



**Staffordshire Leaders Board**  
**Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Visitor Economy**  
**Partnership - Progress and Performance**

7<sup>th</sup> November 2024

**1. Recommendations to the Staffordshire Leaders Board**

That the Leaders Board:

- (a) Consider and comment on the success of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) and its contribution to economic growth.
- (b) Note the Growth Plan priorities set by the newly formed LVEP board
- (c) Agree to support the exploration of a Destination Development Partnership - strengthening relationships in destination and across neighbouring LVEPs

**2. Summary**

2.1 A progress update on the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent's Local Visitor Economy Partnership and our ambitions to build on this as a model of best practice.

2.2 Through the LVEP we will continue to work together, to support sustainable economic growth and secure future opportunities for those who live, work, study and visit Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

**3. Background**

3.1 Following the national reform of Destination Management Organisations in England, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent have been awarded Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) status.

3.2 The Local Visitor Economy Partnership's main objective is to identify areas that the whole county area, is best working on together, while harnessing support from the private and voluntary sector, to support recovery and growth of the sector.

3.3 The Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent LVEP board has been successfully recruited and launched on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024.

3.4 Managed by a board of members representing public, private and voluntary sectors and industry sub sectors the board's key responsibilities are to develop a Growth Plan for the area's visitor economy and provide support to stakeholders in the visitor economy.

3.5 The board also has an ambassadorial role, championing the visitor economy and ensuring that the partnership is active and inclusive.

3.6 The LVEP Board will be led by the appointed chair Alastair Budd, MD Trentham Estate who will provide a figurehead for the LVEP and will ensure that Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent's visitor economy is represented at the highest levels of decision making nationally, regionally and locally. (Appendix 1. press release)

3.7 The main board will have the capacity to create sub-committees to oversee selected





areas of the LVEP Growth Plan – an annual activity programme that prioritises local economic growth within the context of shared local economic strategy ambitions.

- 3.8 A Local Authority Stakeholder Group is also in place to help contribute and amplify the LVEP’s activity across the whole county.
- 3.9 Decisions related to project activities and funding, will be taken to the LVEP board for consideration, alongside the delivery and oversight of a new commercial strategy that will help inform a shared Destination Management Plan required for 2026/27.
- 3.10 The Visitor Economy remains a high growth sector for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent with the latest economic impact assessment measuring it now to be worth £2.9bn (STEAM 2023). The latest report shows our visitor economy has grown by over a third in the last five years. The county is now outperforming pre-pandemic annual growth rates.
- 3.11 The LVEP board will support sustainable economic growth; influence on policy; work to stimulate overall economic growth, productivity, and competitiveness; and support the overarching joint Economic Development Strategy.

#### **4. Growth Plan:**

- 4.1 The LVEP Growth Plan is a live document that tracks the board’s performance and provides VisitEngland with oversight on its activity. This allows progress to be managed and monitored effectively with key priorities highlighted at a national level to influence policy.
- 4.2 The LVEP Board is recommending a key focus on four priority activity areas within the next 12 months:

#### **5. Business tourism**

- 5.1 Business Tourism makes a significant contribution to the local economy, this generates revenue for accommodation, restaurants, transport and leisure services and can also support the growth of other business industries.
- 5.2 Business events often attract large numbers of higher spending participants that stay longer, stimulating demand for local services, the nighttime economy, and helping create jobs.
- 5.3 A working group will be established to review the future function of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Conference Bureau, and projects that have a connection to wider investment priorities.
- 5.4 Projects will focus on sustainable growth, improved transport infrastructure, review of accommodation stock and occupancy, travel trade and event activity.

#### **6. Education and inclusion**

- 6.1 Communication, interpersonal skills, leadership, and critical thinking are among the most noted skills that are fostered in the sector. Acting as a springboard into other industries, the sector currently employs over 25,973 direct and indirect jobs in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
- 6.2 The County benefits from unique courses being ran by local HE and FE providers, and the board has identified the potential for a packaged offer, around our employment offer and growing reputation as the UK’s biggest playground.





6.3 From education, employment and enjoyment, the LVEP board will work towards a more inclusive and accessible offer for all, exploring how this programme can link to and support culture and communities.

## **7. Marketing and digital transformation**

7.1 Making strong connections with We Are Staffordshire, the LVEP Board will align promotional and commercial efforts across the destination, improving customer experience for international visitors, domestic visitors and local communities.

7.2 Working with partners such as the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Growth Hub, and the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce, the board will make it easier for businesses to access information and engage with the LVEP programme.

7.3 A large-scale website estate has been commissioned by the LVEP helping make cost efficiencies, reducing duplication to achieve a more joined up, accessible offer.

7.4 The website estate will also provide business resiliency around the roll out of emergency messaging that the teams experienced during the covid pandemic, and are more frequently experiencing, due to unpredictable weather conditions that impact businesses and visitors.

7.5 The website estate will also connect with AccessAble UK, the leading supplier of Access Guides and can support future itinerary development which drives increased PR, influencer activity, and supports the rise in AI.

## **8. National Influence**

8.1 Through the early support of the national review of DMOs and our We Are Staffordshire activity at the House of Commons, the LVEP team has secured a unique seat on the national steering group responsible for developing England's Visitor Economy Strategy.

8.2 Through our links with VisitEngland the partnership team has also:

- Featured in the Taking Britain to the World familiarisation roadshow with international buyers. Packaging Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, with the Lake District and Oxfordshire.
- Secured £10,000 from English Heritage to support itineraries that package together Stoke-on-Trent, Stafford and Lichfield for international markets.
- Secured £15,000 Photography Commission from VisitBritain to increase visibility on national platforms
- Took part in a parliamentary visit to increase awareness of the national LVEP network
- Played host to Taking England to the World national business support programme.
- Secured a seat on the England Visitor Economy Strategy Committee.
- Secured a seat on the Visit England national awards steering group

8.3 Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent is establishing a proven track record for delivering a high performing LVEP.

8.4 The national Visitor Economy Strategy prioritises sustainable growth and has a key emphasis on the national LVEP network and the formation of Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs).





- 8.5 A Destination Development Partnership is led by a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), on behalf of a wider region and other LVEPs to create a programme of activity funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and managed by VisitEngland to deliver the government's ambitions for the sector at a regional level.
- 8.6 Staffordshire's unique geography presents opportunity to strengthen partnerships in all directions. It is therefore a priority of the LVEP board, to explore this further with VisitEngland and neighbouring LVEPs.

## **9. Future proofing:**

- 9.1 While an economic development priority, LVEPs are not deemed as a statutory council function, and like all partnerships, stability and longevity is a focus for all LVEPs across the country, while Local Authorities continue to face financial pressures and uncertainties.
- 9.2 Legacy Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) reserve funding has been secured, to recruit a new Commercial Officer and a Business Tourism Manager who will play pivotal roles in reviewing the LVEP's commercial strategy.
- 9.3 Public and Private partnership contributions remain important to support the longevity of the LVEP, as is the identification and streamlining of new funding streams that can have benefit when goals are shared, and efforts are pooled.

## **10. Conclusion**

- 10.1 Reflecting on the above, the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent LVEP is gaining significant traction with recent economic data suggesting strong recovery and growth.
- 10.2 The partnership model is making significant headway to support shared economic development and place priorities.
- 10.3 Future partnership efforts and identification of new funding streams will continue to be important for the LVEP.

## **11. Next steps**

- 11.1 Pending conversations and agreement by the Board today next steps are to continue to report on progress and continue to link the LVEP to wider economic growth and place priorities.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - [LVEP Board announcement press release](#).

## **Contact details**

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