

# Visit East Of England Destination Development Plan

October 2021







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# East of England Destination Development Plan

2020 was a tumultuous time for the region's visitor economy. Until the Government's financial intervention on issues ranging from furloughing to reducing VAT for the sector, it looked as if swathes of businesses would close and countless thousands of jobs be lost. That intervention, and a cessation of lockdown for the crucial summer period through to the October half term, saved the industry.

New Anglia LEP and Visit East of England quickly established a Visitor Economy Group of all local authorities and other stakeholders, and we were the first region in the country to publish a Tourism Recovery Plan. VEE lobbied MPs and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport for industry support and worked with VisitEngland and VisitBritain to keep businesses informed. A coalition of all 14 Destination Development Organisations was created and they were successful in bidding for £425k of recovery marketing funds from the Cabinet Office and VisitEngland. It was telling that one of Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston's first tours after the July 4th end of lockdown was here.

Hopefully, we are now in a position to put the pandemic behind us and get on with the task of returning the visitor economy to the record 2019 volume and value levels and beyond. Establishing a framework for that is the objective of this Destination Development Plan. It is a first for this area, with every local authority and DMO contributing, because if there is one thing that Covid-19 has taught us is that we need to work together.

Collaboration has been the key theme of the last 18 months, with a resolve to help create the

conditions needed for businesses to flourish and for our visitor economy to stride forward.

Importantly, the ownership of the plan is with all the incorporated stakeholders, and it is designed to reflect and endorse other regional, county and local strategies while providing a strategic visitor economy vision for the whole area. Ultimately, the stars of our tourism industry are local businesses and destinations, and this plan seeks to reflect that.

We appreciate that things can change so this is an iterative document and, complementing the recently published DCMS Tourism Recovery Plan, will be reviewed and updated regularly. Nonetheless, we believe it sets out an ambitious and compelling narrative, not least in Building Back Better, with key themes of sustainable tourism through Net Zero and Clean Growth, digital innovation and skills development helping us create a year-round industry that grows and spreads demand seasonally and geographically.

It is a plan that, working together, will help us develop a more resilient and dynamic visitor economy that is fit for the future.



**C-J Green**, Chair,  
New Anglia  
Local Enterprise  
Partnership



**Andy Wood**, Chair,  
Visit East of England

# 1 - Executive Summary

**The East of England Destination Development Plan 2021-2025 provides a framework of objectives and actions for developing a sustainable, innovative visitor economy and overcoming market failures.**

This place-based plan is for investors, stakeholders, national tourism bodies and government to understand the long-term ambitions for delivering a resilient, year-round East of England visitor economy.

It seeks to help achieve targets set out in the **Build Back Better** economic strategy, deliver the interventions in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) **Tourism Recovery Plan**, drive investment and growth and address local and regional barriers to productivity as well as enhancing cultural and heritage assets. It is designed for Inclusive Growth, levelling up the visitor economy both geographically and seasonally.

**Amongst other initiatives, the plan will give the region the impetus to:**

- Develop the East Academy for Skills in Tourism (EAST) to change the narrative that the sector is 'seasonal, low skilled and low paid'.
- Develop and promote product to raise the overall tide of year-round tourism towards the high-water mark of Summer, growing and spreading demand seasonally and geographically. Digital innovation will play a key role in this.
- Develop initiatives that will make the East of England one of the most sustainable year-round tourism destinations in the country.

The region has a well-evolved visitor economy, built around staying breaks and holidays, the vast majority of which are for domestic customers. In 2019, tourism was worth £5.5bn in Norfolk and Suffolk and employed 115,000 people. It is the largest sector and biggest employer, so it is vital for the region that it develops, succeeds and prospers.

The Covid-19 pandemic has provided a transformative opportunity for the visitor economy – one that has brought together every local authority and Destination Management Organisation (DMO) in the area, co-ordinated by Visit East of England and New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. Working with us are London Stansted Airport, Greater Anglia Rail and Stena Line operating out of Harwich International Ferry Port.

This is a bottom-up plan with the focus on supporting SMEs, destinations and destination organisations, the stars of our sector, offering business help, sharing expertise, best practice, market intelligence and research.

It aims to help provide stimulus for levelling up deprived coastal and rural areas, encourage building back better our High Streets and market towns, promote **Net Zero** and **Clean Growth**, and create this region as a 'top of mind' destination, particularly as part of **Global Britain**.

It takes into consideration that our towns, cities, rural and coastal areas have different needs and this plan is designed to complement local strategies. Nonetheless, the overall approach recognises that the plan can only be achieved collaboratively.

**Working together, we will address the issues that will make a real difference and move forward towards a strong and resilient future.**

## 2 - What the East will look like in 2025

### Our visitor economy aspirations – making the East of England competitive in a global marketplace:

1. The region's tourism industry, local councils and New Anglia LEP work together as the Visitor Economy Group (VEG) and act as a coalition of progressive change. It represents an ambitious collaboration of public and private sectors with a shared set of goals and objectives.
2. Our geography of Norfolk, Suffolk, east and south Cambridgeshire, including Cambridge, and north Essex is an easily marketable area to domestic and overseas visitors.
3. VEE and its DMO partners are the sustainable resource to the sector, making it easier for owners to run and grow their businesses. The sector is hugely dominated by SMEs who need a strong regional tourism body to represent and help them.
4. We have moved from a narrative of 'seasonal, low-skilled, low-paid' to 'year-round, with well-paid, skilled careers', particularly to support young people into tourism careers and to grow sector productivity. The tourism landscape encourages and supports entrepreneurship.
5. The East of England has a nationally and internationally celebrated range of cultural, arts and heritage events and activities that help define our sense of place and well-being.
6. The East of England has a successful Convention Bureau and Business Visits and Events plan that is renowned for its unique venues and characterful hospitality.
7. The East of England is recognised as being an inclusive and accessible destination.
8. The sector embraces technology and innovation to manage customer and business needs, using a database that includes every visitor economy-related business, service, and venue plus details of 150k+ consumers. As well as communications and promotion, this is used to produce and deliver market intelligence and research for the industry.
9. Our destination websites are all entirely bookable, diminishing the power of global Online Travel Agents (OTAs), and ensuring the value of all bookings is retained for the benefit of the local economy.
10. The Visitor Economy Group and New Anglia LEP have encouraged £250m+ of inward investment on infrastructure and tourism product, including a 15% increase in bed spaces as well as new tourist attractions.





**What we are renowned for: the green thread that runs through our tourism offering:**

11. The East of England is known as a leading environmentally friendly, sustainable travel destination in the UK and is actively working towards Net Zero 2030.
12. We promote our sustainable approach to our diverse landscape, comprising 9,172 km<sup>2</sup> of AONBs, nature reserves, a National Park, country estates and parks, around 2000 miles of walking and cycle paths and trails, welcoming market towns and chocolate box villages. This is critical to our visitor offer as well as engendering enormous pride amongst residents and playing a vital role in supporting the health and wellbeing of local inhabitants.
13. We are a leading proponent of reducing Food Miles and increasing Active Travel.
14. Following Greater Anglia's £1.5bn investment in new environmentally friendly rolling stock and rail infrastructure – the biggest investment since Victorian times – rail is now the principal transport for visitors from London and the wider capital area.
15. Stansted is growing passenger numbers to 43 million by 2032 and is committed to achieving this sustainably: there will be no increase in flights or noise limits, Stansted is carbon neutral and will be zero carbon by 2038. Stansted also has the highest public transport mode share of any airport in the UK. Stena Line Ferries have also helped increase inbound visitors.
16. Together, this has helped increase capacity, whilst minimising impacts on sensitive areas and spreading visitor benefits geographically and seasonally; helping the visitor economy and the jobs it supports to become more sustainable and help struggling parts of the region to level up.



## 3 - Introduction

**The purpose of this Destination Development Plan is the collaborative development of the region's tourism industry and to provide and help implement an ambitious strategic vision that will increase year-round value and employment in this hugely important sector.**

There are five key objectives that will be delivered by this Development Plan to help achieve our 2025 vision:

- Overcoming barriers to productivity and market failures by developing and promoting a year-round visitor offering, utilising the natural, cultural and built capital, demonstrating investment in new product and driving innovation. Attracting visitors outside the main summer season is key to growth and productivity, as well as creating revenue in the entire value chain. This will establish demand, sustain year-round businesses and the value they bring to local communities, and incentivise staff development and retention.
- Propagating the Clean Growth agenda. The region has an ambition to be one of the most environmentally friendly tourism destinations in the UK. Sustainable tourism promotes and supports local businesses and supply lines to keep value in the local economy.
- Making this region a 'top of mind' destination, both for domestic and overseas markets.
- Through an ambitious skills agenda, challenge the out-moded view of the sector being 'seasonal, low paid and low skilled'. We create careers, not 'holiday jobs'.
- Developing technological innovation, innovative promotional methods, an intelligently focussed database and back office systems that can make efficiencies, improve service, and increase bookability that keeps value in the local economy.





## 4 - Overview



### 4.1 - The Destination



**The East of England strategic tourism area is a geography that is attractive and marketable to overseas and domestic visitors alike.**

The area covers all of Norfolk and Suffolk, comprising more than 9,200km<sup>2</sup> of countryside that includes the Broads National Park, Britain's largest protected wetland; three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; countless nature reserves and country estates. The spatial context envelops east and south Cambridgeshire, and north Essex. It includes the internationally significant cities of Cambridge, the world's most famous university, and Norwich, England's first UNESCO City of Literature. It has Ipswich, England's oldest continuously inhabited town and home to a vibrant waterfront, and Newmarket, the world centre of horse racing.

Its varied 150 miles of coastline includes the resorts of Great Yarmouth, Cromer, Hunstanton and Lowestoft, and numerous seaside towns such as Southwold, Aldeburgh, Felixstowe and Wells-next-the-Sea. Much of the region's built

attractions and accommodation are by or near the sea. The biodiverse coast also includes the estuarine Wash and Shotley Peninsula.

The interlocking geographies are The Fens from west Norfolk to Cambridge, Stour Valley and Dedham Vale between Suffolk and Essex, known as Constable Country, and the Brecks and Thetford Forest Park on the intersection of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.

There are more than 2000 miles of walking and cycle paths and trails. With the most hospitable climate in the country and gentle landscape, there is a huge variety of outdoor activities that can be enjoyed year-round. It has some of the most celebrated wildlife watching spots in the UK, regularly hosting BBC's Spring and Autumn Watch series.

Visit East of England's Spring 2021 Consumer Sentiment Survey (7589 responses) suggests visitors come predominantly for good beaches and coast (61%), because it is easy to get to (57%), for good food and drink (49%) and good accommodation (48%).



The region is a microcosm of English history. This is the place where the earliest evidence of man has been found outside the Great Rift Valley of Africa, the cradle of civilisation – human footprints dating back almost a million years when this was the last land link to the Continent. The UK's first ever tourists came to the East of England.

This was a centre of Roman activity and Vikings raided through The Wash to Cambridge and Thetford and overland to Bury St Edmunds where they martyred the King of the East Angles. Sutton Hoo is home to an inspiring Anglo-Saxon royal burial site, featured recently in the Ralph Fiennes Netflix film *The Dig*. This is where 'Angle-land' began. The Normans left outstanding built capital, including the iconic 'Ship of The Fens' Ely Cathedral and 'Box on the Hill' Norwich Castle.

From medieval times, trading created the higgledy-piggledy, part-timbered heritage wool towns including Lavenham; peat-digging for winter fuel created the Broads (yes, we have the only man-made National Park);

Dutch ingenuity helped engineer The Fens and establish modern ports as well as aiding our Puritans' mission towards the New World where a Norfolk man helped make the original Special Relationship by marrying Pocahontas; and King's Lynn – close to the Royal family's residence at Sandringham - forged north Atlantic trading with the Hanseatic League.

This was the birthplace of the agricultural revolution but, crucially, a lack of fast-running water left it ignored by the industrial revolution and so preserved its medieval heritage.

A final invasion was friendly, when more than 350,000 US service people of the Eighth Air Force transitioned through this area: they became Masters of the Air, and their bravery and sacrifices paved the way for D-Day and the end of Nazi tyranny in Europe.

As demonstrated, the East of England has excellent connections with Northern Europe and North America, and we believe these are markets we can take advantage of through inbound tourism.





## 4.2 - Transport and Access



### Transport East's strategy and key themes are supporting growing the visitor economy.

The East of England has excellent connectivity through London Stansted Airport, the International Gateway to the East of England, Norwich Airport with daily flights from the worldwide airport hub Schiphol, and Harwich International Port's passenger and cruise terminal, now also part of Freeport East. Great Yarmouth, with its deep-water outer harbour, has an ambition to be a cruise port, supported by a new third river crossing.

Stansted Airport has plans to grow passenger numbers to 43 million by 2032 and is committed to achieving this sustainably: there will be no increase in flights or noise limits, Stansted is carbon neutral and will be zero carbon by 2038. Stansted also has the highest public transport mode share of any airport in the UK. Stena Line Ferries can also help increase inbound visitors with 1800 passengers a day able to travel between the Hook of Holland and Harwich.

Cambridge, the most popular day trip destination for North Americans staying in London, is our most internationally recognised brand and can be used to attract more international visitors to the region, in turn helping Stansted broaden its route network and level up the disproportionate number of overseas tourists entering via Heathrow. 57% of international visitors arrive through Heathrow, go to London and gravitate west to The Cotswolds, Bath and Shakespeare's Country.

Increasing visitor traffic can be used to strengthen and broaden Stansted's route network. Currently, the airport's connectivity with, for instance, North America is poor. However, air travel demand creates a virtuous circle: a route drives more traffic which encourages airlines to lay on more services.

Greater Anglia's rail network includes Intercity London Liverpool Street-Norwich line and Stansted Express and significant branch lines to the furthest reaches of the region. GA has recently invested £1.5bn in environmentally friendly rolling stock and new services, the biggest investment in rail in the region since Victorian times. We will work with GA to ensure rail is the principal transport for visitors from London and the wider capital area.

The new rolling stock are wheelchair accessible.

'Norwich in 90', for quicker rail transport to and from the capital, is being actively campaigned for across the timetable as well as other upgrades to the Liverpool Street-Norwich main line. An ambition is to have faster and more frequent rail services between Cambridge and Norwich, building on the Oxford-Cambridge East West Rail project with improvements also being campaigned for on the Cambridge to Ipswich line to deliver more frequent services.

There is close proximity to London via the A12 and M11, the Midlands from the A14 and A11 and access from the North is via the A1 and A47. Funding is being sought for more dualling of the A47 in Norfolk, at King's Lynn and into Great Yarmouth. This would follow the huge success of the final dualling of the A11. The Long Stratton bypass will shorten travel time between Norwich and Ipswich. The Norwich Western Link will complete a fully-dualled city orbital. Improvements are being planned for the A12/A14 Copdock junction as part of the Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) and additional improvements are being sought for other junctions on the A14 around Ipswich to improve journey times and reliability.

Signposting to the region from the M25 and M11 would be beneficial.









## 4.3 - Culture, Heritage and Arts

**The region's vibrant cultural sector boasts internationally and nationally celebrated brands, playing a unique role in creating a distinctive sense of place, an important driver in attracting tourism. There are award-winning theatres and international festivals, including Aldeburgh Festival of Music and Arts, the Norfolk and Norwich Festival, Out There at Great Yarmouth, Latitude and the King's Lynn Festival.**

There are important heritage sites such as Sutton Hoo, and Norwich is England's most complete medieval city as well as being England's first UNESCO City of Literature. Newmarket, widely regarded as the birthplace of horse racing offers the National Museum of Horse Racing.

Other historical attractions include Cambridge University, IWM Duxford, Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery and Norwich Cathedral, the Hippodrome Circus in Great Yarmouth, the Abbey of St Edmund in Bury St Edmunds, Palace House at Newmarket, Christchurch Mansion in Ipswich, Maritime King's Lynn, and Ely Cathedral.

National Trust and English Heritage properties include Blickling Hall and Estate, Felbrigg, Ickworth, Anglesey Abbey, Melford Hall, Oxburgh, Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds, Felixstowe Landguard Fort and Harwich Redoubt Fort, and privately-owned open estates include Holkham, Houghton, Somerleyton, Helmingham and Kentwell Hall. English Heritage operate Framlingham, Orford and Baconsthorpe Castles as well as Binham Priory, Castle Acre Priory and Castle Acre Castle. Walsingham, 'England's Nazareth', hosts the Catholic National Shrine and Basilica of Our Lady and is the focus of a new pilgrimage route.

The cultural sector in Norfolk and Suffolk is represented by the New Anglia Culture Board which works closely with the New Anglia LEP and Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils. The sector has been successful in attracting £5.6 million funding from Arts Council England between 2018 and 2021, plus £3.4million for the area's museums. There has also been investment from the National Lottery Heritage Fund amounting to £81.1 million since 2013/14. The region benefited from the Cultural Recovery Fund. Partnership working has been crucial in attracting this investment.

As well as this, New Anglia LEP, through the Innovative Projects and Growing Places funds, have provided funding support of over £2m to a wide range of cultural projects, not least circa £250k each to St Peter Hungate, Norwich, the first church nationally to be repurposed; New Wolsey Campus, Ipswich; Newmarket's National Horse Racing Museum; the National Centre for Thomas Gainsborough and St Peter's Cultural Centre, Sudbury; the Venetian Waterways at Great Yarmouth and £500k for the Norwich Castle Keep project.

Almost 6,985 jobs are supported by the cultural sector, accounting for around 1% of all the jobs in the area. Pre-Covid, Culture had seen rapid growth, increasing by 16% since 2015, but the infrastructure of the sector has been badly damaged by the pandemic and it will take time and investment to rebuild.

Returning the sector to its pre-Covid growth will allow it to act as a crucial driver in achieving the progressive change we aspire to, and ensuring the East of England's position in a global market place.

## 4.4 - Attractions and Events

There is a wealth of private sector family attractions, including theme parks and zoos, many of which have invested significantly in weather proofing facilities. Most are members of the [Norfolk and Suffolk Tourist Attractions group](#).

Most of these venues are open year-round or close to year-round, and many organise seasonal shows and events. These include Thursford Christmas Spectacular, the largest festive event outside the West End; Aldeburgh Food and Drink Festival at Snape Maltings; Latitude at Henham Park; PrimEvil at Roarr! Dinosaur Park and Scaresville at Kentwell Hall; seasonal shows at Great Yarmouth's Hippodrome, the UK's only surviving total circus building; Newmarket Nights and Royal Norfolk Show and Suffolk Show.

There is considerable growth in outdoor active lifestyle participation events and hosting of significant outdoor events, including The Women's Tour, Tour of Britain, Run Norwich 10k, and the Great East Series including the Run and Swim events.

## 4.5 - Accommodation

The region has myriad accommodation options to suit all tastes and pockets, from the adventurous and quirky to the luxurious.

A key sector is self-catering accommodation. In the resorts there is a propensity of quality holiday parks, including lodges, static caravans, and chalets. Hotels range from large brands to stylish boutique; likewise pubs and inns. There are many camping and caravanning sites, with a growing number of glamping sites.

Bed space numbers range from 1,333 in the Ipswich area to more than 40,000 in Great Yarmouth.

There is an ambition to create more bed spaces, from boutique hotels to pop-up camping.





## 4.6 - Vision and Priorities Opportunities by Destination

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**The area covers a disparate landscape that includes market towns, cities, coastal and rural destinations. Their issues and opportunities are not homogenous, and this plan identifies destinations' specific needs.**

Nonetheless, our contiguous region has thematic and geographical synergies that are complementary as we look to drive the sector year-round. For instance, our region includes seaside resorts that share the same objectives; likewise, a number of areas that have a high propensity of retail.

The boundaries that are formed by county borders, administrative regions or other governmental divisions are not a reflection of a natural tourism region - where one is led, not by public sector priorities but simply by the destination perceptions of visitors. Multiple and different destinations can be packaged as a single tourism offering because they are symbiotic.

Our approach is pragmatic about the destination philosophy. Bringing together the whole of Norfolk and Suffolk - an integrated LEP area - and incorporating adjacent areas

in Essex and Cambridgeshire, has created a destination region which chimes with visitors. It includes the hugely important tourism city destination of Cambridge as well as attractive coastal and rural parts of Essex which are an intrinsic part of the Stour Valley, Dedham Vale and Constable Country alongside the villages on the Suffolk side of the border. This naturally feels a cohesive East of England offer.

Local authority initiatives enabling and supporting business growth and product development are a key component of this plan, particularly where learnings and best practises can be shared.

We have listed current and upcoming projects that will be delivered by 2025 and which will help the overall strategy of developing year-round tourism, product and place, skills, sustainability and levelling up.



## ....> 4.7 - Urban Cambridge

**Cambridge is a pivotal destination in the East of England's visitor economy, a world-renowned university city that has an unrivalled creative, cultural and heritage offer. It is a key element of the city region brand.**

Visitors are drawn by the beautiful architecture of the majestic colleges, the museums and galleries, the river that winds through its heart, the unique and relaxed shopping which includes many independent stores, a vibrant food scene, luxury hotels and a first class leisure experience.

The tourism sector in Cambridge embraces arts, museums, conferencing, retail, night-time economy, food and beverage, accommodation providers, attractions, leisure operators and the creative industries and education sector.

These sectors are broadly represented by Visit Cambridge, a newly established DMO that has 4 key partners, Cambridge City Council (CCC) Cambridge Business Improvement District (Cambridge BID), Kings College Cambridge and Fitzwilliam Museum Enterprises (FME)

CCC lead on collaborating with other Local Authorities including the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP), Cambridge County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

2019 Volume and Value figures showed tourism worth £867m, with 8.3m visitors, and employing 17,000 people, 22% of all employment. However only around 12% of these visitors are currently exploring beyond Cambridge.

With its international reputation for intellectual capital, business tourism is an important aspect of the local visitor economy. In 2017 Meet Cambridge, the conference venue finding service for Cambridge, received 2952 enquiries

worth £23 million. Of these, 1307 booked in Cambridge worth £4 million.

It is estimated that the events industry is worth £35 million pa to the colleges alone; this figure does not include other city or regional venues. The economic and wider impact of these events is significantly higher.

Despite its international draw Cambridge is perceived as a day trip destination. 88% of the city's annual visitors stay for a few hours and at best a day. This deeply engrained perception both domestically and internationally is reinforced by a fast and regular train service to London with 8 trains an hour and the travel trade who, when organising coach trips, include Cambridge as a 2 hour stop en route to Oxford, Stratford and York.

However, Cambridge is unable to support many enquires due to a lack of core facilities needed to achieve its full potential, including large-scale (250+) conference facilities and adequate hotel/bed provision. These opportunities are lost to other venues nationally and globally.

### **Strategic investments for Cambridge and the surrounding area**

Network Rail are seeking planning permission for a new Cambridge South rail station. This £186m project is aimed to start in 2022 and complete in 2025.

Cambridge City Council is in consultation about a £4.5m redevelopment of Cambridge Market Square, a significant piece of public realm right in the heart of the City Centre.

Cambridge University and a number of College partners are investing £10s of millions to redevelopment the 5 acre Old Press Mill Lane city centre site with close proximity to the river. When complete this project will include significant new public realm as well as retail and leisure attractions.



## New hotels

Multi-million pound sums are being invested in new and refurbished hotels in the city with close to 1,000 rooms newly opened and close to 1,000 more in the pipeline which include:

- Locke Living Aparthotel 180 rooms opens late September 2021
- Hyatt Centric bedrooms 150 rooms opens late September 2021
- Fellows House Hilton Curio Collection 163 rooms with pool and Spa opened in July 2021
- Novotel North Cambridge 217 rooms with pool and Spa opened in Summer 2021
- Newly Refurbished and opened in August the Graduate Hotel (formerly the Doubletree) with 140 rooms, new pool and Spa
- New Hobson House Hotel in the City Centre opens Summer 2022, this is converting a 1901 former prison to a 56 room Boutique hotel
- Planning agreed for a new 229 room Wilde Aparthotel as part of Cambridge City Councils multimillion rebuilding of Park Street Car Park that starts in January 2022
- Planning agreed for new 125 room hotel as part of a major redevelopment of the Lion Yard Shopping Centre with work due to start in 2022
- Planning agreed for a new 153 room hotel as part of a major redevelopment of the Grafton Centre Shopping Centre with work due to start in 2022
- Planning agreed for a new 141 room hotel as part of continuing major redevelopment of the CBI area near Cambridge Railway Station
- Plans submitted for a new 255 room hotel as part of a major redevelopment of the former County Council HQ Shire Hall in the city





## **Norwich**

**Norwich 2040 Vision sets out the priorities for the city, with Towns Fund Norwich Investment Plan identifying eight distinct funded projects which will deliver on the priorities set out, addressing challenges in the economy and maximising potential and opportunity. Through these projects, the partners will develop a modern, digital, inclusive and sustainable city economy, building on the success of the tourism, tech cluster and knowledge-based sectors, creative ecosystem and strong networks, and addressing inequalities to enable more people to contribute to and benefit from these opportunities. Full details of Norwich's Town Deal are [here](#).**

### **Key Towns Deal projects funded:**

- Digital Hub - a new city centre workspace with start-up and grow on space for digital businesses.
- Norwich Make Space at the Halls – a state of the art digital making space for collaborative creative thinking and high value, cross-sector partnerships between culture, digital and tech.
- Digi-Tech Factory – a new skills facility providing digital tech, engineering and design courses.
- Advanced Construction and Engineering Centre – a training facility applying tech, including Industry 4.0, and clean growth to construction, manufacturing and engineering.
- East Norwich and Carrow House – an investment to accelerate the development of a new high-quality urban quarter in East Norwich through master planning and repurposing Carrow House for professional services and knowledge industry office space.

- Revolving Fund – to unlock brownfield sites to deliver modern homes and workspaces for the growing economy.
- Public Realm – investing in enhancing city centre public and urban spaces and improving connectivity and navigation.
- Branding – communicating what the city has to offer through a project to develop a commercial proposition for Norwich as 'the place' for business and a city to live, learn and invest in.

### **Additional city-wide projects/initiatives:**

- New wayfinding scheme will be rolled out across the city centre, including directional heads-up mapping for easy navigation.
- Norfolk and Norwich Festival celebrates its 250th Anniversary in 2022.
- Norwich's iconic Norman Castle is currently undergoing a £13.5m redevelopment to restore the Keep to its origins as a Norman palace.
- Wensum Lodge is developing a new Creative Industries and Skills Hub.
- Norwich City of Ale is a city-wide festival serving the region's finest beers matched with seasonal local produce.
- Norwich Film Festival is an international BAFTA and BIFA qualifying annual festival.
- Love Light Norwich is a new biennial festival for February, driving tourism in the off-season.
- National Centre for Writing celebrates its 10th anniversary as England's first UNESCO City of Literature.





## Ipswich

Within the Ipswich Vision's overall aim of developing Ipswich into the UK's first 'Connected Town' (a progression of the internationally-recognised model known as the '15-minute city'), there are a series of transformative projects that are funded as part of the Government's Town Deal initiative for reviving UK High Streets. Full details of Ipswich's Town Deal are [here](#).

### Key Towns Deal projects funded:

- Digital Town Centre: developing a seamless digital eco-system connecting booking, travel, venues and shopping through a single platform and enabling AR/VR trails, accessibility information and on-street screens. Improving the visitor experience of the town by implementing digital initiatives that would look to connect with VisitBritain's TXGB booking system. Potential to improve the high street experience.
- Technology and Sustainability Academy: new education centre offering a range of courses focused on digital and tech skills.
- Waterfront Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge: a new bridge connecting the waterfront and creating a circular route around the marina; enabling for a Maritime Trail.
- 'Oasis Project': a new green trail will link the waterfront to the town centre and help to encourage more walking and cycling whilst opening up new, green spaces along the way; improving the town centre for residents and attracting visitors.
- Ipswich Town Centre Revival Fund: within this project is the aim to develop a new music venue in the town centre, strengthening the town's cultural offer.

### Additional upcoming projects/initiatives:

- Ipswich Museum Regeneration: £8m of Heritage Lottery Funding to redevelop Ipswich Museum.
- Development of New Wolsey Theatre and the building of a new youth and community theatre space.
- Suffolk Short Film Festival: new international film festival based in Ipswich Film Theatre (October 2021).
- SPILL Festival 2021 and beyond: internationally performance art festival hosted by SPILL in Ipswich every two years; attracting new artists and audiences in late Autumn (out of season).
- The Hold: Suffolk Archives new cutting-edge archival centre with regular exhibitions of national significance and community-based activity.
- Power of Stories exhibition at Christchurch Mansion: a nationally, and potentially internationally, significant exhibition celebrating the stories of Black communities in Ipswich and Suffolk and from across the world; including costumes from the Marvel Black Panther film.









## ... Ely

**Tourism is very important to Ely, a small city, rich with culture and heritage that is well connected by train and road. It has free parking year-round.**

As part of the local authority, Oliver Cromwell's House on St Mary's Green is not only a Tourism Hub, but an attraction and an asset to the city together with Ely Cathedral, museums, art galleries, riverside attractions, and many independent businesses.

Independent Visit Ely promotes the area and surrounding destinations with bookable tours, events, walks, trails, talks on local history coupled with a collaborative approach with other stakeholders.

With recovery funding from the Heritage Lottery, Ely Museum has had a £2.2 million refurbishment, including an audio guide experience to Oliver Cromwell's House.

Digital signage and Wayfaring project 2022: Combined Authority funding has been secured for this project to better signpost attractions and keep visitors longer through digital signage points across the city.

Ely Cultural and Strategy Group: A working group has been formed to discuss achieving 'City of Culture' status, with the purpose of, among other things, raising the city's profile, embedding it in the national consciousness, showcasing the city's rich history, heritage and culture and attracting more visitors.

The city's ambition and vision includes a sustainable year-round programme that creates a cultural and economic legacy for the city, generates national and international impact, and is accessible, distinctive and experiential.

The Tourism and Town Centre Committee have formed a working group to celebrate the

four-day, national Platinum Queen's Jubilee. In addition, Visit Ely and Ely Cathedral organise several additional events to promote tourism such as the Apple and Harvest Fayre, Green Fair promoting eco-friendly products and sustainability, and Christmas illuminations.

2023 will see the 1350th Anniversary of the Founding of the Monastery of St. Etheldreda.

## ... King's Lynn & West Norfolk

**King's Lynn has been awarded the maximum Town Deal Fund amount of £25 million for major town regeneration projects. This will include regeneration for the town centre and Guildhall. The projects are split into four general themes: economic productivity through urban regeneration; planning and land use; skills and enterprise; and infrastructure and connectivity.**

Wild Ken Hill Estate near Snettisham is hosting BBC's Springwatch, with other ambitious developments planning to happen soon on the Estate helping make it a major new wildlife attraction/events/accommodation venue.

Watatunga Wildlife Reserve is pioneering a new approach to protecting the planet's last populations of endangered deer and antelope. Situated in 170 acres of unused Norfolk wetland, the reserve is dedicated to the conservation of threatened ungulates and birds. The reserve strives to inspire a new generation with the challenges of conservation in the 21st century.

Ashwick Lake is currently developing plans to create an eco-resort centred on waterside living, water-based recreation and wellness.

10k, and the Great East Series including the Run and Swim events.





## 4.8 - Coast Great Yarmouth

23

**2023 will be a Year of the Coast celebration which the region will play a significant part in.**

Great Yarmouth has an extensive series of regeneration plans underway as part of the Future High Street Fund and Town Deal Town Investment Plan vision and objectives. Transformation will occur across a comprehensive suite of interventions that span the town centre and the seafront. These include activities within the areas of growth and regeneration, arts, culture and heritage, connectivity and skills. Details of the Great Yarmouth Town Deal are here.

The two major schemes (FHSF and Town Deal) have secured nearly £34m of funding to provide around £91m of investment overall.

**Projects that have been underway or are already complete include:**

- Venetian Waterways public water gardens on the seafront.
- New Marina Centre to open in the Summer of 2022.
- Third river crossing to link the A47 at Harfrey's roundabout to the port and the enterprise zone via South Denes Road.
- Different Light: An ambitious new post-Covid Winter programme, including Christmas in the Parks, illuminations on heritage and iconic buildings, water-based pyrotechnics and an arts trail to support investment in infrastructure, lighting and spaces to enable year-round events and activity.
- Ginger e-scooters: The town and seafront are piloting e-scooters. Leading up to the Summer of 2021, there were 3200 registered users. There is a local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan.
- The 120-year-old seafront Empire is being relaunched as a music and street food venue.
- FACET is an environmental project, in collaboration with NV Economishe Impuls Zeeland (NL), to support tourism SMEs to make cost effective changes that are better for the environment.



### Other projects as part of the Town Deal include (but are not limited to):

**Arts, Culture and Heritage:** A number of projects that seek to restore and sustainably repurpose vacant historic buildings including the Winter Gardens, the Ice House and a number within the town.

**Growth, regeneration and business development:** This includes strategic interventions in terms of the unlocking of key sites and improving infrastructure. The key strategic projects include the development of an operations and maintenance campus and business incubator, and the regeneration of North Quay.

**Connectivity:** A key element of this will be to enhance the physical and digital connectivity to and within the town, including schemes to provide green mobility and enhancement of seafront, improvements to the rail station and

other digital and connectivity infrastructure

**Skills:** The provision of a learning centre and University Campus to maximise the visibility and accessibility of education and skills pathways to enhance employability for people of all ages.

### Additional upcoming projects/initiatives including those in the Future High Street Fund:

- Redevelopment of the historic North Quay riverside to host events including the Maritime Festival.
- Development of a town centre based Heritage Centre.
- There are plans to increase the number of cruise ships docking at the Outer Harbour.
- Skills pathway and taskforce work via a submission to the Community Renewal Fund for a project called OpportunityGY.





## ..... East Suffolk

**East Suffolk Council (ESC) is investing heavily in its major tourism resorts of Felixstowe and Lowestoft. The Strategic Plan seeks to attract and stimulate inward investment and has communities come together around a shared sense of purpose, place and respect.**

**Felixstowe:** Felixstowe south seafront is benefiting from the build of an iconic café/restaurant due to open later in summer 2021 and investment is already in place for a new accessible beach hut village and activity park. Plans are underway to develop an iconic visitor destination at the Martello Napoleonic tower and to enhance the remaining south seafront gardens and promenade. £2m already invested in Felixstowe, with more in the pipeline. The projects are designed to enhance the visitor experience by creating iconic and attractive visitor destinations that can be enjoyed all year round. They provide a mix of product development, enhancement of place and aim to deliver more sustainable visitor experiences.

**Lowestoft:** First Light Festival is an integral part of wider placemaking and cultural regeneration for Lowestoft, key to the ambitions of the new Town Investment Plan, building a new positive narrative for the town that celebrates its position as UK's most easterly point, promoting Lowestoft as a vibrant place to live, work and visit by delivering excellent cultural and arts events and community projects that local people feel proud of and everyone wants to be part of. First Light significantly supports and contributes to the following strategic priorities:

- **Lowestoft Town Investment Plan:** Lowestoft is at the forefront in using heritage and culture as a driver for regeneration.

- **Lowestoft Cultural Strategy:** Lowestoft advocates the benefits of culture for People, Place and the Economy.
- **London Road, Lowestoft High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ):** The creation of a cultural programme within this area.
- **Local Enterprise Partnership:** Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk by building cultural tourism.

Work is underway in Lowestoft to deliver the seafront strategy and vision. Committed projects include Jubilee Terrace: 72 iconic beach huts, café and public toilets regeneration (2021/22) and East Point Pavilion: Revitalised food and beverage facility with events and cultural space opening October 2021.



## ..... Hunstanton

From Spring 2021 the town was awarded funding for a new Hunstanton Dark Skies Observatory build from the EXPERIENCE Norfolk project.

Hunstanton's Regeneration Masterplan includes major library/bus station redevelopment, work on the town's heritage gardens and redevelopment of the Hunstanton Sailing Club. The masterplan sets out a vision of Hunstanton as: an active town; a town that meets the needs of its residents and acts as a good local service centre; and a more attractive seaside destination where visitors return, stay longer and spend more.

## ..... North Norfolk

The coast and countryside of north Norfolk can facilitate the broadest itinerary for the nature lover, the connoisseur, the adventurer, the artist, the explorer, the pilgrim, the beachcomber, stargazer or those seeking a place of quiet contemplation.

As well as some of the most spectacular beaches in the country, the area is home to The Deep History Coast, featuring a unique 22-mile discovery trail, brought to life by installations and an augmented reality app. This dynamic coastline tells the most significant story of the geological and biological evolution of Britain including the 800,000-year-old human footprints, the earliest evidence of man found outside the Great Rift Valley in Africa, and the discovery of the almost complete fossilised skeleton of a 600,000-year-old mammoth.

The destination hosts the most imaginative attractions, such as BeWILDerwood, an award-winning forest of family fun and outdoor adventure; Pensthorpe Nature Park, home to many rare birds and famed for hosting Springwatch; and The Poppy Line heritage steam railway. It provides the most accessible locations for walkers, cyclists, canoeists and sailors.

The district perfectly achieves that fine balance: providing the infrastructure to host vast numbers of visitors; whilst appearing undiscovered and wild. Its communities and businesses take huge pride in the quality of the environment and the visitor experience.









## 4.9 - Market towns & Countryside

### West Suffolk

**During 2022 Bury St Edmunds will be celebrating 1,000 years since the founding of the Abbey of St Edmund in Bury St Edmunds by King Canute. The ten-year vision for the Abbey of St Edmund is that it will inspire all its visitors through excellent conservation, learning and community engagement.**

The Suffolk Inclusive Growth Investment Fund is helping High Streets by supporting new businesses and revitalising vacant units across West Suffolk to provide vibrant and attractive town centres for visitors.

This includes the redevelopment of 17-18 Cornhill in Bury St Edmunds, the site of the former Post Office, a scheme to protect and keep the historic frontage, returning the site back into economic use and delivering homes and commercial frontage to the town centre.

West Suffolk Council are investing in electric vehicle charge points to serve both residents, visitors and businesses, by trialling lamppost mounted charge points in residential areas, as well as providing fast charge points in public car parks to allow visitors to charge their vehicles.

A green infrastructure strategy is being prepared for West Suffolk which will help inform the revision of the local plan and ensure that West Suffolk remains a green and leafy district.

One of the many alluring features of West Suffolk is the high number and quality of its parks and public green spaces. The district hosts the most 'Green Flag' accredited parks in the county. These sites are diverse in nature and include the ornate Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds, the forested Brandon Country

Park, the historically significant West Stow Country Park (containing West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village Museum) and East Town Park, in Haverhill, which links to the railway walk and provides a green corridor into the heart of the town.

In Newmarket all the major stakeholders associated with the town's £240m a year horse racing industry are working together with Discover Newmarket to build a comprehensive range of bookable experiences. New electric minibus guided tours provide a more sustainable mode of transport for visitor movement.





## ..... Breckland

**Breckland has one of the most distinctive landscapes in the UK and boasts its best overall climate with low rainfall and hot summers. This is the place for eco-adventure.**

The gateway to Breckland is the ancient town of Thetford, which is a perfect base from which to begin exploration of the area's diversity, its outstanding wildlife, rich history and fun outdoor activities.

The Market Towns Initiative will implement place regeneration through public realm and key strategic projects in Dereham, Swaffham, Thetford, Watton and Attleborough.

Undergoing a £2m development, Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse is a family-friendly workhouse museum, rural heritage centre, 50-acre estate and working heritage farm. It contains the recently opened 'Voices of the Workhouse' exhibition exploring the lives and treatment of some of the poorest people in Victorian society.

and trading platforms. In addition, the Go Digital project is providing digital mentoring and training.

## ..... Broadland & South Norfolk

**The Broads Authority has extended its Sustainable Tourism Plan to 2023.**

The 140-acre Broadland Country Park has opened, with ongoing work to restore this important heathland habitat.

The network of EVCPs, which currently covers all the Market Towns in South Norfolk, will be extended. The points are discoverable on the [Zap map](#) used by most EV systems and offer visitors the chance to charge their vehicle while they explore the towns.

The local authority are supporting market town businesses with the Click It Local online trading and delivery platform to enable independent retailers to compete with larger businesses and trading platforms. In addition, the Go Digital project is providing digital mentoring and training.



## Babergh and Mid Suffolk



**Known as the 'Heart of Suffolk', Babergh and Mid Suffolk is home to the medieval Wool Towns, quaint but bustling market towns, historic houses and gardens, innovative cultural venues, coast, countryside and river valleys. It has something for everyone, but as there is currently no central point which visitors gravitate to, the visitor economy is disparate and smaller in scale than its potential.**

However, things are changing, new attractions are being planned and major public and private investment is heralding significant opportunities for the economy of this rural centre of Suffolk.

The John Peel Centre for Creative Arts will expand their venue, making use of an adjoining space, the former Natwest Bank. This will allow for a greater flexibility of hires, increased back-stage facilities, a larger catering offer and a more participatory programme of events.

The Regal Theatre and Cinema has undergone a £3.6m redevelopment project to create two new auditoriums, expanded bar and new café with flexibility built in for hosting small meetings and conferences.

The National Centre for Gainsborough is being developed in Sudbury. This £9m project includes a landmark three-storey structure that will create the largest gallery in Suffolk. It will include spaces for exhibitions, displays and learning with four new galleries and new café overlooking the beautiful 18th century garden will enhance the visitor experience, along with improved facilities, more spaces for learning, talks and concerts.

The multi-million pound renovation of St Peter's Church in Sudbury into a new arts venue including mezzanine gallery and exhibition space, café and bar will be completed in 2022.

The Stowmarket Museum of East Anglian Life houses 7 historic buildings set in 75 acres of land with over 40,000 objects. It is on its journey to be revitalised as the National Museum of Food which will help people understand where their food comes from, using demonstration, displays, the living landscape, tastings and hands-on experiences.

Valley Ridge, a 284-acre mid-Suffolk site, will be developed as a premium staycation resort, offering year-round Winter and water sports alongside best-in-class leisure and hotel facilities using sustainable, carbon-neutral infrastructure. This £500m development will include a snow dome, housing one of the largest indoor ski slopes in the UK, a water park, wellness centre, fitness studios, cinema, and retail. The proposals include a 350 key hotel and approximately 494 self-catered lodges. It will create approximately 1800 new jobs on site with another 2000 in the local supply chain and reflects a scale of ambition not often seen.

The revival of Benton End, the 16th century former home and gardens of celebrated artist-plantman, Sir Cedric Morris has begun. In partnership with the Garden Museum of London, the house is preparing to open once again as a centre for the study of art and horticulture.

The River Stour Festival runs a year-round programme of events celebrating the river, its culture, surrounding landscape and people. It provides a gateway to arts, nature, health, environment, and businesses in the Stour Valley and beyond, and connects both local people and visitors with the rich landscape on their doorstep.

The Primadonna Festival, the first literary festival in the UK to specifically give prominence to work by women, has made a



## South Cambridgeshire

home for itself in Stowmarket at the Museum of East Anglian Life. Now in its second year, it brings together writers, editors, readers, publishers, artists, thinkers, comedians, performers, musicians and foodies to share experiences, ideas and events.

Sudbury is regarded today as Britain's most important centre for manufacture of woven silk fabrics, producing nearly 95% of the nation's woven silk textiles in Sudbury's mills. The first ever Silk Festival for the town was delivered in 2019, followed by the Sudbury Silk Stories film and Creative Young Weavers project. Silk Celebration events will continue with a year-round programme planned and the festival will return in 2023.

A 168-bedroom Hampton by Hilton hotel is being built at Imperial War Museum Duxford to complement the site's conference facilities.

## Downham Market

Downham Market formed a strategy group to create a Neighbourhood Plan and vision for the market town in February 2021. This is a document that is created by the Town Council, working in partnership with its community and which will be used, together with the Borough's Plan, in deciding planning applications. This is an ongoing working opportunity with aims to create an environment which will make the market town a positive and vibrant place in which to live, work and play.



## 4.10 - Regional and County



**EXPERIENCE:** The INTERREG France-Channel-England EXPERIENCE project, led by Norfolk County Council, is an opportunity to deliver new economic growth, harnessing the new trend of experiential travel to grow Autumn-Spring tourism and bring greater sustainability to regional development.

Experiential bookings grew by 125% in 2017 (TripAdvisor.com) and using experiential tourism to market holidays is strongly recommended by 56% of Destination Management Organisations (Treksoft Travel Trend report 2018).

There is a strong need to improve sustainable use of our abundant natural resources and the culture and history of people and place.

EXPERIENCE capitalises on a new audience willing to explore outside traditional tourist destinations by developing world-class, innovative experiential tourism products to attract that market.

Its learnings will be applied to the overall aims and objectives of the Development Plan.

**Zoological Society of East Anglia:** Operating Banham Zoo in Norfolk and Africa Alive in Suffolk, ZSEA is already one of the leading visitor attraction businesses in East Anglia, working with 1400 schools across the region and raising awareness of the importance of connecting with nature and animals for mental health and recovery.

However, ZSEA now wants to be a pioneering Government case study to reimagine what the modern zoo should stand for in collaboration with DEFRA and the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA).

The first project will be to create a new National Attraction, an 'Eden-Project' style modern zoo where mixed species are housed in biodomes surrounded by their natural flora

and fauna. This will be a centre where future generations are taught the importance of all aspects of conserving our planet and those that live within it, where digital technology and AI can extend understanding and connections within conservation. With accessibility at the heart of every step forward, Banham Conservation Education Centre & Zoological Gardens will be a destination attraction which will attract worldwide attention, and be a centre of excellence for animal welfare and science research.

The project at Africa Alive is to create the Zoological Society of East Anglia Nature Reserve which will focus both on conservation education in Africa, through the endangered animals already in our care and collection, part of BIAZA breeding programmes, and also a reserve which focuses on native species to the East of England.

In partnership with the Tusk Trust, and using digital and AI technology, every visitor will become immersed in both the plight and beauty of Africa. There will also be live links into conservation programmes in Africa. The aim is to ensure the reserve can educate those who otherwise may not be able to travel to Africa, and enable visitors to have an immersive experience of the global conservation challenges our generation faces, whether it be an understanding of the precious commodity of water, the plight of animals snared, or supporting community and educational programmes in Africa.

Neighbouring Benacre Estate are supporting the project, which would provide a further 500 acres of land dedicated to nature and the reintroduction of endangered species.

**Celebrating Culture:** Under the banner of Head East, this project aims to rebuild the year-round visitor and cultural economy through product development and enhancement.

**UK City of Culture 2025 Bid:** Great Yarmouth Borough Council and East Suffolk Council are developing a combined bid, establishing a Community Interest Company to make the application.

Culture is increasingly recognised as a driver of economic growth and a key part of the UK Government's Levelling-up agenda. Great Yarmouth has been successful in attracting Town Deal, Heritage Action Zone and Future High Streets Funding for regeneration the 'place' and central to the capital investments and re-purposing of historic buildings planned is culture. Similarly, across the county border

in East Suffolk, Lowestoft was awarded Town Deal and HAZ funding for culture and heritage-driven investments.

The towns of Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft have a shared heritage inextricably linked to the sea and both areas are now realising huge new opportunities through innovation in offshore energy. The UK City of Culture bid presents a natural progression from the Great Places scheme 'Making Waves Together' which was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England, and Historic England, which both councils invested in and delivered.

## 4.11 - Screen Tourism

Given the high levels of feature film and high-end television production in the UK, Screen Tourism is expected to increase in the UK in the coming years and can be developed in this region. There has been recent regional success with films such as Netflix's *The Dig*, Armando Iannucci's *The Personal History of David Copperfield* and the Danny Boyle-Richard Curtis movie *Yesterday*. Visitors can stay at the 'Harry Potter house' in Lavenham.

Much of this success can be attributed to Screen Suffolk. Norfolk County Council has commissioned Olsberg SPI to analyse the opportunity.

Olsberg SPI have previously done a study on Screen Tourism for Creative England and VisitEngland that provided clear evidence that tourists will travel to sites specifically because they have been depicted in feature films and television drama.

36.1% of all international tourists and 11.6% of all domestic tourists surveyed on site at six locations studied for the project, including Holkham Hall, could be defined as core screen tourists ie a screen production was the primary motivator for their visit.

The value of these visits is significant, with the best-performing sites attracting day spend value from international visitors of up to £1.6 million annually. Combined with the day visit value of domestic core screen tourists, the best performing site saw £4.3 million total screen tourism spend annually. Across England, a conservative estimate puts the value of international screen tourism between £100 million-£140 million.

An example of attracting overseas visitors is Apple+ TV series *Masters of the Air*, the last of the second world war trilogy produced by Tom Hanks' Playtone and Steven Spielberg's Amblin and due to be streamed in late 2022. This focuses on the story of the 350,000 servicemen of the US Eighth Air Force who transitioned through the East of England from 1942 to 1945. When the first, *Band of Brothers*, was aired, Normandy Tourism reported a 40% uplift in North American visitors.

Visit East of England brought the executive producer and screenwriter of the series to the region in 2017 as part of the VisitBritain DEF-funded Friendly Invasion project. It was the learnings from this project that convinced Playtone and Amblin to go ahead.



## 5 - Skills

**Covid-19 and Brexit have created recruitment challenges across hospitality and tourism, but the biggest barrier to productivity in the visitor economy is not having a cross-the-board year-round visitor economy.**

The VEE Winter 2020 Business Survey (473 responses) suggested that the majority of business trade (43%) is delivered during the summer months, followed by almost equal share of activity taking place in Spring (23%) and autumn (21%). Winter accounts for 13% of the annual's total volume of trading. Three in five (62%) believe that developing the year-round visitor economy would help their business in the future. Two thirds of respondents believe that not developing year-round business is the key barrier to business productivity. 'Making the region more top of mind with potential visitors' (21%) and 'High-quality, year-round experiences that are good for visitors and host communities' (20%) are two key measures that would help businesses develop the year-round visitor economy. Half (50%) of respondents believe training programmes would also help them extend their season.

To develop this would help overcome its biggest market failure: the narrative that the sector is seasonal, low skilled and low paid and that employment is a 'holiday job for young people' rather than a career.

The survey suggested that the other key challenges are the 'gap between jobs available in the sector and the worker qualifications', the 'cost of delivering vocational training', 'insufficient ties with industry' and, problems with the location of some training facilities, resulting in difficulties attracting critical mass of students to make the offerings affordable.

There needs to be an emphasis on reskilling and upskilling, with entry points for people further on in their lives.

The visitor economy is about people and there are a multitude of entry levels. It is the 'ultimate meritocracy': tourism rewards ambition, it has ease of career progression, it aids social mobility, and provides transferable skills. There are good careers for all ages as long as the person has a good attitude, communication skills and personality.

There is a multi-faceted skills challenge facing the visitor economy, and a need for further and higher education to work closely with the sector to develop career paths.

The industry requires young people inspired to make a difference in the local economy. Courses need to reflect the diversity of the visitor economy and at the same time, focus on the basics: excellent customer service, demonstrable character strengths such as optimism and curiosity. Basic numeracy and a standard of literacy that can be put to work on day one need to be achieved too.

Visitor economy courses need to put sustainability at the heart of their prospectus, while issues such as equality and diversity should take centre stage of the Human Resources agenda.

Education has excellent relationships with local businesses often built around the apprenticeship offer. This relationship needs to be broadened and deepened so that a customer service standard is achieved across the sector. This requires inspiration from industry leaders as well as a new mindset among training providers and colleges.

VEE's Visitor Economy Skills Group, led

## 5.1 - Changing the Narrative

by West Suffolk College, has recently spearheaded a Visitor Economy Network Initiative (VENI), a first for the Eastern region and an important part of the skills offer. It was awarded £1.1m from the European Social Fund. The VENI partnership, comprising three colleges and private and public sector stakeholders, can begin to put the components in place for an East Academy for Skills in Tourism (EAST). This vision is for a joined-up industry provision for the region, delivering the skills needed in management and in the workforce as well as those needed in the future labour market.

EAST will begin as an online resource on the Visit East of England website that will provide bespoke training modules.

A commitment through the VENI initiative to roll out customer service training across the sector makes this framework all the more critical.

The vision is to work with partners to create an apprenticeship programme which can be a flagship offer in EAST. Much work has been done recently in making apprenticeships more relevant to the sector and this has resulted in significantly greater take up of apprenticeships in the region. This needs to be further expanded so that every business can feel reassured that new recruits will be appropriately supported.

Commitment to a successful visitor economy needs to be a shared responsibility. The ongoing skills debate must not only include business voices but be led by the needs of businesses.

**There is a misconception that tourism and hospitality jobs are something to do until a 'proper' one comes along.**

We will change the perceptions about tourism and hospitality jobs and encourage more people to join the industry through a new skills academy to address the persistent skills issues holding back the sector, such as workforce shortfalls and staff retention. We will work in partnership with training providers, taking a leadership position in making the East the destination for tourism skills in the UK.



## 5.2 - Skills & Training Support

**EAST will put businesses at the heart of its ethos, and the academy prospectus will fully reflect the needs of local industry across the visitor economy.**

EAST is about harnessing the best resources we have - in colleges, among training providers, through business networks and most importantly through collaboration. Innovative skills projects which combine existing resources will be the route forward.

EAST then, is a shared resource and a combined vision for skills provision in the visitor economy in the East of England.

The services of East Academy for Skills in Tourism will include:

- Training courses, eg digital promotion, tourism leadership, branding, 2030 Net Zero green tourism.
- An apprenticeship programme relevant to all parts of the visitor economy.
- An internship programme from universities, colleges and schools including international internship programmes helping business to internationalise.
- Mentoring services.
- Coordination of public sector tourism skills programmes.
- An innovative training calendar allowing business to provide year-round employment.
- Through international students provide a global profile for attracting both talent and visitors to tourism to the East.

**As well as these, the skills academy will:**

- Get more industry figures into schools and college to promote the industry and help make the sector a 'career of choice'.
- Change the mindset of careers advisors.
- Promote the attractiveness of our industry.

## 5.3 - Ambassador / Customer Service Scheme

**The sector Skills Group will develop a scheme to deliver better appreciation of customer service that will include 'concierge skills' and local knowledge. The scheme will help the sector workforce to gain a better understanding of delivering year-round tourism.**

Part of the vision is to create exciting local events that combine the best of the farmers' market concept and the breadth of a county show, with a key sustainability focus and the excitement of cultural events, from street theatre to music and children's entertainment. Working with local colleges and schools, we will create educational channels that flow into this 'Innovation Carnival'. At the heart of the initiative is the idea of businesses supporting each other, learning about new products, tasting local flavours, and ultimately, buying and selling local produce to new customers – both those from the hospitality sector (new local produce into local restaurants, cafés and hotels) and to the local community – creating new sustainable local markets for regional produce.

As one of the largest apprenticeship providers in the region, West Suffolk College will work with college and Higher Education partners to establish an industry apprenticeship academy. This will enable businesses to benefit from high quality, work ready apprentices based in their local areas.





Apprenticeships will be offered across a range of subject areas and other standards will be developed based on demand. We will support local businesses, create apprenticeship opportunities, bring new trade, encourage the consumption of local produce across the East's communities and provide a springboard for exciting cultural and educational events. At the same we will inspire young people to get involved in the local community and to learn more about local produce, its beneficial impact on food miles, and its contribution to a vibrant visitor economy, where local foods and crafts can add to the visitor experience in important ways. More than this, the involvement of young people through the LEP's Youth Pledge will help introduce a new generation of local people to the variety of businesses and job opportunities (including apprenticeships) available in the visitor economy, from hospitality and management roles to PR, event planning and of course customer service, not to mention all of the cross-sector support roles from accounting and HR to logistics and food manufacturing – all sectors strongly represented in the East.

We will work with schools and colleges in all of the relevant areas to ensure teaching staff are aware of the opportunities. In partnership with the LEP's Enterprise Adviser Network we will devise curriculum-relevant resources to align as far as possible, with course delivery plans. A key long-term aspiration of this work

is to change perceptions of the sector (Visitor Economy and wider food production sector); promote career opportunities; and develop work related experiences.

To begin with we will create a cluster of businesses willing to engage with schools and colleges and take on apprentices; talk to schools and get local education projects underway; plan activities (both online and physical) involving employers; and create a schedule showing the process of engagement, project work, events, work experience, and potential jobs.

A vital part of our vision is the involvement of the West Suffolk College Sustainability Centre which has two sustainability experts to spearhead a step change in business and community attitudes towards decarbonisation and environmental improvements. This Centre will offer short taster courses on sustainability and longer more in-depth courses such as the IEMA Level 3 to businesses and we will develop parallel educational packages for schools and college students.

We will liaise with Higher Education establishments to broaden this work.





## 6 - Sustainability

**Building on centuries of innovation, the East of England is pioneering the technologies and science needed to power, feed, and connect a growing population for a cleaner and more sustainable future.**

It has the world-leading Tyndall Centre at the University of East Anglia. The East of England is the UK's leading producer of renewable energy and a testbed for innovation in industries, such as farming and food production. It will lead in sustainable tourism too.

Economic growth must go hand-in-hand with greater protection for our natural landscapes, our forests, beaches, clean air, and areas of outstanding beauty rich in biodiversity. We have an exceptional natural environment which is particularly vulnerable to climate change, making our coastline the most dynamic.

These unprecedented times give us an opportunity to reset and jump-start the sector towards a new model of sustainable production and consumption. This will be done by encouraging informed and responsible travel that contributes to local economies and connected local supply chains, protects cultural heritage and natural resources, and moves us towards a zero-carbon economy.

There are social and wellbeing benefits of supporting local firms, producers and environments. Sustainable priorities should be amplified to bring the environmental, social and economic benefits to the visitors and stakeholders.

Key to this will be spreading demand seasonally and geographically to help mitigate over-tourism in a few Summer 'honeypots'.

The East of England will align itself with the Government's Sustainable Tourism Plan to be published later in 2021, aimed at putting the UK at the forefront of the global discussion on sustainable travel.



## 6.1 - Delivering Clean Growth

**We will establish a Sustainable Tourism Group that will involve businesses leading on sustainability including Adnams, Anglian Water, East of England Co-Op and Holkham Hall Estate. They will develop the Sustainable Tourism Plan that will be a road map to Net Zero.**

The group will use the Government's [green industrial revolution plan](#) and the [UN Sustainable Development](#) goals, in particular reinforcing local sustainability and climate emergency plans.

The Sustainable Tourism Plan will build on the significant investments in sustainable tourism already underway, such as the completion of the East Coast Path.

### **The plan will:**

- Include a commitment to environmental and social sustainability in our work.
- Discover and share best practices already taking place.
- Promote how to help visitors make sustainable choices on our DMO websites and in consumer information pre-trip and planning eg rail travel over cars.
- Create sections on consumer and trade e-comms and consumer and corporate websites to make sustainability objectives and related content easy to find.
- Promote spreading demand on transport, seasonality and geography. This should include developing secondary destinations.
- Promote environmentally friendly activities and product offerings.
- Encourage visitors to give back, highlighting community service or ways to learn about and contribute to preserving the natural environment (litter picking on the beach, volunteering as a park ranger).
- Encourage more use of local produce on menus.
- Encourage more use of public transport, walking and cycling including development of new themed walking and cycling routes to help visitors get around.
- Encourage visitors to use local products and services – live like a local.
- Develop a Green Standard for which businesses will have to, for example, adopt a carbon reduction toolkit.
- Develop a Green Pledge for visitors to adhere to eg respecting our natural environment, not wasting water, responsible use of plastic, based on the DEFRA review of the [Countryside Code](#) published on April 1 2021.
- Promote Stansted Airport and Stena Line's efforts on Jet Zero and greener maritime to decarbonise the industries.
- Promote Greater Anglia's environmentally friendly rolling stock.
- Work on the 'final mile' to improve connectivity.





## 6.2 - Digital Innovation

**Technology and innovation have become an enabler for the consumer to learn, reach, plan and book a break and package, as well as opening up instant access to purchases from mobile devices. Visitors can access services and information, such as digital booking systems, digital trails, QR codes, apps, and digital interpretation.**

Digital and tech tourism advancement has created an interconnectedness of smarter travel, smart accommodation, and services. It can help us paint a picture of our destinations, attractions, experiences and offers, reach, and target our audiences more effectively, support the experience, and support retention of visitors and repeat visits.

As part of sector recovery and renewal we will consider how further application of digital and technological innovation can positively impact on our plans and priorities for the visitor economy, including addressing low productivity, perception of the visitor economy as a low skills sector; extending the year-round visitor economy; supporting a sustainable Net Zero tourism industry; and reimagining our town centres and high streets.

Tourism businesses have embraced the opportunities provided by digital innovation during the pandemic, leading to efficiencies and improved working practises. This work will continue and will be collated as a Best Practise guide for businesses.

Tech + Tourism events through Tech East and partners will help businesses digitise their activities.

Improved digital connectivity in the region would help harness the power of new technologies, such as full fibre and 5G, to the benefit of both businesses and visitors.

## 6.3 - Transport Network

**Air:** Stansted has plans to grow passenger numbers to 43 million by 2032 and is committed to achieving this sustainably: there will be no increase in flights or noise limits, Stansted is carbon neutral and will be zero carbon by 2038. Stansted also has the highest public transport mode share of any airport in the UK.

**Rail:** Greater Anglia have made a £1.5bn investment in green rolling stock.

We will work with Greater Anglia to promote the new domestic rail tourism product being developed the Rail Delivery Group, Government and VisitBritain. Building on the success of rail tourism products such as the BritRail pass, the product will encourage sustainable domestic holiday travel and reduce tourism's reliance on cars.

**Active Travel:** Getting visitors to travel without using fossil fuels will not only improve the environment and reduce the carbon footprint but it will also improve health and wellbeing.

In the VEE Spring 2021 Consumer Sentiment Survey 86% of respondents said they would travel to the region by private car, and 47% will walk when here but only 7% will cycle.



## 7 - Business Events & Conferences

**With leading clusters of ICT/digital technology, clean energy and agri-food, we will explore what infrastructure and investment is needed to capitalise on the opportunity to develop business tourism, conferences and events.**

We will work with [Meet Cambridge](#) and others to develop Business Visits and Events and a Business Convention Bureau, broadening MC's work to include, for example, Holkham Hall, Norwich and Suffolk Universities and Norwich Science Park.

We do not have major conference facilities but our USP will be our heritage buildings and venues like IWM Duxford, Newmarket Racecourse, Norwich Castle, The Hold, Snape Maltings, Norwich City and Ipswich Town Football Clubs and the Hanseatic cluster of Listed heritage buildings in King's Lynn alongside numerous smaller venues spread across the region.

We will work with our heritage assets to provide money-can't-buy add-ons eg private tours of Holkham.

In addition, we will look to promote the East of England as a wedding destination, building on the work of Norfolk County Council's [Celebrate in Norfolk](#) and [The Suffolk Coast](#).

## 8 - Accessibility for Visitors

By 2025 a quarter of the tourism market will have accessibility needs. Already, one in five in the UK live with either a disability or a health condition which affects how and where they choose to spend their leisure time. The 'Purple Pound' is worth £12bn a year in the UK.

We will develop bespoke online tourism toolkits for businesses that will include guidance on Responsible Tourism and Inclusive and Accessible Tourism.



## 9 - Background:

### 9.1 - The East of England Visitor Economy



**The visitor economy sector is the region's largest industry and biggest employer, with the potential to grow quickly. The sector has a diverse offering and is dominated by SMEs, many innovative, entrepreneurial and, as Covid has proven, adaptable.**

In 2019, our visitor economy rose in value by 3% to £5.5bn. Tourism-related employment increased by over 3%. In Norfolk tourism jobs were up 3% to 69,266 and in Suffolk up 4% to 44,498. This means tourism was 19.5% of all employment in Norfolk and 14.2% in Suffolk. The area attracted 4,898,000 staying trips and 83,611,922 day visitors.

Establishing our Destination Development Plan will have a transformational impact on our visitor sector as well as lives, future chances and wellbeing of many people living here.

The pandemic has disproportionately impacted on the young in our coastal areas, towns and cities, and this Destination Development Plan will help stimulate recovery as well as growing the local visitor economy. Although we are classified economically as being in the South East, this region has pockets of severe deprivation, both urban and, so we would benefit from levelling up to ensure our

residents have access to similar opportunities and investments as those in more affluent areas around London and we need to build back better, learning lessons from COVID-19.

A key challenge for the sector is the relatively low productivity at £26,000 GVA per job (less than half the value for the ICT sector in comparison). However, Deloitte estimates the tourism GVA multiplier to be 2.8, meaning that for every £1,000 generated in direct tourism GVA, a further £1,800 is supported elsewhere in the economy through supply chain and consumer spending. Nonetheless, jobs in the visitor economy are a good place for non-graduates to start learning valuable life skills, and the sector can be an excellent route to social mobility. It is also a sector with multiple job opportunities across a disparate range of roles.

A priority for the sector is to invest in boosting productivity, encouraging innovation, and enhancing digital skills. This will require much stronger collaboration to build and promote a higher quality product if we are to attract higher-value visitors all year round. We need to work together to develop a narrative for our place that we can all be part of.





## 9.2 - Perceptions of the Region

2021 Consumer Sentiment research by Visit East of England suggests people visit the area because of its distinctive character: good beaches, nice countryside, easy to get to, lots of space, good food and drink, heritage, ideal landscape for walking and cycling.

For those who haven't been, there is a misconception that the East of England is difficult to get to and is flat with not a lot of activities or variety.



## 9.3 - Investment in Product

**We can demonstrate significant evidence-based investment in the sector, particularly in weather-proofing facilities.**

There has been over £50m of investment in visitor attractions and hospitality venues in the past five years, including £10m at Holkham, £5m on The Swan at Southwold, £4m at National Trust Sutton Hoo and £3.5m at Roarr! Dinosaur Park. There is a £500m investment planned at Valley Ridge at Great Blakenham which is due to open in 2024.

The pandemic has led to many businesses investing in larger, drier and more welcoming outdoor spaces. Consequently, this has created adaptation for Winter months.

## 10 - Operations Plan

### 10.1 - Underpinning the East of England Strategy



**Tourism can only thrive with successful destinations. The region's tourism sector is in every local authority and happens every single day. This place-based aspect to the industry means we have localised leadership to ensure success.**

The East of England Destination Development Plan brings together a coalition of 11 district, borough and city councils, 2 county councils, a Local Enterprise Partnership, a Combined Authority, and a number of Business Improvement Districts.

Visit East of England's strategic partners include London Stansted Airport, Greater Anglia Rail and Stena Line Ferries who operate the Hook of Holland-Harwich route.

Management of the tourism strategy is led by Visit East of England and New Anglia Local

Enterprise Partnership, working with the stakeholders. There is a Visitor Economy Group of local authorities, meeting every two months; a VEE board made up of key stakeholders that meets quarterly; and a weekly meeting of DMOs.

Visit East of England is not designed to create extra layers for the consumer to access the region's tourism offer. Instead, it is an enabling brand, supporting the county, district and pre-existing recognised destination locations. This is achieved by pulling together common threads and creating a gateway to join those parts of the region which have natural synergies in product and audience profiles. This approach enables the public and private sector to champion their brands, but also in an amplified way through the scale and support of an umbrella organisation.



## 10.2 - Evolving and Future Role of VEE

- Working with other DMOs – the region has a coalition of Destination Management Organisations who work as a collective with a common objective of promoting and growing the tourism economy.
- Strategy and policy – efficiencies in expenditure for local authorities; sector advice; place shaping; advisory role on planning and development; dissemination of national programmes.
- Business support – business networking; training and webinars.
- Routes to market – promotional activity; local delivery of national campaigns and initiatives; consumer databases.
- Data, Insights and Research – destination performance data; local insights to national bodies; market intelligence; consumer and business research.
- Be the strategic voice of the tourism sector in the region, supporting the growth and increasing the value of tourism.
- Be the conduit for national tourism organisations to tourism businesses in the region and vice versa.
- Develop and promote bookable experiences to ensure value stays in the local economy.
- Develop and maintain strong relationships with tourism businesses, local authorities, DMOs and other public bodies. VEE will become the glue for the sector and conduit to and from the national tourism bodies, not least delivering and supporting interventions and initiatives (We're Good To Go, Know Before You Go, VisitEngland Business Advice Hub etc).
- Work with London Stansted Airport to attract more inbound visitors to the region. The airport should be the International Gateway to the East of England, levelling up the disproportionate number of overseas tourists entering via Heathrow.
- Be a provider of research, insights and tourism intelligence for the region, in particular to encourage inward investment and new product development.
- Be the lead in the development of a 2030 Net Zero green agenda for the tourism sector in the region.
- Be the facilitator of skills development, helping solve the significant skills issues in the sector.
- Work with industry, authorities and DMOs to make the region more attractive to international and business visitors, and also inward investment through placemaking.
- Working with the area's other DMOs, be the vehicle to promote the region's individual destinations as a single tourism offering. VEE provides bottom-up amplification of local messages within its activity.
- Develop a comprehensive tourism database that can be utilised by all stakeholders and create efficiencies. VEE offers a free listing for all tourism related businesses and services.
- Support the development of Business Visits and Events and Business Convention Bureau.



## 10.3 - Branding the Region

### ... A Placemaking Approach

**Placemaking management needs creative solutions to capitalise on our local assets, uniqueness, and potential, with the intention of promoting destinations where visitors can experience happiness, well-being, and enjoyment.**

To succeed, the placemaking initiative needs a vision that is the aggregate conception of all the stakeholders.

Local destinations will continue to market their strengths, but we will develop a long-term brand/solution that will chime with the strategic activity, not least responsible, sustainable tourism and overcoming the main barrier to productivity – not having a constant level of demand year-round.

Although disparate in geography, and with differing concerns and barriers to productivity, the destinations can be woven together as a collective.

This has already been demonstrated by the use of 'Unexplored England', a Covid recovery brand that has been used successfully since July 2020. Working with the area's DMOs, VEE was able to draw down £425,000 of funds from the Cabinet Office and VisitEngland to promote 'Unexplored England' allied with national messaging Enjoy Summer Safely and Escape the Everyday.

## 10.4 - How the Tourism Strategy will be Effective



**Stakeholder support:** We work closely with New Anglia LEP, as well as all local and county councils and Destination Management Organisations. Taking a lead role during the pandemic we have given a voice to the sector and, from the feedback we have had, businesses appreciate what we are doing. We have successfully lobbied MPs and will continue to work with our elected members of Parliament.

**Tourism know-how:** Our stakeholder group of LEP, LAs and DMOs have the knowledge and capacity to manage the destination as well as developing product. We are already promoting the region under Unexplored England. It is important that stakeholders feel ownership and are engaged in decision-making. This did not happen in the days of the East of England Regional Development Agency and the East of England Tourism Board.

**Effective Structures:** Our collaborative working has enabled all the local destinations to come together under a themed promotional umbrella for the first time. Our activity will be aligned to the Build Back Better economic strategy and we are moving forward in a way that all stakeholders have been engaged in.

**Secure funding:** Visit East of England relies on commercial and partnership revenue for its existence, but new streams will be developed to secure the future of VEE to 2025 and beyond. Existential crises through lack of funds take up too much time and energy when there is a big agenda to follow and bigger prizes to reach for.

## 10.5 - Monitoring & Evaluation

- Visit East Anglia's directors oversee and are accountable for finance and operations, meeting quarterly. This group will be strengthened by a commercial director.
- Monthly management accounts help monitor progress and highlight risks. New KPIs will be introduced to ensure a more business-focused approach.
- The Visit East of England visitor economy sector group will oversee the strategic and developmental performance, meeting quarterly. The group is made up of representatives of the LEP, business, local authorities and DMOs and will be strengthened by wider private sector and academic input.
- Tourism strategy performance will be monitored by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership board.
- VEE will continue to outsource where possible to maintain low overheads.
- With limited resource, we encourage partners to carry out some activity.
- VEE is adept at outreach for skills and capacity gaps eg hiring on fixed term contracts for data work or project management.
- To understand performance VEE will oversee consumer sentiment and business intelligence surveys.

## 10.6 - Reviewing and Renewing the Strategy

**The strategy supporting the Destination Development Plan will be reviewed regularly by the Visitor Economy Group and Visit East of England sector group.**

Visit East of England will have the responsibility to monitor amendments and updates to the DCMS Tourism Recovery Plan and report on implementation.





## 11 - Appendices

### SWOT

#### Strengths

- VEE is not a top-down organisation. Rather, it ensures that the stars of our tourism firmament, the businesses, and destinations, as well as all stakeholder authorities, are joined up and working together to grow the sector.
- Working together helped produce a Tourism Recovery Plan in Summer 2020 as well as successfully bidding for Government Covid recovery funds.
- We work collaboratively to achieve common objectives. All DMOs, including Visit Cambridge, and local authorities are engaged. We have a good relationship with the national tourism organisations and DCMS.
- VEE, as the strategic body and customer-facing brand, liaises widely for its decision-making. Local authorities, for whom tourism is not statutory, have skin in the bigger picture.
- Our visitor offering is varied and includes many different destinations that work together as a collective.
- The pandemic has proven how important tourism and travel are to the region, not just for the economy but also well-being.
- Having a Destination Development Plan that aligns with the national Tourism Recovery Plan could bring investment from Government as well as potential encouragement to the private sector to invest in product and the public sector to invest in infrastructure and transport.
- VEE's operation is in line with DCMS thinking - collaborative working, shared resources, and a single back office.

#### Weaknesses

- Poor image of the sector as being seasonal, low-skilled and low-paid.
- Perception of the region as flat and with limited attractions.
- Poor rural broadband and mobile coverage.
- Final mile issues – remoteness of some destinations by public transport.
- Poor rail links between Cambridge-Norwich/Ipswich; Stansted and the region.
- Lack of large conference facilities.
- Slow and risk averse planning procedures.

#### Opportunities

- The East of England is not a top-of-mind destination – it can be.
- Creating a placemaking strategic brand identity for the East of England that overcomes misconceptions of the region.
- Working with gateways and transport operators we can level up with other areas by attracting more inbound visitors.
- Spread demand geographically and seasonally to level up year-round tourism across the geography.
- Developing more TV and movie filming in the area.
- The East of England can develop the year-round visitor economy. Lessons to be learnt from Norfolk County Council's EXPERIENCE project.
- A Destination Development Plan with all the stakeholders engaged and empowered to help develop, particularly through local product development. A vision for growing the visitor economy



and investment that everyone can own and participate in with clear, overarching objectives that will include skills, growing year-round and staying visitors, sustainable tourism, accessibility.

- Working with TXGB we can ensure that more of the value of bookings stays in the local economy and spreading that usage through all DMO websites.
- Working together has demonstrated that we can make successful bids for national funding.
- Continue building the database. VEE offers a free listing to all tourism businesses and services so we can grow our business listings and ensure we can communicate with the entire sector, and they with us. Visits Norfolk and Suffolk will plug into this 'mothership' database in the next 12 months. Can other DMOs benefit too?
- Sizewell C – potential from the developers for investment in tourism infrastructure, such as a visitor centre.

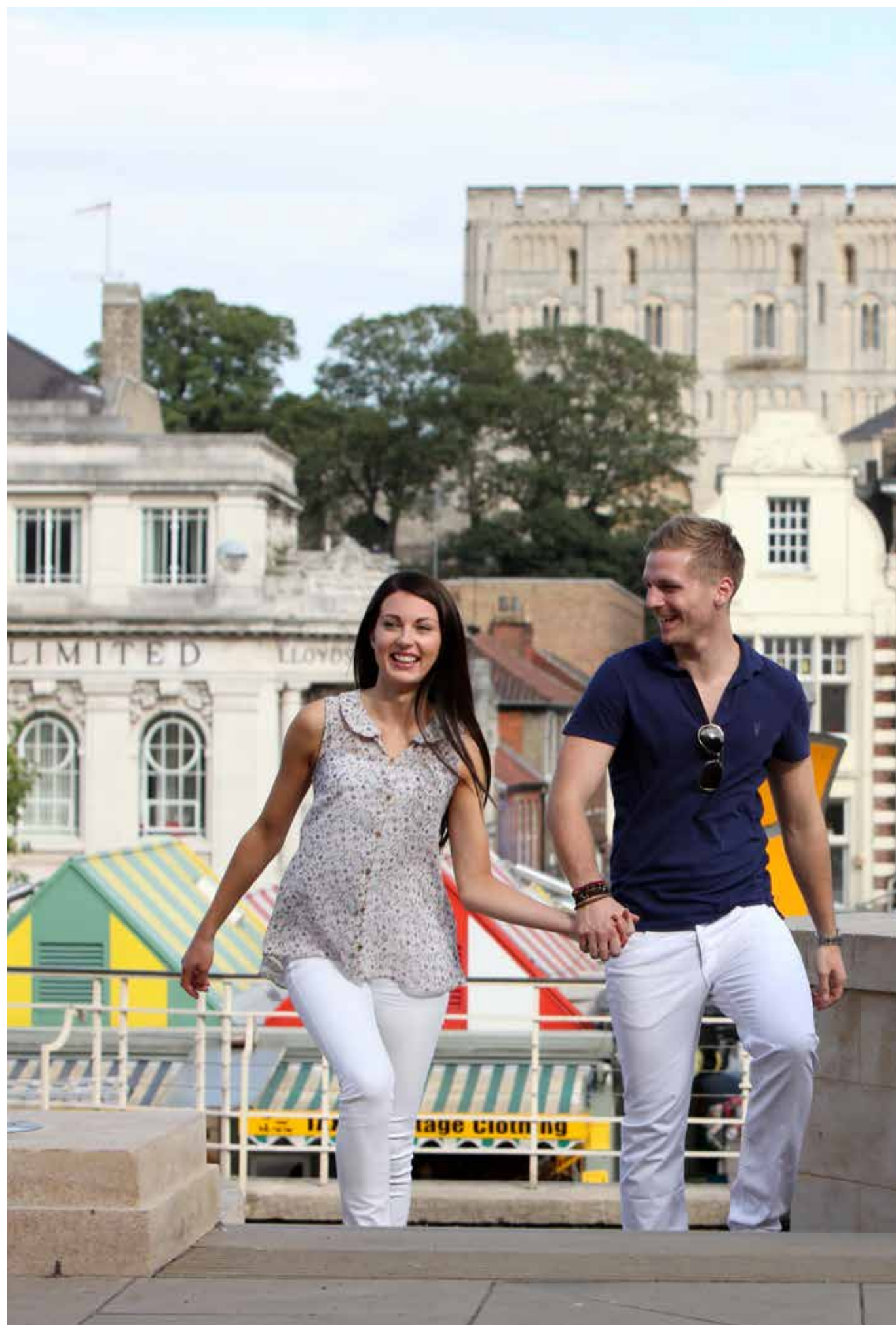
### Threats

- Staffing and skills shortages; attracting people into the industry.
- Covid uncertainty and potential for future local and national lockdowns.
- Legacy impact of the industry being branded 'non-essential' by Government.
- Continued restricted capacity in venues.
- UK outbound tourism recovering quickly and travellers cancelling booked

accommodation to go abroad. In the VEE Spring 2021 Consumer Sentiment Survey, 58% of 7589 responses said they would take a holiday abroad as soon as they are allowed.

- Competition from better-funded regions with history, established structure and governance.
- Businesses not seeing the opportunity to invest.
- Sizewell C – potential for disrupting the tourism sector during construction eg road delays, taking holiday accommodation stock out of the market; environmental impacts; and giving a negative perception of the Suffolk coast.



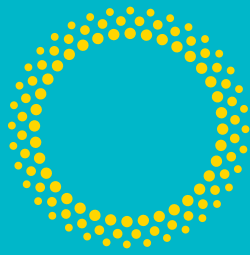




# Destination Development Plan Partners







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