



Nottinghamshire
County Council

2019-2029

The Visitor Economy Strategy

for Nottinghamshire
County Council





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Introduction

This is the first Visitor Economy Strategy (VES) for Nottinghamshire County Council.

The strategy is about added value and stimulating market growth through the Council's role as a leader, influencer, facilitator and investor. Delivering this strategy will contribute to achieving the County Council's objectives for Nottinghamshire to stand out as a great place to start and grow your business and as a place people are proud to call home.

The Council wants residents and visitors to explore and enjoy the Nottinghamshire countryside, market towns and villages, and to enjoy the County's fascinating stories and become immersed in its experiences. At the same time the Council wants to encourage people who are already visiting to stay longer, explore further and spend more during their trip. That will generate jobs, growth and opportunity for local people.

The intent is to attract new visitors for a day out or a short break and to ensure they enjoy an excellent experience, so they come back again and again. We also want to encourage the people who live, work and study in Nottinghamshire to become ambassadors for their County and to spread the word by showcasing it to their visiting friends and relatives.

Critically, we want to create an environment that stimulates and supports small businesses to thrive – now and in the future.

This strategy is about delivering 10 years of change for tourism in Nottinghamshire, with an eye on the longer-term opportunities. It kicks off with quick wins to inspire everyone to work together productively which will set the County on a journey to become a must-see destination.

The importance of tourism and the visitor economy

Tourism is one of the UK's largest and fastest growing industries, generating £106 billion Gross Domestic Product (GDP) a year. It employs over 2 million people and supports thousands of businesses. Tourism and the wider visitor economy works hand in hand with a wide range of sectors across England, including farming, transport, retail, sport, museums and the arts.

The visitor economy creates a unique opportunity to showcase the best of Nottinghamshire to external audiences in a way other sectors can't; ways which help position the County as a great place to live, work and study as well as to visit.

What we want to achieve

Our ambitious goal is that by 2029 we will deliver an additional £80m Gross Value Added (GVA) and create 2,900 full time equivalent jobs (FTEs).

In the first five years of the strategy we are aiming for a steady and sustainable increase in the volume and value of tourism. As new projects come on stream and our reputation and profile grows, the Council believes there is scope to be far more ambitious – raising the bar to deliver just under 4% annual growth from 2023 onwards.

Tourism trends

The continuing popularity of short breaks with more people taking more breaks more often.

An increased demand for active holidays that help people recharge their batteries and get away from the everyday pressures of life.

A growth in people looking for a personalised experiences and local culture visitors are motivated by the experiences they will have rather than what they can visit.

Digital everywhere and always on has transformed how visitors search, plan and book trips and how visitors communicate and find information during their stay. It has changed how destinations are promoted from creating content to sharing content. Content is increasingly about images and video.

Our goal

By 2023, a total of 5% growth will deliver:

- 1 million additional visitors
- 742 additional FTE jobs
- £57.5 million additional economic impact (direct and indirect)
- £18 million additional GVA

By 2029, our aspirational goal is to deliver a total for the 10 year strategy of:

- 5 million additional visitors
- 2,900 additional FTE jobs
- £240 million additional economic impact (direct and indirect)
- £80 million additional GVA.



What we will do

Foundations

Channelling assets and tackling challenges

- International associations.
- Central location.
- Large catchment .
- Low awareness.
- Fragmented offer.

Guided by our objectives

- Position and profile.
- Great visitor experiences.
- Thriving tourism businesses.

Working in new ways

- County Council.
 - Leadership and Facilitation.
 - Influencer and Investor.

Establishing our core story

- Sherwood
 - Green and Active.
- Robin Hood
 - Free Thinking.

Strategy

Inspire new visitors to come

Focus on best prospects:
Active Family Fun Seekers and Country Loving Traditionalists.
Marketing and promotion.

Build great experiences

Walking and cycling - Trails, interpretation and itineraries to unpack our stories.
New signature event for Thanksgiving – capitalising on event opportunities.

Channel County Council assets

Sherwood - Edwinstowe Hub
Maximise links between Sherwood Forest and Nottingham Castle
Holme Pierrepont Country Park as a family sport venue
Rufford and heritage.

Make more of local food and drink

Collaborative working with food businesses.
Showcasing local food and drink experiences.

Plan for growth

Capacity building in the sector.
Toolkits for businesses.
More accommodation.
Transport infrastructure.

Outcomes

Deliver our goals

5% uplift over the next 5 years; thereafter the ambition is for just under 4% annual increase in the volume and value of tourism from 2023

£80m increase in GVA by 2029.

Increase in percentage of staying visitors – Increase in length of day trips
– Uplift in spend per trip.

Currently, the visitor economy in Nottinghamshire is worth £1.75 bn and supports around 15,000 jobs. Nottinghamshire has a loyal base of regular repeat visitors, mainly staying in self-catering accommodation including Centre Parcs. Day visits dominate, accounting for 90% of all trips .

Over the last decade the volume and value of tourism in Nottinghamshire has been growing much more slowly than the national average and the visitor economy has been severely affected by the recession. In the five years to 2014, visitor numbers dropped by nearly 10% in Nottinghamshire and have only just returned to pre-recession levels. The rate of tourism job growth has been 5% slower than for other sectors in the County too.

There is work to be done to re-energise the visitor economy, boost performance and realise potential. Nottinghamshire needs a much clearer identity and a higher profile in the marketplace, more bookable product, more joined up experiences, more things to see and do, and more accommodation to enable the County to grow the short break market. This means capitalising on new digital opportunities, including virtual and augmented reality, and the sharing economy, and focusing on quality experiences to ensure Nottinghamshire is competitive in the marketplace.

Nottinghamshire has great natural capital, inspiring stories and heritage with wide appeal – this strategy is the first step in converting these opportunities into sustainable growth.

Our focus

This strategy focuses on the following five key areas; areas where the County can really **lead** and **facilitate** change. Areas that have the potential to help us achieve our goal. We will:

- Inspire **new visitors** to come
- Create great **new experiences and take them to market effectively**
- Channel the **County's assets**
- Make more of our **local food and drink experiences**
- **Plan for growth in the sector in partnership** with our businesses and through wise investment.

¹ STEAM 2016

² STEAM 2016

³ Excluding Nottingham City, Regeneris analysis.



Our themes

The most successful destinations are clear about what is special about their place that has appeal to visitors. They single-mindedly use these qualities to prioritise investment and to communicate consistent messages to their target markets.

Nottinghamshire will lead with **Sherwood** and **free-thinking**. These are; without challenge, the competitive strengths of the County. Nottinghamshire is known across the world for Sherwood Forest, the home of legendary Robin Hood. The tales of Robin Hood are just one example of the County's free-thinking spirit that has shaped the County's history. Other powerful free-thinking themes are The Civil War and the Nottinghamshire Pilgrims who travelled to North America in 1620; stories that we can help build regionally, nationally and internationally.

We will use our stories to deliver experiences that inspire visitors to explore and build new and enduring relationships with the County. Some of this is happening already with local partners developing new initiatives to strengthen the experiences. But there is more to do to realise the county's full potential as a visitor destination.

Our markets

Our two markets with growth potential for day trips and UK short breaks are **Country Loving Traditionalists** and **Aspirational Fun Families**. These are two segments identified as priorities by Visit England, selected because they have a strong fit with what Nottinghamshire can offer.

Nottinghamshire's central location means it has a large audience within a two-hour drive time. These near markets provide excellent opportunities to build loyal repeat day visitors and near short breaks among people who are likely to enjoy what the County has to offer.

Other destinations will be targeting these segments too. There are opportunities to grow Nottinghamshire's tourism by collaborating with neighbouring Counties to achieve maximum reach where it makes sense to do so, e.g. on sports with Leicestershire, cycling with Derbyshire.

Country Loving Traditionalists – empty nesters with traditional values, who are likely to have recently taken a countryside break in England. They travel as a couple, looking for unspoilt countryside and want to feel “connected to the country's history and heritage” with opportunities to eat local food and produce.

Aspirational Family Fun - information-hungry, living in cities with children at home. They regularly take breaks where they can indulge in active, family-friendly pursuits, such as sporting events and festivals. They like water-based activities. They are active on social media.

Visit England (extract from market segmentation information based on a combination of what matters to visitors, their leisure trip behaviour and demographics.)

International visitors

Inbound tourism to Britain is flourishing and VisitBritain predicts that the UK's current biggest mature inbound markets (such as the USA and Western Europe) will continue to account for the highest value and volume of trips. International visitors make up a very small percentage of visitors to the majority of UK destinations but the profile of international tourism and the spend per head of international visitors means we will explore targeted opportunities in collaboration with regional and national partners. We want to capitalise on our collaboration with the Mayflower 400 and Pilgrim Roots project. 2020 is the 400th anniversary of the sailing of The Mayflower which creates huge potential to profile Nottinghamshire to US markets, as well as showcasing the County to new UK visitors. That project is targeting the 10 million direct descendants of Mayflower through the travel trade. Nottinghamshire is part of the Pilgrim Roots story. We can build on the work done so far by looking at other free-thinking themes and use the strong US connection with Robin Hood as a promotional hook.

We will also work with our regional partners through the Midlands Engine to identify opportunities to attract visitors from Asia to the County.

What we are going to do

The heart of our strategy is about making our natural assets, our stories and our heritage work harder for the visitor economy. That means delivering excellent visitor experiences, and packaging and promoting them effectively to our target markets. We will work with businesses and other stakeholders to achieve that.

Green and active

Nottinghamshire is a rural county; our focus must be on delivering an engaging and distinctive green and active countryside experience. We will:

- Give Robin Hood and Sherwood a much stronger visibility across the County, particularly in the North of Nottinghamshire, and use it as shorthand for "green and active"
- Make Edwinstowe an exciting visitor hub in Sherwood Forest – realising the potential of its natural assets, attractions and facilities, and creating more product
- Deliver more things to do in the countryside that are branded, connected to the Sherwood and Robin Hood theme, and which incorporate the latest digital technology and innovations in visitor experiences
- Create itineraries and packages designed to deliver what visitors are looking for and which make it easy for them to book online - itineraries that combine attractions, places to eat, places to shop and places to stay
- Develop the most powerful of our free-thinking stories into experiences that encourage visitors to explore further and dig deeper into our history
- Make more of our market towns
- Create reasons for visitors to explore beyond the city and deeper into Nottinghamshire - and make it easy to do that.

Food and drink

There has been a boost in demand for good quality locally produced food and drink. Visitors now expect a choice of places to eat and drink from local markets to fine dining. They want to know the provenance of their food and are interested in the people behind the businesses. They want food experiences from tastings to foraging to chef courses. Nottinghamshire is home to some distinctive foods that need to become a much more visible part of the offer. We will:

- Work with the Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Food and Drink Forum to identify opportunities to create exciting food experiences for visitors and promote the local food offer including our 25 Great Taste Awards, two Royal Warrants and the School of Artisan Food
- Ensure itineraries for visitors showcase the best of our produce, pubs and restaurants
- Ensure food and drink establishments are part of the tourism small business community and have access to the business support they need to make the most of the visitor economy
- Work with Nottinghamshire's big sports venues to encourage them to showcase local food to all their visitors
- Celebrate the quality and range of local food and produce connections through events, showcases and festivals.

Festivals and events

There is a range of festivals and events happening in and around the County. Larger events can provide a reason to visit now and to stay longer. Events can only be experienced when they are taking place. That means they play an important role in encouraging visitors to choose Nottinghamshire over other destinations at specific times and can help to extend the visitor season by scheduling 'must-see' festivals in the shoulder months. Events and festivals can showcase the best of Nottinghamshire and provide an opportunity to position the themes of Sherwood & Robin Hood and free-thinking and the County's food and drink in new ways that appeal to Nottinghamshire's target markets. There is a need to identify those events with growth potential, to identify where gaps exist, and then test and develop appropriate responses. Organisers will curate events to strengthen their impact for example bringing together the programme of events across Sherwood and promoting as a Sherwood 'season', designed to complement nearby offers and link up with them.

We want to create a new signature event for Nottinghamshire – unique to the County and a new reason to visit. We will explore the potential to create a legacy to Mayflower 400, the Pilgrim Roots and associated Illuminate events by creating a Thanksgiving Day Festival of national scale. The festival will offer opportunities to showcase the County's heritage, global links and, of course, its food and drink, and for businesses across the County to become involved and own it. The festival will be designed to grow and evolve over time, this could include creative cultural activity supported by the latest digital technology.

Places to stay

To grow the volume of short breaks we need more places for visitors to stay. The County's caravan and camping sites and lodges are largely running at capacity and most hotels are concentrated within the city. Nottinghamshire requires more accommodation for visitors staying in the countryside and more hotels in the towns. Glamping has been identified as a growth opportunity across the D2N2 area. Potential hotel development opportunities have been identified and further work will be undertaken to ensure investment is directed to the best opportunities where sites and demand align. This will ensure the greatest commercial return and support growth in more overnight trips.

Marketing and promotion

The County needs to promote Nottinghamshire's themes and experiences to target markets and tourism businesses are essential to achieving that by driving content to a new website and social media platforms for Nottinghamshire. The County Council will establish the most effective way of doing this.

The County Council will also provide businesses and local partners with the marketing tools and information they need. This will also capitalise on the opportunities for promotion and PR created by Mayflower 400, festivals and events, and the launch of new tourism attractions and facilities. The foundation actions are:

- To develop and maintain a stories toolkit for businesses – a shared bank of information and material which when used consistently by businesses can strengthen and reinforce Nottinghamshire's destination messages
- To commission and maintain an excellent bank of images – available in the toolkit and more widely
- To work with tourism businesses to develop and take to market targeted itineraries
- To develop and maintain a cost-effective visitor website for Nottinghamshire, and
- To develop a social media profile for Nottinghamshire as a destination - across key channels.

Overtime we will build travel trade and campaign activity working with businesses and partners to extend our reach and raise our profile.

⁴ D2N2 Visitor Accommodation Strategy,
Report of Key Findings June 2017

Our people

The success of the visitor economy means creating thriving businesses with the potential to boost productivity in the County and the region. It is essential that our businesses are provided with the relevant high-quality business support they want and need, delivered in ways that encourage them to take part. Businesses need to understand what our target markets are looking for and how to make Robin Hood, Sherwood Forest and free-thinking work for their business. They need to be up-to-speed on the latest market and product trends to make wise business investments and have the latest digital knowledge to take their business to market effectively. The County also wants to engage local people in tourism and for them to share Nottinghamshire's stories.

The Council will:

- Take a strategic lead on coordinating and facilitating improved skills and training support for tourism businesses working with key skills organisations
- Seek to introduce a Welcome for Excellence programme across the County by stimulating demand among businesses
- Introduce an ambassador and volunteering programme that creates opportunities for local people to learn new skills and learn more about tourism and their County
- Research and work with stakeholders to deliver tour guide training
- Work to support business development through the D2N2 Growth Hub
- Work with regional skills partners to develop a digital programme designed for tourism SMEs to ensure they can utilise the latest IT in the development, marketing and management of their company.



Making it happen

There is a lot to do and we need to marshal resources effectively. Here are the areas where the County Council will variously lead and facilitate the strategy.

Lead	Facilitate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver best-in-class visitor experiences at County owned visitor assets• Stimulate investment in tourism facilities that help unlock the tourism growth potential• Ensure visitor-focused transport and digital infrastructure that is part of the experience• Ensure County Council staff are advocates for the visitor economy and work as a team across departments to deliver the strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage and oversee new projects and activity that businesses and partners can support and take part in• Ensure businesses are equipped with the tools and business advice they need to make the most of the visitor economy and improve productivity and the number and quality of new jobs in the sector• Open up clear routes to support providers to build industry capacity.

And this is how we will do it:

- Create a virtual visitor economy partnership across the County Council to help drive, oversee and champion the delivery of the strategy
- Create appropriate skills and capacity within the County Council to collectively champion the visitor economy
- Identify a visitor economy animateur to liaise with stakeholders and work with businesses to coordinate and bring forward offers and experiences across the county.

Here are the quick wins - actions we will deliver in the first 12 months:

- Lead a Visitor Economy Summit to launch the strategy that will become an annual event for all major stakeholders to report progress and identify priorities and collaborative activity to deliver the strategy
- Develop and launch a new tourism website for Nottinghamshire and establish new dedicated social media channels
- Develop a Stories Toolkit – including engaging with businesses to identify stories to take to market
- Identify opportunities to develop high quality experience activities as part of the strategy to drive overnight stays
- Commission a bank of quality images of Nottinghamshire that tell its stories and make them freely available to businesses
- Start work with businesses on market-focused itineraries and promote them
- Refresh the audit of cycling and walking routes to align with the Heritage Lottery funded Miner to Major project
- Engage the food and drink sector to identify opportunities for new events and showcasing local produce
- Work with sports venues to identify corporate opportunities to showcase local food and drink

key:

Year 1-2 ■ Years 2-3 ■ Years 4-5+ ■

Key Development Projects

Timescale

Deliver Edwinstowe as a major visitor hub for Robin Hood & Sherwood Forest. Key actions:	
Realise the tourism plans for the Phase 3 development at the former Thoresby Colliery Site	
Maximise investment in the new RSPB Visitor Centre	
Facilitate joint ventures to deliver more attractions, shopping, places to eat	
Develop and promote new trails, cycle hire, food pop-ups	
Develop activity and promotions to drive visitors between the new Nottingham Castle experience and Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre - linking and enhancing the visitor offer	
Consolidate Holme Pierrepont as a leading destination venue for sporting adventure activities for families. Key actions:	
Along with partners look at opportunities to develop water events, interpretation and activities along the River Trent to create a leisure resource and corridor out of the city	
Develop more activities on the land and in the water and continue to enhance its reputation as a leading sporting destination	
Develop more family-friendly accommodation on site and nearby – hotels, lodges and glamping – offering a family welcome and delivering facilities for active visitors e.g. drying rooms, places to store sporting equipment, family and group rooms	
Develop the potential of Rufford Abbey as a heritage attraction	
Realise the potential of Rufford Abbey as a nationally significant heritage asset by developing a coherent heritage offer and visitor experience for target markets and local people, that balances visitor appeal and supports the special designations of the site	
Make the off-road walking and cycling a much stronger visitor experience. Key actions	
Deliver a network of well signed trails and circular routes with themed interpretation and create easy-to-find downloadable route maps (over time use the latest GPX data)	
Work with Derbyshire County Council to develop tourism cycling opportunities across the D2N2 area. Key actions:	
Develop a D2N2 plan for local cycling infrastructure to link with visitor attractions – use for Growth Fund application	
Deliver North Nottinghamshire parts of the Visit Sleep Cycle Repeat project	

Key Development Projects

Strengthen sense of place for visitors along A614 – take advantage of investment along this growth corridor to:		
Use latest technology to create high quality, well-signed visitor route that welcomes you to the County and to Sherwood Forest		
Create visitor friendly bus route from city to Sherwood Forest using existing services and Sherwood livery buses		
Food and drink		
Work with food and events partners across the County to identify new showcasing and food event opportunities		
Develop itineraries to showcase the best of our produce, pubs and restaurants working with the tourism and hospitality sectors and food producers		
Work with local accommodation to create and promote a Nottinghamshire breakfast to showcase local produce		
Work with local accommodation to create and promote a Nottinghamshire breakfast to showcase local produce		
Work with our big sports venues to encourage them to showcase local food		
Events and festivals		
Explore the potential and pilot a Thanksgiving Day Festival as a new signature event for Nottinghamshire		
Work with attractions to create a Sherwood festival 'season' using existing festivals		
Accommodation		
Create portfolio of potential sites for non-serviced accommodation and promote		
Identify potential sites/buildings for boutique hotels in market towns and promote to identified independent boutique hotel developers		
Skills & Business Growth		
Develop a bespoke digital programme and roll out across the County		
Communicate effectively business awareness of support and advice programmes through D2N2 Growth Hub		



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