

Date April 2023

Shakespeare's England and Local Visitor Economy Partnerships

Background

Nick de Bois was commissioned by Government to carry out an [Independent Review of Destination Management Organisations \(DMOs\)](#) this was published in 2020 with recommendations including

- DMOs should be reduced in number from the current 180+ to approximately 40 grouped at a regional level responsible for core activities that fit with Government priorities such as sustainability, skills, inclusive tourism and levelling up.
- The Government should bring coherence to England's DMO landscape via a tiering approach
 - a top tier of accredited Tourist Boards acting as 'Destination Development Partnerships' (DDPs) 'HUBs' and
 - a second tier of accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs), 'SPOKES'.
- DDP status could be awarded to either an individual accredited LVEP covering a large enough geography (e.g. a city region) or to a coalition of willing accredited LVEPs within an area.
- The Government should provide core funding to each DDP. The funding to be focused on activities that ensuring that destination remains sustainable, competitive and responsive to the high level strategic challenges - sustainability, skills, inclusive tourism and levelling up.
- DMOs that do not obtain accreditation would become 'third tier', small, localised DMOs with minimal engagement.
- DMOs need to drive forward this change, for the new structure to succeed they must be less territorial, have a greater focus on collaboration, and recognise the current fragmentation is holding them back in properly delivering for the visitor economy.
- DMOs should seek to diversify their income streams, share and learn from examples of best practice. diversification will be an important accreditation criterion.
- DMOs should have diverse boards that fully represent their communities, their businesses and visitors.
- Local government – be that a District Council, County Council, Mayoral Combined Authority or any other formulation – must realise the value of tourism and supporting their LVEP and DDP. For the LVEPs to be most effective they need to be public/private/community partnerships, not based in a Local Authority but working in close partnership with them. They should also involve their LVEP in any policy decision-making affecting the visitor economy.

to which the Government then published a [formal response](#) in September 2021. Their response stated: -

- The government will introduce the new tiered structure system for England's DMOs. DMOs that successfully meet clear requirements will become part of a 'national portfolio' of LVEPs
- The criteria for becoming an LVEP, part of the national portfolio will be designed and assessed by VisitEngland, with the final decision on granting accreditation being in the hands of DCMS.
- The government will pilot de Bois' DDP tiering model and subject to a successful pilot, the government's ambition is to adopt the approach nationally, however future funding is not guaranteed.
- DCMS, VisitEngland and other government departments and agencies will only engage with accredited LVEPs that are part of the national portfolio.

Expressions of Interest were opened up in late December 2022. It was confirmed early in 2023 that the North East would be the location for the DDP pilot, under which sits the first 3 accredited LVEPs, NewcastleGateshead Initiative, VisitCounty Durham and Visit Northumberland. Earlier this month a further 13 LVEP's were announced, these are Marketing Cheshire, Experience Oxfordshire, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Visit Hull and East Yorkshire, Visit West, Marketing Manchester, Visit Peak District, Derbyshire and Derby, Visit Hertfordshire, Visit Kent, Liverpool City Region, Cumbria Tourism, and Birmingham, Solihull and the Black Country.

It is anticipated that the closing date Round 2 accreditations submissions is to be 12 June, with DCMS announcing the successful LVEPs in July, prior to the Summer recess.

Opportunities

The new LVEP structure will bring existing DMOs and its stakeholders: -

- Credibility for the LVEP so that it can work with authority throughout the local visitor economy and with its key stakeholders (public and private)
- A direct channel, via VE's regional development team, to VE/VB, Government and other public sector partners
- Access to, and benefit from, VE/VB targeted LVEP support, including: expertise in areas such as commercial, sustainability and accessibility, international and domestic marketing, training services and any future funding programmes, making LVEPs more attractive for local businesses to join
- Opportunity to be part of a national strategic network of high performing LVEPs that work together, along with VE/VB and government, to deliver sustainable development and growth of the visitor economy, shaping national strategy and supporting implementation and sharing of best practice.
- If the Destination Development Pilot is successful, the possibility of national roll-out of funded DDPs from 2025, with some of that funding potentially being devolved to LVEPs to deliver specific workstreams where they have expertise and in support of strategic ambitions.

and provide local government bodies: -

- Joined-up strategic thinking, development and management of the local visitor economy across the public and private sectors, ensuring it directly contributes to creating thriving places and communities.
- Clear strategic line of sight from local to national (Government, VB/VE and other key national bodies) on all visitor economy related issues - giving you the confidence that your LVEP is the delivery partner for the visitor economy.
- Strong and stable partnerships between Local Authorities/ Combined Authorities/ Mayoral Authorities/ and the LVEP to drive forward local priorities and investment.
- Capacity and ability to demonstrate the value of the local visitor economy through a robust evidence base. This will help local government make the case for supporting their LVEP and the local visitor economy.
- Structure and support for smaller DMOs/ Local Tourism teams (not qualifying for LVEP status) to benefit from national initiatives (via the LVEP) while reducing fragmentation and duplication.

The full prospectus can be seen here [Local Visitor Economy Partnership Programme \(visitbritain.org\)](https://www.visitbritain.org)

Board Considerations

A key consideration is that this is not about marketing, but about support at a far more strategic level from VE/VB for destinations to drive forward the Governments challenges. Any funding will be focused on activities that ensuring that destination remains sustainable, competitive and responsive to the high level strategic challenges - sustainability, skills, inclusive tourism and levelling up. Marketing activity will come as a by product and as such 'Brands' sitting within one LVEP could partner on a campaign basis with another. As such should Shakespeare's England be part of a Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership LVEP, it could still join a campaign being run by Cotswolds Plus LVEP targeting domestic leisure visitors, or Birmingham, Solihull and Black Country in a campaign targeting Business Tourists using Birmingham Airport as a gateway.

It comes down to 4 options: -

1. **Do Nothing** – retain Shakespeare's England and Destination Coventry as non-affiliated Destination Management Organisations. These Tier 3 organisations would not be recognised by VisitEngland, have no communication channel to VB/VE and no access to funding bids for marketing activity (e.g. Discover England Fund (DEF) where we were part of England Originals, England's Waterways, England's Literary Greats projects; or route development activity such as England's Heartland, working with WMGC, Peak District & Derbyshire and Birmingham Airport highlighting the airport as an international gateway for our area).

No access to Business Tourism development or the Business Tourism Event growth funding pots. Neither organisation would receive national policy updates or implementation support, like the opportunities we received during COVID to be part of the Good to Go Scheme, access to Government supported DMO funding and the ability to lobby on behalf of our members' for recognition and support under one body.

We would risk being isolated if Destination Coventry chose to join the Birmingham Solihull & Black Country LVEP and potentially losing Members to Cotswold Tourism if they felt unrepresented and a loss of opportunity from being disconnected from VE/VB.

2. Join alternative LVEPs

Destination Coventry could join the Birmingham, Solihull and Black Country Partnership (LVEP) which is already set up. The geography works for them and although they would have to align their commercial partners programmes, they already work closely together as constituent members of the WM Combined Authority, one of the geographies Government is using when looking at LVEP coverage.

The Lead organisation and accountable body would be WMGC. This would also remove the opportunity for a C&W LVEP to join a West Midlands pilot Destination Development Partnership (DDP), as Destination Coventry would already be included within the Birmingham, Solihull and Black Country LVEP.

Shakespeare's England could join the Cotswolds Plus LVEP, made up of Cotswolds Tourism, Cotswolds National Landscape, Visit Dean Wye, Marketing Cheltenham, Visit Gloucestershire (plus Visit Gloucester, Stroud and Tewkesbury who are currently finalising the details of their organisation to make a submission for accreditation under the 2nd phase by 12 June. SE would have to align its commercial & membership programmes and generate a new Tourism Strategy and Destination Management Plan (DMP) in tandem with the lead organisation, already identified as Cotswold Tourism with Cotswold District Council as the accountable body. As North Warwickshire Tourism is neither part of Shakespeare's England nor an accredited DMO with the accompanying Governance structure, they would need to set up their own public-private organisation if the whole County was to be served. There is also the risk of North Warwickshire BC, Nuneaton & Bedworth BC and Rugby BC joining Birmingham, Solihull and Black Country, as they are non-also constituent members of WMCA.

3. Create a Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership LVEP

Under this both organisations would retain their existing commercial organisations and membership functions. The Geography is contiguous and there are already good examples of where it works. CW Growth Hub, CW Chamber, Conference Coventry & Warwickshire and the previously highly successful CWLEP. There is already a legacy of close collaborative work, partnering at both Leisure and Business Tourism Trade Shows, combined Familiarisation visits with Travel Trade and Press. Joint events like the Meet the Supplier Event taking place on 27 April and our current work across with the GDS Index to obtain sustainability benchmarking across the region. The one organisation is already the local champion on Business Tourism – Destination Coventry with Conference Coventry & Warwickshire, the other on leisure tourism, with the power of the globally recognised Shakespeare branding. The vision would be to bring all of Warwickshire County into the LVEP thus ensuring the North of the County has access to the same opportunities for business support, levelling up, funding and promotional activities as does the South of the County and Coventry. It enable them to maximise their Business Tourism strengths whilst they develop their leisure product.

4. Shakespeare's England applies independently for LVEP status

We are perfectly entitled to do this, however I believe it is clear from the details above that the Government is looking to accredit LVEPs that cover a far greater geography than SE does. This restructuring is about strategic positioning, making decisions around infrastructure projects, transport links, planning applications that cover a far greater geography than Shakespeare's England. To ensure that there is joined up thinking across what is at the moment a fragmented landscape. I believe this really is a case of bigger is better if we are to survive and flourish.

Ultimately the LVEP has to be accepted as THE Tourism delivery body for that area.

4. Recommendations

- i. Work with Destination Coventry to submit an expression of interest in becoming a Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership LVEP (see supporting RAG Report)
- ii. Submit the EOI as soon as possible and work on our application with our Regional Coordinator to ensure we meet the deadline for the 2nd Round of submissions on 12 June 2023.
- iii. Obtain DCMS accreditation for a C&W Partnership LVEP in early July
- iv. During year one work to become more financially efficient, champion all aspects of sustainability and accessibility and finalise the Governance around the LVEP, when we have had a chance to fully assess whether we are better to stay as a Partnership or set up a new Company, possibly a Community Interest Company (CIC) with a new Governance Structure.

CORE CRITERIA FOR AN LVEP

Criterion	Proposed evidence	Can C&W deliver? RAG status
Covers an important geography (such as county or city region) and avoids overlap with other LVEPs (as the aim is to create a national portfolio)	National assessment	
Geography makes sense to the consumer and businesses	National assessment	
Should have a destination management plan or tourism strategy developed with local partners	Active DMP/ tourism strategy	
Engaged in destination 'management', not just marketing	Evidence of business support offer, product development and distribution activity etc.	
Should be well integrated with other important local and regional actors such as key attractions and local government	Board make-up, evidence of involvement of stakeholders in DMP/tourism strategy, stakeholder engagement programme etc.	
Demonstrable commitment from local authority/ies that DMO is lead body in the area (incl. public funding)	Letter of support from LA(s)	
Demonstrate an ability to raise funding from the private sector	Evidence of private sector funded activity/memberships	
Can administer public funding with probity	Evidence from previous government funded or EU projects led by DMO; VE assessment of VB/VE grant funding awarded to DMO	
Capacity of organisation needs to be reflective of the size and importance of destination	DMO assessment of capacity in relation to geography covered	
Are working in partnership with other DMOs in their wider region	Evidence of partnership activity	

GROWTH CRITERIA

Criterion	Proposed evidence	Can C&W deliver? Evidence
Commitment to expanding their commercial income and other funding streams	Current level of commercial income and funding streams; and plans for developing future income	
Commitment to staff skills development including digital, international travel trade, bid writing and distribution	Training plan for next year and beyond that identifies LVEP needs and reflects national as well as local priorities	
Governance (incl. board structure) should reflect visitor economy it represents (public sector, businesses and consumers), be focused on impact and outcomes and show diversity	Overview of current governance structures, assessment of how representative they are and plans to expand structure/address any lack of diversity	
Should have a comprehensive business support offer or commit to developing one	Evidence of current business support offer and future plan	
Willing to support national priorities and Government initiatives, including accessibility, sustainability, local research and data	Evidence of current support and plans for future support	
Commitment to growing their membership/partner support model	Evidence of current membership structure and size and future plan	