

BLABY DISTRICT TOURISM PARTNERSHIP

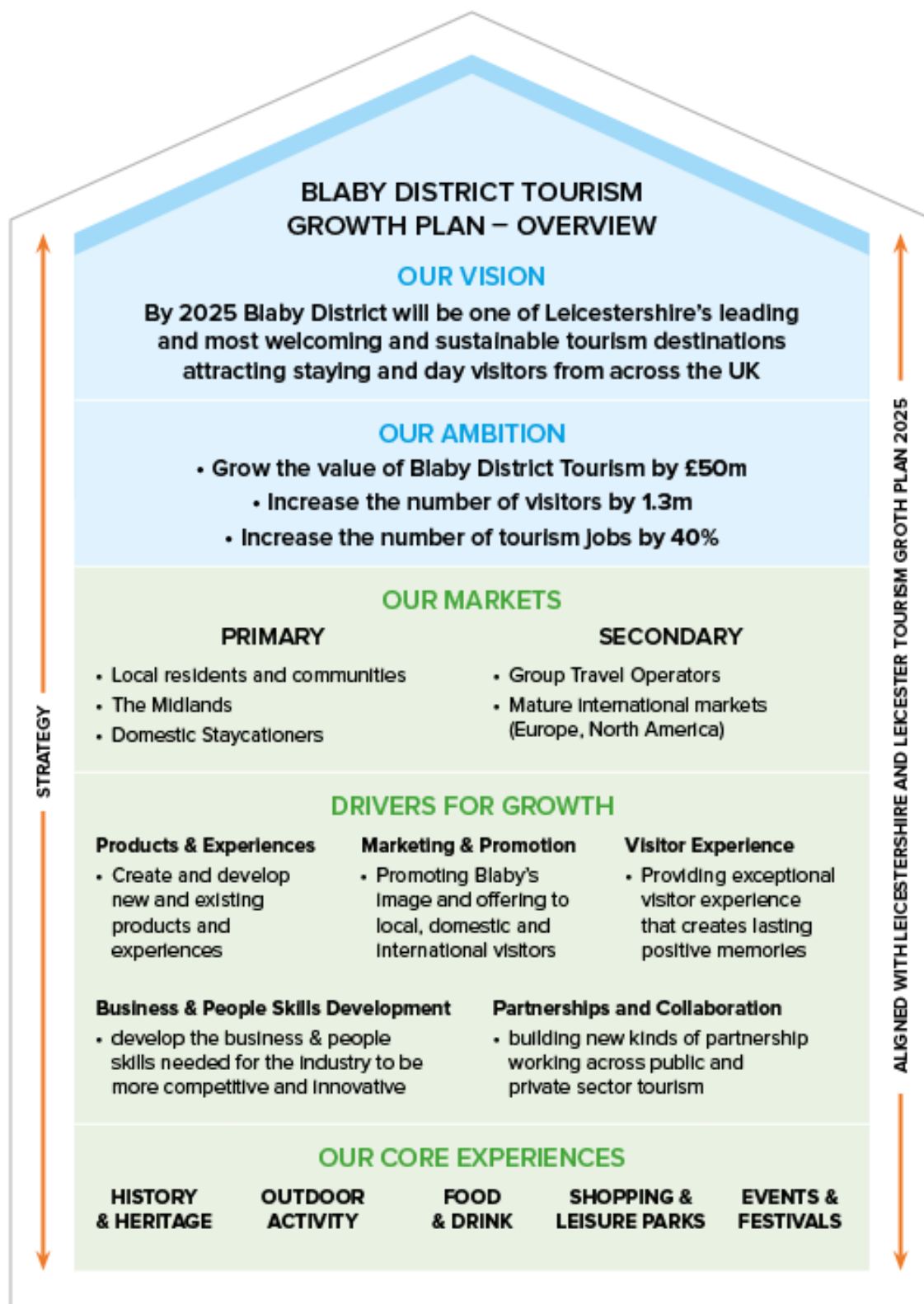
TOURISM GROWTH PLAN 2020 - 2025

November 2019



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1 Introduction

The Tourism Growth Plan for Blaby District outlines the ambition, objectives and priorities for managing, developing and promoting tourism in the District. The plan has been developed by the Blaby District Tourism Partnership. This partnership is a mixture of public and private Tourism stakeholders who are passionate about improving the Tourism offer for the District. A range of consultation and engagement methods have been used to ensure the views of all stakeholders are considered, this includes:

- 1-2-1 meetings (face to face and over the phone)
- Workshops

The key aims for this work included:

1. Setting a framework for future growth and development of tourism, particularly identifying the constraints and opportunities that need to be addressed;
2. Setting the priorities for the tourism sector, including targets, marketing strategy, capacity and product development;
3. Demonstrating how tourism's role as a vehicle for economic growth can be maximised by positioning Blaby District as a competitive and appealing destination in the UK (and wider) tourism markets.

1.1 The Importance of Tourism

Tourism generates¹ £159m for the Districts economy and provides 2,000 jobs for local people. Tourism is recognised as one of Blaby District's major opportunities to contribute to raising the profile and image of the district. The industry is made up of many types of businesses and organisations, from accommodation and attractions, to cultural and sporting venues, shops and shopping centres, outdoor activities, restaurants, food producers and transport providers.

There is also recognition that a thriving tourism industry can generate important social benefits - increased civic pride, sense of belonging, wellness and self-belief, for local people and visitors.

1.2 Purpose of the Growth Plan

The plan's purpose is to focus efforts by the Council, its partners and tourism businesses on the actions which are likely to have the most benefit for the visitor economy of Blaby District.

Tourism and the visitor economy are considered to include:

- Visitors staying overnight away from home in the area – whether for a holiday, visiting friends and relatives or for business purposes;
- Day visitors who are in the area for leisure and recreational visits;
- Local residents taking leisure and recreational trips within the district.

The tourism growth plan is intended to provide guidance to the sector for the development, management and marketing of tourism and the visitor economy in Blaby District for the period 2020 to 2025.

¹ Blaby STEAM Trend Report 2016

2 Destination Profile

The background research and the stakeholder consultation focused on identifying the following:

- The current visitor markets and industry performance;
- The strengths and the key issues facing the tourism industry that need to be maximised or addressed moving forward;
- Market and industry trends and factors that are influencing tourism today in 2019 and need to be taken into consideration in developing strategic priorities for the coming five years.

An assessment of the current situation provides the context for the Tourism Growth Plan and the rationale for its implementation. This assessment is based on answering the overarching question: “Where are we now?”

2.1 Blaby District Profile

Blaby is a local government District in Leicestershire and covers the 24 civil parishes including Blaby. The population of the district is 97,700, working in manufacturing, services, construction, retail, agriculture and tourism industry sectors.

An important characteristic of Blaby District is that it contains several well-known developments in the county, centred around junction 21 of the M1. The most prominent is Fosse Shopping Park, one of the busiest out-of-town shopping centres in the country and the Meridian Leisure Park. Business parks also adorn the gateway into Leicester; Grove Business Park's entrance is less than one mile from the motorway junction and is home to, British Gas, Topps Tiles and the Leicester Marriott Hotel. Meridian Business Park is next to New Lubbethorpe, Thorpe Astley and the Meridian Leisure Park.

Blaby District's location as a strategic gateway to Leicester and Leicestershire presents opportunities to develop and promote tourism experiences within striking distance of many larger conurbations in the Midlands and further afield.

Tourism performance is linked to the strong retail proposition of Fosse Park and a mix of heritage properties and historic sites, spread right across the District. Recent years have seen limited tourism developments in the area – although the developments of Everards Meadows and Fosse Park will provide significant tourism potential. The central issue for Blaby District is its comparative lack of visibility in the tourism marketplace, linked to limited levels of visitation and spend (equivalent to 9.76% of Leicestershire overnight trips and 8.89% of spend in 2016). The area is dominated by day trips and those visiting friends and relatives. Blaby District, in tourism terms, is a developing destination that in recent years has not fulfilled its potential to contribute to economic growth. The new developments at Fosse Park and Everards Meadows are exciting new food, drink, leisure and retail developments will enhance the tourism opportunities for Blaby District.

2.2 Snapshot of Blaby District Tourism

Blaby District Visitor Spend, Visits and Employment ²			
Visitor Spend (£159m)		Visitor Number (3.26m)	
Day Visitors	66%	Day Visitors	90%
Overnight Visitors	34%	Overnight Visitors	10%
Of which:		Of which:	
29% Serviced Accommodation		5% Serviced Accommodation	
11% Staying with friends & relatives		5% Staying with friends & relatives	

² Source: STEAM Trends Report 2016

Sectoral Distribution of Economic Impact		Numbers Employed	
Accommodation	£10.9m	Accommodation	193
Food & Drink	£27.34m	Food & Drink	461
Recreation	£11.39m	Recreation	233
Shopping	£36.97m	Shopping	568
Transport	£19.96m	Transport	99
VAT	£19.96m	Indirect	424
Indirect	£38.93m		

Accommodation in Blaby District			
Category	Nos	No Rooms / Units	Grading
Hotels	13	980	2 x 4 Star 2 x 3 Star 6 x Budget 3 x Non Classified
Self-Catering	2	10 units	2 x Non Classified
B&Bs Guest Houses	4	10	No Classification
Caravan / Camping	2	30 pitches	No Classification

The STEAM survey does not include statistics on the occupancy levels and REVPAR for Blaby District hotels. Without this information an analysis of the supply and demand for the district is not possible. However anecdotal evidence from local hotel operators indicates that there is a higher level of occupancy Monday – Friday from the corporate market and lower occupancy levels over weekends. This is therefore an opportunity to develop the leisure tourism proposition.

2.3 Our Strengths, Opportunities and Challenges

An analysis of the District's strengths, opportunities and challenges was undertaken as part of the consultation, during the development of the Plan and this has helped inform our future focus. The findings are summarised below.

Strengths	Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverse scenic countryside Rural locations Network of canals & waterways Quintessentially English villages offering food and drink experiences Gateway location being at the heart of England / proximity to M1 / M69 Outdoor activities (walking, cycling, BMX, Diving) History & Built Heritage Culture and Arts programmes Retail offer Wi-Fi in Blaby Town Centre Independent retail and food & drink in Blaby town centre Country Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everards Meadows development Fosse Park development Rutland Cycling Hub Narborough Train Station Significant population in catchment area/close travel time Synergies with Leicester and Leicestershire Tourism Growth Plan (LLTGP) themes Events (existing and Everards Meadows / Fosse Park) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No consistent narrative about the area to suggest a strong sense of place Limited tourism industry engagement and networking Limited collaborative marketing Inconsistent visitor experience (quality & service) Community awareness / recognition of value of tourism Limited depth of product Limited range of accommodation High dependency on day visits

2.4 Market and Industry Trends

There are a range of factors and trends that are impacting tourism within the Blaby District. Many are global in nature and not unique to Blaby. Nevertheless, they need to be understood and taken into account when developing the growth plan.

- **Increase in demand for experiences.** Visitors today are seeking deeper, authentic and memorable experiences that allow them to connect emotionally with local destinations and community cultures.
- **A growth in themed tourism.** Themes can differentiate a destination, highlight its unique selling propositions, provide a framework for experience development, clustering, packaging and marketing; they have become increasingly important in positioning and branding destinations e.g. Mid and East Antrim Council - <https://shapedbyseaandstone.com>
- **Consumer segmentation, changing demographics and generational trends.** There are certain demographic characteristics associated with key cohorts – particularly the Baby-Boom Generation and the Millennials that influence preferences and trip planning behaviour.
- **Volatility of global affairs.** Fluctuations in currency exchange and issues impacting traveller security and well-being are all factors that can cause unexpected changes in market trends, and need to be fully understood.
- **Growth and Influence of Social Media.** Social media as a marketing and promotional tool lowers the cost of distribution and allows for much more targeted efforts. It also means that destinations with creative marketing campaigns can have a significant advantage over destinations that still rely on traditional distribution and promotional strategies. While social media is well-known for its ability to raise awareness there are still challenges to be resolved in terms of its capacity to convert interest into actions.
- **Brexit:** While the results of Brexit will have differential geographical impacts across the UK the effect on the Midlands in relation to tourism trends is still unknown. There is significant impact on exchange rates, however these fluctuate and a tourism growth plan should not be built around low rates as these will vary over the duration of the plan.
- **Access:** Perceptions of accessibility, congestion and potential environmental consequences of travel may both impact positively and negatively.
- **The Visitor's Digital Journey:** The journey to a destination starts long before a consumer packs their bag and leaves the house. The average trip will be researched and planned months in advance, with several interactions occurring within these stages. Enabled by technology, travellers have greater expectations for assistance and the visitor journey, from trip planning to trip follow-up, should be effectively managed. This involves engaging the visitor consistently and in a timely manner through multiple channels and devices. Journeys can be long, stretching across multiple channels and touchpoints, often lasting weeks or months – or short, the impulse buyer with short lead times. Visitor Information is a key component in the overall visitor journey, consumed across many touch points and the destinations should strive to provide a consistent visitor experience throughout this journey.

An idealised model of the visitor journey is:

1. **Dream:** They start dreaming about their trip and get inspired by the things to see and do and activities they could find and book.
2. **Research:** They become aware of a business when researching tours, trips and activities. They consider how an experience might fit their needs compared to other options on TripAdvisor, and imagine how it will make them feel.
3. **Book:** They choose a first, anchor business and then some others. Those businesses have been able to convince the customer to choose them over the competition, and they're now excited for the experience ahead.

4. **Experience:** They experience great customer service before, during, and after their visit and their expectations are exceeded. Because of this, they might well become a repeat customer.
5. **Share:** They had such a positive experience that they tell their friends about the destination. You now have a champion providing you with free word of mouth marketing.

2.5 Key Issues

There are some key issues that have implications for the way forward and how tourism development and promotion is managed for the area. These are summarised here:

- Tourism is not recognised as an integral part of the economy and residents underestimate / are not aware of the tourism attributes of the area and the economic role of the sector.
- The current tourism propositions for the area are relatively weak (retail being the exception), resulting in comparative low visitation levels and spend from overnight visitors (with the exception of Business Tourism visitors).
- There is limited communication of the current offer and the opportunities Blaby District has to offer regionally and nationally.
- Transportation to, and across the region, is an issue. The gateway role with the M1 and M69 is a positive, however the volume of traffic at junction 21 might be an inhibitor to drawing visitors to the area. Travel across the region is not easy and public transport connections are poor. There needs to be better communication on how to explore the region using rail and bus.
- While day visitation to the area is important, the reasons to visit are not well articulated and local residents and those within a 2-3 hour drive time are unaware of what they should visit for and what experience they might have.
- The visibility of Blaby District's built and historic heritage and outdoor activity are lost partly because they are spread across the area and also because these attributes haven't been pulled together into distinct propositions for visitors.
- There is a challenge in relation to getting more people to stay in the area overnight and to stay for longer. Currently, many visits are day visits for shopping, maybe going to other activities in the area before moving on to stay elsewhere (e.g. Leicester City Centre).
- A significant proportion of visitor spend relates to where people stay overnight, including evening meal, entertainment and accommodation. Currently however, there is evidence that overnight stays need to be increased to enhance the economic value of tourism and potentially to stimulate additional accommodation investment.
- The quality of the visitor experience is key to tourism success – building reputation and referrals - but is vulnerable in the area because of different levels of service quality, expertise and knowledge within the tourism sector.
- The proximity to Leicester and the perception that Blaby is a part of the Greater Leicester conurbation. Encouraging visitors to explore areas outside of Leicester is a key priority. Identifying different markets' primary interests is the first step in wooing them away from the city centre. Tourism businesses need to understand the benefits from developing compelling and memorable experiences and the opportunities of doing this. Research by VisitBritain³ has identified barriers to international visitors venturing beyond London and much of this research has relevance to supporting Blaby's visitor appeal.

³ Source: Discover England Project Research

2.6 Key Opportunities

A positive context exists for developing tourism in the Blaby District resulting from:

- The development of Everards Meadows, Rutland Cycling, Fosse Park and positioning these as a visitor hub to attract and disperse visitors around the district. Identified as a key product development opportunity in the Leicester and Leicester Tourism Growth Plan.
- Improving the infrastructure links for cycling, to connect the city of Leicester/Fosse Park/Everards Meadows with routes in and out of Blaby.
- Building the identity of the District by leveraging the opportunities from the **Uncover the Story** product development campaigns. These are being developed to raise awareness of Leicester & Leicestershire as a compelling and distinctive destination within the region wide Leicester and Leicester Tourism Growth Plan LTGP i.e. :-
 - “The King Richard III Discovery Story” – identify and contribute the key stories to be told of the region (Everards, History & Heritage). Are there well-known locals who can be used as ambassadors to promote the District?
 - Taste the Place: Focus on the promotion of the range of food and drink experiences: producers, festivals, events, markets, tours, picnic spots and experiences.
 - Fit-cation: Promote Blaby as centre for family activity and a point to explore further afield (walking, cycling, waterways)
- Events are important catalysts for economic and community development. The Victory Show event is well established and draws a wide audience.
 - How can this event be used as a platform to attract more events?
 - The opportunities to look at developing a programme of events such as, community events, music festivals, outside cinema / performances etc at key sites such as Everards Meadows, Kirby Castle, Stoney Cove, Bouskell Park, .
- Potential development opportunities with Bouskell Park HLF Bid.
- Business Tourism (through Leicestershire & Leicester Business Tourism Strategy) especially with events/conferences linking to related local industries e.g. drinks/beer, cycling, retail etc.

3 Ambition and Priorities

The ambition for tourism in Blaby District comprises two complementary components:

- Developing the propositions for Blaby District; and
- Ensuring that the processes for developing and promoting products in the market place are efficient and effective.

3.1 Our Vision

We will attract more visitors to experience a great day out and overnight stay in Blaby District. We will create authentic and memorable visitor offers and experiences that exceed expectations, and will support a network of welcoming local place ambassadors.

Our visitor offer is a blend of things such as...great retail & unique food experiences, complimented by outdoor and leisure activities all set within a backdrop of villages and beautiful countryside.

‘By 2025 Blaby District will be one of Leicestershire’s leading and most welcoming and sustainable Tourism destinations attracting staying and day visitors from across the UK’

3.2 Our Ambition and Objectives

The aims of the tourism growth plan are to:

- Provide leadership, and a focus on the visitor experience, investment and a professional approach to destination development.
- Increase the volume and value of tourism to the Blaby District tourism economy over the next 5 years by:

	Visitor Spend	Visitor Numbers
2020 -2021	3%	4%
2021 – 2023	5%	8%
2023 – 2025	6%	9%
Cumulative growth	£50m (31.2%)	1.3m (40%)

- To sustain and grow the jobs currently supported by the sector from 2,000 to 2,800 by 2025 (40% inc).
- To grow the tourism and visitor economy in a sustainable manner and also enhance the livelihoods and quality of life of local residents.
- Continue to develop public and private sector partnerships to deliver this plan and promote the area to visitors and residents alike, including working with our neighbouring local authorities on cross boundary issues or opportunities.

3.3 Drivers for Growth

There are five drivers for tourism growth which will help realise the ambition of the tourism growth plan. Each driver has a particular area of focus and a set of actions to achieve the Growth Plan ambition.



1. **Products & Experiences:** In line with market needs and opportunities, create and develop new and existing products and experiences targeted at the needs and expectations of current and future visitors.
2. **Marketing & Promotion:** Promoting Blaby District's image and offering to local, domestic and international visitors to attract a larger share of existing and new, year-round markets.
3. **Business & People Skills Development:** Support tourism operators to develop the business & people skills needed for the industry to be more competitive and innovative in a competitive marketplace.
4. **Visitor Experience:** Develop a seamless visitor service excellence culture, capacity and capability by providing an exceptional visitor experience that creates lasting positive memories and compels visitors to return and recommend Blaby District to others.
5. **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Strengthen the role of the Blaby District Tourism Partnership building new kinds of partnership working across public and private sector tourism interests to deliver the Growth Plans' ambition and targets.

3.4 Blaby District Visitor Proposition

Blaby District has many strengths and new emerging opportunities (e.g. Everards Meadows, Rutland Cycles and Fosse Park developments). This changing tourism landscape presents an opportunity to change perceptions of Blaby District and the opportunity to increase awareness of its tourism offering and proposition.

Currently Blaby District is an amalgam of tourism products and visitor experiences, with individual attractions and activities succeeding independently in the tourism market. With this is a lack of distinctiveness that does not separate it from other destinations.

Developing a collective "Blaby District" tourism brand will not in itself generate traction, brand recognition or a compelling proposition for the visitor, because it is a crowded and competitive marketplace. Nor will it raise awareness about the products and experiences available in the Blaby District.

The challenge is how to translate the promotion of its tourism assets and experiences coherently and creatively to form a compelling proposition or propositions for consumers and give visitors reasons to visit.

Uncover the Story⁴ is the campaign brand that has been identified to address the challenge of getting recognition for Leicester and Leicestershire as a tourism destination of choice and to clearly establish its identity in the marketplace. Uncover the Story recognises the fact that Leicester & Leicestershire is a destination made up of a collection of different visitor products and experiences, all with a unique tale to tell. It enables telling the story through partners engaging with local businesses as destination ambassadors to promote and sell the area. A compendium of local stories will be used as hooks for external audiences (including consumers, travel trade and the media) and used to inspire itineraries, narrative for destination videos and websites.

What do we want to achieve?

Blaby District has much to offer, both for business and pleasure. The people, history & heritage, countryside and waterways, outdoor activity and retail shopping. The proposition needs to focus on positioning Blaby District as a desirable place to visit, meet and live and being:

⁴ Source: Leicestershire and Leicester Tourism Growth Plan

- Connected to History
- Active Outdoors
- Quintessentially English
- Countryside & Waterways
- Accessible

The proposition needs to identify what is distinctive about Blaby District using simple language to influence and shape the marketing activity and have a connection with and leverages off the marketing and promotional initiatives of the LLTGP.

Campaign Concept

The campaign is an ongoing content-driven digital campaign, with rich online content designed to re-inforce Blaby District's strengths and connections with the LLTGP "Uncover the Story" product campaigns. It also needs to highlight Blaby District's connections with history and heritage, food and drink and outdoor activities.

The proposition needs to be an engaging call to action combining compelling creative, informative messaging and promotional / marketing assets, and include a digital media plan to dovetail with marketing & PR activity.

The campaigns focus is social media and key trade digital platforms and media and would be set up in the following social media channels:

- Facebook / Twitter / Instagram / YouTube

The proposition⁵ (call to action) will need to be developed, indicative themes are:

- Uncover our Story
- Uncover Blaby's Story
- Discover Blaby
- This is Blaby
- Make it Blaby
- Meet in Blaby

Illustrative examples of campaign themes, colourways, Twitter and Facebook sample pages and digital graphic samples showing how a call to action might be developed and the potential linkages to the LLTGP campaign themes (i.e. Uncover the Story, Taste the Place, Fit-Cation).

It is recognized that there will be differing opinions about the proposition messaging, the recommendation is to scope a brief for the campaign concepts and proposition and the linkages with the LLTGP campaigns (once these have been developed).

The call to action / proposition is creating a framework for a collaborative approach to promoting the Blaby District. The success of the campaign depends on all tourism businesses and partners getting involved and supporting by posting interesting, authentic and rich content on the social media channels.

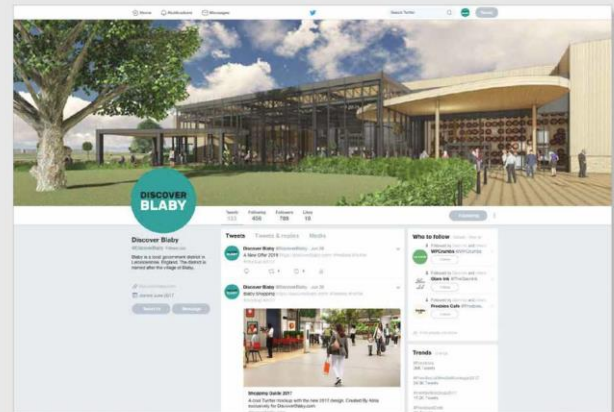
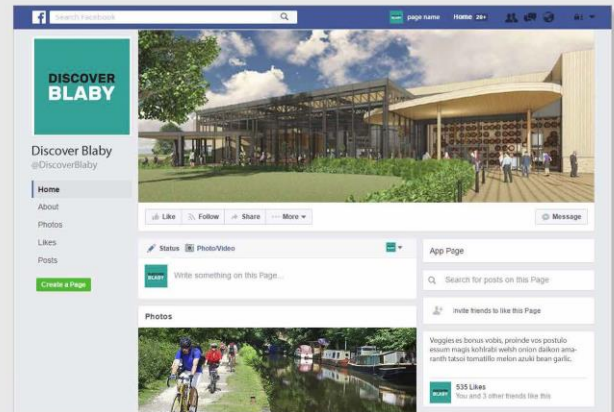
A toolkit should be developed to give the industry the resources and information needed.

⁵ Note: An agreed proposition is required to set up the various social channels

Indicative Campaign Theme



FACEBOOK & TWITTER SAMPLE PAGES



4 Tourism Priorities

The five strategic priorities each have a particular area of focus and a set of actions to deliver the ambitions of the Growth Plan. There is a separate Action Plan showing the required actions along with timescales and costs.

The strategy focuses on these five priorities:

4.1 Products & Experiences

We will in line with market needs and opportunities create and develop new and existing products and experiences targeted at the needs and expectations of current and future visitors.

What we will do:

- i. Support the History & Heritage, outdoor activity and retail product to create, package and deliver compelling quality, authentic visitor experiences across the region and that fit with the LLTGP themes i.e.
 - King Richard III and history & heritage in and around Blaby
 - Fit-cation – Activity, cycling, walking, diving
 - Taste the Place - Food and Drink, local artisans, food producers, pubs and restaurants
 - Creative Edge – (Culture, Heritage, Attractions)
 - Quintessentially English villages
- ii. Work with key stakeholders and partners to develop local cycleways & waterways infrastructure
- iii. Develop quality authentic experiential itineraries for the area (with links to wider Leicestershire area) for the core propositions
- iv. Build the District's reputation for events and conferences by:
 - Improving the range of and encourage development of new events in the District
 - Link with the LLTGP business tourism campaign
- v. Explore and identify opportunities to develop the area's food and drink offer
- vi. Undertake an assessment of the accommodation demand / supply including looking at options for niche product e.g. glamping / pods etc.

4.2 Marketing & Promotion

Promoting Blaby District's image and offers to local, domestic and international visitors to attract a larger share of existing and new, year-round markets.

What we will do:

- i. Develop and implement a multi-channel marketing plan that has a primary focus on digital and social media as routes to market. The actions will include:
 - Scope, develop, test and implement an agreed Blaby District tourism brand proposition
 - Web site: Develop engaging content on the BDC Tourism 'micro-site' and review opportunities with LLGTP to include Blaby content in a wider Leicestershire regional tourism web site.
 - A web site linked to a digital social media campaign
 - Develop an ongoing social media action plan to bring the destination to life through social media and subsequent implementation. There are two aspects:
 - ✓ For consumers/potential visitors
 - ✓ Internal for tourism operators to encourage them to deliver their own social media,

4.2 Marketing & Promotion

- aligned to key market priorities
 - Engaging with tourism influencers/ travel writers and bloggers, developing familiarisation trips
 - Through digital links, encourage businesses to participate in the marketing plan/campaign, this includes developing offers, promotions, competitions to attract and disperse visitors around Blaby District
- ii. Travel Trade Development: As an element of the marketing plan develop a travel trade activity plan that includes:
 - Building relationships with the travel trade and encourage and support them to package Blaby District experiences for their clients. (Market research needed to identify most appropriate tour agents etc.)
 - Partner attendance at select travel trade events e.g. Explore GB, UK Inbound as part of wider Leicester and Leicestershire activity
 - Support and provide content for LLTGP marketing including specific target markets such as group travel
- iii. Initiate a Tourism Awareness programme to promote the value of the visitor economy to the local community, to include:
 - A social media campaign “Tourism is everybody’s business” to raise local residents’ awareness of the District’s tourism products and experiences
 - Hold an Open Day – ‘Visit your own backyard’ concept for local residents to experience the District’s tourism products and experiences and links to participation in English Tourism Week

4.3 Business & People Skills Development

We will support tourism operators to develop the business & people skills needed for the industry to be more competitive and innovative in a competitive marketplace.

What we will do:

- i. Implement a visitor service excellence program for business – capacity building, training, mentoring, including opportunity to undertake familiarisations to showcase good businesses/ good customer service examples
- ii. Encourage businesses to adopt digital technologies and products as key drivers in engaging with the next generation of tourists and help tourism business reach more customers by bringing the destination and products alive
- iii. Explore tourism opportunities from business skills programmes - Collaborate and Digital Growth Programme
- iv. Explore tourism opportunities to link with schools/education & employer programmes such as LLEP Careers Hub, LEBC
- v. Consider how to facilitate increased industry engagement in the area of careers advice and guidance to grow the reputation of the sector as a career or choice
- vi. Implement a sustainable tourism programme that encourages businesses to participate in tourism sustainability and environmental initiatives e.g. Green Tourism

4.4 Visitor Experience

We will develop a seamless visitor service excellence culture, capacity and capability to provide an exceptional visitor experience to create lasting positive memories and compels visitors to return and recommend Blaby to others. Making the Blaby District the most welcoming Leicestershire destination.

What we will do:

- i. Explore opportunity for provision of a Visitor Information Service in new Fosse Retail development – either digital or manned
- ii. Assess the need for mobile & digital information points across the region and the need for printed visitor information collateral
- iii. Enhancing the frequency and integration of key public bus services to facilitate easier independent travel by public transport
- iv. Identifying and developing a network of Visitor Information sites in business and community premises across Blaby District to promote and facilitate greater visitor dispersal, particularly to facilities offering opportunities for visitor spend.
- v. Introduce visitor experience questions for local businesses to include in guest surveys to gather District wide visitor satisfaction benchmarking

4.5 Partnerships and Collaboration

We will strengthen the role of the Blaby Tourism Partnership building new kinds of partnership working across public and private sector tourism interests to deliver the Growth Plan's ambition and targets.

What we will do:

- i. Business Engagement and Networking: Use the Business Tourism Partnership meeting as networking opportunities to encourage local businesses to collaborate, work together and communicate with the aim of increasing knowledge, experience, skills and importantly, spreading good practice
- ii. Annual Tourism Summit: Hold an annual tourism forum to review progress of Growth Plan and to share best practice and hear from experts and speakers on relevant topics
- iii. Facilitate enhanced levels of local collaboration across the sector that are aligned with the LLTGP themes / product campaigns, and the opportunities for cross promotion / cross selling initiatives. The LLTGP themes and the Blaby District connections being e.g.
 - o King Richard III - History & heritage in and around Blaby, Highcross Centre, 'Glenfield Tunnel, Kirby Castle and Bouskell Park Ice House
 - o Fit-cation – Activity, cycling, walking, diving
 - o Taste the Place - Food and Drink, local artisans and food producers, Tithe Barn, Bakers Arms etc
 - o Creative Edge – (Culture, Heritage, Attractions)
 - o City / Market Harbours – Quintessentially English villages
- iv. Familiarisation trips for front line staff to increase awareness of existing product and experiences, and improve their ability to cross-market
- v. Engage with and contribute to the wider Leicester and Leicestershire Economic and Tourism groups i.e. Leicester Tourism Advisory Board, West Leicestershire Strategic Tourism Group

5 Marketing Strategy & Plan

Growing tourism in Blaby District and its economic contribution is dependent not only on the development of tourism products and experiences (which shape the way in which visitors will relate to the destination) but also on positive proactive tactical marketing and promotion of the District.

The strategy must be undertaken in collaboration and partnership with local stakeholders, local industry, distribution partners, e.g. transport operators, on line travel agents, intermediaries and, where relevant, non-traditional partners. The strategy marketing focus will be to align with, support and build on the product development campaigns and experiences being developed in the LLTGP.

The marketing strategy aims to generate visits with a priority in the markets that have the greatest potential to generate visits and yield, including converting day visitors into overnight stays.

The strategy will promote Blaby District's core experiences:

- History & Heritage
- Outdoor Activity
- Food & Drink
- Shopping & Leisure Parks
- Major events & festivals

5.1 Marketing Objectives

The marketing objectives are defined as;

- To increase the value of tourism to Blaby District's economy from £159m to £209m by 2025.
- To generate 15,000 followers and users on identified social channels.
- To sustain and grow the jobs currently supported by the sector from 2,000 to 2,800 by 2025.

5.2 Target Markets & Segments

For domestic markets, the growth of tourism will come through the enhancement of the offer (as proposed in this Plan) and its promotion especially through social media, with a strong focus on active and passive breaks.

The target markets can be broadly categorised as follows:

Primary

1. Local residents and communities
2. The wider Midlands region day visitor market specifically within a 90 minute drive time
3. The Domestic English (staycation) market

Secondary

4. Group Travel Operators
5. Mature international markets (e.g. Europe, North America), targeted through travel trade and intermediaries

Market Segments

VisitEngland has recently developed new visitor segmentation, based on a combination of what matters to visitors, their holiday behaviour and demographics. The Visitor Segmentation report identifies five. There are three segments which are the most relevant to Blaby District, these are:

1. **Country-Loving Traditionalists:** Empty nesters with traditional values, they are likely to have recently taken a countryside break in England. Good quality, secure accommodation is a priority when booking a holiday.
2. **Aspirational Family Fun:** Typically, information-hungry, London-based high earners with children at home, they regularly take city breaks where they can indulge in active, family-friendly pursuits, such as sporting events and cultural visits.

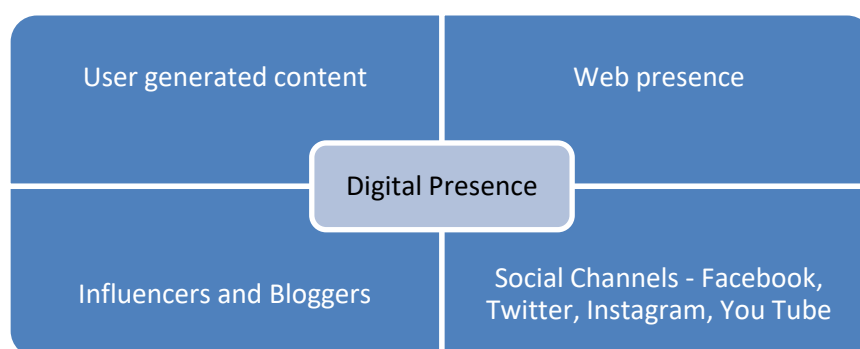
3. **Free and Easy Mini-Breakers:** More likely than other segments to be ‘young, free and single’. Demographically close to ‘the average Joe’, but they really stand out in their holiday behaviour.

5.3 Digital Presence

Social media has transformed the way the travel and leisure sector interacts with the market and target audiences. Marketing activity needs to be digitally led and highly content focussed, with the content being carefully targeted to clearly identified segments.

Content must identify and articulate the benefits of each segment, at each stage of the customer relationship (i.e. the type of messages that initially attract customers may need to change over time to maintain relationships). It needs to be pro-active and push. It will be led via consistent digital direct mail and social media, with a co-ordinated communications and content plan that includes acquisition, management and distribution of content.

The diagram displays the recommended digital presence.



A key emphasis of a digital presence for Blaby District is to ensure the quality and volume of authentic content on the social channels and ensuring relevant information is communicated in an easy and timely manner. The digital activity needs to:

- Be a trusted source of travel and leisure news
- Promote to followers interesting and imaginative images and videos
- Use the power of influencers to spread the news
- Ask questions by asking visitors to generate content about their best experiences in Blaby or ask them to recommend things for visitors to do in and around Blaby
- Listen and respond
- Build on the participation and content of all commercial tourism interests.

5.4 Promotional Activity

Tactical promotional activity must encourage private sector participation to support, complement and add value to the Blaby District marketing programme. The recommended activity includes:

- Web site: Develop engaging content on the BDC Tourism ‘micro-site’ and review opportunities with LLGTP to have content on Blaby District in a wider Leicestershire regional tourism web site.
- Social Channels: Set up the following social channels⁶
 - Facebook: Create Blaby Facebook with interactive “News Feed” for posts, What’s On, Festivals & Events, etc.
 - Twitter: Create Blaby Twitter account and get into the streams of key partners e.g. Leicester Tourism, Everard Meadows, tourism forums, travel writers, bloggers, relevant clubs and associations, food writers, walking and cycling clubs, etc.
 - Instagram: Create the Call to Action e.g. #DiscoverBlaby

⁶ Note: The social channel handles will be dependent on the outcome of the campaign concept workshop

- YouTube: Create a Discover Blaby Channel
- LinkedIn: Create a business forum for all stakeholders in Blaby
- Scope, commission, develop and implement an agreed Blaby District proposition tourism campaign
- Develop Blaby digital campaign toolkit for industry to use in their own promotional activity. Toolkit includes campaign creative, key messaging and assets like promotional films and images, email footers, social hashtags etc.
- Commission series of campaign promotion films to use on online channels, social media and presentations
- Paid digital advertising
- Competition led activity as part of the attract and disperse approach to the marketing campaigns.
- An interactive digital and printed map of Blaby District
- Ensure all social media channels are monitored to respond to any positive and negative comments posted on these channels
- Engaging with social media influencers (travel/creative/arts bloggers)
- Infographics: Create series of infographics to visualise the Blaby tourism proposition for sharing online and on social media
- Public relations and press familiarisation visits
- Travel Trade familiarisation visits
- Programme of industry events attendance

6 Success - How will we measure it?

6.1 Evaluation

The marketing strategy activity should be evaluated by using analytic tools (e.g. sprout social) across each of the social platforms to gain insight into the performance. Using these analytical tools will:

- Identify what is and isn't working so the activity and campaigns can be refined; and
- Gain insight into the online audience. This data will indicate the kinds of people who are following and engaging and their interests. This ensures the marketing activity is consistently hitting the right notes with the target audience.

The overall performance of the growth plan will be measured against the performance of Blaby District as a visitor destination. Success therefore needs to be measured and based on appropriate short, medium and longer term goals such as:

- Improved visitor satisfaction – e.g. through
 - Online feedback via survey with users registering on web site, website contact forms, trip advisor, social media comments
 - spectator surveys at events / prime locations (Fosse Park, Everards)
 - Mystery shopping
 - Including questions in businesses customer surveys etc.
- Enhanced tourism business performance (Set 5 benchmarks to measure from start of growth plan i.e. turnover, number staff, new products developed, occupancy for hotels, visitor numbers for attractions, Gather information from Tourism Partnership Members on a quarterly basis through on-line survey)
- Growth in visitor numbers, expenditure, jobs created/ sustained and new investment
- Awareness of Blaby District as a destination e.g. through intermediaries such as TripAdvisor ratings, through specialist destination survey, social media channels etc.
- Dispersal of visitors around the district and extending the length of stay by visitors

The Growth Plan is based on existing STEAM research that can inform the setting and monitoring of performance indicators. However more specific research will be required to measure and evaluate performance against the overall goals as well as those that are project specific e.g.

- Visitor satisfaction
- Where visitors are from
- Occupancy levels etc.

Recommendations are to:

- Scoping of a brief with the requirements of performance measurement that will provide the sufficiently robust information to measure the growth.
- Introduce a bi-annual visitor survey (for both day and overnight visits)
- Undertake an annual survey of tourism partnership businesses to:
 - Benchmarking of their businesses
 - On-line measure their perceptions of the campaigns, and their own evaluation of the campaign, what they perceive as the benefits in terms of visibility, visitation, spend etc.

7 Implementation

This section outlines the recommendations for the delivery and managing the implementation of the tourism growth plan.

The successful implementation of the Tourism Growth Plan is dependent on:

- Co-ordination, this is a key role for the Tourism Partnership and will be more effectively delivered through co-operative partnerships between all tourism players
- Industry engagement, with the need for clear, consistent, communications and engagement with the trade. The Tourism Partnership will be able to facilitate this activity;
- Prioritisation, to develop and deliver a small number of projects well and effectively, but making sure they are the ones that will make the biggest difference;
- Joint working, with shared responsibilities and shared information amongst the “team” to generate confidence in each other and effective working relationships;
- Strategic leadership, the tourism priorities for Leicester and Leicestershire are outlined in the LLTGP. How these are interpreted and delivered locally requires local determination and leadership;

Developing the tourism proposition in Blaby District incorporates not only marketing initiatives, but also product development, (which includes both hard and soft product development), industry development, research and industry engagement. Delivering these activities requires a partnership approach that brings together the council and their tourism priorities, with the private sector, other agencies and stakeholders.

Developing Blaby District as a visitor destination is about creating and maintaining visitor experiences, saleable products and services that meet visitors’ needs and expectations and facilitate their travel and stay within the destination. Getting the right range and quality of provision across Blaby is a vital part of the growth plan.

7.1 Who will deliver the Growth Plan?

The Tourism Growth Plan is based on a partnership approach, the whole sector (private, voluntary, community and public) needs to be integral in both overseeing and implementation of the plan.

Blaby District Tourism Partnership (BDTP) is the structure currently in place that will drive forward the Tourism Growth Plan. Delivery will require a destination wide mind set amongst all stakeholders and tourism businesses with a clear understanding of the benefits of, and commitment to, collaborative working.

As membership of BDTP increases it is recommended a review of the terms of reference is undertaken and the roles and activities of the partnership are clearly defined. This might include creating an “Executive Group” working on the delivery and implementation of the Growth Plan. They would be supported for projects / themes by working groups for specific aspects in the Growth Plan implementation.

Role of Blaby District Council

The Council has a key role to play in the leadership and influencing input into aspects of the delivery and implementation of the new tourism growth plan. In supporting the delivery of the Tourism Growth Plan the Council has resources to allocate capital and operational (revenue) budgets to tourism. Blaby District Council’s role is defined to optimise the way it works with the tourism and the business community to achieve the tourism objectives.

The Council’s role is as an enabler, supporter, facilitator and advocate of the tourism sector and wider visitor economy. The Council’s role in tourism over the life of the Growth Plan is to:

- To manage and service the Council’s decisions and recommendations as they impact tourism

- To manage and direct research and evaluation to support the growth plan delivery and the quality of the destination;
- Lead on the digital programme of tourism marketing and delivering a strong social media presence for marketing
- Develop and support the local tourism industry through engagement and communication programmes;
- Encourage business development and support to help tourism businesses be more innovative, viable and creative;
- Advocate appropriate tourism development and attract investment;
- Promote the benefits of tourism to industry and the community;
- Elected members to champion Blaby District as a place to visit.

7.2 Resources

The Action Plan identifies the need for investment over the five-year period of this plan. This excludes any capital investment.

The Council's current investment in tourism is limited and is just about adequate for the current level of activity and support for tourism in the District. However, the consultations identified and recognised that it is necessary to adopt a long-term, strategic approach to tourism in order to realise the full potential and play a stronger role in economic development, and boosting the visibility and recognition of Blaby District.

There are three possible options to consider depending on the funding available to deliver the strategy, these are:

Option	Outcome
Do Nothing Status quo	If there is no change in current tourism funding it is assumed that the most likely scenario is no growth or increased profile of tourism in the district and limited economic and social benefits
Do Something Limited improvement	If there is a slight increase in the current tourism funding it is assumed that the most likely scenario is that only a few of the actions are implemented and there would be limited increase in the economic benefits
Do More Growth achieved	Increased tourism resources and management arrangements, together with co-ordination of marketing and evaluation work, will strengthen capacity to develop and deliver a diverse and visitor economy

The recommendations are for additional resources to be made available to tourism development.

The Tourism Growth Plan provides an approach for developing, coordinating and supporting tourism in the District. To deliver the ambition of increasing the volume and value of tourism to Blaby District and thus the economic, social wellbeing and profile of the District will require additional resources (both human and financial). In real terms this means:

- Increase in the tourism budget as outlined in the action plan.
- Create a Tourism Development Officer (TDO) position to be responsible for developing and managing the Blaby District Tourism Partnership, and its roles and objectives.



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