

Culture, Heritage and Visitor Economy Strategy Progress to date (April 2023 – February 2024)

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee
– 14 March 2024**





Strategy adopted in March 2023

THEME 1: BUILDING CULTURAL HABITS – IMPROVING THE EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYDAY RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

THEME 2.1: ACCELERATING PROGRESS – DEVELOPING THE SECTOR AND ITS RESILIENCE

THEME 2.2: ACCELERATING PROGRESS – DATA, INSIGHT AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

THEME 3: DRIVING COLLABORATION TO EVOLVE CULTURAL HERITAGE PLACES AND DESTINATIONS

Cross Party Member Working Group

A cross party member working group was set up and met throughout the development of the Strategy and Action Plan.

This group has been used to test early outcomes from the stakeholder consultation and the insights report and helped to shape the work of the consultants.

The group helped frame the action plan and broke it down into more manageable and achievable outputs with a clearer vision.

Members included:

Mid Suffolk

Cllr Tim Weller

Cllr Teresa Davis

Cllr Gilly Morgan

Cllr Keith Scraff

Babergh

Cllr Derek Davis

Cllr Laura Smith



ACTION PLAN

52 PROJECT AREAS WITH ACTIONS

- 19 under THEME 1
- 16 under THEME 2.1
- 7 under THEME 2.2
- 10 under THEME 3

22 areas delivered through internal budgets and resources

17 areas delivered through external funding already received

13 areas with funding still be found



PROGRESS TO DATE

THEME 1: BUILDING CULTURAL HABITS – IMPROVING THE EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYDAY RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

Reviewed the guidance for organising and planning events, linked with Suffolk Advisory Group and Licensing for joint working on future submissions. Creation of an event management plan template to simplify and guide future applications.

Levelling Up - Shared Prosperity Funding allocated towards Sudbury and Stowmarket Wayfinding schemes (£100K)

Development of specific Heart of Suffolk website, newsletters, blogs and social media including arts, culture and tourism information and signposting

Appointment of 2-year f/t Events and Festivals Coordinator Post, funded via levelling Up - Shared Prosperity Funding

Babergh & Mid Suffolk's Big Weekend being developed for Autumn 2024 including public ballot for free tickets across events and attractions

Work with partners such as Primadonna Festival and Orchestras Live to deliver social inclusion programmes to support access to culture for marginalised groups.



PROGRESS TO DATE

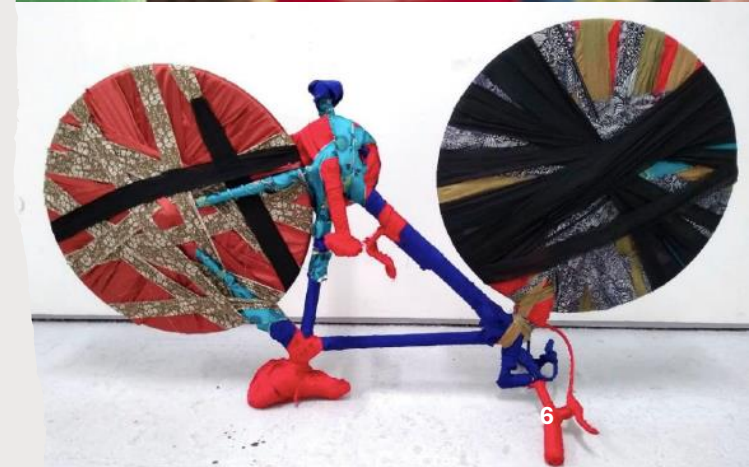
THEME 1: BUILDING CULTURAL HABITS – IMPROVING THE EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYDAY RESIDENTS AND VISITORS CONTINUED

Activities and Events organised and funded via the Welcome Back Fund including Incredible Moving Cinema (Oct 23 - Sudbury 1400 attendees), SPARK Festival (Feb 24 - Sudbury 1200 attendees), Primadonna Festival (July 23 – Stowmarket 1800 attendees), Jubilant (July 23 - 275 students, aged between 7-16, 10 local schools, 10 freelance creatives, more than 100 hours of participatory workshops)

Launch of BMSDC Rural Culture and Creativity Fund using Rural England Prosperity Funding for capital investment (£65k for 2023/24 and £140k for 2024/5)

Great Big Green Week planning (8-16 June) including Eco Markets, Sustainable Travel Events, Climate Cafes, Low Carbon Living Architects Tours

Business as usual - review and comment on planning applications that support development of the tourism, heritage and visitor economy sectors.



PROGRESS TO DATE

THEME 2.1: ACCELERATING PROGRESS – DEVELOPING THE SECTOR AND ITS RESILIENCE

Pop up ARTSPACE gallery and studio model delivered in Stowmarket and two other spaces planned for Kersey Mill.

Good Journey scheme launched to promote car free visitor travel through discounted fees at attractions, car free itinerary development and associated marketing with partners

Continue to work with our county film locations Office, Screen Suffolk, to bring Film and TV filming into BMS and create training and employment offer into film sector

Wingfield Barns audience insight work delivered via The Audience Agency (still in progress)

Worked alongside ACCESS ABLE to carry out audits and produce online detailed access guides across 50+ BMS attractions and venues (funded via Suffolk Growth)

Launched AccessAble Disability Essentials E-Learning programme that businesses can access for free

Provided first time funding advice for Creative Businesses via SUFFOLK GROWTH HUB – funded via Shared Prosperity Funding



PROGRESS TO DATE

THEME 2.2: ACCELERATING PROGRESS – DATA, INSIGHT AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Commission Destination Research to provide annual reports to examine the volume and value of tourism and the impact of visitor expenditure on the local economy each year and provide comparative data

Appoint Visitor Insights to gather new tourism and town centre data to better inform decision making and project planning

Draft data sharing agreements for attractions to share live trends to enable better planning and integration

Worked on Festivals and events review and strategy development for Suffolk (funded via Suffolk Growth)

Involved in the commissioning of Suffolk Visitor Economy Review analysing the area's Visitor Economy marketing and partnership activity and to provide recommendations for future strategic actions.



PROGRESS TO DATE

THEME 3: DRIVING COLLABORATION TO EVOLVE CULTURAL HERITAGE PLACES AND DESTINATIONS

Development and promotion of walking trails and games on the Love Exploring app (funded via Shared Prosperity Funding)

Working with Ipswich and Colchester Museums Service on Constable 250 Heritage Lottery Fund

Submitted bid to Bus Improvement Scheme at SCC for reintroduction and expansion of Dedham Vale Hopper Bus

Develop grants for 'Makers and Producers' markets and events to showcase products and skills of our local entrepreneurs, micro and small businesses (funded via Shared Prosperity Fund)

Shared Suffolk destination marketing campaigns led by Visit Suffolk, including Naturally, Masters of the Air and TV & Film tourism



Example KPI's for across 3 themes. Targets will be listed and recorded on the performance management system, Pentana.

25% increase no. of shooting days across BMS through Screen Suffolk

Up to at least 20 CHVE businesses accessing support through Growth Hub

80 members of staff across 25 CHVE organisations trained on Disability Essentials

20% increase in no of visitors accessing Heart of Suffolk content on the Visit Suffolk site

No of groups benefitting with delivery of small-medium events
25

Access Able site audits across 50 CHVE venues

Wayfinding schemes delivered across Stowmarket and Sudbury

Appointment of fixed term 2-year Cultural Projects Officer

Target of 10 attractions by the end of Year 1 signed up to Data Sharing Agreement

Monthly content to targeted marketing accounts of 59,000

No. of venues registered in pilot Big Weekend Scheme – 20 and 25,000 sign ups

5 locations across BMS agreed for Visitor Insights footfall and demographic figs

The Bigger Picture

- Suffolk County Council pulling £500k 'core funding' from April 2025 and replacing this with a new £500,000 project fund which all Suffolk arts and heritage organisations can apply for.

- Nationally a 24% real terms reduction in 'core spending power' for providing services, including government grants, retained business rates and council tax, from 2010/11 to 2024/25.

- Grants being reduced or shortened where councils can no longer confidently guarantee the money would be available over several years.

- Significant exodus of freelancers from the creative sector during Covid and more being forced out.

- **BUT Local Government remains the largest public investor in culture and all is not lost** – we need to make that money go further. The stacked funding model in culture – a mix of core funding, philanthropy, sponsorship, project funding and earned income.

- **Norfolk and Suffolk Councillor Briefing on the 15 March delivered by Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board. Providing information on how the sector is funded, explaining the concept of 'stacked' funding and the range of business models including commercial, charitable and direct local authority delivery.**

- Present will be Arts Council England (including info on S106), National Lottery for Heritage, and Historic England – all talking about the support that can offer each council.



Visit East of England/Visit Suffolk

Annual £7k contribution from each LA towards marketing campaigns

Visit East of England is a private sector, not for profit limited company that is the region's visitor economy conduit to DCMS and national tourism organisations i.e. VisitBritain and VisitEngland.

It was created to provide a collective voice for the sector following a comment from VisitBritain: 'We only hear white noise coming out of the East'. Chaired by Adnams CEX, Andy Wood, VEE has established itself as the region's strategic voice for the visitor economy and played a crucial role in the sector's response to the Covid pandemic.

It receives no core funding, but marketing funds from local authorities in Suffolk and Norfolk have helped facilitate a coalition of destination organisations, led by VEE and including The Suffolk Coast, Bury St Edmunds and Beyond, All About Ipswich and Discover Newmarket, that promote the two counties to a domestic audience and, in future, to an overseas audience.

VEE also operates Visit Suffolk and Visit Norfolk and the VEE sector group includes representatives of DCMS, Stansted Airport and Greater Anglia Rail.

- [Visit East of England | Welcome to the East of England](#) [Visit Suffolk | Welcome to Suffolk](#)

Strengths: Established regional brand, good relationship with DCMS/Visit England/Visit Britain, promotes inbound tourism, developed the DMO coalition, operates Visit Suffolk.

Weaknesses: Business model is unstable, funding issues and concerns about how VEE is managed. Recently announced they are in serious financial difficulties and were bailed out by NCC. LA's have been asked to double their contributions which has not been received well. Visit Suffolk also needs further development and all LA's have concerns about its performance.

Opportunities: Could become a LVEP which would bring financial resources, but business model would need to change as it doesn't currently meet the LVEP criteria

National DMO review

An independent review to examine and assess the role, structure and performance of destination management organisations (DMOs) across England was published in March 2021

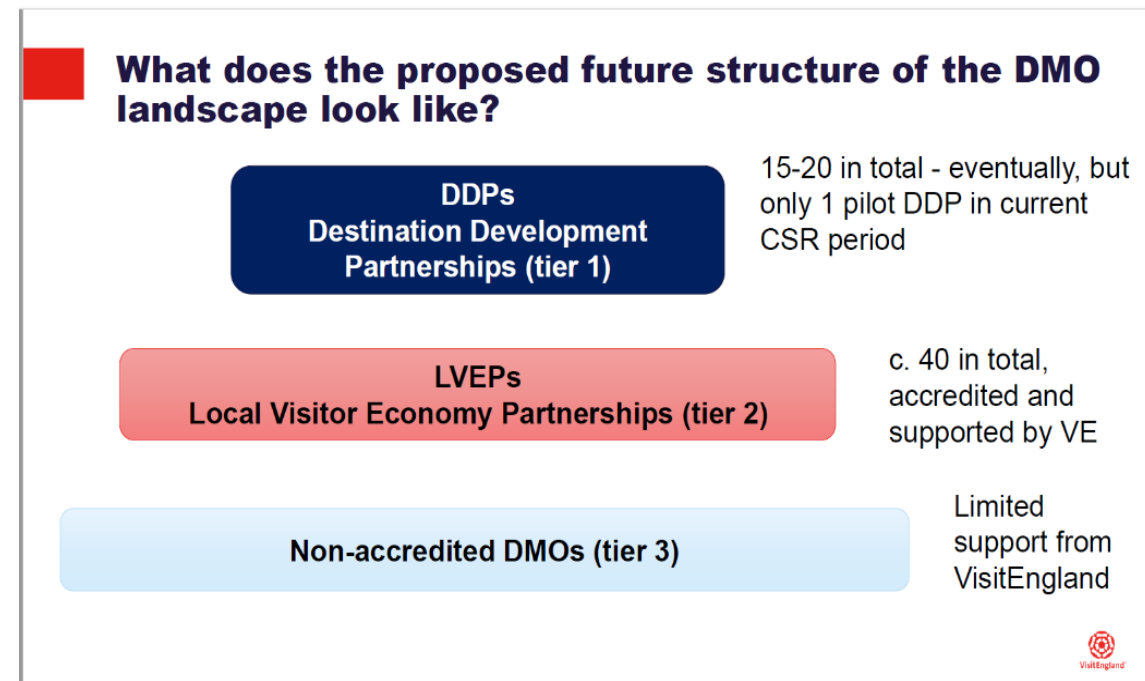
[Independent review of destination management organisations \(DMOs\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91221/independent-review-of-destination-management-organisations-dmos.pdf)

Key points from the review:

- Accreditation process to create a national portfolio of DMOs and minimise fragmentation.
- The national portfolio split into two tiers –a top tier of ‘Destination Development Partnerships’ and a second tier of accredited DMOs.
- All other Destination Organisations part of 3rd tier, no direct relationship with government/VB/VE and served by one-to-many approach.
- Visit England responsible for new tiered structure.

DMOs should:

- Be more collaborative and share best practice
- Seek to diversify their income streams
- Develop the skills of their staff
- Have more diverse boards
- LEPs and local authorities to recognise the importance of visitor economy and DMOs
- LAs to recognise that DMOs need to be public-private partnerships



Suffolk Visitor Economy Review



The review included an analysis of Suffolk's strategic and market position.



It assessed the current landscape to identify the most effective, efficient, sustainable, and accessible model to promote and support the growth and development of Suffolk's Visitor Economy.



The review provided information on how the Visitor Economy in Suffolk needs to be strategically led, marketed and managed with involvement from key public and private sector partners and neighbouring destinations.



It included a comprehensive assessment, mapping, and audit of the current Suffolk visitor economy support structures.



It provided valuable insights into the existing state of the current provision, identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for the future of Suffolk's visitor economy and make recommendations for a collaborative Suffolk model that takes into account the



The full report will be presented to SCOLT on 11 March 2024

Next steps..

Monthly updates with Cabinet leads on progress

Record achievements and impact over the next 12 months and update and inform Cabinets on progress.

