



Board Papers

Thursday 4th November 2021



Agenda

Virtual Board Meeting

Thursday 4th November 2021– 8am

Please join via Teams video conference

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Time		Item	Lead	Reference
08:00am	1	Welcome and Apologies	TB	
08:05am	2	Declarations of Interest	TB	
08:10am	3	Minutes and matters arising from Board Meeting held on 2 nd September 2021	TB	
08:20am	4	Board Matters <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reappointment of Directors- Marketing Chester additional Director	TB	
08:40am	5	Chief Executive Report/Briefing note	JM	(Board Paper 241)
09:00am	6	DMO Review	JM	(Board Paper 242)
09:30am	7	Company Finances	DW/IB	
09:50am	8	A.O.B		
10:00am	9	Close		

**Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Board
Thursday 2nd September 2021 – 8am**

Present: Trevor Brocklebank – Chair (“TB”)
Joe Manning (“JM”)
**Marketing Cheshire
Directors** Mark Goldsmith (“MG”)
David Walker (“DW”)
Andy Lyon (“AL”)
Eleanor Underhill (“EU”)
Sarah Callander-Beckett (“SCB”)
Jamie Christon (“JC”)
Tracey O’Keefe (“TO”)
Rob McKay (“RM”)
Gemma Davies (“GD”)
Steven Broomhead (“SB”)

In Attendance: Nicola Said (“NS”)
Ian Brooks (“IB”)
Sharon Pond (minute taker)

Apologies: Peter Mearns (“PM”)
Philip Cox (“PC”) (observer)

- **Opening by the Chairman and Welcome**

TB thanked the board for joining the call and welcomed Board members to the meeting.

TB stressed the importance of holding an ‘in person’ board meeting at a future date. It was agreed to aim to do this either at the December meeting or in the new year, depending on the Board’s preference.

**Action SP to
poll Board
members**

- **Declarations of Interest**

TB asked Board members to advise of any declarations of interest.

- **Minutes and Actions from the last Meeting**

The Board confirmed that the minutes from the meeting on the 6th May 2021 were correct.

It was confirmed that the actions from the previous meeting have been dealt with.

- **Board Matters**

Purpose Pyramid

JM referred to the purpose pyramid circulated within the board pack and advised that a session had taken place with the MC team members to review the pyramid.

Following feedback from board members it was agreed that we will include outcomes and visitor experience in addition to financials within the pyramid. The pyramid is a work in progress, and we should amend and refresh the pyramid as we move forward. The pyramid will be discussed in more detail at the ‘in person’ board meeting.

JM confirmed that the team will start to use the top line of the pyramid to ensure consistent messaging.

- **Discussion around support to businesses over Autumn / Winter**

JM asked Board members for an update on business performance

EU advised that the National Trust is very encouraged by visitor numbers particularly over the bank holiday, not quite at the levels of several years ago.

SCB advised that Combermere holiday lets and B&B offer is incredibly busy, weddings are also performing well. The intention is to start work on promotion of breaks again mid-September to promote forward bookings.

JC advised that the Zoo has had a very good summer, with August receiving a record number of visitors, 14-15k visitors every day. Spend has also been very good. Pandemic has caused issues with staffing so have had to over recruit to compensate for this. Forward bookings are also looking good with lantern tickets 70% sold. Visitor 80% staycation 20% members.

Hotel Occupancy for June /July is back at 2019 levels with the average cost per night increasing. Forward bookings are slower to recover. Mid-week stays remain a challenge. Occupancy is a lot higher than in Manchester and Liverpool and on par with other historic cities.

We are now working on promoting forward Autumn and Winter bookings and we have lots of programmes in place to increase interest over the Autumn / Winter period.

JC advised that the Destination Chester programme is also supporting forward bookings using the ARG grant which is moving ahead in terms of planning with a programme manager and PR team. Programme has been scheduled through the Autumn /Winter and into next year, putting additional spend into the city to aid recovery.

- **Reappointment of Directors**

TB advised that David Walker and Eleanor Underhill have completed a 3-year term and proposed that they are reappointed for a further 3 years. The MC Board members unanimously recommended the reappointments to the LEP board. This will be tabled for discussion at the LEP board on the 15th September.

- **Board Briefing Note / CEO Report**

JM referred Board members to the report circulated within the Board pack and highlighted the following key items.

- Tour of Britain is taking place in Cheshire on the 9th September starting at Alderley Park and finishing in Warrington. The team have been working on the promotion of this event. We will also use this event to promote cycling, active travel, and enjoying the great outdoors throughout the autumn.
- We have received Good PR coverage, including Chester Staycation Award and the Telegraph feature. PR pack to be circulated to the board.
- EU has kindly agreed to Chair the Destination Cheshire Group and we are holding a workshop on the 20th of September to look at how we position the wider Cheshire offer including looking at sustainability and the family friendly offer.
- MC Awards will be launched next week, this will be tied into the national awards and will include a few new awards linking to the pandemic.

**Action
NS/SP**

- VIC have received increasingly positive footfall numbers, last week had their best day since 2019 in terms of footfall and takings. Lots of positive feedback on the parklets and the outdoor theatre.
- We have 97 Partnerships signed up including a few new partners.
- Christmas Market – In addition to the original budget we will be purchasing a number of new chalets to replace damaged chalets. We will then conduct a full review looking at options that will allow us to recoup the outlay of the chalets this year and assess potential commercial agreements for the future. We will also look at opportunities to hold Christmas markets in other towns to encourage visitor numbers.
- Operationally the market this year will be delivered by an external company.
- NS confirmed that she is working with travel operators including Avanti to minimise travel disruption into the city and looking at ways to keep visitors informed.
- TB and JM had a very positive visit to Macclesfield and were encouraged by the level of enthusiasm by partners. We are using our channels to promote Macclesfield.
- With regard to Government policy, we have not received feedback yet on the Destination Management Organisation review.

Comments from Board

It was stated that Macclesfield have a good town centre recovery plan and similar schemes are being rolled out to other towns in the East. Crewe has received £25M funding to be used over the next 3 years.

There is a huge opportunity to share best practice across Cheshire and get everyone to work together in the individual towns and it was suggested that Destination Cheshire could look at this as part of their programme to create a towns strategy.

It was suggested that once developed the towns strategy could be presented to the Rural Business Forum.

Tour of Britain was highlighted as a real opportunity to promote Cheshire and launch other activities to help with the recovery. Warrington will conduct an evaluation report after the event.

Cultural events such as Creamfields are very significant to Cheshire and there is a need to be clearer on our support of these events. Also, the 'Making tracks' exhibition at the Cathedral was a great success, bringing in 45k visitors. Pete Waterman is looking to run the event again next year, and we should support this.

The appointment of Social as the PR company was referred to. JM advised that Social replace a temporary agent for the LEP and will work with Marketing Cheshire to build PR expertise within the team. We will continue working with specialist PR agents such as Traveltrappers. It was confirmed that recruiting an external agent is more affordable than recruiting a dedicated employee for this role.

JM advised that we are not looking to grow the organisation with regards to staffing at this time, we may wish to bring in specialist skills for the short term or look to return employees seconded to the Growth Hub.

- **Draft Destination Management Plan**

JM introduced the paper which had been included in the board pack advising that the historically the plan is produced on an annual basis, however due to the pandemic a

plan was not developed last year. We have worked with the 3 local authorities to produce the plan and feedback from our partner networks has been included.

NS reiterated that the plan is a destination management plan for the whole destination that connects into the LEP, Government and local recovery plans.

NS ran through 10 priorities which will be refreshed and built upon over time.

Following the feedback from Board members the following was agreed

- The importance of supporting recruitment across all sectors and the big employer branding and sector branding challenge, due to the career change paths of employees due to Covid was recognised
- It was agreed that a clear prioritised action plan should be developed with KPIs
- NS agreed to present the plan to the Covid Recovery Group, SB to agree with Group Cheshire East Chair.

**Action
SB/NS**

The board agreed to support the plan and its publication on the website and to conduct further discussions with partners.

- **Company Finances**

TB introduced IB/ DW to give an overview of the company finances.

IB referred Board members to the July YTD report included within the board pack advising that the operating result is ahead of budget and ran through the key elements of the report noting that the Audit Committee are comfortable with the cash position, level of debtors and reserves position.

IB advised that going forward the intention is to be more strategic with the financial reporting, focussing on the material issues.

IB referred to the proposed grant agreement with CW&C for the delivery of the DC project and sought agreement from the Board to enter into this agreement with CW&C, noting the possible risks. IB advised that he is comfortable with the cash flow analysis and associated risks.

NS stated that the funding is via ERDF and has been fully supported by CW&C to ensure guidance is followed.

TO questioned how MC / LEP currently manage risks. TB advised that he is in discussions with IB regarding managing risk registers as part of the LEP governance.

NS to share the original application and focus of activity in relation to the grant and programme of activity - action NS

Action NS

The board confirmed their approval to enter into the grant funding agreement.

Approval of the 2020/2021 Statutory Accounts

DW updated Board members on the CWTB's financial position at the year end and advised that the Statutory accounts have been approved by the Audit Committee and moved for the Board to approve and sign the accounts.

The report highlighted one issue regarding expense approvals – IB will be putting in measures to deal with this issue.

Action IB

The Board Members present approved the Management letter, the Audit Representation letter and the Audited accounts for 2020/21 for CWTB.

The Chair advised that he is happy to sign the accounts which will be filed at Companies House. IB to liaise with Murray Smith to arrange.

Action IB

- **Any Other Business.**

None

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on the Thursday 4th November 2021 – 8am via Microsoft Teams.

Signature (Trevor Brocklebank, Chair)

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Date

4th November 2021

**Chief Executive update
Paper 241**

1. Headline summary

The team have enjoyed a busy summer and early autumn. It has been great to begin regularly meeting again in person with our many partners and a number of new projects have launched. The work with the LEP on economy-wide communications and marketing has stepped up in the run up to COP26 and with the organisational rebrand. The latest position on the Destination Management Organisation review is the subject of a separate board item and paper.

2. Visitor economy data and general update

We have received our STEAM volume and value report which outlines the impact of the pandemic on the visitor economy in 2020. In summary, the economic impact of the visit economy in Cheshire and Warrington was valued at £2.08 billion in 2020 versus £3.85 billion in 2019. The number of visitors to Cheshire and Warrington in 2020 was 36 million compared to 65 million in 2019. See Annex 1 for more detail. Although this data does not come as a surprise it shows the scale of the impact of Covid19 and the challenges we face to rebuild the visitor economy.

More recent data for Summer 2021 paints a more positive picture. Occupancy for hotels in August 2021 was 82% across Cheshire and Warrington. The average daily rate for hotels was £86.40 in August and £88.49 in September. Comparing with 2019, this is an increase of £15 per night and increase in occupancy by 5%, with Chester hotels achieving a very significant 30% increase in rate.

3. Communications and Marketing

Our current focus is to highlight the range of autumn experiences in Chester and Cheshire and continuing to promote an outdoor offer. This follows on from the Tour of Britain which has raised the profile of Cheshire and Warrington for cycling. We have pulled together all the [cycling experiences in Cheshire and Warrington](#), from family bike rides to longer routes to off road riding. We also focused on cycling in our regular feature in Cheshire Life.

The focus after autumn half-term will be promoting Christmas and winter experiences across our city, towns and rural attractions. We are developing a new digital version of the Ultimate Guide for winter which will embed film and interactive content within it. This will also celebrate all that Cheshire has to offer at Christmas.

In the year to date we generated 96 pieces of coverage with a reach of 43.2million. We have recently secured a visit from a journalist from The Guardian for their new slot "A Walk to A Great Pub" to profile

The Sandstone Ridge area. Our paid for adverts for Chester and the Tour of Britain both performed well. The website had 1.4million visits over the last year which is 3.6% up on 19/20, the focus on developing new content continues to generate visits and promote our partners. Our monthly articles for Cheshire Life have been well received and we have agreed to continue the partnership next year.

4. Travel trade and business events

We are supporting our partners who are focused on the corporate market to promote them for meetings and events. We are starting with a regional promotion targeting companies who may be looking at team building, staff conferences, gala events and awards following the pandemic. Our venues have a lot to offer in terms of space and outside experiences. This will be a precursor to a wider business visits and events strategy which will look to build on our sector strengths, targeting sector specific associations.

We are working with travel trade operators to bring back domestic groups and international visitors to the destination. This includes Liverpool and Manchester Airports and strengthening connections into Northern Ireland beginning with Derry. We are also engaging Avanti, Northern, and Mersey Rail on marketing opportunities for the destination.

5. Destination Chester and Destination Cheshire

The Destination Chester 'Welcome Back Fund' programme launched Friday 23rd October with 'The Nest' an immersive cultural experience taking over an empty shop on Bridge Street. This will be followed by 'The Roving Moon' in the winter and 'Spring Blooms' in the Spring. This activity will complement the activity we are delivering for the Heritage Action Zone project for Chester rows.

The Destination Cheshire network met in September as part of a workshop with Caroline Sanger-Davies to look at developing an enhanced family focused proposition for Cheshire and Warrington. We focused on families and sustainability. The workshop was attended by 20 businesses and there is a high level of enthusiasm for shaping new joint positioning. The group will meet again in early November.

6. Christmas Market in Chester

As advised to the board, the Christmas Market is operating as an outsourced agreement and plans are progressing well, with all traders committed. We will receive payment for costs undertaken to date in November. We are exploring options for future years, working with Cheshire West and Chester Council.

7. Visitor Information Centre

The VIC have had a strong summer of sales and are now seeing visitors from overseas on a more regular basis. The new self-guided historical guides produced during lockdown have gone from strength to strength. They are free to download on the Visit Cheshire website and nearly 2,000 have been bought from the VIC. The team supported the 900-year anniversary of the Shrievalty in Chester. They have also welcomed tourism journalists and University of Chester undergraduates to the city.

During the summer, the VIC team have also shown great resilience to respond to a number of power cuts. This has impacted sales and service. Thankfully, a new substation has reconnected the VIC to the mains.

8. Partnership update

We have 102 partners signed up to date and £55,244 has been invoiced against an annual budgeted target of £28,000. We are now following up on outstanding invoices. Recent new partners include the new Leonardo Hotel Chester which is part of the Jurys Group, Cholmondeley Castle and Gardens, Lymm Heritage Information Centre and Star Narrowboat Holidays. The Marketing Cheshire awards closed for nominations on Wednesday 18th October with over 70 nominations from businesses across Cheshire and Warrington.

9. Economy-wide communications

We are now moving into the second stage of the LEP branding and communications programme. The LEP Annual Report and Economic Summit demonstrated the value of a strong visual identity in line with our vision for a healthy, sustainable, inclusive, and growing economy. This has had good feedback from our stakeholders in both business and government. We have also begun to roll out the sub-branding work to show greater coherence across the LEP family.

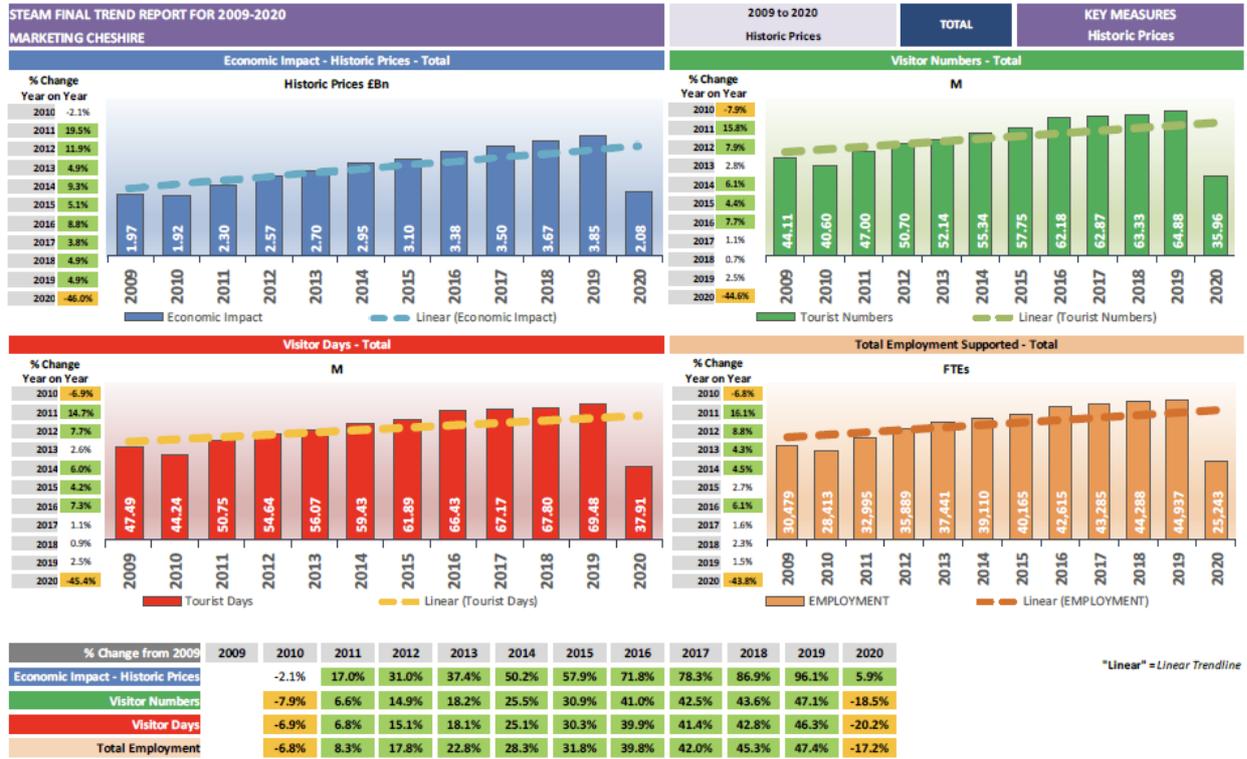
We have also started other projects on transport and skills. We are working with Warrington Borough Council on a project to encourage concessionary bus pass holders back on the buses. The usage rate is currently at 50% the normal rate compared with 80% for other markets. We are delivering this in partnership with Groundwork who manage Warrington Business Improvement District. We hope this can act as a pilot to be rolled out to Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East. We are supporting Cheshire East Council on the Hospitality job support programme. We are engaging with tourism and hospitality businesses with entry level vacancies. Benefit claimants aged 18-30 will receive free training in allergens, health and safety and customer service before being matched to a position. We are providing advice for YouthFed to help them shape their marketing and branding. This supports the work we undertake for the Pledge, which is a joint programme between the LEP and YouthFed.

10. Place marketing and COP 26

The COP26 conference is fast approaching. Clare Hayward and Cllr Louise Gittins will be speaking at fringe events in Glasgow. We had a very successful visit from the Government's Carbon Battle Bus as it works its way up the country having started at the G7 Summit in Cornwall. They visited the plastic to hydrogen plant at Protos, the proposed Hydrogen fuelled glass furnace at Encirc, and then Cheshire East's Environmental Hub in Middlewich to see their two Hydrogen fuelled refuse trucks. The visit was rounded off with a very successful half day conference on decarbonisation held at Thornton Science Park, organised by the Marketing Cheshire team alongside Font Communications.

Marketing Cheshire is working with Cheshire West and Chester on branding activity for the Ellesmere Port Industrial Area. The decarbonisation of Ellesmere Port is a key opportunity in our wider Cheshire and Warrington COP26 programme that includes opportunities in the nuclear sector, the promotion of Net Zero Cheshire, and wider messages to business and residents across Cheshire and Warrington on the importance of sustainability. The recent Government confirmation of Hynet as a first track carbon capture cluster means this work is critical for both Ellesmere Port and the wider sub-region.

ANNEX A: STEAM VISITOR DATA FOR CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON



Joe Manning, Marketing Cheshire, 25/10/2021

4th November 2021

**DMO Review paper
Paper 242**

1. The Destination Management Organisation review is independent of Government. It was commissioned by the Minister for Tourism and led by Nick De Bois, a businessman and former Conservative MP.
2. The review and supporting evidence papers are available here. [Independent Review of Destination Management Organisations \(DMOs\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100424/Independent_Review_of_Destination_Management_Organisations_DMOs_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf). This note provides a very brief summary for Board discussion.
3. The de Bois review sets out a far-reaching analysis of national tourism policy the current landscape of Destination Management Organisations across England. The review did not cover the devolved administrations. De Bois calls for wholesale change to a system that he regards as underfunded by Government with confusion at the local level. His ambition is to improve the overall tourism product across the country – and to ensure it has a role to play in regeneration and place making.
4. De Bois explicitly makes a connection between the visitor economy and the emphasis from Government on Levelling Up and pride in place. He quotes directly from the Prime Minister’s speech: “There is no place in the country that does not have something special, some selling point” and “all they need is the right people to believe in them to lead them and to invest in them and for government to get behind them.”
5. The key recommendations in the Review are for the Government. England is relatively unique in how ‘hands-off’ the Government is with destination management at a subnational level.
6. De Bois proposes the establishment of Destination Development Partnerships at a local level. He also recommends that Destination Management Organisations are renamed, potentially as tourist boards. These strengthened local partnerships would both ‘market’ and ‘manage’ destinations.
7. Destination Development Partnerships would be in Tier 1 of a three-tier local approach to the visitor economy. Destination Development Partnerships could be a large city-region, such as Liverpool City Region or Greater Manchester, operate on a single county, or be formed from a coalition across tourist boards. De Bois also stresses that Destination Development Partnerships should be organised on geographies that make sense to the consumer.

8. De Bois sets out a series of key activities for new Destination Development Partnerships. These activities put the visitor economy at the heart of levelling up, regional growth, and creating sustainable and inclusive places. The recommendations build on the discussions we have had at the Marketing Cheshire board over recent months on our future strategic direction. They cover eight thematic areas (and are included in full at Annex A).
 1. Developing a Destination Development Plan that could cover:
 - i. Regional growth
 - ii. Levelling up
 - iii. Destination sustainability
 - iv. Productivity
 - v. Inward investment
 2. Advocating for the Destination's visitor economy
 3. Partnership working
 4. Bidding for funding / advising on funding bids
 5. Product development
 6. Engagement on major events
 7. Data collection and sharing
 8. Business support
9. De Bois proposes that Government provide multi-year funding for Tier 1 Destination Development Partnerships to carry out the activity set out above. This is primarily for non-marketing activity subject to an application process and according to need and business plan.
10. The role for the second-Tier organisations is more supporting, local, and more tactical. The third-Tier is primarily about local marketing and without any hope of funding. Any tourism organisation not meeting the accredited standard will not get any DCMS funding and will not be engaged with Government.
11. In terms of next steps, I recommend the following:
 - We should position Marketing Cheshire as a Tier 1 Destination Delivery Partnership. We cover the geography of the Cheshire and Warrington. This is aligned with our consumer geography and local governance through the three local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnership.
 - We update the political and officer leadership at the Sub-Regional Leaders Board on the 26th November.
 - We continue discussions across the North-West DMOs on potential for further joint projects and collaboration. This follows a meeting with DCMS on 27th October 2021.
 - We press on with our Destination Chester and Destination Cheshire partnerships to ensure business support and shared destination positioning. This may involve further formalising these networks.
 - We engage actively with our neighbours. Including in North Wales, particularly in the Mersey Dee geography, and with Shropshire to better understand our shared tourism product and positioning. There is an opportunity to provide leadership to these discussions.
 - We continue to show the strategic role of Marketing Cheshire in wider place-marketing and communications activity - including through our role within the Local Enterprise Partnership. There is an opportunity to ensure the visitor economy is considered as part of any local propositions for Levelling Up.

Annex A: Destination Development Partnership – Full Summary

De Bois proposes the following roles for Destination Development Partnerships.

Developing a Destination Development Plan, outlining regional priorities for the visitor economy in the area covered and addressing Government priorities as well as the themes outlined in the UK Government's Tourism Recovery Plan such as:

- Regional growth (with tourism growing across a region rather than just in the honeypots, with visitors staying longer and spending more)
- Levelling Up (encouraging dispersal to lesser-known destinations; promoting sector employment)
- Destination sustainability (visitor management, encouraging positive and avoiding negative environmental impacts, conservation of England's cultural, natural and historic heritage)
- Productivity (providing longer-term skills and careers, addressing seasonality, improving digital and transport connectivity) Accessibility/inclusion (attracting more diverse audiences, improving accessibility across the area) – Targeting key international markets
- Encouraging inward investment in the visitor economy
 - Advocating for the destination's visitor economy. The Partnership would be responsible for ensuring the visitor economy is integrated into wider economic strategies, for advising on infrastructure developments such as transportation proposals or new attractions and for encouraging inward investment into visitor economy sectors. The Partnership would act as the main conduit of information between the national Government and more local DMOs.
 - Partnership working. The Partnership would be expected to work particularly closely with accredited Tourist Boards within their area and would need to engage all relevant partners (including local government, Local Enterprise Partnerships, universities, commercial businesses, cultural organisations) in the development of their Destination Plan.
 - Bidding for funding / advising on funding bids. I would expect the Partnership to work with accredited Tourist Boards in bidding for funding opportunities made available by the national Government. Recent examples of funds that might be appropriate include the Towns Fund and 60 Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport the Discover England Fund. If another party were a more appropriate bidder, such as the District or County Council (e.g., for something like the Levelling Up Fund), I would expect the Partnership to advise on any bid with relevance to the visitor economy. #
 - Product development. I would expect the Partnership to drive regional tourism product development, working with accredited Tourist Boards, other stakeholders and potentially other Partnerships to provide a cohesive visitor offer in the form of travel itineraries, integrated transport passes, new visitor experiences, and so forth. The Discover England Fund offers a strong platform for this in every region of England and has been a catalyst for collaboration across the visitor economy.
 - Engagement on major events or projects. The Partnership should act as a champion for bringing major events – business, cultural, sporting and so on – to the region. They could also advise on the application of major national events to the area's visitor economy, such as the forthcoming Festival 2022 or the Queen's Baton Relay for the Commonwealth Games. They could provide strong support to bids for opportunities such as the UK City of Culture competition. They should be expected to work closely with MeetEngland at a national level to share and service event enquiries, ensuring these remain within England rather than being lost to competitor countries. There is no room for a parochial outlook across the DMO landscape.

- Data collection and sharing. The Partnership would be expected to collect and analyse data on the visitor economy, acting as centres of excellence, working with VisitEngland to ensure a robust and consistent approach. They should be able to articulate crisply the area's volume and value in terms of visitor spend, number of jobs supported by the visitor economy and its wider impact. The Tourism Data Hub referenced in the Tourism Recovery Plan (and referred to in Recommendation 6 below) could help with this.
- Business support. As part of their advocacy and information-sharing remit, and working in partnership with accredited Tourist Boards, Partnerships would be expected to inform the development of and encourage participation in VisitEngland business support initiatives (such as Taking England to the World or the TXGB business to business platform), as well as source and share wider skills and development opportunities for businesses.