

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Full Council – 26 February 2020

Hinkley Tourism Strategy Phase 4 Action Plan 2020 - 2023

This matter is the responsibility of Member Cllr Marcus Kravis, Lead Member for Asset Management & Economic Development

Report Authors: Nicki Maclean & Robert Downes

1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To report to Council on what has been achieved in the first five years of delivering the Hinkley Tourism Strategy 2015-20 under Phase 1, 2 and 3 Action Plans (see section 3.2).
- 1.2 To consult with Council on the proposals for a new 3 year Phase 4 Action Plan from 2020 onward (see 3.4, plus Appendices A and B).
- 1.3 To request the drawdown of £635,594 from Hinkley Point C Section 106 allocations available for tourism, to deliver the Phase 4 Action Plan (see section 3.4). The report also highlights some Phase 3 committed underspend amounting to £49,406 for planned activity, illustrated within the Phase 4 plan making the total £685,000.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council approves the Phase 4 Action Plan for delivery from March 2020 onward.
- 2.2 That Council approves the request for drawing down £635,594 of Hinkley Point C Section 106 allocations available for tourism to deliver the Phase 4 plan.

3 Background and Full details of the Report

3.1 The Hinkley Tourism Action Partnership

- 3.1.1 Section 106 agreements with EDF Energy for the development of Hinkley Point C (HPC) included the condition that a partnership was formed to develop plans for managing impacts and maximising opportunities for tourism. West Somerset Council formed the Hinkley Tourism Action Partnership (HTAP) in 2014, and have since then led the development of activity.
- 3.1.2 The partnership also includes representatives from Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Exmoor National Park Authority, EDF Energy, Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor. Activity is supported and largely delivered by officers from the three

local authorities.

3.1.3 In 2014, HTAP carried out consultation with the tourism industry in order to establish a view on priorities, approach and ideas for achieving success. The Hinkley Tourism Strategy 2015-20 was launched and approved by Council in February 2015.

3.1.4 The strategy was accompanied by a Phase 1 Action Plan. A Phase 2 Plan was approved by Council in July 2016 to take things through to December 2017, which completes the first three years of the strategy. These first two plans utilised the £320,000 (plus an additional £22,311 of indexation) available under the Site Preparation Section 106 agreement with EDF Energy for HPC.

3.1.5 The Phase 3 Plan was approved by Council in December 2017 to take things through to December 2019. The Phase 3 Plan utilised £258,000 available under the Section 106 agreement with EDF Energy for HPC.

3.2 Achievements 2015-19

3.2.1 At the time of developing the strategy in 2015, the official government decision to build HPC was expected imminently. However, it did not occur until September 2016. Some marketing activity was put on hold until 2017, but by and large the delay gave HTAP an opportunity to put in place key plans, contracts, processes, and relationships.

3.2.2 The table below provides details of what has been achieved under the Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 plans in 2015-19. In addition to what is shown, £75k of match funding was secured to enhance planned activity.

Priority Detail	Target	Achieved
1. PR campaigns to generate positive perceptions.	50 pieces of media coverage	400+ pieces of media coverage achieved in regional and national press. Activity has included campaigns and press trips to celebrate Somerset's coast, food and drink and resulted in features in the national press including The Telegraph, iPaper, Sunday Express, Daily Mirror and the The Times.
2. Planning and action to improve visitor experience.	15 initiatives to aid visitors	19 achieved, including: travel plans, business FAQ's, TIC service level agreements, Welcome International training, itineraries, guided walks, videos, photography, e-newsletters and new social media channels.
3. Visitor monitoring of motivations and satisfaction.	Over 70% of visitors actively recommend the area to others	72% achieved in net promoter score question from 1,750 surveys conducted over 2 years (score represents the % of visitors that would recommend the area to others).

4. Development of new tools, products and partnerships.	10 new tools and products	20 achieved , including: Somerset e-book, HPC workers site, new campaign web content, COOL experiences brochures, support for Watchet CCT, Enterprising Minehead, Cheddar & Dunster Tourism Forums, Steam Coast Trail, Brean Down Way, 14 guided walks from the England Coast Path, new Visit Somerset website.
5. Growing the customer base through Somerset & Exmoor advertising campaigns.	100,000 new visitors to digital platforms	138k achieved. 58,000 visitors generated via Secrets campaign aimed at family and couples markets, and 80,000 via Wild West digital advertising campaign aimed at family and active markets.
6. Building industry capacity of Visit Somerset & Visit Exmoor.	10% combined average growth in members and digital	18% combined average growth across all 3 HTAP Phases. Social media channels have shown strongest growth for both DMOs (35% growth across Phase 3)
7. Improve digital and quality skills of businesses.	150 employees supported	290 employees and business supported through digital and management training sessions, workshops to encourage quality and apply for regional awards, workshops with tourism businesses located close the England Coast Path to assist them to make the most of the opportunities
8. Monitor industry performance and issues.	40% of businesses confident about next 12 months.	48% indicated confidence in surveys conducted quarterly between 2016 - 2018. 896 responses from businesses were received across the two-year period.

3.3 The refreshed Hinkley Tourism Strategy 2020-23 (Appendix A)

3.3.1 The decision to refresh the strategy was taken for a number of reasons. The planned mid-term review of the strategy has coincided with significant increases in activity in and around the HPC site. Construction is now well under way with some 500 lorry movements per day. This has been matched with further EDF roadwork improvements in Bridgwater, and non-related projects being delivered by England and Somerset Highways Teams on the M5 and A39. Challenges have begun to emerge in the local accommodation sector for the 4,000 or so workers there are currently in the area.

3.3.2 Time has proved to be a short in terms of issues and trends. The decision to leave the EU and rise in use by the public of online travel agents, such as Air BandB, are set to present new challenges. There has been enormous growth in companies using digital advertising channels to target customers, at the expense of traditional methods. This was predicted in the original strategy, which led to the development of the 'Secrets' and 'Wild West' digital campaigns, both of which have been very successful. Yet trends in the digital world are constantly evolving with newer more cost effective advertising channels and inspiring new offers making things ever more competitive. These changes

all place added pressure on the area's industry bodies (Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor), and individual businesses to grow and remain resilient to change.

- 3.3.3 A key change HTAP partners wanted to see **was a shift in emphasis away from awareness raising advertising campaigns to more of a focus on developing new products, match funding, and supporting the industry.** The key argument being that opportunities to raise awareness of the area before the HPC development got underway have been achieved. Now is the time to focus on developing the legacy and creating more industry resilience. Therefore, in Phase 4 the focus will be on looking to the future to maximise the legacy of the S106 funding and ensure that benefit is felt beyond the end of funding and into the following years. Focus in Phase 4 will move away from direct commissioning of specialist agencies for some activity and will instead provide direct support to the two Destination Management Organisations, to enable them to deliver this activity directly. This support will assist both organisations to become self-sustaining beyond the S106 funding period. Support in the form of match funding for legacy type projects such as the Steam Coast Trail, Enterprising Minehead and projects in Sedgemoor will ensure that benefits are experienced for many years to come. To maximise the benefits of the funding, Phase 4 has provided an allocation for a Small Visitor Experience Grant Scheme to support development of tourism products and experiences.
- 3.3.4 Therefore, the strategy is now structured around four strategic aims: **Perception, Welcome, New Products, and Industry Growth.** Underpinning these aims are the priorities each with a measurable target. (Please see Appendix A).

Strategic Aim	Priorities	Targets for the three years strategy from 2020 - 2023
1. Generating Positive Perceptions	Promoting a positive image	Growth in VS & VE performance across SLA KPI's – Target 10% growth
	Growing the customer base	
2. Delivering an Exceptional Welcome	Enhancing the welcome	200 pieces of media coverage
	Understanding the customer	Over 50% of visitors actively recommend area to others
3. Developing new experiences	Destination competitiveness	£320,000 of match funding provided for new tourism products/experiences/services
	Maximising the Legacy	
4. Supporting Industry Growth	Industry capacity building	5 - 7 new tourism products/experiences supported
	Encouraging quality growth	110 tourism employees supported through training

3.4 **Phase 4 Action Plan 2020-23 (Appendix B)**

- 3.4.1 The HTAP tourism strategy is being delivered through four phased action plans. The phase 1, 2 and 3 plans, which utilised the £600,911.56 of allocations available under the Section 106 Site Preparations, will come to an end in December 2019, apart from committed underspend of £49,406 for the PR and Live Tourism projects, that are scheduled to run through 2020. Phase 4 (please see Appendix B) will run from April 2020 until approximately April/May 2023.
- 3.4.2 The Phase 4 Plan is proposing to utilise £635,594 of the current available Section 106 allocations and includes the Phase 3 underspend of £49,406* to total £685,000. The reason for requesting the remaining share available in Phase 4 is because there is a requirement to ensure that the funds are spent by May 2023.
- 3.4.3 The following table summarises spend against activity in the Phase 4 Plan, and includes the Phase 3 committed activity. Full details of the plan are provided in Appendix B.

Strategic Aim	Activity	Proposed Budget
1. Generating Positive Perceptions	Support delivery of Visit Somerset's 3 Year Business Plan under SLA to promote Somerset as a visitor destination, provide business support and networking to tourism businesses and grow their membership and income streams. This support will improve DMO resilience beyond the S106 funding period.	£120,000
	Support delivery of Visit Exmoor's 3 Year Business Plan under SLA to promote Exmoor and Greater Exmoor through PR and marketing activity, provide business support and networking to tourism businesses and grow their membership and income streams. This support will improve DMO resilience beyond the S106 funding period.	£120,000
2. Delivering an Exceptional Welcome	Phase 3 - existing PR contract covering Somerset and Exmoor.	£15,000
	New shorter visitor survey to measure on-site visitor experience and satisfaction across Somerset.	£20,000
	Volume and Value Data. Annual tourism industry statistical data to inform and influence.	£6,000
	Part funded from Phase 3 - ENPA Walks Project - To create a suite of high profile and consistently branded self-guided walks within Exmoor National Park with supporting resources, available to all.	£22,500
	HTAP Delivery Budget for incidentals and facilitating events as arise.	£5,500
3. Developing new experiences	Support for coastal tourism businesses including maximising the opportunities associated with the England Coast Path.	£40,000

	<p>Provide match funding support for larger legacy tourism projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Steam Coast Trail – Steam Coast Trail – To support the creation of a network of multi-use paths in West Somerset that will increase participation in cycling and walking and boost cycle tourism. The complete network will link Minehead to Williton, the next phase will concentrate on linking Minehead to Dunster Beach and Blue Anchor. - Enterprising Minehead – Continuing to build on the success of Enterprising Minehead place based regeneration, with a key aim to continue roll out of the revitalisation of the seafront promenade. By creating more things to do will tempt visitors and the community to dwell longer and enjoy the offer. It will continue to transform Minehead's seafront with key attractors, further public realm enhancements, new events & activities, and the provision of new business opportunities, to extend the Town's appeal and leave a legacy for West Somerset's flagship seaside resort. - Sedgemoor tourism projects - Bridgwater has seen the most impact from the construction of Hinkley Point C, with the majority of associated developments being built in the town, 82% of non-home based workers resident in Sedgemoor and hundreds of lorry and bus movements every day. This at a time when Bridgwater Town Council is making tourism a priority, in part to compensate for the crisis in retail affecting most High Streets. One highlight has been the Bridgwater Quayside Festival, which has seen a new and diverse audience visiting the town. The aim is to establish the festival in the annual calendar with funds from the Arts Council, match funding from the Town Council and income from sponsors and stallholders. Funding from HTAP for a further three years would help underpin its maturity. - Burnham Evolution seeks to enable the community to meet the challenges and maximise the benefits of being a rural, coastal community close to a major infrastructure project. It aims to do so by revitalising its 	<p>£50,000</p> <p>£50,000</p> <p>£70,000</p>
--	--	--

	<p>seaside and community assets and increasing its resilience as a year-round destination. The project is run by the public-private partnership Burnham Coastal Community Team. Burnham Evolution is made up of a number of projects, such as improvements to the Seafront and Princess Theatre and retail support. There is a shortfall in the funds required and money from HTAP would be spent on marketing to underpin its success and enable it to hold its own as part of a network of resorts along the Somerset Coastal strip.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cheddar attracts roughly half the number of visitors recorded three decades ago despite tourism being its lifeblood. To help reinvigorate it, a Cheddar Vision Group was formed. The group recognises that the Gorge remains a major attraction but tourism is too seasonal meaning employment is not particularly sustainable. The group seeks to implement a strategy designed to enhance the visitor experience in Cheddar and its exceptional natural surroundings, to attract a demographic who will generally dwell longer, be interested in a broader range of activities, spend more, and visit at any time of year. To develop the strategy, the Group would like to do in-depth visitor surveys and it would like to reprint its marketing material. 	
4. Supporting Industry Growth	Small Visitor Experience Grant Scheme – an allocation has been provided for a Small Grant Scheme. This will be for tourism businesses or organisations to bid into and funding will be allocated to those, who it is agreed by HTAP meet its priorities, and develop a new tourism product or experience.	£50,000
	Retained amount of funding for HTAP to consider match funding for future project bids, extending the grant scheme if successful or any other opportunities that may arise delivering HTAP strategy ambitions.	£90,000
	Phase 3 – Live Tourism work. A project with a focus on making visitor experiences easier for consumers to discover covering Somerset and Exmoor.	£20,000
	Continued sponsorship of the Bath, Bristol and Somerset Tourism Awards to raise quality.	£6,000
TOTAL		£685,000

- 4.1 The Council's key theme around Our Environment & Economy around employment opportunities and promoting healthy lifestyles, as well as 'Maximise the local economic benefits from Hinkley Point C'.

5 Finance / Resource Implications

- 5.1 To date, the council received a total of £1,235,905.47 from EDF for Tourism. £342,311.56 was received under the Site Preparation Agreement and £893,594.47 under the Development Consent Order Agreement. The council received the last instalment in May 2019. These amounts included indexation totalling £115,905.47.
- 5.2 The Council previously allocated £170,385 for Phase 1 of the Tourism Action Plan and a further £171,926 for Phase 2. Both phases were funded from the Site Preparation Agreement.
- 5.3 The Phase 3 Action Plan allocated the use of £258,000.56. This includes the remaining £0.56 from the Site Preparation Section 106 allocations, and £258,000 from the DCO Section 106 agreement. This leaves approximately £635,954 for the Phase 4 Plan activity and with £49,406 Phase 3 committed underspend for planned activity carried over totals £685,000.
- 5.4 The funding proposal is requested in four budget areas:

Phase 4 Action Plan Budgets	Sub-Totals
DMO support	£240,000
Visitor Experience	£69,000
New Product Development	£210,000
Industry Support/Growth	£166,000
GRAND TOTAL	£685,000

6 Legal Implications (if any)

- 6.1 Not applicable

7 Environmental Impact Implications (if any)

- 7.1 Promotional activity set out in the strategy and plans focus on using digital channels to target and provide information to customers. Visitor and business surveys are also carried out using digital and online methods. This is offset against the movements of over 95% of visitors that use their car to visit the area, due to a lack of public transport options available. Work with local community groups to improve visitor experiences, aims to keep visitors in the local area when they arrive. Overall, all strategic tourism planning activity follows the principles of sustainable tourism as a matter of course.

Developments supported, like the Steam Coast Trail and Brean Down Way (new cycling routes) typically have their own principles embedded in sustainable tourism principles, and campaigns, like 'Secret Somerset and Exmoor', actively sought to encourage visitors to explore the area and spread their benefits.

8 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications (if any)

8.1 Not applicable

9 Equality and Diversity Implications (if any)

9.1 Where relevant all steps are taken to ensure equality and diversity. Suppliers bidding for contracts are required to meet Somerset West and Taunton Council standards. Where situations occur with businesses, the appropriate steps and advice are provided.

10 Social Value Implications (if any)

10.1 The proposal does involve procuring services. Relevant local companies are given opportunities to bid for contracts. No specific mention is made to social value in the strategy, but much of the planned activity brings many benefits to other businesses, residents and community group ambitions. For example, the Secrets PR campaign celebrated 50 secrets/hidden gems of Somerset and Exmoor and the Wild West Campaign that followed. Visitors were encouraged to explore the area, and in the process discover local shops, tea-rooms and pubs (e.g. Washford, Doniford, and Exford). The campaign actively sought to help spread the benefits of tourism, a key principle of sustainable tourism.

11 Partnership Implications (if any)

11.1 The Strategy and Plan have been created by the Hinkley Tourism Action Partnership, which includes 7 partners (including Somerset West and Taunton Council). The plan has been established in the context of the HPC development, and so Somerset West and Taunton is central to managing any opportunities and challenges. However, visitors do not recognise boundaries, and for many years marketing of the area has been done working in partnership with stakeholders involved in promoting Somerset and Exmoor. The aim being to maximise potential for bringing in visitors to the area. Partners have invested time and energy in the previous plans and will be doing so again in the new one. If the strategy and plan did not go ahead, relationships with partners could be damaged and the impacts of HPC would not be managed in a co-ordinated way.

12 Health and Wellbeing Implications (if any)

12.1 In 2016, HTAP developed a Marketing Strategy to help guide direction. In particular, the strategy sets out how the Family and Active markets will be targeted through campaigns. Somerset and Exmoor's biggest joint strength is its natural landscape. The area benefits from a variety of landscapes, most of which is protected. Therefore marketing campaigns have sought to encourage visitors to explore the area by positioning it as a great natural playground. This approach has important benefits for local residents, who can also

discover the area and utilise new attractions like the Steam Coast Trail and Brean Down Way, two projects supported by HTAP.

13 Asset Management Implications (if any)

13.1 Not applicable

14 Data Protection Implications (if any)

14.1 Not applicable

15 Consultation Implications (if any)

15.1 In 2014, consultation was carried out with businesses and stakeholders in the tourism industry in order to understand the view on Hinkley Point C, and how it may affect the industry. The information and ideas gleaned from this exercise led to the development of the strategy. In particular the development of the priorities and principles of the marketing strategy that was developed later in 2016.

16 Scrutiny Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)

16.1 Not applicable.

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No** (delete as appropriate)
- **Cabinet/Executive – Yes** (delete as appropriate)
- **Full Council – Yes** (delete as appropriate)

Reporting Frequency: **Once only** **Ad-hoc** **Quarterly**

Twice-yearly **Annually**

List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)

Appendix A	Hinkley Tourism Strategy 2020-23
Appendix B	Hinkley Tourism Phase 4 Action Plan for 2020-23

Contact Officers

Name	Nicki Maclean	Name	Robert Downes
Direct Dial	01984 600189	Direct Dial	01984 600190
Email	n.maclean@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk	Email	r.downes@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk