

**GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE  
JOINT STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

**Tourism: opportunities to develop the business tourism market across greater  
Lincolnshire**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform and confirm that development work on developing a Greater Lincolnshire Business Tourism product should be addressed on a Joint Lincolnshire basis.
- 1.2 To task officers with delivering a programme which creates an uplift in tourism income to the area through increasing the amount of expenditure by business tourists.
- 1.3 Consider whether a collaborative approach to tourism could provide the blueprint for collaboration on wider place marketing

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 Tourism Officers from Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, and North East Lincolnshire Councils have, since last March, been meeting weekly together with district council Tourism Officers, Visit Lincoln and the Lincolnshire Coastal Business Improvement District. This has enabled the sharing of information in real time, in what has been a fast changing world for the Visitor Economy. This approach has identified where collaboration is valuable; it does however recognise that there will be times when each authority wishes to pursue an individual approach to enter a specific market.
- 2.2 The government had launched its Tourism Sector Deal in the summer of 2019 and Greater Lincolnshire had begun changing its strategic direction to align with its four key themes of Investment, Skills, Marketing and Product Development. A Tourism Action Plan was begun in early 2020 with consultation events held, firstly in person as in North Lincolnshire but then online.
- 2.3 The Tourism Sector Deal approach offered a very well rounded approach to the visitor economy which was well received by the sector. Government also indicated that through a competitive process Tourism Zone status could be applied for and Greater Lincolnshire would have applied for this. Although the concept of Tourism Zone status has been abandoned by government (see below), tourism remains a sector which provides a strong opportunity for a

dialogue and shared ambition between greater Lincolnshire and central government.

- 2.4 Subsequently the government produced its Visitor Economy Recovery Plan in June 2021, it repeats much of the original Tourism Sector Deal, but Tourism Zones were abandoned. "It is the government's view that much of what Tourism Zones aimed to address – such as improving digital skills, place-making and seasonality – can now be accomplished with the significant levels of funding outlined in this Plan, such as the new Help to Grow: Digital scheme, the £220 million Community Renewal Fund, and the £4.8 billion Levelling-Up Fund." As the process was to have been competitive, achieving Tourism Zone status was always going to be a high risk strategy, but the Greater Lincolnshire Tourism Action Plan is completely aligned with the government's Tourism Sector Deal.
- 2.5 During lockdown it was decided to entirely redevelop [www.visitlincolnshire.com](http://www.visitlincolnshire.com) with a brief to both inspire and inform about Greater Lincolnshire. Phase 1 was launched in March 2021, phase 2 is being worked on with a redeveloped area for Cycle Lincolnshire and all Tourism Officers engaging in the process to ensure good content from their areas. The popularity of the new website is growing fast with a campaign to promote it having launched in mid June 2021.
- 2.6 The redeveloped [www.visitlincolnshire.com](http://www.visitlincolnshire.com) website provides high quality content which showcases the breadth and attractiveness of greater Lincolnshire. This content could be used for broader place marketing than simply tourism, helping to support wider investment strategies.

2.6 Product development is an important part of the government's Tourism Sector Deal and a number of areas have been chosen that have particular resonance for Greater Lincolnshire and where we have under-developed product. These include cycling, walking, the natural coast, the underserved Generation Alpha and business tourism. The government's Recovery Plan specifically supports the areas of sustainability, skills and advocacy of business events. The first two are being dealt with through the green tourism toolkit and the digital skills agenda; developing a Greater Lincolnshire business tourism product would therefore fit with government policy.

2.7 Business event attendees are valuable, spending 30% more on average than leisure visitors. They traditionally help extend the season and fill mid-week gaps; addressing seasonality is also an important element of the government's Tourism Sector Deal. Currently there is not a strong and co-ordinated approach to attracting expenditure from business tourists.

2.8 The whole industry and its requirements have changed, there is the opportunity to design what businesses need for the future. Increasing the levels of spend by business tourists should be seen through two distinct approaches:

- (i) increasing the amount of business events taking place in the area, and
- (ii) providing opportunities for the high numbers of visiting business representatives to spend money in the evening economy.

2.9 The business events market is changing, moving away from traditional conferences into team building, away days, 121 training, and experiences for staff and clients. In turn, businesses who have benefitted from events etc will often make return visits and there is the potential to explore how they might invest in the area in the longer term.

2.10 The number of business representatives who visit greater Lincolnshire should not be under-estimated. The low carbon industry in northern Lincolnshire, engineering in and around Lincoln, changes to the RAF, food manufacturers in south east Lincolnshire, and major civil projects all attract businesses representatives who spend time in hotels during the working week. Developing activity which encourages these representatives to spend time –and money- in the community will be valuable both in financial uplift and in terms of longer term recognition of greater Lincolnshire as a place to invest, visit, or live.

2.11 Top trends for business tourism include: good wi-fi; locally sourced healthy food; state of the art technology; unique, personalised and interactive experiences relevant to the local culture; time to relax with colleagues; wellness and sustainability.

2.12 Officers have commissioned an initial feasibility study, due to report in September 2021, which could inform the development of an action plan.

2.13 It is felt that joint working on business tourism is what we can do as a Greater Lincolnshire partnership and that by working together we can achieve a wider benefit rather than doing this separately.

### **3. DETAIL OF BUSINESS TOURISM PROPOSAL**

3.1 Business Tourism is an area that is undergoing great change, formerly being associated with large conferences and exhibitions in the larger venues. It should now be seen to cover product launches; team building; training; awards dinners; reward and recognition programmes; corporate hospitality; business travel. Smaller sometimes quirky destinations and venues are particularly appealing and organisers are specifically looking for something different.

3.2 In 2019 the events industry reported a direct spend of £70bn and accounted for more than 50% of all visitor economy spending in the UK. As the whole industry and its requirements are changing, it is timely that we should keep ahead of what businesses need and how Greater Lincolnshire can deliver this.

3.3 Businesses themselves are more open to diversifying following the pandemic and as there are limited facilities for business tourism in the East Midlands, there is a gap in the market.

3.4 Lincolnshire County Council has commissioned a study that would provide:

- An improved understanding of the future needs and trends within business tourism
- An overview of where Greater Lincolnshire can capitalise on these needs and trends; district by district and business tourism category by category

- An appreciation of the attitudes and aspirations towards business tourism amongst the different categories of visitor economy providers in Greater Lincolnshire
- Understand potential barriers to success for business tourism within Greater Lincolnshire

The study will be in two parts, with the first part completed by the end of August:

- **Base Line Analysis, mapping, interviewing stakeholders** – a baseline review to map out the existing offer, clarify the challenges and opportunities in developing business events in Greater Lincolnshire and the evidence to support a strategy for growing business including buyer input and views.
- **Vision, Strategy & Development Plan** – a visioning and engagement stage that sets out the ambition for growing business events in Greater Lincolnshire, gets the buy-in of key stakeholders and sets out the actions needed to deliver growth.

3.5 This is an ideal time to review and re-set following Covid and a good time to try new things and do existing things differently. Stakeholders should be much more open in coming together to look at the potential from business tourism. This project and the outputs need to persuade businesses to do things differently, using examples of success from elsewhere to inspire change and show the benefits of that change. We will determine which of the business events sectors have the greatest potential for Greater Lincolnshire and from which locations buyers and delegates are likely to be drawn from. There are enormous benefits of the Greater Lincolnshire partnership working together on developing business tourism and providing strategic leadership on a fast developing sector.

#### 4. **RESOURCE AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 A budget will have to be agreed to deliver the proposals, it is assumed that this can be found from within each authority's existing tourism and promotion revenue budget line.

#### 5. **RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES (INCLUDE EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT IF RELEVANT)**

- 5.1 The risk to delivering this programme is that it will be in addition to the current workload of the three authorities' tourism teams. As such there is a risk that there is limited capacity to deliver and therefore appropriate levels of priority should be afforded to the activity by leadership if it is to be delivered effectively. The opportunity of attracting additional expenditure through the business tourism economy is, however, significant and would outweigh any risk.

#### 6. **CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT**

- 6.1 Using business tourism to drive additional tourism expenditure has been proposed as a result of engagement with businesses in the tourism sector across the whole of greater Lincolnshire.

**7. GOVERNANCE – DECISION(S) FOR MEMBER COUNCIL’S REQUIRED (in accordance with the Joint Committee’s Terms of Reference).**

7.1 Each member authority should commit to developing the agreed programme of events as part of the joint committee’s ambition to collaborate for greater impact. Delivering tourism activity is consistent with each authority’s powers of economic wellbeing.

**8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the JSOC

- 8.1 Confirms that development work on developing a Greater Lincolnshire Business Tourism product should be addressed on a Joint Lincolnshire basis.
- 8.2 Tasks officers with delivering a programme which creates an uplift in tourism income to the area through increasing the amount of expenditure by business tourists.
- 8.3 Considers whether a collaborative approach to tourism could provide the blueprint for collaboration on wider place marketing.

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**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report**

None