



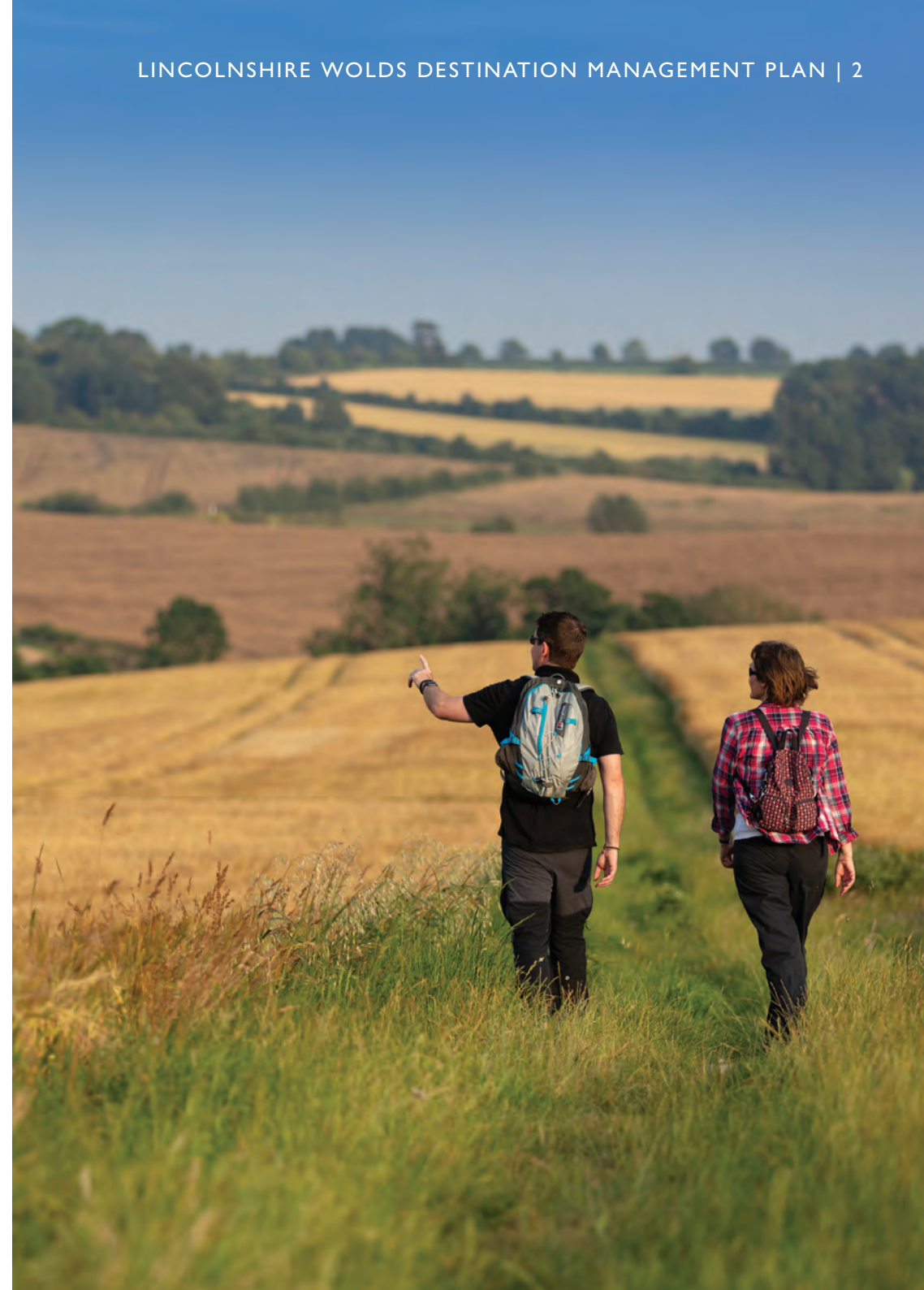
Lincolnshire Wolds Destination Management Plan

2023 - 2027



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A landscape photograph of rolling hills under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The foreground is dominated by tall, golden-green grasses. A narrow path or streambed winds through the middle ground. The hills in the background are covered in green fields, with some patches of brown, suggesting a mix of vegetation or agricultural use. The sky is filled with large, dark clouds, with a bright light source breaking through on the left side, creating a warm glow. A white rectangular box is superimposed over the center of the image, containing the word "Introduction" in a white, sans-serif font.

Introduction

1 Introduction

In 2016, a Love Lincolnshire Wolds Destination Management Plan (DMP), which covered the period 2016 to 2021, was produced by East Lindsey District Council in partnership with West Lindsey District Council.

This DMP outlined a future vision that in five years' time *'The Lincolnshire Wolds and market towns be recognised nationally for its rural beauty and tranquillity and is a destination of choice where visitors enjoy an authentic and welcoming experience and is a place that they desire to visit again'*. There were three core guiding principles that underpinned the delivery of the Destination Management Plan and provided a framework for action:

- ▶ Developing the Lincolnshire Wolds and Market Towns Branding.
- ▶ Putting the visitor first through developing a 'sense of place' and ensuring visitors receive excellent customer service.
- ▶ Working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders.

The renewal of this plan, due in 2021, was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the pandemic, we have seen significant progress in the development of the Lincolnshire visitor economy with the development of the Love Lincolnshire Wolds Tourism Partnership and the establishment of the Love Lincolnshire Wolds destination website. Our STEAM figures recorded high growth between 2016 and 2019 (the last normal pre-Covid year) and there has been encouraging investment in both new and existing accommodation businesses, many focussed on making the most of the Wolds' rural tranquillity.

We have a number of exciting developments in the pipeline or under consideration including the development of the Sessions House (Spilsby), regeneration of Alford Windmill and Alford Manor House, the development of 2-4 Market Place in Caistor, and the Vital and Viable project supporting the regeneration of our market towns.

The following Destination Management Plan provides an update to the 2016 - 21 plan. It has been developed in a context of significant change, nationally and locally. It aims to:

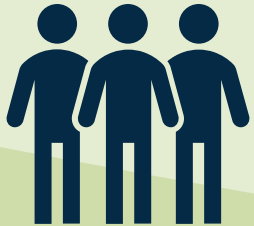
- ▶ Provide a strategic focus to the development and management of the visitor product / experience in the Lincolnshire Wolds.
- ▶ Provide a flexible and dynamic framework that can respond to new opportunities as they arise.
- ▶ Identify clear, co-ordinated and prioritised actions which will:
 - Significantly improve our offer for visitors and levels of visitor satisfaction
 - Raise our profile and drive up tourism business performance
 - Maximise the impact of planned and pipeline developments for the tourism sector
- ▶ Outline a partnership delivery framework for both the public and private sectors.

Importance of the Visitor Economy



2 Importance of the Visitor Economy

Impacts



► Approximately **3.7 million** visitors



► **269,000** staying visitors and **985,000** bed nights



► Visitors spend **£200m** in the area



► Over **2,100** Full Time Job Equivalents (FTEs) supported



► Spend up approximately **22%** over last DMP period (from 2015 to 2019)

Benefits

Our visitor economy:



- Enhances our image and profile



- Supports a wide range of facilities that enhance the quality of life for our residents



- Helps to develop a sense of place and community pride to celebrate what is great about the Lincolnshire Wolds



- Supports a range of jobs with different skills and entry requirements



- Contributes to outdoor recreation and healthy living



- Stimulates investment, conservation and preservation



Destination Management Plan Context

3 Destination Management Plan Context

3.1 Progress and Change Since 2016

The last Destination Management Plan period covered the period of 2016 - 2021 and the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the latter part of this.

However, there were some notable achievements including the development of the Love Lincolnshire Wolds Tourism Partnership. We have approximately 90 members - key operators in the area's visitor economy - and this partnership provides an opportunity for networking but also to guide our activity.

There are also a number of developments and initiatives in the pipeline:

- ▶ **2 - 4 Marketplace, Caistor** - a mixed use development including retail, and accommodation units and community facilities.
- ▶ **Spilsby Sessions House** - restoring the building to create a new multipurpose cultural space, function room and catering facilities and workspaces for cultural organisations.
- ▶ **Alford Windmill** - restore the windmill back to working order, create a new visitor centre and refurbish the entire site with a change in ownership.
- ▶ **Alford Manor House** - a new permanent function space, enhanced collections and exhibition areas and improved catering facilities.

▶ **The Wolds Cycle Park** in South Willingham.

▶ **Development of county wide tourism development initiatives** - e.g.:

- Cycle Lincolnshire, managed by Destination Lincolnshire, which includes a 180 mile Lincolnshire Wolds Cycle Route.
- Bird watching - a Lincolnshire County Council initiative, developing trails and information for potential birdwatchers. It is aimed at enthusiasts and the knowledgeable 'amateur'. There are plans for a Wolds and Marsh (i.e. east of the Wolds) trail.
- The Pub diversification scheme which is looking at developing pub accommodation across Lincolnshire.

A new Destination Management Organisation for Lincolnshire, Destination Lincolnshire (DL), was established in 2022, and is working with partners to grow the County's visitor economy. Destination Lincolnshire is public private sector outcome focused initiative. DL work across the county to align the tourism offer and have delivered campaign activity specifically for the Wolds. DL are currently working through the Visit England accreditation to become a Local Visitor Enterprise Partnership (LVEP). As well as achieving a nationally recognised status, DL as an LVEP will provide strong leadership of Lincolnshire visitor economy working collaboratively with the public and private sector. DL alongside other LVEPs will be promoted across government and national agencies, ensuring the Lincolnshire is an active and valued contributor to Levelling Up and the wider economy. LVEPS will offer support to local authority tourism bodies and smaller tourism partnerships.

3.2 Market and Consumer Trends

Over the next five years, our visitor economy will be impacted on, and influenced by, a number of trends at the national level. Post-Covid, the visitor economy faces an uncertain and potentially turbulent time with opportunities (e.g. the staycation effect) and threats (cost of living and inflationary pressures). In this constantly changing situation, we will remain vigilant to new trends, opportunities and threats.

The following table highlights some of the key factors that will impact on us and their implications.

Trend	What?	Lincolnshire Wolds Implications
Staycation	Post Covid saw an increase in staycations in the UK - with rural destinations particularly benefiting. While here will be a shift back to international destinations, it is likely that there will continue to be staycation effect in the short term.	Focus on domestic markets
Economy	Cost of living, recession and inflation will impact on both businesses and consumers. Impacts will vary depending on markets - e.g. some might replace an overseas holiday with a domestic one (an opportunity) while some might reduce the number of trips they make (a threat).	Focus on value for money and convenience
Sustainability	There is an enhanced awareness among visitors of their carbon footprint. Consumer commitment varies and different consumers take different actions - e.g. shifting to public transport, travelling less distance, choosing green businesses buying local food, travelling off peak or avoiding over-visited sites.	Sustainability needs to be central to our activity and offer. An opportunity to focus on near markets.
Changing markets	Markets are changing with a growth in solo travellers, extended families and ageing travellers.	Tailor accommodation offers for different markets
Globalisation	Consumer choice has exploded. Identifying the distinctive qualities and experiences of a destination will make it stand out.	Focus on a distinctive Wolds experience
Pursuit of real	Genuine, authentic tourism products are preferred by future travellers as they seek to get rid of their “tourist” stamp and experience their destination like a local instead.	Local food, and distinct experience
Healthy living	Seeking a healthy lifestyle (including a focus on mental health) is a trend has possibly strengthened post-Covid. This can include a variety of elements impacting on destination choice (e.g. quiet / rural) and activities (such as physical activities, spa, meditation, yoga).	Focus on ‘wellness’ factors

3.3 The Policy Context

The Destination Management Plan relates to a host of **national**, regional and local policies. At a national level, the context is provided by the **DCMS's Tourism Recovery Plan**. This identifies a number of objectives the UK government will work towards including recovering to pre-Covid levels as quickly as possible; ensuring that the sector's recovery benefits every nation and region; building back better with a more innovative and resilient industry; ensuring the sector contributes to the enhancement of cultural, natural and historic heritage, minimises damage to the environment and is inclusive and accessible to all; and returning to a leading European destination for hosting business events.

The **DeBois Review of Destination Management** in England (2021) looked at destination management organisation (DMO) arrangements across England and made a series of recommendations including creating three tiers of DMO. VisitBritain, over the time period of this DMP, will implement some of the key recommendations include piloting a Tier 1 DMO (the North East), developing criteria for Tier 2 organisations and strengthening arrangements for liaison with DMOs.

At a **local** level there are a number of policies that frame this DMP. The three key strategies are:

- ▶ Destination Strategy for East Lindsey - East Lindsey DC (March 2020).
- ▶ West Lindsey Visitor Economy Strategy (& Action Plan) - West Lindsey DC (2022).
- ▶ Greater Lincolnshire & Rutland Tourism Action Plan 2021 - 2025 - produced for the Visitor Economy Board of the Greater Lincolnshire LEP (December 2020).

There are a number of common priorities across these strategies:

Putting the visitor first

- Providing a high quality, rewarding and immersive destination
- Ensuring repeat visits and recommendations

Resident benefits

- Supporting local services and facilities
- Avoiding over tourism and creating local employment

Building brand/destination awareness

- Recognition of limited awareness of any brand apart from 'Lincolnshire'
- Using targeted social media efforts to create better knowledge

Creating a distinctive sense of place

- Building on existing strengths e.g. quality food to develop distinctiveness
- Promoting the distinctive culture, heritage and environment of the area

Need for investment (private and public)

- Public realm, highway and outdoor recreation opportunities and countryside facilities
- More accommodation, catering operations, distinctive retail

Seasonality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing off peak and shoulder season visits, 'value not volume' • Supporting year round employment
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing opportunities to explore the area using sustainable transport • Encouraging private sector investment in green technologies and sustainable business practice
Working in partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying a clear hierarchy and responsibilities for partners • Recognition of place brands not council boundaries • Encouraging private sector participation in destination partnerships

However, the policy framework is wider than the visitor economy and other relevant policies include:

- The Lincolnshire AONB Management Plan (2018 - 23)** is a statutory plan for the Wolds which seeks to balance safeguarding the landscape (the primary purpose of the designation) with delivering a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits for those living, working and visiting the area. It has five overarching themes: Protecting the Wolds; Living and Working in the Wolds; Discovering the Wolds; Developing the Wolds and Partnerships in the Wolds.

- East Lindsey and Boston: A Cultural Framework for Renewal (2022)** The cultural strategy for East Lindsey and Boston, developed by the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (who subsequently submitted a combined Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Bid including major investment in cultural facilities which is detailed in the strategy), contains four strategic themes. The third of these is 'Cultural Place', which envisages using culture to revitalise town centres', including a specific action to 'support and coordinate the promotion of local events' to attract more visitors. The final theme is 'cultural infrastructure' including venues, outdoor spaces, festivals, heritage and natural assets.
- Midlands Engine: Ten Point Plan for Green Growth (2021)** which identifies the Lincolnshire Wolds as one of the region's key landscapes and states that: 'These woodlands and landscapes must be invested in, not just for environmental reasons, but because they are vital for our people's quality of life and for our visitor economy which accounts for one in ten jobs in our region'.

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Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities



4 Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

4.1 Strengths

As a visitor destination, we have a number of strengths. These include:

Our Heritage

The Lincolnshire Wolds are particularly rich in pre-historic sites (e.g. Neolithic long barrows, bronze age round barrows, pre-historic routes) and medieval sites (e.g. deserted villages, Bolingbroke Castle, priories/ monasteries and a rich array of medieval churches) with a number of Roman sites (e.g. Caistor). Our other heritage assets include cultural heritage (Tennyson, Banks, and Franklin), which further add to sense of place, and visitor attractions (like Gunby Hall and Louth Museum).

The Great Outdoors

The Lincolnshire Wolds are one of only two protected landscapes in the East Midlands, and one of only three in the whole of the Midlands. It is the only upland area in the east of England, between the Humber and Thames. This status should not be under-estimated as an asset.

We have a mixed scenery which affords opportunities for walking (including the Viking Way), biking (particularly road and gravel riding), and horse-riding. Other potential outdoor experiences include wildlife (especially birds), field sports, and dark skies.

Tranquillity

Peace and quiet is one of our assets - a place to relax, with big skies and no issues of overtourism or congestion. It is a potential differentiator to other destinations like the Peak District. This is supported by elements of the accommodation offer - luxury self-catering, and destination hotels.

Other Experiences

There are a range of other special interest reasons for visiting the Lincolnshire Wolds –field sports, Cadwell Park and events. The surrounding area is also an asset - with destinations (like the Coast and Lincoln) and attractions adding to our appeal and offer, as well as being a source of visitors for the Lincolnshire Wolds.

Strong Partnerships and Promotional Frameworks

We have established and strong partnerships operating in the Wolds. Countryside Services brings together a range of organisations with an interest in the management and economy of the Wolds. East and West Lindsey District Councils work closely together on promoting the Wolds through the Love Lincolnshire Wolds website and social media. Destination Lincolnshire are increasingly active in partnership with the two councils. The Love Lincolnshire Wolds Tourism Partnership is a developing private sector led initiative involving key visitor economy operators - it provides a mechanism for networking, business development and involving the private sector in decision making. The dominance of locally owned businesses heavily invested in the area is a key strength.

Sense of Place and Cultural Identity

We have a strong sense of place and cultural identity which visitors can experience. This includes our cultural and landscape heritage, the landscape itself and the built environment of our villages and market towns, our locally owned businesses that are invested in the area and know it and our food offer with local food and drink producers, pubs and restaurants.

Accommodation

We have good quality accommodation with recent investment in destination hotels / resorts and a good supply of modern self-catering accommodation. However, we have some challenges in terms of a lack of branded hotels (which bring profile and a customer base) and limited large capacity establishments (for e.g. major events).



4.2 Challenges

Brand and Awareness

While there is a great rural and heritage product, our brand for visitors is not as strong as it could be. Awareness of the destination and its components is relatively low, and there is a lack of a compelling focal point or unique selling point.

Strong Competitors

While we have strengths and opportunities, we face strong competition from other rural destinations. For our core East Midlands markets (Nottingham, Leicester, Derby), destinations like the Peak District, Cotswolds, Shropshire, Norfolk and Yorkshire are all readily accessible.

Access

Our road connections are primarily by single carriage A roads which can be slow moving, particularly in summer. There is reasonable motorway access to the north of the Wolds (the M180 connecting to the M62 and the west) but access to major south-north routes (like the A1 and M1) is poorer making journeys from large parts of the country relatively difficult (compared to other destinations). Access to, and around, the Wolds by public transport is poor with only Market Rasen served by a train service. Parking in the AONB can also be problematic with limited car parking spaces leading to parking on verges.

Seasonality

Seasonality is an issue with, according to STEAM data, a marked summer peak but much quieter shoulder and out of season periods. Seasonality is a constraint on business development with relatively low occupancies / usage impacting on profitability and viability.

Research Base and Knowledge

We have limited data and intelligence on the Wolds visitor economy in terms of performance data (e.g. occupancy and achieved rates) and market intelligence - e.g. who are our visitors, what are their visiting patterns, what do they do? The lack of market intelligence makes it more difficult to make informed decisions on investment opportunities and marketing.

4.3 Opportunities

Market Towns

Our market towns are a strength, challenge and opportunity. All have a rich history. Parking is typically free or relatively cheap. Louth has strong appeal with excellent retail, food, heritage and built environment, and market. Caistor has a strong heritage offer, and Horncastle's strength, from a visitor focus, lies in Antiques. Alford is attractive with its Manor House and Windmill but, from a visitor perspective it currently lacks a focal point. Market Rasen has the racecourse but that only drives business for a few days of the year and Spilsby, whilst it has an attractive layout, currently lacks product that would attract visitors and encourage them to stay.

There are, however, opportunities for our market towns. They are the gateways to the Wolds, with thriving cultural communities and a core focal point for spending opportunities. There are exciting opportunities through the Vital and Viable programme and the Levelling up Fund that will help to further develop the towns.

New Products and Experiences

There are potential opportunities for products that could enhance the Wolds offer. These include, mountain biking, church accommodation

(through e.g. Champing Churches), cultural development, further landscape interpretation (through digital mechanisms), Dark Skies experiences, a Wolds Visitor and Interpretation centre and nature viewing points (subject to finding appropriate sites), and wellness retreats / experiences (possibly tied to accommodation units).

There may be potential for further accommodation, but this is likely to be relatively small scale and experience based - examples include quality self-catering, glamping (including novel ideas like tree top glamping), boutique B&B, eco-lodges (potentially tied to a particular experience), and pub based accommodation.

Love Lincolnshire Wolds Tourism Partnership

The LLW Tourism Partnership is a developing success story - bringing public and private sectors together into a more coherent whole. There is an opportunity to develop this further - both in terms of its networking opportunities but also as a decision making body, and possibly in time, a delivery body.

Market and Consumer Trends

There are a number of market and consumer trends that the Wolds can benefit from. These include:

- ▶ A likely continued interest in domestic holiday taking, and possible overtourism in popular destinations. The Wolds has a strong advantage in this respect with less visitor pressure than other protected landscapes (albeit there is a balance required to ensure this remains).
- ▶ A continued market trend to wellness and health - both physical and mental.



Aims and Objectives

5 Aims and Objectives

5.1 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the DMP is to 'grow the value of the visitor economy in the Lincolnshire Wolds in an appropriate and sustainable manner.'

Specific objectives are:

- ▶ Seasonality - to attract more visitor expenditure outside the peak summer period.
- ▶ Spread - to ensure that the benefits of the visitor economy are felt as widely as possible through the Wolds and not just concentrated in a small number of locations.
- ▶ Regeneration and product improvement - to use the visitor economy as a catalyst for regeneration and product development across the area, particularly in the market towns.

5.2 Guiding Principles

The following section outlines a series of guiding principles. These support and underpin the aim and objectives.

5.2.1 A Long Term Process

Developing a destination, building awareness of it, and establishing its position in the marketplace is a long-term process - one that takes decades. This five year plan should be regarded as part of a longer and wider process. We need to continue the activity of our previous

Destination Management Plan - much of it remains valid and needed. However, the plan also needs to look forward to new opportunities that should be explored and exploited to develop the Wolds as a visitor destination.

5.2.2 A Market Focus

The development of the Wolds needs to be realistically focused on the needs and motivations of potential visitor markets.

We attract a number of different markets. These are coming for a range of different reasons - such as sightseeing, walking and cycling, visiting attractions, events, and shopping, entertainment and events in the market towns. Some are staying in the Wolds, some are staying in the surrounding area and visiting for the day, and some are visiting for the day from their home.

Their characteristics vary - with young families, younger couples, older couples, groups of friends and relatives. They have different values and attitudes. All of these visitors bring spend into the area - they are all welcome. However, to maximise the use of relatively limited resources there is a need to focus on one primary growth market and adopt a more audience centric approach - focusing more on the experience and the individual than the destination.

One of the potential growth markets in our existing policy framework (section 3.4) is Country Loving Traditionalists (a VisitEngland segment). This group has a strong fit with the Wolds offer and advantages like a higher disposal income and greater propensity to visit out of season.

Country loving traditionalists¹ typically visit rural destinations. They are typically (but not exclusively) empty nesters - over 50s represent 56% of this segment, married / living with partner, and 80% do not have children in their household. They come from all income groups. They are more likely (than other segments) to read broadsheet papers and UK tourism websites.

5.2.3 Brand and Sense of Place

We have product strengths and a sense of place (see Strengths - section 4.1 above). Focusing on a priority segment (see above), these need to be developed into a more cohesive brand that leads with an emotional message around wellness and tranquillity supported by more rational experiences on the countryside offer (particularly walking and dog walking), the landscape and built heritage, nature and wildlife, and the quality accommodation.

New product and experience development should support and enhance the brand.

5.2.4 Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement

The development of the Love Lincolnshire Wolds Tourism Partnership has been one of the major successes of our last Destination Management Plan. Its further development will depend on its appetite and capacity to continue to develop.

Partnership should not just be about public / private activity. There are opportunities to strengthen tourism delivery across the range of public sector organisations (particularly East and West Lindsey District Councils, Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Services and Lincolnshire County Council) and the emerging county Destination Management Organisation (DMO) - Destination Lincolnshire. There is also the

potential to engage with North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire Councils to widen the coverage of Wolds related activity.

5.2.5 Prioritising and Integration of Activities

Resources are tight. The tourism sector, and particularly the public sector, in the Wolds has been successful in collaborating and working in a smart way for the last five years. Continued partnership work and a clear market focus will help maximise the return from available resources.

5.2.6 Sustainability

Sustainability is becoming increasingly important in consumer decisions - in terms of environmental and social sustainability. The Wolds, as a protected area, is already doing a significant amount through the AONB management plan with regard to sustainability, management, planning control, community development and biodiversity and habitat development (see section 3.2.4).

However, there are more specific elements where the visitor economy will look to address sustainability through proactive policies and actions. For example:

- ▶ The DMP's objectives of spreading visitor activity to quieter times, and seeking to spread the benefits as widely as possible.
- ▶ Targeting higher spend and lower volume visitors.
- ▶ Encouraging sustainable business practice through the LLW Partnership.
- ▶ Continuing to promote and use local food.

¹ See: https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/project_lion_-_overview_-_for_website.pdf

Priorities for Action



6 Priorities for Action

The Destination Management Plan is designed to address destination product development and management priorities over the next five years through four project areas, aligned with the strategic priorities for East and West Lindsey Tourism Strategies:

- ▶ Great Places.
- ▶ Quality Visitor Experiences.
- ▶ Targeted Marketing.
- ▶ An Engaged and Vibrant Sector.

6.1 Great Places

6.1.1 Strategic Need and Rationale

Places are key to the visitor experience and the overall destination brand. The Lincolnshire Wolds, as a destination, comprises a number of different destinations - the six key market towns, the villages and the countryside.

Our market towns are a key opportunity for the area - they represent gateways and focal point for potential spend. But they are also challenges. Louth has a strong visitor appeal, but the others all require further development to create a more viable offer. Elements of this include improving the retail, food and drink offer, and, in some cases, the public realm and redundant buildings. From the perspective of visitors, each of the market towns needs a hook - something that will differentiate them and create a reason to visit. The Vital and Viable programme and

Levelling up Fund have started looking at this process and it should be continued in partnership with relevant communities.

Potential specialisms could include:

- ▶ Louth - food and drink, and/or retail and market.
- ▶ Spilsby - walking and heritage.
- ▶ Alford - the Manor House and Windmill.
- ▶ Horncastle - Antiques and / or arts.
- ▶ Spilsby and Market Rasen could be more focussed on events and performance - e.g. Market Rasen and its racecourse and Spilsby on, in time, a regenerated Sessions House.

There is an appetite for developing the presence of arts and culture and the use of public art and art trails has been successful in other areas. Within the lifetime of the DMP we will seek to assess the capacity and appetite of local artists/artist communities, landowners and managing agencies to develop a distinctive presence for environmental arts in the Wolds. The existing cluster of artists in the market towns (especially Alford and Horncastle) will be key partners.

Within villages and the countryside, the visitor economy also links to broader AONB agendas - e.g. conservation and rewilding, access and recreation. From a visitor perspective, these are important elements of creating a sense of place. Maintaining and improving rights of way is vital for a countryside destination where walking is a key activity. Lincolnshire County Council is improving the Viking Way but ideally this type of

activity needs to be extended to other public rights of way. Countryside Services, over the years, have delivered a programme of interpretation that needs to be maintained and continued. The possibility of utilising digital technology to provide enhanced site-specific interpretation is exciting and could add value to sites that have interesting stories but less interesting remains (e.g. Roman Caistor, neolithic long barrows or a deserted village) that have public access (and ideally some parking).

6.1.2 Key Actions

In the short term, we will:

- ▶ Focus on a visitor facing speciality for each town. The Vital and Viable programme has started to look at this process and develop ideas and they should be developed further.

- ▶ Continue the initiatives within the Vital and Viable programme for wider town centre regeneration.
- ▶ Pursue further product development. Pipeline proposals for Caistor's market place, Spilsby Sessions House, Alford Manor and Alford Windmill should be pursued but further ideas should be encouraged to respond to funding opportunities as they arise.
- ▶ Explore options and funding for a pilot digital interpretation scheme for one or two sites and ensure maintenance of existing interpretation boards.
- ▶ Assess the potential and scope of arts based initiatives in the market towns.

6.2 Quality Visitor Experiences

6.2.1 Strategic Need and Rationale

Experiences are the things that people do when they visit. Along with places (above) they represent the things that will motivate a visit. Development of more experiences, particularly ones that tie into the brand values and target audience, will create more appeal and potential dwell time.

There are opportunities for a number of new and appropriate (in planning terms) developments that would enhance the offer. These include small scale accommodation development (self-catering, glamping, boutique B&B, eco-lodges, pub based accommodation), and champing and wellness retreats. Developments like nature viewing points, a Wolds Visitor and Orientation centre and/or Dark Skies experience (possibly tied into a visitor centre) would both enhance the offer but also provide a focal point for visitor to the Wolds (something the National parks have often utilised).



Not all experiences require capital development and there are opportunities for softer, packaged experience development e.g. wellness, dark skies, nature and wildlife (such as LCC's Lincolnshire Bird Trail). There are opportunities for the continued development of outdoor activities - particularly walking but also cycling and, to a lesser extent, horse-riding. Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Services have produced a good range of shorter walks and rides. There are opportunities to increase the range of walks and rides (e.g. walks of 3-5 hours duration) and to promote this content more widely through destination websites. Cycling has focused on road riding with the Destination Lincolnshire initiative looking at long distance routes focused on German and Dutch markets. While a niche market, there is, however, potential for gravel bike² product in Wolds particularly if the development of the bike centre at South Willingham is realised.

A Dog Friendly scheme (like VisitEngland's Welcome Pets)³ could enhance the offer, strength the brand and provide a potential differentiator for the area.

Events can serve a range of purposes for a destination - bringing visitors and spend, animating a space, enhancing the brand and build awareness, supporting sense of place, fostering community pride. We have events that already deliver some of these elements (the Outdoors Festival, the Louth Food and Drink Festival) and there are opportunities for further event development (of either existing events or new events) - subject to funding. These should ideally be focused on the market towns (which have capacity) and support the brand or specialism of that town (like the Louth Food and Drink Festival). Events can be resource heavy and ideally need support for a number of years to gain traction and have an impact - supporting one or two flagship events will have more impact than supporting a number of smaller events.

Underpinning the development of new experiences and operations, is a need for market intelligence on the visitor economy in the Wolds. This will help operators and potential operators make more informed decisions about potential investment. Research is needed on visitor characteristics, activities and views (probably every four to five years), awareness and perceptions (every five years) and business supply and performance (annually or biennially).

6.2.2 Key Actions

In the short term, we will:

- ▶ Explore the opportunities for a Wolds Visitor and Orientation Centre and / or Dark Skies Centre and/or Nature Viewing Points.
- ▶ Continue initiatives like the Lincolnshire Bird trail, Pub Diversification Scheme (and other business support initiatives), and Cycle Lincolnshire.
- ▶ Seek to roll out a Welcome Pets scheme among businesses.
- ▶ Look to expand the range of walking and cycling product and promote it more widely.
- ▶ Investigate opportunities for funding and developing existing and/or new events.
- ▶ Develop a programme of market intelligence to inform investment decisions.

² Gravel biking is a cross between road and mountain biking – typically using bridleways and quiet roads.

³ See <https://visitenglandassessmentservices.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/3.2-Welcome-Schemes.pdf>

6.3 Targeted Marketing

6.3.1 Strategic Need and Rationale

Good work has been done on marketing the Lincolnshire Wolds as a tourism destination with the development of a specific Wolds website and supporting PR. However, we have the scope to enhance this activity through a more focused approach through adopting a more audience centric approach (around Country Loving Traditionalists), a better articulation of the core brand of the Wolds and focusing on out-of-season, staying visits. The content of the Love Lincolnshire Wolds website needs to be more curated and dynamic for this audience - focusing more on inspiring. The visual design, search capacity and interactivity of the website can all be enhanced. The website is the primary marketing tool for the Wolds and investment in it should reflect that.



Awareness of the Wolds as a destination remains low. This will not change in the short term with the resources available but continued work in raising the profile is essential. This should include social media activity (primarily Facebook and Instagram given the target audience), hosted influencers visits, campaign activity (focusing on out of season periods - STEAM data suggests Autumn is the priority period) and seeking to influence third party content (like TripAdvisor).

We are a distinct destination within Lincolnshire (and its brand needs to reflect that). However, it is part of a wider Lincolnshire offer. Our marketing collateral (like the LLW website) needs to reflect the wealth of experiences in the wider area that will appeal to the core audience - Lincoln, the natural coast, key historic attractions and gardens etc. There is also a need to continue to ensure a Wolds presence in wider Lincolnshire collateral (VisitLincolnshire features the Wolds strongly) and ensure content is up-to-date and dynamic.

6.3.2 Key Actions

In the short term, we will:

- ▶ Articulate the core Wolds brand and its values.
- ▶ Re-focus the LLW website on Countryside Loving Traditionalists and invest in its design to ensure it is a stand-out website.
- ▶ Ensure the website content is dynamic and up to date.
- ▶ Continue to develop an annual programme of PR and social media.
- ▶ Undertake annual proactive campaign - focusing on the autumn period.
- ▶ Work to ensure with third party content (including VisitLincolnshire) is up-to-date and reflects key Wolds messages.

6.4 An Engaged and Vibrant Sector

6.4.1 Strategic Need and Rationale

The Love Lincolnshire Wolds (LLW) partnership is one of the major success stories of the Destination Management Plan. It has survived the pandemic. LLW has buy in from the local private sector and helps to guide action and activity.

To successfully develop and market a destination, it is vital we have strong relationships between the public and private sector and LLW is key to this. Businesses are absolutely key to the delivery of the DMP - they are core to the visitor experience and the marketing of the Wolds, the value of LLW partnership cannot be over-estimated with core benefits felt in terms of advising businesses on opportunities and trends, developing campaigns, creating networks, and fostering relationships and support between businesses.

However, the development of the partnership requires time and effort to co-ordinate and maintain interest and this should be a key priority moving forward. There is scope to develop the partnership further - while not likely to acquire full DMO status (there is insufficient critical mass of business and resource) the partnership could take a more proactive role and develop a more formal structure. While there is limited appetite for that at the moment it is worth reviewing it, as appropriate, over the DMP period.

The LLW partnership is important to help guide activity and developing content but is also a conduit for developing particular initiatives. There should be a particular focus on sustainability (greening of businesses and adoption of local food) to tie in with the DMP's objectives and the Wolds brand.

6.4.2 Key Actions

In the short term, we will:

- ▶ Continue to provide regular communications and organise networking events (three to four a year), ideally showcasing different Wolds businesses.
- ▶ Encouraging sustainability (e.g. green businesses, local food) among businesses.
- ▶ Work with potential new operators to help develop their ideas and businesses.
- ▶ Look to strengthen and develop the partnership and formalise its role in developing marketing campaigns and content, mindful of the emerging structures coming from the DeBois review.



Implementation



7 Implementation

Partnership is a key principle of this plan. Destination Management arrangements are evolving in Lincolnshire as Destination Lincolnshire becomes the County Wide DMO (and, under the national DMO review, probably a Tier 2 DMO). Our delivery arrangements will need to be reviewed through this DMO period, particularly in relationship to marketing delivery. At the moment this is largely managed by the Local Authorities with the DMO delivering campaign activity (on a project by project basis) under an SLA. Moving forward, we will have greater clarity around this to ensure a more integrated approach in awareness raising and campaign activity, and marketing collateral (web and social media channels) with a possible option of including management of collateral as part of a DMO: Local Authority SLA.

The following table outlines a suggested of responsibilities for the key players. Responsibilities highlighted in ***bold italics*** may change as Destination Lincolnshire's role develops over the DMP period. Responsibilities in brackets may emerge for that particular organisation as the plan rollout develops.

Organisation	Role and Responsibility
East (ELDC) and West Lindsey (WLDC) Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and leadership of the LLW partnership • <i>Developing and managing the destination branding, website and social media.</i> • Visitor information • Securing funding opportunities (LUF, UKSPF) to develop the visitor economy • (Events support and development) • Market town development • Public realm management, planning, public services
LLW Tourism Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting and guiding ELDC, WLDC AND DL activity • (Managing the LLW partnership)
Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership on the development and delivery of the Management Plan including access, recreation and tourism • Countryside management • Protecting and enhancing natural beauty across the AONB • Encouraging and supporting community engagement across the Lincolnshire Wolds • Interpretation and events to help promote the special qualities of the AONB

Organisation	Role and Responsibility
Destination Lincolnshire (DL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Developing and managing the destination branding, website and social media</i> • Campaign development • Cycling Lincolnshire
Lincolnshire County Council (LCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product development like the Lincolnshire Bird Trail, Pub Diversification • VisitLincolnshire.com
Towns Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local activities and events • Interpretation and visitor information • Market town development • Public realm

7.1 Targets and Monitoring

Criteria/Priority	Indicator(s)	Source	Current Performance (2022)	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Economic Impact	Total Tourism spend	STEAM	£199.5m	+4%	+2%	+2%	+3%	+5%
	Total visitor numbers	STEAM	3.752m	+3%	+2%	+2%	+2.5%	+4%
Employment	FTE Jobs supported by tourism spend	STEAM	2,100	2,300	2,400	2,500	2,600	2,700
Seasonality/Productivity	'Off peak' (Oct-Mar) as % of all visitors	STEAM	35%	37%	39%	40%	42%	45%
Destination Awareness	Google searches for term 'Lincolnshire Wolds'	Google trends	2,918	+5%	+4%	+5%	+6%	+6%
Website Activity	No. of unique visitors	Fathom		+5%	+3%	+3%	+2%	+2%
PR Activity	No. of pitches made	LA and DL records	80	60	120	120	120	120
	No. of visits	LA and DL records	7	10	10	10	10	10
Visitor Engagement	Social Media Followers	Official social media accounts	FB 5,500	+20%	+20%	+20%	+20%	+20%
			Insta 2,513	+20%	+20%	+10%	+10%	+10%
	Social Media Reach		FB 197,826	+30%	+20%	TBD	TBD	TBD
			Insta 2,656	+30%	+20%	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Social Media Engagement		FB	Year 1	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
			Insta	Year 1	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Business Engagement	No. of businesses in the LLW Partnership	LLW Partnership	81	90	100	120	150	170

Please note: Additional targets will be added as and when projects are developed.

Action Plan



8 Action Plan

8.1 Introduction

The following section outlines a three to five year action plan against the four strategic priorities identified in the DMP.

The action plan is tabular and is further split into those actions which can be met from existing budgets (including staffing levels and revenue expenditure) and those which will require additional resources (optional but retained for this framework).

Each project has a priority. These are as follows:

- ▶ **Priority 1 = must do**
- ▶ **Priority 2 = high priority**
- ▶ **Priority 3 = medium priority**

Priorities have been allocated against a number of criteria including: strategic fit, market relevance, deliverability, fundability, affordability, expressed support from businesses and other stakeholders during consultation etc.

The level of resources that are ultimately available will determine which priorities are undertaken.

The 'who' column identifies the key organisations responsible, but others may be involved in delivery. Where an organisation is highlighted in brackets, it means their involvement is a potential which needs to be determined as the plan develops.

Abbreviations include:

AONB	Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Countryside Services
DL	Destination Lincolnshire
ELDC	East Lindsey District Council
LA	ELDC/WLDC working in partnership
LCC	Lincolnshire County Council
LLWP	Love Lincolnshire Wolds Tourism Partnership
LWT	Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust
TPC	Town and Parish Councils
WLDC	West Lindsey District Council

Timescales highlight when a project is likely to be undertaken. Year 4+ means it will continue beyond the detailed three-year action plan into years 4 and 5. Timescales can be brought forward (or pushed back depending on resources). Financial years are anticipated, and Year 1 begins in April 2023.

The final column identifies, where appropriate, the potential additional resource (over and above existing investment) that might be required. This is an approximate order of magnitude.

8.2 Action Plan

Project	Description/Action	Priority	Who	Timescales (year)				Additional Resource
				1	2	3	4+	
Action Priority 1: Great Places								
Actions Using Existing Budgets								
Vital and Viable+	Consider, discuss and agree specialist focus for each market town	1	LA	•				-
	Roll out and implement	1	LA		•	•		TBC
	Deliver Vital and Viable programme, consider extension to WLDC	1	ELDC	•	•	•		TBC WLDC Staff time
Access	Maintain and enhance rights of way network	2	AONB/LCC	•	•	•	•	-
Actions Requiring Additional Resources								
Art in the Wolds	Consult with ACE, local artists and landowners to agree 'art in the landscape' programme	2	LA/AONB		•			-
	Submit funding applications and commence delivery	2			•	•	•	TBC
	Assess potential for arts based initiatives in market towns, consult with local artists	1	LA/TPC	•	•			LA staff time
	Funding applications and eventual delivery	1	LA/TPC			•	•	TBC
Digital Heritage Interpretation	Investigate feasibility of on-site digital interpretation for heritage sites e.g. neolithic long barrows, deserted villages	3	AONB		•			Staff time
	Submit funding applications and commence delivery	3	AONB		•	•	•	TBC
LUF Bid	Deliver LUF funded project (if successful) for Spilsby Sessions House, Alford Manor, Alford Windmill	1	ELDC	•	•	•		£9m

Project	Description/Action	Priority	Who	Timescales (year)				Additional Resource
				1	2	3	4+	
Action Priority 2: Quality Visitor Experiences								
Actions Using Existing Budgets								
Cycle Lincolnshire	Continue delivery of cycling initiatives	1	DL	●	●			-
Pub Diversification	Continue business support scheme	1	TBC	●	●			-
Accommodation Development	Encourage innovative and appropriately scaled accommodation development within the AONB e.g. pub-based accommodation, champing, glamping, eco-lodges	2	LA/Businesses	●	●	●	●	-
Lincolnshire Bird & Nature Trail	Review 'what is where' in terms of experience content on websites. Continue existing and develop more nature based experiences and products, potentially in partnership with the Coast	1	LA/LCC/AONB/LWT	●	●			TBC
Pet Welcome	Roll out a Pet Welcome scheme among businesses and embed the concept in marketing collateral	2	LA/Businesses		●	●	●	Staff time
Market Intelligence	Develop comprehensive market intelligence programme to inform decisions	1	LA/DL/LCC/LLWP	●	●	●	●	£25 - £35,000
Actions Requiring Additional Resources								
Visitor/Dark Skies Centre	Explore opportunities for a Visitor/Orientation/Dark Skies Centre	2	AONB/LA		●			-
	Eventual delivery	2	AONB/LA			●	●	TBC
Event Programme	Investigate opportunities for developing new events and enhancing existing events e.g. the Outdoor Festival and Louth Food & Drink Festival	1	LA/LLWP/TPC	●	●			£10,000
Activity product	Improve existing trails e.g. Viking Way. Develop more wellness, walking and cycling products and bring to market, working with businesses to maximise economic impact	2	AONB/DL/LA/Businesses		●	●	●	TBC

Project	Description/Action	Priority	Who	Timescales (year)				Additional Resource
				1	2	3	4+	
Action Priority 3: Targeted Marketing								
Actions Using Existing Budgets								
Brand	Articulate the core Wolds brand and its values	1	LA/LCC/DL/LLWP	•	•	•	•	TBC
	Continued rollout of LWW brand collateral to businesses and partners	1	LA/LLWP	•	•	•	•	
Website	Re-focus website, review and update incl. business listings. Invest in design and additional content, refresh image bank	1	LA/LLWP		•		•	c.£20,000
Social Media/Comms	Continue existing PR and social media activity including additional influencers and specialist writers	1	ELDC/LLWP	•	•	•	•	TBC
	Develop new accounts/platforms	2	LA/LLWP			•	•	TBC
Proactive Marketing	Undertake annual proactive campaign focused on Autumn	2	LA/DL/LLWP			•	•	TBC
3rd Party Content	Review and ensure 3rd party content (incl. Visit Lincolnshire) is up to date and 'on brand', supply official images and copy where required	1	LA/LCC	•	•	•	•	-
Actions Requiring Additional Resources								
Proactive Campaign	Secure additional resources to enhance campaigns, eventual delivery	2	LA/LLWP		•	•	•	TBC
Delivery Partnerships	Develop appropriate marketing delivery partnerships with e.g. Destination Lincolnshire	2	LA/LLWP	•	•	•	•	TBC

Project	Description/Action	Priority	Who	Timescales (year)				Additional Resource
				1	2	3	4+	
Action Priority 4: An Engaged and Vibrant Sector								
Actions Using Existing Budgets								
Networking	Continue networking events, consider introduction of more regular meetings and literature swaps	1	LA/LLWP/DL	•	•	•	•	£10,000
Sustainable Wolds	Encourage and promote Sustainable Business practice in local businesses	3	LA/LLWP/DL		•	•	•	TBC
Partnership Development	Develop and strengthen LLW partnership investigating its potential eventual formalisation and a more proactive role in campaigns and content	2	LLWP/LA/DL			•	•	-
AONB Extension	Consider the opportunities to recruit additional businesses included within the potential enhanced AONB extension	2	LLWP/LA			•	•	-
Actions Requiring Additional Resources								
Skills Development	Conduct detailed assessment of training needs, consider introduction of a 'Wolds Ambassador' programme of local champions supported by information on events, new developments etc.	3	LLWP			•	•	£15,000

