

VISIT HEREFORDSHIRE

Herefordshire
& THE WYE VALLEY



A DIFFERENT PLACE AND TIME

Business Plan 2007/10

Visit Herefordshire Business Plan 2007/10

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Guide to abbreviations and acronyms used in this plan

CMS	Client Management System
VH	Visit Herefordshire
HC	Herefordshire Council
DMP	Destination Management Partnership
IPS	International Passenger Survey
KPI	Key Performance Indicators.
LA	Local Authority
STEAM	Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Model
TWM	Tourism West Midlands
UKTS	United Kingdom Tourism Survey

1. The Pathway

1.1 Aim

What are the critical issues and challenges facing the development of the visitor economy in Herefordshire over the next three years? Where do the greatest opportunities lie? How can they be grasped?

This Business Plan aims to answer these questions and thereby *“strengthen the focus of all stakeholders on the small number of core initiatives where there will be most impact and best return on investment”*

This plan covers the period 2007 - 2010 and is linked to the Herefordshire Tourism Strategy that is currently in the process of being updated.. It is a plan for the entire area and everyone within it. It has been produced by Visit Herefordshire, and is intended to be used as a “live action” plan to drive progress for the area. It will only be valuable if all stakeholders feel that they own it and that it will take the area and their businesses forward.

It therefore prioritises a limited number of areas for action that need to be addressed in order to increase the area’s competitiveness in an increasingly crowded world of destinations seeking to attract visitors. Specific actions will then need to be identified by businesses and public bodies in their own business plans to pursue these.

Success will be measured on three levels:

- Increased business for Herefordshire - measured through bed nights and spend
- Participation and use of the DMP on an ongoing basis by stakeholders to guide action and monitor progress
- Successful partnership working between the private and public sectors.

1.2 The Vision for Herefordshire

In 2010 Herefordshire will have achieved:

“Its’ ambitious target to increase visitor spend to £313 million, supporting 10,000 jobs.

Hereford is well established as a “must-see” city within the West Midlands, while the county of Herefordshire is synonymous nationally with green sustainable tourism, with an excellent provision of self-catering accommodation, visitor attractions, leisure facilities and award winning restaurants throughout the region, ensuring all the needs and expectations of a visitor are met.

Herefordshire has a strong high quality event and festival programme, and is one of the lead counties for Activity and Food events in the West Midlands.

Increased product packaging and coordinated marketing activity ensures that every part of the county benefits from tourism and that the Herefordshire experience is underpinned by quality and value-for-money choices. The people of Herefordshire go the extra mile to deliver a personalised service that reinforces its’ outstanding reputation for quality.”

1.3 Where are we now?

The visitor economy in Herefordshire is currently worth in excess of £290 million. The rate of growth is around 2% per annum. The chart below illustrates the growth that is required to meet the economic impact target of £313 million by 2010. The region is attracting around 4.8 million visitors per year, of which 93% are day visitors and the remaining million are staying visitors - either in serviced or self-catering accommodation, or staying with friends/relatives.

	Number of visitors	Total Spend
2006	4.8 million	£291 million
2007	4.89 million	£295 million
2008	4.99 million	£301 million
2009	5. million	£307 million
2010	5.1 million	£313 million

Whilst it is clear that the sub-regional visitor economy relies very heavily on the day visitor market, staying visitors spend around £132 more per day when visiting the countryside, or £116 per day when staying in towns, than day visitors. It will be important to continue to grow both markets and ensure that both are catered for, but there is good opportunity for increasing the value of the visitor economy by £100 million, attracting a greater proportion of overnight visitors. This will be achieved by target marketing and specific activities outlined in the plan.

1.4 The Challenge

Herefordshire faces three key challenges in maximising its' tourism potential over the next three years:

- Hereford's main historic city competitors in the UK have invested more heavily in developing a wider range and quality of accommodation, restaurants, entertainment and a more stimulating city experience.
- Herefordshire has low awareness amongst UK travelers as a visitor destination.
- Stakeholders in Herefordshire could benefit from a greater share of the tourism market.

1.5 Key Priorities

The following are the most immediate priorities to be addressed in the coming years. They have been identified as actions necessary to achieving the Vision. Visit Herefordshire will act as the catalyst for this programme of action by further developing relationships with relevant partners in the private and public sectors in order to tackle these tasks. Many of these actions are about planning, achieving clarity of direction and putting in place mechanisms that will enable effective partnership working. This will ensure that we are in the best position to drive the destination forward.

- **Events**
Establish a clear plan of action to link in with major events and destinations in the West Midlands and the 2010 Ryder Cup in Wales.
- **Quality Product**
Establish a plan for reaching a World Class Service standard; address skills shortages through training and ensure customer-facing staff have adequate local knowledge.
- **Investment**
Commission a forward-looking study of the accommodation sector, highlighting gaps and opportunities for attracting new investment.
- **Communication**
Develop relationships with transport providers, aiming to improve connectivity between the regional airports and key sub-regional railway stations, as well as bus linkage between the City and the Market Towns.
- **Olympics 2012**
Review opportunities relating to the 2012 Olympics.
- **Working Relationships**
To Improve the tourism offer and work together with neighbouring areas to improve the % of staying visitors to the county and day visitors from other area.
- **Sustainability**
Establish the Destination as the 'Greenest County' in England.
- **Training**
Develop opportunities for Training for the tourism operators in the county.
- **Be the voice for tourism in the sub-region**
Represent the needs of Herefordshire at the Regional and National committees and groups.
- **Activity Tourism**
Establish Herefordshire as the 'University of the Great Outdoors.'
- **Membership of Visit Herefordshire**
Increase the number of members per annum.
- **Edgar Street Grid**
To work with ESG on the incorporation of tourism within the project.
- **Disaster Plan**
Develop a contingency plan in conjunction with the Emergency Planning Team of Herefordshire Council to deal with disasters e.g flooding, Foot and Mouth etc.

1.6 Visit Herefordshire Background

- 2005 - Visit Herefordshire predecessors APH and Herefordshire Tourism began a consultation process to establish a Destination Management Partnership for Herefordshire.
- 2006 - Visit Herefordshire was launched and delivers visitor services within the county.
- 2007 - moving forward to establish Visit Herefordshire as a company limited by guarantee.

1.7 Major Milestones to date

Change in marketing & promotion

There has been a change in the method of marketing the county by targeting the sustainable green and active markets - this includes food and drink; food festival and raising the profile of the county as a green destination.

Improved Economic Data

Visit Herefordshire has recognized the need for robust information on the volume and value of tourism. The introduction of the STEAM economic model and research has ensured that Visit Herefordshire is now in a better position to accurately monitor the impact of tourism on the economy of the county.

Development of a membership body

In the first year of Visit Herefordshire the membership reached 340 businesses with a mixture of different types and levels of take up. The aim in year 2 is to achieve 450 members and to ultimately have all tourism operators as members of Visit Herefordshire.

2. The Strategic Context

2.1 The Vision

“Our strategic vision is to develop a high quality, thriving Herefordshire visitor economy, based on the premise that a good place to live and work is a good place to visit. Visit Herefordshire aims to work towards delivering a quality tourism product and experience that makes it easy for visitors to buy the experience and will in turn attract more visitors.

*Herefordshire will work towards the enhancement of the area, in terms of **quality, businesses, infrastructure and marketing** to establish the area as a **short-break destination** with the domestic market and with international tourists to the UK. It will be positioned as a **gateway to Wales and the West Midlands** featuring the rural landscape, the outdoor activities - based on the river, valleys and hills, the **food and drink** made in the county, the **arts and crafts** and the range of attractions and events within the private and public sector. At the same time the destination will also be developed as an **incentive tourism destination**, based on its facilities for small meetings, coupled with the exciting leisure opportunities.”*

2.2 Delivery Model

Visit Herefordshire cannot work in isolation to the organizations that contribute to the promotion and economic development of the county. The aim is to work collectively with a number of key organizations involved in the marketing of the county. Regionally and Nationally Visit Herefordshire works with Advantage West Midlands; Tourism West Midlands and Visit Britain to develop a range of publicly funded projects in Herefordshire.

2.3 West Midlands Regional Strategy for the Visitor Economy

The regional Visitor Economy Strategy was launched in April 2004 with this vision for the West Midlands for 2010 and beyond:

“The West Midlands visitor economy will be recognised for its’ continuing growth, and for the excellence of a number of sophisticated, world-class urban and authentic rural destinations for business and leisure visitors, which showcase the region’s creativity and its’ heritage, celebrate its’ diversity and set new standards for quality and sustainability.”

In order to achieve this vision Visit Herefordshire will work in partnership with Tourism West Midlands to deliver the following strategic aims:

1. Add value to the West Midlands visitor economy by attracting more day, overnight and business visitors and more private sector investment.
2. Enhance the West Midlands for residents and visitors by creating an ideal place to live and visit; high standards of quality; local and regional pride; sustainable development and jobs/economic benefits.
3. Support local businesses and cultural life by enhancing and promoting a multicultural experience in the region.
4. Co-ordinating with Visit Britain marketing.
5. Conducting destination level marketing and branding
6. Managing tourist Information Centres and the Visitor Services Function
7. Providing business support to the tourism sector.

2.4 Visit Herefordshire's Mission

“Through genuine partnership working, to lead Herefordshire in fulfilling its’ tourism potential both as a destination of quality in its own right, in ways which bring clear, lasting and increasing benefits to the resident communities and businesses of the region, and a body that will support the unique rural and environmental character of the area.”

The Objectives

1. To establish Herefordshire as an Active and Sustainable Tourism Destination.
2. To undertake specific tourism marketing and product development activities, which help deliver the strategy.
3. To work with all businesses in the region (not only businesses that have a direct link to tourism) to make Herefordshire a better place to live and work.
4. To increase the share of overnight stays in the county from 7% to 15%.
5. To influence major decision makers, e.g. Advantage West Midlands and Visit Britain, on national trends and to work reciprocally across different areas.
6. Provide strong leadership for the tourism industry, ensuring recognition and awareness of the sector as a key component of the County’s economy.
7. Work on behalf of the sector to secure the development and maintenance of public infrastructure, which provides the basis for a flourishing tourism economy.

3. Industry Performance.

3.1 National Performance.

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the UK accounting for 3.5% of the UK economy and worth an estimated £85 billion in 2005. (UKTS statistics 2006).

3.2 Regional Performance.

In the West Midlands there is a significant economic sector. In 2004 there were 102 million visits to the West Midlands Region. These visits generated £4.4 billion in spend supporting 103,000 jobs.

3.3 Sub Regional Performance.

Herefordshire currently has 4.8 million visitors per annum (2005) with a value in excess of £291 million. It is estimated that during the next five years that there will be significant investment from the private sector in developing infrastructure for the tourism product both within the city and outlying market towns. The value of tourism has increased by £18 million since 2002 representing a 7% increase.

3.4 Measuring Performance.

Trends for volume, value and employment will be monitored through the STEAM model. This work will be informed and enhanced through local surveys and improved occupancy surveys. Disaggregated UKTS and IPS values, and Government employment figures will provide more detailed information on volume, value and market analysis. There will also be an accommodation occupancy survey undertaken with the tourism operators.

- Targets for VH supported marketing projects will be leverage based, e.g. Campaigns generating an agreed return on investment (up to 25:1) and partner matching contributions to VH activity.
- Tracking/conversion studies will be undertaken in respect of marketing projects in partnership with Tourism West Midlands and others.
- Attitudinal surveys will assess customer, trade and community awareness and attitudes.
- Stakeholder Satisfaction surveys.
- Customer Satisfaction and spend per head.
- Work with accommodation and attraction operators to gather visitor statistics to support the visitor surveys. A financial incentive has been offered to members of Visit Herefordshire who are prepared to report on statistics e.g. discount on the membership. There are

80 businesses signed up for this to date (22 attractions, 5 caravan and camping, 28 self catering and 25 serviced).

3.4 Key Performance Indicators.

		TARGET
1. Business Plan Outputs	Aggregate performance in achieving the output target values defined in RTP annual business plans	Achieve the goals set out within the plan to increase the number of visitors to Herefordshire to 5.1 million by 2010 and generate an income of £313 million.
2. Leverage	Aggregate value of partner contributions via sponsorship and membership.	Achieve a membership level of 500 members by 2009 and 600 members by 2010.
3. Inclusive Trade Involvement	Ability to engage with inclusive constituency of trade interests	Annual Tourism Forum, 4 newsletters a year and 5 area open meetings.
4. Business Plan Priorities	Ability to focus on the effective delivery of the key funded activities identified in annual business plans;	Achieve all the actions within the Business plan
5. Funding Agreement	Ability to adhere to the undertakings and targets as contained in the annual Funding Agreement;	Achieve the level of funding from the Local Authority that is currently received and identify funding from other outside bodies in line with the Business plan.
6. Organisational Efficiency	Ability to operate effective internal governance arrangements - integrity, probity, efficiency;	Ensure that the Board members engage with their relevant sectors to share information about the work of the Board.
7. Regional Strategy	Ability to maintain a relevant and up-to-date regional strategic framework through review and monitoring;	Links with the Regional Tourism Marketing and Branding and engagement through regular contact with TWM.

4. Action Plan 2007 - 2010

Project	£	Description	Targets 2007/08	Targets 2008 - 2010
Area Regeneration	2007/08			
Tourism Planning	1000	Link with planning; work with Street Clearing and litter collection	To improve communications and influence decision making at all levels.	
		Public Transport links		
		Town Councils		To ensure all Town Councils are members and involved in decision making.
		Tourist Associations		To ensure all Tourist Associations are members and involved in decision making.
		Parks & countryside (Rights of Way, Open Spaces)		
Business Development	120,100			
	2,500	Walking Festival	60 walks attracting 1400 walkers with over 50% from outside the county.	Raise funding via sponsorship.

	55,000	Flavours of Herefordshire Awards and Festival	Encompass 100 businesses within the Flavours Awards and 120 businesses (90% from Herefordshire) within the Food Festival	Encourage all businesses to participate.
	50,000	Activity Tourism - University of the Great Outdoors	Build brand awareness of the product working with 50 operators. This brand growth to include a launch at an Outdoor show and developing a large scale event in 2008.	Continue to develop the brand in the National and International markets.
	2,500	Green Tourism	Promote the National scheme and highlight participants within specific marketing campaigns.	Encourage all accommodation businesses to participate.
	2,000	Photography	Add new images both digital and moving video for the library.	
	1,500	Caravan and Camping	Develop a campaign for the caravan and camping sector including stand space and the Boat and Caravan show.	Identify new markets for the product.
	1,500	Cider Route	Publish a leaflet and web site for the cider route	Work on cross border partnerships to develop the product.

	1,000	Disability Information	Develop a data base of accommodation and facilities suitable for disabled visitors leading up to the 2010 Blind World Football Championships in Herefordshire.	
Skills Development	4,000			
Training		Delivery of courses identified through the Training needs audit including Food Hygiene, Fire Risk, Welcome Host etc.	Membership benefit to VH members.	
		Training needs assessment	Develop a training plan	Implement the plans across the sectors
Marketing	130,900			
Domestic	23,620	Advertising	Develop an advertising plan to include a number of national and regional publications.	
		Direct Marketing	Utilise the 50,000 names and addresses on the current database to encourage repeat visits throughout the year.	
		Web Marketing	Optimise web site - identify new partners for reciprocal links.	

		Text marketing	Implement campaign via SMS and specific advertising campaigns.	
		Brochure fulfilment - postage.	Deal with all postal, telephone and e mail enquiries within 2 days.	
Literature Production	40,110	Visitor guide production	Publish an annual visitor guide and generate £50k in advertising income	Identify new ways of marketing the county
	22,470	Discover guide production	Publish an annual guide for attractions generating £22k of advertising.	
	2,800	Bedroom Browser	Annual publication with minimum of 50 businesses.	
	2,400	Newsletter	Quarterly publication	
Web marketing	17,500	Web site content management, redesign and update.	Increase number of hits and monitor Increase reciprocal links with member sites. Achieve 40,000 hits	
	19,000	Web site management	Full time position to manage site.	
Travel Trade & Conference	2,000	Advertising and Fact file for Tour Operators and undertake a marketing campaign to attract day coach bourne visitors to Herefordshire.	Publish a guide and CD for tour operators to generate enquiries.	
		Develop a Fact file of facilities for Conferences	Link conference facilities with the tour operators file and CD.	

Overseas Marketing	1000	British Heritage Tours - US Market	Participation on a pr and marketing campaign to travel agents in the US	Work in partnership with AWM on the overseas campaigns.
Membership	3,000	Develop membership packages	Membership package for June 2007. Achieve 500 members by March 2009.	
		Identify Corporate mailings	Identify sectors and packages for corporate membership/sponsorship.	
Press and PR	5,000	Develop a good link with press locally and Nationally	Targeted press release each month to the press	
		Press visits from within UK and overseas.	Host at least one visit per month.	
Research	6,000			
		Bed stock Survey	Complete bed stock survey by August 2007	
		Visitor Survey	Distribute 10,000 surveys to businesses within the county and publish bi-annual reports.	
		Visitor guide and Discover guide questionnaires	Include questionnaire within the guide to analyse the customer satisfaction with the guides.	
		Visitor Economy	STEAM model to measure the economic impact of tourism on the economy.	

		Occupancy Study	Work with a maximum of 70 businesses to collect data monthly on bed occupancy levels to inform the STEAM model.	
		Conversion Analysis	Sample conversion of all marketing activity undertaken during the year.	

5 Income and Expenditure 2007-2010

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Projected Income	£	£	£
Herefordshire Council	106,000	106,000	106,000
Membership	15,000	18,000	20,000
Income from Sales	68,000	70,000	74,000
Sponsorship	2,000	6,000	8,000
External Grants	79,000	70,000	70,000
Total	270,000	270,000	278,000
Projected Expenditure			
Area Regeneration	1,000	1,000	1,000
Business Development	120,100	106,000	106,000
Skills Development	4,000	4,000	4,000
Marketing	130,900	145,000	148,000
Membership	3,000	2,500	2,000
Press & PR	5,000	5,500	7,000
Research	6,000	6,000	10,000
Total	270,000	270,000	278,000
Tic's	350,000	350,000	350,000
Staff	96,000	98,400	100,860
Total additional cost	446,000	448,400	450,860

6. Communication Plan

6.1 Internal Communication

The standard method of internal communication of information between directors, including the transmission of documents, papers, agendas, etc. will be electronic. Hard copies will only be sent, by exception, where the partner is not able to receive email or where the item is not available in electronic form. In addition Visit Herefordshire will keep open “one to one” channels of communication with each partner including at least one face to face meeting during the year. It is assumed that LA Board members will be reporting back to the Authority as a matter of course. A quarterly newsletter will be distributed to the membership to update on progress and any issues facing the tourism industry both within the destination, and regionally and nationally.

6.2 Newsletter

Quarterly newsletter to members of Visit Herefordshire outlining the latest activities and opportunities to get involved in training and marketing, together with regular contact via an e mail newsletter and through the members area on the web site.

6.3 External Communication

The following **formal** communication channels with external stakeholders are operating currently:

Tourism West Midlands

Through the regional representative on the TWM working group.

Herefordshire Rural Hub

To ensure links with the Agricultural Community through the NFU, DEFRA, etc.

Full use will be made of directors’ personal networks with individuals taking on recognized liaison roles.

6.4 Stakeholders

A wider circle of stakeholders within and outside the region will also need communication with the Partnership:

- Tourism Associations and Tourism Groups in the County.
- All tourism and visitor related businesses in the Region
- Business organizations e.g. Chambers of Trade, Quality at Heart, Business Link etc..
- Elected members of local and UK Government and European Parliament
- West Midlands Transport Group and leading public transport operators eg Arriva, Great Western

- Suppliers to the industry
- Higher and Further Education
- Other tourism bodies e.g. neighbouring Authorities.
- Departments of the Local Authority e.g Transport, Environment, Planning etc

7 Management & Administration

7.1 Business Structure

Visit Herefordshire has 4 full time equivalent staff, 2 part time and 2 contracted staff, all staff salaries and expenses are covered by Herefordshire Council with staff working on behalf of Visit Herefordshire. The link officer between the Board and the Council is the Cultural Services manager.

Cultural Services Manager

Principal Tourism Officer

Tourism Officer Ft	Visitor Services & promotions Officer Ft	Membership Officer Pt	Research Officer Pt	Web Officer (contract)	Food Officer (contract).
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7.2 Board Structure

The Board has 15 members, including two Herefordshire Council appointed members and one observer (TWM Board member). The Board members all represent individual sectors within the industry with the seven private sector members representing industry sectors i.e. serviced large, serviced small, self catering, caravan and camping, attractions, activities and events and food and drink. The balance of the 5 public sector representatives include farming; community sector; National Trust; English Heritage and Chamber of Commerce.

Board meetings take place on a monthly basis. The key objective of the Board is to provide the strategic direction and focus for Visit Herefordshire.

8 Products and Services

Visit Herefordshire is responsible for a number of innovative products and services and this activity is core to the success of Visit Herefordshire.

8.1 Marketing Toolbox

Visit Herefordshire will develop a number of tools that will assist other organisations in their marketing activities. These include:

- Image library
- Opportunities for joint marketing.
- Sponsorship opportunities.

8.2 Research

Visit Herefordshire undertakes a number of research projects on an annual basis these include:

- Economic impact assessment.
- Campaign evaluation.
- Segmentation.
- Bed occupancy.

8.3 Media

Visit Herefordshire is committed to developing a link with the national and international press. This includes:

- Planning tailored media itineraries.
- Assistance with the development of articles for tv and radio programmes.
- Providing facts on the area.
- Supply images.

8.4 Visitor Services.

The role of visitor services is to ensure that visitors have access to information on the area and its products. The information centres are located in the city and the market towns and provide the following services:

- Accommodation booking service.
- Tickets for events.
- National Express tickets.
- Tourist Information including maps and guides.

8.5 Web site.

The web site www.visitherefordshire.co.uk provides invaluable information about what to see and do when visiting the area. Accommodation and short breaks together with tickets for events e.g Walking Festival and Food Festival can be booked on line.

8.6 Training

Developing a range of training opportunities for the tourism businesses in the county including customer care, food hygiene, risk assessment and others identified within a training needs assessment.

8.7 Events

Organise major events for the county including an annual Walking Festival and Food Festival together with integral links with the other major and small festivals in the county. These include H Art week, Contemporary Craft Fair and the Photography Festival.