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Author: Yvette Turnbull, Culture, Visitor and Creative Economy Project Officer
Lead Officer: Dave Caulfield, Director of Economic Regeneration and Place

Title: Heart of Yorkshire Visitor Economy Strategy Refresh (2022 – 2025)

Summary:

In 2018 Members agreed to adopt a Visitor Economy Strategy for Selby District, which was a key element in delivering Strategic Priority 2 of the Economic Development Framework “Making Selby District a great Place to live and work.” The aim was to increase the value of the visitor economy to the District by 20% by the end of the delivery period (March 2022).

Considerable progress has been made against the original action plan and economic impact data (using the Cambridge model, which is the industry standard) showed growth of 20% between 2017 and 2019. This growth has, of course, been impacted by Covid for 2020 and 2021.

The Visitor Economy Strategy Refresh builds on the foundations of the original strategy. It incorporates learning so far and establishes the key priorities for the next development period. It seeks to continue the work to support the visitor and cultural sectors as they recover from the impact of the pandemic, build on the Heart of Yorkshire destination brand and capitalise on the District’s status as a Priority Place for Arts Council England and HM Government, via its Levelling Up for Culture agenda.

Having the Refresh in place will ensure no loss of momentum whilst we transform local government delivery in North Yorkshire, as well as ensuring that our aspirations for the visitor economy sector and offer in our District are clearly articulated and understood, enabling them to be incorporated into a new Visitor Economy Strategy for North Yorkshire.

Recommendations:

The Executive are asked to agree the Visitor Economy Strategy Refresh.

1. Introduction and background

Selby District’s Visitor Economy Strategy 2018 – 2022 ‘Making Selby District a Great Place’ recognised the role that the town centres, high-quality environment and the

breadth of our visitor assets have, in making Selby District a great place to live and work, to attract visitors, and to improve quality of life for our residents. It set out to develop the visitor offer, so that both residents and visitors alike could discover and celebrate the district's rich cultural heritage and unique locations.

It was the first of its kind for Selby District; 'A Strategy for Growth' that recognised the visitor economy was an under-exploited, and poorly understood, sector within the district. It was built around 4 key outcomes, to:

- Play a crucial role in the District's Economic Development Framework and boost the local economy.
- Improve the lives and wellbeing of residents as well as improving the experience for visitors.
- Directly address the ambitions of key visitor economy stakeholders.
- Encourage and create ambassadors and advocates for the district.

This strategy articulated the growing ambition for Selby District's visitor economy. It analysed opportunities and challenges for the area and the sector, and focused on priorities to improve the visitor experience, develop richer experiences, and attract more visitors and spending in the Selby District, while celebrating our identity, heritage, and arts and culture.

Selby District is well-located and has many assets to be proud of, including a unique heritage story. The Visitor Economy Strategy and Cultural Development Framework put these assets at the heart of regeneration and revitalisation plans, as the visitor and cultural sectors grow within the district's economy and enhance its image and reputation.

2. The Visitor Economy Strategy (VES) Refresh:

2.1 Purpose and need for the VES Refresh

Establishing Selby District as a Great Place to Live and a Great Place to Grow means using what sets it apart and makes it special, to attract visitors, to improve quality of life for our residents and to encourage people to invest.

As the delivery period of the first iteration of the VES comes to an end opportunity for further growth still exist, as do the substantial challenges created by the impact of the pandemic on the sector. Much of the work which has been delivered lends itself to logical and incremental subsequent development and it is considered that a refresh of the strategy and action plan, would take the work from its current starting point to the next level.

Having made considerable progress it is important to ensure that there is no loss of momentum; that the sector continues to be supported as it recovers from the impact of the pandemic and that the interests, needs and uniqueness of Selby District's visitor sector is articulated as we move into the new local authority for North Yorkshire.

It is not considered appropriate to develop an entirely new strategy at this point as there will, in due course, be a County-wide strategy for the development, support and growth of the North Yorkshire's visitor economy. However, without any strategy in

place for Selby District it will be difficult to ensure that the ambition and needs of our own sector are recognised and understood. The Refresh will make sure that Selby District's sector is not forgotten, as it competes with the established offer of the North Yorkshire Coast, Moors and Dales; and ensure that we continue to make the most of changing opportunities, such as continuing growth of the interest in Localhood.

2.2 Delivery of the VES 2018 - 2022

Significant progress was made, despite challenges throughout the period including the Covid-19 pandemic, and its associated national and international restrictions, Brexit and changing market demands. The overriding objective of the strategy was to grow the sector by 20% by the end of 2022, having established a credible baseline in 2018. The Cambridge Model Economic Impact of Tourism report for 2019 indicated that was achievable, with the volume and value of tourism in Selby District increasing by 23% and 15% respectively, when compared to 2018.

The district's visitor economy contributed £187.4 million in 2019, supporting 4,392 jobs, meaning 12.2% of the working population in Selby District were employed as a result of tourism, and the visitor economy saw a growth in value of 20% between 2017 – 2019.

Key achievements include:

- Creation of the Visitor Economy Advisory Board, bringing together sector experts and businesses, and delivery of a range of networking & training opportunities for the sector.
- Supporting the sector through Covid-19 via information, newsletters, help with achieving Good to Go (industry standard and consumer mark to assure customers of covid-secure status), business grants and cultural recovery grants.
- Delivering a number of high-profile events, which included Selby 950 (which won a White Rose Bronze Award and saw audiences of over 20,000); the Tour de Yorkshire finish (with an estimated audience of around 50,000 for the district) and the Yorkshire 2019 paracycling international (including a specific viewing area for people with disabilities or access needs and additional facilities, such as the Mobiloo).
- Support for new product development, including new tours at Selby Abbey, outdoor games at The Escapologist, expanded caravan and campsites, The Explorer's Road project, bookability support and access to the travel trade by Stillingfleet Lodge Gardens.
- Development of the Cultural Development Framework, which was a direct contributor to the Arts Council's recognition of Selby District as a Priority Place.
- Development of the Heart of Yorkshire destination brand, website and its associated social media channels: [Home, At The Very Heart Of Yorkshire | Heart Of Yorkshire \(exploreheartofyorkshire.co.uk\)](https://www.exploreheartofyorkshire.co.uk). To date, the Heart of Yorkshire website has achieved over 29,000 views.
- Development of a marketing plan and delivery of a wide range of campaigns, including HOME (which aimed to encourage local people to explore the offer on their own doorstep), Christmas at HOME and Get to Know Your Own Heart, which supported the District's first residents engagement festival (attracting

over 500 residents with 15 different offers, activities and events taking place over two days).

- Campaigns have included advertising via Google & Facebook, on the back of buses on multiple routes through the district, in local newspapers (including the Selby Times) and on hoardings on the A64 and at Selby railway station. Digital campaign activity has, collectively, achieved over 2.5 million impressions, (the number of times a piece of our content was seen), achieved a social media reach of over 120,000 and generated over 15,000 website clicks).
- Creating a number of District Trails [Discover Selby District Trails | Heart Of Yorkshire \(exploreheartofyorkshire.co.uk\)](https://www.exploreheartofyorkshire.co.uk) which include family adventure, nature & wildlife and a trail exploring the district’s heritage and history. The trails have been viewed over 5000 times since they were added the SDC website in October 2020 and the Heart of Yorkshire website in July 2021.

2.3 Priorities for the VES Refresh

The VES Refresh sets out a revised vision, which reflects the significant progress which has been made:

“Developing passion for the place – at the Heart of Yorkshire For Selby District to stand out as an authentic, enriching and welcoming place to explore, that locals are proud to call home and visitors are excited to visit.”

- The visitor economy will be united, resilient, sustainable and prosperous; responsive to the needs of the residents and communities of the district, celebrating the authenticity and spirit of the area.
- The district of Selby will be recognised as a place full of rich stories and quality experiences that contribute to the area socially, economically, and physically.
- Local communities and residents will benefit from the opportunity to participate in high-quality experiences on their doorstep.
- Selby District’s offer will be more widely understood and valued, regionally, locally and nationally.

The VES refresh identifies four threads:

<p>1: Connecting</p>	<p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity to connect and network the sector, as well as linking the cultural and visitor sectors. • Strengthening and maintaining relationships. • Establishing and facilitating partnerships, not just locally, but regionally, nationally and internationally.
<p>2: Developing</p>	<p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product development • Support to test new ideas and new thinking. • Audience development.

3: Promoting	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising the profile of the Heart of Yorkshire, its personality and welcome, key assets and its businesses within. Achieved through thematic, seasonal and collaborative marketing campaigns, and increased information provision. • Use of key themes: History & Heritage, Food & Drink, Arts & Culture, Nature, Wildlife & Green Spaces. • Reaching audiences: residents, visiting friends and relatives, 30 mins drive time, families, older couples.
4: Championing	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harnessing and developing the District’s industry experts through business training, support and upskilling. • Gathering and sharing industry data, trends and insights. • Ensuring there is a unified voice. • Sustaining development.

In order to achieve the vision a clear three-year action plan has been developed. A series of deliverable and measurable actions have been identified for each of the four threads.

The Visitor Economy Strategy Refresh is attached as an appendix.

2.4 Delivery of the VES 2022 - 2025

The plan will be delivered as a collaboration with the visitor & cultural sectors and will be flexible enough to respond to changing needs. Aspects may be commissioned, delivered by Selby District Council, or by the sector themselves. The Tourism Development Officer will lead on delivery, supported by the Culture, Visitor & Creative Economy Manager.

It is anticipated that the Refresh will be incorporated into a new VES for North Yorkshire, which will then be delivered by a visitor economy team resulting from the service review and transition, therefore giving a clear direction for the district going forward.

3. Impact and outcomes

The VES Refresh aims to support and develop the sector as it recovers from the pandemic, so it is considered that only a modest increase in economic impact should be predicted, in line with Visit Britain’s growth predictions.

The aim is to restore visitor numbers and spend to 2019 levels or beyond.

4. Alternative Options Considered

The option of “no action” was considered i.e., whether it was necessary to produce a refresh, given the relatively short period of time before the North Yorkshire Council is in place. It was decided that the resulting loss of momentum would further damage support to the sector as it is attempting to recover from Covid, as well as having a negative impact on relationships and a loss of trust between the sector and the council. It would also make it harder to make the most of the significant opportunity which exists from the Levelling Up Agenda and Selby District’s status as a Priority Place.

5. Implications

5.1 Legal Implications

Commissions will go through appropriate procurement and legal processes.

5.2 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications. A modest underspend from the delivery of the 2018-2022 VES exists (as some elements were undeliverable during the pandemic) and this would be used to deliver the first year of the Refresh. This is funded through the existing P4G budget for visitor economy.

6.3 Policy and Risk Implications

The VES Refresh exists as a fundamental part of a framework of interdependent policies and plans; the key ones being:

- Selby District Council Plan 2020-2030 (delivery priority to: Enable a growing visitor economy underpinned by a sustained focus on enhancing the district’s cultural, retail and leisure offer).
- Selby District Cultural Development Framework.
- Y&NY LEP’s Greener, Fairer, Stronger – A vision for economic recovery.

It is not considered that there are significant legal, financial or reputational risks from the VES Refresh. However, loss of momentum if development work stops now could create reputational risk, through its impact on relationships and a perceived failure to support the sector effectively at a time when it has been made more vulnerable by the pandemic.

6.4 Corporate Plan Implications

The VES Refresh is in line with Council Plan Delivery priority: Enable a thriving visitor economy underpinned by a sustained focus on enhancing the district’s cultural, retail and leisure offer.

6.5 Resource Implications

Resourcing for the VES Refresh has been identified above.

6.6 Other Implications

None identified.

6.7 Equalities Impact Assessment

Wherever necessary projects contained within the VES Refresh action plan will have an EIA assessment.

7. Conclusion

The VES Refresh action plan is required in order to secure a strategic focus for the development of the district's visitor economy. It will enable the Council to move through Local Government Reorganisation with clear intent for delivery of Visitor Economy priorities, ensuring the ambition and needs of the sector are recognised and understood.

8. Background Documents

Visitor Economy Strategy Refresh 2022 - 2025

Contact Officer: Yvette Turnbull, Culture, Visitor & Creative Economy Manager
yturnbull@selby.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix A: Visitor Economy Strategy Refresh 2022 - 2025