

## FUNDAMENTAL SERVICE REVIEW: TOURISM SERVICE PROCUREMENT OPTIONS

### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report is to seek Cabinet's approval for the future direction of the Tourism Service, which places greater emphasis on partnership working and a closer alignment with other management and economic activities.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Tourism Service has been assessed on a number of occasions. Under the Best Value regime it was externally inspected and achieved 2\* likely to improve – the highest score achieved by any Tourism Service. It was awarded Beacon Status for Sustainable Tourism and has been used in a number of national case studies. During the Review, the "Towards An Excellent Service" external accreditation rated the service highly and whilst not a national ranking system, it is understood the performance of the service had not been bettered. Most recently three awards were secured at the World Responsible Tourism Awards: Overall Winner, Best Personal Contribution and Best Destination - the first time this has been won by a British destination.
- 2.2 Report D to Cabinet in April 2007 concluded the Fundamental Service Review of the Leisure Service (which at that point included Tourism). Two findings of that Review were to test the procurement of the Health and Leisure Centres and the Tourism Service, with the outcomes of each to be reported on in their own right. This paper considers the procurement of the Tourism Service, Cabinet having set the direction for the procurement as in-house provision with an improvement plan at the April 2007 meeting.
- 2.3 In summary, the Service continues to perform well, founded in its strong relationships across the whole range of interests which bear on this sector (Visitor, Industry, Community, Environment). The Authority has been successful in providing the core service, around which partnerships have been built. These are an excellent foundation for forging even better links, with partners contributing to shared outcomes. There is scope to increase the impact of the Service locally by moving in the direction of closer partnerships. Examples of the proposed direction are:

**Visitor:** maintain the core function of producing tourism led publications, develop the official web site and related "e" products as the future focus of information services, whilst increasing the role for the New Forest Tourism Association in public relations and selling.

**Industry:** maintain the core specialist support, whilst enabling closer ties to New Forest Business Partnership and the Economic Development Unit.

**Community:** maintain support for Community Tourism groups and seek stronger engagement from Town and Parish Councils.

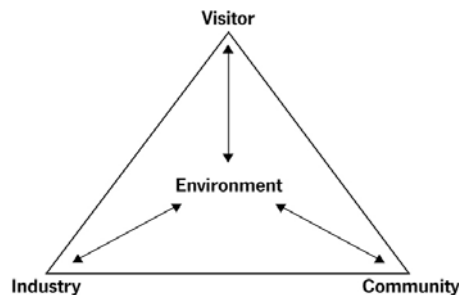
**Environment:** maintain stewardship programmes whilst developing the role of the New Forest National Park Authority and the wider business sector.

2.4 To assist members summaries of the options reviewed are attached as Appendix 1. In the procurement stage further work was undertaken on performance indicators to assess the performance of the Service against data which was available nationally. This is attached as Appendix 2.

### 3. CONTEXT

3.1 For the Service, there is another aspect of “accrediting” its performance and that is its place in the local community. There is great potential for tourism to be an adversarial subject, particularly in an area of great environmental sensitivity. However, the Council’s consistent and objective approach, built around direct action in all aspects of Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment (VICE); has led to high levels of citizen support every time surveys are conducted.

3.2 The New Forest VICE Model identifies responsible destination management as balancing the interaction between Visitors, the Industry that serves them, the Community that hosts them and their collective impact on, and response to, the Environment where it all takes place:



The Service aim is to deliver a collective and integrated destination management plan which:

- welcomes, involves & satisfies                      Visitors
- achieves a profitable & prosperous                      Industry
- engages and benefits host                      Communities
- protects, reflects and enhances the local                      Environment

3.3 As well as being the principle behind the approach of all partners and stakeholders, the VICE equation can also be applied as a simple check against the future viability (sustainability) of any decision. How will this issue/decision affect the visitor? What are the implications for industry? What is the impact on the community and what is the environmental effect? If a positive answer cannot be found to all four questions, the proposition is likely to be unsustainable.

3.4 This approach to working with partnerships is one which is applicable to all services. To that extent the strong connections between this sector and the business sector as a whole suggests there is scope for more collective working.

3.5 Why the Council would want a Tourism Service at all was considered in the challenge element of the Review. The need for an internal service was supported by the review process and then by Cabinet in the adoption of the Service Plan. Attention at that stage turned to: what form and scale of Service? This will be considered in the following sections of the paper but it is worth reflecting on some of the characteristics of this District, since this not only is a key factor in shaping services but also in attempting to interpret performance against other destinations.

- 3.6 This destination is unique, it stands apart from others because:
- It is big geographically.
  - It has a large and mobile residential population but
  - It has no major towns (in destination terms).
  - It is bordered by two sizeable urban centres.
  - It is within easy reach of London and much of the Midlands.
  - The whole area contributes to the identity of this major tourism destination.
  - The district is synonymous with the destination.
  - There is a National Park that is smaller than the single District within which it (largely) sits.
  - Substantial parts of the District (including significant areas outside of the National Park) have designated landscapes / habitats.
  - Tourism is a significant part of the local economy but not exclusively
  - There is a living social/cultural dimension, with a distinct heritage of its own.
- 3.7 The core influence this has on designing the nature of the Service is the need for reconciliation between competing demands, providing leadership to disparate groups and achieving a working balance between them.
- 3.8 To continue to develop the service is to find ways which continue to secure the trust and commitment from across all stakeholders, which lies at the heart of the Council's successful leadership of this management role. It is uniquely placed to perform the role as honest broker amongst the range of particular interests. It is now the task to assess whether there is a more cost efficient means to deliver against the Council's aims and the wide range of service areas that it necessarily affects.

#### 4. OPTIONS DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The Review considered the options for procurement and judged the only effective option to be a development of internal provision. (The options table from the April Cabinet meeting is attached as Appendix 1). In summary Cabinet agreed:

**Options no longer to be developed:**

Market testing in open competition  
 Externalisation, with no in-house bid  
 Transfer to a not for profit body / volunteers  
 Cessation of the Service  
 Public Private Partnership

**Options to be developed:**

Joint commissioning with another local authority  
 Operational partnerships  
 In house with benchmarking and improvement plan

- 4.2 Further work has taken place on the three options:

**4.2.1 Joint commissioning with another local authority.**

In the April 2007 report, it was noted that the procurement decision of this Authority should be made first. Working with the suggested direction, there is still the prospect of benefits from shared services. Since that report, rather than this being of interest just to this Authority, there is now a Hampshire Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers' Association project, which is examining the scope for more joint working on facets of the Service. The direction presented in this paper is not precluded by those future discussions.

#### **4.2.2 Operational partnerships**

The Service is already characterised by a wide range of operational partnerships. The extent of these was noted in the earlier stages of the review and is repeated as part of Appendix 1 for ease of reference. This is a theme where there are suggestions for improvement in all aspects of the Service. This is on-going work but there is one partnership where the review has generated a definite step forward and that is with the New Forest National Park Authority (NPA).

One of the reasons that tourism was selected for procurement analysis during the fundamental review was the potential for partnership with NPA. There is considerable shared interest, negotiations have continued and a proposed Agreement has been devised. It is attached as Appendix 2 and is recommended for adoption.

#### **4.2.3 In-house with benchmarking and improvement plan**

This work has continued and the benchmarking activity has further indicated how well the service has performed. There are aspects which stand out:

- The importance of maintaining income streams.
- The movement towards electronic means to deliver information.
- The particular importance of Lyndhurst and Lymington for visitor information / contact.
- The high proportion of jobs and value generated by tourism for the District's economy.

4.3 More detail on benchmarking follows in the next section.

### **5. BENCHMARKING**

5.1 No destination tourism service operates within exactly comparable circumstances, indeed no destination area is ever the same. This can be marked – exacerbated by the fact that this District has some very particular characteristics in its make up:

- One of England's top destinations (second highest profile in the SE region) and regularly featured in national press and media coverage.
- It is a single destination – “The New Forest” – not a “federal” one – e.g. “low profile” Districts that host “higher profile” resort / destination towns [e.g. West Dorset and Lyme Regis, South Hams and Salcombe].
- Tourism has a major community, environmental and economic influence, which needs an approach based on management rather than re-generation.
- There is a track record of achievement over two decades.

5.2 However, it is possible to have some indication of performance in comparison of destinations. In order to evaluate the possibilities of change to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and best value of the service, a comparison and benchmarking exercise has been undertaken with best performers in the rural group of authorities in the only national benchmarking scheme, Destination Performance UK (DPUK), together with additional data from a leading National Park Authority and a Beacon Authority. This data is presented in Appendix 3.

5.3 The review went beyond the DPUK data to seek other examples. Across all of the data there is a re-inforcement of the positive messages from the initial data which supported the presentation in April. The data did suggest some aspects to look at but essentially the improvement agenda is self developed. The outcomes in summary are:

VICs:

- Footfall at all the Centres is significant when viewed against other examples but Lyndhurst is about the same as Ringwood and Lymington combined.
- Review of usage patterns has shown that Ringwood serves local people via parking clocks and bus tickets, much more than tourism visitors.
- All Centres earn good levels of income (but the source in Ringwood's case is primarily parking clocks and bus ticket) – ahead of all other local authorities.
- Peak National Park earns more income (which assists its net cost per user) but this is through souvenirs – product lines which NFDC are substantially precluded from (due to Agreements with host organisations at Lyndhurst and Lymington).

Core Service:

- This element of the Service beats all-comers in respect of income generation and its recovery of costs. Print and web income are the main providers of income, which is based on the strength of the destination brand and the depth of relationship with business customers and visitor spend.

5.4 A further exercise was undertaken to assess the efficiency of administrative processes at the VICs. This was done by using an approach adopted across the Council, termed “systems thinking review”, which works through the key processes undertaken looking to simplify / cut duplication / improve clarity and so forth. The main findings of that work are below, the majority of which have been implemented:

FINDING	ACTION
Phones: call handling The VICs receive a lot of calls. There would seem to be scope for diversion of frequently asked questions to the Council's Call Centre	Call Centre pilot undertaken and shows promise. Currently not cost effective but will be kept under review. VIC rotas are so slim on numbers that reduction of on-site resources is unlikely – with seven day operation the rotas are already at the minimum levels possible. So the benefit could be in quality of service, rather than cost reductions.
Data communications: Slow communications links were hampering efficient operation	Changes to broadband have been made
Income: Given the constraints on product lines, maximum income is being achieved within current staffing. Prices are matched to local high street prices.	More might be possible only if time is released (eg call handling above) but there are the retailing restrictions to be operated within at Lyndhurst and Lymington VICs.
Supervisor: The supervisor has been drawn into the counter rota too often	Re-aligned rota to release the supervisor for better management of information / systems / presentation / selling via supervisor role. Call handling changes could also assist.
Management information: Inadequate recording and speed	Work methods being changed and dates for reporting established. Will be assisted by rota change above.

- 5.5 Overall, the exercise found there was little duplication and the operation of processes was good. The teams are at capacity and the staffing cost of this element of the service is lower compared with other destinations and other functions in the Council.
- 5.6 The key findings are:
- The core is where the significant income is generated.
  - Having a “shop window” does create other income.
  - VICs do create higher income than most peers but capacity is constrained.
  - Overall the Service recovers 52% of its gross cost.
  - Footfall and phone contact is moving to web based.
  - Ringwood VIC serves a community function, rather than for visitors.
  - There are limited resources in the current structure to effect changes to the web at the level which is needed.
  - Data needs better management.
- 5.7 Arising from the Review proposals for the future direction of the Service are offered in two sections: the core team (based at Appletree Court) and the Visitor Information Centres. These follow.

## **6. PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE FORM OF SERVICE: CORE TEAM**

- 6.1 The core team is the unit that largely delivers what is recognised as the main service and all the networks and support across all of VICE. It provides the focus and leadership to co-ordinate across all the sectors, thereby achieving the balanced approach which leads Council policy. The Tourism Destination Manager provides the focus of the service, networking, influencing and leading particularly on management, marketing and co-ordinating across all elements of VICE. The two other members are the Tourism Officers, who take the lead on specific projects within the framework of Visitors, Industry, Community and Environment.
- 6.2 The Review considered options for improving effectiveness across the core team. The proposal is that:
- The Service is best placed within the Employment Health and Well-Being Portfolio and with a Head of Service which relates to that Portfolio.
  - The delivery of the Service should be more closely aligned to the delivery of Economic Development.
  - The management of the team should maintain its base of skills, especially in relation to the increasing importance of ICT.
  - Each member of the team will have partnerships to develop which improve efficiency and effectiveness. There is an expectation that they will be furthered in the next phase of service delivery.
  - To bring these to effect, the Tourism Team and Economic Development Unit are proposed to be merged. Should the proposal be supported, the formal processes on personnel matters will be undertaken.
- 6.3 In coming to these proposals, a range of options were considered including amalgamation across Heads of Service, ceasing current work programmes and outsourcing of roles / functions. None were assessed as being appropriate, given the requirements of the Service and the Council’s Aims. Some savings were identified in administration and have been identified in the financial implications.

- 6.4 It is proposed that the structure be implemented from mid May, subject to the detail of the business case and the conclusion of detailed personnel matters.

## **7. PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE FORM OF SERVICE: VICs**

- 7.1 Benchmarking provided only limited insights on other models for delivery in this element of the Service. There is still a definite role for face to face contact in VICs. However, probably the greatest factor with the VICs is to consider is how (and when) the Service responds to the trend for electronic means of information delivery to out grow footfall (largely static) and phone work (in decline). A national trend is in the reduction of the number of VICs in destinations where they have two or more. This trend would seem likely to continue, fuelled by cost pressures and increased use of electronic media.
- 7.2 The scale of change in electronic delivery is becoming apparent. For example, in 2006/07 the tourism web site had over 560,000 users. Since the refreshment of the site in December 2006, current usage rates suggest a total for 2007/08 of over one million visits. The expectation is that this could double in the next four years if the site continues to be developed. This movement is fuelled by the fact that many transactions are capable of being undertaken on the web – accommodation booking, ticket sales, information enquiries being the key examples. Some elements (e.g. bed bookings) are moving at an even faster pace. At these volumes, it does create opportunities for new revenue raising streams, particularly the improvement of advertising revenue investment by local businesses.
- 7.3 Given the above, the balance of future service delivery is something to reflect further on. This would be best achieved alongside the consideration of the Council's assets, covering both physical assets and ICT.

## **8. NEXT STEPS**

- 8.1 If Cabinet are mindful to support the recommendations, the formal processes will be instigated as far as personnel matters are concerned. In the interest of all parties, the intention would be to expedite matters in accordance with the proper requirements of the process but in a timely fashion. Initial discussions have been positive and suggest an outcome can be achieved with the support of those affected. Matters related to capital investment will take their place in the Council's asset management processes and any implications included in the Expenditure Plan process.
- 8.2 Operationally, the Council has established objectives and action plans for both Economic Development and Tourism. These will continue and be delivered by the new team. It is anticipated that the synergy within the team will lead to increased coverage of Council objectives in the emerging Corporate Plan. This, in turn, will shape the next versions of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategies, devised (as now) with key partners through the Local Strategic Partnership.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There is a target of £21,000 in the Expenditure Plan process for the reduction in the net cost of the Service in 2008/09. Should the direction for the Service be agreed the implications for 2008/09 are:

ITEM	EFFICIENCIES (£)
Full year impact of the reduction in administration	11,000
Pro-rata reduction in management costs	23,400
Additional income	5,000
TOTAL	39,400

9.2 There will also be a pro-rata efficiency saving in management costs within the Economic Development Unit.

## **10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The need to have regard to environmental issues has been demonstrated as fundamental to the Council's work in sustainable tourism. In addition there has been productive work in with the wider business sector and there is scope to develop this in future. There will continue to be an emphasis on this dimension in the partnership with the with the NPA.

## **11. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no particular implications arising from this report.

## **12. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are no particular implications arising from this report.

## **13. CONSULTATION**

13.1 There was a range of consultation in the process of the Review leading to the paper in April 2007, which created the template for this report.

## **14. EMPLOYEE SIDE COMMENTS**

14.1 Employee Side compliments the author on a clear and extensive report.

14.2 Employee Side welcome the decided options to be developed (see para 4.1) and believe these have a fundamental role to play in the promotion of Tourism within the New Forest.

## **15. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS COMMENTS**

15.1 The recommendations are fully supported as the basis for the Council to continue to develop its well respected work in Tourism and Economic Development.



## **16. RECOMMENDATIONS**

16.1 It is recommended that the direction of the Tourism Service procurement be progressed as contained in the report and additionally:

i) The creation of a single post to manage both the Tourism Service and Economic Development Unit.

ii) The examination of the future provision of tourism information services, along with consideration of the future of Council assets.

iii) The adoption of the Partnership Agreement between the Council's Tourism Service and the New Forest National Park Authority identifying the Underlying Principles for Joint Working.

<b>PROCUREMENT OPTIONS ANALYSIS AGREED AT CABINET APRIL 2007</b>
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**OPTIONS STILL IN DEVELOPMENT**

<b>In house with benchmarking and improvement plan</b>	<b>Complete in review</b>	✓
	<b>Investigate</b>	
	<b>Don't pursue</b>	
<b>OBVIOUS BENEFITS</b> Plays to strengths of the Service and Council. Confirms belief in team Ease of implementation and control Examines across the Service	<b>OBVIOUS ISSUES</b> Sufficiently testing of performance? Achieving the best "set" of comparators.	
<b>COMMENT</b> This approach has been central to the development of the service up to this point and has consistently delivered high scoring assessments.		
<b>UPDATE</b> Business Process Re-engineering underway in VICs. Presented as the only substantive option for lead procurement but strong features of in-house commissioning through operational partnerships and possible joint working with other local authorities remains.		

<b>Operational partnerships – new and / or re-negotiation contract arrangements for parts of service</b>	<b>Complete in review</b>	
	<b>Investigate</b>	✓
	<b>Don't pursue</b>	
<b>OBVIOUS BENEFITS</b> Can devise the sections of service where the biggest impacts are likely to be felt. Extends an existing culture that has been successful. Potential for partnership agreements: eg NFTA; NPA; TSE	<b>OBVIOUS ISSUES</b> Only partial to the service – will the best areas be picked or hidden? Limitations – in practice, probably - paid for publications; distribution and ICT are the key areas.	
<b>COMMENT</b> This can be rigorous and targeted to maximum effect. The resources needed to undertake it are less. Add in the possible sharing of delivery of services internal to the Council.		
<b>UPDATE</b> Shared VIC arrangements with NPA will provide some revenue for displays and training but not "equal" funding / resources. Draft of Agreement in circulation. NFTA and TSE similar – not lead partners but will support and contribute to delivery. The intention is to develop Agreements with these agencies too.		

<b>Joint commissioning with another local authority.</b>	<b>Complete in review</b>	
	<b>Investigate</b>	✓
	<b>Don't pursue</b>	
<b>OBVIOUS BENEFITS</b> Could lead to overhead reductions. Public structures are under review in any event. More shared agendas now. Some partnerships exist in other services. Creation of National Park Authority. Some level of role for HCC A role for Dorset / New Forest partnership?	<b>OBVIOUS ISSUES</b> Loss of identity which is already strong. Leadership complexities. "Control issues" for partners to face Lack of scale or depth of expertise in partners.	
<b>COMMENT</b> The core of the Service could be managed by one authority on behalf of others – eg set up a joint board with an adjacent local authority to then make arrangements for delivery. Particular target authorities can be quickly identified and scoped. There is practice in other services to draw on and learn from.		
<b>UPDATE</b> The Review Board endorsed an approach which is based on two stages. First of all, NFDC should determine its approach to procurement. Once that is done, adjacent authorities should be approached to determine the potential for shared services.		

**OPTIONS NO LONGER BEING DEVELOPED**

<b>Market testing of all, in open competition</b>	<b>Complete in review</b>	
	<b>Investigate</b>	
	<b>Don't pursue</b>	✓
<b>OBVIOUS BENEFITS</b> In principle, the rigour of the market. The process would promote learning.	<b>OBVIOUS ISSUES</b> No available market to test with. Time and resources to pursue and Likely scale of benefit - when already a good service.	
<b>COMMENT</b> Given the history of performance this option demands too much resource in comparison with the likely benefits it might yield. Even a partial test has no meaningful competitor to undertake this exercise with.		

<b>Externalisation, with no in-house bid</b>		<b>Complete in review</b>	
		<b>Investigate</b>	
		<b>Don't pursue</b>	✓
<b>OBVIOUS BENEFITS</b> Theory of market forces (but lack of market in practice)	<b>OBVIOUS ISSUES</b> Potential for loss of the gains made by the current (good) service. Reliance on written documents. Time and resources to implement – if there are concerns over standards etc		
<b>COMMENT</b> There would seem to be insufficient benefit for the circumstances of this Council to recommend this be pursued as an option.			

<b>Transfer to a not for profit body / volunteers</b>		<b>Complete in review</b>	
		<b>Investigate</b>	
		<b>Don't pursue</b>	✓
<b>OBVIOUS BENEFITS</b> Immediately evident financial benefits related to facility element.	<b>OBVIOUS ISSUES</b> No existing structures in this area of service across the nation. Would need to be created. Time, resources and uncertainty of doing so. Questions over sustainability being small. Questions over standards / skills.		
<b>COMMENT</b> There is no track record of not for profit organisations in this sector. Past national assessments and Beacon, have shown the central role of local authorities.			

<b>Cessation of the service</b>		<b>Complete in review</b>	
		<b>Investigate</b>	
		<b>Don't pursue</b>	✓
<b>OBVIOUS BENEFITS</b> Savings of subsidy	<b>OBVIOUS ISSUES</b> Consistent support for the service from stakeholders. Negative impacts in areas such as health, behaviour, social well being. Against all current public agendas. Impact on the special qualities of the destination. Loss of co-ordination between sectors. Loss of community leadership / honest broker role.		
<b>COMMENT</b> As a whole, inappropriate given the Council's objectives. Very strong citizen support for the service. Partial cessation may arise from other assessments. Would be reflected in benchmarking / surveys of the Service.			

<b>Public / Private partnership</b>		<b>Complete in review</b>	
		<b>Investigate</b>	
		<b>Don't pursue</b>	✓
OBVIOUS BENEFITS New finances	OBVIOUS ISSUES Lack of scale		
COMMENT Inappropriate for the nature of the operation – lack of scale.			

These options above were developed by the Reference Group:

Employee side	Jean Barras
External peers (2) – one per subject	Mark Smith; Peter Amies
Finance	Alfons Michel
Human Resources	Manjit Sandhu
Independent Head of Service	Ken Connolly
Leisure Review Panel Chairman	Cllr Roger Neath
Leisure Review Panel Vice Chairman	Cllr John Hutchins
Performance and Strategic Development	Dottie Dabrowska
Procurement Working Group	Beccy Drummond

The Group noted the extensive partnership working in the service:

#### **DESTINATION MANAGEMENT [I – internal; P – Partnership; E – external]**

FUNCTION	I	P	E	WHO
Policy and objectives	✓			Tourism Destination Mgr
Representation / voice for the subject	✓			Tourism Destination Mgr
Integration of stakeholders & partners	✓			Tourism Destination Mgr
Development of quality standards		✓		Tourism Destination Mgr
Advice to planning	✓			Tourism Destination Mgr
Research	✓			Tourism Destination Mgr
Initiatives with transport, produce, quality	✓			Tourism Officer I&E
Green Leaf tourism scheme	✓			Tourism Officer I&E
Community Tourism Groups	✓	✓		Tourism Officer I&E

#### **MARKETING**

FUNCTION	I	P	E	WHO
Marketing progr. & PR commissioning		✓		TDM / NFTA
PR delivery	✓	✓	✓	Largely external
Marketing delivery	✓	✓	✓	TDM; TO V&C; TO I&E
Print commissioning	✓			TDM and team
Where to Stay Guide design and print			✓	Tender
Where to Stay Guide distribution	✓		✓	Direct supply via VIC
Visitor Guide design, print and distribution			✓	Print: tender Distribution: supplier
Map design, print and distribution			✓	Print: tender Distribution: supplier
Quality Guide design, print and distribution			✓	Print: tender Distribution: supplier

**VISITOR INFORMATION**

FUNCTION	I	P	E	WHO
Lyndhurst & Lymington VICs in museum premises. Ringwood stand alone	✓	✓		TO V&C and VIC employees
Web commissioning and content management	✓			TO V&C and VIC employees
Web site host / development / service			✓	Tendered service
Visitor Information Panels commissioning	✓			TO V&C
Visitor Information Panels operation			✓	Managed service

# UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES FOR JOINT WORKING BETWEEN NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL'S TOURISM SERVICE AND THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 New Forest District Council's tourism service and the New Forest National Park Authority are committed to working together to deliver the highest possible standards in tourism, interpretation and information service provision. This paper sets out key principles and arrangements which form the basis of developing a close working partnership in this area.
- 1.2 The District Council has a long and successful track record of operating visitor information services, sustainable tourism management and marketing the New Forest, working closely with the New Forest Tourism Association, Tourism South East, Hampshire County Council, Forestry Commission and a range of other partners. The Council's brief is District wide, but its work recognises the close associations with Dorset, South Wiltshire and the rest of Hampshire, to facilitate management. It is a member of the Dorset New Forest Tourism Partnership and the Hampshire Tourism Partnership.
- 1.3 The National Park Authority covers the whole of the New Forest National Park which includes areas beyond New Forest District. Tourism is not a specific purpose or duty for the Authority, but there are important links and connections with the National Park's purposes and its duty to foster the socio-economic well being of local communities. The Authority is required to prepare a National Park Management Plan which will develop and bring together policy relating to the conservation and enhancement of the National Park, and the promotion of understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. It will seek to influence recreation, tourism and visitor management by working with and through existing providers to support and enhance the provision of information and interpretation about the New Forest. So that although the Authority does not have a remit for tourism or marketing, it enthusiastically supports the development of sustainable tourism in the New Forest.

## 2 Principles for joint working

- New Forest District Council's tourism service and the New Forest National Park Authority are committed to working together to deliver the highest possible standards in tourism, interpretation and information service provision.
- New Forest District Council will be the lead authority for the provision of tourism-related services for the District and that area of the National Park within the New Forest District Council area.
- New Forest National Park Authority will provide support for a range of tourism-related activities by agreement with New Forest District Council subject to the availability of resources.

- Both organisations are committed to reviewing the existing tourism destination strategy, *Our Future Together*, and preparing a new Sustainable Tourism Strategy under the leadership of New Forest District Council and in close partnership with other key stakeholders such as the Tourism Community Action Network and the New Forest Tourism Association. This strategy will include an action plan for the development and management of tourism in the New Forest and will clearly identify who is responsible for implementing projects and the allocation of resources.
- The revised document will be the ‘sustainable tourism strategy’ for the whole National Park. This would probably satisfy the requirements of the EUROPARC Charter for Sustainable Tourism. The Authority is also preparing a Recreation Management Strategy for the National Park to support the National Park Management Plan and in parallel with the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.
- The policy framework which will guide both the Authority and New Forest District Council tourism and visitor management activities will therefore be provided by the National Park Management Plan, the Recreation Management Strategy, New Forest District Council’s Tourism Service Plan, the New Forest Community Strategy and the Core Strategies of both authorities.
- The New Forest is an established destination covering a wider ‘product’ than either the District or the National Park. Wherever possible all service delivery activities by the Authority and Council should be integrated rather than provided in parallel and it should not normally be necessary to distinguish prominently between the service providers.
- Regular joint working liaison meetings are held quarterly between relevant officers of each authority to discuss strategic issues.
- Ongoing daily communication between officers will take place at an informal level as and when necessary.

### **3 Sustainable Tourism Policy**

- 3.1 The shared policy aim is for the New Forest to become a destination where the visitor, tourism industry, community and environment are better integrated and make a significant contribution to improving the quality of life for both local people and visitors.
- 3.2 The sustainable Tourism Strategy has two main themes:
- a) continuing to develop a responsible and sustainable approach to tourism; and
  - b) management through partnership.





electronic media, and the distribution of the joint (produced by New Forest District Council, the Forestry Commission and the National Park Authority) Visitor Stewardship Pack via accommodation providers and tourism businesses.

<b>Visitor Information Centres</b>	<b>Lead NFDC</b>	<b>Support NPA</b>
<b>Visitor Stewardship Pack</b>	<b>Lead NFDC</b>	<b>Support FC/NPA/NFTA</b>

*Industry Stewardship Programme – Green Leaf Tourism Scheme*

4.2.2 A programme of activities to engage all tourism and visitor businesses in the day to day stewardship of the destination. This includes supporting and promoting the visitor stewardship (New Forest Friends) programme, improving their own operational stewardship (energy, waste and recycling), support of and involvement with their local community and environment.

<b>Green Leaf Tourism Scheme</b>	<b>Lead NFDC</b>	<b>Support NPA/NFTA/FC</b>
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*Community Stewardship Programme – Community Tourism Groups*

4.2.3 A programme to create and support Community Tourism Groups in each community area of the New Forest establishing links where relevant with neighbouring communities. Each Community Tourism Group would undertake an audit, engagement and action planning programme and participate in the Community Action Network for tourism.

<b>Community Tourism Groups</b>	<b>Lead NFDC/TSE</b>	<b>Support NPA / NFTA</b>
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*Environmental Stewardship Programme*

4.2.4 A programme of planned activities to help landowners and managers to reduce the negative impacts of tourism and where possible enhance the environment. These include developing car free tourism, sustainable visitor access and recreation management, the development of local produce and the control of tourism related development. (The National Park Authority's *Recreation Management Strategy* will identify new initiatives in this field.)

<b>Visitor access and transport</b>	<b>Lead FC/NPA/HCC</b>	<b>Support NFDC/NFTA</b>
<b>Recreation management</b>	<b>Lead NPA/FC</b>	<b>Support NFDC</b>
<b>Local produce / New Forest Marque</b>	<b>Lead NFDC</b>	<b>Support NFTA/NPA</b>
<b>Tourism planning applications:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Park</li> <li>▪ Outside National Park</li> </ul>	<b>Lead NPA</b> <b>Lead NFDC</b>	<b>Support NFDC</b> <b>Support NPA</b>

## 5 Marketing

5.1 This is the collective process of creating appropriate tourism and visitor products and effectively communicating them to appropriate audiences throughout the year, thereby ensuring the sustainability (social, economic and environmental) of the unique quality of the New Forest area both now and in the future.

### 5.2 *Destination Marketing Programme – ‘Little Acorns’*

5.2.1 Promotion and selling is implemented by the tourism industry. However New Forest District Council and National Park Authority engage with these activities to further the wider objectives of the sustainable tourism strategy.

5.2.2 Within marketing this involves the development of a comprehensive framework for marketing and communications within which local businesses, community tourism groups and environmental interests can present the New Forest area as a leading “green” destination to appropriate local, national and international audiences. It is important that marketing benefits businesses, the environment and the future of the destination and its stakeholders as a whole.

5.2.3 Delivered through a joint New Forest District Council / New Forest Tourist Association / National Park Authority marketing committee (‘Little Acorns’), it will use the Tourism Community Action Network to create greater involvement and buy in from all other stakeholders. It is important for future social, economic and environmental sustainability that everyone works together to ensure the destination leads the market and not the other way around.

5.2.4 To support the Little Acorns programme, New Forest District Council publishes the Official New Forest Where to Stay Guide, Visitor Guide, Map, [www.thenewforest.co.uk](http://www.thenewforest.co.uk) and operates Visitor Information Centres.

5.2.5 In terms of activity, the primary lead on selling and public relations will be New Forest Tourist Association, within the context of a marketing programme devised through the ‘Little Acorns’ process.

<b>Tourism Website</b>	<b>Lead NFDC</b>	<b>Support NFTA/NPA</b>
<b>Marketing Programme</b>	<b>Lead NFDC</b>	<b>Support NFTA/NPA</b>

### 5.3 *Visitor Information Centres*

5.3.1 New Forest District Council operates three Visitor Information Centres in Lyndhurst, Lymington and Ringwood. The National Park Authority will create a greater public awareness of the National Park and add value to current Visitor Information Centre provision.

5.3.2 The National Park Authority is currently producing a series of information / interpretation panels about the New Forest National Park. These will be installed at sites such as Lepe Country Park, Village Halls, campsites, local information points and Visitor Information Centres. They include a general panel with information about why the New Forest is a National Park, the wider family of National Parks and protected landscapes; and three further panels describing the National Park’s ‘special qualities’, embracing landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage.

<b>Visitor Information Centres</b>	<b>Lead NFDC</b>
<b>Pilot Local Information Points</b>	<b>Lead NPA</b>

#### 5.4 *Britain’s Breathing Spaces*

5.4.1 In 2005, the Association of National Park Authorities commissioned consultants to identify an effective brand which could be used for corporate promotion of sustainable tourism within the National Park family and by partners without duplicating or over-riding existing initiatives.

5.4.2 The recommended brand positioning: **National Parks: Britain’s Breathing Spaces** is designed to establish the National Parks as a concept and describe how they are different to other visitor experiences.

5.4.3 This brand positioning is designed to establish the concept of National Parks at a national (rather than just individual local) level. It also describes how they are different from other visitor experiences, i.e. physically they are ‘energising’ unspoilt landscapes, but they also provide a sense of sanctuary and recovery.

5.4.4 The brand positioning is supported by a new visual style incorporating commissioned photography and an overarching visitor segmentation model, designed to be used as a tool to help with message targeting.

5.4.5 It is available for use across all collective National Parks communications, for example as a sign-off on brochures, strap line on advertising and in written communications pieces such as editorial copy. It has clear meaning but is also flexible in use and is broad enough to be nonthreatening to other stakeholder brands.

5.4.6 New Forest District Council and the National Park Authority will remain aware of the Britain’s Breathing Spaces brand, and the potential opportunities arising from it.

<b>Britain’s Breathing Spaces</b>	<b>Lead NPA</b>	<b>Support NFDC</b>
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## SERVICE BENCHMARKS AND PERFORMANCE

In all of the indicators the service is in the top quartile.

### Destination Performance UK Baseline Statement Results for 05 / 06

Visitor Spend v Local Authority Spend - Comparative Figures	
Cotswold	1,184
<b>New Forest</b>	<b>973</b>
Rother	883
Forest Heath	876
East Hampshire	833
Babergh	592
West Oxfordshire	586
Test Valley	519
Taunton Deane	426
Wycombe	391
Forest of Dean	225

Cost per VIC User – Comparative Figures	
Cotswold	0.69
<b>New Forest</b>	<b>0.98</b>
Test Valley	1.11
East Hampshire	1.24
Lewes	1.34
West Oxfordshire	1.46
Taunton Deane	1.86
Huntingdonshire	1.97
Forest Heath	2.55
East Northamptonshire	2.87
Wycombe	2.95
Forest of Dean	4.02

Visitor Expenditure & FTE Jobs Supported	
Powys	6239
<b>New Forest</b>	<b>5690</b>
Forest Heath	4790
Cotswold	3747
Rother	3724
Huntingdonshire	3475
Cherwell	3195
Wycombe	2814
West Oxfordshire	2656
Test Valley	2606
Taunton Deane	2402
East Hampshire	2229
Babergh	2036
Forest of Dean	1681
Wealden	1178

Local Authority Leverage Achieved – Comparative Figures	
East Northamptonshire	0.57
<b>New Forest</b>	<b>0.53</b>
Cotswold	0.47
Wycombe	0.31
West Berkshire	0.28
Babergh	0.23
Lewes	0.23
West Oxfordshire	0.19
East Hampshire	0.12
Forest Heath	0.12
Forest of Dean	0.12
Taunton Deane	0.11

Selecting the best performers and undertaking further research, the Service continues to perform well.

#### **ADDITIONAL 2006/07 DATA**

**Higher performers from DPUK; Peak National Park and South Hams as a Beacon destination.**

#### **2006/07 COST RECOVERY**

	Income generated	Gross expenditure	Cost recovery %
Peak NPA	317,000	542,000	58
<b>New Forest</b>	<b>401,332</b>	<b>776,619</b>	<b>52</b>
Cotswold	144,000	525,255	27
South Hams	61,000	256,900	24
W. Oxon	86,600	423,000	20

#### **2006/07 COST PER CONTACT**

	Net cost	Income	Staff	Footfall	Phones	Total contact	Cost/contact
Peak NPA	192,000	317,000	2/20/14	425,593	20,847	448,272	£0.43
<b>New Forest</b>	<b>216,401</b>	<b>198,851</b>	<b>5/5/3</b>	<b>344,024</b>	<b>59,339</b>	<b>403,363</b>	<b>£0.54</b>
Cotswold	240,510	78,000	2/7/4	268,066	28,490	296,566	£0.81
W. Oxon	223,200	62,600	2/14/6	107,900	16,000	132,400	£1.68
South Hams	n/a	n/a	3/11/1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

#### **2006/07 LEVERAGE**

	Visitor expenditure	Net LA expenditure	Leverage	No. jobs
South Hams	227,000,000	195,900	1,159	4,491
<b>New Forest</b>	<b>395,449,000</b>	<b>375,287</b>	<b>1,054</b>	<b>7,987</b>
West Oxon	212,800,000	336,400	633	4,506
Cotswold	205,181,000	381,255	538	3,747
Peak NPA	185,000,000	350,000	529	3,400