
Culture and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission

**Leicester Tourism Action Plan 2020-2025
Update Report**

3 April 2025

Lead director/officer: Mike Dalzell

Useful information

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This briefing provides an overview of the progress made on the actions outlined in the Leicester Tourism Action Plan 2020-2025 since the last report tabled in April 2024.
- 1.2 The **Leicester City Tourism Plan 2020-2025** has made significant progress in positioning the city as an attractive and sustainable tourism destination. The economic impact of the tourism visitor economy in Leicester is showing positive signs of growth, even as the UK tourism industry continues its recovery from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Key achievements include the growth of tourism infrastructure, enhanced visitor experiences through events, stronger local partnerships, and a focus on developing a skilled tourism workforce. The plan's emphasis on cultural diversity and inclusivity, alongside its commitment to sustainability, ensures that Leicester's tourism sector will continue to thrive, drawing visitors from near and far. Moving forward, the plan's continued focus on community engagement, innovation, and strategic partnerships will be key to achieving its long-term goals. Several factors are contributing to this positive progress, including:

Increase in Hotel Bed Spaces: The expansion of accommodation options in Leicester is a critical factor. With more hotel bed spaces, the city can now cater to a wider range of business and leisure tourists, encouraging longer stays and boosting local hospitality businesses.

Effective Place Marketing: Over the period of the Plan the numbers of people regularly using the online tools that promote the city has grown massively. Visitors to the core Visit Leicester website have grown from 283,892 in 2020 to 842,075 in 2024 – a 196.6% increase whilst downloads of itineraries and trails are now more than 7,000 with nearly 40,000 views.

Growth in Tourism Venues and Attractions: The growth in existing tourism venues and attractions in Leicester is driven by a combination of innovation, investment, and operational improvements. These efforts are helping the city strengthen its tourism economy, attract more visitors, and ensure that Leicester remains a dynamic and competitive destination.

Recognition by the Industry : Leicester and Leicestershire have been shortlisted and finished twice in successive years in the national Group Travel Awards which are voted for by the Group Travel Industry. We have been shortlisted again for the 2025 version. The Leicester Museum Team have been shortlisted by Visit England for the

prestigious Tourism Superstar Award which is the currently the subject of a national public vote.

New Attractions Under Development: The investment in new attractions provides fresh experiences for tourists, making Leicester more attractive as a tourism destination. This not only increases the variety of things to do and see for visitors but also creates jobs in construction, operation, and maintenance of these attractions.

Net Gain of 43 New Businesses: The net gain of 43 new businesses in the city centre since March 2020 reflects a growing confidence in Leicester's tourism potential. These businesses, spanning hospitality, retail, and leisure sectors, contribute directly to the local economy by creating jobs and offering products or services to visitors.

Festivals and Events: Leicester's tourism landscape is significantly enriched by a comprehensive programme of festivals and events that bring vibrancy to public spaces and streets. These events not only animate the city but also draw a diverse, multicultural audience. Large-scale, high-quality events like *Bring the Paint* and *Light Up Leicester* are key attractions, drawing visitors from across the UK and internationally. These festivals and events help to position Leicester as a dynamic cultural destination, enhancing its appeal and boosting tourism.

Tourism Ambassador Schemes: The introduction of tourism ambassador schemes helps to enhance the visitor experience by providing personal recommendations and insights. This can improve the satisfaction of visitors, leading to positive word-of-mouth, repeat visits, and longer stays.

Local Visitor Economy Partnership Recognition by VisitEngland: Achieving Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) recognition by VisitEngland for Leicester and Leicestershire is a significant milestone. It highlights the collaborative efforts between local businesses, tourism bodies, and authorities to improve Leicester's tourism offering. This recognition brings both credibility and access to support, promotional opportunities and funding from VisitEngland, to help attract more visitors to the region.

Skills, Networking, and Support: Considerable progress has been made in this area. Leicester College offers various tourism-related courses, from entry-level to degree programmes, and partners with local businesses to bridge skills gaps. The courses cover customer service, event planning, marketing, and sustainable tourism. The college collaborates with Leicester City Council to offer volunteer tourism ambassador opportunities. De Montfort University provides two programmes in Tourism and Hospitality Management, focusing on international tourism and hospitality management.

Leicester & Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership (LLBSP)

The LLBSP Careers Hub works with schools and colleges to raise career aspirations and connect young people with local job opportunities. It includes over 88 senior business volunteers helping schools and colleges with career guidance. Initiatives like "Unbox Your Future" engage students with tourism sector insights. There is potential for further collaboration between the Careers Hub and the tourism sector.

Skills Support and Workforce Development

The LLBSP provides a snapshot guide for employers on skills support, offering details on work placements, internships, and industry programs. Leicester City Council has

secured funding for Skills Bootcamps to upskill adults in various sectors with potential for the tourism sector to benefit from such bootcamps. The Employment Hub helps tourism employers with recruitment and skills, offering personalised services to bridge the gap between local employers and job seekers. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) offers further support for tourism businesses in recruitment, training, and employment initiatives.

2. Recommended actions/decision

2.1 To note and comment on the scope, impact, and accomplishments of the Leicester City Tourism Plan 2020-2025

3. Background

3.1 Leicester Tourism Action Plan 2020-2025

Leicester Tourism Action Plan was developed closely in parallel with the Tourism Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire. Both plans are designed to complement each other. The city plan helps to deliver priorities for the wide area, for example product investment, improved productivity and in particular it supports the strategy for creating a strong, distinctive and visible destination through the campaign brand entitled *Uncover the Story*. [Leicester Tourism Action Plan](#).

3.2 Tourism Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire

The framework of the five-year Tourism Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire developed by the jointly funded Place Marketing Team has helped focus effort, reduce duplication, inform, guide and influence decisions on investment and bring individual partners together to increase impact. By visualising the area as a single, integrated visitor destination, the sector can achieve more growth, more visitors, more economic value and more jobs. [Leicester Leicestershire Tourism Growth Plan](#).

3.3 Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) Accreditation

The Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) and Visit England (VE) have introduced a new tiered structure of accredited tourist boards to manage and promote destinations. The Place Marketing Team (PMT) successfully secured Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) accreditation January 2024, establishing a direct and strategic relationship with Visit England. Accreditation as an LVEP provides the PMT with the opportunity to promote Leicester nationally with government recognition and to participate in national marketing and travel trade activities. The Partnership includes key stakeholders, such as visitor economy businesses, and cultural and heritage attractions. The status also offers opportunities for skills development, commissions, and access to grant funding.

3.4 LVEP Advisory Board

A public/private sector Board was established to shape the delivery of the Leicester and Leicestershire Tourism Growth Plan 2020-2025 and the work of the LVEP is guided by the LVEP Advisory Board (previously Tourism Advisory Board) and is overseen by the Place Marketing Coordination Group. The Board includes

representatives from across the city and county, including businesses such as National Space Centre, King Richard III Visitor Centre, Great Central Railway and Everards Brewery.

3.5 Leicester Tourism Forum

Its primary function is to work in partnership to support and enhance Leicester's tourism sector. The Forum serves as an advisory body, pooling expertise and intelligence from across the tourism and hospitality sectors to inform strategic decisions and initiatives.

3.6 Leicester Tourism Action Plan Performance Indicators

Source: STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity)

The tourism sector in Leicester continues to recover after the Covid pandemic and the value of tourism is ahead of the 2025 target.

Performance Indicator	2022	2023	Target 2025	2023 vs 2025 target
Value of Leicester Tourism (£m)	724	844	792	+6.6%
No of overnight stays inc VFR (m)	5.0	5.2	5.6	-7.7%
No of visitors to Leicester (m)	9.9	10.24	14.0	-26.8%
No of jobs created and safeguarded (000)	7.2	8.0	9.2	-12.8%

4. Summary of Recent Activity (2024-2025)

Theme 1: Product – Improving the tourism product offer in terms of quality, diversification, productivity and profitability

Jewry Wall: A Real Roman Experience

- The Grade II listed Vaughan College designed by Trevor Dannatt is to be the home of Jewry Wall: a real Roman experience – a museum telling the stories of Roman Leicester associated with the archaeology discovered across the city. With cutting edge interactive multi-media displays, a large immersive Roman experience entrance hall, a new shop, private hire and education facilities, and a public café with views over the Roman ruins of the scheduled ancient monument, Jewry Wall, a Bath House complex dating back to the 2nd Century AD, it is one of the tallest surviving sections of civic Roman masonry in Britain, standing over 9 metres high.
- The museum has been closed since 2017 for refurbishment which includes the upper levels of the former Vaughan College, Adult Education Department of the University of Leicester and a new pedestrianised bridge making the site physically accessible for all for the first time in its history.
- We are celebrating all things Roman at the Old Town Festival: Roman Edition over the Easter Holiday weekend of April 26th and 27th 2025 as we prepare for the reopening of Jewry Wall, with lots of activities including, a roman chariot tricycle race and the building of a encampment of re-enactors, a roman chariot tricycle race and the building of a Roman Triumphant Arch by the artist Olivier Grossetete with help from the public.
- Jewry Wall is due to reopen to the public for Summer 2025.

Leicester Cathedral and Heritage and Learning Centre

The first full year of Cathedral reopening has seen over 120,000 people visiting and engaged with our various events and services.

The Cathedral hosted a varied and full programme in 2024 which is being built on in 2025 - reaching a lot of new audiences and an overwhelming positive response to things like the Journey's Festival Swing installation and the Luxmuralis Light Show. Family programming is growing significantly with large numbers attending the school holiday programmes.

2025 sees the 10th anniversary of the reinterment of Richard III with a 3-week programme of events at the end of March, the return of Luke Jerram with his installation Mars in May and much more later in the year. We will also be working with Art Reach again on Journey's Festival in October.

Work is regularly taken out into the community including attending several libraries, the Haymarket Shopping Centre and John Lewis.

Works are due to finish on site by the end of March and the gardens will be turfed. The fencing has now been taken down to reveal the new Heritage and Learning Centre extension.

A confirmed opening date is yet to be shared.

Phoenix Cinema and Arts Centre

Phoenix completed an £8M capital project to expand its venue in 2023 and won Medium to Large Non-residential Scheme of the Year at the ProCon Leicestershire 2024 awards in November 2024. Audience figures for Q1-Q3 in 2024/25 are 46% up on the whole of the previous year and with our busiest period, Q4, well underway we expect total visitors across all business areas to reach 250,000 in 2024/25, a 25% increase on 2019/20 (the last year of 'normal' trading before the pandemic).

Phoenix's year-round cultural programme comprises cinema, digital arts, and related courses, workshops and other enrichment events for all ages. Phoenix also operates facilities for business and private hire, conferencing and a large vibrant café bar that serves exceptional food and drink.

Throughout 2024/25 Phoenix has developed a complementary programme of exciting events – including spoken word, music, comedy and dance.

Phoenix is enhancing Leicester's creative economy through its year-round cultural programme and active support for local filmmakers, digital artists, and creative businesses. The **PLATFORM programme**, launched in November 2024, is funded by UKSPF and hosts bi-monthly events featuring talks from industry professionals, networking opportunities, and a space for creative exchange. PLATFORM aims to foster collaboration among current and future creative networks, contributing to a vibrant community of creatives in the city.

Additionally, Phoenix is delivering the **Create Growth programme**, which provides business support to filmmakers and digital creatives from Leicester, Leicestershire, and the East Midlands. This is part of a national initiative led by the UK government's DCMS and Innovate UK.

Phoenix's **Community Outreach Office** and **Associate Curators** have made a significant impact, helping to surpass audience attendance targets and increase diversity in attendance. Their efforts have also contributed to sold-out community-focused events, reinforcing Phoenix's reputation as an inclusive space and boosting returns for its film program and wider business.

Leicester Museum and Art Gallery

- Work is continuing to carry out improvement works at LMAG. This includes improved visitor flow routes, a suite of new art galleries, opening up previously hidden architectural features and the creation of a new café.
- Funding of £411k has been awarded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the development of new gallery designs at LMAG. The galleries will include two new Story of Leicester Galleries and an Environment Gallery. Subject to the

successful submission of a Round 2 application, the galleries will be created and open in 2028.

- The museum is currently hosting 'A World of Colour & Emotion: Satta Hashem', a major retrospective of Leicester based artist Satta Hashem. Hashem's work reflects his Iraqi heritage, using deep saturated colours to explore how art can make sense of life, death and war and the role of the artist in conflict.
- Popping to the Shops: Saffron Lane will open on 22nd March and explore the history of Leicester's Saffron Lane in the words of the people who live and work in the area.
- The team at Leicester Museums & Galleries is in the running for VisitEngland's Tourism Superstar 2025. The team is among 10 national finalists who have been selected for providing unforgettable visitor experiences. The annual awards, now in their 13th year, seek to find the unsung heroes of English Tourism and the winner will be announced at the end of March

Leicester Market

Plans to rebuild a permanent market in front of the Corn Exchange were put on hold last year after the removal of the old infrastructure opened up views of the attractive heritage buildings that surround the market area and highlighted the scale of the space.

Following a public consultation, the City Mayor announced recently that his intention is to move forward with a scheme to create a new market building next to the existing Food Hall, housing 48 stalls that could be fully dismantled, if necessary, together with a new flexible event space that would become a focal point for outdoor events in the city.

If Leicester Market is to have a viable future it is also planned that the redeveloped market should focus on food, which will also complement the range of quality produce on sale in the food hall.

Subject to planning permission being granted and a formal decision to proceed, works could start on site in Summer 2025 with the new market building opening by the end of 2026. The market will continue to operate from Green Dragon Square in the meantime

King Richard III Visitor Centre

- Celebrations of the 10th Anniversary of the rediscovery, identification and the reinterment of Richard III comes to an end in 2025, but monthly RIII lectures and talks continue, tickets include access to the exhibition and food and drink offers from their award-winning White Boar Café. Investment is planned to relocate the café which will mean it is not behind the pay barrier. This will also enable the reception team to operate the catering offer and deliver significant cost savings.
- The **Voice for Richard** project will soon be unveiled as the second installation of this national initiative. It features a reconstructed bust of Richard III, accompanied by a recording of him reading a prayer from his *Book of Hours* in his reconstructed voice. Additionally, a new display of 15th-century religious artefacts will be added to the exhibition.

- The centre is the recipient of the Travellers Choice Award from TripAdvisor, Gold Accolade from Visit England, History Museum of the Year from Luxury Travel Group, Quality Food & Drink Award from Visit England, Small Visitor Attraction of the Year from Leicestershire Promotions and nominated for the Visit England Tourism Superstar Award. Celebrated the milestone of receiving their 70th award since opening in 2014.
- The 2023/23 financial year recorded 78,599 and continues to see a rise in visitor numbers in peak season.

Visit Leicester Information Centre – KRILL Visitor Centre

- **The Visit Leicester Information Centre** experienced a slower recovery in visitor numbers post-pandemic, primarily due to the decline in international visitors. However, the centre has now bounced back significantly, with visitor numbers in 2023/24 surpassing 35,000.
- Retail Income from the Leicester themed books, gifts and souvenir continue to improve and are the best they have ever been, both in total value and average spend per head.

National Space Centre

The Centre saw our third busiest year since opening in 2024, with 314,013 visitors, 78,437 school visitors, and 19,570 venue hire visitors. This was also the year two huge records were broken for our Venue Hire team... first year to £1million revenue, and the first time we hosted 10 exclusive day hires.

- We launched a brand new Fulldome show in the UK's largest planetarium, The Great Solar System Adventure. The show won the Audience Award at the Brno Fulldome Film Festival 2024 a week prior to launching to the public in Leicester.
- In 2024 we launched a brand new event, To Boldly Game, which focuses on STEM, family, ad space themed board gaming. It was a huge success, with sell out audiences, which was repeated in 2025. Our Dark Side of the Moon official Pink Floyd fulldome show has now been seen by over 1 million people, with more shows programmed into the Sir Patrick Moore Planetarium.
- The centre's Community Engagement programme continues to grow and develop, with afterschool clubs, library sessions, school holiday outreach, and in-person summer schools all being offered at no cost to over 6.300 individuals who struggle financially to access educational content of this kind.

Great Central Railway

- Great Central Railway ended 2024 on a high note, welcoming a record number of visitors to the much-loved Santa Express. This festive success, combined with an excellent Winter Steam Gala in January and strong visitor numbers throughout March, has played a key role in helping the railway recover significantly from previous challenges.

- The attraction is continuing to invest in new experiences that will captivate visitors. A particular focus has been placed on enhancing the experience for families, with the introduction of itinerary-driven Explorer products designed to offer a more immersive and engaging visit. In addition, the food and drink options are expanding with the launch of a casual dining offer, complementing our already popular First-Class Dining experiences.
- A new website will launch this Spring along with a refreshed brand identity.

Curve

- In 2023/24 over 250,000 tickets were sold for performances at Curve and over 1.2million tickets were sold on tour.
- In January 2024, Curve was the only regional theatre to showcase work on The National Lottery's Big Night of Musicals - which was broadcast on BBC One. A CHORUS LINE, THE WIZARD OF OZ and GREASE were all featured.
- Across the year, 27,000 participants were engaged in Creative Programmes for schools, colleges, universities, community groups, young people, families and artists.
- Over 1,000 creatives, theatre-makers, practitioners and artists from the Midlands took part in development sessions, projects and performances at Curve.
- The second year of our Neighbour-hubs programme across New Parks, Saffron, Braunstone, Evington, Highfields and St-Matthews took place. In each area, we delivered a range of free, bespoke creative projects in partnership with primary and secondary schools, SEND and alternative education providers and community groups.

De Montfort Hall

- Between 1st February 2024 and 31st January 2025 attendance numbers were 222,371.
- A Membership scheme has been introduced rewarding loyal customers with money off at the Hall and in local restaurants and hotels. The scheme now has over 700 members.
- A packed programme offers something for everyone with both familiar favourites and brand-new shows coming through the doors.

Leicester Comedy Festival

- Leicester Comedy Festival 2025 featured 1017 performances, with 753 shows taking place in 76 venues across Leicester and Leicestershire.
- The UK Kids' Comedy Festival 2025 featured over 65 events across 30 venues,
- The festival also worked with 5 local schools as over 100 students performed comedy for the first time at The Y Theatre as part of its Loving Laughing initiative.

- The festival delivered eight joke spots, attracting hundreds of young participants, and 22 young people (aged 11-18) spent their half-term at Laugh Academy workshops developing their stand-up and performance skills.
- The annual awards take place on 31st March recognising multiple awards.

Itineraries and Trails

A Heritage Panel Trail has been created which is available both online and in print. [Heritage Panel Trail - Visit Leicester](#). There are currently 367 heritage panels in place and the brochure will be updated when the 400th panel is in place.

A guided walk through the city centre of Leicester, created by the Leicestershire and Rutland Society of Architects in 1984 and re-instated by the LRSA in 2024 is marked by 37 terracotta plaques depicting foxes. Each of the plaques marks a vantage point, from which to observe the townscape, their purpose is to identify panoramic views of interest, not just individual buildings.

Additional trails currently under development are, a Faith Trail for the city centre area, Suffragettes trail, an Old Town trail and a new Street Art trail.

Three Leicester riverside maps (North, Central and South) created in partnership with the Canal and River Trust provide riverside trails to encourage walkers, cyclists and those travelling on the water to enjoy the area by following the course of the River Soar and the Union Canal. [Leicester Riverside Trails - Visit Leicester](#)

New Leisure Venues

The city continues to benefit from the increase of new leisure venues. Recent additions include, the live escape rooms Escape Leicester on Market Street, Game of Throwing, an Axe Throwing venue on Hotel Street and Roxy Ballroom on Humberstone Gate.

New Restaurants

The new restaurant and café guides reflect the diverse independent food offering in the city centre with over 100 restaurants [LCC Restaurant Directory](#) and over 70 cafes [LCC Cafe Directory](#).

Recent openings include, Sangeeth, a modern South Indian restaurant and bar on Hotel Street in the unit previously occupied by the Case Restaurant, Zait and Zaatar, a Middle Eastern restaurant on Abbey Street, Amrut Indian Fine Dining on Church Gate and Peara, Asian cuisine on Market Street.

The recent improvements to Granby Street have attracted new businesses offering a wide range of food offers and the major Heritage Action Zone project has sensitively restored the shopfront around the Grand Hotel project.

Serviced Accommodation

- The number of bed spaces in the city centre has increased by 47% since 2020 with the addition of five new serviced accommodation providers. The occupation rates remain high.

- The Grand Hotel Leicester, previously owned and operated by Jupiter Hotels and Mercure Hotels, will be rebranded as The Grand Hotel Leicester by The Unlimited Collection, as part of a strategic repositioning by S Hotels and Resorts partnering with The Ascott Limited starting in Q2 of 2025.
- BID Leicester has funded a feasibility study to look at the appetite for establishing an Accommodation BID (ABID) in Leicester. An ABID is a specific type of Business Improvement District (BID) focused on improving the area where accommodations, such as hotels, are located. It operates similarly to a traditional BID, where property owners within a defined geographic area agree to pay a charge to fund services that can enhance the visitor experience and support accommodations. Services could be marketing campaigns, enhanced public realm initiatives, securing large events and conferences to drive overnight stays. Projects are funded through a supplementary charge per room, per night for guests, which is added to the accommodation cost. A decision by the Leicester serviced accommodation providers on whether to proceed to a ballot will be made later in 2025.

Theme 2: Place – Delivering the place and connectedness

Connecting Leicester

Connecting Leicester continues to be central to the vision of creating and providing a connected, safe and family-friendly city centre. There have been a number of significant improvements to enhance the connections between shopping, leisure, heritage, housing and transport facilities in Leicester for the good of the city.

Highcross Leicester

Highcross has revealed plans to invest in new designs for its four city centre entrances to revitalise and enhance its visibility. The design takes inspiration from Leicester's fashion and textiles history.

Animating public spaces programme to deliver high quality events

Festivals bring people together and promote a sense of belonging and community. They are a vibrant expression of a community's cultural heritage promoting unity and boosting the local economy. The city centre has seen a substantial step change in the quality and scale of festivals and events.

- **Bring the Paint** the award-winning international street art festival returned in May 2024. The festival brings together internationally acclaimed painters to transform the city centre with world-class mural paintings. Supported by Arts Council England, Leicester City Council, BID Leicester and other organisations.
- **Light Up Leicester** saw the city centre lit up over four nights with extraordinary, illuminated artworks from the 12-15 March together with a nightly programme of events. The festival attracted 93,000 visitors.

Safe Night Time Economy

The city's night time economy has been boosted with the opening of new restaurants and leisure venues. The Night Time Venue Forum and Night Time Economy Strategic Group bring public and private members together to work in partnership to deliver a safe and welcoming night out.

- **Purple Flag Accreditation** has been regained in January 2025. Purple Flag status is awarded to towns and cities that meet or surpass the standard of excellence in managing the evening and night time economy.
- **Best Bar None awards** took place for the second year running with 50 city centre venues accredited and seven venues crowned winners across various categories at an awards event in November 2024. The Best Bar None national scheme is dedicated to recognising and celebrating establishments that go above and beyond in ensuring a safe, enjoyable and inclusive environment for all patrons.
- **St John's Ambulance** first aid and support service operates in the city centre from 10pm – 5am. The scheme is match funded by BID Leicester and the Community Safety Partnership. 50 medical sessions were delivered in 2024. The most frequent outcome for discharge routes was 43% discharged at the scene, 18% transported to hospital by SJA reducing the pressure on EMAS and the LRI.
- **Walk Away Campaign** funded by the Home Office and developed through the VRN police team and supported by the city centre night time venues. The campaign aimed to reduce night time violent incidences by changing behaviour. Evaluation carried out in August 2024 reported that crime data showed a 16.4% overall reduction in violent incidences in key locations in 2023 vs 2022.

Theme 3: Positioning – Developing a strong identity to position Leicester as a desirable destination attracting first-time visitors

Tourism Campaigns

The **Uncover the Story** tourism marketing campaign remains an important way to create a strong, distinctive identity for Leicester and Leicestershire as a visitor destination and bring cohesion to the visitor offer. Recent publications *The Cultural Quarter Guide* and *Leicester Leading* creative and cultural strategy integrated this brand identity into the wider city centre marketing activity to increase brand recognition.

Themed trails promote over 70 different local attractions to encourage exploration by visitors of the wider area. campaign.

www.visitleicester.info/ideas-and-inspiration/trails

Taste the Place campaign launched in March 2023 to promote the area's food and drink reputation through themes such as *The World on a Plate*. The first ever Leicester Food Festival was held in Abbey Park in August 2024, attracting thousands of people over two days. The event is returning in 2025. Leicester was crowned England's Curry Capital in 2024.

Conferences: Marketing to the Group Travel market has resulted in Leicester securing the Association of Group Travel Operators (AGOT) conference in February 2026. Also, The International Council of Museums conference in conjunction with De Montfort University is being held in Leicester in October, the first time it has been hosted in the UK.

Social Media and Visit Leicester Newsletter. The Place Marketing team continues to grow the number of followers and engagement rate on social media platforms and work in partnership with influencers and bloggers resulting in a wider reach. The Visit Leicester Newsletter remains a valuable tool for engaging with and communicating to a long-term interested audience who have signed up to receive the newsletter.

Visit Leicester Website Over the last year, the site was visited by over 830,000 users and viewed over 2.2 million times. A new Visit Leicester website is being created and will go live by May 2025.

Marketing Collateral - Funded by Shared Prosperity Funding,

Legible Leicester maps have been created in two formats: tear-off A3 maps for distribution at the Visit Leicester Information Centre, hotel receptions, transport hubs, and the Highcross customer service desk to assist customers with directions, as well as free small fold-out maps that are readily available for visitors to help them navigate the city.

Restaurant and Café Guides are available in print and online at Visit Leicester promoting the independent businesses with a hygiene rating of 3 or more.

Venues and Attractions leaflets are being created advertising over 40 city venues and attractions. The fold out leaflets include a city map and distances from the Clock Tower together with information to help visitors plan their itineraries.

Old Town Brochure and Leaflet: The brochure will offer a historical timeline of the area while highlighting the attractions and venues available for visitors to enjoy today. The leaflet will feature the local attractions and venues, along with a new Old Town trail currently being developed to encourage visitors to explore the area further.

Theme 4: People

Volunteer Tourism Ambassadors

- A Volunteer Tourism Ambassador (VTA) scheme has been developed in partnership with Leicester College. The team of fifteen volunteers are recruited from Leicester's neighbourhood area, universities and businesses reflecting diversity, inclusion and equality through the council's Assemble platform, VAL, universities and colleges and the businesses.
- Volunteers have received a Level 2 Customer Service certificate from Leicester College following their training and induction tours carried out at (at least) four tourism venues and two hotels.

- The Volunteer Tourism Ambassadors (VTAs) support the promotion of the city's tourism venues and attractions and festivals and events programme. The focus will be on the visiting friends and relatives market (VFR).
- A further element of the tourism ambassador programme is a team of existing staff in customer facing roles have received training on the tourism offer. The first session was well attended with fifty individuals representing a wide range of sectors including shopping centre customer service personnel, taxi drivers, bus drivers, hotel staff and museum staff.
- The VTAs have supported University Open Days, Freshers, Riverside, Leicester Cathedral events, Christmas Light Switch On, Light Up Leicester and conferences and events.

Skills, Networking, Support and Engagement from Tourism Businesses

Leicester College

At Leicester College offers a range of courses designed to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and behaviours as well as provide practical and relevant learning experiences needed for success in the tourism and travel industry. Our strong industry links, ensure students gain real-world insights and opportunities. Our curriculum is designed in collaboration with local employers to address identified skills gaps.

In addition to formal qualifications, Leicester College focus on developing practical skills through:

- Industry Guest Speakers & Employer Engagement with local tourism expert
- Work Placements and Live Projects giving students hands on experience
- Specialist Training such as sustainable tourism and customer experience excellence
- Work with industry partners to align courses and explore opportunities for collaboration

De Montfort University

There are currently two Tourism programmes at De Montfort University:

- Ba (Hons) International Tourism and Hospitality Management, [link](#)
- L6 Top Up International Tourism and Hospitality Management, [link](#)

Leicester & Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership (LLBSP)

LLBSP Careers Hub

Since the 2020-2025 action plan launch the LLBSP Careers Hub has been working with all secondary schools and colleges across Leicester and Leicestershire, leading a community of best practice around careers education and raising the career aspirations of young people to help them take their next best steps. The Careers Hub leads the partnership of schools, colleges, local authorities, businesses and careers providers to help young people connect closely to local skills and economic needs through a responsive careers education programme.

All local schools and colleges are part of the LLBSP Careers Hub with over 88 senior business volunteers each working with one school or college as an Enterprise Adviser supported by a LLBSP Enterprise Coordinator and offers a range of innovative ways that employers from the sector can readily engage with area schools and colleges to convey opportunities in area sectors, whether their size or availability.

For example, one option to engage is **Unbox Your Future is an innovative workplace experience**, and to date the Space Centre, Highcross shopping, and Haymarket shopping have already delivered careers insights into the sector, supporting over 200 city students. There are plans in place for Visit Leicester / KR111 museum to deliver Unbox Your Future in the summer term of 2025.

There is scope for further activity between the Careers Hub and city tourism going forwards.

World of Work Leicestershire guides

The LLBSP produce a short guide for both young people and adults, updated yearly, to convey key area sectors. The 36-page guides summarise area industries to help young people and adults to be more aware of career opportunities across Leicester and Leicestershire. Both guides include a page devoted to tourism and hospitality careers.

Skills support

Building the workforce of the Future

The busy tourism sector needs an easy use guide to area skills offers. The LLBSP has worked with local colleges, universities, and skills provider partners to create a FREE snapshot guide for employers about support for a range of common employer skills challenges.

The guide has all the information employers need to offer experience of the workplace, work placements and internships, and T Level industry placements, and how these programmes can benefit employers in the long term. [Information and Resources for Employers | LLEP](#)

FREE or low-cost skills support for tourism

Skills Bootcamps

Leicester City Council have been successful in securing regional Skills Bootcamps funding, since 2023, working with LLBSP and the county council on these short courses to help employers achieve the skills that they need. Adults (19+) can be upskilled at any age, there are a range of sectors, people can be unemployed, career changers, work PT or be in work full time, some local and national provision. There is potential for the tourism sector to benefit from such bootcamps, either through tourism specific bootcamps, or utilising other bootcamps such as marketing or digital skills. [Skills Bootcamps](#)

Employment Hub

The Employment Hub continues to support employers in Leicester with recruitment and skills, run by Leicester City Council. The project team is dedicated to bridging the gap between local employers and people seeking meaningful employment opportunities. This

free, personalised service can support tourism businesses. [Home | Leicester Employment Hub](#)

DWP offers

DWP can support tourism employers with bulk vacancies through sector-based work programmes (tailored pre-work training), along with advertising vacancies free of charge and offer a range of free initiatives such as Work Trials, Disability Confident Support, and a Small Business Recruitment Service, along with In Work Progression support.

5. Future Priorities

- **Destination Management Plan 2026 -31**

Work on a new Destination Management Plan for 2026-2031 has begun, to be ready to launch in January 2026. This will establish the new strategic direction, aligning with Visit England's priorities as set out in the forthcoming strategy. The LVEP will work closely with its stakeholders to help shape its development and ensure relevance to the sector. The DMP will set out ambitions for the visitor economy across Leicester and Leicestershire positioning the region as a leading destination for leisure and business tourism. It provides a framework for the city to attract an increasing number of leisure and business visitors to the area, whilst encouraging those visitors to stay longer and spend more.

- **Leicester Tourism Action Plan 2026-31**

While aligning with the new Destination Management Plan to reflect Visit England's priorities, the Leicester Tourism Action Plan will emphasize the unique aspects of the city's tourism offerings, such as Jewry Wall, King Richard III, the National Space Centre, and the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery. The plan will consistently highlight the city's rich cultural and heritage offerings. Its timeline is coordinated with that of the Destination Management Plan, and it includes extensive consultation with tourism venues and attractions to ensure that partnership goals and actions are effectively incorporated.

- **Volunteer Tourism Ambassador and Tourism Ambassador Programmes**

To continue the partnership with Leicester College to train more Volunteer Tourism Ambassadors to grow the team to 30.

To hold another event to secure a further 50 Tourism Ambassadors who are employed in customer facing roles and can support promoting the city's tourism offer.

- **Skills, networking, support and engagement from tourism businesses**

To continue to work with partners to promote tourism as a career of choice and to provide work experience opportunities for students and access to training and future employment.

Appendix 1: Challenges to the Tourism and Hospitality Sector

Appendix 2: Tourism Trends

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

Whilst tourism contributes positively to the finances of the Council, there are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance Ext 4004

6.2 Legal implications

There are various strands of works being undertaken in achieving the tourism action plan. General comments in relation to commissioning of services/goods/consultancy would be to ensure that engagement with Legal and Procurement teams to ensure compliance with Procurement Legislation and internal Contract Procedure Rules. Further, Legal support and advice to be sought in respect of funding and any partnership initiatives and arising implication. Advice to be sought on a project by project basis.

Mannah Begum, Principal Solicitor, Commercial Legal, Ext 1423

Dated: 20 March 2025

6.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

This briefing provides an overview of the progress made on the actions outlined in the Leicester Tourism Action Plan 2020-2025. There are no direct equality implications arising out of it.

The tourism sector, along with the arts, entertainment and recreation, has been one of the sections of the economy that was most impacted by COVID-19. Leicester is the largest city in the East Midlands and the most diverse, the city has a rich mix of cultures, languages, and communities, making it a vibrant and diverse place to live and visit. Culture presents an opportunity for authentic cultural exchange between locals and visitors and for destinations it encourages local communities to embrace their culture and boost economic growth. Thus, providing an opportunity to foster good relations between different protected characteristics.

One in five people in the UK has an impairment and those with health conditions, and their travelling companions, are estimated to spend £12 billion on trips in England each year. Half a million British adults cited 'lack of accessibility provision' as the reason they did not take a domestic trip in the last 12 months. It is important to consider inclusive design principles in relation to accessibility for people from across all protected characteristics.

Moving forward, the plan's continued focus on community engagement and innovation alongside efforts to promote equality and diversity should have a positive impact on visitors from across all protected characteristics. Having accessible safe and inclusive places to visit that helps to create an environment that encourages as many people to access services and participate fully, helps to advance equality.

Equalities Officer Surinder Singh Tel 37 4148

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

Tourism, like other economic sectors, contributes to carbon emissions and, as highlighted in Appendices 1 and 2, an increasing proportion of visitors and potential visitors are concerned about the carbon footprint of their visit and looking for sustainable options. So, there is an economic imperative to reduce the climate impact of Leicester's offer and to effectively market that. This is in addition to the policy imperative of the council's 2019 climate emergency declaration to reach net zero.

Broadly speaking, to respond to these imperatives the council and its partners need to be working towards the sector:

- a. Maximising visits on public transport and use of public transport or active travel modes during visits;
- b. Providing EV charging infrastructure at accommodation and other locations where visitors will need it;
- c. The continued decarbonisation of local transport services for visitors including electrification of rail, taxi and private hire services, and availability of cycle and e-bike hire services;
- d. Decarbonising visitor accommodation and attractions by improving energy efficiency, replacing fossil fuel systems with electric heating and hot water and increasing renewable energy generation where possible;

- e. Sustainable management of tourism-generated waste;
- f. Making tourist infrastructure resilient to the changing climate, including targeted planting of trees to enhance shade during heatwaves and the use of passive cooling measures to prevent overheating in accommodation and attractions;
- g. Enhancement and sustainable management of green spaces, including regular conservation and other activities providing visitor opportunities;
- h. Basing marketing of our 'sustainable tourism' offer on our existing sustainability achievements and USPs, and on independently verified sustainability credentials of accommodation and attractions – giving visitors confidence in our sustainability offer.

From the early stages of developing the new Destination Management Plan and Leicester Tourism Action Plan, reference should be made to the council's Climate Ready Leicester Plan to ensure that they are contributing to delivering the plan. Consideration should be given to adopting appropriate performance indicators to allow monitoring of progress and outcomes in creating a sustainable tourism sector.

Duncan Bell, Change Manager (Climate Emergency). Ext. 37 2249.
20th March 2025.

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

None

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

10. Is this a "key decision"? If so, why?

No