

**Report to:** West Yorkshire Combined Authority

**Date:** 22 June 2023

**Subject:** **West Yorkshire Tourism**

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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 In March, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority [CA] approved a regional approach to promote and support tourism by endorsing a joint application of Local Authorities and the CA to VisitEngland to establish a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for West Yorkshire.
- 1.2 The application has been developed collaboratively by Local Authority and Combined Authority partners and was provisionally submitted on 19 June, subject to endorsement by this committee. The application has separately been considered by all Local Authorities through internal processes.
- 1.3 This paper provides an update on the application, the development of a regional Destination Management Plan, a governance model and funding.
- 1.4 Members are asked to:
  - Approve the joint application for West Yorkshire LVEP status.
  - Note the update of the Destination Management Plan and governance model.
  - Endorse the development of a funding proposal, to establish the region's LVEP, once accredited, subject the CA's Assurance Framework.

## **2. Information**

### **2.1 Local Visitor Economy Partnership Application Update**

- 2.1.1 There are currently five local authorities in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority area and five publicly funded Destination Management Organisations with Visit Bradford, Visit Calderdale, Visit Leeds, Experience Wakefield and Kirklees Council.
- 2.1.2 West Yorkshire CA and LA partners have been working together to apply to VisitEngland to establish an LVEP for West Yorkshire, with Visit Leeds (Operated by Leeds City Council) as the lead applicant. An application has been provisionally submitted on 19<sup>th</sup> June, the most recent deadline, set by VisitEngland.
- 2.1.3 The application was triggered by VisitEngland's implementation of the recommendations from the 'De Bois' Review of the Destination Management Organisation landscape in England. The review recommended the creation of a coherent national portfolio of destination management organisations, including a tier of accredited Tourist Boards called 'Local Visitor Economy Partnerships' tasked with leading, managing and marketing destinations. VisitEngland, the national tourist board for England, are administering the accreditation.
- 2.1.4 The most recent application window for LVEP status closed on 19<sup>th</sup> June. VisitEngland had previously announced 12 destinations that gained LVEP in the first round of applications in April, in addition to the three North East Destination Development Partnership (DDP) pilot LVEPs announced earlier this year. The next application window is not expected until early autumn.
- 2.1.5 The application process required the development of a Destination Management Plan for the region and the establishment of a governance board reflective of West Yorkshire's visitor economy and in alignment with existing strategic priorities. The work sits alongside Yorkshire wide activity as guided by Yorkshire and Humber Leaders.
- 2.1.6 West Yorkshire partners put forward a comprehensive case of why and how developing, supporting and growing the visitor economy on a West Yorkshire footprint will make our region an even better place to live and work as well as to visit. The completed application form will be attached to this paper after the submission deadline as Item 1.
- 2.1.7 A response from VisitEngland is expected within two months of submission.
- 2.1.8 Members are asked to endorse the joint application for West Yorkshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership status.
- 2.1.9 In parallel to the ongoing work on the LVEP application, West Yorkshire Local Authorities and the Combined Authority are also active partners of a Yorkshire

wide project, initially taking place over two years, which has been initiated in response to Welcome to Yorkshire's, closure in spring 2022.

2.1.10 The former destination management organisation for Yorkshire has left a gap in the market and the Yorkshire Leaders Board has agreed for a project group to create and deliver a model to collaborate at a Yorkshire level to work together to market the region nationally and internationally as well as amplify heritage and culture offers, events and opportunities around travel and accommodation.

## 2.2 Destination Management Plan

2.2.1 One of the criteria for LVEP applicants is to have a destination management plan or tourism strategy based on the geography of the applicant and developed with local partners.

2.2.2 £25,000 of capacity funding already allocated to Leeds City Council was used to cover the costs and commission the Destination Management Plan for West Yorkshire.

2.2.3 A consultant was appointed to develop a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for West Yorkshire. This consultant has worked with all Local Authorities in West Yorkshire to develop the plan.

2.2.4 The DMP will set a strategic direction for West Yorkshire as a destination over the medium to long-term and cover all fundamental aspects of destination management for West Yorkshire, including:

- Tourism performance and impacts, including effective use of data;
- Operational working structures, strategic governance, and communication;
- Identifying options and outlining a high-level plan towards sustainable funding of the LVEP;
- Overall appeal and appearance, access, infrastructure, and visitor services;
- Destination image, branding and promotion (marketing);
- Product mix – development needs and opportunities;

2.2.5 Initial conversations with key stakeholders, including Local Authority and Combined Authority Officers have taken place and the strategic, research, product and media review is completed. The consultant is currently engaging with wider stakeholders across the West Yorkshire visitor economy to establish priorities.

2.2.6 VisitEngland have clarified that LVEP status can be achieved, subject to conditions, even if certain criteria have not been met/are not complete yet, as is the case with the West Yorkshire DMP, as they acknowledge the establishment of a LVEP is a process.

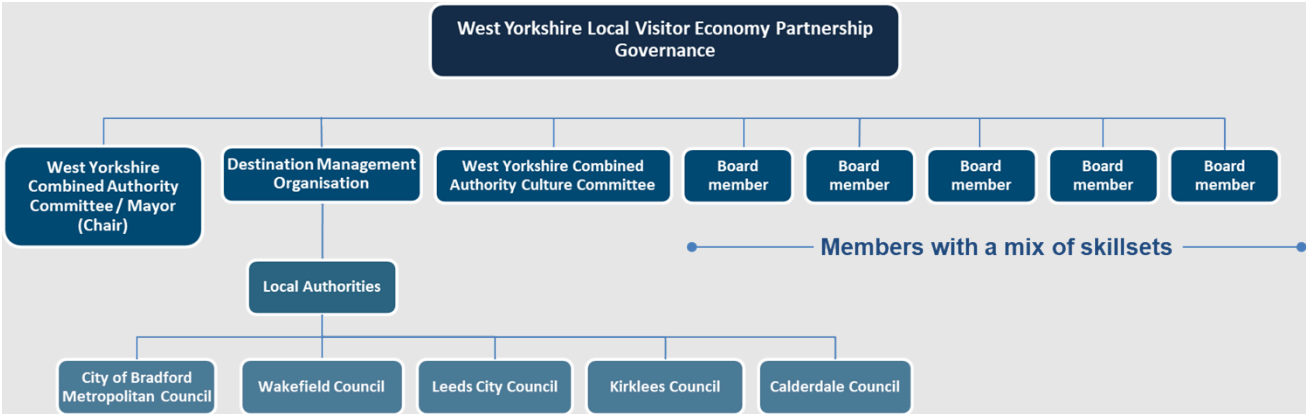
2.3 Governance

2.3.1 The proposed Governance structure for the West Yorkshire LVEP reflects the importance that has been attributed to the stewardship and development of the region’s visitor economy at a senior political level.

2.3.2 Mayor Tracy Brabin has agreed to Chair the West Yorkshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership Board [final name for this Board to be determined]. In addition, there will be a direct link to the Combined Authorities legal Governance structure through a member representing the Culture, Heritage and Sport Committee.

2.3.3 The proposed structure will ensure that any work on the visitor economy has strategic alignment to the wider agenda of the Combined Authority, with a particular focus on the Culture, Heritage and Sport Framework’s core themes (people, place, skills and business), but also place, transport, business and skills support, and vice versa.

2.3.4 Additional Members will be recruited in due course to ensure a mix of private, third and public sector voices and reflect the diverse nature of the region’s visitor economy. An outline structure for the proposed governance board can be seen below.



2.4 Funding

2.4.1 Becoming accredited by VisitEngland as LVEP does not currently attract any core or project funding from VisitEngland or DCMS. Part of the DMP will form the initial assessment of future income streams to create a self-sufficient, financially sustainable structure that is not dependent on public funding in the medium to long term.

2.4.2 Once the application is successful, any work to deliver on the priorities and activities identified in the regional DMP and on the core criteria of VisitEngland for LVEPs will require initial funding.

2.4.3 Although the region's DMP is still in its early stages, likely work of the future West Yorkshire LVEP is envisaged to include the following:

- Regional Strategy development and delivery
- Destination management planning
- Coordination/liaison with VisitEngland/DCMS
- Platform for partnership development between the public and private sector
- Commission of outward services
- Sector intelligence
- Development of a skills and business support offer specific to the tourism sector
- Tourism product development and delivery
- Near domestic marketing
- Region wide Travel Trade & Conferencing/Conventions
- Alignment of local marketing strategy & performance
- Convention Bureau Services
- Research and evaluation services
- Digital Services

2.4.4 The meeting of the Combined Authority in February 2023 outlined indicative funding of £500,000 for the West Yorkshire tourism workstream from gainshare. This proposal has not yet been taken through the assurance process and so is subject to the authority's assurance framework and a final Combined Authority decision. Members are asked to endorse the development of a funding proposal, to establish the West Yorkshire LVEP, once accredited by VisitEngland.

2.4.5 Building on the findings of the region's DMP (currently in development, see above) this would mean a Strategic Assessment would be developed over the summer and, subject to approval, a business case could be completed for consideration and approval in late 2023 / early 2024.

2.4.6 Part of the indicative funding would also support the Yorkshire wide tourism project that is aligned to but separate from and taking part parallel to the West Yorkshire LVEP workstream. This contribution is expected to be £50,000.

2.4.7 As laid out in the March CA meeting, a do-nothing approach could have led to a situation where all or a number of local authorities could have submitted an application to become an LVEP in their own right.

2.4.8 Had only one succeeded, this would have relegated neighbouring local authority DMOs to 'tier three' of the new VisitEngland structure, meaning little or no support from VisitEngland, no access to current or future funding opportunities, England wide campaigns, country managers or international travel trade campaigns.

### **3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications**

- 3.1 Embedding sustainable tourism are one of the key programme goals for the LVEP programme. The strategic development of the West Yorkshire visitor economy enables a focus on sustainable activities for and by visitors and businesses and other actors within the sector that minimise the negative environmental impact of tourism. There is also an opportunity to link existing activity delivered in line with the Combined Authorities net-zero ambitions, such as promoting sustainable travel of visitors to and within the region.

### **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. Strategic development and support of our visitor economy intends a positive shift of local and wider perceptions of our region, contributing to local pride, as well as attract new investment, grow businesses and create jobs. As outlined in the West Yorkshire Investment Strategy, inclusive growth cannot be a bolt-on and any project seeking funding from the Combined Authority must demonstrate a proactive and targeted approach to engaging with and bringing benefit to disadvantaged groups. This approach will apply equally to any proposals for investment in the West Yorkshire LVEP.

### **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 The meeting of the Combined Authority in February 2023 outlined indicative funding of £500,000 for the West Yorkshire tourism workstream from gainshare. A robust funding proposal, which will be subject to the CA's Assurance Framework and final decision, will be developed.

### **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 and this will be reflected in the business case that would be developed.

## **9. Recommendations**

It is recommended that Members:

- 9.1.1 Endorse the approach of a West Yorkshire LVEP application to VisitEngland.
- 9.1.2 Note the proposed Governance structure and proposals for considering the gainshare to support the activity of the LVEP (to be brought to a future meeting).

## **11. Background Documents**

[West Yorkshire Tourism Paper](#), West Yorkshire Combined Authority Meeting from 16 March 2023

## **12. Appendices**

Appendix 1: West Yorkshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership application – to follow