

HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL

Economy and Growth Select Committee

26 January 2023

TITLE:	Tourism Strategy
EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR:	Councillor Damien Greenhalgh - Deputy Leader & Executive Councillor for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure
CONTACT OFFICER:	Nicholas Lamb – Interim Head of Regeneration
WARDS INVOLVED:	(All Wards);

Appendices Attached

Appendix A – Blue Sail Project Timetable

Appendix B – Baseline Data Report

Appendix C – Draft Tourism Strategy

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the development of the Tourism Strategy and action plan for tourism delivery in the High Peak over the next five years.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the draft version of the Strategy and recommend to the Committee for approval and publication of this Strategy.
- 2.2 To note the actions taken for the effective delivery of this Strategy.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 The global pandemic has had a significant impact on the tourism sector with total visits to the High Peak down approximately 49% on 2019 figures with economic benefits down by over 50% on 2019 values. National forecasts are now suggesting that it will be the end of 2022 before domestic tourism recovers to 2019 levels. Given the reduction in visitor numbers, this Strategy is required to help High Peak Borough capture new markets, using the area's cultural and natural assets to fuel growth and capitalise on the staycation demand and people's desire for escape to and exploration of "the great

outdoors”. The key to success of the Strategy will be increasing overnight stays to maximise visitor spend in the High Peak.

3.2 In February 2022 High Peak Borough Council issued a tender to appoint consultancy services for the preparation of a five-year Tourism Strategy and action plan for the High Peak.

3.3 Tourism specialists, Blue Sail Consultants were appointed in April 2022 to conduct stakeholder and wider consultation and draft the Strategy working closely with Officers.

3.4 Blue Sail Consultants have held individual conversations with the people listed here:

- Clare Brookes, High Peak Borough Council
- Jo Dilley, Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire
- Alison Foote, Derbyshire County Council
- Simon Fussell, Buxton Civic Association, Poole’s Cavern
- Ben Green, Buxton Opera House
- Cllr. Damien Greenhalgh, High Peak Borough Council
- Lisa Hoyland, High Peak Borough Council
- Helen Illingworth, Yorkshire Bridge Inn
- Roddie MacLean, Visit Buxton
- Stephen Owen, Buxton Crescent Trust
- Sarah Porru, High Peak Borough Council
- Sally Potter, Marketing Buxton
- Lindsay Rae, Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire
- Paul & Kathryn Roden, LosehillHouse Hotel & Spa
- Mark & Jackie Sweeney, Live for the Hills guided tours
- Sarah Wilks, Peak District National Park Authority
- Joss Winter, Sustrans
- Duncan Wright, GlossopCreative Trust

3.5 In addition a cross-section of businesses and town representatives took part in an online survey, a summary of the online survey can be found at Appendix B.

3.6 The Baseline Report was delivered by Blue Sail in November 2022 and shared with key Regeneration Officers and the Deputy Leader & Executive Councillor for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure for further input and feedback (Appendix B). This report includes:

- Current Tourism Performance
- Comprehensive Product Audit
- Regional and Local Strategy Review
- Market Review
- Best Practice (learning from others and case studies)
- Consultation and Engagement
- Business Surveys

3.7 As a result of consultation the four key priorities identified for growth are:

- **Towns & Villages**—creating destination hubs and reasons to linger.
- **Cycling & Walking**—developing routes, trails, packages and events.
- **Creators & Makers**—supporting events, workshops, courses and opportunities to buy.
- **Accommodation**—extending the range and type.

4. **How this report links to Corporate Priorities**

4.1 This Strategy supports the principles of the High Peak Corporate Plan: 2019 - 2023 and has the potential to help deliver all four aims of the Corporate Plan.

- Aim 1 – Supporting our communities to create a healthier, safer, cleaner High Peak.
- Aim 2 – A responsive, smart, financially resilient and forward thinking council.
- Aim 3 – Protect and create jobs by supporting economic growth, development and regeneration.
- Aim 4 – To protect and improve the environment and respond to the climate change emergency.

5. **Alternative Options**

5.1 To reject the draft Tourism Strategy.

This is not considered the preferred option. Baseline data and consultation provides evidence to suggest that the High Peak is constrained by the lack of sufficiently compelling reasons for visitors to stay longer. And while the infrastructure is generally good, there are elements which could be improved or utilised better. A highly competitive national and international marketplace present major challenges for the destination as a whole and the many small, independent businesses which characterise the High Peak. A long-term strategic vision is required and a framework for service delivery to aid economic recovery following Covid and more recently with the Cost of Living Crisis.

Not recommended

5.2 Approve draft Tourism Strategy.

Under this scenario, High Peak Borough Council would acknowledge the Baseline data findings to date and approve the proposed Tourism Strategy and Plan for the next five years that aligns with the work of Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire, reflects and builds upon work already achieved, and aims to develop the High Peak as a destination and a brand; and promote the area nationally and internationally.

Recommended

6. **Implications**

6.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

Long -term sustainable growth to the local economy will benefit the

local community by reducing unemployment and crime.

6.2 Workforce

Regeneration team to provide tourism delivery in the short term with experience and expertise in delivering projects and events. The Strategy requires the right kind of support in place to grow tourism sustainably working in partnership with other organisations. Ensuring that marketing is delivered primarily via Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire and other town teams.

6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment

The draft Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Council's Diversity and Equality Policies

6.4 Financial Considerations

Continuing DMO support/contribution will be required to develop and deliver the marketing elements of the Strategy. Specific projects and activities will require funding either external to the Council or internal resources.

6.5 Legal

The report is to approve the draft Tourism Strategy and action plan and work carried out so far by Blue Sail Consultants. Legal advice will be sought to review the current arrangements with DMO's and to consider available options for partnership arrangements with DMO's for delivery proposals.

6.6 Climate Change

The draft Strategy has been developed with consideration given to the local and regional plans to support Climate Change, further detail and national plans can be found on page 61 of the Baseline Data Report (Appendix B).

- High Peak Corporate Plan 2019-2023
- Growth Strategy for High Peak 2017
- Peak District National Park Management Plan 2018-2023
- Marketing Peak and Derbyshire 5yr Destination Plan: The Rescue & Rebuilding of Peak District & Derbyshire's Visitor Economy
- Goyt Valley Action Plan (Draft)

6.7 Consultation

The Baseline Data Report (Appendix B) provides an outline of consultation carried out to date in the development of the draft Tourism Strategy.

Consultation has been carried out with a wide range of public, private and third sector stakeholders. Consultation took place face to face, by telephone or online from mid-May to end of June 2022.

A Business Survey was carried July 2022 these results can be found in the Baseline Data Report (Appendix B). Blue Sail conducted site visits in High Peak on 17th and 18th May 2022 areas included Glossop, Bamford, Hope, Castleton, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Whaley Bridge, New Mills, Hayfield and Buxton.

- 6.8 Risk Assessment
None at this stage.

Neil Rodgers
Executive Director (Place)

**Web Links and
Background Papers**

Contact details

INSERT NAME OF ANY PAPERS AND WEB LINKS

7. Detail

- 7.1 Largely situated within the Peak District National Park, High Peak typically attracts some 5 million visitors each year (Although these numbers are estimated to have halved during 2020/21 due to pandemic restrictions).
- 7.2 Tourism is a significant economic sector employing over 3,700 people or around 13% of all jobs in the High Peak. Visitors spend almost £300M, with around half of that on shopping, and food and drink -supporting facilities and services also used by residents.
- 7.3 The global pandemic has had a significant impact on the tourism sector with total visits to the High Peak down approximately 49% on 2019 figures with economic benefits down by over 50% on 2019 values. National forecasts are now suggesting that it will be the end of 2022 before domestic tourism recovers to 2019 levels. Given the reduction in visitor numbers, this Strategy is required to help High Peak Borough Council capture new markets, using the area's cultural and natural assets to fuel growth and capitalise on the staycation demand and people's desire for escape to and exploration of "the great outdoors". The key to success of the Strategy will be increasing overnight stays to maximise visitor spend in the High Peak.
- 7.4 In February 2022 High Peak Borough Council issued a tender to appoint consultancy services for the preparation of a five-year Tourism Strategy and action plan for the High Peak.
- 7.5 **Specific Requirements**

The tender was to develop a new Tourism Strategy and action plan for the High Peak. The Strategy to cover a 5-year (2022 – 2027) vision and framework for delivery and address the following objectives:

- Provide a long-term strategic vision that clearly demonstrates growth ambitions for the visitor economy.
- Define the priority actions for delivery at a district and regional level, identifying opportunities for collaboration and partner destination Management Organisations and key stakeholders.
- Identify the sector's current positioning and consider emerging trends, opportunities and challenges in each district. This included a review of the evidence base including sector performance; recent growth trends and future forecasting; new and planned investments of significant scale.
- Identify opportunities to embed performance and evaluation monitoring at an early stage.

7.6 Outputs

7.6.1 **A Tourism Strategy and action plan** for the next five years that aligns with the work of Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire, reflects and builds upon work already achieved, and aims to:

- Develop the High Peak as a destination and a brand.
- Promote the area nationally and internationally.

7.7 An open tender call was published on 14th February 2022 and closed 14th March 2022, with 22 Expressions of Interest and six tenders received. The tender was awarded in accordance with the Procurement Policy and Blue Sail Consultants appointed.

7.8 Work commenced in April 2022 with Blue Sail Consultants with the first inception meeting held on 29th April 2022.

7.9 Following this meeting a project timetable was developed with some suggested dates for key points in the project. (Appendix A).

7.10 On the 10th May 2022 Blue Sail Consultants provided a Consultation Workbook. This workbook included detail on all consultees including tourism businesses and key tourism contacts. Further consultation detail is provided at 6.7 of this report.

7.11 Blue Sail conducted site visits in the High Peak on the 17th and 18th May 2022, this included included Glossop, Bamford, Hope, Castleton, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Whaley Bridge, New Mills, Hayfield and Buxton.

7.12 The Strategy has been developed with engagement from a wide range of public, private and third sector stakeholders to set out a clearly articulated, refreshed vision for driving sustainable, innovative, resilient and inclusive sector recovery and growth.

- 7.13 From the research, consultation and analysis conducted in the development of this Strategy there are, naturally, areas of strength and opportunity to capitalise on. And areas of weakness and threat to try to address. The full SWOT analysis can be seen on page 6 of the draft Tourism Strategy (Appendix C). In summary the strengths of High Peak lie in its outstanding landscape with opportunities to exploit around activities, culture and making more of its built environment. On the downside it is constrained by the lack of sufficiently compelling reasons for visitors to stay longer. And while the infrastructure is generally good, there are elements which could be improved or utilised better. A highly competitive national and international marketplace present major challenges for the destination as a whole and the many small, independent businesses which characterise High Peak.
- 7.14 Strategy Vision - Over the next five years High Peak will establish itself as a coherent, connected destination within the iconic brand of the Peak District.
- 7.15 Baseline Data research carried out in the development of this draft Strategy indicate that day visits dominate. Of the 50 million annual visits, 90% of those are day trips –one of the consequences of proximity to big centres of population. Day visits however only account for 60% of the £286M spend, clearly indicating the value of overnight stays. While attracting overnight stays is desirable, day visits have been growing markedly faster than staying visits. Between 2014 and 2019, the number of day visits increased by 14% in High Peak while the number of staying visits increased by just 1%.
- 7.16 Market Trends suggest there is uncertainty in the travel market, but discernible trends and related opportunities are emerging. Five macro trends likely to influence travel patterns in the longer term have been identified along with their implications for the High Peak as a destination. Further detail on the implications for tourism in the High Peak can be found on page 12 and 13 of the draft Tourism Strategy (Appendix C).
- The Pursuit of Real
 - Fresh Adventures
 - Going Digital
 - All About Value
 - Journey to Net Zero
- 7.17 Six areas of particular focus formed the basis of the best practice examples which inform this Strategy are:
- Active outdoors culture
 - Strategic events
 - Town centre development
 - Transport and cycling infrastructure
 - Alternative accommodation
 - Sustainable destination development

- 7.18 Focussing on a small number of priorities is much more likely to lead to positive outcomes. Four areas of opportunity will provide that focus for the High Peak. These four areas are based on the strengths of High Peak's tourism offer and the analysis of market prospects. They are not everything that can or will happen, rather they provide a focus for investment and development to unlock growth. The four areas of opportunity are:
- **Towns & Villages**—creating destination hubs and reasons to linger.
 - **Cycling & Walking**—developing routes, trails, packages and events.
 - **Creators & Makers**—supporting events, workshops, courses and opportunities to buy.
 - **Accommodation**—extending the range and type.
- 7.19 Underpinning the above four areas of opportunity is vital in that the right kind of support needs to be in place to deliver the Strategy, grow tourism sustainably and approach this work in partnership with other organisations; to influence, ensure alignment, efficiency and effective delivery of the Strategy and support for the tourism sector. We need to use these partnerships to ensure the quality of the visitor offer is improved and standards are maintained.
- 7.20 It is recommended that a Tourism Partnership Forum is set up to ensure that the key organisations involved in the High Peak's visitor economy work together. It will help to align priorities, programmes and activities, identify and take opportunities to enhance and build on what each organisation is doing, work to avoid duplication, and potentially establish new collaborations or projects which cut across geographical or organisational boundaries. Areas of focus for this Forum to include:
- Marketing
 - Visitor management – including transport, dispersal, pressure points etc
 - New capital or infrastructure developments
 - Business support and engagement
 - New funding streams, bids and opportunities for larger scale initiatives and projects.
- 7.21 Monitoring and evaluating progress of this Strategy will be carried out in two ways. The first by evaluating the outputs of each Action Area listed in this Strategy, these outputs can either be quantitative or qualitative.
- 7.22 The second method is to monitor and evaluate the five key performance indicators in the draft Strategy, detail how they will be measured and to evidence why it's important to measure the outcome. Further detail can be found on page 24 of the draft Tourism Strategy (Appendix C). Baselines for each of these performance indicators will be established in spring 2023 through STEAM data. The five key performance indicators are shown here:
- Sector Growth - Proportion of visits that are 'staying' visits (overnight).
 - Average length of stay and spend per visit (holiday visits).

- Visitor survey - Longer stays and spend during a visit will contribute economic impact, business profitability and sustaining jobs.
- Business Growth (% annual increase in turnover).
- Visitor Satisfaction (from a visit).

7.23 On approval of the draft Strategy it will be published online and shared directly with key stakeholders including DMO's, Town Councils, County Councils and other key consultees.