

Lancashire defining the rule of six

A recovery plan for
Lancashire tourism
& hospitality

www.lancashire.gov.uk



Beacon Fell

MARKETING LANCASHIRE

Marketing Lancashire is the agency charged with promoting the county on a national and international stage. We are a not for profit organisation working in the interest of a prosperous Lancashire. We reinvest all our partner fees into promotional activity for the county to develop Lancashire into a leading leisure, learning and business destination for domestic and international visitors, to enhance the national and international reputation of the county and promote sustainable economic development and growth. Lancashire has one of the largest economies in the Northern Powerhouse, with over 52,000 businesses generating £34 billion per year.

Visit Lancashire is the official tourist board for the county and a division of Marketing Lancashire. We work closely with VisitBritain and a wide range of public and private sector agencies. Our activities in marketing and communications, commercial membership and place marketing are all designed to grow the visitor economy and develop the destination as a great place to visit, work and invest. Most recent figures (2018) show that Lancashire attracted 68.74million visitors, who contributed £4.41 billion to the local economy and helped support over 60,700 jobs.

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 crisis has had a devastating impact on a whole range of sectors and communities, but none more so than those involved in tourism and hospitality. Nationally, 2020 saw an estimated £73 billion drop in revenue - a 57% fall from the year before. With lockdown now extended into at least March 2021, this loss is set to increase further still, with a devastating impact. Businesses are expecting a very slow recovery over the next year. According to one study, 41% of businesses surveyed suggested that they would fail by mid-2021. For Lancashire, this would equate to a loss of £2.5bn in GVA, and, without targeted support, could result in more than 25,000 job losses.

Even with the optimism that the vaccination roll-out brings, it is likely that operational capacity for the tourism and hospitality sector will remain constrained until summer 2021 at the earliest (i.e. with social distancing measures remaining in place even if/when the lockdown is

eased). National forecasts suggest that it will be 2022 before domestic tourism recovers to 2019 levels, with international tourism not returning to pre Covid-19 levels until 2023. In addition, we don't yet know what the longer term impacts will be on the UK's visitor economy now that we have formally left the EU.

Set against this context, Marketing Lancashire has been working with public and private sector partners to establish and deliver a tactical response that reacts to the still evolving situation, sets out our case for investment and looks at how we can redefine the way we attract visitors in 2021 and beyond, as soon as we are able to do so. This is an industry that is not afraid to evolve and innovate. The incredible assets that are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike are still here, and they are what make Lancashire's quality of life what it is. We need to bring them back from the brink and help them not only to survive, but to thrive again.



Morecambe

WIDER CONTEXT

During the second wave of lockdown, Marketing Lancashire issued a survey to assess the impact of Covid-19 on tourism and hospitality businesses in Lancashire. 204 businesses responded, 99% of whom had been negatively impacted by Covid-19. 87% of businesses had already seen a drop of over 90% of revenue, and 94% were closed. As expected, this has hit tourism hot spots such as Blackpool particularly hard.

At that point, 78% declared that they would not be able to last more than six months, and 50% felt they would not last three months. Although the majority had been able to furlough staff, access to finance was proving to be a challenge. 50% of Lancashire businesses were unsuccessful in their application for a CBIL loan due to low turnover, lack of time trading, or that investments in previous months meant profits were too low for a successful application.

Of the businesses that tried to claim for business interruption on their insurance policy, 100% of claims were rejected, despite many businesses being covered for pandemics. We are hopeful that the recent supreme court ruling will overturn some of these decisions, although it is not currently a legal requirement for all insurers to do so.

Since that survey the furlough scheme was extended, the discretionary grants were made available and the bounce back loan scheme was launched. All of which were very welcome. However, despite this, we are still seeing businesses fail. 2020 saw the industry lose Easter, the two May bank holidays, all of October half term and the Christmas holiday period. All major events were cancelled and the situation goes on.

This one year support and recovery plan has been developed within the context of the wider strategic and recovery ambitions for Lancashire. Redefining Lancashire: Our Approach to Recovery was published in June 2020 and sought to identify the sectors, occupations and places most severely impacted and bring forward immediate solutions to arrest and deflate the intensity of impact.

Prior to Covid-19, Marketing Lancashire had already begun working on a long term Tourism Growth Strategy, in partnership with the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and in consultation with businesses and local authorities across the county. So, whilst our immediate focus is on supporting the tourism and hospitality sector through the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, growing business and consumer confidence to recoup some of the lost revenues and protect as many jobs as possible, ultimately our 10-year vision is to grow tourism in Lancashire by providing exceptional experiences and transforming people's perceptions of the county.

Lancashire will achieve this by being the UK's first SMART tourism destination – one that is truly sustainable, mutually beneficial, accessible, radical and tech-led.

The development of this plan is designed to act as a bridge into the longer term strategies currently being developed, including:

- The Greater Lancashire plan, led by Lancashire's 15 local authorities and supported by an independent economic review which is currently underway;
- The Local Industrial Strategy currently being revisited by Lancashire's LEP;
- The internationalisation strategy which is about to be commissioned by the LEP;
- The sector development plan for Tourism, Culture and Place being developed by a private sector-led working group as part of the LEP's strategic framework delivery plan.

This interim, short term plan is designed to support the sector through 2021 and into 2022. It is likely to evolve as the situation changes, particularly in relation to any tiered levels of restrictions that are imposed once full lockdown is eased, as well as the roll out of the vaccination programme. However, it serves to outline the immediate priorities to secure agreement and support from key local and national stakeholders. Whilst the plan incorporates actions that will impact on the full extent of the visitor economy, including hospitality, leisure, sport, culture and the night-time economy, its primary focus is on tourism and hospitality.



South Pennines



**Giving Lancashire's
visitor economy a strong,
co-ordinated voice**

Crook O' Lune

SIX STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We have divided these priorities into those that we need to focus on at the current time, whilst the county remains in lockdown, and those it is critical we swiftly turn towards as soon as we are able to do so. As such, we will continue to focus through the spring on providing support and guidance for the sector:

1 Wherever possible we will identify, co-ordinate and, if necessary, help to activate platforms for collaboration, ensuring that the intelligence which is being gathered across both destination specific and county-wide sector groups and networks is being shared appropriately for mutual benefit.

2 We will use this evidence to continue to lobby Government for additional support for the sector, giving Lancashire's visitor economy a strong, co-ordinated voice at a regional, pan-regional and national level, ensuring that the specific needs of the rural and coastal visitor economy are fully represented and not lost amid 'core cities' focused calls for support.

Alongside the above, we will continue to promote those elements of Lancashire's redefined offer that are still available to consumers, and to offer inspiration that will keep the county 'front of mind'. Then, as soon as we are able to do so, hopefully from March 2021 and onwards, when the sector is able to look towards re-opening and recovery, we will focus on a further four areas of activity:

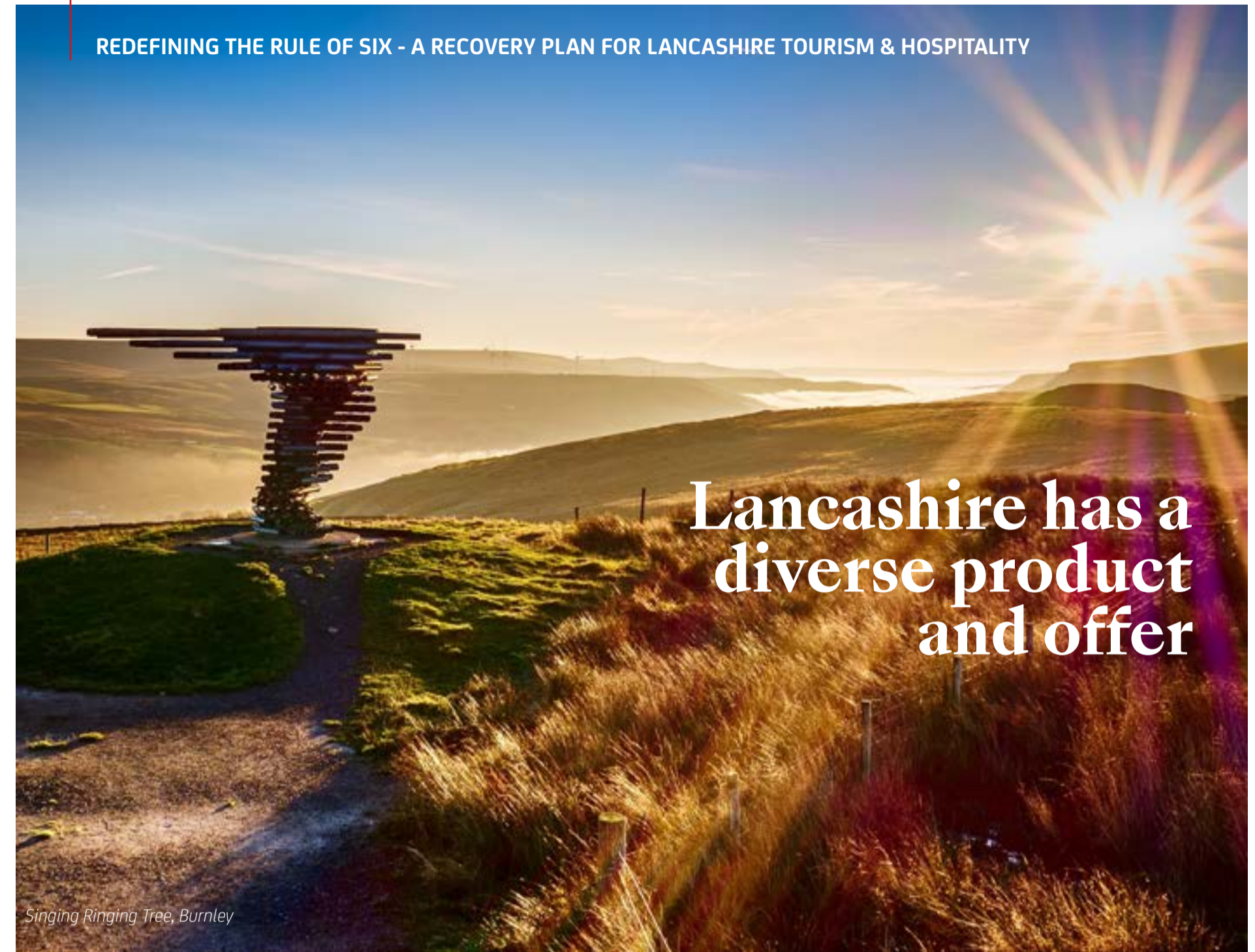
3 We will extend the #RedefiningLancashire campaign to inspire consumer confidence and build the profile of Lancashire, maximising the legacy of the 3.9m reach of the campaign in late summer and we will bid for additional funding to support the delivery of this campaign.

4 We will draw in every possible ounce of resource for FY21/22 and align all campaign activity to extend our collective reach and deliver a campaign that positions Lancashire as a must visit destination, driving visitor numbers back up.

5 We will further develop proposals for a Connect Lancashire Platform, seeking investment for the digital infrastructure to deliver visitor management that will help tourism and hospitality businesses to build back safely in a way that maximises income.

6 We will secure maximum benefit for the sector from major initiatives such as the Lancashire 2025 bid for UK City of Culture, and from national schemes that have the potential to fund in-year projects (such as the £5m uplift agreed for VisitBritain, the £600m to be made available as part of the £4bn 'levelling up' fund and the £220m set to be distributed as part of the UK Shared Prosperity funds).

In support of the above priorities, we will continue to lobby for a more sustainable national DMO structure. A national framework for tourism management is identified as a key first step, and DCMS has tentatively committed to completing a review by the end of March 2021. Beyond that, we intend to push for a 3-5-year financial settlement for DMOs in the medium term.



Lancashire has a diverse product and offer

Singing Ringing Tree, Burnley

THE POTENTIAL FOR SUCCESS

Covid-19 has fully exposed the fragility and hand-to-mouth nature of the tourism and hospitality industry. Fragility that has been caused through an erosion of support over many years. As a destination more reliant on tourism than many neighbouring major cities, Lancashire has arguably suffered a greater impact. However, if we get our recovery plans right, the county also has the potential to build back more quickly.

Lancashire has a diverse product and offer in terms of its destinations (countryside, seaside resorts, market towns, an historic city) and themes/experiences (with strengths in food and drink, nature, culture, heritage and industrial heritage, outdoor activities, country accommodation etc). Blackpool remains an iconic, high profile destination with major attractions, events, venues and conference offer, plus substantial accommodation stock.

The significant motorway network into and around Lancashire makes it very accessible by car, and the substantial conurbations of Merseyside, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire are within our catchment for day trips and short breaks. As Lancashire's visitor economy emerged from the first wave of lock-down, it out-performed many other areas in the north and was able to benefit from the pent-up demand and desire for a staycation offer. Proposed actions against each of our identified objectives are outlined on the following pages.



Shipwreck Sculpture, Cleveleys promenade



Inch Perfect Trials, Ribble Valley

1. Identifying platforms for collaboration

Ensuring that intelligence which is being gathered across both destination specific and county-wide sector groups and networks is being shared appropriately for mutual benefit. We will:

- Work closely with local authority tourism and economic development teams to ensure that intelligence gathered at a local level feeds into county-wide sector development strategies;
- Work closely with the LEP to ensure a two-way flow of information between the private sector-led Tourism, Culture and Place Working Group and local and national government organisations and ALBs;
- Utilise support programmes such as the Peer Network visitor economy focused cohort to surface issues and opportunities that can be shared with the sector more widely;
- Continue to deliver a B2B communication campaign via a series of website updates, e-newsletters, webinars and online networking events which have been widely welcomed by the sector;
- Create and share case studies of best practice and spotlight innovative business operators via Marketing Lancashire and LEP platforms;
- Continue to build intelligence throughout 2021 – assessing the real impact on businesses as well as changing consumer behaviours to help inform our asks of Government, as well as our marketing campaigns and approaches to visitor management.

2. Lobbying for additional sector specific support

Giving Lancashire’s visitor economy a strong, co-ordinated voice at a regional, pan-regional and national level, ensuring that the specific needs of the rural and coastal visitor economy are fully represented. We will:

- Work with colleagues in DMOs across the north, but specifically those in the North West, to make sure that Lancashire’s needs are positioned effectively within regional proposals and recovery plans;
- Speak with ‘one voice’ to colleagues in DCMS (and MHCLG and BEIS where appropriate), liaising closely with Visit Blackpool and with local authority tourism teams to ensure we are communicating evidence-based needs;
- Work with national trade partners and bodies including the Tourism Alliance, UK Hospitality, UKInbound, Coastal Tourism Authority and others;
- Ensure Lancashire MPs are fully briefed at every opportunity so that they can champion the cause of the sector in Westminster;
- Call on Government for:
 - » a fair financial settlement for tourism and hospitality that protects jobs and businesses, and for those areas of Lancashire with lower infection rates to be allowed to drop down into lower Tier restrictions once the national lockdown end, rather than a blanket whole county approach;
 - » an extension to the reduced VAT period (with clarity on how those savings can be used) and the business rates relief until at least the end of December 2021;
 - » a package of targeted support for the conference, weddings and event sector which should include financial measures to restart market demand;
 - » work from home guidance for Covid-19 secure workplaces to be managed at a local level;
 - » development of initiatives that will inspire consumer confidence and drive up demand quickly as soon as it is safe to do so, such as a repeat of Eat Out to Help Out and/or an extension into ‘Stay Out to Help Out’ or ‘Go Out to Help Out’ which could also support theatres and live events.



Houghton Tower, Houghton

As soon as we are able to do so, we will:

3. Inspire consumer confidence and demand

Building the profile of Lancashire and maximising the legacy of the 3.9m reach secured in late summer 2020 via our successful pitch for funds from Cabinet Office connected to Enjoy Summer Safely. We will:

- Re-purpose the content and collateral developed for our DEF funded 'Discover More Than Just a Holiday' campaign, to align with 'Escape the Everyday';
- Onboard bookable product and experiences onto the TXGB platform so that consumers can book directly on VisitLancashire.com;
- Create example itineraries as part of a dedicated campaign area on VisitLancashire.com, suggesting products that could be connected together based on the target audience;
- Engage with all national initiatives designed to inspire confidence and generate demand, including support of the 'We're Good to Go' accreditation;
- Seek to maximise visitor interaction with targeted surveys, opportunities to review product, and where possible encourage user generated content through incentives and prize draws.



The cabins, The Cartford Inn, Little Eccleston

4. Position Lancashire as a must visit destination

Aligning all campaign activity to extend our collective reach and deliver a campaign that positions Lancashire as a must visit destination, driving visitor numbers back up. We will:

- Draw in every possible ounce of resource for FY21/22, ensuring that we can invest in campaign activity which drives bookings;
- Work with the industry to design, develop and deliver campaigns which will appeal to a broad audience base within the 'new normal' of 2021 and beyond;
- Divert audiences secured through lockdown and Government funded campaign activity to connect them into these collaborative communications;
- Work with the travel trade to package appropriate itineraries for different audience segments, and with DEF funded projects to maximise legacy;
- Target media familiarisation visits from priority markets and publications related to thematic strands;
- Support local promotion of specific niches (i.e. weddings) and hyper-local audiences;
- Ensure that national activity delivered by VisitEngland/ VisitBritain promotes Lancashire as a visitor destination.



Brockholes, Preston

5. Further develop proposals for a Connect Lancashire Platform

Seeking investment for the digital infrastructure to deliver visitor management that will help tourism and hospitality businesses to build back safely in a way that maximises income. We will:

- Develop proposals for a digital campaign and platform (potentially an app, to be identified via national destination best practice) to provide 'real time' information to visitors;
- Identify data gathering opportunities that enable us to identify 'hot spots' so that visitors can be guided safely around the county and flexible product offers such as food and drink pop-ups can be positioned to greatest effect;
- Linked to the Town Centres proposition, create a 'Make a Local Visit' programme to ensure towns can play their part in welcoming visitors back to Lancashire in 2021;
- Support Lancashire's Transport Authorities to encourage visitors to use cycling initiatives and public transport as restrictions permit;
- Identify funding streams and opportunities to secure investment to develop the digital infrastructure required, potentially via an innovative start-up support fund.

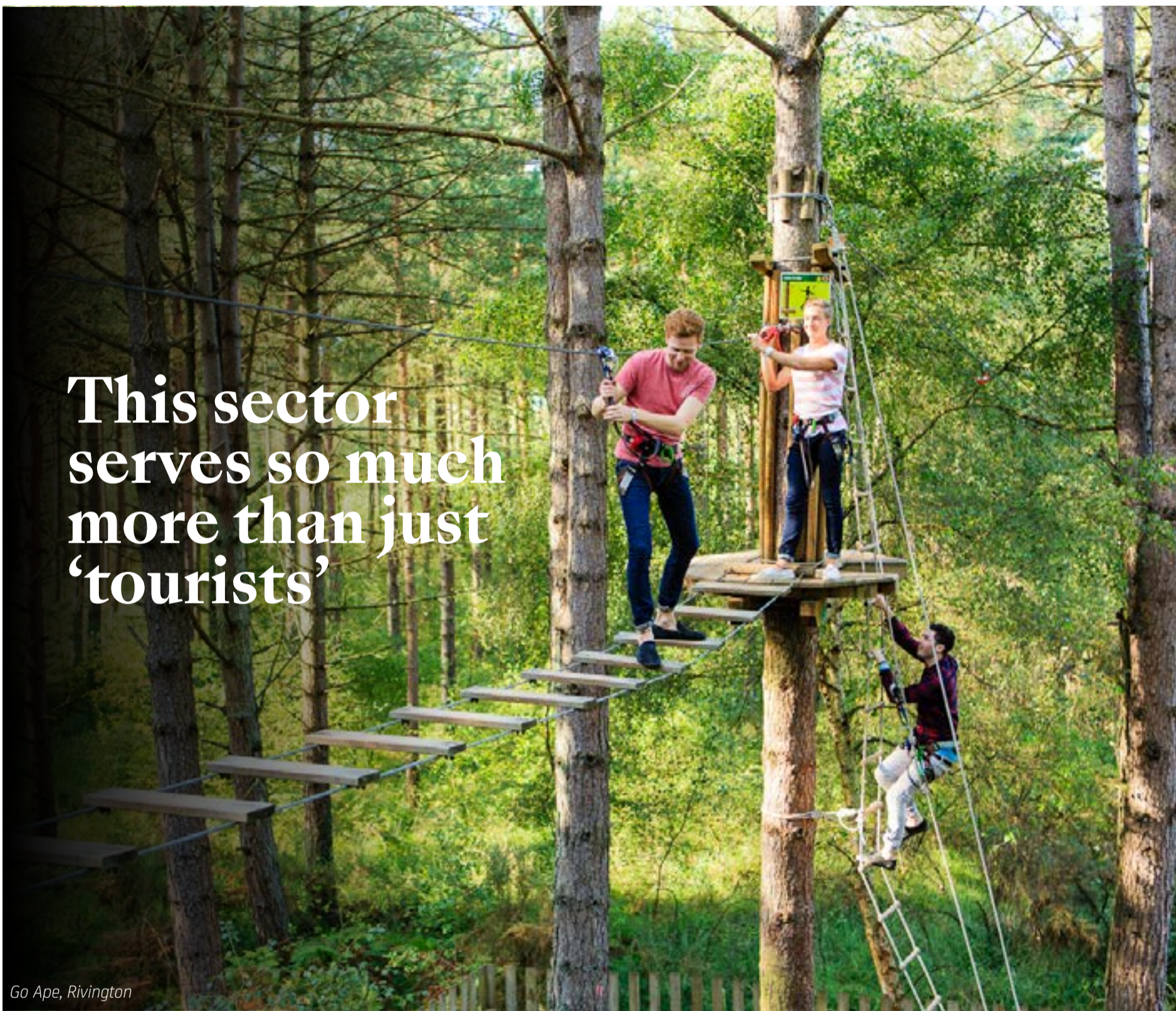
6. Secure maximum benefit for the sector

Ensuring that they are represented within major initiatives such as the Lancashire 2025 bid for UK City of Culture, and within national schemes that have the potential to fund in-year projects. We will:

- Support the Lancashire 2025 bid team to create a compelling case for Lancashire to host UK City of Culture in 2025;
- Support proposals for the Eden North Project at Morecambe to secure Government funding, creating jobs and providing general and mental health improvements to the community and to visitors;
- Support Visit Blackpool in the delivery of their post-Covid recovery plan to help drive visitor numbers and make the resort a must-visit destination throughout the autumn and winter;
- Support local Towns Fund Deal bids to help ensure that redevelopment projects identified will impact both the town centres and the visitor economy as a whole;
- Work with Historic England to extract maximum benefit for the visitor economy from the High Street Heritage Action Zone Cultural programme;
- Work with the LEP to better demonstrate the wider value of the sector to the quality of life and investment proposition of Lancashire;
- Work with DCMS colleagues to understand the opportunities for tourism and hospitality initiatives within the levelling up and UK shared prosperity funding streams, as well as making sure Lancashire's needs are represented within their own tourism recovery plan.



Lancashire Encounter



This sector serves so much more than just 'tourists'

Go Ape, Rivington

NEXT STEPS

Covid-19 has seen interest in tourism increase at local, regional and national level. But we have been here before. Interest increased after foot and mouth, after 9/11, but it wasn't maintained. We must find a way of capturing and maintaining the current interest and support that is now evident among LEPs, local authorities and Government and maintain it in the medium and long-term.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach for this wonderfully diverse sector. It is made up of multi-million pound companies employing thousands of people and micro businesses creating bespoke, memorable experiences. We need to ensure that we don't lose this diversity, it is why Lancashire has been so successful at tourism to date, attracting the millions of visitors that we do. However, we also need to recognise that the sector is a critical part of our overall proposition – a key reason why people choose to live and work where they do. The sector serves much more than just 'tourists'.

Marketing Lancashire has drafted this tactical plan based on intelligence gleaned from our private and public sector partners. It seeks to set out short-term priorities for 2021, as discussed and debated with industry stakeholders. The intention is for this to feed into the wider sector specific and economic development strategies being developed by the LEP.

THANK-YOU

We would like to give thanks to those businesses and organisations that have played a part in the development of this plan, including:

Our local authority stakeholders

Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council, Blackpool Council, Burnley Borough Council, Chorley Council, Fylde Borough Council, Hyndburn Borough Council, Lancaster City Council, Pendle Borough Council, Preston City Council, Ribble Valley Borough Council, Rossendale Borough Council, South Ribble Borough Council, West Lancashire Borough Council, Wyre Council

The Marketing Lancashire Board

Tony Attard OBE DL (Chair), James Allison, Michael Ahern, John Barnett MBE DL, Cllr Gillian Campbell, Andrea Challis, Christine Cort, Zera Dawson-Gerrard, Cllr David Foxcroft, County Cllr Michael Green, Joycelyn Neve, Cllr Phil Riley, Cllr Cosima Towneley

Our Visit Lancashire Partners

Lancashire Business Amassadors

The LEP Tourism, Culture and Place Sector Group

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Blackpool Pleasure Beach