

Lancashire 2023

A five year vision for the promotion of
Lancashire

Introduction

Marketing Lancashire is the organisation charged with promoting the county and its assets to a national and international audience. We do this on behalf of our public sector stakeholders, and for the benefit of the businesses and residents of Lancashire.

In FY2018/19 we worked to align our activity and resources against our strategic priorities, demonstrating the return on investment and **setting targets** to better **measure success**. We also sought to shift our focus so that we are **adding value** wherever possible, rather than replicating activity that partners and stakeholders deliver at a more local level.

Looking forwards, we want to **bring partners together** behind a vision for the promotion of Lancashire that we can all support and buy in to. One that is meaningful to individual places, but also to the county as a whole. One that will help us to highlight the immense potential that exists here, and showcase the opportunities that will achieve that potential.

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No. 1



Foundations

Establishing a vision is essential, and the foundations for building it need to focus on our strengths, our aspirations and our pride in place. Assessment of these by an 'outsider' with an external perspective may mean that nuances are missed, but should help us focus on the bigger picture. Some immediate observations/opportunities:

- We need to stop viewing the diversity of this county (both its people and places) as a disadvantage, and begin celebrating it as our greatest strength
- We need to switch self-diagnosed 'parochialism' into a sense of place that is proud and open, rather than closed and defensive
- We need to reconnect individual places and assets with the county that they are in
- We need to disconnect Lancashire the county from Lancashire the County Council
- Instead of allowing ourselves to be over-shadowed by our neighbours, we should be bolstering our profile through their proximity

Strengths

We have been good at showcasing our sector strengths:

Aerospace // advanced manufacturing // engineering // energy innovation // food and drink // logistics
// tourism and hospitality

We know what our broader strengths are, but need to differentiate them more:

Quality of life // connectivity // educational excellence

We underplay our scale and diversity:

50,000 businesses // 1.5m people // 1,190 sq miles // 80% rural

And we have not yet really articulated the Lancashire personality...

Aspirations

There is no shortage of ambition in Lancashire, evident in almost every conversation I have had. There is also a sense of urgency, in that we need to build on momentum achieved to date and continue to step up our game.

However, we do not seem to have an agreed/shared aspiration, and when one is expressed, it tends to be in terms of who we want to be better known than, not what we want to be better known for. Two comments that came from the City of Culture scoping work:

“Lancashire is a place that knew who it was, lost itself and is trying to find itself again”

“We are on the verge of something, but don’t quite know what it is”

We need strong leadership to help address these challenges, and we need to answer two core questions: who are we? And who do we want to be?

Pride in place

Lancashire is certainly not lacking in pride. However, it feels as though we have let that pride become affected by administrative boundaries. The 'loss' of parts of the county in 1974 is still felt keenly, yet instead of rallying together, we have begun sub-dividing ourselves further (East Lancashire, Central Lancashire etc), tried to promote administrative areas rather than the places they represent, and allowed structures to impact on partnership working.

We need to re-establish a direct connection between the county and its places and assets. This means not adding extra layers/definitions between the two:

- Burnley, Lancashire (not Burnley, East Lancashire or Burnley, Pennine Lancashire)
- Leyland, Lancashire (not Leyland, South Ribble)
- Blackpool, Lancashire (not Blackpool, Fylde Coast)

Pride in place

We also need to re-activate the pride in the county that very much exists, but seems to have lost a sense of direction, or has perhaps become muddled in the confusion between **politics and place**.

This is not about losing the identity of individual places under a blanket Lancashire 'brand'. But it is about maximising the value of our assets by promoting them collectively, regardless of how diverse they may be.

We are a county, not a city region. This is not a disadvantage. That we don't have a single urban centre that dominates awareness allows us to shine a light on a broader range of assets. The ambitions of our towns are not drowned out by our cities. Our interesting quirks and nuances should not be suffocated by a one size fits all approach.

No. 2



Who are we?

This is well-articulated in the 'We are Lancashire' promotional film. We have a much stronger regional identity than the likes of Dorset or Hampshire. We know what our strengths are, but there is also something about the Lancashire spirit and personality that hasn't quite been pinned down. We are not/should not be humble. Granted, we shouldn't try and emulate the swagger and self-assuredness of our city neighbours, but we are confident and we need to express that in a way that feels right for Lancashire.

We have also lost ownership of some of the stories of our heritage that belong to us as much as they do to the parts of Lancashire that are no longer within our official boundaries. It is not about claiming them instead, but claiming them as well. We have lost our connection to them and they are a key part of who we are. Working class should not mean second class. Not in the 18th century, nor in the 21st. Lancashire is a county that works hard, that makes things, that has a wealth of family-owned businesses developed over generations.

Who do we want to be?

We want to be known...

for our strengths, for our heritage and for our scale of opportunity

We want to be inclusive...

across our communities and our boundaries

We want to be ambitious...

shouting louder and standing taller (upon the shoulders of giants if necessary)

We want to be stronger...

as people and as places, individually and collectively

Who are we doing this for?

There is much talk about inclusive growth, but this needs to be more than just a catch phrase. We are here to promote the county for the benefit of the people who live here. And they are our assets too.

We need to activate our people to be ambassadors for Lancashire, in the knowledge that they should also be the primary beneficiaries of our promotional activity. The ambassador programme will begin by harnessing the people with the greatest reach (personalities who have global resonance, business people with national and international connections and the resources to help contribute), but ultimately it should expand to become something that can galvanise everyone with a connection to Lancashire, adding their voices to ours in consistently re-enforcing positive perceptions.

What is our vision...?

We have developed a revised mission and vision statement for Marketing Lancashire:

- Our mission is to work collaboratively with our partners to identify, articulate and promote the strengths of Lancashire to national and international audiences, with a single-minded focus on delivering economic benefit.
- Our vision is to be a high-performing, sustainable place-promotion agency at the heart of a thriving Lancashire.

However, we also need to articulate a succinct and memorable vision for Lancashire. So that we can all, as organisations and individuals, reiterate it and help to drive it home.

No. 3



Challenges // the media

One of the biggest challenges we face is over-turning an out-dated, negative perception of Lancashire that is perpetuated in the media. We are too often chosen when journalists are looking for an example of a place where things are bad. Often with a recycled story that is no longer current, but gains traction through repeat use – if they keep saying it, it must be true?

First, it will help to measure this perception (i.e. the impact of this negative coverage) amongst our target audiences in a quantifiable way. We plan to work with our universities to do this, and plan to repeat it on a biennial basis so that we can measure change.

Then, we need to give the media multiple opportunities to choose Lancashire as an example of a place where things are good. We need to do this continually and consistently, so that they have no excuse to re-use out of date stories. This will take time, it's a cyclical process and we will need to push hard to begin to reverse the direction that the spiral has been going. We will also need to do this collaboratively, engaging as many communications teams/professionals as possible. We need to push our own positive stories, and each others. It is obvious but as true as ever – Burnley referencing a positive Blackpool story will gain greater traction than Blackpool promoting it alone.

Challenges // the focus

Where do we focus our energy? How do we prioritise our messaging and our audiences? This is a challenge for any destination, but particularly so for a county with the scale and diversity of Lancashire. We cannot tell everyone in the world everything there is to know about Lancashire. We need to divide and conquer.

A headline overview of where we should profile which key strengths is included below (but needs agreement and should be further informed by the development of the local industrial strategy):

Sector	Market			
	UK	Europe	US	Asia
Aerospace		✓		✓
Advanced manufacturing (including Automotive)	✓	✓	✓	
Digital and Creative	✓	✓	✓	
Engineering	✓	✓	✓	
Energy (including nuclear)		✓	✓	
Food & Drink	✓			
Tourism	✓	✓	✓	✓

Challenges // the focus

Place promotion is neither a science nor an art form, it is a mix between the two. But the other thing it is not, is new. Places have been doing this for a long time. Descriptions that were once appealing are now clichéd (vibrant, world-class), slogans that gave a point of difference have been diluted (I love xxx, we are xxx, xxx is on the up), USPs have become MSPs (mainstream selling points!).

We need to focus on our genuine point(s) of difference, which might be about connecting two different elements of our offer together. The Lake District did this very effectively when they felt they were only known for the rugged outdoors and wanted to highlight their luxury spa and hotel offer. This is a crude mock-up of an idea to connect Blackpool's reputation as the home of ballroom dancing with its strengths in an entirely different form of energy.



Challenges // the finances

We are competing for profile against destinations that have greater budgets available to them. Manchester spends £5m a year on international promotion alone. Some have an international gateway with ambitious expansion plans that will invest significant funding into place promotion, leveraging match funding both locally and nationally. Some have structures in place that generate funds year on year, pumping revenues from investment deals back into place promotion to support the creation of more deals.

We need to find the right approach for Lancashire but one thing is clear, our place promotion is currently too reliant on funds secured from local government (funding over 50% of our FY18/19 activity). Public sector investment in place promotion should hopefully increase if we can clearly demonstrate the return on investment. However, it should be a much smaller percentage of the overall budget. We need to secure a greater share of central government funding, but critically we also need to inspire the private sector to support our activity, whether that is general financial support, buying into specific campaign activity, or commissioning dedicated branding work that connects them more closely to their Lancashire roots.

Risks // national level

We cannot ignore the potential impact of Brexit on plans for the promotion of UK PLC as a whole and Lancashire's place within it. Uncertainty within both the public and private sector could well make it more difficult to secure financial support for activity, and we need to recognise that risk.

However, it is impossible to predict the final outcome or impact, and it is clear that other UK destinations are not scaling back their activity. If anything, they are re-doubling their efforts to raise their profile both in Europe and further afield. We need to move forwards now, not wait to see what happens.

We also need to keep a close eye on the evolving situation connected to Tourism Zones as part of the sector deal, and on tourism levies, which still have a way to go until a proposed approach that is palatable to the sector is developed, but is broadly seen as an idea that is coming of age.

Risks // local level

We will only achieve the aspirations for the promotion of Lancashire set out here if we have the support and buy-in (philosophically and financially) of our local partners. Often it is possible to win the intellectual debate, but harder to win the emotional one, and we need to have both hearts and minds on board.

This vision was first aired with the ML Board, and I know want to take it through a process of assimilation with various audiences, including the LEP, LA Leaders and Chief Execs, Marketing Lancashire partners and ambassadors, broader business networks, academic partners etc.

The feedback secured through that process over the next few weeks and months will hopefully deliver not only buy-in and support, but also refinement of the vision for Lancashire that we can then begin to shout from the rooftops.

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