

# North Somerset

Update to Visitor Economy Action Plan - Sept 22



**North Somerset**

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## Strategic objectives and priorities

**Overall objective: To increase visitor spending and support the retention of this income within the economy, to benefit local employment, businesses and communities.**

**To pursue this, we have identified three priorities for action:**

- 1. Increase visibility** of North Somerset as a destination and what it has to offer.
- 2. Increase the value** of the visitor economy sector and sub-sectors in North Somerset.
- 3. Increase the diversity** of the current offer to better match visitor trends.

## Current Visitor Economy Overview

North Somerset is strategically located at the gateway to the South-West and part of the highly successful West of England region. Four main towns, Weston-super-Mare, Nailsea, Clevedon and Portishead and 25 miles of coastline and countryside are well connected nationally and internationally with an airport, port, and direct trains to Paddington, South Wales and Midlands.

The region's opportunities for business investment and innovation, together with natural assets, culture and heritage scene makes it a place where people want to live, work, and visit.

- 2021 saw improvement for domestic travel to North Somerset on both the numbers of overnight stays (up 58% from 2020) and day visits (up 68% from 2020). While these numbers have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels, it does indicate a significant recovery
- While this is encouraging, unfortunately Visit Somerset has reported seeing drops in many attractions across the region of between 20 and 25% from 2019 figures and accommodation between 25 and 35%
- Overseas travel is also still experiencing major challenges (down 15% from 2020) and will require further support for these figures to improve
- However, the Visitor Economy in North Somerset remains a viable sector, with the total value of tourism estimated to be £283,904,000



# Action Plan Update

## 1. Increase the visibility of North Somerset as a destination and what it has to offer

Action	Output/s	Progress
<p><b>Build partnerships with our Destination Management Organisations to utilise their expertise in promoting North Somerset as a destination, exploring the possibility of joining one or more to unlock access to potential national funding opportunities and promotional opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal relationship created with at least one Destination Management Office</li> <li>• Provide NS with key market research &amp; insights of the current impacts to the Visitor Economy</li> <li>• Encourage and support new NS business to become active members</li> </ul>	<p>The contract for Visit Somerset has been extended for 2022/2023</p>
		<p>40 free memberships for Visit Somerset have been offered to North Somerset businesses for 1 year. To date, 4 businesses have signed up</p>
		<p>Visit Somerset submit quarterly reports that provide key insights into the visitor economy. The most recent submission indicates that the sector has been hit particularly hard with the cost-of-living crisis, rising fuel prices, decrease in the number of international visitors, and consumer habits trending toward last minute bookings</p>
		<p>North Somerset Council is now an official member of Visit West, which enables NS to tap into national Visit Britain funding, regional promotions, and recruitment and skills support for visitor economy businesses</p>
		<p>NSC has worked closely with Visit West to bring membership numbers back in-line with pre-pandemic levels (approx. 20)</p>

Action	Output/s	Progress
		<p>Visit West have mapped the sector by region to provide better intel for NSC to work on new planning applications as well as identify areas for inward investment</p> <p>Visit West have supported NSC in distribution of visitor economy related business information that includes an annual volume and value study and the production of a monthly business barometer</p>
<p><b>Encourage and support our partners to create itineraries designed to deliver what visitors are looking for and which make it easy for them to book online - itineraries that combine attractions, places to eat, places to shop and places to stay</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Itineraries created and promoted by our partners, to focus on: culture and heritage, active holidays, foodie breaks, environmentally friendly breaks</li> </ul>	<p>Visit Somerset now features 3 x 2-day itineraries that have a focus on activities, food, and family as well as a 1 x 3-day itinerary with a focus on food</p> <p>Visit West features environmentally friendly itineraries that highlight North Somerset food &amp; drink options, outdoor experiences, and the region as a family destination</p>
<p><b>Support DMOs to promote key locations across NS with a focus on attractions, shopping experiences, accommodation options, and general visitor information</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMOs to install digital marketing plans that focus on attracting visitors to NS</li> <li>• DMOs to host microsites for key locations that includes information on attractions, shopping experiences, and accommodation options</li> </ul>	<p>Visit Somerset now host dedicated microsites for Weston-Super-Mare, Clevedon, Portishead, and Nailsea on their website. Recent figures demonstrate a positive pickup in these sites with approx. 19,000 page views from users</p>

Action	Output/s	Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DMOs to promote NS attractions via social media</li> <li>DMOs to market free listings for NS events and festivals</li> </ul>	<p>Visit Somerset are promoting NS attractions via their social media channels. Engagements throughout Q1 have been strong with high levels of engagements</p> <p>In Sept 2022, Visit Somerset have created marketing content for Yeo Valley Open Days, Weston Bandstand Sessions, and exhibitions at The Tropicana</p> <p>Visit West are promoting NS through dedicated webpages and content. These promotions are now available through visitbristol.co.uk under 'Coastal Somerset'. Pages include Local's Guides to Weston-Super-Mare, Clevedon, and Portishead</p>
<b>Encourage FAM/journalist trips to develop stronger relationships with attractions to provide better intel for promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DMOs to organise FAM trips to key locations/attractions across NS</li> </ul>	<p>In Q2 of 22/23, Visit Somerset organised FAM trips to the Mendip Outdoor Activity Centre, The Grand Pier, and the development of See Monster</p>

## 2. Increase the value of the visitor economy sector and sub-sectors in North Somerset

Action	Output/s	Progress
Co-ordinated work with the Employment and Skills Strategy to understand the skills requirements to improve the quality of jobs in the sector and where jobs cannot be saved due to redundancies what reskilling and upskilling needs there are for people effected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Visitor Economy Skills Deep Dive' to understand changing nature of skills in the sector</li> <li>Implementation of skills products for:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those impacted by redundancy in the sector (Rapid Redundancy Taskforce)</li> <li>The business skills needs of the sector, which can lead to better quality jobs</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	
Focused support for accommodation providers to improve the quality of their offer to enable them to appeal to visitors with higher levels of disposable income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit of accommodation stock</li> <li>Accommodation listings featured on DMO websites</li> </ul>	<p>North Somerset Council have conducted an audit on the 2020 accommodation stock and utilised emails to develop a quarterly newsletter</p> <p>Visit Somerset Website lists information for a range of NS accommodation options for hotels, B&amp;Bs, and Guesthouses through Staylists</p>
Explore the possibility of hosting a quarterly visitor sector networking event - for all major stakeholders to report progress, identify priorities and collaborate on activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NCS to develop event specifically targeted at accommodation providers and businesses within the Visitor Sector</li> </ul>	Event in development. Initial conversation with Noah's Ark to host the first event in Q4 22 utilising the newly audited accommodation stock as the priority guestlist



Action	Output/s	Progress
Provide support for the development and promotion of See Monster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DMOs to offer support for the development and promotion through online media and content</li> </ul>	Visit Somerset have created an additional microsite dedicated to See Monster, complete with suggested accommodation and itinerary options
		Visit West have provided additional support for SEE MONSTER, linking up efforts with GWR and First Bus

### 3. Increase the diversity of the current offer to better match visitor trends.

Action	Output/s	Progress
<b>Develop and promote an environmentally friendly tourism campaign identifying the environmental benefits of staycationing in North Somerset</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·DMOs to create content that presents alternative forms of transportation to key locations across North Somerset</li> </ul>	Visit West have published content on their 'Coastal Somerset' website that includes 'Discover Clevedon by Bike' and 'Travelling to Somerset'
<b>Encourage businesses to adopt the principles of reducing plastic, sourcing food and drink locally and adopting environmentally friendly practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Universal Business Support offer to start-up businesses with a focus on embedding sustainability at the start of the business journey</li> <li>· Webinars for existing visitor economy businesses providing guidance on ways to be more environmentally sustainable</li> </ul>	<p>The North Somerset Enterprise Agency are continuing their North Somerset Sustainable Business Club for each quarter, which attracts approx. 12 members per session</p> <p>Visit West have encouraged North Somerset businesses to participate in Green Tourism Workshops and Webinars that have primarily focused on the creation of consumer content such as walking and cycling routes in the region</p>
<b>Create links between North Somerset town centre transformation and visitor economy to ensure positive outcomes for the sector. Focus on cultural offer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Promote key attractions and events through frequent posts on NSC TimeoutinNS social media accounts</li> <li>· Itineraries focused on culture and heritage</li> </ul>	<p>Visit West are delivering 2 webinars per year to support business connectivity to local and national programmes and maximising travel trade</p> <p>Visit West have created product pages on key locations/attractions such as WsM Beach, Noah's Ark Zoo Farm, and Tyntesfield as well as additional promotion of major festivals and events held across North Somerset</p>

Action	Output/s	Progress
Work with the Communications department to get editorial pieces into key magazines, papers, and online digital content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High-quality hospitality film to promote jobs in sector</li> </ul>	Hospitality film promoting job opportunities in the hospitality sector has been completed and distributed
Engagement with key transport providers to further develop itineraries and links to NS destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build relationships with providers such as GWR and First Bus</li> </ul>	Visit West have continued to work in partnership with key transport providers such as GWR and First Bus to further develop itineraries and links to North Somerset destinations. They have developed specific content outlining the opportunities for business events and incentive travel in North Somerset, with particular focus on a 'conference fare' to WsM

## Future Projects to Explore

Action	Output/s
Explore partnership opportunities to sponsor signage in key locations	Signage on strategic locations e.g. M5
Partner with Bristol Airport to raise the area's profile to international visitors in collaboration with regional and national partners	<p>Three North Somerset events and cultural attractions promoted through in-terminal and digital communications</p> <p>Jointly identify and work towards funding opportunities e.g. at the regional level through Tourism Action Zones</p> <p>A staffed tourist information point in the arrivals area of the terminal and tourist information training with staff that interact with incoming passengers e.g. taxi drivers, to sell North Somerset as a destination</p>
Encourage high-quality accommodation providers to choose North Somerset as a place to expand, invest and set-up	<p>Identify potential sites/buildings for boutique hotels, high-quality hotel chain, and non-serviced luxury accommodation</p> <p>Support partners to promote sites to developers linking with Weston Place Agency and Invest Bristol and Bath (IBB)</p>
Draft and promote content focused on alternative travel and the environmental benefits	Consumer focused fact sheet e.g., carbon saved from reduced travel, how to be a responsible tourist and range of local produce available

## Next Steps

- Conduct an audit on the 2020 Accommodation database to create a mailing list
- Plan and develop a quarterly networking event specifically targeted at accommodation providers and businesses within the Visitor Sector. These events will be hosted at a key NS tourist attraction each month and will provide a platform for skill-sharing and collaboration
- Draft and publish a quarterly newsletter to run alongside the networking event. This will be distributed to the audited list of accommodation providers as well as any relevant businesses within the Visitor Sector.
- Engage with the Skills Team to understand the current requirements and demands for employment for the sector in the region