

Foreword

1.0 Background

Bolsover District is located in north east Derbyshire, an area of rich diverse and interesting heritage, and three iconic attractions - Bolsover Castle, Hardwick Hall and Creswell Crags. Bolsover Castle, managed by English Heritage, dominates the skyline from the M1 motorway, was built in 1612 by Sir Charles Cavendish who was one of William the Conquerors knights. Hardwick Hall, managed by the National Trust, pays homage to Elizabeth Cavendish (1758-1824) or “Bess of Hardwick” as she is affectionately known. Creswell Crags, managed by Creswell Heritage Trust, offers visitors the chance to walk in the footsteps of early humans and woolly mammoths through our dramatic gorge and marvel at the Ice Age rock art.

Our iconic attractions provide the foundations of the District’s tourism economy. The District has real ambition to encourage collaboration with our partners to grow the sector further to improve the diversity of our offer through our: attractions, accommodation, events, town centres, walking and cycling, heritage and culture, our accessibility and our food and drink offer; all vital components to strengthen our destination offer.

1.1 Location

Geographically the district has excellent accessibility and connectivity. Motorway Junctions 28, 29, 29A and 30 of the M1 motorway are within the District with the central location meaning there are 3.1 million people within an hour’s drive time. There are four railway stations on the Robin Hood Line within the District and five international airports within an hour’s drive. The development of good quality cycle routes also offers the opportunity to promote a more sustained travel option. The district is in close proximity to the Peak District National Park to the east and Sherwood Forest to the west so is well positioned to complement these iconic visitor destinations.

2.0 Strategic context

The strategy considers the following key strategic documents and prioritise to ensure our strategy aligns with the national, regional and district prioritise for the growth of the tourism sector.

2.1 VisitBritain and VisitEngland

The 2020 to 2025 Tourism Strategy for England's key priorities are:

- Grow the value of Tourism
- Drive the dispersal of tourism value across Britain
- Support productivity optimisation
- Be the expert body on growing tourism
- Deliver a clear strategy for England

The Tourism Recovery Plan sets out the role that the UK government will play in assisting and accelerating the tourism sector's recovery from COVID-19. It also sets out a framework for how the government will work with the sector to build back better.

Looking ahead, the UK government wants to see a growing, dynamic, sustainable and world-leading tourism sector reaching its full potential and driving growth across all parts of the UK.

The UK Government wants to:

- Recover domestic overnight trip volume and spend to 2019 levels by the end of 2022, and inbound visitor numbers and spend by the end of 2023 – both at least a year faster than independent forecasts predict.
- Ensure that the sector's recovery benefits every nation and region, with visitors staying longer, growing accommodation occupancy rates in the off-season and high levels of investment in tourism products and transport infrastructure.
- Build back better with a more innovative and resilient industry, maximising the potential for technology and data to enhance the visitor experience and employing more UK nationals in year-round quality jobs.
- Ensure the tourism sector contributes to the enhancement and conservation of the country's cultural, natural and historic heritage, minimises damage to the environment and is inclusive and accessible to all.
- Return the UK swiftly to its pre-pandemic position as a leading European destination for hosting business events.
- The Bolsover District area Tourism Strategy will align with this overarching strategy to ensure the area drives tourism in the same direction as the rest of the country.

2.2 Visit Peak District and Derbyshire Tourism Strategy

Visit Peak District and Derbyshire are the tourism marketing body for the area and whilst they are currently reviewing their tourism strategy their Destination Plan is still relevant. Their vision:

“Using Partnerships to Grow Our Tourism Offer “To champion the Peak District and Derbyshire as a great place to visit, live, work and play. ‘A world class destination’ offering rich experiences in a cherished landscape, having an unrivalled reputation for heritage, culture, the outdoors, walking and cycling, with a year-round programme of events and festivals.”

To meet this vision, the document sets out six strategic aims:

1. Maximise the impact of the visitor economy in key destinations and hubs
2. Capital investment to improve the visitor offer
3. Create a leading cultural, festivals and events destination
4. Maximise the potential for growth through tactical marketing campaigns
5. Develop a successful thriving tourism industry
6. Develop a consistent brand for the Peak District

2.3 Bolsover District Council Plan – Which seeks to “work with partners to grow the visitor economy, the number of tourists and the amount of tourism spending in the District.

2.4 Bolsover District Council Business Growth Strategy – Identifies the tourism prioritise for the District to:

- Increase overnight stays
- Increase visitor spend
- Develop a walking and cycling proposition for visitors
- Develop visitor online communications including a dedicated website

3.0 Review of the Bolsover District Tourism Strategy 2019- 2023

The strategy was written pre Covid-19 when tourism was showing growth within the district. Since the pandemic recovery across the country has been slow due to the impact on tourism but also other external factors with the current economic climate and the impact on the cost of living due to the conflict in Ukraine. These factors are likely to have an ongoing initial impact on tourism recovery and resilience but will not inhibit growth of the visitor economy in the district.

The priorities within the Tourism Strategy 2019-2023 were to:

- Improve the overall visitor economy offer
- Improve the accommodation offer
- Maximise our marketing potential
- Improve visitor economy business engagement and
- Continue to improve the amount and quality of our intelligence and evidence in respect of the visitor economy.

3.1 Improve the overall visitor economy offer

This priority was focussed on the continued development of the walking and cycling routes that cross the District, including working with Derbyshire County Council to develop the Visit Cycle Sleep Repeat overnight stay project. The improvement to the walking and cycling offer has been developed with further opportunities for the Bolsover area. It is clear that this work is still relevant to provide a strong outdoor proposition which links to wellbeing, health and active travel agendas.

3.2 Improve the accommodation offer

Since the publication of the strategy the appetite for new accommodation provision has been monitored through the number of planning applications received through the district for new accommodation. These businesses have been supported through marketing, business workshops, funding and other training opportunities. An increase in hotel and non-serviced accommodation has improved the accommodation offer to support the tourism sector and encourage additional overnight stays and spend although additional accommodation is needed to support the growth of the sector.

A feasibility study into the potential for additional camping/glamping provision for the Visit, Cycle, Sleep and Repeat project has been completed highlighting that the District as a whole would benefit from the provision of additional visitor accommodation.

3.3 Maximise our marketing potential

Some work has been carried out to begin the process of defining the districts tourism offer. Following consultation with businesses it is clear that the District needs to develop a strong collaborative marketing campaign that will utilise the

reach of partner sites such as Visit Peak District and Derbyshire, but also through the development of a district wide website and social media platforms.

3.4 Improve Visitor Economy Business Engagement

The introduction of a Customer Relationship tool for all businesses across the district is now being managed through the Economic Development Team. This platform will provide a secure database of business information that can be used to communicate with businesses.

The success of the Visit Bolsover group has resulted in a strong business-led proposition for the town. Opportunities going forward to collaborate with our town centre and tourism businesses will provide collaboration and business networking opportunities. The district wide Culture and Tourism Partnership will continue to deliver actions set out by the group to grow and improve the tourism and cultural offer of the district.

Our engagement with tourism and related stakeholders through dedicated workshops and a business survey has supported with the review of both the previous Tourism Strategy and help with defining our future tourism priorities within a new strategy. In order to deliver the new strategy we very much rely and depend upon collaboration and buy in from our partners and we look forward to supporting these partners to unleash the tourism growth potential of the area.

4.0 Visitor Economy Research and Performance

4.1 Value and Volume of the District

The following diagram illustrates the performance of the district pre-pandemic and are based upon the tourist season of 2018. Data for 2020 is unavailable and 2021 would be unreliable due to the number of lockdowns so the next available data will be 2022 which will be made available in September 2023 as this is a retrospective study.

VisitEngland research showed that in 2021 England’s tourism research showed an average of 80% recovery of pre-pandemic figures. Given this and the impact of the pandemic, the EU exit and the current cost of living crisis, which is hitting businesses hard, the 2018 figures remain the most logical back drop for this strategy as it shows the picture of “where we were”.

Figure 1 – Volume and Value of Bolsover District in 2018



Key areas to note:

- Tourism is worth almost £140m per annum to the Bolsover area economy
- A high proportion (80%) of visitors are here as a day visitor
- The “Visiting friends and relatives” market is strong in the district
- The district is attracting the short stay market (average 2.3 days)
- Staying visitors generate 4.3x more income than day visitors
- At the time the trend data is showing growth

Visitor accommodation research shows:

- Lower than average self-catering offer (7% of the District’s total - compared to 19.5% ¹across Derbyshire.)

¹ 2017 figures

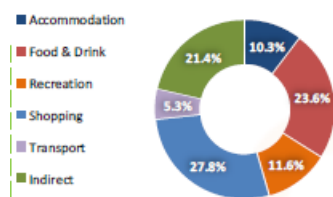
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- The Visitor Accommodation sector consists of 16 serviced premises² and 21 self-catering establishments. There are 1135³ beds between them, 66% of which are within the 3 big hotels (Holiday Inn, Premier Inn and Ibis).
- Airbnb accommodation is becoming increasingly popular. In January 2020 there were 35 houses or rooms within Bolsover District available to be booked.
- There are 5 camping, touring caravans and caravans for hire in the District. (8% of the District's total compared to 43%⁴ across Derbyshire).

4.2 Tourism Employment and skills

Employment within Bolsover (2018) is lower than the average tourism employment in Derbyshire with FTEs supported locally per 1,000 population is 21.3 in Bolsover and 28.8 in Derbyshire. This chart also shows that the core employment in tourism – Accommodation and Recreation are low in comparison to the secondary tourism services such as Food and Drink and Shopping.

The strategy going forward is to build a resilient tourism sector that then encourages investment in the area in accommodation and recreation. This will be achieved by encouraging inward investment in tourism and by developing collaborative marketing campaigns that will then build awareness of the area as a serious tourism destination.



4.3 Measuring Success

In order to track progress against targets and to constantly review activities, it is essential that performance towards achieving the priority outcomes within this strategy are monitored over the coming years. This will be achieved by:

- Subscribing to Economic Impact Research every two years. This will provide trend analysis for volume and value of tourism to the district. It will also show spend breakdown across the visitor economy.
- Monitoring the performance of the Bolsover Tourism Strategy Action Plan through the Culture and Tourism Partnership on a quarterly basis.
- Building greater awareness of our destination through data sources to monitor the tourism and town centre businesses to enable resilience and unlock our growth potential.

² Hotels, Guesthouses, Inns and Bed and Breakfasts.

³ This figure includes the 54 room extension at Hotel Van Dyke.

⁴ 2017 figures

4.4 Drivers for Future growth

4.4.1 Heritage Assets - Bolsover's key strengths are its three big heritage attractions and its numerous miles of walking and cycling routes that crisscross the district, many of which are off road and perfect for a family experience.

The three attractions of Bolsover Castle, Hardwick Hall and Creswell Crags attract almost half a million visitors each year, many of whom are attracted by the family focussed events that are held throughout the year. Collaboration between these regional attractors is important and a clear area of focus should be to create reasons for these visitors to explore the wider area thereby encouraging a longer overnight stay in the area.

4.4.2 Town Centre Growth and Events – If we are to increase the value and volume of visitors, we need to increase the viability and vitality of our town centres. Place making will capitalise on our local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that improve urban vitality and promote people's health, happiness, and well-being. Place Management bring a collective of businesses and individuals with a shared purpose together, forming a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges of their place, creating a shared vision bespoke to them. Opportunities through the High Street Taskforce and the Government's Levelling Up Agenda are opportunities to improve our destination offer to support the growth of the tourism sector. Events are a key driver to increasing footfall in the district and our town centres. Iconic events such as the Stainsby Festival, Medieval Jousting at Bolsover Castle, Food and Drink events, Christmas markets, Bolsover Lantern Parade and Antique Markets have all been successful in increasing the volume of visitors to the district; there is potential to better coordinate these events and promote these to a wider audience.

4.4.3 Digital Economy - The digital economy is growing and according to the Office of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) it is now the platform of choice for visitors whether they are researching, staying or sharing their experiences after their visit. It is imperative that Bolsover adopts a "digital first" ethos, for all tourism communications. A dedicated district wide is needed to showcase what the area has to offer that social media can be directed to. This will build awareness of the area and what it has to offer as well as encourage bookings and visits.

Embracing the digital economy goes beyond marketing and promotions and because of these businesses will need to be supported to make the most of the digital solutions that are now available to them.

4.4.4 Data Driven - Understanding our visitors through sharing data about the profile of visitors we attract is fundamental to planning and delivering our marketing activity. This understanding will dictate what we want to say to our visitors, when we communicate with them, and most importantly how best to communicate with them. This understanding will also provide tourism business with the ability to respond to internal and external influences and build resilience. Supporting businesses in the area to participate in the quarterly Visit Peak

District and Derbyshire Business Survey will contribute towards understanding our visitors, will generating data from mobile phone roaming to understand visitor movements and profiles.

4.4.5 Collaboration - Perhaps the most important driver for growth is the need for collaboration across the visitor economy. Collaboration is a great way to build specific campaigns with like-minded and complementary businesses, but collaboration builds a strong base of trust and referral across the tourism sector if it is embraced by the sector. Therefore, local area or town-based tourism networking groups will be set up to share best practice and to develop appropriate area-based projects.

This collaboration is also needed between with the District Council with its counter parts in neighbouring local authorities across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and with Visit Peak District and Derbyshire to maximise awareness and growth opportunities.

4.4.6 Sustainable and responsible tourism

The District needs to encourage and implement sustainable tourism practices so that the area can attract all parts of the community to the area. Priority in this area is to encourage all businesses within the visitor economy within Bolsover area to complete their Access Statement so that visitors with disabilities and other needs are able to understand where they can visit and stay. This will be achieved by working with Accessible UK and through training available via the UK Shared Prosperity funding.

Encourage social sustainability by engaging with local residents of tourism and events campaigns so that they get involved by attending events, encouraging their friends and relatives to join them and by adding to the social media buzz for the area.

Bolsover is a fantastic outdoor destination, but it is important that these assets are maintained and promoted sustainably so that visitors are free to roam with an understanding of how to make their time here sustainable by helping to protect the environment they are visiting.

Encouraging active travel and seeking opportunities through low carbon and public transport, such as the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) through Derbyshire County Council may offer opportunities to support the tourism sector.

5.0 Vision and Strategic Priorities

Our Vision is:

“To create a vibrant tourism sector by encouraging all tourism stakeholders to work collaboratively to improve business resilience and to grow the value of tourism to the economy of the Bolsover area”.

5.1 Strategic Priorities:

The Tourism Strategy identifies five priority areas:

- 1 Create a sense of place and growing Bolsover’s economy
- 2 Build business resilience through collaboration and skills
- 3 Develop the district as a family friendly destination
- 4 Create stronger events offer
- 5 Develop a strong marketing proposition for the district.

5.2 Delivering the strategy

This strategy identifies the strategic direction, nature and scale of the challenges involved in realising the overall strategic vision and achieving the objects for each strategic outcome.

A detailed Action Plan will be developed which sets out how each of these strategic outcomes will be achieved and whilst partners will be involved in delivering against each of these actions the Culture and Tourism Group will take responsibility for monitoring progress.

5.3.1 Strategic Priority Area 1 – Creating a sense of place and growing Bolsover’s economy

Bolsover area already boasts a strong day visitor proposition with three high performing attractions attracting nearly 500,000 visitor per year, but these visitors are being attracted by site specific marketing communications and not through a destination focussed website. Therefore, the opportunity is being missed to disperse visitors around the area, minimising opportunity for overnight stays and additional spend. By creating destination propositions the area will be able to maximise the number of staying visitors who spend nearly three times as much as a day visitor.

Bolsover District’s four town centres (Bolsover, Clowne, Shirebrook and South Normanton) play a crucial role in creating a sense of place. Visitors are attracted to an area for a number of reasons but once here, they will want to visit our towns and villages, so it is critical that our town centres are welcoming to visitors and have the vibrancy needed to attract and retain visitors and our local residents.

Priorities within this area are to:

- Develop a strong brand for the area so that businesses are able to use the brand in their own promotions as a way of creating a shared offer for the area which will help to create a strong sense of place.

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- Develop a destination website that will be consumer and business facing so that businesses have a one stop shop for everything related to tourism.
- Carry out a tourism audit of Bolsover's four main towns of Clowne, Bolsover, Shirebrook and South Normanton so that any gaps are identified, and strengths promoted.
- Use events and other activities to build awareness of the area and to lengthen the tourist season.
- Create a dynamic "sense of place" campaign – one that visitors and residents can engage with to drive new interest in the area.

5.3.2 Strategic Priority Area 2 – Build business resilience through collaboration and skills development

There is no doubt that since the beginning of the pandemic when businesses were asked to close, the economy has not recovered (Figures from VisitEngland showed that in 2021 recovery was on average 80%). It is also true to say that the tourism sector was completely decimated by the length of time it took for the country to be out of lockdown and because of this it will take longer to recover than many other sectors.

Anecdotal evidence and figures reported by VisitEngland are showing that tourism visitor numbers won't return to pre-pandemic levels until around 2025. Businesses need to collaborate and share data to build resilience.

It is therefore important that as part of the strategy a priority to help businesses collaborate and grow will be important. Collaboration is an excellent way for businesses to share the burden of costs and other expenses, but it also enables trust to be built within the sector.

Providing relevant tourism skills to businesses of all sizes will also be important if Bolsover area is to build resilience within the visitor economy and start to grow the economic value in the area.

Priorities within this area are to:

- Create four business networking groups around the four towns of Clowne, Bolsover, South Normanton and Shirebrook so that businesses can share best practice and start to collaborate and work with private sector partners to develop local area initiatives. Tourism businesses across the District will be encouraged to engage and town centre developments will seek to improve the sense of place.
- Develop a year-round business training calendar for businesses within the visitor economy that will help businesses grow their customer base and build resilience within the sector.

- To work with other tourism training providers to ensure businesses in the Bolsover area are aware and able to take advantage of a full range of business specific courses that are relevant to them.

5.3.3 Strategic Priority Area 3 – Develop the district as a family friendly destination

There are a number of factors that identify the area as an ideal location for family friendly short breaks and holidays. The most notable is that all three major attractions in the area confirm that the majority of their visitors are families, even though in the main they are heritage attractions. This is because of the impact their events have on their visitor numbers, but also the increase in the multi-generational visits that are now occurring – grandparents and the increase in disposable income for the “Millennials” is providing this new opportunity.

Millennials prefer to have an experiential visit and spend quality time with their children in a safe environment. The common thread for all three of these attractions is that they have plenty of outdoor space for families and this coupled with their lively events programme will provide the backdrop of this opportunity.

Moreover, and importantly the area boasts a number of smaller family friendly attractions such as farms where children can “have fun” whilst learning about farm-based animals.

For those families that like to get outdoors the area is ideal as Bolsover District has 34 miles of multi-user trails (compared to 65 miles in the Peak District) made up of largely former railway lines linking towns and villages along the way.

The district has a high level of Staying with Friends and Relatives (SFR) with visitors coming to the area staying with local residents in unpaid accommodation. Developing the family friendly destination may encourage these visitors to stay in visitor accommodation to extend their stay with friends or relatives.

Therefore positioning the district as an inward investment opportunity for family friendly attractions as well as identifying the right sites to attract accommodation providers is imperative to bring this opportunity forward. This work will then facilitate the opportunity to develop and attract support functions such as bike rentals, food and drink providers etc.

Priorities within this area are to:

- To collaborate with visitor attractions to map the opportunity for family friendly experiences and develop a campaign around this.
- Map the family friendly attractions, cafes, restaurants, accommodation etc.
- To work with partners to create a walking festival that showcases the number of routes available for families.

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- To develop the opportunities of the Visit, Sleep, Cycle Repeat project by working with partners including Derbyshire County Council.
- To attract, through inward investment, additional family friendly attractions, accommodation and supporting infrastructure such as food and drink, bike hire etc.

5.3.4 Strategic Priority Area 4 – Create a stronger events offer

The district hosts numerous iconic events, such as the Lantern Parade, Medieval Joust held in Bolsover, Hardwick Hall Food & Drink fair and Stainsby Festival to name but a few; as well as the well-dressings in our towns and villages. These events attract thousands of people to the District but many arrive for the event and then go home without visiting our towns or staying overnight.

Events are an important element in the visitor calendar as they can be programmed during the quieter months as a way of extending the visitor season. Importantly, events bring vitality and colour to the towns and villages they are held in and help create a sense of place and community pride with our residents. However, events being held across the district are not coordinated. Having a “Clash diary” for events in the District is important as it can ensure events are held on different days which has a number of positive impacts, from ensuring the district is seen as a vibrant area with lots going on to encouraging the same visitors to come back.

Priorities within this area are to:

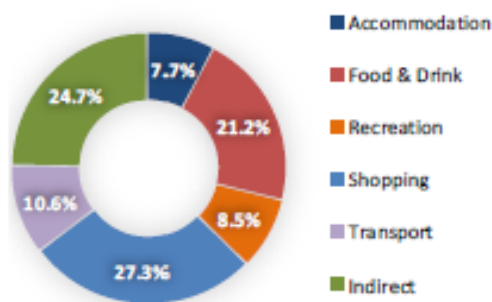
- Create an events “Clash Diary” for Bolsover district events which will enable effective marketing and encourage collaboration across the visitor economy.
- Develop an events section on a destination website so that event organisers are able to post their own events in one place and share the events information with key partners to support with the marketing and promotion of the events and the wider district offer.
- Encourage events such as the Lantern Parade to extend their offer across other parts of the district as a way of creating a festival appeal at specific times of the year.
- Programme new events that will bring in additional visitors to the district.
- Encourage events during the shoulder months to help mitigate issues of seasonality
- Create a collaborative marketing plan for events that partners can share and add value to the communications around each event.

5.3.5 Strategic Priority Area 5 – Develop a strong marketing proposition for the district

Industry feedback identifies that the district lacks a distinctive proposition. Current Internet search results for the area provides minimal information about the tourism offer and opportunity to book multiple experiences.

There are currently two websites that promote the area, the Visit Peak District website and the Visit Bolsover website, which currently promotes the town of Bolsover only. A destination wide website is needed to strengthen the local tourism offer if we are to deliver our priorities. Social media will also play an important part in developing strong campaigns that promote the key strengths of the district for both day visitors and staying visitors.

The chart below shows the current breakdown of visitor expenditure. It shows that by far the most is spent on essentials such as accommodation and food and drink; highlighting the need to promote the wider experiences within the district so that this can increase expenditure across the visitor economy.



Priorities within this area are to:

- A marketing plan will be created for both online and offline media, this will help to create the brand along with tone of message.
- Create separate campaigns in consultation with businesses. These will include, Wellness, Outdoor and Family Friendly, Events, Food and Drink and others identified through the local area tourism networking groups.