

## **TOURISM STRATEGY FOR WORCESTERSHIRE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **TOURISM IS IMPORTANT**

Tourism is important for Worcestershire. Worcestershire County Council has taken the lead in producing this strategy for developing tourism in the county in partnership with the District Councils and the tourism industry.

Tourism is usually defined as:

The temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work and the activities during their stay at these destinations.

Tourism is not just about going on holiday, it also covers a growing range of leisure-time activities including sightseeing, shopping, attending sports events, visiting friends and relatives as well as many specialist interest activities.

Worcestershire attracts nearly 12 million visitors each year who spend nearly £422m. Spending by our visitors supports 12,679 jobs either directly or indirectly -although only one in ten visitors to Worcestershire stay the night and many are on a trip of only a few hours.

Worcestershire's tourism is part of a growing national and global business. The World Travel and Tourism Council estimate that tourism is about to become the world's largest industry. Here in the UK tourism already accounts for between 4 and 5 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product and it is a growing employment sector with 1.86m people employed in the industry.

Tourism also makes a vital contribution to the wider social and economic well-being of Worcestershire. It helps to regenerate our urban and rural areas, conserve historic buildings, build interest in the environment and maintain the economic viability of local businesses, including our leisure and cultural facilities.

### **CONSULTING ON TOURISM**

Our strategy has grown out of a great deal of consultation and discussion within the county's local authorities, tourism businesses and providers and the regional bodies who are seeking to build up tourism with the region.

Consultation highlighted the many strengths of Worcestershire's offer to visitors including its natural beauty, history and heritage, central location, shopping and local food and drink opportunities.

Consultation also pointed to key areas that the strategy needs to address if tourism in Worcestershire is to develop and keep up with growing competition from neighbouring areas. Our strategy seeks to ensure we strengthen our tourism business and take advantage of new opportunities.

### **MEETING THE CHALLENGE – THE TOURISM STRATEGY FOR WORCESTERSHIRE**

We have set out our overall **mission** for work in supporting tourism in Worcestershire. It is:

**To help provide a high quality experience for all our visitors, and to bring economic, social and environmental benefit through a growing and sustainable visitor economy.**

Our strategy is guided by **five policy aims** which are:

- To **increase the income from tourism** through increasing visitor spend and reducing the seasonality of visits
- To **increase the range and number of places and activities which attract visitors** thereby increasing the benefit to local businesses and lessening any adverse impact on established 'honey pot' destinations
- To **build partnership working** between local authorities, the tourism sector and other agencies concerned with tourism to ensure an effective strategic approach
- To **strengthen links and co-ordination between tourism support and other initiatives** including Community Plans, Economic Development and Cultural Strategies
- To ensure **value for money and effective use of the limited resources** available to support tourism in the county.

Our **four priorities for the strategy** are:

**Priority A: BUILD A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO SUPPORTING TOURISM**

Everyone involved in developing tourism in Worcestershire needs to ensure that we take a broad view of the industry and plan for its future. We must take opportunities to link with regional and county initiatives on the economy, transport, environment, leisure and cultural development where they impact on tourism and tourism can make a contribution. We need to address the low profile for Worcestershire so that more people learn about what we have to offer. The local authorities need to organise their tourism development support in the most effective way.

To build a strategic approach to supporting tourism we will:

**A1:** Seek widespread adoption of this strategy and promote the value of tourism to key decision makers in all local authorities and other key partner agencies

**A2:** Carry out a thorough review of how tourism support is currently delivered within the county by the County and District Councils and identify structures and ways in which strategic and partnership work can be most effectively delivered

**A3:** Develop a programme of profile raising for the county including a joint project with the county wide Economic Development Partnership to raise awareness of and to create a positive image for the county to potential visitors and investors

**A4:** Identify ways in which we can work closely with regional agencies, especially Advantage West Midlands and cultural development organisations, to ensure that tourism in the county benefits from leisure and tourism sector, rural and cultural development programmes

**Priority B: ADDRESS QUALITY ISSUES IN TOURISM**

Worcestershire's tourism industry operates in an increasingly competitive market with rising expectations among our visitors. We need to raise the quality of what we offer in accommodation, information and customer service, build participation in quality and registration schemes and ensure that the industry is ready to respond positively to the Disability Discrimination Act in 2004.

To address quality issues in Worcestershire's tourism we will:

**B1:** Develop a pro-active approach to quality and registration schemes, seeking ways to positively encourage businesses to participate in service and quality improvement and registration schemes

**B2:** Seek to work with other quality schemes run by other bodies to facilitate common promotion of such schemes to tourism businesses

**B3:** Develop a joint approach to create awareness of disability issues among tourism businesses and develop effective training and preparation for the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act in 2004

**Priority C: PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT TO TOURISM BUSINESSES**

Our tourism businesses face a range of challenges. Worcestershire's local authorities and partner bodies have an opportunity to help tourism businesses address issues such as; the reliance on day visitors and low spending per head, how to access new niche markets like business and conference tourism that will help reduce seasonality, increasing imaginative use of the world wide web and information technology and ensuring that the needs of tourism businesses are recognised by our planners and highway bodies.

To provide effective support to Worcestershire's tourism businesses we will:

**C1:** Establish an annual programme of priority research on potential tourism development areas (eg conference and business tourism, cultural tourism, special interest visits including food and drink), seek with partners to fund research which will be of assistance to the future planning of tourism businesses and disseminate the results of research widely to businesses

**C2:** Identify ways in which the tourism sector can benefit from regional and county development programmes such as the regional technology corridors, business and conference development and regional promotional programmes and promote the involvement of the tourism sector in these programmes

**C3:** Work jointly with other local authority departments including planning and highways to ensure that the needs of tourism businesses are recognised and that planning, signage and other regulations seek to respond to their needs wherever this does not conflict with other policies

**C4:** Work jointly with county and regional partners to maximise the benefit of ICT development for tourism businesses and visitors drawing on the professional expertise of local authority ICT departments and other agencies.

**Priority D: WORK FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR TOURISM**

If our tourism business is continue to have a beneficial impact on the economic, social and environmental development of Worcestershire we need to meet a number

of challenges. We need to ensure that tourism's many small businesses have the skills and business support they need, that it can offer attractive careers to its workers, that visitors are spread across a wide range of places and that we encourage visitors to get out of their cars as much as possible.

To work for a sustainable future for tourism in the county we will:

**D1:** Work with key partners in economic development and skill development and training organisations to ensure that business and skill development needs of tourism businesses are identified and provided for

**D2:** Explore how we can jointly support and extend visitor management initiatives by local authorities and other agencies (such as the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)

**D3:** Work with cultural and other organisations to broaden the number and range of destinations and activities that can be promoted to visitors across the county

**D4:** Encourage walking, cycling, the development of 'quiet lanes', public transport interchange points and coach parties and other transport initiatives that strengthen our appeal to visitors.

*A full version of the Tourism Strategy for Worcestershire is available from*

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*It can also be downloaded from [www.worcestershire.gov.uk](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk)*

Or from your local district Tourism Officer