

REPORT TITLE: LOCAL VISITOR ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

25 NOVEMBER 2025

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

This paper sets out the exciting opportunity for Winchester City Council to help shape the future of Hampshire's visitor economy through the establishment of the Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Winchester Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) and the development of a Hampshire Destination Management Plan (DMP).

These initiatives mark a step change in how partners across the county work together to strengthen Hampshire's profile as a world-class visitor destination – from coast to countryside, history to innovation – and to unlock the economic, cultural, and community benefits that tourism brings.

The paper outlines:

- The Council's leading role in developing the LVEP alongside Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton;
- How the emerging DMP will support growth, sustainability and inclusivity within the visitor economy; and
- The alignment between these regional initiatives and the Council's own ambitions for a thriving, vibrant Winchester district underpinned by a strong, well-managed and distinctive visitor offer.

Together, the LVEP and DMP create a platform to attract investment, enhance local collaboration, and ensure Winchester district's voice and assets are at the heart of shaping Hampshire's visitor economy of the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Policy Committee are asked to review and comment on the work undertaken to develop the:
 - Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Winchester Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)
 - Hampshire Destination Management Plan (DMP)
2. The Policy Committee are asked to support the council's role in facilitating the delivery of the LVEP and realising its benefits in supporting the visitor economy across the district.

1 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 1.1 Along with other Hampshire Local Authorities, Winchester City Council contributes £2000 per annum to support the work of the LVEP and its contribution to the district's visitor economy. The 2025/26 investment helped fund the work to:
 - a) secure a successful application to Visit England for Hampshire to become a LVEP
 - b) develop, initiate and mobilise the governance structure to underpin the formation of the LVEP
 - c) develop a Hampshire wide Destination Management Plan.
- 1.2 £2,000 has been planned for in the 2026/27 budget to continue this investment and activity, to support delivery of the DMP and fully mobilise the Destination Committee and associated working groups.
- 1.3 The staffing resources required will come primarily from the Economy & Community Service teams, with staff resources specifically deployed from the Economy & Tourism team, at a minimum of one day per month to support governance and delivery activity.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

WHAT IS A LVEP?

- 2.1 A LVEP is a designated body that provides local leadership for a visitor destination. It works to strengthen the local visitor economy by coordinating public and private sectors, focusing on shared goals like destination management, marketing, and visitor experience.

2.2 LVEPs are rooted in local identity and assets, helping to:

- a) Leverage local strengths (heritage, culture, natural landscapes)
- b) Tailor strategies to the unique opportunities of the place
- c) Attract investment and support regeneration

2.3 The key functions and goals are:

- a) Local leadership and governance: LVEPs provide a single, strong voice for a destination's visitor economy
- b) Collaboration: They bring together public and private stakeholders, including councils and businesses, cultural and community organisations, education and skills providers, to work on shared priorities and targets through joined up thinking, leading to the delivery of more effective visitor economy strategies
- c) Strategic planning and management: LVEPs develop and implement robust plans for the destination to support the sector to grow and develop, creating jobs (especially for young people and part-time workers), support small businesses including hospitality, retail and creative sectors and increase local spending and tax revenues
- d) Enhancing visitor experience: through aligning marketing, infrastructure and service delivery, LVEPs can influence the improvement of the visitor offer, encourage longer stays and repeat visits and promote off-season tourism to reduce pressure on peak times
- e) Sustainability and resilience: LVEPs are often well positioned to embed sustainable tourism practices including promoting low carbon travel, protecting natural and cultural assets, encouraging responsible visitor behaviour as well as helping the sector become more resilient to economic shocks by diversifying income streams
- f) Strategic alignment: LVEPs align their work with national tourism strategies as well as local industrial strategies and devolution agendas which helps unlock funding opportunities and influence policy at local, regional and national levels

WHY IS A LVEP IMPORTANT FOR WINCHESTER DISTRICT?

2.4 LVEPs play a crucial role in driving sustainable economic growth, community wellbeing and place-based development, outcomes which would benefit the visitor economy across the district.

2.5 The visitor economy forms an important and significant part of the overall economy of the district. The sector attracts over 8m visitors to the district each year generating over £292m to the local economy, supporting over 5760 jobs, equivalent to 7% of the district's employment. The council recognises

the importance to this sector, which is reflected in its provision of the Visit Winchester partnership.

- 2.6 The activities to support the visitor economy across the county, regionally and nationally, have an influence over the impact and success of the visitor economy locally and vice versa. It is key therefore to adopt shared priorities and mutually beneficial working relationships, supported by collaborative working and with these tourism bodies. The formation of a LVEP better creates the conditions to achieve this.
- 2.7 The council has therefore worked with other Hampshire local authorities and Tourism South East to make an application to Visit England, the lead body for tourism nationally in England, to become recognised as a Local Visitor Economy Partnership.

WHAT BENEFITS DOES A HAMPHIRE LVEP OFFER WINCHESTER DISTRICT'S VISITOR ECONOMY

- 2.8 Participation in Visit England's national LVEP programme, ensures that the Winchester District's visitor economy can benefit from:
- a) National networking/ best practice sharing between Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs) and LVEPs
 - b) Continued support for Visit England's Regional Development Lead, including support with sector growth and development through the production of a Growth Action Plan
 - c) Central thought leadership, expertise, support and tools e.g. Accessibility, Sustainability
 - d) Bid support: identifying funding streams, toolkits and training
 - e) Training programme for LVEPs and businesses around commercialisation, distribution, accessibility, business support and marketing
 - f) Enhanced destination insights and intelligence including domestic and inbound tourism research
 - g) Inclusion in and benefit from Visit England led marketing and travel trade activity, website, PR, trade missions, events
 - h) Working with DCMS to raise the profile of the visitor economy amongst arm's length bodies and other government departments including Arts Council to enable access to potential funding streams

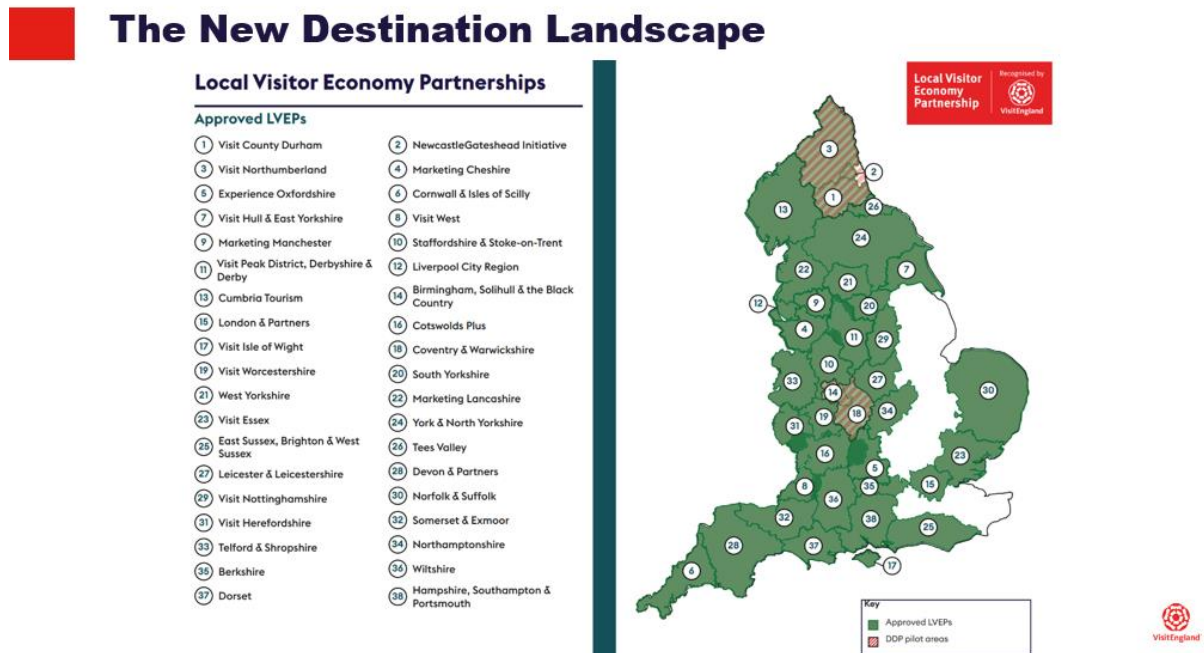
WHY FORM A LVEP IN HAMPSHIRE NOW?

- 2.9 This paper recognises the importance the visitor economy plays within the district and the value the sector places on the council's support and intervention through the Visit Winchester Partnership. Establishing an effective LVEP now creates a structure which brings together the visitor economy across the county that complements, and is ready to work alongside, the new Local Government Reorganisation and devolution arrangements. Moreover, it provides a legacy for the existing best practice established in the Winchester district and will support the role a new unitary authority might take within the visitor economy across a wider geography.
- 2.10 Therefore, it is timely to consider the role of local authorities in supporting the visitor economy across the county including how the sector could organise itself against the backdrop of devolution and the LGR.
- 2.11 The visitor economy forms, along with culture and creative sectors, one of the devolution policy workstreams, led by Southampton City Council. Winchester City Council is feeding into this process via Test Valley Borough Council, who are the districts' lead on Culture, Creative and Visitor Economies. The future delivery of the Hampshire LVEP will have to be considered as part of this process.
- 2.12 The devolution policy workstream have been tasked with the following deliverables:
- a) Options for how the MCCA could engage with or adopt existing or future regional partnerships for these sectors including the two LVEPs, and how this would benefit the region and strengthen its relationship with government
 - b) Options for drawing down investment on priority capital, revenue, and skills investment schemes for the MCCA to consider and implement in its first year

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF LVEPs

- 2.13 The national LVEP programme, developed and administered by Visit England, is a result of key recommendations following the Government's independent de Bois review of Destination Management Organisation in England (published in August 2021, followed by the government response in July 2022, and regional consultation on the proposals). The programme, which launched in January 2023, creates a portfolio of high-performing partnerships working locally, regionally and nationally on shared priorities and targets to support the growth of the national visitor sector.

2.14 The map below shows all accredited LVEPs as of October 2025:



2.15 LVEPs form one of three new tiers which have now been adopted by DCMS and Visit England, with only tiers 1 and 2 having any direct dialogue with these two agencies and access to funding. This is outlined as follows:

- a) Tier 1 – DDP: Destination Development Partnerships – strategic objective setting in line with national priorities and regional programme delivery.
- b) Tier 2 – LVEP: Local Visitor Economy Partnerships – strategic and high performing, recognised by Visit England. Lead, manage and market destinations, collaborate locally and nationally.
- c) Tier 3 – DO: Destination Organisations – might deliver marketing of local destinations, contact with tourism businesses, products, services and infrastructure for visitors.

2.16 The white areas on the map at 2.13 indicate areas where LVEPs have failed or have not yet been successfully established. This is often where destination management organisations (DMOs) have been dissolved, recently Cornwall, Kent and Hertfordshire. Others include:

- a) Lincolnshire
- b) Cambridgeshire
- c) Buckinghamshire

2.17 Typically, the DMOs have dissolved following a reduction or removal of public funding rendering the service no longer financially viable.

2.18 Successful and sustainable DMOs and LVEPs are those that are collaboratively driven, bringing together a balanced and sustainable combination of public and private sector investment and practical intervention, focussed on agreed and shared goals and priorities illustrated in a tourism strategy and delivered through recognised and established structures and partnerships. It is recommended that these conditions are carefully considered when developing the future landscape for the delivery and support of the visitor economy across the Winchester district and beyond, across the county. Examples of areas where LVEPs have made the most impact this has been most effective and are regarded by Visit England as best practice examples are:

a) Visit West

Rapidly established itself as a successful regional Destination Management Organisation since its launch in May 2021, following the merger of Visit Bath and Destination Bristol. Co-owned by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and Business West, and working with four unitary authorities, it operates as a not-for-profit public-private partnership with dual responsibilities as the Local Visitor Economy Partnership and for delivering Business Improvement Districts in Bristol. Building on roots dating back to 1999, Visit West combines strong governance, a commercial membership of around 650 businesses, and an experienced leadership team with deep expertise across tourism and hospitality. Its management of three BIDs and plans for a unified Bristol BID in 2025 further demonstrate its strategic vision and commitment to driving growth in the region's visitor economy.

b) Sussex & Brighton

Success stems from strong collaboration between three county councils, clear strategic direction, and effective governance. Accredited in January 2024, the partnership launched an ambitious 10-year Strategy for Growth in early 2025 and established an LVEP Advisory Board to guide delivery. Joint funding of a dedicated Project Officer has ensured smooth coordination across a complex geography, while the creation of a Destination Forum fosters engagement with local destinations and businesses. The strategy sets bold goals - to grow the visitor economy from £5 billion to £7.5 billion by 2034 and position Sussex as a national leader in sustainable tourism - supported by initiatives such as an international trade strategy and participation in international-ready programmes. Additionally, the LVEP's role in fast-track devolution highlights its effectiveness and forward-thinking approach.

c) Visit Hull & East Yorkshire

Success is rooted in a strong, long-standing partnership between Hull City Council and East Riding Council, formalized in April 2023 with Hull as the lead accountable body. Building on years of collaborative work since the regional development agency era, the LVEP benefits from coordinated local authority teams and effective governance. Key achievements include establishing a new advisory board led by a salaried Chair and composed of influential local business leaders, ensuring strategic direction and broad sector representation. This structure has enabled the LVEP to operate smoothly and deliver value across the region's visitor economy.

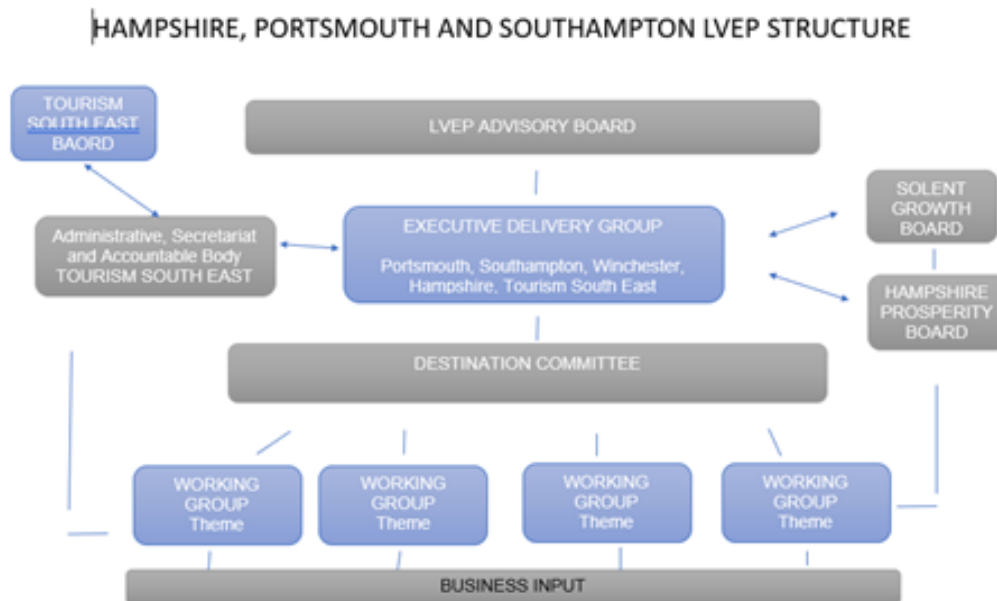
- 2.19 Some of the conditions outlined in 2.18, which support the development of a successful LVEP are already established across the Winchester district through the work of the council's Visit Winchester partnership.
- 2.20 Tourism South East established, as part of the preliminary LVEP development work, Winchester district is the only area across the county that has a current set of priorities, established in partnership with stakeholders for developing the visitor economy, through the council's work on the emerging tourism strategy. The operating principles of Visit Winchester directly align with the conditions recognised for delivering a successful LVEP. This places the district in a strong position as the Hampshire LVEP develops, ensuring that the local visitor economy is appropriately recognised and supported going forward.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE HAMPSHIRE LVEP

- 2.21 Given the complexities around devolution, and the budget challenges facing Hampshire County Council, Visit England's preferred approach of a Hampshire-led LVEP became increasingly unlikely. As a result, Visit Isle of Wight successfully made the case to become a standalone island LVEP.
- 2.22 Winchester City Council, through its' delivery of Visit Winchester, has demonstrated successfully its role to undertake the responsibilities of destination management, supporting the visitor economy across the district by:
- a) recognising the value of tourism and how well known the place is as a destination of choice for visitors
 - b) developing the Visit Winchester partnership, serving as the platform for the Visit Winchester brand and the related campaigns, marketing and PR activities that the council undertakes. This partnership provides an opportunity of engagement for all businesses operating within the visitor economy across the district. In addition, all major attractions, many accommodation providers, large event organisers and many businesses in support sectors to the visitor economy opting for enhanced engagement through the range of partnership programmes

- c) establishing partnerships in key visitor economy sectors to enable collaborative working practices including the Attractions Partnership, the Meet in Winchester Partnership, Discover Winchester and more recently, the emerging advisory group, made up of strategic thinkers operating in the visitor economy across the district, who have assembled to work with the council in finalising and mobilising the Winchester District Tourism Strategy
- 2.23 This expertise and results have led to the council taking an instrumental role, along with Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council in the development and delivery of the Hampshire LVEP.
- 2.24 It was agreed that Tourism South East would facilitate an application to Visit England on behalf of Hampshire county, unitary and district/city councils and take a strategic lead, delivering the LVEP in partnership with, Winchester City Council and working with the local authorities and key stakeholders across the region.
- 2.25 This approach is underpinned by the policy commitments of regional partners to invest and grow the visitor economy and capitalise on the benefits of tourism in each of the distinct and regional destinations. To that end, the Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Winchester LVEP was accredited by Visit England in May 2025.
- 2.26 Winchester City Council, along with Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council form the Executive Delivery Group (EDG). This enables the council to take an active role in setting out a strategic path to shape the tourism offer in the area, attract inward investment, deliver visitor economy growth and ensure positive contributions to the local community.

2.27 Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Winchester LVEP structure:



2.28 The initial priorities for the EDG were to:

- a) Develop a governance structure for the partnership
- b) Form the LVEP Advisory Board
- c) Develop a Hampshire Destination Management Plan (DMP)

2.29 A light touch governance structure has been developed so far. A group of representatives from key organisations across the county's visitor economy are being assembled to form a shadow Advisory Board.

2.30 It will be fundamentally important that the DMP development draws from all the 11 districts in Hampshire, ensuring an inclusive and representative approach. The subsequent action plan and the working groups and quarterly meetings, identified in the governance structure ensure that each district and destination will play an active part in the direction of the LVEP and that it is relevant to the make-up, geography and priorities in their specific area. The agreed governance is as follows:

- a) **Lead and Accountable Body:** Tourism South East (including secretariat and administrative activity).
- b) **LVEP Advisory Board:** The Advisory Board will sit to advise, direct and approve the strategic direction of the LVEP and the activities under the Executive Delivery Group and Destination Committee. The Advisory Board will sit once a quarter, receiving regular reports and will be asked to critique the LVEP strategy, providing commercial and wider economic input. It is proposed that the Board be limited in numbers but ensure representative coverage of the private/public

sector. The independent Chair will be allocated from the Board and must be a private sector representative. The term of the Chair should be limited to one year rolling position.

The Shadow Advisory Board is currently being formed and is made up of:

- Winchester Cathedral
- Hampshire Fare
- Hampshire Cultural Trust
- South Downs National Park (representing National Parks including New Forest National Park)
- Southampton Hoteliers Association
- Southampton Airport
- Gunwharf Quays
- Portsmouth International Port
- Beaulieu Enterprises
- Basingstoke College of Technology
- Farnborough International Exhibition Centre
- Blue Star Buses
- Paulton's Park

In addition to the potential for the Growth Board to take a place on the Advisory Board, there is a need for a robust two-way relationship with the Boards. In a long-term objective to secure core funding from the Boards, it will be the responsibility of the Executive Delivery Group to maintain this relationship. It will therefore be important to ensure regular and effective communications and reporting on return on investment and delivery points because of any core funding.

- c) **Executive Delivery Group:** The Executive Delivery Group will sit directly below the Advisory Board and will be the main vehicle for the coordination and delivery of the DMP. The Executive Board will be made up of the following members:

- Tourism South East - CEO, Fran Downton
- Visit Hampshire - Strategic Economy Lead, Teresa Hogsbjerg
- Visit Portsmouth - Tourism and Marketing Manager, Jane Singh
- Visit Southampton - Head of Culture and Tourism, Carolyn Abel
- Visit Winchester - Economy & Tourism Service Lead, Andrew Gostelow

- d) **Destination Committee:** Importantly this area of governance will be made up of the Executive Delivery Group and one representative from each of the District/Borough councils and related tourism organisations. It is proposed that the Destination Committee should meet on a face-to-face round table quarterly basis, following the meetings of the Executive Delivery Group. The Destination Committee will take on a collaborative approach in feeding into the DMP, strategic direction and providing a comprehensive representation of the visitor economy across the county. Fundamental to the committee and the overall LVEP is the ability to be inclusive to businesses and provide a means for input through their destination representative.
- e) **Working Groups:** As a direct line down from the Destination Committee, working groups will be established to move forward themed activities in line with the strategic objectives outlined in the DMP. It is envisaged that relevant businesses will be invited to join the working groups to ensure a widespread collaborative approach.

2.31 Working Groups, public sector facilitated and business-led, will be formed once the Hampshire DMP is agreed. It is likely that the working groups will focus on the following emerging themes and priorities including:

- a) Marketing and events
- b) Sustainability
- c) Infrastructure and investment
- d) Business support and workforce / skills development

2.32 The emerging Hampshire Destination Management Plan priorities and themes and their alignment with the Winchester District Tourism Strategy:

Emerging Hampshire DMP priorities	Emerging Winchester District Tourism Strategy priorities
Awareness and promotion Joined-up approach to promoting across the county and creation of a co-ordinated, unified identity. Key themes currently under-promoted include history and heritage, nature.	Destination marketing Grow awareness and strengthen perceptions of Winchester through 'heritage plus' itineraries and experiences. Seize key themes including food and drink and access to nature.
Visitor market focus -International visitors -Domestic visitors travelling more than 30 minutes -Young professionals	Visitor market focus -Country Loving Traditionalists -Cultural Foodie Explorers -Global Experience Seekers

Emerging Hampshire DMP priorities	Emerging Winchester District Tourism Strategy priorities
Infrastructure and investment Better transport links connecting towns, villages and coastal cities.	Product development -Active travel options and information -Joining up city and rural areas -Rural transport promotion
Skills and workforce Retain talent in the county, create peer to peer learning opportunities, adopt a joined-up approach to skills development	Destination Management Centralised advice and support, signposting to training, networking, sector and visitor market knowledge.
Sustainability Signposting to training, toolkits and funding.	Destination Management -Business support and collaboration, signposting to training and toolkits -Quality welcome and environment, managing the balance of visitors with residents.
Diversity and inclusion Accessing and sharing research, data, insights and best practice.	Product development Inclusive and accessible to all Destination Management -Quality welcome and environment, well managed and inclusive destination -Business support and collaboration, signposting to training and toolkits, networking -Data and insights

- 2.33 It is predicated that the delivery of the Hampshire Destination Management Plan will be led by the activity of the visitor economy across the county and facilitated through the current and future activities of key tourism functions in Local Authorities, including that of Winchester City Council's and their successor organisations forming from the Local Government Reorganisation.

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

3.1 The other option considered and rejected are:

- a) Do nothing – not recommended: The involvement in the delivery of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership and associated DMP for Hampshire is an action in the Economy & Community Service Plan 2025/2026 and aligns with the Council Plan priority of 'Thriving Places'. To not engage with the development of the region's visitor economy would risk a lack of strategic direction and engagement at national government level. This would impact Winchester district's ability to retain and develop the volume and value the sector represents as part of the wider district's economy. Participation in VisitEngland's national LVEP programme, ensures that the local tourism industry in the region can benefit from opportunities for collaboration and support, funding and training, insights and marketing, recognition and advocacy.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Information on the Local Visitor Economy Partnerships programme

[The de Bois Review: an independent review of destination management organisations in England](#)

Previous Committee Reports:-

[EHP57 Tourism Strategy, 16 September 2025](#)

APPENDICES:

None