



DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

DORCHESTER HERITAGE JOINT COMMITTEE

DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF TOURISM IN DORCHESTER

The Strategic Context - “Who does What”

The National Picture

National Government sets a strategic direction for tourism through its Local Industrial Strategy and the emerging Tourism Sector Deal. It provides funding through the Department for Culture Media and Sport for both Visit Britain and Visit England.

As the national tourist board Visit Britain focusses on promoting Britain to the rest of the world and encouraging inbound visitors, principally from 16 target destinations focussed on priority customer segments¹:

Buzzseekers - Younger, 64% aged 18-34 Free spirited and spontaneous, they like to take holidays full of action & excitement

Explorers - Older, 58% aged 55+ Content to enjoy holidays at a more relaxed pace. Nature lovers, enjoy the outdoors as well as must-see sites and enjoy embracing local culture

Adventurers - Older, 67% aged 45+ Enjoy traveling off the beaten track, spending time outdoors in nature and seeking out new experiences.

Sightseers - Older, 57% aged 55+ Like to stay within comfort zone, prefer cities to countryside and seek sensible, well-planned trips

Culture Buffs - Average age 37 years Image and brand conscious, travelling often is a status symbol and they like well-known and safe destinations

Visit England focusses on promoting England to the rest of the UK, and from 2016 has overseen the £40m Discover England Fund – a challenge fund to encourage international visits to the English regions, and to develop online bookable product. 50 projects have been funded, 14 of which have been considered major scale.

¹ See https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/global_pr_strategy_2017-19.pdf

Dorset LEP and Dorset Tourism Association

Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, established in 2011, is a public private business led partnership responsible for dialogue with Government, and lobbying for and influencing the use of Government grant funding in Dorset.

It is currently tasked with producing a local industrial strategy for the County, prioritising sectors for growth and investment, and demonstrating how the local industrial strategy supports the national industrial strategy. At the time of writing this is in draft (Dec 19). A highlight summary of the draft strategy² notes that for the county of Dorset, Tourism is an established sector worth £1bn GVA and supports 27000 jobs.

The draft strategy makes no specific further reference to the tourism sector, but does include ambition across the county, relevant to tourism, to:

- Make Dorset a place of exceptional culture and quality, releasing the potential of the very best creative and cultural businesses
- Address demand-led skills and education programmes
- Unlock talent and ambition across local communities
- Unlock productivity opportunities for businesses of all sizes who have growth potential
- Enhance rural productivity

Dorset Tourism Association

The Dorset Tourism Association DTA, is a subgroup of the Dorset LEP, a registered CIC, and has a board drawn across the tourism sector and from across Dorset. The board also includes representatives from both Dorset Council and BCP Council tourism teams. Membership of the DTA as an organisation is free, and open to all.

The DTA board meets regularly, and it hosts quarterly networking events for members across Dorset, together with an annual conference. The DTA does not undertake marketing or tourism product development.

The DTA acts as the representative voice of tourism to the Dorset LEP and will be influential in developing and proposing the local tourism sector deal as part of the national tourism sector deal emanating from the national industrial strategy. This may include influencing how and where any local investment in tourism through the sector deal is made.

The DTA strategy (2017) seeks to:

- Protect market share in peak season
- Increase productivity through greater asset utilisation in off peak periods

It identifies the areas for development as:

“Networking for creativity - in a fragmented industry, future product development is likely to come from partnerships who seek to tailor themselves to customer needs

2

https://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/userfiles/files/LIS/Dorset%20LEP_Local%20Industrial%20Strategy_initial%20highlights_Oct%2019.pdf

Building a Dorset brand - ... By linking organisations to the wider brand of the county, we can multiply the effect of the promotional activity taking place across the area. ...

Inspiring excellence - ... Through supporting the Dorset Tourism Awards, sharing best practice, linking organisations to opportunities we will improve our delivery to look after our customers. ...”

Destination Management Plan

In 2013 the Dorset LEP commissioned the production of a Destination Management plan for Dorset. The Plan was published in July 2014.

It has five action areas that affect both the visitor awareness and the visitor experience of a visit to Dorset:

Action Area 1 – To Raise the profile of Dorset

Including – Brand management, research, promotion of individual destinations, visitor information, and communications infrastructure

Action Area 2 – Capitalise in inherent resources

Including – coastal, countryside, settlements and transport network

Action Area 3 – Enhance Quality and Distinctiveness

Including – Accommodation, attraction offer, customer service, food tourism, cultural offer, growing events, greening (sic) of business

Action area 4 – Enhance Business performance

Including – new business starts, training, encourage tourism careers

Action Area 5 – strengthen delivery strictures

Including – Create a new Destination Management Partnership for Dorset, establish local Destination Management Boards, monitor progress on DMP

At the time of writing, there is no available written progress report published on the DMP. However, several of the underlying principles and aspirations remain pertinent to the town tourism plan and will be reflected in the strategy. The Project officer has a copy of the original report for reference.

Dorset Council

The newly created Dorset Council has responsibility for many services which directly and indirectly impact on tourism and the visitor experience.

Some, such as parking and parking enforcement, street cleanliness and litter collection, management of public conveniences, public transport, planning or spatial policy and development management will all indirectly affect the visitor experience of the town.

More directly, its management of the Roman Town House, of access to and through the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and delivery of LEADER and any successor grant schemes can and do play an important role in enhancing the visitor offer in the town.

Most importantly, Dorset Council has direct contact with potential and actual visitors through its Economic Development and Growth Service (Visit Dorset), and its Library Service (Dorchester TIC).

The Visit Dorset team maintain and manage the www.visit-dorset.com website and associated social media channels, actively promoting Dorset as a visitor destination. This is part funded by the Council, and part funded from “sale of memberships” through which accommodation providers and attractions can appear on the website. The website also contains suggested itineraries and information about local destinations (towns) and the area generally. There is a free self-entry facility for events.

The team also produce a printed “Explore Dorset” attractions guide and continue to produce and distribute a printed accommodation guide

Dorset Council is producing a new Economic Growth strategy, which will include tourism. It does not seem that the Visit Dorset activity is likely to change from its current Dorset wide promotional activity.

Dorchester Library and Learning Centre has included the Dorchester TIC since 2017. Following the creation of Dorset Council, the TIC service is managed through the Libraries service.

The TIC provides information to residents and visitors alike, is a distribution point for promotional leaflets from attractions and events, and acts as a ticket agency for many local organisations.

At the time of writing (Dec 19), the future strategic direction for TICs at Dorset Council is not known.

The newly formed Dorset Council has adopted the Dorset Cultural Strategy 2016 – 2021³ produced in 2016 by the Arts Development Company as its current Cultural Strategy. The Strategy definition of culture includes:

- Museums, artefacts, archives and design
- Libraries, literature, writing and publishing
- The built heritage, architecture, landscape and archaeology
- Parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, water environment and countryside recreation
- Tourism, festival and attractions

The strategy, which is written at a county-wide level, amongst it’s strategic aims has ambition by 2021 for:

- Dorset has a national/international reputation as a cultural destination
- To have achieved a sustainable model for the county’s recorded and built heritage, encouraging the wider use of heritage assets.
- Promotion and raising awareness of opportunities for cultural activity both as audience, participant and volunteer
- A thriving cultural sector, with sufficient capacity and a well skilled and diverse workforce representative of the whole community

It has priorities amongst others to:

³ <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/libraries-history-culture/arts-in-dorset/dorset-cultural-strategy-2016-2021.aspx>

- Develop role of culture in the visitor economy through the Culture and Tourism Action Plan
- A programme to improve marketing with social media strategy

Dorset Council also currently fulfils an enabling role through its grant programmes. Locally Dorset Council provides grant assistance to the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester Arts, and the Arts Development Company. These grants support the continued operation the respective organisations and delivery of their heritage and cultural programmes.

Dorchester Town Council

Dorchester Town Council manages and/or maintains a number of natural assets in the town such as the Borough Gardens (the Victorian pleasure gardens on the edge of the town), Maumbury Rings and the town walks.

The Council grant assists and provides support for events such as Moonbury , and Heritage Open Dorchester, and organises the open air cinema in the town. It also grant assists and provides offices and performance space for Dorchester Arts, and is currently hosting Dorset County Museum staff as the museum is redeveloped.

Dorchester BID

Dorchester BID was established in 2007 and is funded by a compulsory levy charged to a majority of town centre business rate payers. Dorchester Town Council is in the top quartile of contributions as a levy payer. Dorchester BID trades as a private company limited by guarantee and is overseen by a board of directors from local businesses.

It receives in excess of £120k pa levy income and allocates £48k pa for each of the five years in its current business plan (2018-2023)⁴ towards town promotion and marketing. It aims to “Attract more visitors and residents to visit the town, staying longer, visiting more frequently, and spending more in local businesses.”

Amongst other things, the BID currently manages and maintains the Dorchester BID website www.dorchesterdorset.com, sponsors events in the town, promotes the town via social media, and maintains the free to access town Wi-Fi network.

The BID is also involved in providing hanging baskets and in funding music on Saturdays in the summer, in employing occasional (peak season and peak time) car park “ambassadors”, mystery object “supersleuth” competitions and an informal network of TIPS.

Summary and Conclusion

From the national tourism bodies promoting the UK nationally and internationally, through the Dorset LEP and Dorset Tourism Association strategies and sector representation, to Dorset Councils county wide promotion of Dorset through its visit-Dorset channels, and individual businesses

⁴ https://dorchesterdorset.com/docs/DBID_BP2018_web_version.pdf

promotion of their own enterprises, the promotion and development of tourism is a complex picture.

Each has a role to play:

- international and national promotion,
- national and local product development,
- setting strategic direction
- sector representation and lobbying,
- grant fund prioritisation, application assessment and administration
- industry data gathering and analysis,
- Grant support to local organisations such as cultural organisations which are a key part of the local offer to visitors

However, for these myriad organisations, “local” does not go below County level.

At local destination or town level, and apart from local business own promotional activity, the only visitor promotion or support currently provided is through:

- Dorchester BID’s current programme of activity encouraging and supporting visitors to and within the town, and is just part of a wider remit within the BID business plan 2018-2023
- Dorchester TIC ‘s information and event booking services.

There is however no one plan for coordinating or delivering the promotion and development of Dorchester as a visitor destination.