

Report to: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Date: 16 March 2023

Subject: **West Yorkshire Tourism**

Director: Phil Witcherley, Interim Director of Inclusive Economy, Skills and Culture

Author: Phil Witcherley, Interim Director of Inclusive Economy, Skills and Culture

Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 Tourism is an important sector in West Yorkshire and is worth an estimated £5bn¹. The region has significant national assets including the Unesco World Heritage site of Saltaire, Piece Hall, Harewood House and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park.
- 1.2 Our years of culture present an unprecedented opportunity to sell our region to visitors - from LEEDS2023, Kirklees Year of Music 23, Wakefield Our Year 24, Culturedale 25 and Bradford UK City of Culture 2025.
- 1.3 Following the closure of Welcome to Yorkshire² last year and changes in Government policy around tourism following the 'De Bois Review' of destination management organisations in England, including the creation of new, Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs), it is important as a region we decide how we support this important sector.

¹ Source: Office for National Statistics

² Silicon Dales Ltd purchased all of Welcome to Yorkshire's assets and operates utilising the original brand, website and social media channels.

1.4 This paper proposes a way forward to support the tourism sector at the West Yorkshire level. In summary:

- Existing activity at a local authority level is recognised and in addition, we proceed with plans to promote and support tourism at a West Yorkshire regional level.
- This will be done by making an application to VisitEngland 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.
- The application process requires the development of a Destination Management Plan and a governance board. An LA/CA officer oversight group will be established to commission this work and determine longer term governance.
- It is right that we consider a governance model that is appropriate for our region. It is recognised that activity to support the tourism and hospitality industry is broader than support from VisitEngland (for example, Combined Authority investment in business support, skills and culture). The Mayor and Council Leaders will play a key role in championing the governance of a suitable support structure for tourism at a West Yorkshire regional level. This may be over and above the governance of the LVEP given VisitEngland may be prescriptive around the type of governance structure and purpose.

1.5 The Combined Authority are asked to approve this way forward.

2. Information

National Landscape

- 2.1 In March 2021, in response to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the visitor economy, 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 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 VisitEngland, the national tourist board for England, is now implementing the agreed recommendations with the overall aim of providing a more effective model to support English tourism at a regional level, using an accreditation process designed to create a national portfolio of Destination Management Organisations.

The De Bois Review

- 2.3.1 The De Bois Review recommended that there should be a coherent national portfolio of destination management organisations using a tiered approach:
- A top tier of 'Destination Development Partnerships' ('hubs' also known as DDPs), tasked with setting strategic objectives in line with national priorities and regional programme delivery.
 - A second tier of accredited Tourist Boards acting as members ('spokes') called 'Local Visitor Economy Partnerships' (LVEPS); accredited and recognised by VisitEngland, tasked with leading, managing and marketing destinations.
 - A third tier of local destination organisations, non-accredited, which have no formal relationship nor receive direct funding via VisitEngland or DCMS.
- 2.3.2 It is Visit England's intention that the Destination Development Partnership will be to develop and oversee 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). These partnerships will pass some funding to the Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs).
- 2.3.3 The idea is for existing Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) to move across to become accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (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. VisitEngland is responsible for creating, maintaining and supporting this new tiered structure and will introduce a Tourism Data Hub to allow for better decision-making.
- 2.4 The Government response to the De Bois Review³
- 2.4.1 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, VisitEngland has received new funding (£2.25 million over 2022-25 period) to develop and administer the accreditation of the national portfolio of LVEPs. This included the establishment of a regional team to support, and account manage the national portfolio. West Yorkshire has been allocated a regional account manager through this process.
- 2.4.2 The Government response also included a single, funded pilot for the Destination Delivery Partnership for North East of England region (Newcastle Gateshead Initiative and Northumberland and Durham)⁴, covering the period to March 2025.

³ [Government response to the De Bois Review](#)

⁴ [DDP Established in Newcastle](#)

2.4.3 The pilot will need to prove the concept and case for funding for a future national roll-out of the DDP model. No other areas will be considered for or receive funding to develop a DDP until after 2025. West Yorkshire, should therefore consider becoming a Local Visitor Economy Partnerships first.

2.4.4 The government agreed that VisitBritain and VisitEngland should have minimal engagement, if any, with 'third tier' organisations.

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

2.5.1 DCMS and VisitEngland envisage that, once the DDP pilot has finished successfully in 2025, there will be between 15 and 20 Destination Delivery Partnerships established, and an expected 40 Local Visitor Economy Partnerships in total accredited and supported by VisitEngland. Being a Local Visitor Economy Partnership as part of the pilot scheme does not preclude an organisation from becoming a Destination Delivery Partnership at the end of the pilot. The remainder will be non-accredited Destination Management Organisations, which will be positioned as Tier 3 with minimal support from Visit England. There is no funding available for Local Visitor Economy Partnerships during the pilot period, but it is envisaged that once the pilot has finished Destination Delivery Partnerships will have devolved funding from VisitEngland, which in turn will be made available to Local Visitor Economy Partnerships.

What are the criteria and process for achieving Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) status?

- 2.6.1 VisitEngland set out the criteria applicants need to meet to achieve LVEP status and invited Expressions of Interest.
- 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. Ability to administer public funds with probity
 - viii. The capacity of the organisation needs to be reflective of the size and importance of destination
 - ix. Be working in partnership with other DMOs in their wider region and other LVEPs

- x. Show commitment to expanding commercial income and other funding streams
- xi. Show commitment to staff skills development including digital, international travel trade, bid writing and distribution
- xii. Demonstrate governance reflects visitor economy it represents, be focussed on impact and outcomes and show diversity
- xiii. Have a comprehensive business support offer or commit to developing one
- xiv. Be willing to support national priorities and Government initiatives, including accessibility, sustainability
- xv. Develop the ability to track local visitor economy through research and data gathering and sharing insight, working with VisitEngland

2.6.2 The formal application process to apply for LVEP status opened on the 17th February 2023 for a week and will reopen every six weeks to allow applications to be submitted. There is no deadline but most regions are expected to submit their applications during the spring and summer 2023.

West Yorkshire current position

2.6.3 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.

2.6.4 Following the publication of information regarding the LVEP accreditation process by Visit England in December 2022, West Yorkshire Local Authorities have been working together to explore the collective appetite towards a West Yorkshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). The overall view is that a West Yorkshire LVEP is preferable as:

- Each of the local authorities could have submitted an expression of interest to become an LVEP in their own right.
- Had only one succeeded, this would have relegated neighbouring local authority DMOs to tier three meaning little or no support from Visit England, no funding and all contact would be routed through the tier two LVEP, meaning no access to England wide campaigns, funding, country managers or international travel trade campaigns.

2.6.5 Visit England has suggested summer 2023 for a West Yorkshire application. It is therefore vital to reach consensus about next steps as soon as possible to ensure that the necessary work can be undertaken to complete the application.

2.6.6 Visit England has indicated that at the end of the pilot, Destination Development Partnership status could be awarded on a West Yorkshire

geography. A Destination Development Partnership will attract funding at the end of the pilot and given there is potential for additional Destination Development Partnerships in South Yorkshire and North Yorkshire, this could give rise to greater funding potential for Yorkshire as a whole. Were West Yorkshire to achieve Destination Development Partnership 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 two LVEP within the Destination Development Partnership.

Next steps for West Yorkshire

2.7 This paper proposes a way forward to support the tourism sector at the West Yorkshire level. In summary, it is proposed that:

- Apply to Visit England to establish a West Yorkshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), with Visit Leeds (Operated by Leeds City Council) as the lead applicant.
- Establish an oversight board to develop a Destination Management Plan, an appropriate governance structure and develop the application. Leeds City Council will apply existing capacity gainshare funding for the development of the Destination Management Plan.

The Mayor and Council Leaders will play a key role in championing the governance of a suitable support structure for tourism at a West Yorkshire regional level, reflecting on the Combined Authority and Local Authorities' wider remit and ambitions around business support, skills and culture.

2.8 It is proposed that £25K of capacity funding already allocated to Leeds City Council is used to cover the costs and commission the Destination Management Plan.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

3.1 Sustainable Tourism and an accreditation process for the Tourism industry is currently being devised by VisitEngland, to ensure a standardised approach.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

4.1 The creation of an LVEP realises the ambition that place matters, and that West Yorkshire is an outward looking global region with its people and businesses operating on the world stage, mindful of impact on the planet, where inward investors that share our values are welcomed. The realignment of the DMO to LVEP status, contributes to WYCA's vision for 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.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

The approach to tourism will draw on the experience of our existing work and focus on promoting initiatives that support people from a diverse range of backgrounds to access tourist attractions and employment in the tourism and hospitality sector.

The recommendation from the De Bois Review calls for a diverse governance board for the LVEP. The aim will be that the governance will reflect the diversity of our region.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There will be financial implications arising from the findings of the Destination Management Plan. Initial costings are estimated at £25k for the creation of a West Yorkshire Destination Management Plan by an independent consultant. Further budget will be reviewed as the work progresses.

7. Legal Implications

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

8. Staffing Implications

- 8.1 There are presently no staffing implications directly arising from this report. However, the Destination Management Plan may indicate additional resource requirements to deliver a programme of works.

9. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- A Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) application for West Yorkshire to Visit England is supported.
- As part of this work, appropriate governance will be developed. The Mayor will play a key role in championing the tourism sector and this will be reflected in the governance.
- An independent Destination Management Plan will be commissioned, utilising capacity gainshare funding already allocated to Leeds City Council.

11. Background Documents

None

12. Appendices

None