

April 2013

Harborough District
BLUEPRINT FOR TOURISM
2013-2018

**Leicester Shire Promotions
District Partnerships Development**

**Harborough District
BLUEPRINT FOR TOURISM 2013 - 2018**

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HEADLINES

Together we will clearly and firmly establish the Harborough and Lutterworth area - together with its distinctive rural tourism product - within the broader context of the Leicestershire tourism 'destination', attracting staying leisure and business visitors from across the UK and beyond

We will aim to deliver:

- 1** Distinctive tourism story for the Harborough and Lutterworth area, a part of Leicestershire's destination story
- 10%** Growth in economic activity over five years through greater visitor spend
- 12%** Growth in visitor numbers over five years
- 75%** Sector inclusion in the district pages of goleicestershire.com
- 80%** Of tourism businesses proactively using online marketing
- 85%** Visitor satisfaction

Profile

This Blueprint will be delivered by a partnership of like-minded people and organisations with a shared ambition to improve the business of tourism in our area.

Building on the considerable success achieved since the first Blueprint was agreed in 2004, the characteristics for success describe an active and engaged partnership between public, private and voluntary sectors that is:

- Directed by a steering group of local public, private and voluntary sector representatives, which meets 2-monthly
- Influenced by an area-wide annual Tourism Forum that is open to all in tourism
- Facilitated by Leicester Shire Promotions (LPL)
- Guided by a five-year Tourism Marketing Action Plan or 'Blueprint for Action'
- Relevant to attractions, accommodation providers, key businesses, town centre management, night time economy and heritage providers
- Focused on wealth creation through the growth of high value, low impact tourism activity
- Sensitive to the potential environmental and other costs associated with volume driven tourism

The Business of Tourism in the Harborough District

We believe that the business of tourism in the Harborough & Lutterworth area comprises:

591 square kilometres (228 sq miles) of attractive English countryside embracing one of England's finest, most picturesque market towns with a strong independent retail offer, and over 90 rural villages ranging in style from classic farming communities to scattered hamlets of mellow brown stone.

Around 61 accommodation providers offering between them over 1,595 bed spaces, as well as over 150 pubs, restaurants and bars, tea rooms, coffee houses and farm shops, and a wide range of supporting facilities and services.

Over 20 specified visitor attractions offering the most authentic English heritage with castles, historic buildings and museums, plus a wide selection of leisure possibilities including rural attractions, local markets, garden centres, equestrian activities, 14 village trails/walks, cycle routes, corporate opportunities and an intricate network of over 24 miles of fabulous canals boasting many unique features and waterscape attractions, all set against the country's finest rural backcloth.

Significant transport links with an intercity station on the Midland Mainline with regular services to London, with links to the continent via the Channel Tunnel being available from the same London station. Junction 20 of the M1 provides easy access to Lutterworth, being

situated near the junction and a short journey to the rest of the area. A potential audience of some 10 million people live within a two-hour drive.

A programme of events ranging from carnivals and canal festivals to farmers markets and guided walks, supported by a full programme of local and rural activities such as scarecrow contests.

A tourism workforce of over 1,663 jobs (full time equivalents), employed in over 500 businesses

In excess of 2.5 million 'visitors' every year, amounting to well over 2.86 million 'visits' (including locals), spending £100 million between them, and approximately 90% visiting for the day.

New Tourism

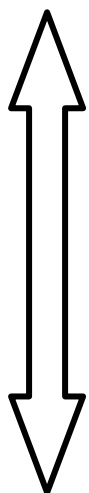
Tourism is ever changing.

The concept of tourism now embraces all manner of leisure pursuits, from undertaking activities to visiting attractions, attending events and staying overnight. It includes the economic activity of local residents and their visiting friends and relations, as well as the traditional visitor from outside of the area. There is currently a significant trend towards attracting domestic tourism and towards attracting greater 'consumption' of tourism by ever more focused consumer segments. Underlying all of this is a continuing growth in leisure and in the wider aspects of improving one's quality of life. Whilst economic conditions remain challenging, there are sizeable sectors of the ageing adult population with high disposable incomes and time to enjoy increased leisure activity, commonly known as the 'grey pound.'

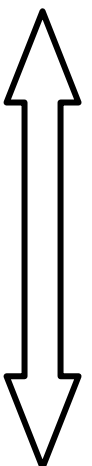
Recent economic, social and environmental issues have all had a significant impact on the nature of tourism in England. As taking leisure breaks in the UK continues to be fashionable as a real alternative to overseas travel, the 'staycation' phenomenon is here to stay.

The national and regional tourism sector is changing dramatically in response to structural and financial policies at national and local levels. We need to create a more focused and streamlined mechanism for enabling the tourism industry to flourish.

Clarifying the Tiers of Tourism . . .



National Tourism Level	Country	VisitEngland // Enjoy England campaigns
Regional Tourism Level	Region	No regional tier since 1 April 2011
Sub-regional Tourism Level	Destination	Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). For Leicestershire, we have an LEP based on the City and County geographical areas. The LEP's agreed delivery vehicle for tourism is Leicester Shire Promotions // Leicester Shire Tourism Strategy 2011-2016



Local Tourism Level	Area	Harborough // Blueprint for Tourism (one of up to 6 tourism area partnerships within Leicestershire)
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Policy Framework

There is already an emerging economic vision for the sub-region through the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategy for Economic Growth. This proposes economic priorities on which to focus over the next 10 years. It is supported by a Multi Area Agreement signed with Government by Leicester and Leicestershire which provides a broad delivery framework for the proposals. These plans provide a common purpose, clearer sense of priorities and a framework within which the Tourism Strategy will fit.

This policy framework recognises that the sub-region enjoys a central location within the UK with excellent transport links. The county has a high quality natural environment, an exciting cosmopolitan major city, vibrant market towns and attractive villages which provide for a high quality of life and a draw for tourism and recreation. Areas within the sub-region have their own local distinctiveness and offer opportunities on which to build and create a unique identity for the area.

This broad plan for economic growth is delivered through a partnership which brings together key delivery organisations with representatives of business and the voluntary and community sectors. It recognises that there needs to be clear arrangements to manage the respective roles, relationships and contributions which each of the partners can make to delivering the priorities. This approach applies equally in delivering the priorities outlined in this Blueprint.

The Leicestershire Tourism Strategy 2011-2016

The Tourism Strategy identifies four strategic priorities that express the local tourism industry's ambitions in a practical way. These cover:

- Expanding the quality of Leicestershire as a destination
- The positioning of Leicestershire to distinguish it from its competitors
- Improving customer service through training and improved skills
- Ensuring up-to-date intelligence and data

Finally it outlines a delivery framework and range of organisations and businesses which need to be involved and committed in delivering its priorities.

Strategic Themes

There are four key themes that address our ambitions in a practical way. They also establish the rationale in linking with the wider ambitions and longer-term direction being set by the Leicestershire Strategy for Economic Growth through to 2020. The themes are:

1. Destination: offering people a wide range of quality attractions, accommodation and experiences with growing local distinctiveness and a warm and genuine welcome

2. Positioning: developing and promoting the county's assets while differentiating between the business and leisure markets in a way which offers a unique and quality product
3. People: ensuring visitors enjoy a world class experience and have their expectations surpassed, promoting tourism as a 'first choice' career by investing in skills and training and creating a workforce capable of delivering high standards of customer service
4. Intelligence: providing a robust evidence base enabling tourism businesses and the public sector to make informed and more coordinated investment decisions

Leicester Shire Promotions has been actively involved in all the tourism changes at regional and sub-regional level. They have also been working at the local level across the public and private sectors to establish appropriate as well as effective area partnerships.

Harborough Distinctiveness

We have agreed there are benefits arising from more cohesively and single-mindedly presenting the Harborough & Lutterworth tourism product. We refer to this as creating the Harborough & Lutterworth '*distinctiveness*'. It requires that we focus on just a few aspects (which can be real or created), around which we can position all the other facets of tourism and deliver the cross-selling opportunities. It is the central story that all partners can translate to fit their own needs. Different aspects may have stronger appeal to different target audiences, but the range of 'stories' being told must be as small as possible.

In identifying this single-minded focus we flag up the possible 'iconic' attractors of Foxton Locks and the 24 miles of waterways, the stylish appeal of Market Harborough, the diversity of accommodation options and attractions, the links to Wycliffe and Whittle in Lutterworth, the 230 square miles of pure English countryside, and also consider the potential of Rockingham and Bruntingthorpe in attracting a range of differing activity-based visitors. These can all be placed within a context of quiet by-waters and the offer of a hidden corner of Middle England - located in the centre of the country.

Creating a sense of place that is greater than the sum of these many parts is the obvious and aspirational, yet challenging, goal. This challenge is heightened by the need for the sense of place to motivate people to visit.

The Blueprint recommends the single-minded positioning of 'Quintessential England' for the District. This is the picture we must seek to paint in the minds of everyone who is exposed to any messages about the District's tourism offer.

Painting a picture of 'Quintessential England'

Mature trees. Rolling fields. Meandering routes. Picture-book villages. Rural activity. Bustling streets. Stylish independent shopping. Tasteful menus. Fresh produce. Quiet by-waters. Intriguing waterways. And the time to savour these experiences.

A place so rich in rural charm, so packed with sites where history has been made, so overflowing with intriguing waterscapes, and so stylish in the way life passes unassumingly by - it's a way of life to be envied. It's definitely English. It's wholeheartedly rural. And its market towns are a delight to explore.

You'd naturally expect such a place to be over-run with visitors. But that's reassuringly not the case in Harborough and Lutterworth.

Retreat to Rural England . . . and rediscover yourself in some fabulous friendly places.

Supporting and reinforcing the 'Quintessential England' message will be a limited number of destination specific messages focused on:

Market Harborough - *England's Finest Rural Market Town*

Foxton Locks - *A perfect day out for all the family*

Lutterworth - *Home of Wycliffe and Whittle*

It must be appreciated that these concepts are not marketing slogans, brands or logos. These phrases may never appear in this form. They are the PROPOSITIONS behind the marketing and communications activity that will be developed and implemented. The core proposition of 'Quintessential England' and related messages will be used as the platform for building area distinctiveness, and as the basis of the wider sales appeal. In this way Harborough & Lutterworth will build a more distinctive profile and will succeed through offering a genuinely unique tourism story within the Leicestershire destination, supported solidly by the strength of the links with associated tourism themes.

Blueprint for Action

This Blueprint is our operational plan for tourism.

As a part of Harborough Promotions, it is also *your* plan.

It is shared by all of us who have any type of role in tourism within the Harborough area. The main aims of the Blueprint are to bring about more cohesion, consistency and focus.

The Blueprint identifies and prioritises the actions that will make most difference to the business of tourism.

It is intended to be a practical and action-orientated Blueprint for the whole tourism sector and as such embraces our collective ambitions. As well as stakeholder partners, the Blueprint also identifies our tourism neighbours and the basis of working with them.

It should also be regarded as the catalyst for identifying, developing and funding new tourism initiatives.

The Blueprint takes each of the three 'propositions' and describes action to develop each one in line with the strategic themes of the Leicester Shire Tourism Strategy.

As well as the tangible measures described earlier, the consequences of the successful implementation of this Blueprint and its action plans will be:

- better integration and coordination of events, activities and other tourism offers
- greater ownership of the tourism economy by all its stakeholders
- mutual support, cooperation and understanding
- a better understanding of our visitors and what they want

Harborough District BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION 2013 - 2018

'Quintessential England'

Proposition 1: Market Harborough - England's Finest Rural Market Town

		WHO
Destination	<p>Continue to develop and improve the appearance, cleanliness and attractiveness of the town centre.</p> <p>Use planning and other powers to preserve and develop further the 'England's Finest Rural Market Town' proposition.</p> <p>Explore placing the Old Grammar School at the heart of building a 'Harborough brand' and as an icon for the town.</p> <p>Review and take action as necessary on access, parking, signage, toilets and visitor orientation.</p> <p>Review and take action as necessary on facilities for groups and visiting coaches.</p> <p>Support and encourage an active town partnership to develop and deliver a regular programme of events and activity to increase footfall and improve marketability.</p> <p>Identify and tackle 'grot spots' including vacant units.</p>	
Positioning	<p>Position graded accommodation alongside other relevant properties in the district in targeted value-driven short break packages.</p> <p>Increase online bookable product range.</p> <p>Improve representation on 'goleicestershire.com'.</p> <p>Identify opportunities to approach and attract relevant conferences and other events to the town as part of the Event Bidding activity.</p>	
People	<p>Consider 'welcome' activity to promote highest standards of customer service and care.</p> <p>Look to reward excellence in customer service.</p> <p>Review and improve visitor literature and online resources to support the proposition.</p> <p>Improve representation on 'goleicestershire.com'.</p> <p>Encourage active participation in training and development opportunities designed to improve the customer experience.</p> <p>Listen to and act upon feedback.</p>	

Intelligence	<p>Measure footfall in order to evaluate progress.</p> <p>Use local college students to undertake quarterly visitor surveys to understand views and opinions and product weaknesses/new opportunities.</p> <p>Work with other partners to fund STEAM volume and value research every three years.</p>	
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Proposition 2: Foxton Locks - a perfect day out for all the family

		WHO
Destination	<p>Continue to invest in and maintain a quality environment for all users.</p> <p>Work with key stakeholders to develop a medium to long term ambition for the site, evaluating all options from a full restoration of the inclined plane, through to virtual restoration using modern technologies.</p> <p>Work to secure funding for major projects and schemes.</p> <p>Develop a year round programme of festivals and activities.</p> <p>Increase opportunities to grow the economic impact of visitors to the site, explore craft, artisan and rural industries through both temporary and permanent activities.</p>	
Positioning	<p>Position graded accommodation alongside other relevant properties in the district in targeted value-driven short break packages.</p>	
People	<p>Consider 'welcome' activity to promote highest standards of customer service and care.</p> <p>Look to reward excellence in customer service.</p> <p>Review and improve visitor literature and online resources to support the proposition.</p> <p>Encourage active participation in training and development opportunities designed to improve the customer experience.</p> <p>Expand and use the 'friends of' scheme to develop a regular band of 'Foxton Welcomers' to improve visitor experience and orientation and to encourage longer dwell time.</p> <p>Listen to and act upon feedback.</p>	
Intelligence	<p>Work with local colleges to develop, undertake and analyse a seasonal visitor satisfaction survey.</p>	

Proposition 3: Lutterworth - Home of Wycliffe and Whittle

		WHO
Destination	<p>Develop and improve the appearance, cleanliness and attractiveness of the town centre.</p> <p>Review and take action as necessary on access, parking, signage, toilets and visitor orientation.</p> <p>Review and take action as necessary on facilities for groups and visiting coaches.</p> <p>Improve access to and exposure of locations, attractions and artefacts supporting the 'Wycliffe' and 'Whittle' connections.</p> <p>Support and encourage an active town partnership to develop and deliver a regular programme of events and activity to increase footfall and improve marketability.</p> <p>Identify and tackle 'grot spots' including vacant units.</p>	
Positioning	<p>Position graded accommodation alongside other relevant properties in the district in targeted value-driven short break packages.</p> <p>Improve representation on 'goleicestershire.com'.</p> <p>Increase online bookable product range.</p>	
People	<p>Consider 'welcome to Lutterworth' activity to promote highest standards of customer service and care.</p> <p>Look to reward excellence in customer service.</p> <p>Review and improve visitor literature and online resources to support the proposition.</p> <p>Encourage active participation in training and development opportunities designed to improve the customer experience.</p> <p>Listen to and act upon feedback.</p>	
Intelligence	<p>Measure footfall in order to evaluate progress.</p> <p>Use local college students to undertake quarterly visitor surveys to understand views and opinions and product weaknesses/new opportunities.</p> <p>Work with other partners to fund STEAM volume and value research every three years.</p>	

Destination wide issues:

		WHO
Major Events	Explore the medium to long term opportunities presented around investment in and development of the Bruntingthorpe site	
Accommodation	Audit existing accommodation stock and identify gaps both in geographic spread and accommodation types. Encourage development of new accommodation offers from hotels to camping and motor homes. Encourage diversification into tourism activity.	
Investment Readiness	Work with the LEP to seek funding support for the development of 'investment portfolios' to give confidence to private sector partners to invest and support their access to finance.	