
Inward Investment & Place Marketing

Economic Development, Transport and Climate
Emergency Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 23rd April 2025

Report of the Director of Tourism, Culture, and Investment

Useful information

■ Ward(s) affected: All

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1. Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Scrutiny Commission on the work of the Place Marketing Team for Leicester and Leicestershire.
2. Leicester and Leicestershire's Economic Growth Strategy for 2021-2030 emphasises the importance of enhancing Leicester's profile as a desirable location to visit, live, work, and do business. This strategy aims to stimulate investment and create a thriving environment for businesses to grow and prosper.
3. The Place Marketing Team (PMT) was established in 2017 and is jointly funded and managed by the City Council and Leicestershire County Council, this team leads on place marketing, inward investment, and strategic tourism across the region.

2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny:

Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission Scrutiny Commission are invited to:

- Review the contents of this report.

3. Detailed report

Background

1. Established in 2017 the PMT promotes the city and county as a place to visit, to live and invest in. Leicester City Council hosts the PMT with the County Council providing funding of £60,000 a year as well as two seconded members of staff. Leicester City Council provides funding of £47,700 a year as well as five full time members of staff.
2. The service works across Leicester and Leicestershire and delivers the following key areas of activity:
 - Strategic Tourism – positioning Leicester and Leicestershire as a cohesive visitor destination, through integrating and delivering in key public and private sector partnerships and contributing to the local economy. A public/private sector, Tourism Advisory Board (now known as the LVEP Advisory Board) is established to shape policy and the delivery of the Leicester and Leicestershire Tourism Growth Plan 2020-2025. In addition, the PMT also work alongside the City Centre Director and Tourism Officer to deliver the aligned objectives from the City Tourism Action Plan 2020-2025.

- Place Marketing – to promote Leicester and Leicestershire as a destination to visit, invest and live. A strategic Place Marketing Coordination group, made up of public and private stakeholders is established to shape placed based strategies.
- Inward Investment – Providing an account management service to support businesses (both foreign and domestic) seeking to expand or relocate within Leicester and Leicestershire, as well as developers and investors looking to bring sites and properties to market. The inward investment service also hosts events and promotional activities throughout the year to highlight the potential opportunities available within the city and county.

Strategic Tourism

4. Latest data commissioned in the annual Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM), reports visitor numbers to Leicester and Leicestershire surged in 2023, generating a substantial economic impact. Leicester and Leicestershire welcomed 31.28 million visitors, contributing £2.39 billion to the local economy (£1.547 billion for the County and £844.37 million for the city) This figure surpasses the £2.1 billion target outlined in the current Tourism Growth Plan and represents a 15.5% increase compared to the previous year's £2.07 billion.
5. Across Leicester and Leicestershire visitor numbers rose by 2.46%, with the city welcoming 10.24 million and County attracting 21.04 million visitors. The total number of visitor days increased to 38.53 million, up from 37.65 million in 2022. This growth is attributed to both an increase in visitors and the average length of stay.
6. The data shows growth in the number of tourism-related jobs with more than 22,922 people now employed in the visitor economy sector across the city (8,012 jobs) and the County (14,911 jobs), an increase of 8.96% on 2022.

Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) Accreditation

7. 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. Leicester and Leicestershire successfully secured accreditation in January 2024, establishing a direct and strategic relationship with Visit England.
8. Accreditation as a LVEP provides the PMT with the opportunity to promote Leicester and Leicestershire nationally with government recognition and to participate in national marketing and travel trade activities. The LVEP offers opportunities for skills development, commissions, and access to grant funding as outlined above. The Partnership includes key stakeholders, including visitor economy businesses and district councils. More detail on the key priorities within the Growth Plan can be found in Appendix B.
9. The strategic tourism work is guided by the LVEP Advisory Board (previously the Tourism Advisory Board - TAB). This includes senior leaders from across the City and County, including businesses such as the National Space Centre, KRIII, Canal and Rivers Trust, Marriott Hotels, Leicestershire County Cricket Club, De

Montfort University, Curve Theatre and Public Sector representation, including Visit England, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council.

10. The LVEP will implement a strategic approach to regional destination management campaigns for Leicester and Leicestershire. Each campaign brings together the offers in Leicester City under overarching themes encouraging visitors to explore the city. Through these joint promotional activities, the campaigns provide a more comprehensive and engaging experience, capitalising on heightened visitor interest, and maximising campaign exposure.

Place Marketing - Strategic Place Marketing Group

11. Established in 2023, the Strategic Place Marketing Group serves as a platform for key stakeholders in Leicester and Leicestershire. Comprising representatives from the three universities, local government, business associations such as the Federation for Small Business, and cultural institutions, the group is dedicated to identifying and implementing strategic place marketing campaigns and group member initiatives that promote the region as a thriving destination.
12. By fostering collaboration and alignment among partners, the Strategic Place Marketing Group amplifies tourism campaigns and projects defined in the Leicester and Leicestershire Tourism Growth Plan 2020-2025. The group's key priorities for 2024 include:
 - Aligning with Visit England's priorities and the focus of Visit Leicester and surrounding districts.
 - Promotion of Leicestershire as a place for students to explore, increasing promotional activities around September and October, capitalising on student enrolment.
 - The creation of a business-to-business newsletter. This platform will enable partners to disseminate their sustainability initiatives and other relevant content, thereby enhancing the region's overall brand visibility and attracting investment.

Destination Management Website

13. Launched in 2017, the current destination management website used for promoting tourism and investment activities, has reached its operational limit. To effectively support the PMT's commercial activities and enhance user experience, a comprehensive website rebuild is imperative. A rigorous procurement process has been completed, outlining detailed specifications for a new platform to replace the current, outdated system and will result in the launch of a new destination management website in May 2025. The new contract represents a significant yearly saving after the initial setup and testing phase.
14. By prioritising a modern, user-friendly website, Visit Leicester will host event, hotel and attraction information for tourism businesses based within Leicester City. The new website aims to further increase its online presence, drive tourism revenue, and better serve both visitors and local businesses. The new website will also meet rigorous accessibility standards, meaning that it is usable and navigable by those with accessibility requirements.

Commercial Strategy

15. Increasing commercial income provides a significant opportunity for the Place Marketing Team to achieve long-term financial sustainability. This marks a shift towards a more commercial approach by generating income from both public and private sector partnerships. Since Q1 of 2024, the Place Marketing Team have established the following commercial income streams to support the sustainability of the service:
 - Direct Hotel Booking: Utilising platforms such as Booking.com and Expedia, Visit Leicester can secure commission revenues without incurring additional costs for accommodation providers.
 - High-Value Partnerships: The PMT has pivoted towards developing bespoke commercial packages. This targeted approach offers businesses the opportunity to access Visit Leicester's extensive marketing expertise, maximising their reach and driving ticket sales. This strategy has yielded significant success, particularly for attractions across the county.
 - The PMT successfully secured £13,500 of funding to refresh the image library of Leicester and Leicestershire aligning with Visit Britain/England's strategic communications. This initiative, commissioned by the PMT, has captured high-quality imagery of attractions and venues across the region, and at key City Centre venues such as the National Space Centre and the King Richard III Visitor Centre.
16. Whilst in its first year of commercial activities, it is forecast that the PMT will generate circa £48,000 of commercial income by the end of the financial year. The income is intended to be used to reduce the budget pressures on Leicester City Council. By analysing booking trends and partner engagement, the PMT will continue to refine its commercial strategy. The new destination management website, due to complete by May 2025 will enable continued revenue growth. This strategic shift towards a more commercial Place Marketing Team helps to position the service for long-term sustainability.

Group Travel

17. Attracting coach and group travel bookings to the city has been a significant priority for the PMT in 2024 and is yielding the following, tangible results.
18. A booking from Probus Harpenden in October 2024, comprising 45 delegates, contributed £8,717.50 to a local business. The booking was taken whilst attending the Group Leisure Travel Show. The stand was organised by the PMT with partner businesses contributing to the costs.
 - The Association of Group Travel Organisers (AGTO) have agreed to host their annual showcase event in the region in February 2026 and have confirmed accommodation at the Holiday Inn, Leicester. This prestigious event, valued at over £30,000 in accommodation and room hire costs, provides a unique opportunity for local attractions to connect directly with group travel bookers.

- At the Group Leisure and Travel Show in Milton Keynes, the PMT collaborated with seven partners to share exhibition costs and maximise Leicestershire's presence. This strategic approach resulted in engaging with over 130 group travel organisers, generating bookings for partners such as King Richard III visitor centre and the Great Central Railway and Belvoir Castle. This partnership approach generated a net profit, rather than incurring a cost to attend the show.
- The PMT's quarterly newsletter, distributed to a database of over 600 group travel organisers amongst others, continues to be a valuable tool for promoting group-friendly attractions. With an impressive 30% subscribers regularly reading the newsletter, it is an effective communication method, reaching a group travel target audience.
- Recognition of the PMT's commitment to the group travel market was further solidified by being shortlisted as a finalist for the Group Leisure and Travel Awards - Best UK Destination for Groups category, for a third consecutive year.

Campaigns – Uncover the Story/Fitcation/Taste the Place

19. The PMT's email newsletter audience continues to expand and now reaches 12,000 subscribers. This valuable platform serves as a direct channel to engage with individuals interested in exploring the region's attractions and accommodation providers.
20. A key focus has been on promoting the Uncover the Story, a campaign aimed at showcasing attractions, hidden gems and telling the story about Leicestershire's history. The campaign attracted over 170,000 views to the Uncover the Story web pages in the last year.
21. The Fitcation campaign aims to encourage visitors to explore the City's green spaces, active leisure venues and waterways through experiences such as cycling, walking, and sporting activities. The campaign was strategically featured during the spring and summer seasons, generated over 28,000 views.
22. Taste the Place, a central focus of PMT's efforts, resulted in the creation and promotion of a suite of five videos, which were integral in promoting the campaign across social media. The campaign webpages have attracted over 257,000 views during the past year, with key pages such as "13 Places to Enjoy Afternoon Tea" reaching a wide audience of over 24,000 viewers.

City Event Promotion

Key Event Promotion Highlights:

- **St George's Festival in Old Town:** A change in location, driven by our promotion, resulted in increased footfall in Leicester's Old Town.
- **Riverside Festival:** Active participation at the Visit Leicester stall promoted return visits and showcased city walks, trails, and attractions. The event page secured 35,644 views.

- **Kasabian Summer Solstice Gig (Victoria Park):** Our promotion generated the year's most popular blog post, with 11,136 views.
- **Leicester Food Festival:** Collaboration with About Leicester led to the successful launch of the inaugural Leicester Food Festival at Abbey Park, attracting thousands to sample local cuisine, and featuring the "Taste the Place" branding. The event page received 20,430 views.
- **Diwali Events:** Comprehensive support for Diwali events included fulfilling a request from 10 Downing Street for footage of community preparations. Pages received 80,906 views.
- **Abbey Park Bonfire and Firework Display:** Promotion included a paid social marketing campaign, resulting in 63,055 event page views and 8,116 blog views.
- **Christmas in Leicester:** Support included paid commercial work for Leicester Cathedral, Enlightened Leicester (16,087 views), the Christmas Market (27,868 views), and Ice Skate Leicester (73,737 views). The Christmas in Leicester marketing campaign and ongoing support for city centre visitation were key. The Ice Skate Leicester paid campaign saw a 245% increase in page views and 42,477 ticket page referrals compared to 2023.
- **Comedy Festival:** Promotion included blog writing, national PR activity, and city-wide awareness campaigns. Partnership with DataThistle and Big Difference ensured all 2025 comedy festival events were listed. Results included a 6% increase in ticket sales, a 20% increase in ticket value, and an estimated £6 million economic impact (figures from Big Difference Company).
- **Light Up Leicester:** Collaboration with BID Leicester and FU Media focused on idea generation and promotion to drive footfall and support food and drink businesses through the "Taste the Place" campaign.
- **City Centre Event Popularity:** Five of the top 10 most viewed pages on Visit Leicester over the past year were dedicated to City Centre events: Ice Skate Leicester, Abbey Park Bonfire, Diwali, Riverside Festival, and the Christmas Market.

Cultural Quarter Guide

- Work to create a Leicester Cultural Quarter destination guide was completed. This 20-page guide features creative businesses, venues and food and drink retailers. 5,000 copies have been printed and are being distributed around the city. Printing costs were covered by £1,500 of income secured through advertising. Complementary webpages have been created on the Visit Leicester website to ensure online representation of this key city area.

Sustainable Tourism

23. Supporting net zero ambitions, and in alignment with Visit England's core priorities, and the LVEP Growth Plan, focussed work in this area recognises the associated challenge of balancing increased visitor numbers with a reduced carbon footprint.

Leicester City businesses are supporting this campaign, working with Visit Leicester on Case Studies, highlighting best practice in the local visitor economy. Leicester Museum and Art Gallery was chosen as a Visit England case study for their community engagement work to produce locally focussed exhibitions. Businesses are also being supported with dedicated business support, encouraging them to apply for green accreditation and helping them implement sustainable practices. This also links to the Fitcation campaign expanding its product reach by promoting green transport, walking, and cycling routes throughout the city. Visit Leicester has launched a digital-first initiative, Green Days, Green Stays, Green Ways to promote Leicestershire's tourism businesses actively working towards sustainable goals. As part of this initiative, City Centre sites such as King Richard III and Leicester Museum & Art Gallery alongside green travel initiatives will be highlighted as implementing sustainable best practice through case studies and social media features.

24. This campaign adopts a dual-pronged approach, targeting both businesses and consumers. By sharing inspiring stories and raising awareness, the PMT aims to encourage more City businesses to achieve green tourism accreditation and join the wider movement. Participating businesses also benefit from the potential for promotion by Visit England.
25. Through this strategic initiative, the PMT is actively contributing to a more sustainable and regenerative tourism landscape while promoting the region's green credentials.

New Destination Management Plan 2025

26. The Tourism Growth Plan 2020-2025 set out ambitions for tourism across Leicester and Leicestershire positioning the region as a leading destination for leisure and business tourism. It has provided a framework for the City and County's efforts to attract an increasing number of leisure and business visitors to the area, whilst encouraging those visitors to stay longer and spend more. Work on a new Destination Management Plan for 2026-2031 has begun and is due to conclude in November 2025, 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 Visit England strategy, and collaborating closely with stakeholder groups to help shape its development and ensure relevance to the sector.

Inward Investment Reporting

27. The PMT has expanded its key performance indicators (KPIs) to provide a more comprehensive assessment of its economic impact on Leicester.
28. The table below highlights the economic impact on Leicester derived from projects directly supported by the PMT through account management. Further details on the account management support offered for each success can be found in Appendix A.

Key Performance Indicator	Reporting Period: 1st January 2024 – 31st December 2024
No. of Enquiries Converted into Investment Decisions	6

Capital Investment	£1.1m
Business Rates Generated per annum	£292k
Total Salary Value per annum	£9.8m
Total Investment Value*	£11.2m
New Jobs Created	183
Safeguarded Jobs	205
Average Salary of New Jobs Created	£35,302

*Total Investment Value = Capital Investment + Business Rates + Total Salary Value

NB the financial information provided is commercially confidential and has therefore been aggregated and rounded.

Department for Business and Trade (DBT) Reporting

29. The PMT serves as a point of contact between Leicester City Council and the DBT. This role involves providing the DBT with local knowledge and connections to the region's business support services and Leicester City council. This facilitates the DBT in successfully 'landing' their account-managed projects.
30. The table below highlights the economic impact to Leicester relating to projects where the PMT and local partners have supported the DBT to secure inward investment. Further details on the DBT account management support offered for each success can be found in Appendix A.

Key Performance Indicator	Reporting Period: 1 st January 2024 – 31 st December 2024
No. of Enquiries Converted into Investment Decisions	3
Capital Investment	£6.4m
Business Rates Generated	£83k
Total Salary Value	£1,02m
Total Investment Value*	£7.34m
New Jobs Created	35
Safeguarded Jobs	0
Average Salary (New / Safeguarded Jobs)	£29,425

*Total Investment Value = Capital Investment + Business Rates + Total Salary Value

NB the financial information provided is commercially confidential and has therefore been aggregated and rounded.

Attracting Businesses to City Council Managed Workspace

To support the wider activities of Leicester City Council's Corporate Estate to generate tenants for the council, the Invest in Leicester team proactively engaged with colleagues to add value by strengthening marketing and promotion to help identify end users.

Promotional activities for CANOPY, Dock, and Blackbird Industrial Park to highlight the availability of immediate space has helped to gain traction for the council which means the premises have either been pre-let or leased out to prospective tenants.

Similarly, joint promotion with Leicester Museum and Art Gallery (LMAG) and the Estates and Building Services team seeking interest for a café operator following interest from soft marketing have brought bids which would have otherwise not come forward.

Aiding Sale of Council Assets

Following Invest in Leicester roundtables held last year jointly with the private sector, this generated acquisition interest in the council's disposal programme which led to several marketing opportunities for sites and premises including Ashton Green (employment and housing options), Sovereign House 16 New Walk and Phoenix House. LinkedIn posts at the time provided a valuable insight from the market into the appetite from developers keen to engage with the council and will serve the basis for any asset sale in the future.

Growing Rented Housing Stock

It has been widely reported that Leicester faces a substantial housing demand, with a target of 39,000 new homes by 2037. To fulfil this critical need and meet its obligations, the city must consistently deliver 800 new affordable homes annually.

This significant demand is driven by a growing population and the urgent need to address homelessness, which affects 5,000 individuals and families each year. Therefore, the council has been exploring opportunities to partner with agents and landlords to address the temporary housing needs. Proactive promotion at property events and on LinkedIn with Housing colleagues (facilitated by HomeCome Ltd) to individuals and organisations interested in renting properties to house residents using council funds has attracted numerous enquiries to the inward investment team resulting in contracts agreed for periods of between 2 – 5 years.

Partnership and Collaboration

31. The PMT has developed a collaborative network dedicated to attracting and supporting strategic investment, highlighting local opportunities, and presenting a unified, professional front for investment in Leicestershire. Key partnerships include:
 - Team Leicester: The PMT collaborate closely with Team Leicester to jointly host events at the MIPIM, UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) and hold networking sessions for the property industry to promote the city. Team Leicester is funded through its sponsorship base, whereby businesses pay a small sponsorship fee of £1,950 per annum with 100% of the funds reinvested into promotional events and activities. Sponsoring businesses can then attend events and network with attendees.
 - Midlands Engine: The PMT is a member of the Midlands Trade & Investment Advisory Forum, ensuring that Leicester is represented and involved in the development of international trade and investment activities undertaken by the Midlands Engine. The Forum enables members to discuss issues, shape and suggest initiatives, and identify areas for collaboration.
32. For further details on these partnerships and specific examples of collaborative work, can be found in Appendix A.

Investor Events Programme

33. The PMT has developed a comprehensive events programme designed to bridge the gap between the public and private sectors. This has been part-funded by private sponsorship.

34. Highlights from the 2024 events programme include:

UKREiiF: The Leicester and Leicestershire delegation included representatives from Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council, and University Hospital Leicester NHS Trust. The PMT coordinated a series of three interconnecting events for UKREiiF:

- A launch event prior to UKREiiF for 85 delegates to equip our ambassadors with positive messages and provide them with details of local development opportunities to highlight. Leicester City Council presented their growth, and regeneration plans for the city. The event was fully funded through private sponsorship.
- A showcase session highlighted sustainable development in Leicester and Leicestershire, and that the area is 'open for business.' 100 delegates attended. The event was funded 50% through private sponsorship and 50% by Leicester City and Leicestershire County Council.
- A networking event, hosted by Team Leicester, connected 90 property and construction sector directors with senior council officers from Leicester City, Leicestershire, Blaby, Melton, and Northwest Leicestershire. Team Leicester sponsors fully funded the event.

35. Leicester and Leicestershire Property & Construction Lunches: In collaboration with private partners, the PMT established bi-annual networking and awareness raising lunches for the region's property and construction sector, held across Leicester and Leicestershire. These events offer an excellent opportunity to spotlight local authority projects, enabling stakeholders, including landowners, developers, commercial agents, and architects, to connect, resulting in improved awareness of local priorities and initiatives and engaging with key decision makers to support bringing sites and properties forwards. In March 2024, Leicester City Council Senior officers presented to 130 delegates about their development and regeneration opportunities within the city.

36. These events offer excellent return on investment for Leicester City Council, as they are organised and managed by a private operator, who charge a commercial delegate rate with the PMT devising the agenda and influencing the attendee list.

37. Feedback highlights that the events outlined above are highly valued by the property industry and Leicester City and Leicestershire's county council. These events serve as valuable platforms for highlighting projects underway across the region, enabling senior leaders from City councils to discuss their regeneration objectives and masterplans with the property industry. The PMT successfully leveraged £43,350 in private sector funding for these events in 2024.

38. Further details of the events can be found in Appendix A.

DBT Funded Key Account Management Programme

39. In 2024, the PMT successfully secured funding from the DBT to establish a Key Account Management (KAM) Programme for the region. This initiative is designed to provide dedicated account management support to existing foreign-owned businesses and is a strategic priority for the DBT.
40. To date, the KAM programme has identified 41 foreign owned businesses within the City, account managing a total of 3 verified wins, creating a total of 35 jobs, and a financial investment totalling £7.34 million.
41. The KAM programme will continue until 31 March 2025, with funding in place to support its operations. The PMT provides monthly progress reports to the DBT, detailing all company interactions, new projects, investment wins, and job creation.

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

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Signed: Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance

Dated: 26th March 2025

4.2 Legal Implications

The Partnership and funding arrangements agreed between Leicester City Council and Leicester County Council including the secondment of staff from the County Council must follow and comply with any Memorandum of Understanding governing the ongoing relationship and any performance, monitoring objectives and outcome requirements to promote and enhance the viability and success of the various work programmes. In relation to any purchase or procurement of goods, services or external consultancy services including expenditure on ICT and computer related requirements this will generally need to be on a competitive and value for money basis taking into consideration social value issues and fully in accordance with the Council's internal Contract Procedure Rules.

Signed: Steven Lowry-Smith - Contracts & Procurement Solicitor (Commercial) Ext. 37 1395

Dated: 13th March 2025

4.3 Equalities Implications

There are no direct equality implications arising from this report, however with regards to any engagement, promotion, or marketing campaigns, we need to ensure these are accessible for all groups and communities, including those with access needs, for example BSL, visual impairments.

Signed: Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer

Dated: 13th March 2025

4.4 Climate Emergency Implications

Leicester's economy, like all other areas of life in the city, will need to transition to a net zero economy – and one in which businesses are as resilient as they can be to the changing climate. All of this will involve challenges for businesses, but it also brings opportunities, both for individual businesses and for Leicester as a city. The areas of activity covered in this report can all play a role in helping Leicester grasp those opportunities. For example, in Strategic Tourism, businesses can be encouraged to adopt sustainable practices and encouraged to use these in their marketing. Under Place Marketing, Leicester's advantages as a destination with relatively good public transport and cycling links can be promoted. And under Inward Investment, the City's initiative-taking approach to adopting the low carbon technologies and best practices can help position the city as modern, forward thinking and open to investment in sustainable new development. Actions already included in the council's Climate Ready Leicester Plan, and referred to in paras 23-25 of this report, are the Green Accreditation Scheme for tourism businesses (action 3.15, p49 of the Climate Ready Leicester Plan) and showcasing green businesses as part of the Destination Management Campaign (action 3.16, p50). The Plan is updated annually, so there will be opportunities for further actions to be added in future.

Signed: Duncan Bell Change Manager (Climate Emergency). Ext. 37 2249.

Dated: 7 March 2025

4.5 Other Implications

Signed:

Dated:

5. Background information and other papers:

None

6. Summary of appendices:

Appendix 1 - Recent Achievements and Current Activities: Inward Investment

Appendix 2 - Recent Achievements and Current Activities: Place Marketing and Strategic Tourism