

# The Landscape of Tourism Structures and NNDC's Approach on Tourism Services

## Introduction

Tourism comprises a diverse range of activities covering not only holidays and leisure but also business travel. Long holidays, short breaks, day trips, visiting friends and relatives, conferences, events and exhibitions are all encompassed within its ambit.

Over the past five years there have been significant changes in the domestic tourism market away from main holidays to short breaks. North Norfolk has adapted well to these changing market trends; exploiting its relative proximity to main centres of population, its natural environment and attraction (as a place to 'escape' to) and the predominance of smaller, quality accommodation. There has also been a change in the way many consumers make holiday bookings – particularly independently via the Internet, but also making late bookings once in an area with mobile phones etc. This will continue to challenge the way accommodation services and attractions are promoted and accessed through the TICs.

From the perspective of public sector tourism management and delivery, organisations of a national, regional and local level are involved in a variety of activities, notably:

- research
- strategy and policy formulation
- development
- information provision
- marketing.

## The National Picture

Throughout the UK the structural landscape of tourism promotion and funding is being transformed. Despite the government's assertion that tourism is vital for revitalising the economy, funding for national tourism bodies has been reduced. Yet this comes at a time when domestic tourism is gaining ground and Norfolk is still benefiting from the 'staycation' effect.

In a public sector context the picture in England is quite complex. The government department for tourism is the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the sector falls within the brief of the Minister for Sport, Olympic Legacy and Tourism. DCMS sponsors the national tourist offices VisitBritain and VisitEngland.

### *VisitBritain*

VisitBritain is Britain's national tourism agency. It is a DCMS non-departmental public body with a role to promote the UK worldwide and develop Britain's visitor economy. It also acts as an advisor to government and industry on tourism, particularly on issues which affect the UK's international competitiveness, providing research, market intelligence and analysis to inform the British tourism industry.

### *VisitEngland*

VisitEngland is the national tourist board funded by DCMS to work with the tourism industry to grow the value of the sector to the benefit of the economy, employment

and quality of life in England. Its framework document entitled “A Strategic Framework for Tourism in England 2010–2020” aims to grow the value of the sector by 5% year-on-year. This framework will be delivered collaboratively through cooperation across the public sector and through businesses and other stakeholder organisations lending their support to an agreed plan of activity.

## **The Regional Changes**

The regional tourist board, East of England Tourism was disbanded in March 2012. Its residual tourism assets have been purchased by a new private sector organisation led by local tourism businesses, called Visit East Anglia Ltd. [VEA]. This company has been endorsed by the new Local Enterprise Partnership for Norfolk and Suffolk – New Anglia LEP. VEA are hoping to be able to bring together the key elements of sub regional promotion using its East of England Tourism assets and to contract with Norfolk and Suffolk to deliver county level promotion.

## **The County Level Structure**

Faced with reducing public sector funding, the Executive of Norfolk Tourism (the county level public/private sector partnership for promoting Norfolk as a destination) decided to outsource its tourism service delivery in autumn 2012. As mentioned above, this contract has been won by VEA Ltd. who will be answerable to a new Visit Norfolk (VN) Board. This board is currently comprised of the following organisations which have contributed funding:

### Local Authorities

- Borough Council of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN)
- Great Yarmouth Borough Council (GYBC)
- Broads Authority (BA)
- Norfolk County Council (NCC)
- North Norfolk District Council (NNDC)
- Norwich City Council
- South Norfolk Council (SNC)

### Destination Management Organisations (DMOs)

- Greater Yarmouth Tourist Authority (GYTA)
- Visit North Norfolk Coast & Countryside Ltd (VNNC&C)
- Visit Norwich Ltd (VNL)

### Tourism Groups

- Broads Tourism (BT)
- Norfolk Tourist Attractions Association (NTAA)
- Swaffham & District Tourism Association (SDTA)
- Where to Go in North Norfolk (WTGNN)

### Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

- New Anglia LEP (NALEP)

## **The Approach of NNDC**

Tourism is not a statutory duty for local authorities but a discretionary role. Too often this discretion is viewed purely in terms of whether or not to provide financial support to the sector (via a tourism service) irrespective of its contribution to the prosperity of the area. However, this discretion should be viewed as an opportunity for local authorities to determine the role of tourism on the basis of its importance to the wider economic prosperity of the area and then invest in the sector accordingly.

NNDC has always recognised that tourism is such an important component of this District's activity and economy, that if the industry is to move towards sustainable growth, or at least maintain its share of the present market, it is essential that business efficiency (alongside the development of new products and services) is addressed. This has historically been done through the Council's Economic Development function.

The economic development work carried out by NNDC is mainly directed at improving the efficiency of the supply side of the economy. Expenditure is broadly made on projects and initiatives designed to improve the competitiveness of businesses and ensure that the Economic Development function is underpinned by maximising external funding opportunities. The overall objective is to ensure that NNDC and its partners are better placed to boost the competitiveness of local businesses and thereby make a concerted effort to tackle the multiple causes of social and economic decline. Achieving this goal is a complex process that requires innovative strategies, tools, techniques and investment that no single agency or sector alone can provide. The development and co-ordination of partnerships between the public, private, voluntary and community sectors are essential elements needed to counteract diminishing public sector funding.

For example in Wells-next-the-Sea, NNDC has supported the "Barley to Beer" project of The Real Ale Shop by helping to secure funding from the Norfolk Coast and Broads RDPE funding stream. The District Council has also made substantial contributions of assets, funding and in-kind support to the establishment of the Wells Maltings project and it is working with other partners to secure further funding to deliver its further development as a significant economic, cultural and tourism asset.

With the abovementioned changes and challenges facing the tourism industry, coupled with the intent of Government Tourism Policy to "modernise and update local tourism bodies to become focused and efficient destination management organisations (DMOs) which are led by and, increasingly, funded through partnership with tourism industry itself", the District Council has stated in its Annual Action Plan for 2013/14 that it will "support and facilitate the newly established private sector led DMO for the North Norfolk coast, broads and countryside to maintain the profile of the district as a leading tourist destination within the UK boosting levels of employment and income for the district."

#### *Visit North Norfolk Coast & Countryside Ltd*

In 2013 NNDC entered into a three-year Service Level Agreement (SLA) with 'Visit North Norfolk Coast and Countryside Ltd (VNNC&C) providing a total funding contribution of £105,000. The objectives included in the SLA are as follows:

- The effective operational area for VNNC&C is the coast stretching from Heacham to Horsey and inland, covering all of the NNDC local authority area but also including elements of the BCKLWN local authority area and potentially the rural area of the Broadland district.
- The role of VNNC&C is to bring together the cohesive north Norfolk coastal and countryside tourism offer and promote it to external markets through seeking to develop local tourism business in terms of the quality and reputation of the local tourism product, levels of business management skills, staff, customer care and innovation.

- VNNC&C is required to develop as the recognised DMO for the north Norfolk coast and countryside and work collaboratively where required with the other operational DMOs in Norfolk, namely those of Norwich, Great Yarmouth, the Broads and The Brecks. It is also required to work with and through Visit Norfolk and support that organisation appropriately.
- VNNC&C is to develop, review and implement a marketing strategy that will be the main focus for its activities during the operation of the SLA.
- VNNC&C is to operate the content management system that underpins the NNDC's tourism website [www.visitnorthnorfolk.com](http://www.visitnorthnorfolk.com) and in so doing use this media as the cornerstone for all promotional activity including social media, e-marketing, Apps and Android developments.
- VNNC&C is required to communicate with all known tourism businesses in the area, using the NNDC and other tourism databases as appropriate, so as to develop its membership base and promote membership offers, marketing offers and business development opportunities to tourism businesses across the DMO area.

### *Governance of VNNC&C*

The Board of Directors of VNNC&C is responsible for the proper management and operation of all aspects of the company. Currently, the Board is comprised of individuals who have an understanding of the industry and have a commitment to 'growing' the destination and the businesses within it, along with nominated representatives from NNDC and BCKLWN.

An Oversight Committee was formed to provide advice and make recommendations to the Board on policies and procedures pertaining to the structure, function, development, monitoring, co-ordination and evaluation of any Working Groups, structures or activities of the company. It will also lead on drafting and monitoring the Destination Management Plan for the DMO area. The Committee will aim to have up to 30 members with perspectives from the following stakeholder groups:

- Members of the Executive of the West Norfolk Tourism Forum
- Former members of the North Norfolk Tourism Forum
- Private sector initial stakeholder funders
- Officer representation from NNDC & BCKLWN
- Representatives of other organisations that have an interest in promoting northern Norfolk as a destination (including Town Councils, Parish Councils, community/voluntary groups etc)

### *Destination Management Plan*

Visit East Anglia has informed VNNC&C that any Visit England or New Anglia LEP future funding will be contingent on the formulation of a Destination Management Plan (DMP). Visit England has formulated a 'guiding principles' handbook to producing a DMP which defines this as "a shared statement of intent to manage a destination over a stated period of time, articulating the roles of the different stakeholders and identifying clear actions that they will take and the apportionment of resources."

According to the same document, the importance of having a plan includes:

- Addressing fragmentation
- Recognising, strengthening and coordinating different functions
- Managing and monitoring impacts
- Prioritising and allocating resources
- Winning more support and resources.

The preparation of the DMP for the area will be led by the VNNC&C Oversight Committee through consultation workshops of Working Groups that will be formed according to sub-sectors (e.g. hotels, B&Bs, attractions, food & drink, retail) and geographical areas (e.g. towns & villages, coast, countryside etc.) and composed of representatives from the private, public and voluntary sectors.

### *Wells-next-the-Sea*

Wells-next-the-Sea is one of northern Norfolk's most valued and most visited places. Appropriate marketing and promotion of the destination and the management of visitors (and the impacts they have for this sensitive area) are of paramount importance. The most appropriate way for this to be achieved is for those involved in tourism locally to become directly involved. To this end the operation of the Tourist Information service (via the TIC) has been put in the hands of the Wells Maltings Trust, which is most able to gauge the level of demand and thus target resources appropriately in response. Open channels of communication have been established with local businesses, via the North Norfolk Business Forum and VNNC&C, and with local organisations such as Wells-next-the-Sea Town Council, the Norfolk Coast Partnership etc. VNNC&C is accessible to all local organisations with an interest in tourism and it is hoped that through their involvement it will develop and grow in such a way as to respond appropriately to new opportunities and challenges, whatever they might be.

It is therefore hoped that Wells-next-the-Sea Town Council can send a representative in the Oversight Committee and be involved in the preparation of the DMP in order to support the growth aspirations for tourism in the town in particular and the whole of north Norfolk.

**The 'Landscape' of Tourism Partnership Activity in UK – January 2014**

**Visit Britain**  
 Promoting UK to overseas market  
[www.visitbritain.com](http://www.visitbritain.com)  
 [Funded by HMG and some private sector]

**Visit England**  
 Promoting England Home and Some Overseas  
[www.visitengland.com](http://www.visitengland.com)  
 [Funded by HMG and some private sector]

Visit Scotland  
 Visit Wales  
 Visit Northern Ireland

**New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership [NALEP]**  
 Has tourism as one of its key priorities  
 [Funded by HMG and some Local Authorities]

*Following Government spending cuts and the abolition of Regional Development Agencies – the Regional Tourist Board [ours being East of England Tourism – EET] have mostly gone. They only remain where the private sector fully supports and funds them.*

Visit England links direct to 'destinations'

**Visit Norfolk**  
 Promoting the whole of Norfolk  
[www.visitnorfolk.co.uk](http://www.visitnorfolk.co.uk)  
 Norfolk Tourism [NT] has contracted out its tourism delivery services after an open tender to VEA from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012 which will be overseen by Visit Norfolk Board  
 [Funded by County, all LA's (except Breckland) and private sector]  
 [NALEP has joined with these funding Partners to secure the new tourism delivery contract for the next 2.5 years]

*NALEP has endorsed Visit East Anglia Ltd. [VEA] to look after the tourism interests in Suffolk and Norfolk. Suffolk has contracted with VEA to handle Suffolk's marketing. VEA purchased the former EET website and databases and runs a regional website:  
[www.visiteastofengland.com](http://www.visiteastofengland.com)  
 [Funded by private sector – investors/membership and activity contracts e.g Suffolk/Greater Anglia Railways]*

Visit Norfolk links to its Partners –  
 The Destination Management Organisations [DMO's]  
 The Local Authorities  
 and any trade associations that pay for involvement

**Funding Trade Associations:**  
 Norfolk Tourist Attractions Association Ltd  
 Where to Go In North Norfolk Ltd

**Visit North Norfolk Coast and Countryside Ltd.**  
 A newly formed DMO for northern Norfolk – from Heacham to Horsey and inland.  
[www.visitnorthnorfolk.com](http://www.visitnorthnorfolk.com)  
 [Funding currently: from private sector investors/local authorities/grant aid/membership/advertising income]

**Established DMO's in Norfolk:**  
 Greater Yarmouth Tourist Authority  
 Visit Norwich Ltd  
 Broads Tourism (quasi-DMO)