

Destination Conwy Management Plan

2019-2029

January 2019

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1 Tourism - The beating heart of Conwy

Tourism is the beating heart of Conwy's economy, and we are both proud to be working with and supporting this industry. Our fabulous scenery, long cultural heritage, amazing range of attractions, and talented and welcoming business people mean that Conwy's reputation as a destination is becoming second to none...and recognised globally.

Across Conwy, tourism is a key sector for the economy of the county. Conwy County is Wales's leading tourism destination, at the heart of which is one of the UK's top seaside destinations. Tourism is worth £887million to the county, generated from 9.5 million visitors. Year on year our visitor numbers are increasing and the profile of Conwy and North Wales continues to grow.

So it is timely that the Destination Conwy Partnership has produced this Destination Management Plan, which gives a clear message as to our vision for tourism over the next ten years, and the priorities that we need to achieve. It has been gratifying to see how private, public and third sectors have all worked together to develop a document that provides direction, support and vision for all of these diverse groups. This plan will support our tourism businesses, benefit our visitors, and most importantly support and develop the whole of our community across Conwy. It will allow us all to play a role in ensuring that Conwy has a sustainable and buoyant tourism sector, which continues to gain national and international recognition for our sense of place and for everything we offer our visitors.

We are pleased to commend and support this Plan.

Christopher Owens
Chair
Destination Conwy



Councillor Louise Emery
Cabinet Member
for Economic Development





2 What is our Vision?

We want Conwy's tourism industry to be one which puts Conwy and North Wales on the world stage, and is successful, dynamic and working together to deliver real benefits to businesses and the local community.

We aim to do this by:

- Increasing the value of tourism across the whole year;
- Ensuring the quality and sustainability of the visitor experience;
- Engagement of visitors with our heritage, both cultural, spoken and built;
- Support to address skills and workforce issues;
- Partnership working;
- Developing a positive profile through effective marketing of Conwy County;
- Ensuring the County Planning Framework meets the needs of the industry and is flexible enough to work with emerging tourism trends.

These objectives were identified after a consultation process that involved a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties, including the public, private and third sectors as well as representative organisations. The Destination Conwy Partnership has then developed this Management Plan in order to work towards these objectives. By concentrating on these objectives, and by identifying priorities beneath each objective, the Destination Conwy Partnership can then develop an Action Plan of specific measurable items that will deliver results within an agreed time period.



3 Introducing Conwy

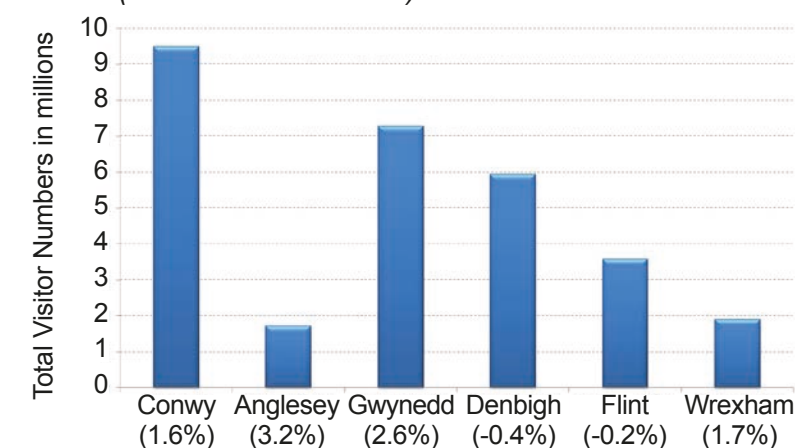
Conwy is a diverse county, covering an area of 1,130 square kilometres, situated at the heart of North Wales. The county has a varied geography ranging from the coast through into the heart of the Snowdonia National Park, thus offering a range of scenery and leisure opportunities.

It links East, West and Mid Wales and has an estimated resident population of approximately 116,850 people. Conwy's location also has easy access to two international cities and airports in Liverpool and Manchester. An international cruise and ferry hub linking Ireland - in particular, Dublin - and the world in Holyhead is less than 40 minutes away. In addition, Conwy's position astride the A55 (East to West) and A470 (North to South) routes makes road links to Ireland and England seamless. There is also good access to rail links with Llandudno Junction a key station that connects London to the county in less than 3 hours.

This means Conwy County is not just ideally situated for discovering North Wales, but it is also well placed as a base from which to explore North-West England and the Marches as well as Ireland.

Conwy's location means that it has a visitor catchment that, within 3 hours driving time, encompasses almost all the major Northern English conurbations and a huge part of the UK population. This, along with its geography and continually developing tourism offering, means the county is a tourism hotspot, attracting 9.50 million visitors in 2017 (STEAM data), and making it the leading destination area in North Wales.

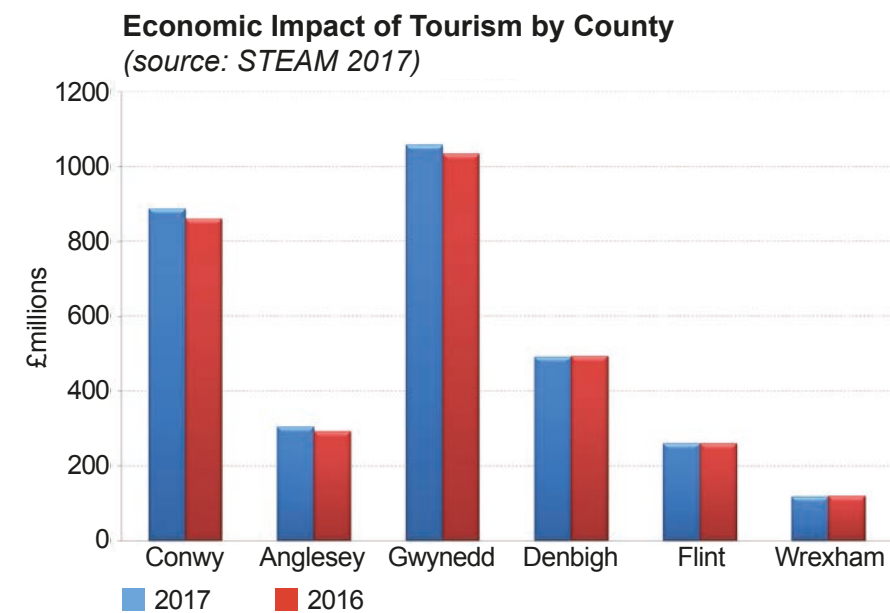
North Wales - 2017 Total Visitor Numbers by County
(source: STEAM 2017)



Figures in brackets show increase/decrease against 2016

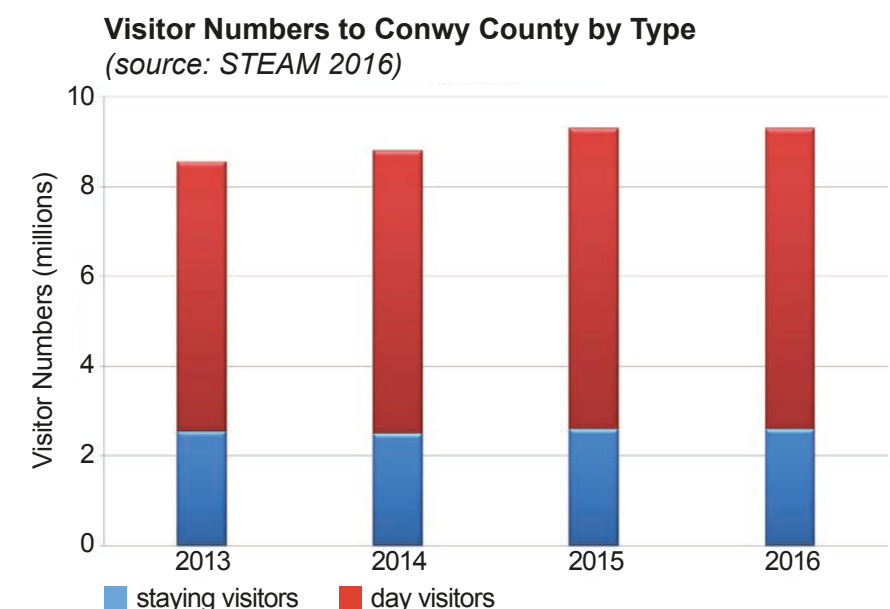
It should be no surprise therefore that tourism is a priority sector for Conwy - tourism's value to the local economy is estimated to be worth £887.62million, supporting over 12,319 jobs in the county (STEAM 2017 data).





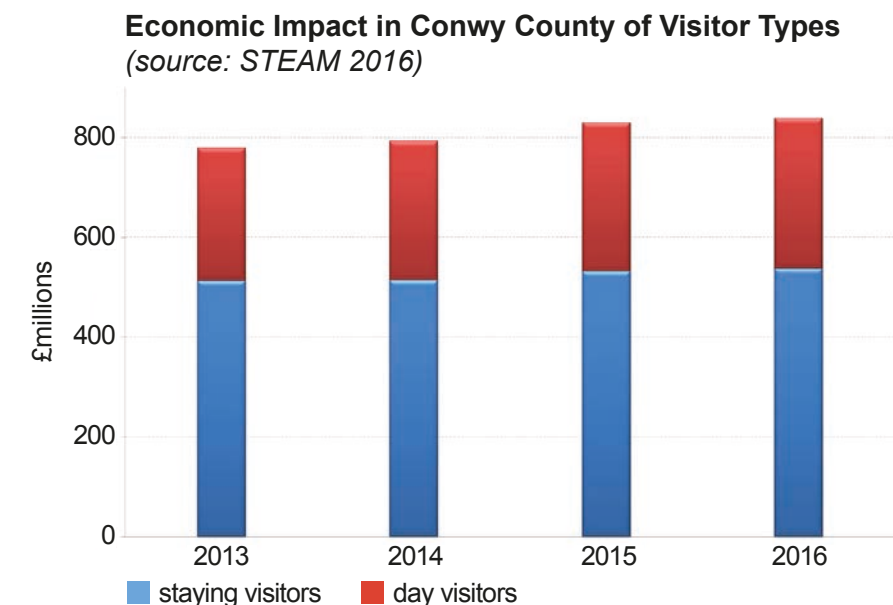
Not surprisingly the county attracts a wide range of different visitor types, with day visitors providing the largest volume. Day visitors are those who visit the area from outside purely for some or all of a day, and do not use overnight accommodation locally.

More significant is the number of staying visitors across the county, accounting for 2.7 million visitors (STEAM 2017 data) up 3.7% on the previous year. Staying visitors will be spending a period of time in the county and using overnight accommodation again in the county.



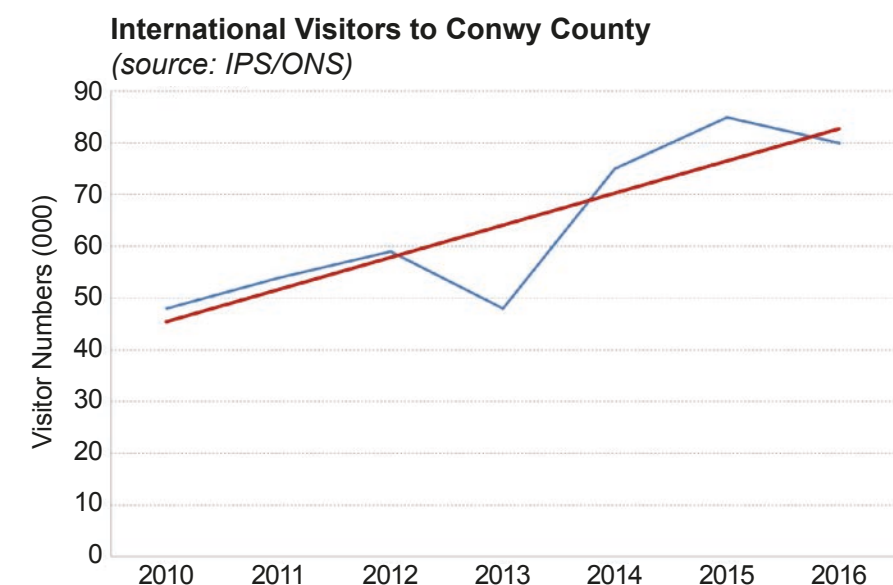
Staying visitors are particularly valuable to the local economy, as they spend money not just with accommodation providers but also in local restaurants, pubs and retailers - in turn generating spend by these businesses within the local economy.

In fact, although the number of staying visitors is almost one-third that of day visitors, their economic impact is almost double that of day visitors.



Many staying visitors are located along the coastal strip. Llandudno acts as the regional serviced accommodation hub for North Wales, and indeed accounts for a significant part of the total serviced accommodation stock for the whole of Wales. Llandudno is able to offer over 15,000 beds per night, with a breadth of accommodation to suit all visitors. Towards the East of the county, non-serviced accommodation (primarily static mobile homes) offers around 50,000 beds per night. Across the county as a whole, there is a strong and increasingly dynamic and fast changing range of accommodation options, from camping and bunkhouses, through glamping, self-catering properties, caravan parks, bed and breakfasts and guest houses, to a strong offering of small, boutique, large and luxury hotels.

The developing attractions of North Wales, and Conwy in particular, have meant that an increasing number of international visitors are spending time in the county. International visitors have increased by almost 50% between 2011 and 2016 to 80,000 visitors a year (IPS data 2016). Certain key destinations in the county are particularly attractive to visitors from specific destinations, and this provides another positive aspect for tourism opportunities in the future.



4 What makes Conwy County such an attractive destination?

As already noted, Conwy is perfectly placed for exploring North Wales, as well as further afield. Equally, the natural environment of sea, mountains and valleys provide a resource for a tremendous variety of tourism offerings for visitors.

In particular there is a wonderful array of adventure activities that have made North Wales the adventure capital of the UK. These include surfing, zip wires, caving, mine exploration, mountain biking, sailing, kite-surfing, canoeing, rock climbing and walking.

But Conwy has even more to offer...

- Conwy has 45 miles of coastline, of which 17.5% is designated as Heritage Coast. This offers family friendly beaches - including several Blue Flag beaches, boating and water sports, bustling harbours and the longest pier in Wales.
- The Wales Coastal Path runs through the county, and two new Wales Way routes (North Wales Way and Cambrian Way) cross the county, meaning there are many cycling, motorcycling, touring and walking friendly routes.
- The county offers two fully serviced marinas, as well as significant offshore and inland water sports facilities.
- Environment and wildlife feature strongly across the county, including the Great Orme Country Park SSSI, Conwy RSPB reserve and Bodnant Garden. 38% of the county lies within the Snowdonia National Park.
- Our cultural and Welsh language heritage means Conwy is rich in local myths and legends, offering a powerful sense of place, and - as the county has a significant number of Welsh language speakers - giving visitors experience of our Welsh heritage and language.
- Our built heritage encompasses the World Heritage Site of Conwy Castle and Town Walls, numerous other castles and historic monuments, standing stones and the Great Orme Copper Mine.
- Conwy County is a cultural centre, with a major regional theatre and conference centre at Venue Cymru, as well as museums, galleries, craft workers and exciting arts festivals. In 2019 the county will boast a new Culture Centre in Conwy town.
- The county has an excellent retail choice, with many independent and specialist retailers offering real choice to visitors. There is also a major retail hub in Llandudno.

- Conwy County has emerged as one of the leading international destinations for adventure seekers. Attractions include Surf Snowdonia, Zip World Fforest, Go Below, Llandudno Ski Centre, GYG Karting and Tir Prince, alongside extensive road cycling and mountain biking opportunities.
- The county boasts a wealth of award winning food and drink producers - from chocolatiers to butchers, vineyards to yogurt makers - as well as some of the finest farm produce.
- This local produce helps to support our hospitality offer across the county, which has grown and gained a great reputation for quality food and service, attracting and developing leading chefs.
- Conwy is a county that has a great reputation for sport, with opportunities for participation or just spectating. There are excellent golf courses, hosting international championships (including the Curtis Cup 2020). Parc Eirias is home to a Welsh Premiership Rugby side as well as Wales's under-20 team, and hosts international under 20's rugby. The local geography also makes the county attractive for car rallying, including Wales Rally GB and the Cambrian Rally.
- Conwy has also developed a great reputation as a major event destination. Year on year the county hosts an increasing array of international events, covering sport, heritage, culture and music - with everything from Proms in the Park to World Snooker and Sea Fishing to the National Eisteddfod 2019.
- Conwy is benefitting from a pipeline of new ideas and developments that are feeding through to offer new tourism opportunities, such as the Dark Skies Initiative in the Snowdonia National Park.
- Conwy County has achieved a huge number of accolades and awards for its attractions and accommodation in recent years - from organisations as varied as Lonely Planet, TripAdvisor and the Japanese Association of Travel Agents - demonstrating both growing awareness and interest across the travel industry and high levels of visitor satisfaction.

This developing and diverse range of attractions has also meant that visitors, who traditionally were attracted to the coastal resorts of the county, have started to spread more widely across the county. And as this continues to develop, it is important that all sectors involved in the tourism economy pro-actively work together to manage and increase the opportunities that tourism affords the county.

5 Why do we need a Destination Management Plan?

A Destination Management Plan (DMP) is a shared statement of intent to manage a destination over a stated period of time, articulating the roles of the different stakeholders and identifying clear actions that they will take. By having a Plan, which has been drawn up through a consultative process with input from many stakeholders, everyone is aware of the direction in which we want to proceed and the priorities that will determine both policies and actions in the coming period. This means there should be alignment in the objectives and work of different partners, whether public, private or third sector - working towards a common goal of a better Conwy for everyone.

6 So what is Destination Management?

Destination Management is a process of coordinating all the aspects of a destination that contribute to a visitor's experience, taking account of the needs of visitors, local residents, businesses and the environment.

By managing the destination, not only do visitors receive the best possible experiences during their time with us, but residents and the local economy benefit through increased stays and thereby expenditure - which (when supported through the Plan and elsewhere) in turn moves around the local economy, generating more employment, business and economic activity.



7 And what do we need to manage?

Conwy County has the huge benefit of having significant natural assets on its doorstep, alongside which are strong tourism-orientated locations and Wales's leading seaside resort. It is the role of the DMP to protect and enhance all these assets in order to deliver the best experience for visitors and for residents, and the maximum economic benefit for the local economy, as well as addressing and mitigating the impact of tourism where it risks negatively impacting communities. It is a core objective of this Plan that all sections of the Council, as well as the widest spread of businesses, recognise the importance that tourism plays in the local economy - and that the support of tourism and the visitor experience is woven into every aspect of work locally.

We also need to recognise that an effective DMP needs to extend its reach beyond the sometimes narrow definitions of tourism. Particularly in somewhere like Conwy County, the elements that make up and go to support the visitor offering are wide and diverse, ranging from the natural environment and cultural heritage through facilities in the community to wider infrastructure areas such as transport and housing.

It is recognised that the County's Planning Framework needs to act as a control to aspects that are deemed detrimental, yet should also be a support mechanism for aspects that are improvements or innovations. Destination Conwy commits to offering its Destination Management experience so that the needs of the destination are understood and become embedded in the planning system, and consequently managed as appropriate to support the tourism and hospitality sectors across the county. In particular, the Framework needs to be inherently agile enough to respond to changes across the tourism sector, so Conwy County can better manage threats and embrace opportunities.

The broad strategic thrust over the coming period is to make Conwy the leading destination area in Wales, and one that is known on the world stage of tourism destinations. This will be achieved through continuing to enhance the full range of infrastructure and facilities across the whole of the county, focussing in particular on developing and improving accessibility and facilities in key visitor locations and along the two "Wales Way Routes" (broadly covering the

lines of the A55 and A470). Whilst it will continue to be a priority to address regeneration, the Plan also identifies that existing strong destinations should be positively maintained and either renewed or enhanced to retain their attraction to visitors.

It is worthy of note that several destinations in the county are highlighted by visitors as clean, tidy and well maintained, and the Plan aims to continue and develop issues of sustainability and responsible tourism. This will be through recognised accreditation schemes or through community and business engagement around specific sustainability issues. Additionally there is recognition that at occasional hotspots, pinch points or events, the impacts of large numbers of tourists need to be mitigated and managed. Alongside this will be a thrust to encourage people to explore the area using a range of transport options other than private vehicles, and a long term objective is the development of a better integrated public transport system across the area.

In addition, the Plan recognises that making sure visitors' expectations are addressed requires strategic engagement and collaboration with other partners around broader key issues, in particular skills and workforce and quality upgrading and maintenance of the accommodation offering within the area.

All this work will support extending the tourism market (both in terms of visitors and seasonality) to operating on a year round basis, thus growing value across the county for businesses, individuals and the public sector. In turn this will encourage more collaborative working between partners and improving experiences for visitors and residents alike. The Plan also allows for the opportunity to put in place localised strategies for different parts of the county (for example, East Coast and West Coast), as better data enables investigation and understanding of the tourism picture in these places. However this does rely on engagement and support from all partners in ensuring appropriate data is provided for the benefit of all parties.

The Plan has determined a number of objectives that need to be attained across the period of the Plan. In order to achieve each objective a number of key priorities have been identified. These priorities will allow individual actions to be drawn up, with measurable and specific results to be achieved across a given period of time. The objectives and priorities are listed further on in this document.



8 Who will make it happen?

Ultimately, the delivery of a great visitor experience lies with every single person who lives and works in Conwy County - because every single person influences what happens in the local area. The DMP sits under “Destination Conwy”, which is a partnership organisation aimed at supporting and promoting tourism in the local area.

Destination Conwy has a Steering Group, which oversees activities and actions in assisting Conwy’s destination management in its ambitions and vision. The Steering Group is made up of representatives from across the local economy, particularly the tourism sector. It takes into account the geographical areas of the county and the different businesses and representative bodies across the tourism industry in its widest sense.

The Steering Group will draw up and oversee an Action Plan deriving from the objectives and priorities, and delivering specific targeted outcomes starting within six months of the adoption of this Management Plan. It is intended that this Action Plan is dynamic and pro-active, and will constantly evolve and respond to particular circumstances or opportunities that may occur. Consequently, the Action Plan does not appear in this document, but will appear as a continuing piece of work that will change and develop as time continues.

The Steering Group currently operates a number of sub-groups - such as Marketing, Year-Round Tourism Development, Skills, Visitor Information Centres, and Destination Management - which draw in both Steering Group members and other relevant expertise. It is envisaged that these sub-groups, or others as needed, will oversee the proposed actions, being small, nimble and focussed on delivery. The sub-groups regularly report back to the wider Steering Group.

This close partnership model, between public and private sectors, has proved increasingly pro-active and successful in being able to influence policy and take into account the requirements and constraints on the different groups involved in the destination, the visitor experience, and the local economy. This model has been the ideal platform for developing this DMP, and is equally ideal for delivering the Plan.



9 Encompassing a strategic approach

Much of Conwy's tourism economy is underpinned by small and micro businesses, run by hard-working and dedicated entrepreneurs and individuals, who deliver high levels of quality service to visitors. It is important that the Destination Management Plan supports them in their businesses and work. Equally, the Plan needs to take into account the wider strategic objectives that Conwy County Borough Council (as well as other partners across business and government) are seeking to achieve for the whole community, through a strong, vibrant and successful economy.

Consequently, this Plan takes into account, and seeks to support, the strategies and objectives that are laid out in the following areas:

- **Conwy County Borough Council Economic Growth Strategy**
Tourism has a key role in this strategy, with focus on the development of year-round tourism (through reinforcing winter tourism), the development of a strong evening economy, and developing events and arts strategies.
- **Conwy County Borough Council Local Development Plan**
With tourism a vital element in the county, the Council's new Local Development Plan (currently in preparation) and its wider planning policy will need to encompass, protect and support the existing tourism infrastructure and accommodation base as well as opportunities for future tourism development.
- **Conwy County Borough Council Cultural Strategy**
Conwy County Borough Council is developing a Cultural Strategy for 2019, which will be important for the county in providing direction and priorities. Linking this through to tourism will be a key action in the future.
- **North Wales Economic Ambition Board**
Tourism is identified as a key sector, with focus on the development of year-round tourism, and the building and enhancement of hospitality and tourism industry skills through the creation of a tourism academy hub.
- **Welsh Government Partnership for Growth Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020**
Close attention will be paid to this strategy's five main areas - promoting brand, product development, people development, profitable performance, and place building.
- **Welsh Government Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015**
A key aspect of Conwy's tourism offering is highlighting the thriving culture and language of Wales, which links with the aspirations of this Act. A successful and prosperous tourism economy, feeding into the wider economy, will positively impact on making Wales more prosperous, more healthy, more equal, more resilient, more globally responsive and more cohesive.

Unsurprisingly, many aspirations and strategies in these six areas overlap, and engage fully with the objectives and priorities that this DMP has identified.



10 What do we want to achieve?

After consultation with partners and stakeholders across the area, and taking into account the wider contexts in which the Destination Plan will sit, Destination Conwy Steering Group has identified seven overarching objectives. Beneath these objectives sit a number of strategic priorities. Our objectives and their subsidiary priorities are:

A Increasing the value of tourism across the whole year

- i increase the economic impact of tourism to Conwy County to £1billion by 2027;
- ii increase the economic impact per visitor by an average of 3% above inflation for the next 5 years;
- iii support increasing the overall proportion of full-time jobs from 59% to 70%;
- iv open opportunities to support a year-round tourism offering across the county and for businesses in less visited areas;
- v encourage investment, innovation and entrepreneurship across the tourism sector.

B Ensuring the quality and sustainability of the visitor experience

- i ensure destination facilities and amenities are kept and improved effectively for the benefit of residents and visitors alike across the whole year;
- ii encourage and support our high street and retail businesses as these play an important role in the wider visitor offer in the county;
- iii ensure the quality of the visitor offering is a priority, particularly that the delivery of accommodation, attractions, facilities and service across the county is exemplary;
- iv provide better integrated transport options across the county;
- v actively promote and support infrastructure improvements and opportunities that would benefit visitors and encourage better access to all aspects of the visitor experience.

C Engagement of visitors with our heritage, both cultural and built

- i improve heritage and cultural attraction education to trade businesses, allowing better information for visitors, and use heritage story-telling and place setting to develop new visitor experiences;
- ii engage with Visit Wales themes;
- iii encourage greater engagement with food producers and seek improvements in the supply chain between producers and end-users;
- iv support and promote the Welsh language and our unique cultural heritage, emphasising bilingualism, and dispelling myths with inclusivity and education to both trade and visitors;
- v examine opportunities to encourage diversity in the agriculture sector.

D Support to address skills and workforce issues

- i identify key skill sets and staffing issues, both immediate and future;
- ii work with relevant partners to deliver suitable career and life-long training support for businesses and individuals;
- iii ensure the proposed Tourism Academy provides tailored training and support that addresses both local and regional requirements, and that Destination Conwy is linked to the project;

- iv work with local tourism businesses to highlight the quality of career opportunities within the local tourism economy.

E Partnership working

- i ensure engagement across the Council and the community as to the importance of the tourism sector and supporting infrastructure and services, so residents and businesses alike are bought into the delivery of the tourism experience;
- ii improve understanding of the multiplier effect and encourage local supplier support to retain spend within the local economy and develop the “Conwy Pound”;
- iii actively promote and support the lifting of quality across all tourism service providers;
- iv work with relevant partners to provide a thriving all-day and year-round tourism offering;
- v engage with partners to make available robust data about tourism in Conwy County, particularly to understand tourism pictures in different parts of the county, especially in the East of the county.

F Developing a positive profile through effective marketing

- i provide a comprehensive information service about local amenities across all platforms;
- ii work with relevant partners to promote Conwy County and the visitor experience as a year-round tourism destination;
- iii monitor visitor trends and identify target markets for product initiatives and development;
- iv develop an events programme that supports a year round tourism offering;
- v work towards an appropriate branding for the whole region.

G Ensuring the County Planning Framework meets the needs of the industry and is flexible enough to work with emerging tourism trends

- i a planning framework which accommodates and actively promotes the needs, requirements and opportunities of the tourism sector;
- ii a planning framework that supports the tourism industry in ways which limit negative environmental impacts as well as consider the opportunities to enhance biodiversity;
- iii planning decisions take into account the existing tourism infrastructure;
- iv a planning framework that is dynamic and flexible in addressing the rapidly changing tourism sector;
- v a planning framework that addresses the developing nature of tourism accommodation and adopts clear management of differing accommodation types.

To deliver these priorities the Destination Conwy Steering Group will create a dynamic Action Plan. This Plan will set specific tasks and projects in line with the priorities, with measurable outcomes over agreed time frames. In addition, the Action Plan will respond to any changing requirements or circumstances, so that the Steering Group can remain pro-active and on the front foot in delivering the objectives of this Destination Plan.



11 Action Plan

As mentioned earlier in this document the aspirations and direction of travel identified in this Plan will be guided and monitored by the Destination Conwy Steering Group. This will be done through the creation of a robust and dynamic Action Plan, with the first Actions to be agreed and started within six months of the Management Plan's adoption. The Plan will feature agreed activities with specific time frames and measurable outcomes, and a detailed delivery methodology.

It is intended that the Action Plan will not only determine an on-going series of defined projects and activities that will pro-actively respond to and deliver against the objectives and priorities identified above, but will also generate positive results underpinning the objectives in the Council's Economic Growth Strategy as well as Welsh Government aspirations. More importantly, it will enable local businesses across the tourism sector, and the wider local economy, to seize opportunities and implement ideas that will boost their success and profitability for the benefit of the whole community.

Through regular monitoring by the Steering Group, the Action Plan can be responsive to changes in the tourism marketplace as well as to opportunities that may present themselves. It is proposed that the Action Plan should be a regular item on the Agenda of the Steering Group, and regularly reported back to the Council Cabinet.

12 Contact Information

Destination Conwy Steering Group welcomes further enquiries about anything in this document, or tourism in general.

General tourism information can be found on the Destination Conwy website at www.visitconwy.org.uk

Further enquiries about this document can be made to:

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