

Lancashire and Blackpool Visitor Economy Strategy 2006-2016



Prepared By



In association with



L&R CONSULTING SOLUTIONS LTD
UNIT 252
5-9 SLATER STREET
LIVERPOOL L1 4BW

Tel: 0151 707 2255
Fax: 0151 707 2577
Email: info@lrconsulting.co.uk

A member of L&R Consulting
Offices in Liverpool, Malvern, Sussex and Paris

Forewords

Lesley Lloyd
Chair, Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board



Mention Lancashire and Blackpool as a visitor destination and there is little doubt that there will be a nod of recognition. The Blackpool Tower; the Golden Mile, Britain's biggest resort, the historic city of Lancaster; Morecambe Bay and the classic resort of Lytham St Annes, and Preston as England's newest city. They will probably all come quickly to mind.

For this is an area of the UK where mass seaside tourism was invented and where the UK's most popular visitor attraction, the Pleasure Beach, can be found, not to mention a rich and proud industrial history, world famous foods including Lancashire Hot Pot and Morecambe Bay shrimps, a sporting pedigree that includes the birthplace of professional football, a place where legends of witchcraft and strong royal connections survive today, and an area where a surprising 80 per cent of the landscape is rural including stunning parts like the relatively undiscovered Forest of Bowland.

In fact if you take away 'visitors' and Lancashire and Blackpool's astounding variety of places to visit, then suddenly the area becomes anything but awash with 'Living Legends, Family Fun, Nighttime Buzz, Coastal Contrasts or Country Escapes' – the very themes that encapsulate the visitor products promoted here.

Furthermore, without visitors the sub regional economy of Lancashire and Blackpool would be £2.5 billion poorer and 52,000 jobs light. And which economies could afford to lose that level of spending or employment?

In this, the first ever Visitor Economy Strategy for Lancashire and Blackpool, we describe and quantify the current visitor assets, the reasons why 64 million visits are made to this area every year; the challenges that lie ahead, the strategic directions we wish to take by working in partnership, and those all important actions we will be pursuing to turn the visions in to reality over the next 10 years.

The task will not be an easy one and there will inevitably be obstacles to overcome – as well as new opportunities to embrace. But this is a journey we are all committed to pursuing and by 2016 we anticipate that visiting Lancashire and Blackpool will be not only a great visitor experience but a real destination of choice.

I commend this strategy to you and thank you for your interest.

Felicity Goodey
Chair, NorthWest Tourism Forum



England's Northwest is a thriving region. It is home to a £7 billion tourism industry supporting an estimated 400,000 jobs, and a visitor economy of even wider reaching proportions. With 18 million visits a year based on distinctive assets such as the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Britain's top seaside resort and an impressive heritage, this is a serious business for England's Northwest.

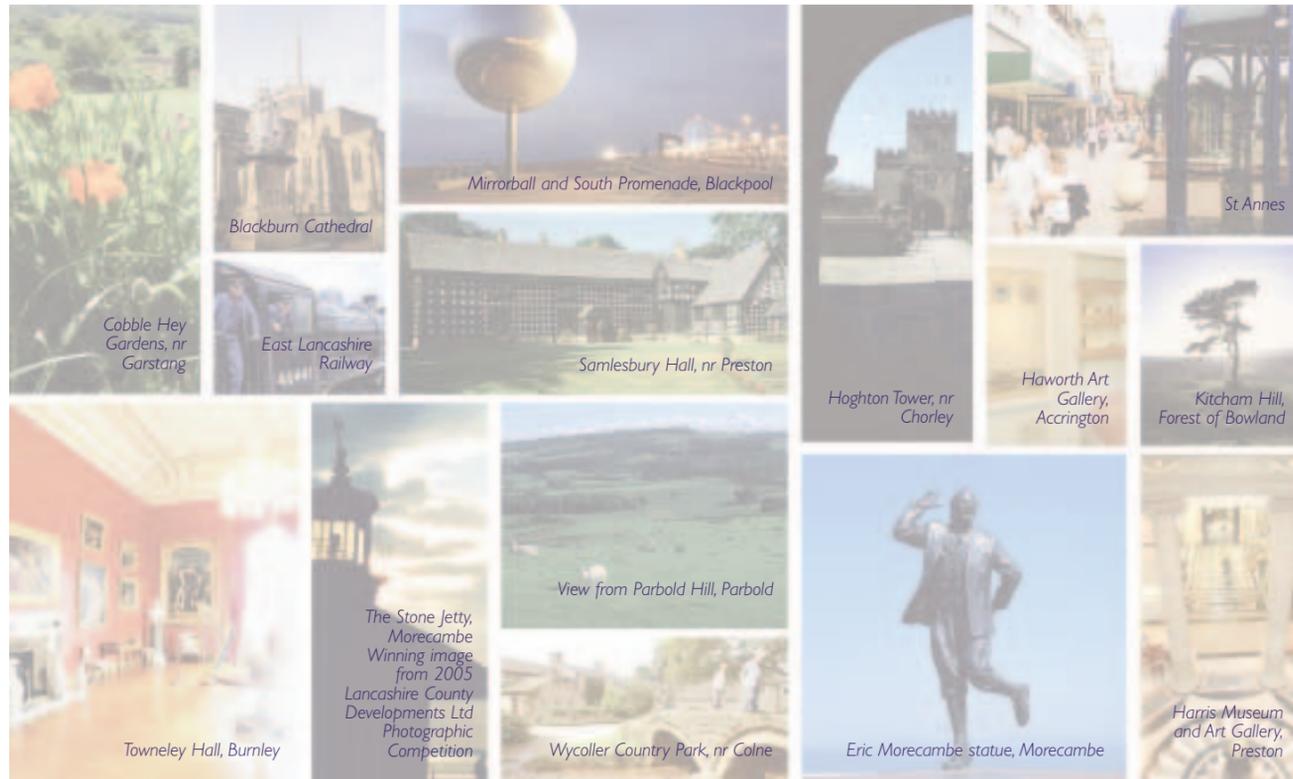
The visitor economy is one of the few areas of real growth potential to the wider economy. It is our job to ensure that its potential is realised sensitively and to the benefit of the entire community. As consumers we are becoming richer and more demanding and as an industry we are operating in a highly competitive, rapidly changing global market. We must therefore continue to invest to raise quality or lose out.

Investment in skills is a key issue. I very much welcome Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board (LBTB) taking the lead on skills for the region, which is challenging the industry to perform to world standards in this vital area. The future of the visitor economy depends on highly trained and motivated people and we cannot rely only on an influx of bright young people from Eastern Europe.

Blackpool is a key regional and national tourism asset with the potential to be a world-class resort. The implementation of the Blackpool Masterplan, including Blackpool's bid to host the UK's only regional casino, will not only transform the town's fortunes, but will have a huge effect on the regional economy. Regeneration is needed if it is to compete in the international market place for visitors and investment.

Lancashire could perhaps be described as a relatively undiscovered gem. But it has the potential to play a much bigger role in both the sub-region and the wider visitor economy of the Northwest. This really is the home of the industrial revolution. Visitors from all over the world as well as other parts of the UK are forever asking where they can see the places where it all began. And then there is the glorious natural environment, not to mention so many connections with the turbulent royal history of England.

LBTB is a relatively new organisation but it is already making a major impact on the development of tourism in the area. The publication of the first ever visitor economy strategy for Lancashire and Blackpool marks yet another important advance. This strategy will provide the strategic framework to ensure that one of the most beautiful and interesting parts of the country is able to play a full and vital role in the development of the visitor economy in England's Northwest.



Contents

1.	The Need for a Visitor Economy Strategy	pg 01
2.	Putting the Visitor Economy in the Regional Picture	pg 02
3.	The Lancashire and Blackpool Visitor Economy Now	pg 03
4.	Drivers for Change	pg 04
5.	Where Do We Want to be in 10 years?	pg 05
6.	How are We Going to Get There?	pg 06
7.	Making it Happen: Market focus	pg 07
8.	Making it Happen: Investing in the Visitor Experience	pg 11
9.	Who Will Do What?	pg 17



View from Parbold Hill, Parbold

The Need for a Visitor Economy Strategy

The visitor economy is, by its nature, fragmented. Over 80% of businesses are small or micro businesses. The ‘visitor experience’ is usually provided by a range of different commercial operators plus the local authorities and other public-funded agencies.



Cobble Hey Gardens, nr Garstang

The public sector plays a key role in the visitor economy because:

- It delivers a significant proportion of the visit or experience – from signs and seafronts, lighting, street furniture and street cleaning to countryside management, cultural facilities and conference halls.
- It has a major impact on the visitor experience through the decisions it makes – such as licensing, planning decisions, conservation and community safety.
- There is a national, regional, subregional and local network of public-funded services to develop and promote the industry.

As well as jobs in the visitor economy, the industry plays a key role in economic development and regeneration because:

- Commercial enterprises deliver the services and products that are essential to attracting visitors in the first place and in meeting the needs of those visitors during their stay. The creative flair and innovation of the industry is a key part of the image of Lancashire and Blackpool.
- The industry is an ambassador for Lancashire and Blackpool. The marketing messages they use, their investment in the business and the service and customer care they deliver is a crucial part of the image of the sub-region.
- Visitors generate demand for new facilities and activities and contribute to the viability and vitality of a place.

- The collective impact of the industry through its networks, sharing best practice and investment in people makes an important contribution to the local and sub-regional economy.
- A positive profile as a visitor destination will boost the reputation of Lancashire and of Blackpool regionally, nationally and internationally, supporting other industry sectors – and therefore jobs – beyond the visitor industry.

So there is a vital need for partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors when planning, developing, promoting and managing the visitor economy. Partnerships should be forged at a strategic and operational level; built around practical actions.

Putting the Visitor Economy in the Regional Picture

This Visitor Economy Strategy has been developed to uphold, reinforce and add value to the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the Northwest.

It also signs up to the objectives of the Northern Way Growth Strategy which aims to establish the North of England as an area of exceptional opportunity, with a world class economy and a superb quality of life. The actions of this strategy will also embrace the recommendations in the emerging Northwest Business Tourism and Visitor Information Strategies and the Marketing the Natural Environment of the Northwest report. In particular, this Visitor Economy Strategy supports:

- The development of the Central Lancashire City Region which is built around creating a Green City of quality urban living in Preston next to readily accessible, superb countryside, recognising that the development of the visitor economy is an integral part of realising this potential. The visitor economy can help bring more people into employment, help create truly sustainable communities and is central to marketing the north to the world.

- The realisation of Blackpool's Masterplan, including Blackpool as the priority location for the regional casino development in the UK.
- The investment of sustainable growth in Lancaster, ensuring that the role of the visitor economy is strongly reflected in its plans to realise its heritage potential as a significant historic city in the region.

The delivery of actions in this strategy will support realising the Quality of Life objectives set out in the RES in particular:

- To improve the product associated with tourism 'attack brands' and 'signature projects'.



The Stone Jetty, Morecambe



East Lancashire Railway

- To develop the economic benefit of the region's natural environment.
- To invest in quality public realm, greenspace and environmental quality.
- To implement a Business Tourism Strategy, to develop the quality and range of facilities within the region.
- To develop and implement a Visitor Information Strategy for the region.

The RES identifies the role of the region's five tourist boards as the main conduits to support business development for the sector. The work of Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board (LBTB) and its business networks is an important route to grow the sub-region's market share of domestic, overseas and business visitors.

The Lancashire and Blackpool Visitor Economy Now

In 2005, 63.8 million visitors accounted for £2.49 billion spend per annum and supported nearly 52,000 jobs in thousands of businesses and organisations throughout Lancashire and Blackpool.

Exciting things are happening, including:

- Blackpool has an impressive Masterplan and public money has been found to begin the work.
- Significant investment is happening and planned for Preston, Blackburn and Burnley, changing perceptions and having a positive impact on Lancashire's image and growing the profile and potential of these urban areas, their links with the rural hinterland and with other city regions in the north of England.
- Lancaster is developing an ambitious Vision which should help it compete better with other historic towns and cities.
- Regeneration is taking place in the West End of Morecambe and the restoration and redevelopment of the Art Deco Midland Hotel is secured.
- Recent investment in St Annes as a Classic Resort is also reinforced by coastal defence works in Cleveleys.
- Blackpool International Airport is expanding its routes and developing its terminal.
- East Lancashire now has Regional Park status and this and the proposed Regional Parks for the Ribble Estuary could boost the rural visitor economy in the future.

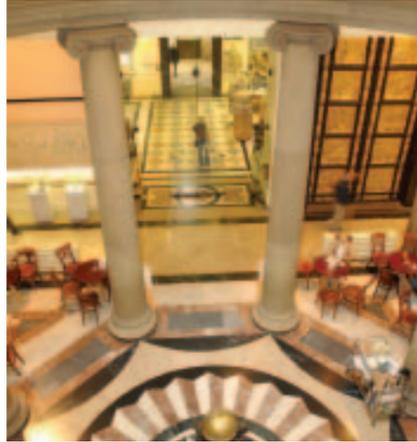
- The Forest of Bowland has achieved Europarc status that affords opportunities to maximize sustainable tourism and the potential of the rural visitor economy.
- The 'Made in Lancashire' initiative is bringing together producers and suppliers with businesses working in the visitor economy.
- The universities have plans to work with the visitor economy on conferences and VFR and are developing strong relationships with industry. They are a key partner in helping to develop the visitor economy.
- CoVEs (Centres of Vocational Education) are also playing an increasingly active part in the visitor economy, helping to make the industry professional and reward achievement.
- LBTB has adopted and developed a strategic and customer-focused approach to marketing, using new media to reach new markets.
- The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) is spending considerable sums of new money to raise the profile and image of the Northwest and its destinations including through its major events plan.

But the Lancashire and Blackpool sub region has challenges too:

- Perceptions of Lancashire as a visitor destination (especially outside the region) are often negative and outdated.
- Blackpool's highly publicised decline – and that of the other seaside resorts – has coloured people's perception of Lancashire overall.
- Apart from Blackpool and its Pleasure Beach, the sub region has no national-profile visitor destinations and attractions.
- The sub region's visitor economy is arguably more fragmented than most. It is dominated by micro and small businesses, very few of which work together.
- There is low quality and lack of investment in the product. Quality investment has only been achieved in isolated pockets.
- Visitor accommodation occupancy levels are poor-to-average, leading to a lack of investment.
- Marketing is fragmented across many organisations, so resources and impact within the visitor marketplace are diluted.
- There is a lack of good market intelligence on which to base investment decisions.
- The transformation planned for Blackpool and elsewhere presents challenges in how to address future labour shortages and associated recruitment and training needs.

Drivers for Change

Key national and regional trends that will bring about change in the sub region are:



Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston

- Meeting the challenge to close the economic gap in the Northwest by improving productivity and growing the size and capability of the workforce.
 - Ensuring local people are equipped to take advantage of new jobs developed within the visitor economy.
 - Delivering improvements and enhancements to the road and rail networks in the region and developing the potential of airports and ports – in particular investment in Blackpool International Airport.
- Specific Lancashire and Blackpool drivers for change are:**
- **The delivery of Blackpool's Vision and Masterplan**, in particular the casino and conference centre. These projects will deliver the greatest opportunity for the visitor economy and enable Blackpool to compete strongly again in the conference association market, with a positive ripple effect across Lancashire.
 - **Implementation of the recently drafted Lancashire Economic and Rural Strategies for the sub-region** have placed the visitor economy firmly in their sights for future growth.
- An ageing and increasingly middle-class population with increased quality expectations but a growing interest in domestic leisure visitors.
 - Increased competition for visitor spend – from alternative leisure activities as well as from other well-funded destinations, at home and overseas.
 - Increased competition for business visitors nationally and within the region – destinations are becoming increasingly competitive and customers increasingly focused on value for money.
 - The growing importance of new technology for planning and booking leisure and business visits.

- **Investment in Central Lancashire through the Northern Way, which is taking a city region approach.** This will have a positive impact on the image of Lancashire, help build new confidence and stimulate further inward investment through the Lancashire Economic Partnership.
- **Delivering the potential of Lancaster as a historic city.** Investment in the heritage product and the public realm will deliver a historic city with appeal to the higher value visitor markets.
- **The expansion of routes at Blackpool International Airport.** Lancashire and Blackpool must continue to work closely with the airport to develop long-term inbound business.
- **Developing business aspirations and expanding the skills pool.** Lancashire and Blackpool needs to develop professional, entrepreneurial businesses that are market driven and able to respond to market changes. This approach must cover all sectors including accommodation, attractions, retail and other visitor services. The public agencies need to create the physical environment and economic climate for such businesses to prosper, including providing appropriate business support and workforce development.

Where Do We Want to be in 10 Years?

The vision for the Lancashire and Blackpool visitor economy is to realise its potential by:

- Building and sustaining confident, committed and prosperous businesses.
- Investing in quality in every aspect of the visitor economy.
- Improving the image and raising the profile of the area.
- Ensuring that people living and working in the sub region appreciate and benefit from the contribution that the industry makes to the quality of life.
- Ensuring the visitor economy is integrated with regeneration and economic development policies and strategies.

By 2016:

- Blackpool will be transformed into a world-class visitor destination and appeal to increasingly affluent and discerning visitors.
- Lancashire will be established as a destination for mature and discerning visitors attracted by the traditional Lancashire welcome based on a high quality, friendly and personal service. These visitors will come throughout the year helping to achieve a seasonal spread of benefits.
- The main appeal of Lancashire will be its well-kept heritage towns, classic resorts and beautiful countryside, whose attractions are presented with flair and imagination that reinforces a strong sense of place and local identity.
- Lancashire's countryside - one of the area's strongest assets - will have developed its potential through sensitive and sustainable development.

- Blackpool will have a reputation as a quality association events destination and the whole area will have achieved a strengthened corporate business offer.
- The visitor economy will be making a significant contribution to the sub-regional economy, the environment and the image of Lancashire and Blackpool as a quality place to live, work and visit.

To achieve this Vision:

- Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board will work with public and private stakeholders.
- Local authorities will value the importance of the visitor economy and this will be reflected in their approach to the development and management of the public realm and the heritage and natural assets in their care.
- The industry will invest in their product and their people to ensure the quality of the visitor experience exceeds expectations. They will work together effectively to share best practice and add value to individual achievements.
- Lancashire and Blackpool will seek to establish a reputation for best practice in access for all.

The philosophy of the vision is encapsulated in the Mission Statement:

To revitalise and reposition the visitor economy in Lancashire and Blackpool so that it is more productive and sustainable, by working in partnership.

The delivery of the vision will focus on the destinations which offer the greatest opportunity by virtue of their natural and built heritage assets and which offer inward investment potential. These destinations are:

- Blackpool (21st Century World Class Resort)
- Preston (City Vision)
- Lancaster (Historic Towns Initiative)
- The Forest of Bowland (Sustainable Tourism)
- Lancashire Coast (Classic Resorts)

A Leading Role for the Industry

The prime role of **businesses** is, of course, to run a successful enterprise. Each individual business provides only one part of the visitor experience and it takes a collective effort to raise aspirations and achieve potential. That is why it is important that businesses back this strategy in practical ways, and back LBTB and its partners to raise the quality of the offer across Lancashire and Blackpool.

Businesses can support LBTB by serving on its board of management, acting as ambassadors for LBTB within the industry, becoming members of LBTB and being actively involved in its activities, communications and networking.

They will contribute to the **growth of know-how** and profit from it by participating in programmes and projects that are designed to invest in people and in the visitor experience. Businesses will also support the **marketing strategy** by becoming involved in research (such as the How's Business surveys) and monitoring projects, supporting marketing activities and campaigns and participating in the Destination Management System (DMS).

How are We Going to Get There?

Cross Cutting Principles

These principles will underscore all activity and are the sound basis for a holistic and integrated approach to destination management.



Samlesbury Hall, nr Preston

Market Focus – Lancashire and Blackpool's approach to its visitor economy will be market focused. From product and workforce development to partnerships and promotion, it will build on an understanding of markets and market trends. Listening to customers and communicating effectively is a key part of this approach. Lancashire and Blackpool will use regular communication of information and the interpretation and dissemination of data to achieve this using the latest developments in new technology

Sustainability – Lancashire and Blackpool's visitor economy will be driven by quality and productivity which will maximise the contribution visitors make to delivering economic and social regeneration in the Northwest, in particular contributing to quality of life objectives. Development will respect the needs of visitors, the natural landscape, the local community and the built environment. Activities will be located and managed appropriately and be to a scale that does not exceed the capacity of the associated environment and its communities.

Quality – Lancashire and Blackpool will develop a high-quality visitor experience, based on an approach to service which reflects the sub region's reputation for friendly, honest and light-hearted people.

Partnership – LBTB will enable private, public and voluntary sector organisations to work together productively. The local industry will network with its peers and with other stakeholders to deliver an integrated visitor experience and make the best use of the collective skills and resources of its people.

Capacity building – A confident and skilled industry is central to the successful delivery of the strategy. Businesses will be motivated and entrepreneurial. Business champions and beacon businesses will be used to foster entrepreneurialism and innovation.

Priorities

Lancashire and Blackpool stakeholders recognise the importance of good communications to attract and retain visitors, for inward investment purposes and within local communities to foster pride of place. The visitor economy strategy will encourage business investment in people and products and tackle issues of staff recruitment and skills development.

There are 11 priority areas to the strategy, grouped under four generic headings. These are explored in more detail below and a strategic action plan covering 2006 - 2009 has been prepared for each of them (see insert):



Making it Happen : Market Focus

'The Foundation'

Lancashire and Blackpool's branding and destination marketing should be market-led, evidence based and customer focused, based on excellent Customer Relationship Management (CRM) which aims to achieve...

... a continuous cycle to identify, win, satisfy, retain and grow customers.

Branding and marketing is not simply promotion, it should underpin the whole 'Visitor Journey', touching the visitor at every stage: from dreaming, planning and booking, to the travel and destination experience itself, to returning home and reminiscing, to repeating a visit and recommending the destination to friends and family.

The sub region has developed Five Winning Themes which are based on market intelligence and is taking a market-focused approach. This work will now be evolved to concentrate the focus and to ensure that the themes form the basis and rationale for product development as well as promotional work.

Market Intelligence

This approach calls for excellent market intelligence, in order to understand what the visitor wants and reach the visitor effectively at every stage of the visitor journey with:

- The right promise
- Communicated in the right way
- Delivered at the right point-of-experience

Lancashire and Blackpool needs to invest in market intelligence so that stakeholders:

- Better understand the characteristics of the people they want to attract.

- Know which are the most effective tools to attract these visitors and to keep them here once they arrive and get them to visit again.

- Understand the markets and the economic, environmental and social sustainability of new development concepts and projects so they can make informed judgements on return of investment and priorities.

- Can plan accommodation needs based on future needs and opportunities.

- Can identify future labour and skills development needs.

Market Focus

- Most leisure visitors to Lancashire and Blackpool will be from the UK on short breaks (1-3 nights), a day visit, or visiting friends and relations (VFR).

- Ideally a destination should focus product development and marketing communications on one market - to project confidence and clarity to consumers. However, this objective is difficult to achieve in Lancashire and Blackpool - mainly because of the distinctly different perceptions and products of Blackpool and of Lancashire. Such is the diversity across the sub-region and even within individual destinations that a single market cannot always offer sustainability in the long term.

- It makes sense for Lancashire and Blackpool and its destinations to join forces to focus on key leisure market segments, and in particular those values-based markets identified by Arkenford. This segmentation is based on a variety of value statements and can be used to help define the kinds of holiday or leisure product that could be of most appeal.

- The 'Traditionals', in particular, have been identified as offering value to Lancashire but each of the five themes offer the opportunity to attract different segments. Further work will therefore determine those segments of high value which match the winning themes. While a focus on the segments will act as the main driver for marketing activity, other markets will be attracted and encouraged to visit.

- For at least the next five years to 2010, until the New Blackpool starts to emerge, Blackpool will focus on encouraging its existing visitor markets to stay longer and come again. It will use CRM to encourage loyalty. CRM is about getting to know your customers, so you can give them the experience and service they really want and then subsequently use targeted promotions to encourage them to come back again. Also, by committing to the sustainable development of specific annual events that will become over time, regionally and nationally significant.

- As the New Blackpool takes shape, it should be able to attract markets which are higher spending per trip and able to travel year round, or at least not so tied to peak times. Again, further research into the eight Arkenford values-based segments, will be required to ensure a strong fit between their values and motivations and the core experience Blackpool can offer in the future. Through analysis and a deeper understanding of the segments, these can then be prioritised and sense-checked to ensure the correct product fit.

- Test the brand promises and propositions for Lancashire and Blackpool and develop a clear brand direction that includes guidelines and informed recommendations on creative treatments and destination marques.

Visit Britain research shows that England's greatest strengths are its unspoilt countryside and history and heritage and that the biggest priorities and opportunities lie in developing the outdoors product. Lancashire and Blackpool is well-placed to deliver these experiences.

Leisure marketing communications

- The approach to marketing communications for leisure visits will recognise the distinctly different markets for Lancashire and Blackpool and this will be reflected in all marketing and promotional activity, though it will ensure that where synergies exist these are developed over time.

- LBTB will evolve its current Five Winning Themes as follows:

Country Escapes, Coastal Contrasts and Living Legends will be developed alongside the appropriate Arkenford segments to become LBTB's core three campaigns.



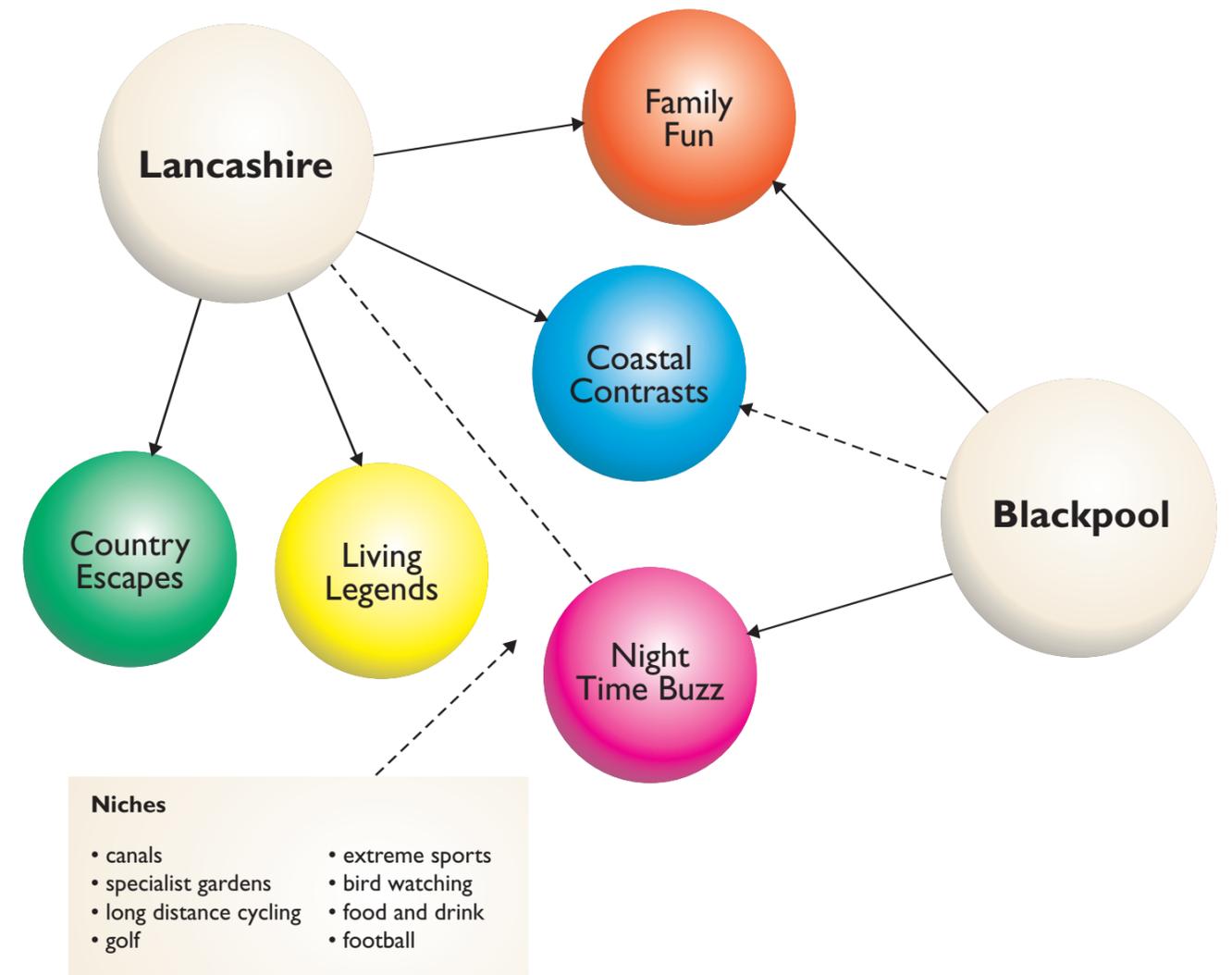
St Annes

LBTB and Blackpool Tourism will work together to develop the Family Fun campaigns, reflecting the differing interests of different types of families and building on the success to date of web based campaigns.

Blackpool Tourism will lead on Night Time Buzz. Campaigns will focus almost entirely on Blackpool, but businesses outside Blackpool may choose to take part in them.

- Potential niches to explore further include: walkers, long distance cyclists, extreme sports enthusiasts, bird watchers, gardens 'specialists', golfers, canal-users, football and food and drink.

Lancashire and Blackpool should ensure they capitalise on the captive audience of the 100,000 students in higher education in the sub-region and their visiting friends and relatives. These students are important ambassadors for Lancashire and Blackpool.



- Blackpool already has its own established routes to market in Ireland and this work will continue in the short to medium term. When the New Blackpool starts to take shape, more research will be needed into potential overseas markets building on initial research under the Air Services Development Fund, with an examination of how Lancashire will tie into these.

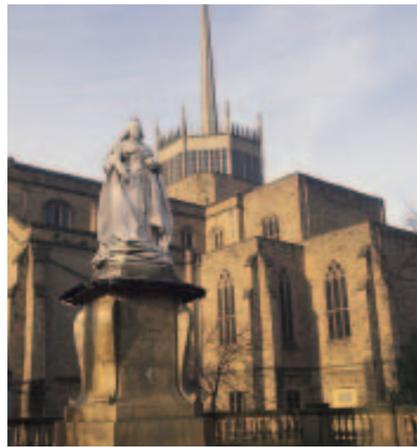
- Lancashire's overseas leisure work will be undertaken in partnership with NWDA and England's North Country to a carefully chosen selection of their target market segments and where possible tied in with carriers including those into Blackpool, Liverpool and Manchester International Airports.

E-business is an essential tool for marketing and business support. The Destination Management System, LOIS, will drive e-marketing, supported by the local authority stakeholders.

LBTB will work with tourism associations to strengthen the offer of LOIS, including providing businesses with the skills to contribute and use the system to its full potential. Sophisticated Customer Relationship Management capability will be developed for the system, so that the product information is rich and accurate, and a critical mass of bookable product is available to allow visitors to move from holiday planning to booking with relative ease.

Groups/Travel Trade

Travel trade/groups are important for the seaside resorts, particularly Blackpool and Morecambe, bringing much-needed out-of-season business to a core of hotels. There is an issue about the quality of this business: these resorts compete on price and are seen as low-cost destinations for groups. In the short term Blackpool and Lancashire will continue its joint development of the group market and travel trade. Keeping the travel trade informed about the New Blackpool developments will be an important communications job as work progresses.



Blackburn Cathedral

Business tourism

Blackpool will continue to be the lead destination for conference association business and the New Blackpool will target:

- National and international high-profile conference association business
- Increased amounts of corporate business
- Exhibitions

Association and corporate business is expected to grow – in particular in the cities of Lancaster and Preston and in Blackburn – reflecting inward investment and good accessibility by road and rail. Business travellers will continue to be important too.

LBTB and Blackpool Tourism will work together to form a new business tourism partnership, conserving the best features from the two existing conference desks to ensure Lancashire and Blackpool is equipped to meet this demand in a professional way and fully capitalise on the opportunity. The two organisations will plan this initiative together with the longer term objective of establishing a joint Conference Bureau that is resourced to compete alongside similar bureaux around the country in line with recommendations in the Northwest Business Tourism Strategy.

Lancashire will take a market-focused approach to the travel trade, starting with an audit of facilities for groups (accommodation, eating places, attractions etc). Lancashire will undertake research to identify the role of travel trade and group travel for the Arkenford segments identified and for potential niches. This research will also help identify the scale of investment needed. Stakeholders will work together to deliver online information dedicated to the travel trade, with special interest and themed itineraries. They will also design and deliver familiarisation visits.



Eric Morecambe statue, Morecambe

Making it Happen : Investing in the Visitor Experience

‘Investing in People’

Lancashire and Blackpool will take a strategic long term view of the skills needs of the sub-region, as well as tackling the immediate needs of the industry.

Lancashire and Blackpool will be represented on the **North West Tourism Employers’ Group** and will use this group to ensure the specific needs of the sub-region are articulated and addressed. This will be complemented by working closely with the industry and with educational and academic institutions within Lancashire and Blackpool, working through existing groups and support agencies. LBTB will also strengthen their business forums to take a stronger role looking at business development.

Projects will be delivered through four main strands of activity:

- Visitor First - business development activity that focuses on ensuring businesses are equipped to meet the service and quality expectations of their target customers.
- Profit through Productivity - training and business support that is designed to improve business performance through improved business operations.
- Employer Champions - businesses that will lead by example.
- Management and Leadership - ensuring the good management of individual businesses whose owners and managers lead and inspire, and championing the concept of a Leadership Academy for the sector.

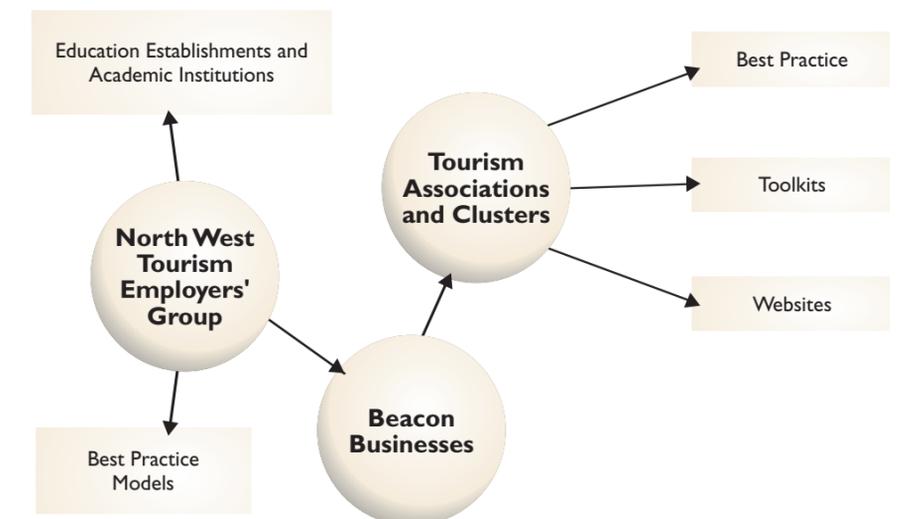
To effect real long-term change Lancashire and Blackpool will invest in **career development** working with the industry, through schools and using work-shadowing and work placement schemes. These opportunities will be developed between employers and the education sector.

Lancashire and Blackpool will seek creative solutions to force up business standards and aspirations. **Beacon Businesses** will have a key role to play. Beacon businesses combine entrepreneurialism, creativity and flair with an understanding of their markets and good business practice. They will enthuse their peers and motivate the industry to aspire by sharing best practice. They will evolve from the Employers’ Forum and feed into it. Beacon businesses will also be identified through tourism associations and business forums.

Lancashire and Blackpool will use sophisticated marketing and promotion to improve take up of training courses, particularly the Welcome to Excellence suite of courses. This promotion will focus on selling the business benefits, presenting and packaging training in an engaging way, including offering online modules and business support. Tourism associations and clusters will provide a focus for business support.

Working with Business Link, the education sector and key training providers, LBTB will:

- Coordinate the production of an Action Plan to provide an informed and detailed framework for priorities in the short to medium term.
- Extrapolate relevant recommendations and actions from the National Skills Needs Assessment being undertaken by People 1st.
- Coordinate best practice case studies, toolkits and other self-help programmes and make these accessible through on-line support.
- Manage LETS (Lancashire Excellence in Tourism Skills Awards), England For Excellence and other awards.
- Deliver specialist industry seminars.



Clusters and Networks

Develop **clusters and networks** with:

- (a) a geographical focus - working through tourism associations and other groups such as the Market Towns Initiative
- (b) a thematic focus – e.g. for cycling, walking, wildlife observation, heritage, adrenalin sports

Clusters and networks will:

- Reduce product fragmentation
- Create a critical mass of visitor experience
- Develop joint working opportunities between businesses – packaging the experience for the visitor
- Raise the collective quality and aspirations of businesses
- Foster and support innovation
- Engage businesses with business support, quality and training initiatives, funding for development and marketing initiatives, e.g. through LRTi (Lancashire Rural Tourism Initiative)
- Seek to develop business networks and marketing activity with Cheshire and Cumbria to strengthen the rural positioning of particular niches where appropriate

Key initiatives should include:

- Improving facilities for walkers and cyclists at accommodation and through additional services, e.g. cycle hire, cycle repair
- Establishing a series of cycle hubs and a network of easy walks that deliver a joined up quality experience that encourage visitors to explore further and stay longer
- Developing networks of wildlife attractions, linking groups of smaller wildlife sites to the major centres
- Roll out specific specialist quality and service programmes as part of the Welcome to Excellence programme

Polishing Gems

Lancashire and Blackpool's heritage 'gems' are defined as permanently established 'built' visitor attractions or facilities. These gems tend to be relatively small in scale and are in several different ownerships. They should work more closely together as a business cluster on:

- Marketing, including customer relationship management and public relations
- Joint ticketing arrangements
- Visitor and market research
- Staff development and skills
- Events coordination

They also need investment for:

- Upgrading larger, higher profile sites
- Physical improvements to the surrounds and setting of historic properties
- Improvement to the visitor facilities such as catering and retail
- Additions to the visitor experience, such as support for the development and marketing of a major exhibitions or cultural events programme in museums and historic properties across Lancashire and Blackpool

Local Distinctiveness

To differentiate from competitors and to meet the needs of the agreed market segments, local distinctiveness will be encouraged, supported and developed for:

- Accommodation – serviced and self catering
- High quality food offer focusing on local produce
- Retail – stronger packaging of independent retailers – in particular in rural areas and in market towns, where local and high quality crafts are a sub-regional strength. Also linking with creative industry quarters in the cities and in Blackburn
- Living Legends – celebrating the varied and interesting industrial heritage of Lancashire, including finding new uses for previous industrial buildings, interpretation, trails and investment in the public realm. Blackburn and Burnely offer particular potential to lead in this field
- Public realm – design and presentation
- Visitor service and the welcome

A Balance of Accommodation

Lancashire and Blackpool will:

- Encourage inward investment in a range of accommodation to meet market demand identified through further research - this is likely to embrace serviced and non-serviced accommodation
- Support existing operators who can meet the needs of target markets
- Create an economic environment in which they can flourish
- Rationalise existing stock in coastal resorts
- Identify future business and leisure needs in expanding commercial centres
- Promote and facilitate the Quality in Tourism programme
- Identify Beacon Businesses to share best practice and raise the bar on quality across all types of accommodation

Events

To lift the current festival and events offer to a higher level, the private sector working with other stakeholders in Lancashire will:

- Take an Events Cluster Approach – providing cooperation/assistance with marketing, customer relationship management, programme coordination, funding/sponsorship, event management, links with the industry
- Support thematic festivals – extend existing cultural events and festivals from local to countywide, e.g. Food Lovers Festival, Royal Lancashire Show

The New Blackpool will use events to reposition the resort once the improvements are under way.

In the shorter term, Blackpool should use events to extend staying visits and lengthen and strengthen the season. It will:

- Establish itself with the events industry as an 'events friendly destination'
- Introduce coordinated programming
- Adopt a resort-wide proactive, coordinated approach to events publicity
- Develop 2-3 high-profile annual 'signature events' from existing events
- In the run up to the New Blackpool, the Illuminations will be completely transformed – design-led, use the latest technology and complemented by creative lighting events throughout the year

Investing in Gateways

The visitor welcome at gateways (road, rail and air) must deliver on the brand promises with:

- Investment in the design, presentation and management of public spaces led by the local authorities and public transport providers
- Appropriate, targeted and timely information and visitor services.
- Tourist information provision should be strategic (within the context of the regional visitor information framework) and include:
A hub and spoke approach - with hubs at Blackpool, Lancaster, Preston and Blackburn, which build on investment already made at these sites
Appropriate information delivering the brand promise and themes at every step of the visitor journey

Destination Investment

Improved destination quality is essential, so:

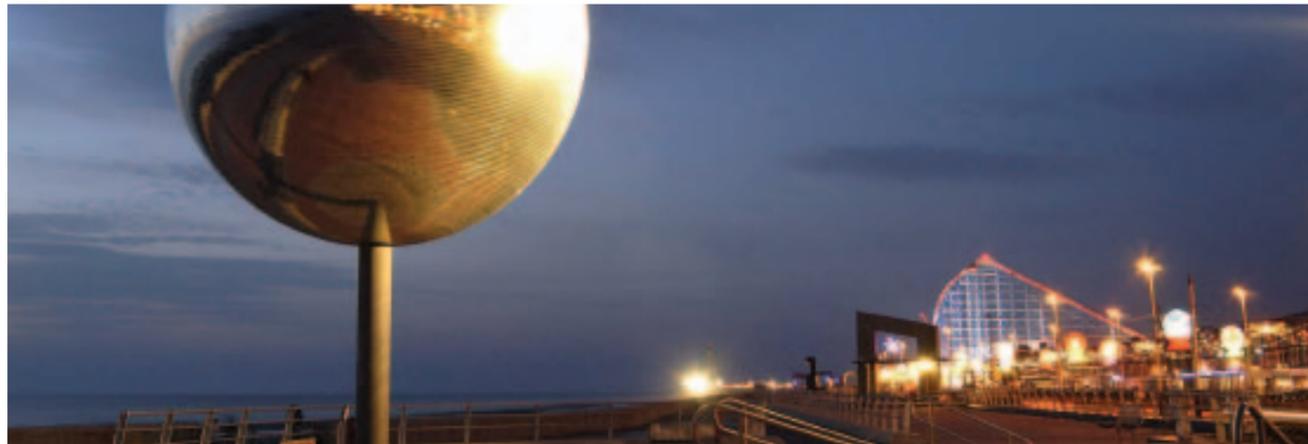
- Local authorities should
Use market intelligence to clarify the needs of the core target market segments
Lead the way with market-focused investment in the public realm and in public-funded facilities
Adopt a 'joined-up' approach to visitor services and management, including parking, coach parking, signage and visitor information to deliver the welcome
- Tourism officers should work with town centre managers to meet visitor needs
- There should be continued investment in public art to deliver a 'cultural coast', building on the good practice of Morecambe, Blackpool and St Annes
- Towns taking part in the Market Towns Initiative should ensure the needs of visitors are taken into account when identifying priorities and their action plans should be embedded within the Destination Management Plan

Other headline projects – what and why

Pride of Place

To achieve the necessary quality improvements, deliver on the brand promises and turn round external perceptions, Lancashire and Blackpool needs to:

- Win local hearts and minds – residents, business people, opinion formers/decision makers, local media
- Use the momentum created by the Northern Way, the Masterplan for Blackpool and the significant investment in the other urban centres to generate and foster pride of place
- Make local people and businesses ambassadors, spreading the message far wider than a programme of marketing activities can possibly do. This can be achieved through properly resourced professional communications targeting local visitors, residents, decision makers and opinion formers, potential investors and the travel trade.



Mirrorball and South Promenade, Blackpool

This table relates the visitor experience to Blackpool, and the five winning themes and recommends priority actions for product development for Lancashire and Blackpool. The focus is on Blackpool and the four winning themes that are priorities for Lancashire; namely Country Escapes, Living Legends, Coastal Contrasts and Family Fun.

Product Development Priorities

Destination	The Visitor Experience	Challenges	Priority Actions
Blackpool	Blackpool Pleasure Beach Blackpool Tower The Golden Mile entertainment Traditional beach experience The Illuminations Bars and clubs Spectacular shows	Volume, range and quality of accommodation Lack of investment in the visitor experience Tarnished image in the marketplace	To use investment in the public realm to help raise aspirations and quality across the resort To realise the big private sector projects in the Masterplan to unlock other investment Development of spectacular state-of-the-art events

Themes	The Visitor Experience	Challenges	Priority Actions
Country Escapes	The Forest of Bowland Pendle Hill West Pennine Moors Arnside and Silverdale Lune Valley Ribble and Wyre estuaries Market towns and villages Rural pubs and restaurants Distinctive local food and regional chefs Farm accommodation Quiet Lanes - cycling and walking routes Birdwatching and wildlife including Martin Mere Lancaster Canal and rural stretches of Leeds Liverpool Canal	Raising market awareness Strong competition from established brands Limited points of focus for rural activities Limited accommodation capacity	To develop thematic business clusters for cycling, walking and watching wildlife To develop networks of wildlife attractions, linking groups of smaller wildlife sites to the major centres at Leighton Moss and Martin Mere To develop adrenalin sports in the West Pennines To grow potential of existing events – especially those with a strong and locally distinctive theme To develop further the quality of the accommodation and food offer to appeal to visitors
Coastal Contrasts	Lytham St Annes, Morecambe, Fleetwood, Cleveleys Dramatic coastline and views Traditional seaside towns Rural coast and wildlife Traditional family fun Golf Watersports Award winning public art	Range, volume and quality of accommodation Need for further investment in the public realm Varying quality of experience across the resorts	To coordinate investment and management of the public realm To use creative, quality public art to create a distinctive coastline To invest in product development and marketing for niche opportunities e.g. golf, watersports
Living Legends	Lancashire has many cultural 'gems' including: The historic city of Lancaster Pendle Witches Industrial heritage e.g. Blackburn, Burnley Public art along the coast Historic sites Distinctive historic buildings, interiors and historic gardens Canals and waterways Cultural Coast	Strengthening the quality of the offer Joining up the offer to present critical mass How to interpret and communicate the past history and myths and legends in an engaging and contemporary way	To ensure the Lancaster Vision realises the full heritage potential of the city and fosters an integrated approach to the development of the visitor economy To introduce a polishing gems programme to improve the setting, the facilities and the marketing of museums and heritage sites To create a heritage cluster for development and marketing activities To celebrate Lancashire's industrial heritage through investment in industrial buildings, the public realm and through marketing activity To strengthen and coordinate existing events



Towneley Hall, Burnley

Themes	The Visitor Experience	Challenges	Priority Actions
Family Fun	The Blackpool Experience Destination family attractions	Volume, location and quality of accommodation catering for families Different products appeal to different aspects of the family market – one size does not fit all	To use business advice as a tool to help businesses maximize opportunities in the family market To encourage businesses to work together to offer a joined up family experience and customized packages.
Night Time Buzz	The Blackpool Experience Maritime, Jazz, Classical Music and Literary Festivals Niche music festivals with an 'edgy' feel	Contrasting offer between Blackpool and other evening entertainment experiences Ensuring a consistent quality visitor experience	To coordinate investment and management of the public realm To use creative, quality public art to create a distinctive coastline To invest in product development and marketing for niche opportunities e.g. golf, watersports

Who Will Do What?

Each stakeholder has a role in realising the potential of the visitor economy and ensuring a joined up response to the challenges and opportunities for Lancashire and Blackpool. This approach will recognise the links between the different facets that make up the visitor experience and the links between the visitor economy and other sectors.

LBTB and local authorities in particular have cross-cutting responsibilities at a strategic and operational level for the visitor economy.

So LBTB and local authorities will work together to establish protocols which make sure that there is maximum impact, minimum duplication, clear messages to the consumer, a coherent programme of opportunities for businesses and best use of resources.

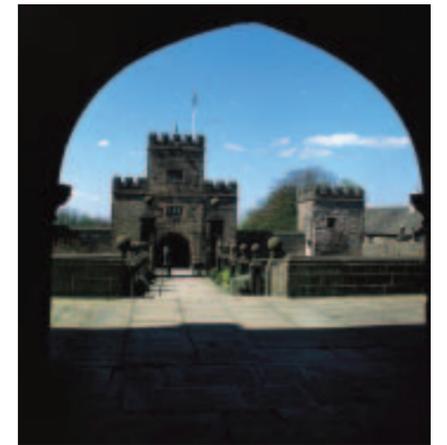
The businesses that make up the industry and drive the visitor economy will continue to network with each other and identify practical ways in which they can package the offer to the visitor and build the skills capacity of their business. They will also work in partnership with the public sector to promote a single voice for the visitor economy in Lancashire and Blackpool.

Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board

LBTB has been formed to harness the energies and resources of the Lancashire and Blackpool visitor economy and focus them on a winning strategy with clear priorities. Its role is:

- To be the voice of the sector regionally and nationally
- To provide the clear strategic lead for destination management and the development of the visitor economy
- To ensure that all support activity, especially by the public sector, is coordinated
- To bring together resources to support and promote the visitor economy, to improve effectiveness and reduce fragmentation and duplication

To be the leader and the voice for the visitor economy, LBTB will represent and listen to the whole industry. It will do this through its Board of Directors, through working with existing forum including the Leaders and Chief Executive Officers Group and the Lancashire Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Group to ensure engagement with all sectors including transport, cultural, sporting and heritage interests. The Board will also strengthen its Business Forums and continue to work closely with tourism associations to ensure full engagement across the spectrum of the industry



Houghton Tower, nr Chorley

LBTB will participate fully in the Lancashire Economic Partnership so that connections are made with other economic sectors and the role of the visitor economy in achieving the quality of life objectives of the Regional Economic Strategy for the Northwest is supported.

LBTB will be responsible for activities that will generate the visit. This will include the majority of destination and thematic marketing activity.

LBTB will lead a rationalisation of marketing communications activity to establish Lancashire's positioning to appropriate Arkenford segments with high impact, well resourced marketing activity.



Wycoller Country Park, nr Colne

Local authorities

Local authorities will continue to improve the visitor experience and be responsible for the visitor welcome through:

- Looking after and improving the public realm and amenities
- Managing the transport infrastructure including car parks, signage, lighting etc
- Supporting visitor and cultural attractions
- Producing local information and guides and supporting local visitor information services
- Helping local partnerships and networks in the sector
- Including issues related in the visitor economy in local plans

All local authorities will participate fully in other developments coordinated by LBTB, including:

- Development of the use of information and communication technology including ensuring compatibility of systems with LOIS, LBTB's destination management system
- Workforce skills development programmes
- Business development programmes



Haworth Art Gallery, Accrington

The Industry

Businesses will work together and with the public sector on action orientated activities. The industry will put the quality of the product offer and visitor experience at the heart of their business operation and encourage their peers to do likewise, to help raise collective aspirations of the industry. They will network and share best practice as one way to strengthen the intellectual capital of the industry and help drive up the visitor economy. Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board and local authorities will facilitate forums to enable networking and better packaging of the experience to target markets.

Targets

Stakeholders will augment existing market research to inform development and marketing priorities and evaluate progress for specific projects and destinations.

Targets for the visitor economy strategy to 2016 are:

- To increase visitor spend by 20% to £3 billion
- To increase numbers of jobs by 30% to 70,000
- To increase visitor numbers by 30% to 85 million



Kitcham Hill, Forest of Bowland



Published in September 2006 by

Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board, St George's House, St George's Street, Chorley, Lancashire, PR7 2AA
Tel: 01257 226600 Fax: 01257 469016 www.lancashireandblackpool.com