



GO TO PLACES



VISIT HERTS

# Visit Herts Strategy 2021 - 2024





# Vision

To be a world class destination management team delivering innovative and desirable destinations in Hertfordshire for visitors, residents and businesses.

# Mission

To build prosperous, sustainable and inclusive destinations in Hertfordshire that enrich people's lives through collaboration and our expert, informed approach.



## Collaborative

Leveraging local and national partnerships to maximise the benefits for our destinations

## Innovative

Dynamic industry leaders that can adapt to changing markets and opportunities

# Our Values

## Perceptive

Insights and market intelligence are at the heart of every decision we make

## Inclusive

Delivering a positive impact on local communities and creating welcoming destinations for all



# Background



Visit Herts was formed in 2015 as a result of recommendations in the 2013 Destination Management Plan which showed Hertfordshire’s Visitor Economy had **“no strategic direction, fragmentation and an uncoordinated approach to marketing the destination, wasted resources and with no representation at national or international level either in the consumer, B2B or travel trade sectors.”** It stated that **“as a result, the county and its businesses would have lost business to other destinations which would have led to lower footfall and reduced investment and employment in the sector.”**

The recent [independent review of Destination Management Organisations](#) clearly sets out this market failure which has been experienced in many destinations and the need for strong strategic leadership to ensure the sector fulfils its potential and supports wider strategic goals. The challenges that the sector has faced over the last 18 months has only reinforced the importance of the role that Visit Herts plays in bringing stakeholders together and the value that the visitor economy brings to our places. The report also emphasises the need for a stable mixed funding model with Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships **“realising the value of tourism”, “working in partnership” and “ensuring the visitor economy is fully integrated into their economic strategies.”** The frameworks and partnerships developed by Visit Herts with support from Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire LEP and District Council partners, demonstrates best practice but we must build on this to place Hertfordshire in a position to capitalise on opportunities as a result of this review.

Visit Herts initially focussed on establishing the brand and digital channels, travel trade engagement and developing a strong network of visitor economy partners. This was built on a strong foundation of destination insights and research and later a programme of sector-specific business support and advice as evidenced in the [2019 Annual Review](#). Using the expertise and connections available within Go To Places, the team have successfully leveraged national funding streams including Discover England Fund and Escape the Everyday to deliver product development and increased awareness nationally and internationally. The programme evaluation conducted by KADA Research in May 2020 concluded that Visit Herts **“benefits from a strong supporting infrastructure”** by being part of Go To Places and that the **“model has exploited economies of scale”** to deliver **“good value for money for investors.”**

The impact of the pandemic on the visitor economy meant the team had to quickly **respond** to the crisis with sector specific support and advice, emergency communications, monitoring and lobbying, as set out in the [2020 Annual Review](#), as a result partnerships with other business support organisations in the county have strengthened working together closely on a number of projects. This was followed by work to **reboot** footfall and **rebuild** confidence as we saw the sector gradually reopen, however, despite this work being critical for businesses, Visit Herts also saw more uncertainty in funding from the private sector as a result of the impact on businesses.

This strategy sets out a three-year plan divided into three interconnected strands which focus on close alignment with local and national strategies by placing the visitor economy firmly at the heart of our destinations to enable the wider recovery:

<b>Rebuild</b>	Driving the recovery of the visitor economy, our places and communities
<b>Grow</b>	Capitalising on growth opportunities for the visitor economy which align with key sectors, local strengths and priorities
<b>Sustain</b>	Continually improving the destination and maximising opportunities for Hertfordshire

The core activity set out in this plan delivers against local priorities for **growth, jobs, skills, the environment, communities, health and wellbeing, sustainable development and regeneration** and therefore should be primarily supported by the public sector. Additional funding unlocked as a result of funding bids will be designed to enhance activity to provide more impact or deliver against national strategic priorities. Additional private sector contributions would primarily focus on the delivery of increased destination marketing activity.

# Recovery of the Visitor Economy

Between 2015 and 2019, Visit Herts has supported the visitor economy to increase the annual value by £300m and create an additional 5,500 jobs. Current forecasts predict that the sector won't recover to pre-pandemic levels until 2025, therefore this three year strategy will focus on **supporting the sector to rebuild, capitalising on growth opportunities and delivering sustainable destination management** to recover the sector value and jobs ahead of the average UK destination.

This infographic summarises the volume and value of tourism and the impact of visitor expenditure on the local economy in 2019. The results are derived using the Cambridge Economic Impact Model under licence by Destination Research Ltd.

29M VISITORS



£2.4BN VALUE

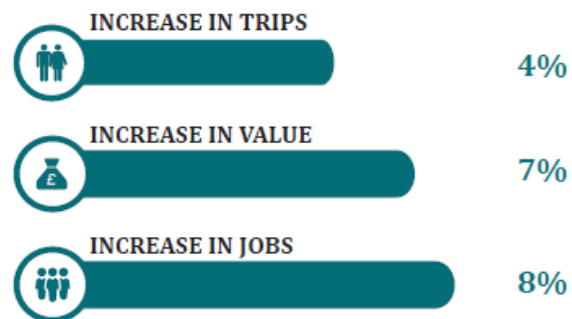


43,390 JOBS



## HERTFORDSHIRE'S PERFORMANCE

2017 → 2019



## PURPOSE OF TRIP TO HERTFORDSHIRE



**HOLIDAY 34%**  
THOSE ON HOLIDAY  
STAY 4.3 NIGHTS  
IN THE AREA AND  
SPEND £192  
FOR THE DURATION  
OF THE TRIP



**BUSINESS 19%**  
THOSE ON BUSINESS  
STAY 3.8 NIGHTS  
IN THE AREA AND  
SPEND £399  
FOR THE DURATION  
OF THE TRIP



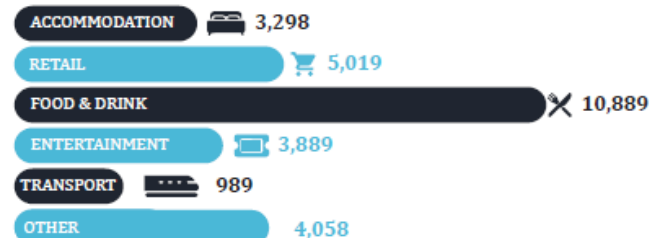
THOSE VISITING FRIENDS AND RELATIVES  
STAY 6.6 NIGHTS  
IN THE AREA AND  
SPEND £247  
FOR THE DURATION OF THE TRIP



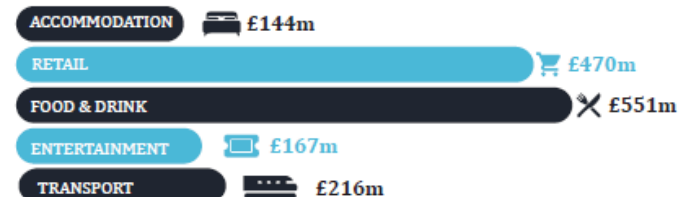
**3%**  
OTHER PURPOSES  
INCLUDING OVERSEAS  
STUDY VISITS

## VALUE AND VOLUME

### TOURISM JOBS



### DIRECT EXPENDITURE







## Visitor Economy

Revitalises Highstreets

Brings People Together

Attracts Inward Investment

Improves Health & Wellbeing

Celebrates Culture

Attracts Skilled Workers

Creates Communities

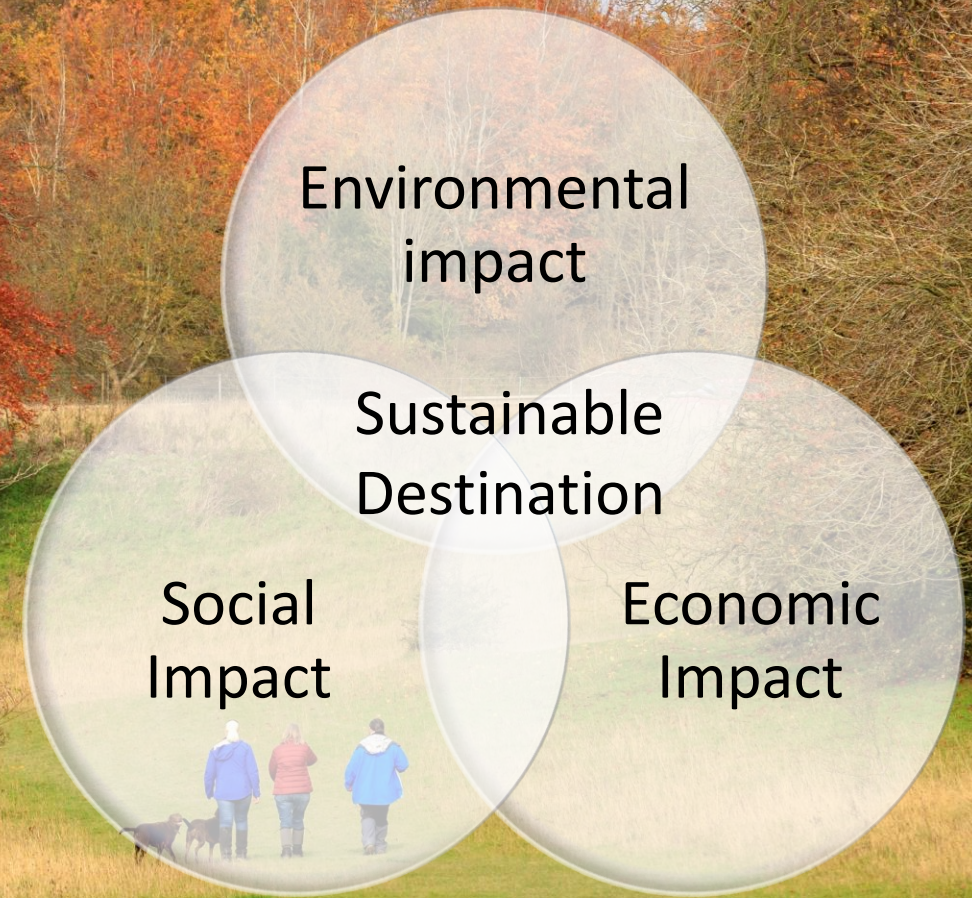
# Supporting Wider Recovery

This three year strategy will **place the visitor economy firmly at the heart of our destinations** to enable the wider recovery of the economy and our communities. Close alignment with inward investment, placemaking and cultural strategies will help to deliver vibrant places which offer people a good quality of life and attract people to **live, work, study, invest and visit.**



# Measuring Impact

Traditionally the Visitor Economy has been measured solely on the economic impact. In addition to measuring the **volume and value of visitors and jobs supported**, this three year strategy sets out a range of activities and indicators that will be monitored to demonstrate the positive impact on **resident physical and mental wellbeing** and **reduction in environmental impact** through consumer behaviour change and business adaptation.





# Visit Herts Strategy 2021 - 2024



Industry  
insights



**GO TO PLACES**  
Bringing people together, helping places thrive

Informed by data and industry knowledge

## Rebuild

Support local & national placemaking initiatives and economic recovery strategies

Respond to industry challenges with national partners & deliver timely sector-specific business support locally

Deliver a positive impact on local communities & improve resident wellbeing

## Grow

Develop business events offer to capitalise on new trends and Hertfordshire key sectors

Capitalise on opportunities for the visitor economy around screen tourism & creative industries

Continue to develop new markets & audiences through targeted marketing & distribution

## Sustain

Strong partnerships & collaborative activity under a compelling destination brand to deliver economies of scale

Strategic destination management to deliver sustainable and inclusive destinations

Unlock funding through the development of bids with cross-sector and regional partners

Aligned to support the delivery of local and national strategies

Business support

Research

Distribution

Product development

Content creation

Digital marketing

Partnership development

Lobbying & funding

Continually measuring impact, monitoring data and identifying opportunities



# Rebuild



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## Aims

To support the recovery of the visitor economy, our places and communities by:

- Feeding into local and national placemaking initiatives and economic recovery strategies.
- Responding to industry challenges with national partners & deliver timely sector-specific business support locally
- Delivering a positive impact on local communities and improve resident wellbeing.

## Approach and key deliverables

- Actively engage in local placemaking initiatives and development of recovery strategies to ensure the visitor economy is used to enable high street and destination recovery.
- Regularly attend forums such as Hertfordshire Economic Development Officers Group (HEDOG), Hertfordshire Arts and Cultural Officers meeting (HACO) and Vibrant Towns and present at other strategic forums where relevant.
- Maintain proactive engagement with national industry bodies to ensure that the Hertfordshire visitor economy has a strong voice.
- Engage in national lobbying activity and campaigns to improve perceptions around a career in the industry.
- Gather insights into industry challenges through regular forums, stakeholder engagement and surveys.
- Connect training providers with businesses, attend the West Herts College Skills Board and encourage participation in professional development and apprenticeships.
- Provide ongoing sector specific training, resources and support for businesses and signpost to other support programmes through the Visit Herts Business website, events and communications.
- Ensure key messages around supporting local communities, buying local, being active, engaging positively with outdoor spaces and the cultural offer is central to content planning.
- Deliver the annual Herts Big Weekend resident campaign to encourages residents to explore their local area and become ambassadors to drive visiting friends and relatives market.

## Key partnerships

- Industry partners (VisitEngland, TIER, Tourism Alliance, UK Hospitality, People 1<sup>st</sup>)
- Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire LEP
- Hertfordshire Growth Hub, Better Business for All Partnership, Chamber of Commerce
- District Councils – Economic Development teams, Cultural Officers
- Business Improvement Districts, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation
- FE & HE providers (West Herts College, Together Training, University of Hertfordshire)
- [Creative Hertfordshire](#), [Hertfordshire Lifestyle Network](#), [Herts Sports Partnership](#),

## Local and national strategies supported through activity

- [Hertfordshire Skills & Employment Strategy](#)
- [Hertfordshire Recovery Plan](#)
- [Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- Wellbeing Strategies incl. [East Herts](#), [St Albans](#), [Hertsmere](#), [Dacorum](#), [Three Rivers](#)
- Regeneration Plans incl. [Stevenage](#), [Hatfield](#), [Watford](#)
- Cultural Strategies incl. [East Herts](#), [Stevenage](#), [Watford](#)
- [Tourism Recovery Plan](#)

## Measuring Impact

- Number of placemaking and recovery strategies where visitor economy is mentioned.
- Number of jobs supported directly & indirectly through supply chain.
- Number of vacancies in the sector compared to national average.
- Engagement with B2B channels and communications.
- Annual residents survey.
- Engagement in Herts Big Weekend.
- Resident engagement with content with a focus on deprived and minority audiences.



# Grow



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## Aims

To capitalise on growth opportunities for the visitor economy which align with local strengths by:

- Capitalising on opportunities for the visitor economy around screen tourism and filming.
- Developing business events offer to capitalise on trends and key Hertfordshire sectors, help replace lost business tourism revenue and support inward investment.
- Continuing to develop new markets through targeted marketing and distribution.

## Approach and key deliverables

- Support businesses to become filming locations and develop screen tourism products linked to locations and iconic productions using the Visit Herts Screen Tourism Toolkit.
- Position Hertfordshire as the UK's Home of Film & TV through content, campaigns and PR to attract visits but also raise awareness with production companies and increase filming.
- Build relationships with studios, production companies and location scouts to maximise opportunities around productions and encourage use of local supply chains incl. local accommodation for cast and crew.
- Support businesses to develop their experiential and hybrid business events offer.
- Increase awareness of the Meet in Herts offer through development of destination itineraries and collateral, familiarisation visits, industry events and PR.
- Proactively work with business events partners and local ambassadors to identify and target high-value events from sectors such as life sciences, construction and aerospace.
- Educate businesses on how to work effectively with the travel trade and develop destination itineraries around key themes and flagship attractions.
- Proactive engagement with key travel trade partners to increase awareness of Hertfordshire product including familiarisation trips and attendance at industry events.
- Conduct a visitor and non-visitor perception study to identify emerging markets, barriers to visits and target segments.
- Targeted approach to digital marketing focusing on driving overnight visits from priority segments supported by influencer activity and tactical campaigns to secure data capture.

## Key partnerships

- Distribution Partners (Tour operators, DMCs, OTAs)
- Industry Partners (UKInbound, VisitBritain)
- DCMS, Creative England, Filming in England Partnership
- Film Studios (Elstree Studios, Leavesden Studios, Sky Studios)
- Film locations, business events venues and visitor economy businesses
- Hertfordshire LEP, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Growth Hub

## Local and national strategies supported through activity

- [Hertfordshire Enterprise and Innovation Strategy](#)
- [Hertfordshire Local Industrial Strategy](#)
- [Hertfordshire Recovery Plan](#)
- Hertfordshire Film and TV Sector Action Plan (in development)
- [Tourism Recovery Plan](#)
- [International Business Events Action Plan](#)
- [Tourism Sector Deal](#), [Creative Industries Sector Deal](#)
- [St Albans and District Tourism Profile and Strategic Action Plan](#)

## Measuring Impact

- Businesses supported or trained.
- Businesses promoted as part of the destination-wide activity.
- Number of businesses on Creative England location database.
- Engagement with travel trade and business event distribution partners.
- Products featured in travel trade brochures and programmes.
- Reach of film tourism campaign and PR activity.
- Increased reach and engagement with priority audiences.
- Volume and value of visits to Hertfordshire with a focus on overnight stays, business visits and length of stay.



# Sustain



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## Aims

To continually improve the destination and maximise opportunities for Hertfordshire by:

- Providing strategic destination management to deliver sustainable and inclusive destinations.
- Unlocking funding through the development of bids with cross-sector and regional partners.
- Building strong partnerships to deliver collaborative activity under a compelling destination brand.

## Approach and key deliverables

- Provide long-term expertise and strategic thinking to enable the sustained success of the Hertfordshire visitor economy.
- Encourage businesses to make changes to reduce carbon and adopt sustainable practices by providing best practice advice and signposting to low carbon support and funding.
- Develop a partnership with AccessAble to offer lower cost access guides and advice on improving accessibility for businesses in Hertfordshire through economies of scale.
- Work with VisitEngland, BBfA and organisations such as Quality in Tourism to ensure businesses can find the support and advice they need to be compliant and get accredited.
- Promote sustainable tourism products, the use of public transport, active travel options and encourage responsible behaviours through a new sustainability pledge.
- Actively seek funding opportunities using in-house capacity and expertise to lead bids in partnership with cross-sector and regional partners which build on the foundation of core funding.
- Identify emerging opportunities as a result of the DMO review and position Hertfordshire to access potential funding to deliver on national priorities and support for the sector.
- Deliver regular networking events, industry updates and forums focused on a particular segment, product theme or market (e.g. Hoteliers Forum, Travel Trade Group).
- As the sector recovers, re-engage lapsed private sector partners and increase partnerships with experiential products, local producers, meeting venues and activity providers.
- Offer public and private sector partners opportunities to participate in and buy into destination campaign activity providing increased reach, buying power and access to new audiences.
- Provide opportunities for partners to attend travel trade and business events shows under a strong destination brand, providing access to VisitBritain representatives and economies of scale.

## Key partnerships

- AccessAble, Quality in Tourism, Green Tourism, Cycling UK
- VisitEngland
- Other regional and UK Destination Management Organisations
- Hertfordshire County Council, District Councils
- Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Hertfordshire Growth Hub, Better Business for All (BBfA) Partnership
- Chilterns AONB, Canal & River Trust, Woodland Trust, Lee Valley & Colne Valley Regional Park Authorities
- Public Transport Partners (Govia Thameslink Railway, Arriva)

## Local and national strategies supported through activity

- [Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy](#)
- [Local Transport Plan](#)
- [Tourism Recovery Plan](#)
- [Tourism Sector Deal](#)
- [Independent review of Destination Management Organisations in England](#)

## Measuring Impact

- Number of businesses with access guides.
- Engagement with information shared with businesses to promote best practice and support.
- Number of consumers who sign up to sustainability pledge.
- Funding bids submitted.
- Funding leveraged through bids.
- Number of businesses attending events.
- Number of private sector partners.
- Participation in collaborative activity and additional buy in.