

Cabinet

9 July 2024

Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr R Biggs, Property & Assets, Economic Growth & Levelling Up

Local Councillor(s):

All

Executive Director:

Jan Britton, Executive Lead for Place

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

“Local Visitor Economy Partnership” (LVEP) is a recent designation created by VisitEngland, the official government-funded tourist board for England.

An LVEPs mission is to support and grow the visitor economy through robust destination management, strong stakeholder relationships and clear planning.

Being part of the LVEP programme will give Dorset access to VisitEngland support including expertise, data, knowledge, and experience sharing, access to future grant funding and opportunities to influence national visitor economy strategy.

This report seeks approval for the establishment of a Dorset LVEP, which would put Dorset on an even footing with 33 other English areas with recently established LVEPs.

Since LVEPs are a very recent creation, the exact costs and benefits that leading a Dorset LVEP may bring are as yet unclear, however the risks are small and considered proportionate.

Recommendation:

1. To support Dorset Council applying to VisitEngland for the establishment of a Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)
2. To endorse Dorset Council assuming the role of Accountable Body for the proposed LVEP
3. To delegate authority to the Executive Lead for Place, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member and Section 151 Officer, to agree:
 - (i) the terms of any LVEP agreement between DC and VisitEngland,
 - (ii) the terms of any partnership agreement between Dorset LVEP members and
 - (iii) Dorset LVEP governance arrangements.

Reason for Recommendation:

- (i) Following the government-commissioned Du Bois review of Destination Management Organisations, direct government support through VisitEngland will be channelled exclusively through LVEPs. If Dorset wishes to benefit from this support, it needs to be part of an LVEP.
- (ii) Guidance from VisitEngland suggests an LVEP covering the Dorset Council and BCP Council areas is a suitable functional area of sufficient size for an LVEP. The Dorset Council area alone is not of sufficient scale,

1. Report

- 1.1 The 2021 government-commissioned De Bois review concluded Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) suffered from fragmentation and distorted priorities. It proposed a new structure for DMOs, including the creation of approximately 40 LVEPs that should be well integrated with local government but not solely local authority based. They should focus on marketing, promotion and information with day-to-day support and account management for tourism businesses. It also envisaged small Destination Organisations (DOs): These would be unaccredited, unable to receive central government funding, and unable to receive support from VisitEngland and participate in their initiatives. If Dorset Council's DMO, Visit Dorset, is to continue to have direct links with VisitEngland it needs to be part of an LVEP.
- 1.2 VisitEngland has indicated that it would support the creation of an LVEP covering the BCP and Dorset Council areas, as the official core criteria

guidance states a proposed LVEP must “cover an important geography (such as county or city region) which avoids overlap with other LVEPs and can demonstrate the importance of its visitor economy” and VE has stated informally that an LVEP covering Dorset Council alone would not be of sufficient scale or a logical fit with the local visitor economy.

- 1.3 It is anticipated that a Dorset LVEP is essentially an updating and refocusing of existing organisations concerned with Dorset’s visitor economy to better align with the national context: The Dorset LVEP would build on relationships between local authorities, town councils, tourism and hospitality groups, Business Improvement Districts and chambers of trade.
- 1.4 The process of establishing an LVEP begins with an application to VisitEngland. VisitEngland then drafts a collaboration agreement which stipulates conditions, usually including a commitment to agree a Growth Action Plan and support package within a specific timeframe. It is up to the individual LVEPs to arrange agreements between partners and governance arrangements, and delegated authority is sought for these steps.
- 1.5 While the final shape of a Dorset LVEP is to be determined, discussions have been held with the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Accommodation Business Improvement District (ABID) about sharing the leadership of key areas of a proposed growth plan: Sustainability, Accessibility and Inclusivity, Marketing and PR, Travel Trade, Seasonality, Productivity and Skills. Dorset Tourism Association has offered to act as the advisory group for the Dorset LVEP helping to engage key stakeholders in support of delivery for the LVEP growth plan. BCP Council is also a proposed partner and is supportive of the concept but is not in a position to allocate financial resource to the proposal. Support from all area local authorities, but not necessarily funding, is needed for an LVEP.
- 1.6 There needs to be an Accountable Body (AB) with a robust set up and a council within the LVEP area is the most common AB for LVEPs. The BCP ABID is a new creation and would not meet VisitEngland requirements for an Accountable Body at present.

2. **Financial Implications**

- 2.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report: LVEPs are new, and the exact scale of resources needed – and benefits – are not yet known. The Council resources needed for the establishment and initial operation of the LVEP will come from current Officer resource

within the Growth and Economic Regeneration Service, principally from the Visit Dorset team, alongside funding from the Dorset Shared Prosperity Fund.

- 2.2 However, once the Dorset LVEP is established it may become apparent that additional resource is required. VisitEngland has advised that it expects at least 1FTE be committed to LVEP work between the partners. It is realistic to expect half of this to come from DC, either through reallocation of existing Officer tasks or allocation of additional resource.
- 2.3 Forming an LVEP is not a legal partnership, but it is officially recognised by VisitEngland as the vehicle for tourism delivery. It is a matter for local partners to shape the governance, structure, and most appropriate funding model for each LVEP, which reflects the needs of all stakeholders.
- 2.4 No government funding is offered at this stage, but current policy is that government funding for the visitor economy will be offered exclusively through LVEPs. The benefits and risks of acting as Accountable Body will depend on the future agreements and grants available.

4. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

- 4.1 The visitor economy has a significant impact on Carbon emissions and the environment. The Southwest Tourism Partnership, of which Visit Dorset is a key stakeholder, has structured its strategy around productivity, accessibility, and sustainability. The LVEPs more strategic approach and good practice sharing both have the potential to have a positive effect on reducing and mitigating the negative environmental effects of tourism. This should allow greater alignment with Dorset Council's stated ambitions in the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology strategy. For Climate Emergency Wheel see Appendix 1.

5 Well-being and Health Implications

- 5.1 There are no significant health or wellbeing implications.

6 Other Implications

None

7 Risk Assessment

- 7.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW
Residual Risk: LOW

8 Equalities Impact Assessment

- 8.1 There are no Equalities implications: The LVEP is essentially an updated version of current arrangements between Dorset visitor economy stakeholders and VisitEngland.

9 Appendices

Climate implications report

10 Background Papers

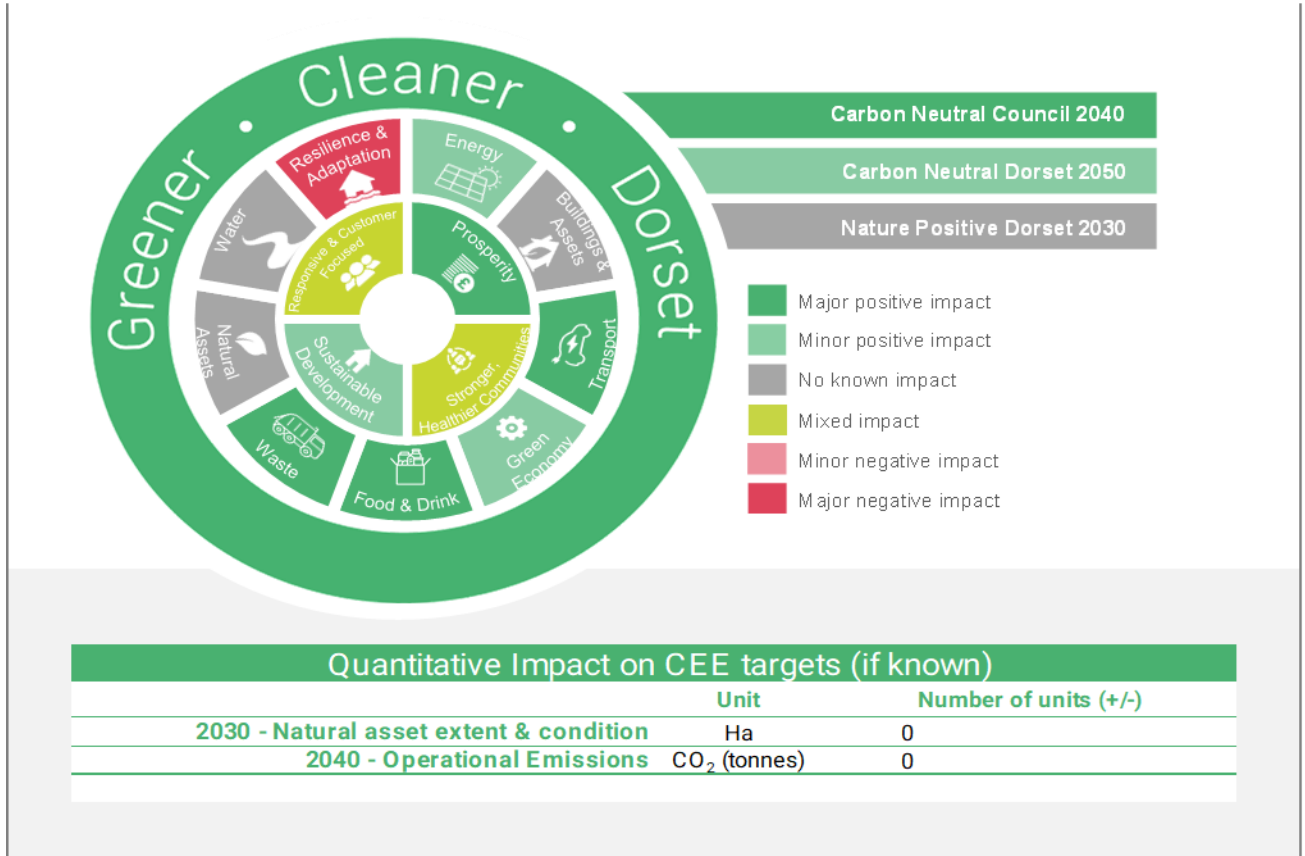
Business Case

VisitEngland Local Visitor Economy Partnership Programme brochure

11 Report Sign Off

- 11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendix 1: Climate Wheel



ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	minor positive impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	major positive impact
Green Economy	minor positive impact
Food & Drink	major positive impact
Waste	major positive impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major negative impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Prosperity	strongly supports it

Stronger healthier communities	neutral
Sustainable Development & Housing	minor positive impact
Responsive & Customer Focused	neutral

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
Provide advice and/or signpost business to sources of information on how they can reduce their bills and environmental impact by fitting renewable energy	
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	