

ITEM: 10

REPORT TO: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY

DATE: 28th SEPTEMBER 2018

REPORT TITLE: SUPPORTING THE VISITOR ECONOMY

**AUTHOR: JESSICA LEE, HEAD OF STRATEGY & POLICY,
WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY**

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report presents an opportunity for WECA to support the visitor economy in the West of England region.

Issues for consideration

- 2.1 The visitor economy is a key contributor to the West of England economy. Figures from 2015 show that:
 - Visitor related spend topped £2.13 billion
 - The Visitor Economy accounted for 44,996 jobs (33,257 FTEs) – 8% of total employment (10% in Bristol and Bath)
 - Bristol hosted 2.3 million staying visitors in 2015 - Bath hosted 1.1 million
 - There were 11.6 and 4.6 million day-visitors to Bristol and Bath respectively
- 2.2 Bristol Airport handled over 7.5 million passengers in 2016, employed 3,392 people in 52 companies and has seen year on year growth continue at a rate of 11.3% per annum
- 2.3 2017 was a record year for inbound tourism in the UK with an increase of up 4 per cent to 39.2 million total visits, according to new VisitBritain figures
- 2.4 Local tourism initiatives are largely managed by Destination Management Organisations (DMOs). In 2017/2018 a two-city marketing approach was explored by two of the local DMOs, working closely with Bristol Airport and the Bristol & Bath Cultural Destinations project. Longer term return on investment is anticipated to demonstrate increased bookings, visitor numbers and development of additional flight routes.
- 2.5 Inward investment into the Region is managed separately through Invest in Bristol and Bath (IBB). A review of IBB is currently underway and will be reported to the West of England Joint Committee in November 2018.

ITEM 10 – Supporting the Visitor Economy

2.6 A West of England Cultural Strategy is being developed, and a supplier will shortly be appointed to commence this work, with a view to delivery in early 2019. The scope of the strategy will include exploring the contribution of the visitor economy to regional economic growth.

2.7 It is proposed that, noting the value of the visitor economy to the region from both tourists and business visitors, WECA explores the benefits of a more regional approach to marketing the area through the provision of funding for two initiatives:

2.8 Regional tourism promotional exercise

2.8.1 A regional tourism promotional exercise to deliver the following:

- Identification of key target markets
- Creation and promotion of new regional itineraries that look further than city centre visits and include other regional attractions such as Aerospace Bristol
- Development and refresh of online regional content
- Development of targeted promotional material / approaches to reach target markets
- Identify and implement opportunities for further private sector funding

2.8.2 The impact of these activities will be monitored through agreed performance indicators, to include:

- Increase in visitor numbers across the region
- Increase in online travel agent bookings for regional visits during campaign periods
- Overall increase in online engagement, eg Website visits, content downloaded

2.9 Regional visitor economy study

2.9.1 A feasibility study to explore options for the development of a regional approach to the visitor economy that would support increased economic growth through:

- Increased promotion of the region to visitors
- Increased visitors to the region
- Increased investment in the sector, leading to
- Increased employment in the sector

Consultation:

3 Drafts of this report have been shared with West of England Directors and Chief Executives.

Other Options Considered:

4 None. This is a one-off activity to recognise the benefit of regional initiatives and encourage further activity in this area, made in advance of the development of a Regional Cultural Strategy which is scheduled for completion in Spring 2019.

Risk Management/Assessment:

5 The following risks and mitigations have been identified:

Risk	Mitigation
There is a risk of duplication of activity with Invest in Bristol and Bath (IBB)	The regional visitor economy study will take into account the outcomes of the IBB review
There is a risk that visitor numbers decline post Brexit	Monitor situation

ITEM 10 – Supporting the Visitor Economy

Public Sector Equality Duties:

- 6 The public-sector equality duty created under the Equality Act 2010 means that public authorities must have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.1 The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:
- Removing or minimizing disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
 - Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
- 6.2 The general equality duty therefore requires organisations to consider how they could positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations. It requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of policies and the delivery of services, including policies, and for these issues to be kept under review.
- 6.3 There are no specific equalities implications in relation to this report, but any grant offer application or procurement response will require provision of supporting equalities analysis.

Economic Impact Assessment:

7. Success will be monitored through submission of progress reports as required by the terms and conditions of the any grant offer or procurement.

Finance Implications:

8. Up to £100K of funding will be made available for the WECA investment Fund (revenue) to support the proposals set out in this paper. Any grant or procurement process will be undertaken in accordance with the WECA Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

Advice given by: Tim Richens, Interim S151 Officer

Legal Implications:

- 9 The West of England Combined Authority Order 2017 includes an economic development and regeneration function for WECA that explicitly provides WECA with 'The power under s144 of the Local Government Act 1972 (the power to encourage visitors and provide conference and other facilities'

Advice given by: Shahzia Daya, Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Land/Property Implications;

- 10 None arising directly from this report

Human Resources Implications:

- 11 None arising directly from this report

ITEM 10 – Supporting the Visitor Economy

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the West of England Combined Authority agrees:

1. To allocate a total of up to £80K from the WECA investment fund to support the regional tourism promotional exercise identified in paragraph 2.8 of this report.
2. To allocate a total of up to £20K from the WECA investment fund to support the regional visitor economy study identified in paragraph 2.9.1 of this report
3. To delegate to the West of England Combined Authority Chief Executive, in consultation with the West of England Chief Executives, authority to make all necessary arrangements for the allocation and application of this funding in accordance with the objectives set out in this report.
4. To request the WECA Chief Executive bring report back to WECA upon completion of the projects setting out the outcomes and options available as appropriate.
5. To delegate to the Section 151 Officer to make all necessary amendments to the WECA and Mayoral Budgets as appropriate to reflect the approved allocation of investment funding

Report Author:

Jessica Lee, Head of Strategy & Policy, West of England Combined Authority

West of England Combined Authority Contact:

Any person seeking background information relating to this item should seek the assistance of the contact officer for the meeting who is Tim Milgate, who is available by telephoning 0117 428 6210, emailing democratic.services@westofengland-ca.gov.uk or by writing to West of England Combined Authority, 3 Rivergate, Temple Way, Bristol BS1 6ER.