VisitEngland

**PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING
DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLANS**

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Principles for developing Destination Management Plans

This guide is for organisations and individuals who want to work together with others to gain more benefit for their area from the visitors it receives.

It is about agreeing on current and future priorities and activity in a systematic way and setting this out in a Destination Management Plan (DMP).

The guide is relevant for:

- Established (or emerging) Destination Management Organisations[1] or looser partnerships.
- Separate organisations with relevant responsibilities and interests, such as local authorities, private sector tourism associations, heritage bodies and community groups.
- Individuals, such as staff or committee members, interested or engaged in the process of destination management at different levels.

The guide should be of value to organisations and individuals with a **wide range of experience**, whether as a reminder and checklist or a source of new ideas and knowledge. It is **relevant to destinations which already** have a DMP or equivalent document and who want to **strengthen or renew it**, as well as to those who are at the **beginning of planning together**.

The guide is not seen as a prescriptive manual but rather focuses on the key principles behind the development of DMPs. It identifies the key stages and elements that should be in place – the people to involve, the evidence required, and the process of shaping and determining action. It recognises that all destinations are different and will need to interpret and adapt the processes outlined here to their own particular circumstances.

The guide is in five sections:

1 Agreeing to plan together [Why do this and who to involve?]

2 Gathering the evidence [How well are we doing now?]

3 Setting the direction [Where do we want to get to?]

4 Identifying the action [What do we need to do to get there?]

5 Measuring progress and keeping it going [Have we got there yet?]

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[1] Destination management organisations vary in form, function, governance and size but essentially take a lead role in the management and development of tourism in a destination. These may be a single organisation, such as a local authority; an informal partnership or a legal entity, such as a community interest company, that includes representation from both the private and public sectors.

VisitEngland encourages and supports the development of Destination Management Plans throughout England as an essential tool in the delivery of a successful visitor economy. National Government policy encourages destination organisations to become focused and efficient bodies that are increasingly led by the private sector. Destination Management Plans are one mechanism to achieve this.

VisitEngland's corporate website **www.visitengland.org/destinations** provides an on-line resource for destination managers including supporting information on various aspects of destination planning and management.

1   AGREEING TO PLAN TOGETHER

Good plans, in themselves, need planning.

At the outset it is important to spend some time thinking, discussing and agreeing about the idea of developing a Destination Management Plan and what will be needed to carry it out. Some key questions include: What is this all about, why should we do it, is it appropriate for this area, who should be involved and what do we need to put into it?

1.1   What is a Destination Management Plan?

- **Destination Management** is a process of leading, influencing and coordinating the management of all the aspects of a destination that contribute to a visitor's experience, taking account of the needs of visitors, local residents, businesses and the environment.

- A **Destination Management Plan (DMP)** is a shared statement of intent to manage a destination over a stated period of time, articulating the roles of the different stakeholders and identifying clear actions that they will take and the apportionment of resources.

In these definitions, 'manage' and 'management' are taken in their widest sense. Crucially, destination management includes the **planning, development and marketing** of a destination as well as how it is managed physically, financially, operationally and in other ways.

Various terms have been used for the process of planning and managing tourism or visitors in a destination. It is important not be get confused by different jargon which can sometimes mean the same thing, but also to be aware of where some terms which sound quite similar actually have slightly or significantly different meanings. Some clarification is provided in Table 1.

Broadly, a Destination Management Plan is equivalent to a Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism in a destination. There should be no difference in how such documents are drawn up and what they address, whatever they may be called.

Destination Management Plans should cover all the fundamental aspects of destination management, including:

- Tourism performance and impacts
- Working structures and communication
- Overall appeal and appearance, access, infrastructure and visitor services
- Destination image, branding and promotion (marketing)
- Product mix – development needs and opportunities.

Typically, a Destination Management Plan would:

- Set a strategic direction for the destination over period of up to 5 years.
- Contain prioritised actions within an annual rolling programme, identifying stakeholders responsible for their delivery.

TABLE 1 Glossary of related terms

In considering destination management and what it entails, it is helpful to have a common understanding of some related terminology.

Tourism: The activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes[2]. The term '**tourist**' may be taken as those persons defined above. There is some inconsistency in whether 'staying' is taken as implying overnight stays or includes day visitors.

Visitor Economy: All aspects of the economy related directly or indirectly through the supply chain to the provision of services to visitors and benefitting from their spending. The term **'visitor'** has the same meaning as tourist above but unequivocally includes people visiting just for a day or less as well as overnight.

Place Shaping: The creative use of powers and influence to promote the general wellbeing of a community and its citizens[3]. It includes components such as understanding local needs, making the local economy more successful, being sensitive to the environment, security and policing, maintaining cohesiveness and shaping destiny.

Place Making: A multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. This can include aspects such as information, interpretation, events, community and business engagement etc. as well as physical appearance and facilities.

Place Marketing: The application of marketing and branding strategies and tactics to destinations in order to attract investment and income. This latter may arise from attracting new business, tourists, residential expansion and other development and activity.

Destination Marketing: An aspect of place marketing, commonly referring to the promotion of a destination to tourists.

Sustainable Tourism: Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities[4].This is an essential component of effective destination management, integral to success and not an additional facet.

Visitor Management: The physical process of influencing, directing and accommodating the flow of visitors to and within a destination.

Please note the Tourism Intelligence Unit of the ONS have published further information on tourism definitions, these can be accessed here.

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[2] UNWTO definition

[3]Lyons Inquiry into Local Government, 2007

[4] UNWTO short definition

1.2   Why bother to have a Destination Management Plan?

Two sets of reasons for developing a DMP should be considered in deciding whether to embark on the process and in seeking to convince others.

The importance of having a plan:

- Addressing fragmentation: The visitor economy involves a whole set of experiences delivered by many organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It is essential that they work together and in doing so achieve a better use and management of resources.
- Recognising, strengthening and coordinating different functions: Supporting the visitor economy is not just about promotion but must cover a whole range of activities aimed at strengthening the quality of the visitor experience and the performance of businesses.
- Managing and monitoring impacts: Tourism has a range of impacts on society and the environment and is inherently an activity that benefits from management.
- Prioritising and allocating resources: A key benefit of having a plan is to identify what the real needs and priorities are so that financial and human resources can be used most effectively.
- Winning more support and resources: Well researched, argued and presented action plans can strengthen the case for funding and help to identify projects for support.

The importance of the visitor economy and its wider linkages:

A second set of reasons concerns the overall importance of the visitor economy to most destinations and its implications for the quality of life of residents and for the wider local economy:

- By strengthening the visitor economy, services enjoyed by local people, such as restaurants, attractions, arts and entertainment will benefit.
- Looked at the other way, actions directly aimed at making somewhere a better place to live and work will also make it a more appealing place to visit.
- Strengthening and promoting the image and awareness of a destination and the services available can be highly important in attracting new business and investment across all sectors.
- Tourism has demonstrated its ability to stimulate growth in jobs and is a relatively accessible sector in which to start a new business
- The health of tourism related businesses can be very important to other parts of the local economy who supply them, such as food producers, maintenance services etc.

A DMP can play a very important role in identifying how the full range of local authority policies and services (in planning, transport, environmental management, leisure and recreation, culture and the arts) can support the visitor economy on the one hand and be supported by it on the other. By showing these links it prevents tourism being treated in a silo, rather than as a core contributor to economic development.

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1.3   Is this appropriate for all destinations?

A destination is an area of visitor appeal which includes attractions, accommodation and support services. It may be defined by physical, thematic or administrative boundaries and it embraces a set of distinctive images and qualities that give it a brand identity recognisable by potential visitors. Destinations should be places with which tourism stakeholders have a natural affinity and within which it is practicable for them to work together[5].

A key consideration of whether an area can and should be managed as a destination in its own right is whether it has a clear and distinctive identity by which it can be promoted and described to visitors and recognised by them.

However, this should not be the only consideration. As implied by the above definition, destinations can only work effectively if they are meaningful to the tourism businesses, visitors and other players, including the local authorities and communities, who need to work together to manage them.

Destination Management Plans and destination nesting

Destinations can vary considerably in size. England is a destination, so too is a village visited by people from outside.   A large destination, such as county with its own brand image, can contain many separate destinations within it, such as resorts, market towns or defined rural areas.

Separate DMPs could be prepared at all levels, where destinations were felt to need and merit one.   However, it is important that they should relate strongly to each other across the levels. Alternatively, a single DMP could have elements within it that address smaller nested destinations.

A key principle is that the level of the plan does not need to dictate the level of the action. While the questions asked should be the same at each level, concerning visitor needs, product quality, information, amenities, awareness etc., the DMP may point to actions being undertaken at different levels. For example, work on local amenities, events, community engagement (place making) may often be best carried out at a local level while some aspects of brand awareness and marketing may be best undertaken at a higher level, while reflecting local strengths and needs.

The principles behind a DMP and the stages to follow are the same for all destinations. However, the amount of work in preparing a plan and the procedures used may vary according to size of the destination, available resources etc.

1.4   Who should be involved?

If there is an existing Destination Management Organisation (or equivalent group of stakeholders) it should be responsible for leading the development of the DMP. Essentially the DMO provides the leadership and the DMP provides the context of its work – i.e. it should be seen as their roadmap and that of other stakeholders in the destination.

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[5] Adapted from Action for More Sustainable European Tourism, European Commission

> **What is a DMO?** Destination management organisations vary in form, function, governance and size but essentially take a lead role in the management and development of tourism in a destination. These may be a single organisation, such as a local authority; an informal partnership or a legal entity, such as a community interest company, that includes representation from both the private and public sectors.

Either as part of a DMO or separately, the preparation of a Destination Management Plan must involve:

- Private sector – representative bodies and/or key tourism enterprises.
- Local authority – key departments/functions: economic development; tourism/recreation; arts/culture/heritage; planning; transport; environment/countryside. Some destinations will involve more than one authority and all should be engaged.
- Civil society/ voluntary interests – community, civic, environmental.
- Wider economic partners that are influenced by or have influence on tourism.
- Cultural and heritage partners

A balance of the above interests should be reflected at three levels of engagement in the preparation of a DMP:

- DMP Steering Group. A small overseeing body that meets regularly.
- Key stakeholder participants. Involved in all meetings and processes that shape and agree on the DMP.
- Wider consultees. Organisations and individuals surveyed and consulted.

It is very important that the private sector should play a leadership role in the development of the DMP and not simply be consulted.

1.5 What does it take to produce a Destination Management Plan?

The work may be undertaken by:

- Officers/ staff of the DMO, a local authority or other organisation, as agreed by the Steering Group.
- A set of different stakeholders (bodies or individuals), coordinated through the Steering Group, working individually on allocated tasks and together in group work.
- Appointed consultants (optional), working together with the Steering Group to a brief drawn up by them. They may be contracted to do all or just part of the work or to provide independent advice and expertise.

The above options are not mutually exclusive – destinations could adopt just one or a combination of them.

Whatever the approach, it is important to have:

- a single lead body and person to oversee the process;
- tasks and responsibilities clearly identified and agreed;
- timelines specified and adhered to; and
- an identified reporting process.

The stages of Destination Management Plan development

Stage	Time required (months)	Key stakeholder engagement	Wider consultation	Outputs
Getting started		Initial meeting	Announcement	
Gathering evidence	2 – 6	Assistance and participation	Extensive consultation	Summary results
Establishing strategy/direction	1 – 2	Stakeholder workshop	Information as required	Strategic directions
Developing action plan	1 – 4	Agreement on tasks and responsibilities	Information as required	Draft DMP
	(1 – 2)	Approval of DMP	(Consultation on draft)	Final DMP launched
Monitoring and reporting		Quarterly reporting	Regular communication	Annual report

The time required for each stage is shown as a range and will depend on the size and complexity of the area and size of the team involved. The minimum requirement is likely to be around 4 months and the maximum around one year.

In some destinations it may be appropriate to move directly to the final DMP once the work has been completed, while others may need to undertake a stage of wider consultation on the final draft.

A DMP is a dynamic concept, with a long term vision, and should always be seen as live. It requires regular monitoring and reporting on action, with revision and renewal on a cyclical basis.

1.6   Getting started

Before the DMP development begins, work to prepare the ground should include:

- Getting key stakeholders together to agree on a DMP, its purpose and coverage and the process that will be followed.
- Setting up the programme of work – identifying a leader, establishing a Steering Group, agreeing tasks and potentially appointing consultants.
- Possibly holding an initial kick-off event or workshop.
- Announcing the exercise and handling relations with the media.

This period should involve some early consideration of the context and background to the DMP, including:

- The local and national policy context, including relationship to the Strategic Framework for Tourism in England 2010 - 2020(see Section 3.1 below).
- Past and current work on the visitor economy in the area.
- The current stakeholder structures and engagement processes.
- Key issues and priorities already apparent that the DMP will need to address.

Consulting VisitEngland could assist with the national perspectives and other sources of information in this process

It can be helpful to express this context and background, purpose and proposed stages of work in a short paper that can be used as a reference point during the exercise. This would also form a key part of the briefing of all those involved in undertaking work on the DMP, including any consultants appointed.

2   GATHERING THE EVIDENCE

Destination Management Plans should be evidence based rather than being built on assumptions or on limited knowledge and opinion.

The gathering of evidence can be time consuming and needs to be efficiently organised. Some key points to bear in mind include:

- Being aware of all the available evidence that may have already been collected before starting to gather more. This may come from:
    - o   Evidence already collected by individual public and private stakeholders.
    - o   Previous tourism/visitor economy plans, strategies and research
    - o   Plans and research for other topics and sectors – e.g. economic development, sport/recreation, transport.
- Using data that may be available nationally or for a wider area, having considered its relevance and applicability – i.e. how representative is it likely to be of the destination? Can it be broken down to the destination level?
- Putting together data that may be available for smaller areas within the destination.

The sections below cover seven areas of investigation on both the supply and demand side of the visitor economy in a destination.

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2.1   Knowing the product

DMPs should be based on a sound knowledge and assessment of all the features of the destination that relate to the visitor economy.

Elements to include in product audits

Tourism facilities	Accommodation, catering, attractions, activities, events, retail relevant to tourists, other facilities.
Heritage and culture	Historical connections, traditions, specific heritage sites, arts, crafts, cuisine, other aspects of living culture.
Landscape and countryside	General qualities, appeal and distinctiveness of the landscape. Specific access sites, routes and trails, wildlife and other features. This may include the seaside and beach management.
Built environment	Cityscape, towns, villages – appearance and upkeep. Specific features, distinctive architecture, parks and gardens, public realm.
Access and transport	Road, rail, boat (river, sea), air links to and within the destination. Transport providers (public and private).
Visitor services	Marketing media, information provision and outlets. Signposting, car-parking availability and charging, toilets, other services. Accessibility of tourism products and services.

In addition to what is currently available in the destination, it is very important to be aware of:

- **New development projects** – being constructed, planned or proposed.
- **Neighbouring product** – major facilities and attractions, key strengths, new developments and initiatives, outside but close to the destination.

In recording and assessing all this product it is necessary to consider:

- **Quantity** – how much is there, of what type?
- **Quality** – is it good or poor? This should include reference to national or local quality assessment schemes (e.g. accommodation or attraction grading) as well as any other available evidence, including local stakeholder and visitor opinion
- **Distinctiveness** – to what extent is it special to this destination?
- **Change and threats** – does it appear to be growing/improving or declining/ deteriorating and are there any clear risks to its presence and quality?

A completely comprehensive record of everything may not be necessary, although destinations should maintain a database of the main product.

Sources of information:

- Maintained lists of tourism products, including visitor information. Tourism departments and/or TICs and bodies responsible for arts, events, countryside etc. may have databases.
- Official records for licensing, planning and other purposes. These may contain information on existing and new developments.
- Collective and individual websites. Increasingly the internet will hold information on much of the product, in some form. Searches can be helpful in gap filling.
- Consultation with local authority departments and other bodies. This should cover services such as transport, signing, information etc. as well as issues relating to quality and the public realm.
- Commercial guidebooks. These can be very revealing of how others assess the destination objectively and comparatively and help in summing up the less tangible product strengths.
- Site visits and observation. A very important part of the process, helping to reveal issues as well as provide product knowledge. Observation may be the only way to gaining information on the level of facilities that are not on any lists. Systematic checking can be undertaken of amenities and facilities and assessment can be undertaken from the point of view of a visitor (mystery shopper type approaches).
- Information from visitors and businesses. This can reveal additional product but is also very important in getting feedback on quality and other issues (see 2.3, 2.4).

2.2   *Understanding current performance*

This is about gaining a clear picture of the volume and value of tourism in the destination and the performance of tourism businesses. It should include the most up to date annual figures, including any trend information where possible.   Four different types of source can be considered for this purpose.

- **National data applied to the area of the destination**.
  - The Great Britain Tourism Survey, covering domestic overnight visitors, can supply data at a local authority level in the form of three-year rolling averages. The robustness of the data depends on the relative size of the area.
  - The International Passenger Survey outputs data on overseas visitors for certain towns in England.
  - Information from the Great Britain Day Visits Survey will be available at a county level and for certain other leading destinations.

- **Local economic impact**
  Commercial models on the performance and impact of tourism are used by many destinations. These are based either on building up estimates of the size of the visitor economy from supply-side data or on apportioning national performance data to the destination level. Reliability is affected by available data. A process of estimating tourism's contribution to the economy (Gross Value Added) at a sub-regional level has been undertaken by the Office for National Statistics and the British Hospitality Association has estimated the specific contribution of the hospitality sector to local authority areas.

- **Annual information on visitor volumes at key sites**.
  Most destinations have a few locations where volumes of visitors are regularly counted. These may be main attractions, car parks, TIC etc. Provided no changes have be made to affect results (opening times, charges) they can provide helpful trend data. The national Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions can be helpful in providing comparable data of this kind.

- **Surveys of businesses and visitors in the destination**
  Businesses can provide information on current and recent performance (see 2.4). Some destinations conduct their own regular business occupancy and performance surveys, and these can be tied into the national England Occupancy Survey through aligning the data collecting process. Local visitor surveys (see 2.3) can only provide trend data if regularly repeated using identical methodology.

For smaller destinations, national data is less available and reliable. However, it is important that they consider the data that is available for their county or region as this can provide a useful guide. National trend data is also broadly relevant to all destinations, showing changes in market performance.

In addition to measures of general performance of the visitor economy, other information on the performance of specific visitor services and initiatives should also be recoded. This would include, for example, tracking response and return on investment of marketing activity.

2.3   *Listening to visitors*

Destination Management Plans should, if possible, be market based and fully informed by a knowledge of visitors and their experiences.

Information required about visitors includes:

- Visitor profiles – origin, lifestage, party make up etc.
- Information on visit – previous visits, awareness of brand, specific purpose of visit, transport, information used, length of stay, spend
- Activities – places visited, use of services, activities undertaken
- Reaction to the destination and its components – general and specific satisfaction/ dissatisfaction; recommendations.

Sources of information:

- Visitor surveys. Can be expensive but need to be conducted objectively in order to be reliable. Ideally requires face to face questionnaire survey in carefully selected locations to provide a representative mix of visitors.
- Business survey (see below) – Information on make up, activities and interests of guests can be obtained from businesses.
- More informal feedback. Talking to people who serve visitors can be very revealing – e.g. Information centre staff, specific businesses etc.
- Customer generated content on destination websites and social networking pages, including feedback and comment options. Also review of other sites containing visitor assessments, such as TripAdvisor.

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More in-depth market research can be very helpful in informing the DMP. Focus groups, constructed to cover both previous and potential visitors and different market segments, can provide highly valuable insights into destination awareness, reactions, expectations and factors affecting decision making. More generally, use of omnibus surveys and brand tracking can provide a measure of awareness of the destination.

2.4   Understanding businesses

Destination Management Plans should give high priority to the performance and impact of tourism businesses and so they should be based on a clear understanding of their needs.

Businesses should be encouraged to recognise that destination management is about the delivery of quality experiences for visitors and addressing the needs of enterprise and the local area in a range of ways, rather than simply promotion. Fundamentally, it has to include the "product" part of the marketing mix, which is so critical for destination success. In fact, many surveys in destinations have found that businesses often give as much priority to maintaining the appearance, environment and visitor appeal of a destination as they do to its promotion.

Information required about businesses includes:

- Nature of the business – size, employment, management, networking etc.
- Level of performance – patterns of use, unfilled capacity
- Markets served and observed market trends and needs
- Investment intentions and issues
- Barriers to successful performance, investment and growth
- Support required - e.g. training needs, marketing
- Assessment of current destination management – what aspects are most important to them and what aspects are delivered best and least well
- Engagement and communication with the destination – how could this be improved
- Overall key issues concerning the destination that should be addressed.

Sources of information:

- Consultation with industry groups/associations
- Face to face meetings with selected key and/or representative businesses
- Questionnaire survey of all tourism businesses. The best approach, in terms of cost, making contact, and ease completion and analysis, is likely to be an on-line survey. This should be promoted to a database of all known business contacts and endorsed by the relevant industry associations.

2.5   Identifying local issues

This aspect of evidence gathering is more intangible and difficult to define but is very important in shaping the strategy and actions.

It is about being alert to a range of possible local factors that should affect the context of the DMP moving forward and gathering evidence about them.

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Issues may include:

- The local economic and political context for tourism development
- Community awareness and reaction to tourism, including understanding of its importance
- Local environmental impacts of tourism, including pressure on finite resources such as land, water, habitat etc.
- On-going or proposed projects and initiatives in related fields, particularly those that may benefit the visitor economy and provide additional resources
- Transport and other access issues to and within the destination
- Generally perceived opportunities and threats
- The relationship to other sectors, such as economic linkages through the supply chain.

Sources of information

- Local policies, strategies etc. (see Section 3.1).
- Direct consultation with a range of local authority departments and civil society bodies.
- Community consultation. This may involve meetings or surveys of parish/community councils, holding local open meetings, etc.
- Direct surveys of residents. This may not be necessary in many situations but can be appropriate in others. One approach could be to add questions to already existing local residents' surveys or panels.

2.6 Reflecting external trends

Future opportunities will depend as much on the external environment, in the UK and internationally, as on the situation within the destination.

Relevant knowledge and information includes:

- General economic, social and environmental trends that may influence tourism's performance in the medium term.
- Tourism market trends, including domestic and incoming.
- Any forecasting specifically on tourism (although this tends to be limited).
- Tourism product trends, such an innovative types of facility, attraction or event that have proved popular.
- Trends in technology and its use, especially ICT applications in destination marketing, visitor information and networking, but also in products and management.

Knowledge on these matters can be acquired over time through keeping abreast of media covering general development and the visitor economy. Individuals working within destinations should seek to engage with professional networks that provide regular information, enable exchange of experience and facilitate continual professional development. More specifically, information is available from VisitEngland on domestic market trends and developments in England, and from VisitBritain on overseas markets and incoming tourism to the UK.

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2.7   *Assessing the destination's competitor set*

As part of the evidence gathering for the DMP it is instructive to take a quick look at what other destinations are offering and their approach to tourism. This can help in:

- Aspirations to be a market leader
- Being aware of current standards to be met or surpassed.
- Understanding the relative strengths and weaknesses of the destination and what makes it distinctive.
- Learning and getting ideas from elsewhere.
- Thinking about what could be done differently, in order to generate new tourism rather than just displacing it from elsewhere.
- Considering possible future linkages and collaboration.

A first step is to identify which destinations may be in the competitor set (or be potential collaborators), both in the UK and possibly abroad. This will require some knowledge of places with similar products, appeal and access to markets.

Approaches and sources:

- Looking at the marketing material (websites, print) from other areas.
- Keeping abreast of media coverage, including reading guidebooks.
- Engaging in services that offer comparative assessment and benchmarking of performance of different destinations.
- Undertaking fact finding visits.
- Communicating and sharing through professional forums.

3   SETTING THE DIRECTION

Having gathered together a comprehensive set of evidence on the destination, how it is performing and the local and wider context, this stage is about using this to identify the desired goals for the visitor economy over the forthcoming period and the direction to take to reach them.

It is important to have aspirations and challenging goals but these should be guarded by an element of realism and attainability over the period of the plan.

The Destination Management Plan, including the objectives and actions it contains, should provide a direction for all tourism stakeholders working together. It is not the same as the DMO's own business plan, although they should be closely related. The DMO's business plan is about the focus of its own work, which will feature in a destination management plan but the DMP itself will include actions for other stakeholders.

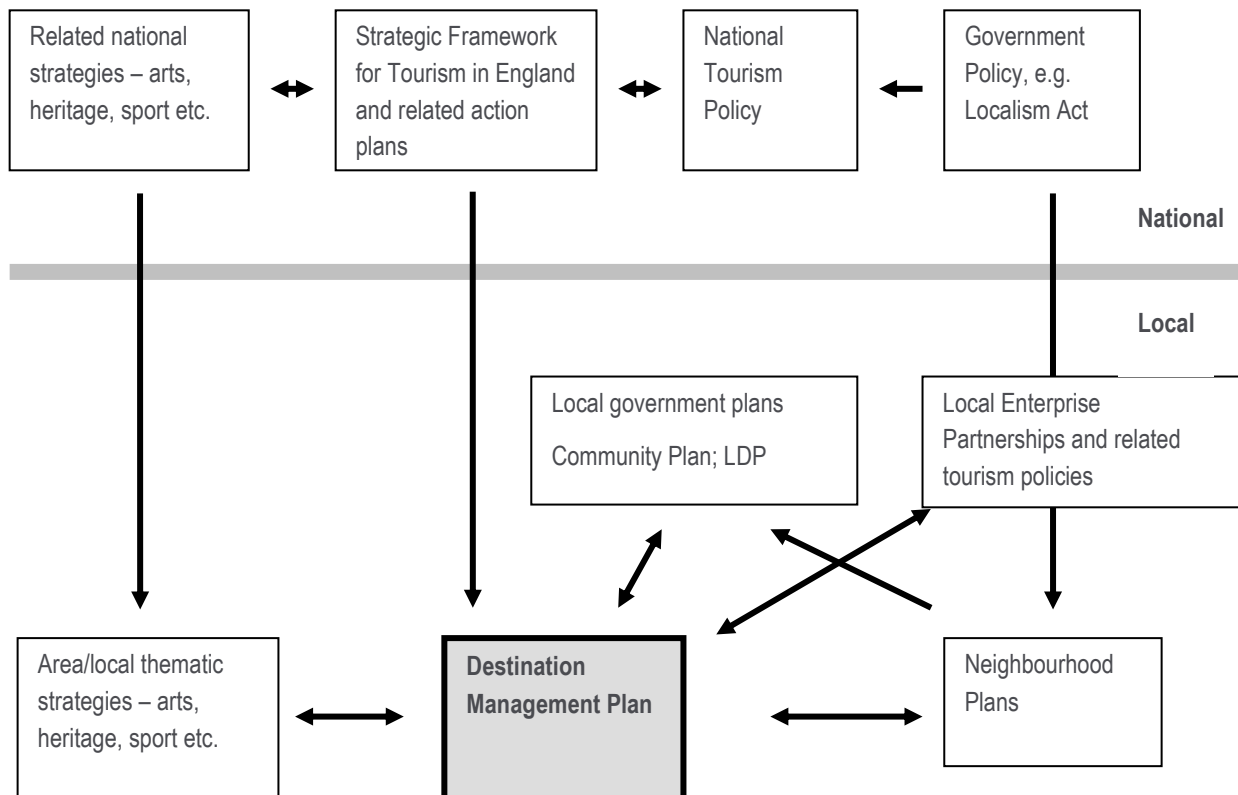### 3.1   *Lining up with existing policies*

The DMP needs to show awareness of all existing policies that have a bearing on the visitor economy in the area. This is important in:

- Ensuring that the DMP is shaped to support wider policy aims.

- Gaining support for the DMP and the visitor economy generally.
- Being able to influence other policies and sectors that are important for the visitor economy.

The relevant policy framework is both national and local, as shown below.

| Related national strategies – arts, heritage, sport etc. | ⟷ | Strategic Framework for Tourism in England and related action plans | ⟷ | National Tourism Policy | ⟵ | Government Policy, e.g. Localism Act |

National

Local

| Local government plans Community Plan; LDP | | Local Enterprise Partnerships and related tourism policies |

| Area/local thematic strategies – arts, heritage, sport etc. | ⟷ | **Destination Management Plan** | ⟷ | Neighbourhood Plans |

The implementation of the Strategic Framework for Tourism in England (SFTE), informed by the government's national tourism policy and directed through 12 thematic action plans, provides the context for Destination Management Plans (DMPs).   This can also provide some useful ideas on actions that can be adapted for local application, influencing growth in the visitor economy or addressing challenges and barriers.

At a local level, the DMP should be seen in the context of wider policies and plans covering the destination that may have been established by the local authority (or local authorities if the destination crosses administrative boundaries). These may include an overarching Community Plan that sets the overall direction, Local Development Plan, and other relevant plans such as for transport.   There may also be other relevant strategies and plans affecting the visitor economy in the destination, covering matters such as heritage and the arts, sport and recreation, countryside management and access. All of these should inform, and be informed by, the DMP.

The 2011 Localism Act is particularly relevant to DMPs in the emphasis given to local communities and their role in shaping the future of their areas. Locally, this will be played out through community led planning and the production of neighbourhood plans, which again should be informed by the DMP as well as informing it.

Local Enterprise Partnerships have an important role to play in supporting destination management and the development of DMPs. They may have their own tourism policies and strategies that should relate to the DMPs in their areas.

3.2 Shaping the approach together

It is very important that key stakeholders have the opportunity to work together at this stage in order to consider the evidence, identify and agree strategic priorities and start to talk about actions.

This may be best achieved by a central workshop which brings them together in one place. The main objectives of this are to:

- Present feedback on the evidence gathering and agree on the main conclusions from this.
- Gain reaction to initial ideas for future direction – working together to develop these further, including pointing to possible principle actions.

Participants at the workshop should involve a carefully selected and individually invited to ensure that all the key organisations are involved and to maintain a good balance of interests. The different types of key stakeholder were identified in Section 1.4.

Ideally, such a workshop should cover a full day to allow enough time for a through debate. It should be very interactive, using various techniques to stimulate engagement, including the use of break-out groups where appropriate.

All the remaining sections within this stage (3.3 to 3.7) should be covered in the workshop, but in each case will need to be further developed after the event.

3.3 Summarising the situation – SWOT

A useful way of summarising the evidence and distilling the messages from it in order to inform the way forward is through a SWOT analysis, presented as a table, as illustrated below.

	POSITIVE	*NEGATIVE*
INTERNAL	**STRENGTHS** **e.g.** - Key assets - Brand and product distinctiveness - Location advantages - Other comparative advantages	**WEAKNESSES** **e.g.** - Gaps in assets - Aspects of poor quality - Resource constraints - Organisational problems - Comparative disadvantages
EXTERNAL	**OPPORTUNITIES** **e.g.** - Key markets - Market and product trends - Technological advances - Supportive policies - Available resources - New developments	**THREATS** **e.g.** - Economic or security uncertainties - Environmental challenges - Unsupportive policies - Lack of coordination and response - Strengthening competitors

The topics shown in the boxes are broadly indicative and not necessarily comprehensive. It should be noted that strengths and weaknesses relate to the destination as it stands, while opportunities and threats refer to the context, largely external, that affects the future strategy and development. The opportunities box should not be used to set out possible actions – these come later.

The response to a SWOT analysis is to build on the strengths, address the weaknesses (where they are holding the destination back), pursue the opportunities and minimise the impact of the threats.

3.4   *Identifying overall principles and aims for tourism*

The first questions for stakeholders to consider in shaping the Destination Management Plan should be fundamental ones – How important is tourism to the local area?; What is it that we want tourism to deliver and why are we concerned about its development and management?

Tourism can have many different impacts on a destination, both positive and negative. The SFTE articulates the principles of 'Wise Growth', which are equivalent to those of sustainable tourism. It wishes to see these embedded in all action plans. This is about taking a long term view, meeting the aspirations for growth together with the needs of local communities, businesses, visitors and the environment. It recognises that through good planning, creative development and effective management, all can benefit.

The DMP should recognise and set out the basic principles for tourism in the destination and the relative importance of different aims, such as:

- Increasing economic prosperity and creating new jobs
- Strengthening and improving the quality of existing jobs
- Generating interest and support for the conservation of the area's natural and cultural heritage
- Increasing income for local services and improving their availability and quality
- Minimising environmental impacts – local (e.g. congestion, overuse of natural resources) and global (e.g. low carbon)
- Providing a fulfilling and rewarding experience for visitors and local residents
- Ensuring social inclusion – maximising opportunities and access for all.

In pursuing a balance of aims the destination should be creating the environment for sustainable economic growth.

3.5   *Shaping the strategic direction and priorities*

At this point, the whole approach to the visitor economy over the next 5 years, which provides the basis for the plan and actions, should take shape. It requires thought and discussion to distil out the key lines to pursue, changes of emphasis, priorities and key themes. The underlying principles and aims should be kept in mind throughout.

Priority areas and issues to consider may include, for example:

- The seasonality of tourism – when more may be needed, including time of the year and times of the week.
- The spread of tourism activity within the destination – how concentrated and how dispersed; locations with the greatest opportunity and need.
- The balance of volume and value – the advantage and chance of increasing spend per head.
- Priorities towards staying as against day visitors, and increasing length of stay
- Issues of capacity and quality of accommodation and services – the balance between filling existing space, making improvements, filling gaps and pursuing new development.
- The opportunity to make more of the destination's particular distinctiveness, in terms of attractions, local produce, events or in other ways.
- Opportunities to increase the level of tourism spending retained locally, for example through local supply chains.
- The need to develop new services for visitors.
- The need to improve stakeholder engagement and joint working, through better structures and communication.

The above list is indicative, not comprehensive.

A key aspect of this is a consideration of current and future **target markets.** These should be identified in the DMP, based on a realistic consideration of:

- Existing markets, trends and the opportunity for change
- Current product strengths and weakness and development needed to attract different markets
- Market access opportunities and constraints
- How different markets relate to the strategic priorities.

Equally and in parallel, it is important to relate strategic direction and priorities, including market selection and product development, to the destination's **brand values** and the way in which the brand is presented currently and in the future.

3.6 Preparing a vision statement

Vision statements can be quite useful as an anchor point for a DMP and to convey simply what it is seeking to achieve.

Vision statements may be expressed in a few clear sentences. They should reflect the local circumstances and strategic priorities. Elements could include:

- What the destination will be like at the end of the period in question
- The relative position of the destination and how it is viewed
- How the visitor economy will be performing
- What benefits are being seen
- Visitor levels, types, activities, and reaction to the destination
- Levels of enterprise and community engagement
- Change compared with the current situation.

Vision statements should be inspiring but also achievable.

3.7 Identifying strategic objectives and targets

The strategic direction and priorities should provide the basis for identifying a set of strategic objectives, which in turn provide the framework for specific actions.

How these objectives are best expressed may vary between destinations. Sometimes it is helpful for these to be relatively functional, covering the different aspects of destination management, such as product development and marketing, but relating them back clearly to the strategic priorities.

The strategic objectives should relate to clear outcomes. Sometimes these can be expressed as targets that can be quantitative as well as qualitative.

Quantitative targets for the overall DMP, whether linked to individual objectives, may be set. Examples include volume and value targets for tourism.

It is important to remember that the objectives and targets of the DMP are not equivalent to the specific performance targets of the DMO as an organization, although these may be related.

4 IDENTIFYING THE ACTION

Destination Management Plans should contain clear action plans to form the basis for their implementation. Actions should be guided by the strategic objectives and relate back to them in the way they are framed, selected and prioritised. These should not just be actions for the DMO – a key role of the plan is to coordinate actions amongst different stakeholders. In many cases a DMO will not have the responsibility over every facet of the destination. For example, if the organisation is separate from the local authority it will have no direct control over the public realm. Likewise individual businesses are responsible for the quality of their product, a DMO can only influence, raise awareness and encourage improvements to be made.

Action plans may cover the full period of the DMP, e.g. 5 years, or may be annual. A five year plan creates more of a menu of action from which annual plans are drawn.

4.1 Covering the ground

DMPs will be stronger if they address, and coordinate, a full range of action areas that are relevant to the visitor economy.

Specific action areas may include:

- Partnership structures and communication
- Community engagement, including advocacy
- Product quality and development, including investment promotion
- Infrastructure investment and improvements.
- Place making – public realm etc.
- Sense of place – use of local produce
- Arts, culture and heritage – access, interpretation, promotion

- Provision for informal and organised activities
- Events planning and management
- Destination branding and awareness-raising
- Tactical marketing, including relationships and engagement with others
- Information services – including signing and host orientation
- Visitor transport and access
- Business support and training
- Environmental management and conservation
- Visitor safety and security
- Research and knowledge gathering

Again, the list is indicative, not definitive

Action planning should take account of what stakeholders are already doing, which should be clear from the evidence gathering stage.

4.2   Identifying and defining actions

Ideas and concepts for specific actions will emerge throughout the DMP development process.

- Current actions should be included if it is considered that they are important and contributing to the strategic objectives, either simply as they are or modified/improved. The DMP should not be just about new actions.
- Some actions may be previously planned or in the pipeline – again these should be included. The DMP can help in flagging them up and bringing them forward.
- Some actions may be in areas not normally directly associated with the visitor economy but very important to it.
- Actions may vary in how far they have been worked up or in their level of detail.

Action plans should identify for each action:

- The timing for the action
- The level of importance
- Indicative cost and resources required (this does not necessarily have to be additional costs)
- Responsible body and others involved
- Funding source, if possible

Prioritisation is important. It can be helpful for longer term action plans to indicate early actions – quick wins. However, there is a difference in prioritisation by time and by importance – these may not always be the same.

Some actions may not be initially funded. The DMP can provide a basis for seeking funding for their implementation. It can be used as evidence and justification of the need for funding. Furthermore actions do not have to cost additional money; resources could be refocused to address an action or be pooled from other partners.

4.3   Allocating roles and securing commitment

Action plans are pointless if they are not implemented.   A key feature of actions identified in a DMP is that they will need to be carried out by a range of different stakeholder bodies. For this reason it is important that action plans are developed in concert and are agreed by the stakeholders.

Having a single lead body to take responsibility for each action is important, to avoid confusion. However, many actions are likely to involve a number of stakeholders, requiring thought on how they will work together.

It is important that implementing bodies are committed to the actions identified. In some cases this may require them literally to sign up to them. Negotiation on the action plan or individual elements may be required.

The table below indicates some of the different kinds of body to involve in actions and the roles they may be best placed to play.

Some actions may need to involve organisations outside the destination, including those in neighbouring areas or at a higher geographic level, including national agencies.

Local Organisations

ORGANISATION	ROLES
Destination Management Organisation (if one exits or a similar partnership body/group)	• Overall responsibility for DMP • Representing tourism and the visitor economy • Quality of the visitor experience – standards • Evidence gathering / monitoring – visitor/business surveys • Destination branding and marketing • Visitor information and orientation
Local Authority (County, District or Unitary)	• Public realm – appearance and maintenance • Transport planning and supporting provision – infrastructure • Planning and development control • Public health and safety • Public/visitor services – toilets, car parking, waste, utilities • Certain arts, heritage, leisure and information services • Access, rights of way, countryside management • Partnership with private sector on development /promotion
Protected Area Authority (National Park, AONB)	• Some of the above, depending on status • Conservation and enhancement of natural beauty/heritage • Visitor enjoyment and understanding of protected area • Economic and social wellbeing of the community
Parish / Community Council/ neighbourhood group	• Future direction for area/community • Local place-making; aspects of public realm / visitor services • Engagement in planning • Local activities, events
Local Enterprise Partnership	• Economic/ business development, including sector support • Investment promotion • Funding of enterprise focussed initiatives

Individual tourism businesses	• Development and operation of most visitor facilities • Employment creation and maintenance • Product development, investment and improvement • Promotion of business and link to destination brand • Visitor welcome, orientation and care
Local landowners	• Provision and management of access to key sites • Future development opportunities
Local civic societies, heritage groups, arts & culture groups, other local/ voluntary bodies	• Presentation / interpretation of heritage – sense of place • Local events and initiatives • Support for community engagement • Representing environmental interests • Local knowledge and expertise
City Centre Management teams	• Streetscape, including cleaning, presentation • Signage/ visitor information • Street safety • Other aspects of place making not carried out by the local authority.
Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) or Tourism Business Improvement Districts (TBIDS)	• Establishment of local private sector partnerships and engagement • Development of better trading environment for businesses within a specific geographical area.

National Organisations

VisitEngland	• Advice and support for DMOs and other stakeholders • Aspects of business support and quality standards • Tourism intelligence • Sector representation nationally • Promotion of England and individual brands • Destination networking and coordination
Other national public agencies and NGOs in heritage, arts, sport, environment, places	• Advice and support on heritage, place-making, communities • Management tools and information • Provision of, and support for, schemes and initiatives • Links and pointers to funding
Tourism Association or other trade group (maybe local or national bodies)	• Communication with tourism businesses / representation • Member support – information, training
Research and training bodies (maybe local or national bodies)	• Research and knowledge gathering • Business and staff training; advice

5   MEASURING PROGRESS AND KEEPING IT GOING

A Destination Management Plan (DMP) should be regarded as a living entity, kept relevant and fresh by constant use. This will require a structure for supporting the DMP, with on-going reporting and communication, a process for assessing its impact and a programme of review and renewal.

5.1   Supporting and maintaining the DMP

The DMP should be the responsibility of the DMO or equivalent body. If appropriate the Steering Group or another working group could be maintained to oversee implementation.

Actions to support the implementation of the DMP include:

- Allocation of actions to lead bodies, as indicated in the previous section
- Work on securing funding and resources for the plan and individual actions, as required.
- Pointers to sources of technical assistance, including from VisitEngland and their online resource.

A dynamic reporting process is required, which should entail:

- The provision of information on progress on individual actions, through regular reporting by the responsible stakeholders to the Steering Group and DMO.
- Regular (probably quarterly) reporting on the DMP, summarising progress on all actions and taking any necessary management decisions.
- Preparation of an annual report, to be received by the full DMO and stakeholder partners and widely communicated.
- An annual meeting and process to determine and agree the forthcoming annual priorities and action plan.
- Public communication of the work, including media relations.

5.2   Selecting indicators and undertaking monitoring

Performance indicators should be selected for the whole DMP, linked to its strategic objectives and targets, and to individual actions.

Indicators need to be relevant, clear, credible and comparable, but above all they should be capable of being used – i.e. based on relatively easy and cost effective monitoring.

Indicators relating to the overall state of tourism in the destination, such as volume and value, seasonality etc. are important in keeping overall track of the visitor economy. However, they are affected by the limitations of available statistics (see Section 2.2) and will partly depend on what local surveys are undertaken. Furthermore, general performance measures are usually difficult to relate to individual actions.

Key Performance Indicators should be identified for the various actions in the DMP. These should include indicators covering:

- Inputs – e.g. level of support for projects, enterprise engagement etc.
- Outputs – deliverables completed, actions taken
- Outcomes – specific results of projects/initiatives.

Monitoring processes may include, amongst others:

- Recording of actions and responses
- Observation of changes on the ground
- Informal feedback from stakeholders
- Visitor surveys, repeated – see section 2.3
- Business surveys, repeated – see section 2.4

As well as tracking changes over time, opportunities for benchmarking performance between destinations using comparable indicators and monitoring processes should be pursued.

5.3   Reviewing and renewing the Destination Management Plan

Through annual reporting and renewal of the action plans, the DMP will be kept up to date. The overall strategic direction of the DMP should be considered annually through this process in case there may be an early need for change and amendment.

The whole DMP should be reviewed and then renewed within a regular cycle (e.g. 5 years).

Examples of other Destination Management Plans and other resources are available on the VisitEngland Corporate website and through VisitEngland's Destination Managers online resource – www.visitengland.org/destinations