommended that greater effort should be put into ensuring that the areas businesses have got good product knowledge and that there is good communication across the sector.</p> <p>It is recommended that annual surveys are conducted so that policy makers and tourism operators understand through research what visitors want in a post-Covid-19 world.</p>	<p>We continue to invest in the Great outdoors to ensure the quality of the offer to include off-road cycle paths, widely available cycle storage and businesses geared up with appropriate facilities</p> <p>Wilder Witham from Doddington Hall to Hill Holt Wood would be the largest Nature Recovery project in the East Midlands and an exemplar of nature based tourism including glamping, sustainable transport and cycle safaris.</p> <p>We should be both ambitious and imaginative in our thinking at both the small and large scale. From converting public loos to cycle storage, to establishing a major attraction which features its own nature reserve and is cycle friendly both on site and in terms of its accessibility.</p>
<p>WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High proportion of businesses signed up to TXGB or other online booking platforms. • Experiences packaged and readily available. 	



4. SKILLS

Key Line of Enquiry:

How can we fill every vacancy in greater Lincolnshire and Rutland's visitor economy with a motivated individual who has the right skills for the job?

At every meeting the Commission discussed skills, competence, knowledge and employment. People are at the centre of every holiday experience, but tourism development doesn't have skills as a major priority and the tourism sector is perceived as a Cinderella industry and no positive aspirations as a career. Hiring people is a skill particularly if we want people who are motivated and at the top of their game. It is recommended that skills and employment are put at the heart of this commission's recommendations and indeed put at the heart of every tourism strategy.

Immediate and Long term vision

Short Term: A recruitment hub will be established by spring 2022, enabling employers in the visitor economy to recruit into hard to fill posts. Potential employees will understand the career opportunities that are available in greater Lincolnshire and Rutland's visitor economy because of the advice, guidance, and career path information that will be produced about the sector. Skills and employment will be a resourced priority in the area's tourism strategies.

Long Term: Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland will have a highly skilled, highly motivated workforce, providing opportunity to all those already within or looking to move into the sector. A range of opportunities to retrain, but with a strong message that it is important to be satisfied and happy with the role whatever the skills set is. Every role within the sector is important.

SHORT TERM COMMITMENT	LONG TERM COMMITMENT
<p>The commission identified two distinct issues -recruitment and training. The commission recommended that a clear plan is established to fill vacancies in the areas of staff shortage. This will include the establishment of an online recruitment hub and the suggestion that recruitment master-classes are run for the sector.</p> <p>There is concern about the negative perception of the sector amongst students and that teaching about tourism often did not use local examples. It is recommended that there is substantially more engagement with schools and colleges about careers in tourism. Encourage those working in the sector to talk about their career paths.</p> <p>In order to drive up interest in tourism careers, the commission recommends that high quality education/training in tourism -potentially through a core new training facility which adds value to existing provision.</p> <p>It is recommended that leadership skills in businesses should not be forgotten and that we should aim to improve enterprise and skills at all levels. It was recommended that current business advice programmes for the sector are expanded to meet a wider cohort of businesses.</p>	<p>Work with training providers to attract commercial and government money for new, high quality facilities for the visitor economy.</p> <p>Lead a campaign amongst schools, colleges and job centres to promote careers in the visitor economy, highlighting the variety of roles and opportunities available.</p> <p>Businesses are doing their part to promote what a vast sector Visitor Economy is and the opportunities it brings, to ensure that the negative perception of a Cinderella industry is a thing of the past.</p> <p>Both the public and private sector will be working closely with recruitment agencies</p>
<p>WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland is noted for its friendly and professional service. • Staff are appointed on full time contracts because business is now year round. 	