

# Worcestershire Destination Management Plan:

Growing our billion pound visitor economy



# Welcome to Worcestershire

Rich in over 2,000 years of history, with stunning rolling countryside, majestic waterways and a vibrant urban heart, Worcestershire is a county full of remarkable assets and attractions. Hidden for too long, Worcestershire is ready to be explored and discovered...

We, both as Worcestershire County Council and as the Local Visitor Economy Advisory Group for the county, are excited to work together to encourage more visitors to the county. Offering them a warm Worcestershire welcome and ensuring they leave with a smile and a positive experience – which will leave them wanting to visit again, and again.

This new Tourism Growth Strategy is a celebration of our 'billion-pound visitor economy'. It recognises how far we have come but also, where we need to develop and grow.

Working together offers wider benefits, including increased revenue for the local economy, more opportunities for employment and creating an attractive place for all to live, work, visit and study.

We recognise that tourism raises the profile of Worcestershire nationally and internationally, which dovetails into a range of other activities, from inward investment to attracting students to our university.

The purpose of the Visit Worcestershire Destination Management Plan is to provide a framework for growth for everyone who delivers on the visitor experience across Worcestershire. Be it local councils, the Local Visitor Economy Partnership, tourism and hospitality businesses or those who care for our natural landscapes and town centres.

We all have a role in developing Worcestershire and to ensure our visitor economy thrives.

The Destination Management Plan has established clear priorities and messages for us all to focus on. It gives a clear outline of what needs to be done to make a difference and most importantly - what success looks like for Worcestershire.

*Marc Bayliss*

Marc Bayliss  
– Cabinet Member for Economy,  
Infrastructure and Skills



## Local Visitor Economy Advisory Group, comprised of:

- > West Midland Safari Park
- > Severn Valley Railway
- > Astley Vineyard
- > Attwell Farm Park
- > Worcester Business Improvement District
- > Worcester Tourist Information Centre
- > Canal and River Trust

- > Forestry Commission
- > The Elms Hotel
- > Rowley Farm Holidays
- > The Cottage in the Wood
- > Hopleys Family Camping
- > Treeopia

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# 1 About this Plan

This Plan is a shared commitment to develop, manage and market Worcestershire's visitor economy in a way which benefits all those involved in it - businesses, visitors, local communities - and the environment. It is the first Destination Management Plan (DMP) that has been produced for the county since Visit Worcestershire (VW) - now the accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for the county - transitioned into Worcestershire County Council in April 2020; a recognition of the importance of the visitor economy within the county's wider economic and social context. Showcasing a commitment now to continue to promote the visibility of the sector and achieve growth within it.



Deer Park Wines

It is a Strategic Plan built on a thorough market and trend analysis, full review of existing tourism strengths and consultation with stakeholders. Consideration of the strategic local, regional and national priorities, the county's central location and the opportunities that arise have also been key. Designed to get partners actively involved in growing the county's visitor economy, it is not everything that will

happen, instead it is focused on the actions and approaches that will have the greatest impact towards delivering the vision and objectives identified for the next five years.

The De Bois review, commissioned by Government and published in 2021, highlighted the challenge of a highly fragmented DMO landscape across England.

As a result, a new tiered structure of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) was proposed with a pilot structure in NE England and VisitEngland rolling out a national network of second tier DMOs called Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) to which Visit Worcestershire is accredited. In light of the new structure, VisitEngland is now developing a new national strategy with the key themes of accessibility, sustainability, skills, business visits & events, innovation and business support at its core. This DMP for Worcestershire has been developed with both the new national structure and strategy in mind.

It provides a framework for growth for all those involved in the tourism sector, guiding activity and focus and influencing investment. It is for Visit Worcestershire as the accredited LVEP, for local authorities, and for those providing tourism experiences and services from the private, public and third sectors.

The DMP establishes clear priorities and messages for the county to focus on over the next five years, it gives a clear outline of what needs to be done to make a difference and most importantly - what success looks like for Worcestershire.



Lygon Arms, Broadway

## Total value to the economy

The total value of Tourism to the Worcestershire economy in 2022.

**£939**  
MILLION



## Overnight visitor spend:

**£176**  
MILLION



**17.3** MILLION

trips were undertaken across the County during 2022



## Full time equivalent Jobs:

**14,759**



The number of FTE jobs increased in 2022, with the total number of jobs estimated to be nearer **19,547**. Which equates to **7%** of total Worcestershire jobs




Proportion of visitors and the purpose of there trip in 2022.

<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Holiday	50%
<span style="color: limegreen;">■</span> Visiting Friends and Family	42%
<span style="color: white;">■</span> Business	8%

### Tourism Enterprise Growth from 2016-2021

Worcestershire	15.9%
England	9.4%



### No of Tourism Sector Businesses

2019	2020	2021
2,010	2,215	2,230

The number of available bed space across the County (2023).

**4,360**



In 2022 Room occupancy was up to

**73.40%**



\*Economic Impact Assessment 2022, The Research

# 2 Now

# Worcestershire

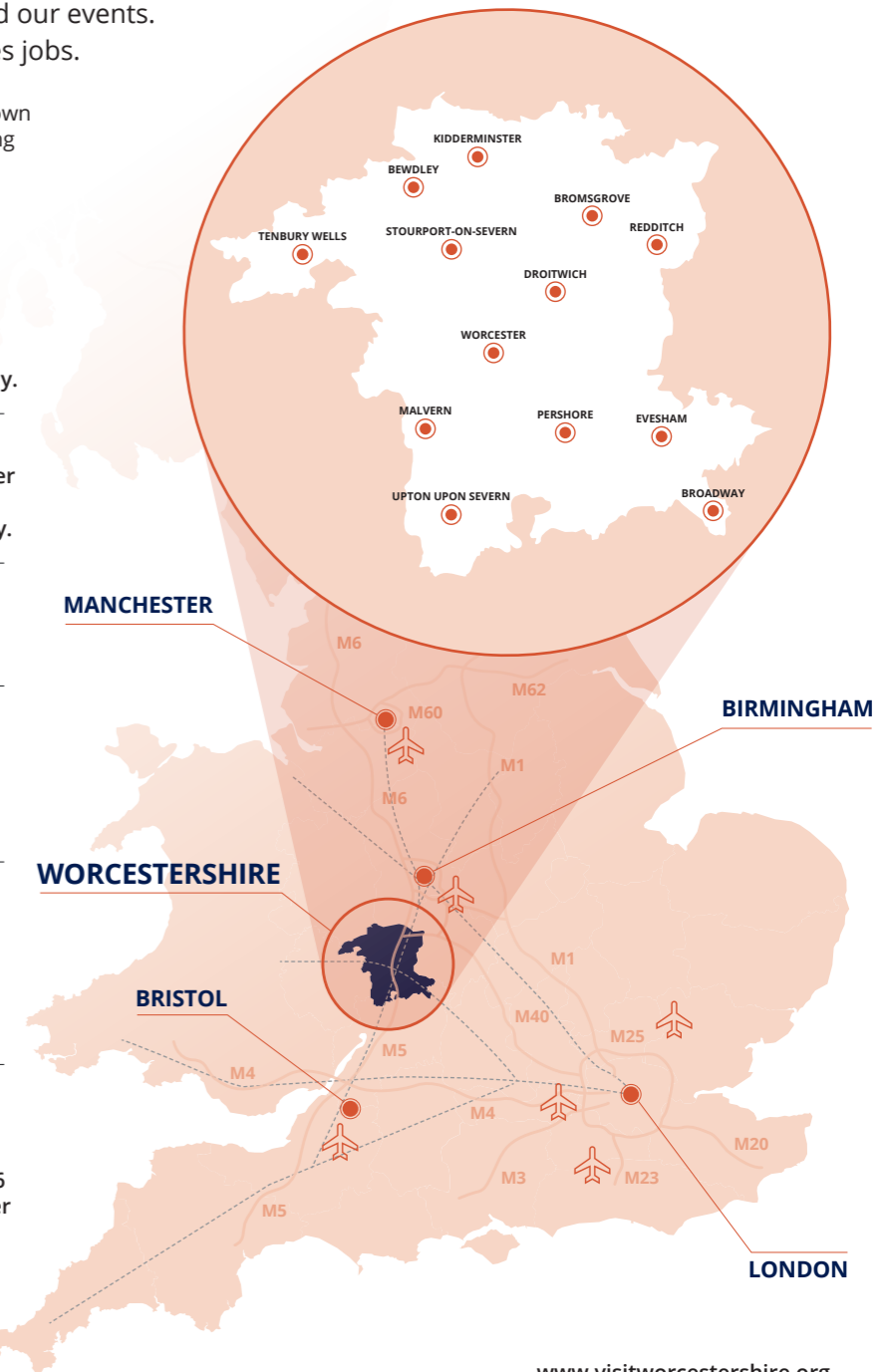
Tourism and hospitality play an important role in making Worcestershire the attractive place that it is to live and work in, as well as a special place to visit. Tourism contributes to the vibrancy of our towns and villages, supports our shops, our eating places and our events. It sustains successful business and creates jobs.

Headlines for Worcestershire's visitor economy (shown to the left) are impressive, revealing some interesting findings with implications for this Plan:

- > **Day trippers**  
Unsurprisingly, with its central location and proximity to both the motorway network and large domestic markets (over 14m residents within two hours' drivetime), the majority of visitors to Worcestershire are coming for the day.
- > **Overnight Stays**  
Domestic staying visitors, although much smaller in number, spend significantly more than day visitors and so are clearly valuable to the county.
- > **Family Connections**  
A high proportion of visitors to Worcestershire are visiting friends and relatives (VFR).
- > **Year Round Appeal**  
Worcestershire is an all-year destination, with an even split of visitors across the year. April, July, August, November and December just edging ahead as key months for visits<sup>1</sup>.
- > **Perception**  
Encouragingly visitors are happy with the county's tourism offer and are likely to return but non-visitors are typically unaware of what Worcestershire's proposition as a visitor destination is<sup>2</sup>.
- > **Sector Growth**  
Predominantly made up of independent small to medium-sized enterprises, Worcestershire's tourism enterprise grew by 15.9% between 2016 and 2021, compared to 9.4% across England over the same period.

<sup>1</sup> Worcestershire County Council Economic Impact Assessment, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Bluegrass Visitor & Non-Visitor Perceptions Research, March 2023



# The Worcestershire Offer

Worcestershire is famous for many things – for its sauce, for being the birthplace of Sir Edward Elgar, and for playing host to the Battle of Worcester during the English Civil War, among others. But its tourism offer spans much more than that with a range of quality assets, experiences and events across six clear areas of strength:



## Heritage –

A deep history which dates back over 2000 years, from Bad King John, the Magna Carta, to the Civil War, Stately Homes and Industrial heritage. There are plenty of opportunities to get hands on with history across Worcestershire.



## Green spaces –

From the iconic rolling Malvern Hills to the UK's largest ancient woodland, Worcestershire offers beautiful countryside in which to walk, cycle, or horse ride.



These six themes reflect what Worcestershire is best known for, they also offer our strongest growth potential. Across all six areas, there is an exciting opportunity to develop high quality experiences that are distinctly Worcestershire. Building on the excellent things our tourism businesses are already doing and ensuring our warm Worcestershire welcome is open to all.



## Food & drink –

Not only does Worcestershire have great places to eat and drink but the majority of the UK's soft fruits, apples and pears are grown within the county. With its internationally recognised asparagus and award-winning vineyards, it's safe to say Worcestershire's food scene is more than just the sauce!



## A warm welcome –

Cosy fires, attentive staff, friendly locals, panoramic views, independent food and retail offerings. Complimented by quality accommodation with friendly customer service. Often a home-from-home for visitors.



## Family fun –

With roaring lions, ample woodlands to explore, farm parks that celebrate our farming heritage as well as lidos to splash around in. Not to mention steam engines that take you back in time. Worcestershire offers something for the whole family.



## Waterways –

Along with the extensive canal network which connects Worcester to Birmingham. Home to the Mid-Worcestershire Ring - the only circular canal route you can do in a weekend. The County has plenty of opportunities for visitors to enjoy the meandering River Severn, Teme and Avon which run through several of the county's towns and along with the extensive canal network. Offering plenty of opportunities for visitors to enjoy activities on or by the water.



Worcestershire is home to a number of international brands, but none more synonymous with luxury as the Morgan Motor. Famous across the world for its unique blend of craft, heritage and pure driving experience, the Morgan Motor Company has been manufacturing quintessentially British vehicles in Malvern, UK, for more than 110 years.

^ Morgan Motor Factory Tour and Experience Centre

## Spotlight On:

Our businesses which are already paving the way for growth



### Business Innovation

Coffee infused gin anyone? Or perhaps Douglas Fir is your preference?

Award-winning Piston Gin is a craft gin producer founded in Worcester in 2018. Capitalising on market interest for craft gin, Piston have expanded the visitor experience at their new location in Diglis Basin with a gin school and sophisticated bar for tasting, learning and chilling.

The company's growth has been aided by Visit Worcestershire's tourism business support programme.



### Accessible Tourism

The renowned landscape of the Malvern Hills deserves to be enjoyed by all. So, when Dee Jones began to lose her sight she started Sense Adventures for people who are sight impaired but still want to enjoy regular walks.

Sense Adventures take a relaxed and friendly approach offering guided day activities and short breaks for individuals or mixed groups of blind and sight impairments. Guides will meet customers at the local railway station, provide assistance throughout the visit as well as describing the landscape and recounting its history. With plans to extend into cooking classes and creative writing Sense Adventures is making accessible tourism a reality.



### Distinctive Accommodation

In recognition of excellence, Worcestershire's very own Treeopia featured in VisitEngland's English Tourism Week as one of England's amazing places to stay. They won the acclaimed VisitEngland gold Award for Excellence in 2022 for Self Catering Accommodation of the Year.

It's easy to see why. Set in four acres of secluded woodland and lakes, Treeopia's two spacious treehouses have every luxury - under floor heating, opulent bathroom, bespoke hand-crafted kitchen, private fire pit and a hot-tub under the trees to name but a few of the delights on offer.

Use of local materials, welcome packs with local produce and EV charging on-site demonstrate an ongoing commitment to environmental concerns, as well as high standards.



WORCESTERSHIRE  
FILM OFFICE

### NEW Worcestershire Film Office

Launched in 2023, Worcestershire's new Film Office adds another dimension to the county's tourism offer. A joint initiative between location managers, FAME Pro and Visit Worcestershire, it aims to put Worcestershire on the map as a film friendly destination. Promoting its assets to production companies, supporting tourism businesses to become screen friendly locations and diversify their income, and in time, attracting screen tourism to the county.

# The key messages from the consultation and survey

## Consultation

Consultation through four workshops helped to understand the views and perspectives of stakeholders. Participants included members of Visit Worcestershire's Local Visitor Economy Advisory Group, representatives from several departments within the District Councils, and tourism businesses and organisations from across the county who make up key stakeholders e.g. Canal and River Trust. In total 59 people engaged with the workshops from 39 different businesses and organisations. The key messages from the consultation and survey are summarised on the following pages.

## Policy Context

Current national strategies are largely concerned with recovery from Covid (and a return to pre-Covid levels of tourism by 2024), better dispersal of tourism across the country and improved productivity. Those in development are likely to focus more heavily on accessible and sustainable tourism – areas which are more closely attuned to local policy ambitions around building a more sustainable future for Worcestershire. Key local policy areas that emerge strongly and which have relevance to the DMP include:

- Reducing the county's carbon footprint through business support initiatives and creating new walking and cycling routes (Worcestershire County Council Corporate Plan 2022-27, Shaping Worcestershire's Future)
- Infrastructure to support development including better connectivity and sustainable transport options (Worcestershire Local Transport Plan, 2018-30)
- Improving digital infrastructure, particularly in rural locations (Worcestershire LEP's Plan for Growth, 2020-40)
- Supporting skills development and retaining a highly skilled workforce locally (Worcestershire County Council Corporate Plan 2022-27, Shaping Worcestershire's Future)
- A focus on partnership working - public, private and voluntary & community sectors working together (Worcestershire County Council Corporate Plan 2022-27, Shaping Worcestershire's Future)





Malvern Hills

# Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

A summary SWOT highlighting the main findings from the research and engagement stages of producing the Plan is shown here. It provides context and direction.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Central location and proximity to a number of large population centres</li> <li>- Connected travel network - motorway and rail links</li> <li>- Strong tourism assets across a number of themes - heritage, family attractions, countryside, waterways</li> <li>- Engaged tourism sector (awards, listings on the VW website)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visit Worcestershire's established business support programmes and signposting (advice and grants)</li> <li>- Key policy aims align well with tourism development - active travel initiatives, rail improvements, rural digital infrastructure</li> <li>- Strong events programme</li> <li>- Active District Councils supporting the grass roots</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expanding strong themes (heritage, countryside, food &amp; drink) - identify and leverage key brands and USPs to develop products and experiences around themes - the clean and green experience for those visiting from the West Midlands Conurbation</li> <li>- Identify clear target markets and trends, and develop marketing content to inspire visits</li> <li>- Converting day visits to overnight/s - encouraging deeper exploration of the county and increasing spend per visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborative LVEP bringing the industry together with partners and stronger governance</li> <li>- Using big brands like the Cotswolds to attract, and raise the county's profile amongst, international visitors (baseline data needed first)</li> <li>- Enhanced business support programme with a focus on delivering sustainable and accessible tourism</li> <li>- Improved visitor data and insights</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of conferencing/venue facilities</li> <li>- The younger market (25-35) lack awareness of what Worcestershire has to offer</li> <li>- No comprehensive understanding of existing international visitors</li> <li>- Overshadowing brands in neighbouring destinations - Cotswolds, Shakespeare's Country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flood risk leading to negative perceptions around access</li> <li>- Limited public transport and sustainable 'final mile' options</li> <li>- Lack of high-end accommodation provision, particularly in the city of Worcester</li> </ul>
<p><b>Threats</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business resilience (post-covid) and increased operating costs</li> <li>- Cost of living crisis and visitors spending less</li> <li>- Sustainability and responsibility balanced with growth</li> <li>- Workforce development and labour supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Success could lead to over tourism in honeypot and sensitive destinations eg Malvern Hills, Broadway</li> <li>- Failure to appeal to a younger market</li> <li>- Lack of focus - trying to do too much</li> <li>- Delayed recovery from some international markets</li> </ul>



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# Vision & Objectives

## Vision

**We will work together to celebrate and champion Worcestershire's Billion Pound Visitor Economy.**

We will ensure our visitor economy continues to thrive for the benefit of all those who visit, live and work here – now and for future generations. We will make the most of our 2000-year heritage, our countryside with its hills, panoramic views and waterways and our unique food and drink offer, delivering memorable experiences to visitors from near and far.

Those experiences will be delivered by vibrant, independent businesses firmly rooted in Worcestershire and offering the warmest of welcomes.



^ West Midland Safari Park

## Objectives

To achieve this vision of a thriving visitor economy and growing sustainably, we have three inter-related areas of focus to guide the action flowing from this Plan.

- Objective one: Developing the Worcestershire Experience with increased product and a focus on business support which puts our key themes of sustainability and access for all at the heart of what we do. Creating the right environment for sector growth.
- Objective two: Raising awareness about what is special and distinctive about tourism in Worcestershire encouraging visits from our target markets and attracting higher value staying visitors.
- Objective three: Ensuring our infrastructure is ready for growth and investment while delivering an outstanding welcome across all visitor touch points which will create a positive impression and result in positive advocacy for the county.



## Targets


We will establish baselines during 2024-2025 for some key measures to monitor our progress over the 5 years for the Plan. Those key measures are:

### Target Measure:

Awareness, positive perceptions, and propensity to visit among target markets

### How to Measure:

Participation in commercial annual omnibus survey with targeted questions for selected profile of respondents

**5%**   
over baseline

### Target Measure:

Satisfaction levels among visitors to Worcestershire

### How to Measure:

Participation in commercial annual omnibus survey with targeted questions for selected profile of respondents

**5%**   
over baseline

### Target Measure:

Number of tourism businesses supported with 25 new tourism products brought to market.

### How to Measure:

Engagement in VW business support programmes.

target  
**400** 

### Target Measure:

Visitor spend from all markets and types of visit

### How to Measure:

National surveys – 3 year averages

**10%**   
over rate of inflation

### Target Measure:

Number of staying holiday visits from UK and international markets

### How to Measure:

National surveys – 3 year averages

**10%**   
over baseline

# 4 Markets for Growth

To achieve our vision, we must be clear on who our target markets are, both in the short to medium and longer term. Only then can we begin to position and develop our proposition in a meaningful way that will resonate with potential visitors, help us stand out amongst competition, and increase the value of tourism in our county.

## Key Market Trends

There are five market trends likely to have implications for Worcestershire. They are:



All about value - getting the biggest bang for your buck



Living like a local - the pursuit of authenticity



Activity, health and wellbeing - fresh adventures in the fresh air



Changing behaviours in a changing climate - seeking out responsible destinations



Going digital - digitalisation to enhance the experience



### Primary target markets

The primary target markets shown below are those visitors who visit the county time and time again. They are familiar with Worcestershire's visitor offer which has plenty that appeals to them. So, the growth opportunity here is a short to medium term one. It is about increasing spend by encouraging them to do and see more of the county either as part of a day visit or, preferably, by converting them into overnight visitors.

MARKET SEGMENT	WHO ARE THEY & WHAT DO THEY DO?	WHY THEM?	WHERE'S THE OPPORTUNITY?
 <p><b>Country Loving Traditionalists</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Couples, typically 50+ (but may be younger) travelling without children</li> <li>- Mid-affluence with a skew towards living in South East England</li> <li>- Countryside break takers</li> <li>- Enjoy heritage, outdoors &amp; experiencing local culture – including food &amp; drink</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Propensity to spend if the quality is right</li> <li>- Largest VisitEngland segment at 30%</li> <li>- Likely to do a lot, particularly in more rural areas of the county</li> <li>- Will visit outside of peak times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of established rural brands eg the Malvern Hills to attract them into the county and then encourage further exploration of lesser-known market towns and villages through showcasing quality experiences to spur repeat visits</li> </ul>

MARKET SEGMENT	WHO ARE THEY & WHAT DO THEY DO?	WHY THEM?	WHERE'S THE OPPORTUNITY?
 <p><b>Aspirational Family Fun</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Families with school-aged children</li> <li>- Affluence</li> <li>- City break takers – but also looking for rural locations with outdoor activities</li> <li>- Enjoy family-friendly activities – especially entertainment, culture &amp; events</li> <li>- Regular repeat visitors to seasonal events and festivals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will convert from day to overnight/s if the offer is right</li> <li>- Propensity to spend on activities that keep the children happy</li> <li>- Building loyalty with the destination from a young age</li> <li>- Want to make sustainable choices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use established attractors eg West Midland Safari Park, Severn Valley Railway, Wyre Forest, Worcester City as a means to appeal and then highlight additional daytime/evening options to convert day visits into overnights</li> <li>- Promote Worcestershire as an ideal location and central point for meeting up and spending time with wider family/friends</li> </ul>

In addition to the two VisitEngland market segments above, we will also maintain a focus on those people visiting friends and relatives (VFR) for the reasons detailed below:

VISITOR TYPE	WHO ARE THEY & WHAT DO THEY DO?	WHY THEM?	WHERE'S THE OPPORTUNITY?
 <p><b>Visiting Friends &amp; Relatives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All types of people (domestic and international) visiting friends and family in Worcestershire and the West Midlands</li> <li>- Some will know the area well, others less so - local people are ambassadors and information providers</li> <li>- Looking for things to do - days out, activities, entertainment, events - and places to eat and drink</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visit throughout the year</li> <li>- Willing to spend as accommodation is free</li> <li>- Make up a large proportion of Worcestershire's current visitor base</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engagement with residents to encourage and influence visitor behaviour e.g. local ambassador schemes</li> <li>- Opportunity to create a campaign which celebrates family and friends coming together in the county</li> </ul>

### Secondary target markets

We have identified two secondary target market segments which we will aim to grow in the medium to longer term as we place more emphasis on developing our destination. Whilst there are elements of the current proposition that will appeal to these markets, we are not yet competitive against those destinations for which these are the core audiences. It will therefore be important for us to build on our existing products and develop quality new experiences over the lifetime of this plan which will appeal to these markets.

MARKET SEGMENT	WHO ARE THEY & WHAT DO THEY DO?	WHY THEM?	WHERE'S THE OPPORTUNITY?
 <p><b>Young Actives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Younger (pre-family) couples and groups of friends</li> <li>- Enjoy spending time outdoors</li> <li>- Looking to escape the everyday and do something different</li> <li>- Capture and share moments on social media</li> <li>- Long days of activity need to be rewarded by good night-time experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frequent trip takers and will pack a lot in</li> <li>- Will spend on unique experiences including unusual accommodation</li> <li>- Advocates for destinations they love</li> <li>- Consciously support independent businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raising the profile of Worcestershire's outdoor offer among this market encouraging exploration by showcasing independent businesses doing innovative things</li> <li>- Evening activity development to encourage night-time spend</li> <li>- Showcase the county's AONBs, long distance walking paths (eg the Worcestershire Way) and range of on water activities</li> </ul>
 <p><b>International Explorers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Typically 45+ travelling without children</li> <li>- Mid-affluence; overseas trips a priority</li> <li>- Like a relaxed pace in small cities/countryside</li> <li>- Enjoy heritage, outdoors &amp; experiencing local culture – including food &amp; drink</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Largest segment in USA, Canada, Australia &amp; France</li> <li>- A City+ rural offer is likely to appeal</li> <li>- Will travel by public transport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of major brands eg the Cotswolds to attract them and then to encourage further exploration of the county, showcasing quality experiences</li> </ul>



Malvern Hills



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# Areas for Action

We will ensure Worcestershire’s billion pound visitor economy continues to thrive and grow sustainably with an approach that is creative, collaborative and market-focused.

Our plan is built around three inter-related delivery pillars – development, marketing and management – which will mean working together in new and exciting ways for tourism in Worcestershire.

Within each pillar there are actions for everyone – actions that are ambitious but deliverable and will make a real difference over the five years of this Plan.

Running across the three pillars are sustainability and accessibility, both integral to the future success of our visitor economy, with actions to address them woven through.



## Development

### The Worcestershire Experience

Successful destinations focus on delivering what they are particularly good at and making sure that visitors have a great time. That’s what this pillar is concerned with. Our priorities mean a rigorous focus on extending and enhancing our strengths and helping those at the core face of tourism to deliver memorable products, services and experiences. This is how we will achieve objective one:

PRIORITY	WHY?	WHAT?	WHO?	WHEN?
<b>Priority 1:</b> Building on our strengths	Worcestershire is strong in the six themes identified earlier – heritage, green spaces, family fun, waterways, food & drink and welcome. These - along with events - are the growth areas which will underpin the success of our visitor economy and will be the focus for investment and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish task &amp; finish groups of key partners and experts for each of the thematic strengths to produce a development plan which meets the needs of the market</li> <li>Each plan should involve partners from public and private sectors and set out priority actions, resourcing and delivery responsibilities phased over the five years of the Plan</li> <li>Plans should include an audit of the experiences on offer, identification of gaps and development needs including sustainable practices and accessibility</li> <li>Accommodation – type and location – should form part of this audit to encourage staying visits</li> <li>The identified gaps will become the focus of future product development/business support programmes</li> <li>Working to identify available land for leisure and hospitality purposes, developing investment packages and ensuring tourism is front and centre in all master plans</li> </ul>	VW, businesses & providers, County and District Councils	2023 - 2024
<b>Priority 2:</b> Supporting our businesses	Worcestershire already has a strong programme of support for visitor economy businesses. This will be extended and tailored to support the priorities of the Plan while responding to the needs of businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target additional business support – training, advice, and mentoring – to build good practice around key priorities eg becoming a more sustainable small business, good employer and digital skills</li> <li>Expand reach by rolling out ‘one to many’ programmes targeting new participants</li> <li>Provide networking opportunities for businesses to make connections and encourage collaboration</li> <li>Identify innovating and/or high performing businesses and provide tailored support to help them grow; showcase as exemplars and mentors to others</li> <li>Celebrate and encourage good practice via new categories within the Worcestershire Tourism Awards for innovation, accessibility and sustainability</li> <li>Via the recently launched Film Office, work with more tourism businesses across the county to support them in developing their film friendly offer</li> <li>Key focus of support will be access and inclusion, supporting businesses to access Visit England’s Toolkit. Offering bespoke consultancy and grants</li> <li>Supporting businesses to access UKSPF funded energy efficiency and Net Zero portals, support and grants</li> </ul>	VW	2024 onwards
<b>Priority 3:</b> Developing our workforce	The visitor economy provides job opportunities at all levels. A well-trained and skilled workforce is vital to deliver high quality experiences. Ensuring the sector is seen as attractive is important in recruiting and retaining enough of the right people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business engagement with schools and colleges to raise profile of tourism as a good career option</li> <li>Work with businesses to promote living wage and good employment conditions, through identifying exemplars, sharing good practice, celebrating action and signposting to support and funding</li> <li>Identify and support businesses in addressing any skills gaps including use of automation and technologies to improve productivity</li> <li>Ensuring businesses are aware of the County Councils skills support programmes including accessible apprenticeships and supported employment</li> </ul>	Businesses & providers, VW, schools and colleges	2024 onwards



#### Objective one:

Developing the Worcestershire Experience with increased product and a focus on business support which puts our key themes of sustainability and access for all at the heart of what we do. Creating the right environment for sector growth.



Marketing

# The Worcestershire Brand

Our 2023 perception research showed that many self-classified non-visitors had visited Worcestershire previously but not realised, suggesting that it lacks resonance with people as a visitor destination. So, there is a need to articulate Worcestershire’s offer and identity more clearly to build profile as a destination and to stand out against competition. As part of the development of this Plan, we have redefined our proposition and positioning statements to resonate with our target markets, highlighting our strengths but being careful not to overpromise. They are:

## Proposition

Ideally situated in the heart of England, Worcestershire is easy to get to and a joy to explore. Its riverside towns provide the perfect alternative to the coast and its fascinating histories, epic green spaces and authentic fresh tastes give plenty of reasons to get to know it better.

## Positioning

Steeped in history dating back over 2,000 years, Worcestershire has plenty of stories to tell new and returning visitors. The iconic rolling landscape of the Malvern Hills and the picturesque honey coloured Cotswold stone of Broadway village are undoubtedly jewels in Worcestershire’s crown. But it’s a county that’s as blue as it is green, and the meandering River Severn and extensive canal network offer a wealth of opportunities to enjoy activities on or by the water. Whether it’s by walking, cycling or paddling, Worcestershire is easy to explore and a joy to spend time in.

### What we mean by positioning

- > It’s about concepts, not language: what you want to convey but not how you say it
- > It’s what we want our targets to think, and think about, when they hear “Worcestershire”
- > It’s based on what our target visitors want and what we can deliver


### What does success look like?

- > When stakeholders and influencers use it - in marcomms and in product development
- > When it takes on a life of its own - grows organically and virally
- > When it appears in customer research - same concepts, in their own words

### Positioning must be...

- > SIMPLE - so it is easy for partners and stakeholders to remember and share
- > CONSISTENT - used and repeated over the long-term
- > DISTINCTIVE - different from the competition
- > REAL - it must ring true to locals and visitors

Over the five years of this Plan, the ‘Worcestershire Brand’ pillar is concerned with elevating the position of the county as a destination of choice among its key markets as new experiences and activities come on board. It is how we will achieve objective two:

 **Objective two:**  
Raising awareness of what is special and distinctive about tourism in Worcestershire encouraging visits from our target markets and attracting higher value staying visitors.

^ Broadway Tower

PRIORITY	WHY?	WHAT?	WHO?	WHEN?
<b>Priority 1:</b> Developing a distinctive proposition and positioning	Giving focus to the way Worcestershire is presented to target markets across all touch points, particularly as new experiences and activities emerge, will help it gain traction in the marketplace and stand out amongst competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review the destination’s proposition and positioning statements annually throughout the lifetime of this plan, updating as new products and experiences are developed</li> <li>- Roll out new consumer destination marketing messaging across channels belonging to each of the below stakeholders in light of the updated statements and new experiences:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit Worcestershire</li> <li>• Local destination marketing organisations (where they exist)</li> <li>• Individual tourism businesses and providers – expanding messaging to reflect the wider destination proposition as well as the individual offer/s</li> <li>• Wider regional marketing initiatives that may exist via new Destination Development Partnerships</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	VW, businesses & tourism providers, district councils, DDP/s	Begin 2024, then annually
<b>Priority 2:</b> Creating inspirational content	Visitor and non-visitor perceptions of a destination can be positively influenced by the content they consume about it. This is not necessarily about pure marketing messaging but rather finding new ways to talk about and present Worcestershire that will appeal to target markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expand the recent ‘story’ destination marketing campaign to include and celebrate the stories of some of Worcestershire’s independent tourism businesses and suppliers who are doing new and innovative things. Featured stories should be those which tap into the senses and have a strong sense of place                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit Worcestershire to provide practical yet flexible tools (narratives, images, guidance on stories) for businesses to create their own ‘story’ digital content to be used across destination channels</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Help visitors be more responsible during their visit through creating new marketing content which shows them how they can make environmentally sound choices in Worcestershire eg public transport, car free options, profiling businesses exercising good practices, EV charging points etc                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit Worcestershire to create the content initially and host centrally on the VW website</li> <li>• Businesses and tourism providers to use and link to in their own marketing activity</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Develop a flagship overnight/short break itinerary for each of Worcestershire’s key areas of strength which can be used across marketing channels. The itineraries should include several complementary experiences, including some of Worcestershire’s hero assets and events where appropriate, as well as logical routes between them and suggestions for travel, food &amp; drink and accommodation                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work alongside the experience development task &amp; finish groups to review itineraries and include new experiences as they come on board</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Showcasing the hero products and experiences, whilst building the profile of the destination, with a result of focusing and working with national and travel trade media</li> <li>- Showcasing our unique and vibrant event and festival scene, theming events and working with partners to increase reach and footfall</li> </ul>	VW, tourism businesses & providers, experience task & finish groups	2024 onwards
<b>Priority 3:</b> Collaborating to extend reach	While boundaries are important to local stakeholders, they mean very little to visitors. Working across boundaries can help to extend audience reach, particularly with new and international markets who are less familiar with the Worcestershire offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work with neighbouring LVEPs and Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs) where applicable on combined initiatives such as:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborating with Cotswolds Tourism on a campaign to raise the profile of Worcestershire as part of the Cotswolds among prospective international visitors</li> <li>• Joining forces with West Midlands Growth Company (as a new pilot DDP) on travel trade initiatives</li> <li>• Exploring opportunities to work with other neighbouring DMOs/LVEPs on the marketing of a borderlands proposition</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	VW, DDP(s), neighbouring LVEPs	2025 onwards

Management

## The Worcestershire Welcome

Successful destinations don't just offer great experiences, they have the essential services, environments and information that meet the needs and expectations of visitors to underpin them. The third pillar is concerned with getting these basics right in Worcestershire. Ensuring our infrastructure is ready for growth while delivering an outstanding welcome across all visitor touch points, which will create a positive impression and result in positive advocacy and repeat business. It is how we will achieve objective three:



**Objective three:**  
Ensuring our infrastructure is ready for growth and investment while delivering an outstanding welcome across all visitor touch points, which will create a positive impression and result in positive advocacy for the county.



PRIORITY	WHY?	WHAT?	WHO?	WHEN?
<b>Priority 1:</b> Delivering a great Worcestershire Welcome from our businesses	Worcestershire already places emphasis on providing a great welcome and Visit Worcestershire has delivered some training around specific elements. This will be extended into a full training programme for tourism providers, which aligns with national tourism priorities and responds to the needs of visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism businesses participate in an expanded Worcestershire Welcome training programme to deliver a great visitor welcome</li> <li>Include topics that support the priorities of this Plan and meet the needs of the key target markets it identifies eg welcoming international visitors, inclusion and disability awareness, welcoming families and young people</li> <li>Prioritise engagement of independent businesses via one-to-many delivery mechanisms, bringing them together to learn from each other</li> </ul> Support the programme with a new online portal which businesses can access to find practical information about how to deliver a great Worcestershire Welcome. Link to practical resource and toolkits such as Visit England's accessibility guides, training and other resources provided by Tourism For All	VW, tourism businesses and providers	2024 onwards
<b>Priority 2:</b> Coordinating our in-destination visitor information	Encouraging visitors to stay in Worcestershire longer and to explore it more fully, needs joined up, consistent visitor information, and effective signposting between locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a working group of representatives from district councils and Tourist Information Centres across the county to review the current in-destination visitor information provision, identifying gaps in linkages and developing a plan to coordinate it more effectively</li> <li>The plan should take into account opportunities for more digital integration of visitor information</li> <li>Working with all TICs to access and generate better quality information about visitors which can inform future strategy and developments</li> </ul>	VW, district councils (and TICs where applicable)	2024 onwards
<b>Priority 3:</b> Improving our access and infrastructure	Wider county policies are concerned with improving physical infrastructure and reducing Worcestershire's carbon footprint. Success in these bring benefits to both residents and visitors so it is important that visitors' needs are considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage businesses to offer and promote car-free travel incentives to their visitors</li> <li>Review key points of visitor access to make sure they meet the requirements of visitors and positively promote the destination eg prominent signage on key feeder roads like the M5 and welcome signage at main train stations</li> <li>Positively influence County Council transport planning investment to meet the needs of visitors as well as local communities and to improve the viability of rural transport</li> <li>Group travel, whilst not a target market segment for the county, remains an important part of the visitor economy with specific needs including dedicated pick-up/drop-off locations, large vehicle parking, driver facilities etc. So, review and develop plans to improve coach and group travel facilities in the towns where demand is greatest</li> </ul>	VW, WCC	2024 onwards
<b>Priority 4:</b> Making the case for Investment	Key to growing the sector is ensuring Worcestershire is investment ready, understanding what the county needs, engaging key industry leaders and ensuring the needs of the sector and visitors are considered in future investment and place based policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate private sector development/investment pipeline e.g. new products /refurbishments /regeneration etc so we can use these new products to create and unlock potential</li> <li>Acting as a consultee in future consultations for planning, transport, skills and infrastructure projects &amp; strategy development. E.g. Parkway Development and Local Transport Plan 5</li> <li>Fund feasibility study to review key investment gaps e.g. hotel study and business conferencing - making the most of our high end rural location</li> <li>Ensure tourism is connected to wider investment strategies, key link to inward investment, place marketing and coordination of government funds e.g. future UKSPF funding</li> <li>Working with inward investment to understand available land and to create investment proposition for Worcestershire e.g. Shrub Hill Hotel Development</li> </ul>	WCC/District Councils/ Tourism Sector	2024 onwards

# 6 Delivery through Partnership

Many organisations – public, private and third sector - play a part in Worcestershire's visitor economy. This DMP advocates strong collaboration and coordination across all of them and with other wider partner organisations. Responsibility for delivering the plan therefore does not lie with any one organisation - it is a road map to guide and inspire tourism businesses, public agencies and communities. All have a part to play and there are clear benefits of aligning investment, development and marketing. Visit Worcestershire however, as the accredited LVEP, does have a key leadership and enabling role - making the right connections, bringing influence to bear, refining activity and reporting progress to VisitEngland.

The recently reformed Worcestershire Local Visitor Economy Advisory Group now with a private sector chair and open recruitment process, will lead the implementation of the Plan and monitor actions and progress. It will bring the main support and public sector organisations together along with business representatives through its schedule of regular meetings.

Each area should look in detail at the implications for them of this DMP, the opportunities arising, and what actions they need to take forward working within the strategic framework provided by the countywide DMP.

Whilst resources are stretched for all partners, this Plan provides a framework against which funding (permanent and discretionary) should be aligned – and so should make the allocation of resources more efficient and effective. Funding streams such as the Shared Prosperity Fund, Rural England Prosperity Fund and any other emerging programmes applicable to the visitor economy should be allocated to the priorities and actions in this Plan.

The roles and responsibilities for the different organisations that make up the visitor economy in Worcestershire are illustrated in the diagram on the next page, and it will be for each of them to take forward the implementation of the DMP.



Swallowfields - Luxury Safari Tents

## The Worcestershire Visitor Economy







# Thank you:

The work to create this Plan has been coordinated and overseen by Visit Worcestershire in collaboration with the tourism industry in Worcestershire. It was compiled following a 3-month consultation process with a wide range of public bodies, key stakeholders and the tourism & hospitality sector during winter and spring 2022/2023.

This plan represents the county, reflects its vibrancy and ambition to grow.

We want to take a moment to thank all those who have taken part and supported this process.