



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**



Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee


26 March 2024

Report of Councillor Ashley Baxter,
Leader of the Council and Cabinet
Member for Finance and Economic
Development

Discover South Kesteven website update

Report Author

Jade Newby, Tourism and Visitor Economy Officer

 jade.newby@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the Discover South Kesteven website and future options regarding a Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy for the District.

Recommendations

It is recommended Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Considers any further additions or amendments to be reflected on the Discover South Kesteven website.**
- 2. Agrees to receive an update, at a future meeting, on the Destination Management Plan for Lincolnshire being prepared by Destination Lincolnshire.**
- 3. Agrees to the development of a Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy for South Kesteven, which will align with the new Corporate Plan and the emerging Destination Management Plan.**
- 4. Agrees to the procurement of a specialist consultant for the development of a Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy for South Kesteven, which will align with the new Corporate Plan and the emerging Destination Management Plan.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Enabling economic opportunities
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 Any costs associated with amendments to the Discover South Kesteven website and the development of a Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy will be met from the approved 2024/25 General Fund Revenue Budget.

Completed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Deputy Director (Finance & ICT) and Deputy S151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 This report is for noting only. There are no significant legal or governance implications arising from the report.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan (2024-2027) guides the work of the Council towards the vision to be 'a thriving district to live in, work and visit'. One of the missions is to enable and support a dynamic, resilient and growing local economy, which benefits all South Kesteven communities. The Council is therefore committed to promoting the district as an attractive place to visit, work, invest, study and do business.
- 2.2 The latest STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) evaluation model data was reported to the November 2023 meeting of the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). This confirmed South Kesteven had attracted more than three million visitors in 2022, an increase of almost a third on

the previous year, with an economic impact of £218 million and higher than pre-pandemic levels.

- 2.3 At the September 2023 meeting, the OSC: considered the content of the updated Discover South Kesteven website; agreed to its live publication; and to receiving a six-monthly update.
- 2.4 To support the visitor economy sector, the Council (through its Tourism and Visitor Economy Officer), collaborates with partners, stakeholders and businesses at a national, regional and local level to promote the many attractions within South Kesteven to the wider visitor market.
- 2.5 Discover South Kesteven is the tourism brand of South Kesteven District Council. As previously reported to Committee, the website www.discoversouthkesteven.com received an update last year which has been well-received.
- 2.6 The following data relates to website visits during January 2024:
 - a total of 236 users to the site, of which 232 new users.
 - average engagement time on the site was 1 minute and 13 seconds, which is strong as it shows people are staying on the site when they find it.
 - engagement sessions per user were 0.69 illustrating a good return and a low bounce rate, which means more than half the visitors to the site are staying on the page.
 - 94 of the sessions came from organic searches.
 - 82 were direct visits to the URL (uniform resource locator i.e. a web address).
 - 74 came from referral from another website.
 - 54 came through social media.
- 2.7 The blog posts are proving popular, with two new blogs added to the site each month. Discover South Kesteven has four social media accounts:
 - TikTok which has over 9,000 views on its most popular video.
 - Facebook which has 1,300 followers
 - Instagram which has 1,442 followers
 - X (formerly known as Twitter) has 1,115 followers. The brand is also supported at in-person events, such as business-to-business (B2B) networking events, trade shows and within publications.
- 2.8 Visit England (VE) is the national tourist board for England, responsible for marketing England to domestic visitors and established overseas markets and for improving England's tourism product.
- 2.9 Following the recent Government-commissioned independent review by Nick de Bois of the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) landscape in England, VE has begun to create a portfolio of nationally supported, strategic and high-performing Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs). LVEPs will provide strong local leadership and governance in tourism destinations across the country.

- 2.10 A key partner in this approach is Destination Lincolnshire, who are the official DMO for the Lincolnshire. In February 2024, Destination Lincolnshire were awarded LVEP accreditation status. This is seen as a significant positive for the area and will help unlock growth opportunities in the regional visitor economy.
- 2.11 Destination Lincolnshire's mission is to support and grow the visitor economy through robust destination management, strong stakeholder relationships and clear planning. The new LVEPs will support this role through collaboration with partners locally to reflect each district's priorities, such as increasing overnight visitors in South Kesteven. Nationally they will focus on being an advocate for shared priorities and targets and helping realising funding into the county.
- 2.12 A critical outcome of the new LVEP will be to develop and publish a Destination Management Plan for Lincolnshire, for which South Kesteven District Council will be a key partner. Once completed, this regional strategy will offer the context required to begin the process of acquiring a consultant to help develop and write the Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy for South Kesteven. Further updates will be provided later in 2024.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 A future Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy will need to be considered as a live and dynamic document to take account of both the new Corporate Plan and any emerging policy and legislation.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 The Council could decide not to produce a Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy for South Kesteven. However, this may risk loss of focus on achieving the aims of the Council within the quickest practicable timescales and has therefore been discounted.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The recommendations are to enable the OSC to understand current changes in the management and organisation of Tourism both nationally and regionally; and to recommend changes; and to consider this impact locally in advance of the development of a Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy for South Kesteven.

6. Background papers

- 6.1 *Review of Hello SK app and draft Discover South Kesteven website* – Report to Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee, published on 5 September 2024 and available online at:
<https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s38879/Report.pdf>

- 6.2 *The de Bois Review: an independent review of Destination Management Organisations in England* – Published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport in August 2021 and available online at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/611bbff6d3bf7f63a7b29233/2585-C_The_de_Bois_Review_ACCESSIBLE_for_publication_.pdf