

Cabinet 15th April 2026

Item

Public



Adoption of the Destination Management Plan

Responsible Officer:	Matt Potts / Paul Gossage		
email:	Matt.potts@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 257881
	Paul.gossage@shropshire.gov.uk		01743 255068
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Cllr Rob Wilson		

1. Synopsis

Approval is sought for the Shropshire Destination Management Plan (DMP) which sets the direction of tourism for the next 3 years. Its objectives are to grow the value of tourism, strengthen stakeholder collaboration, raise Shropshire's profile, enhances access and inclusion and follow restorative tourism practices that restore, renew, and enhance the local environment and community.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Shropshire Destination Management Plan (DMP) provides a strategic roadmap for boosting the visitor economy between 2025 and 2029. Funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the DMP is intended as a guiding framework for stakeholders to inform their own operational plans, rather than detailing specific projects. It emphasises Shropshire's natural beauty, rich heritage, and distinctive local character, aiming to grow tourism's value, raise the region's profile, and improve the overall visitor experience. Shropshire's appeal lies in its 23% National Landscape designation, scenic rivers, charming market towns, and welcoming community. The DMP actively promotes these assets, inviting visitors to explore and appreciate the county's unique charm. In 2024, Shropshire welcomed 10.23 million visitors, generating around £910 million for the local economy and supporting approximately 9,153 tourism-related jobs. Most visitors (86%) are day-trippers, but those who stay overnight contribute significantly to economic impact, prompting the plan's focus on attracting more staying guests. The latest Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor report estimates that the visitor economy, for the first time, generated over £1bn in 2025 in Shropshire, a 10.1%

increase on the 2024 results. Visitor numbers rose to 10.66 million and 9454 jobs were supported.

- 2.2 The plan's key objectives are to increase tourism value, attract more and longer-staying visitors, foster stakeholder collaboration, strengthen regenerative tourism, and develop Shropshire's reputation as an accessible and inclusive destination. These objectives set a foundation for future investment and credibility within the sector.
- 2.3 Developed through extensive consultation—including stakeholder engagement, focus groups, interviews, and a two-month public consultation—the DMP aligns with Visit England's strategies and Telford and Wrekin's DMP. Ultimately, it aims for a unified DMP across the Telford and Shropshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership area by 2029.
- 2.4 Shropshire's strengths include its heritage attractions, vibrant food and drink scene, unique towns, and diverse outdoor activities, especially walking. However, the plan acknowledges areas for improvement, such as increasing serviced accommodation, enhancing transport options, and developing more family-friendly attractions.
- 2.5 The four-year growth plan seeks to adjust the ratio of staying to day visitors from 86:14 to 80:20, develop productive partnerships, promote Shropshire's image nationally, and establish a reputation for regenerative tourism. Key priorities involve increasing bed stock, defining a clear identity for the county, implementing targeted marketing, supporting responsible and inclusive tourism, building county-wide and regional partnerships, and establishing a robust evaluation framework using STEAM Tourism research, which is a methodology that measures the economic impact of tourism by systematically collecting and analysing visitor data and surveys, covering aspects such as spending, visitor numbers, and local benefits.
- 2.6 Governance will be overseen by a Visitor Economy Working Group, comprising representatives from Shropshire Council, local business improvement districts, Visit Shropshire, the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, and the tourism sector. Developing the visitor economy is expected to directly benefit Shropshire Council through increased business rates, higher spending in council facilities, reduced pressure on health and wellbeing services, and greater inward investment and migration, contributing further to council tax and business rates.
- 2.7 The implementation of the plan will be delivered by multiple stakeholders including Shropshire Council. This will be done within current budget levels, with any additional operational costs supported by external funding.
- 2.8 In conclusion, the Shropshire DMP is a comprehensive strategy designed to revitalise the county's visitor economy through sustainable practices, partnership working, and leveraging its unique assets. By focusing on accessibility, inclusivity, and responsible tourism, Shropshire aims to cement itself as a leading and attractive destination within England.

3 Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to endorse the Destination Management Plan and delegate to the relevant Service Director, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to work with partners and stakeholders to deliver the plan.

Report

4 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>	<i>Link to Strategic Risk</i>
If the DMP is not approved, the visitor economy will be disadvantaged, and Shropshire will no longer be able to be a partner of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership	Approve the DMP or suggest amendments	No direct link to the Council's strategic risks has been identified
The tourism trading environment can change quickly due to external factors, such as economic down turns, pandemics, geopolitical issues. Such issues could result in the DMP becoming irrelevant.	The DMP should be seen as a dynamic document that needs to be reviewed over the course of its life and adapted where necessary.	No direct link to the Council's strategic risks has been identified
Increased visitors have a negative impact on the environment	The DMP puts the local and global environment at its heart through the adoption of regenerative/ sustainable tourism developments and recommends that the value rather than the volume of tourism should be grown, and all growth should be done in an environmentally sustainable fashion.	No direct link to the Council's strategic risks has been identified
The need for additional accommodation results in more residential properties being used as holiday lets, reducing available housing stock and increasing rents/ property values	The DMP recommends the growth of serviced rather than un serviced accommodation, which is already well represented.	No direct link to the Council's strategic risks has been identified

<p>There may be criticism that the plan does not address the needs of local areas/ specific sector.</p>	<p>The plan explains that whilst certain hero locations and products are referenced, the DMP follows a thematic approach rather than a spatial one. It should be used by local destinations or product types to develop their own plans within the framework of the DMP.</p> <p>In response to public consultation, additional geographic/ product references have been included.</p>	<p>No direct link to the Council's strategic risks has been identified</p>
<p>Shropshire Council may be criticised for not investing in the recommendations suggested within the DMP</p>	<p>The plan clarifies that the DMP is a strategic document that should be used by the entire Visitor Economy, not just Shropshire Council.</p> <p>In order to help facilitate its recommendations Shropshire Council will continue to seek external funding to support a Visitor Economy team.</p> <p>Without external funding, Shropshire Council will play an enabling role rather than a delivery role.</p>	<p>No direct link to the Council's strategic risks has been identified</p>
<p>More visitors will increase demand on the county's infrastructure and services.</p>	<p>The DMP suggests a growth in the value of the visitor economy rather than a pure increase in the volume. It also recognises that infrastructure and services need to be maintained and developed in line with any tourism development.</p>	

5 Financial Implications

5.1 The implementation of the plan will be delivered by multiple stakeholders including Shropshire Council. This will be done within current budget levels, with any additional operational costs supported by external funding.

5.2 Development of the Visitor Economy will benefit Shropshire Council with:

- additional car parking revenue in town centre and country park locations
- additional ticket spend, donations and secondary spend at Theatre Severn, Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery and other sites

- Increased / sustained business rates from commercial tourism operators
- Improved perception for inward investment and migration with consequential income from business rates and council tax
- Enhanced visitor facilities, being beneficial for residents which will help support positive mental and physical health, helping to reduce the strain on adult and child services
- The latest Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor report estimates that the visitor economy generated over £1bn in 2025 in Shropshire, a 10.1% on the 2024 results. Visitor numbers rose to 10.66 million and 9454 jobs were supported.

6 Climate Change Appraisal

6.1 The DMP directly addresses climate change and the environmental consequences of the impact of the Visitor Economy.

6.2 It recommends that sustainable/ restorative tourism under lines all visitor economy development.

6.3 This will result in the environment being in a better state after a visit than before

6.4 Detailed delivery plans will be developed as part of the next phase and these will address carbon reduction, transport choices and other measures to manage carbon footprint.

7 Background

7.1 The Shropshire Destination Management Plan (DMP) serves as a strategic framework for enhancing the visitor economy in Shropshire from 2025 to 2029. The plan emphasizes the region's natural beauty, exceptional history and heritage, and unique local offerings, aiming to increase the value of tourism and improve the overall tourism experience. The production of the Destination Management Plan has been funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The DMP is not an operational document that details specific projects and tactics, but a strategic plan that can be used by all stakeholders to develop their own operational plans to help deliver the DMP's objectives.

7.2 Shropshire boasts 23% of its area designated as a National Landscape, providing a tranquil escape from urban life. The region is characterized by its picturesque rivers, quirky towns, and friendly locals, which contribute to a unique visitor experience. The plan encourages potential visitors to explore Shropshire and discover its charm first-hand.

Objectives of the DMP

7.3 The objectives are designed to provide direction for stakeholders, enhance the credibility of the tourism sector, and inform future funding and investment strategies:

- Increase the value of tourism.
- Attract more visitors and persuade existing visitors to stay longer.

- Enhance collaboration among stakeholders.
- Elevate Shropshire's profile as a tourist destination.
- Strengthen a regenerative approach to tourism development.
- Enhance Shropshire's product and reputation as an accessible and inclusive destination

Methodology

7.4 The plan was developed through a consultative process involving Shropshire Council and various stakeholders. It included updating previous plans, engaging in focus groups, conducting interviews to gather insights on tourism themes, priorities, and emerging trends and a written survey completed by 50 partners.

7.5 It was subject to a 2-month Public Consultation, the results of which have been incorporated into the plan.

7.6 It aligns with Visit England's strategies and priorities and has received their approval. It was designed to work in parallel with Telford and Wrekin's DMP, with the aim that in 2029 there is one DMP for the Telford and Shropshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership area.

Current Visitor Economy

7.7 Shropshire's visitor economy is rich in history and natural beauty, with significant figures indicating 10.23 million visitors in 2024, contributing approximately £910 million to the local economy. The employment within the sector has also seen growth, with around 9,153 people employed in tourism-related jobs.

Visitor Demographics

7.8 The visitor demographics indicate that 86% of visitors are day-trippers, while staying visitors account for 14%. However, staying visitors generate a considerable portion of the economic impact, highlighting the need to attract more overnight guests, in line with our priority to grow the value of the visitor economy, not just the number of visitors.

Strengths and Gaps

7.9 The DMP identifies key strengths such as:

- A variety of heritage attractions and a strong food and drink culture.
- Unique market towns with distinct identities.
- A strong and varied outdoor activity offer, particularly walking opportunities.
- However, it also highlights gaps, such as the need for more serviced accommodation, better transport choices and family-friendly attractions.

Four-Year Growth Plan (2025-2029)

7.10 The growth plan focuses on:

- adjusting the ratio of staying to day visitors from 86:14 to 80:20.
- developing effective partnerships including enhancing collaboration with Telford and Wrekin

- delivering activity as part of the LVEP
- working with neighbouring destinations including the Marches
- improving Shropshire's image and growing awareness
- establishing a national reputation for regenerative tourism and as an accessible and inclusive destination.

Priorities for Development

7.11 The plan outlines several priorities:

- increase bed stock to encourage longer stays
- build on past work to create a clear identity for Shropshire as a tourist destination
- implement integrated marketing strategies to attract visitors
- support responsible tourism initiatives that benefit the environment and local communities
- work with the sector to develop product to ensure that the destination is accessible and inclusive
- the development of county wide and regional partnerships
- the creation of a robust evaluation framework based on STEAM, a visitor survey and partner intelligence.

Governance

7.12 Progress in delivering the DMP will be monitored and managed by a Visitor Economy Working Group, made up of representatives from:

- Shropshire Council's
- Visitor Economy Team
- Economic Growth Team
- Relevant Portfolio Holder
- Shrewsbury and Oswestry Bid
- Visit Shropshire
- Shropshire Hills National Landscape
- The wider sector.

Direct benefit to Shropshire Council

7.13 The direct benefit to Shropshire Council includes:

- Increased business rates from tourism businesses
- Increase visitor spending in Council facilities including car parks, museums & parks
- Reduce pressure on health and wellbeing services, as tourism product has a positive impact on residents as well as visitors
- Increased awareness of the county, resulting with increased inward investment and migration, with associated income from Business Rates and Council Tax for Shropshire Council.

Conclusion

7.14 The Shropshire DMP is a comprehensive strategy aimed at revitalizing the visitor economy by leveraging the region's unique assets and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. By focusing on sustainable tourism practices and enhancing the overall

visitor experience, Shropshire aims to position itself as an attractive and increasingly popular destination in England's tourism landscape.

8. Additional Information

- The DMP has been created in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders
- Following 2 months of Public Consultation over 70 comments were analysed and relevant feedback added. The relevance of comments was judged by the executive, Portfolio Holder and the working group.
- From 1st April the responsibility for the Visitor Economy will sit in Economic Growth and be delivered by a dedicated officer
- An integral part of their role will be to identify projects and secure funding that will help deliver the DMP

9. Conclusions

- The DMP has been developed by professionals, informed by the sector and public consultation
- It is a broad strategic document that will be used by the wider visitor economy sector, not just Shropshire Council
- Shropshire Council is one of the key partners in its delivery, but we are one of many.
- Cabinet is recommended to endorse the plan and delegate to the relevant Service Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to work with partners and stakeholders to deliver the plan.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

1. The Destination Management Plan
2. The Public Consultation Report

Local Member: All

Appendices

The Destination Management Plan
The Public Consultation Report