

WIRRAL **VISITOR ECONOMY** **STRATEGY**

2017-2020

THE WIRRAL PARTNERSHIP

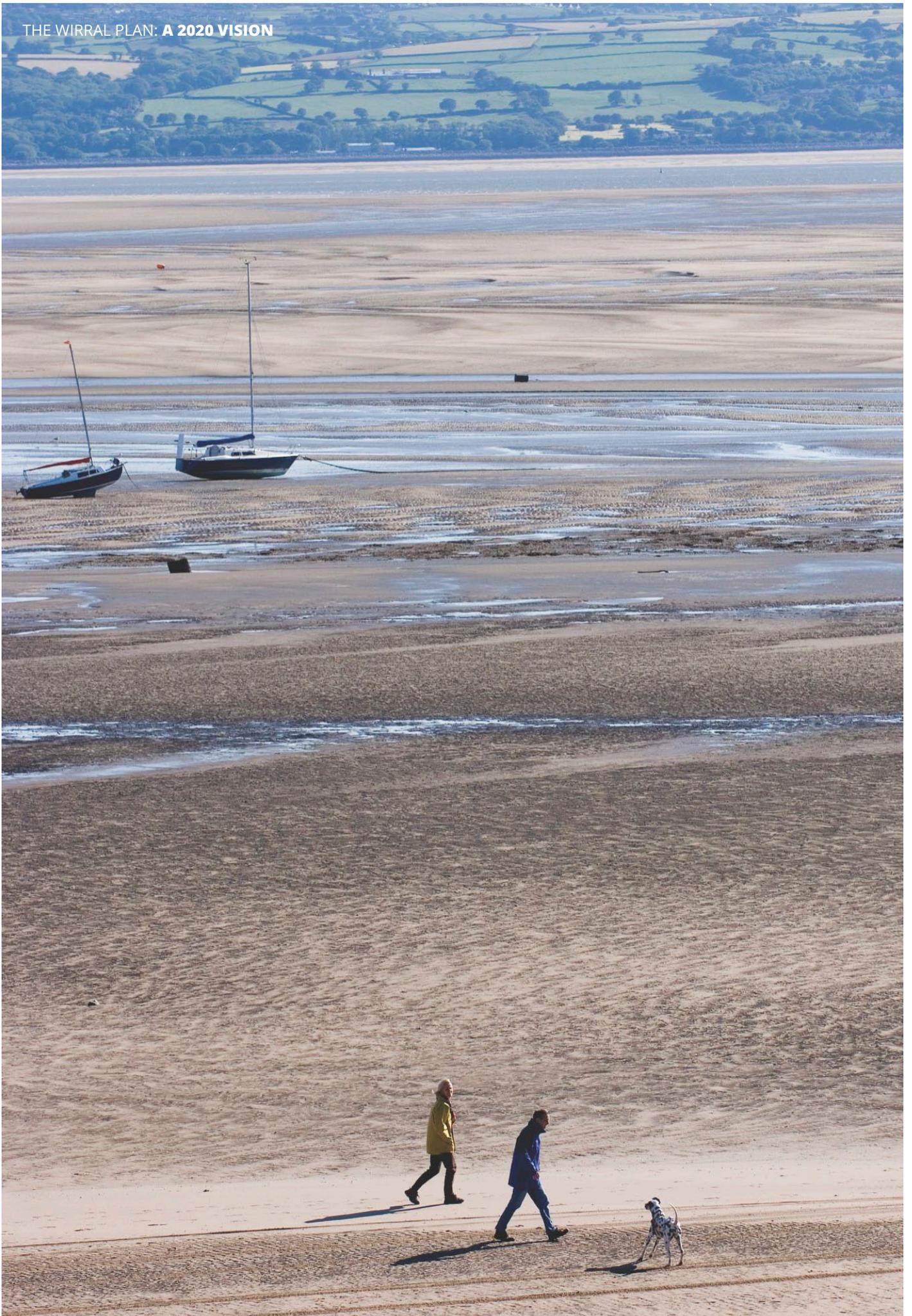
“ *The Wirral is an intriguing place, flanked by Liverpool on one side and Chester on the other. There are plenty of reasons to come here: bracing seaside resorts, one of Britain’s most enchanting art galleries, gentle countryside, coastal walks, and a fairytale village. Wirral is well worth taking a ferry ‘cross the Mersey for.* **”**

Stephen McClarence, The Times, 15th April 2017.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
INTRODUCTION	7
CURRENT MARKET & TRENDS	9
KEY OPPORTUNITIES	10
WHAT MAKES WIRRAL DISTINCTIVE AND SPECIAL?	12
PRIORITIES FOR GROWING WIRRAL'S VISITOR ECONOMY	14
1. DEVELOPING WIRRAL'S TOURISM MARKETING STRATEGY AND POSITIONING THE PENINSULA AS AN OUTSTANDING DESTINATION	15
2. GENERATING GREATER BENEFIT FROM CONFERENCES, BUSINESS MEETINGS AND EVENTS	18
3. DEVELOP WIRRAL'S TOURISM ASSETS AND EXPERIENCES TO INCREASE COMPETITIVENESS AND ATTRACT NEW VISITOR MARKETS	21
4. ESTABLISHING A SUSTAINABLE AND ACCESSIBLE VISITOR ECONOMY	24
HOW WILL WE DELIVER THIS STRATEGY?	27
ACTION PLANS	29

THE WIRRAL PLAN: A 2020 VISION



FOREWORD

Wirral is perfectly positioned. Surrounded by thriving Liverpool and Manchester, historic Chester and the stunning coastlines of the Mersey and Dee Rivers, the Wirral Peninsula is a unique and attractive place to live, work and visit.

Offering stunning panoramic views of the Liverpool skyline and beautiful scenery of coast and countryside, Wirral's picturesque setting is unrivalled. From the tranquillity of our countryside parks and trails, to experiencing the adrenaline rush of water sports on the coast, visitors to Wirral can enjoy an abundance of attractions and activities.

Wirral is home to a number of internationally recognised attractions, such as Port Sunlight Village, the Mersey Ferries, Birkenhead Park and the Royal Liverpool Golf Club in Hoylake.

Visitors to Wirral can also enjoy quality food and drink options, with award-winning producers and breweries offering some of the most diverse and locally produced food in the UK, including the only Michelin star restaurant in the city region.

We are delighted to introduce this Wirral Visitor Economy Strategy, which will help us build on these assets and drive the continued growth in this sector, to benefit local businesses and residents.

Our aim is to build partnerships with organisations from across Wirral and further afield to ensure our most prominent and recognisable attractions and experiences are promoted to attract visitors from far and wide.

Please take the time to read this strategy and we look forward to working with you to deliver our ambition of growing Wirral's visitor economy by 2020 and beyond.



P. Brightmore

**Councillor
Phill Brightmore**
Cabinet Member for
Environment



P Basnett

Paula Basnett
Chief Executive of
Wirral Chamber of Commerce

“ Over the last 10 years we have made real progress in raising Wirral’s profile as a destination and in enhancing the visitor offer. This new strategy represents a step change in our approach, and provides us with a robust, targeted and realistic framework for further development and growth.

We are very optimistic about the future, and look forward to working in partnership with Wirral Chamber of Commerce, Wirral Council, and other partners across the Liverpool City Region to realise our ambitions for Wirral’s visitor economy. ”

Katherine Lynch, Chair, Wirral Visitor Economy Network.

“ **Our Wirral Plan pledge is:** We are proud of our home and will work to promote and grow the borough’s tourism offer; making Wirral a place even more people enjoy visiting.

We will review and make the best use of our heritage, leisure and cultural assets to drive tourism, the associated creation of jobs and increase revenue for Wirral’s visitor economy to £450 million by 2020. ”

INTRODUCTION

The Wirral Plan commits to delivering twenty pledges by 2020. One of these pledges is to grow Wirral's vibrant visitor economy, ensuring it is worth £450 million by 2020.

Delivering this pledge will be an important step towards our longer term vision to increase the value of Wirral's visitor economy to £550 million by 2025, by encouraging more visitors to come and discover a unique peninsula full of award winning experiences.

Why is Tourism important?

Tourism plays an important role in growing local economies, by supporting local attractions, theatres, museums, restaurants, events, shops and hotels. The tourism industry is diverse and inextricably linked to other sectors like transport, design and construction and wider supply chains which contribute towards the wider visitor economy and benefit business. As a result, attracting people to visit a destination to invest their disposable income in local amenities, services and experiences can be an effective way of creating jobs, growing local business and forming a positive sense of place.

Wirral's Visitor Economy

Wirral has made significant progress in developing its visitor offer over the last 10 years. Visitor satisfaction is high, with an average visitor rating of over 4 out of 5 for Wirral's tourism offer. The creation of Wirral's Visitor Economy Network has further developed partnerships across sectors to drive destination marketing and product development activity.

Over the last few years, Wirral has built its reputation on quality and distinctiveness, receiving a wide range of awards for its

unrivalled beaches, green flag parks as well as its heritage and attractions. Wirral is part of England's Golf Coast, home to 14 golf courses including Royal Liverpool, host of The Open in 2014 and 2006.

The renaissance of New Brighton has seen huge increases in day visitors, while Port Sunlight Village and Birkenhead Park continue to demonstrate the depth of international heritage the peninsula has to offer. Coupled with its perfect backdrop of Liverpool's world heritage waterfront and its close proximity to the international attractions offered by other nearby destinations, Wirral is well placed to capitalise on these unique opportunities.

Purpose of this strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to clearly establish the priorities for marketing, investment, product development and training which will be instrumental for sustainable growth of the visitor economy in Wirral.

Through this strategy we will:

- Raise the profile of the Wirral Peninsula and enhance its image and reputation, not only as a place to visit, but also as a place to live, work and invest.
- Increase Wirral's share of visitor markets and create a thriving, profitable tourism economy, which delivers high levels of economic, cultural and social benefit to the Liverpool City Region, and the North of England as a whole.

- Work with Wirral's visitor economy community and stakeholders, to champion the industry through a shared vision for growth, in order to lever investment.
- Grow the number of businesses operating in Wirral's visitor economy, to enhance the quality and diversity of our offer, and create a compelling, year-round visitor experience.

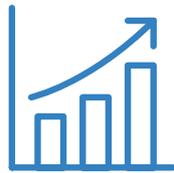
Strategic Context – An Integrated Approach

Wirral's leisure and cultural experiences are an integral part of its visitor offer. Our aim is to develop these sectors to provide compelling reasons to visit Wirral, providing fulfilling and enjoyable breaks. Our strategy will complement Wirral's existing Growth Plan, as well as the Culture and Leisure strategies, aiming to build collaborative and effective partnerships, exerting influence where it is needed and capitalising on opportunities for securing investment through funding agencies such as the Arts Council, Heritage Lottery and Visit England.

For the Liverpool City Region, Wirral has internationally renowned visitor attractions. Through the city region's Visitor Economy Investment Strategy places such as Port Sunlight and Birkenhead Park, as well as the proposed Wirral Waters development and Golf Resort and Spa in Hoylake, are experiences with the potential to grow the region's share of domestic and overseas visitors. Similarly, Wirral's strong heritage, arts and leisure offers will ensure it is well placed to benefit from the city region's proposals for cultural devolution.

At a national level, our strategy will foster better and more integrated working relationships with the key brands in the wider region and it also forms part of the national strategy for dispersing more of the 18.6 million international tourists visiting London every year into England's regions.

CURRENT MARKETS & TRENDS



£385M

IN EXPENDITURE SUPPORTING
OVER **5,000** FULL-TIME JOBS



WIRRAL IS A POPULAR DESTINATION
FOR DAY VISITORS AND HAS A
STRONG DAY VISITOR MARKET

BY
36%



VISITORS STAYING OVERNIGHT
IN WIRRAL'S HOTELS HAS
INCREASED BY 36% SINCE 2010



FASTEST GROWING

WIRRAL IS THE FASTEST GROWING
VISITOR DESTINATION WITHIN
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION



POPULAR WITH TOURISTS ON
SHORT BREAKS, ATTENDING
CELEBRATIONS, BUSINESS
MEETINGS OR EVENTS.



UP BY
26%

SINCE 2010, WIRRAL HAS
EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT GROWTH

8.2 MILLION

ANNUAL VISITORS



BY
7.42 MILLION
DAY VISITORS, SINCE 2010



266,000
VISITORS STAYED IN
HOTELS & GUESTHOUSES



STAYING VISITORS UP TO
788,000
PER ANNUM



500,000
VISITORS STAYED WITH
FRIENDS & RELATIVES

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Central to the delivery of the Wirral Visitor Economy Strategy is the Wirral Plan target to increase total tourism spend to £450 million per annum by 2020. To deliver this growth, the main considerations for delivering the strategy are as follows:

- **Staying visitors** are of vital importance as they spend on average four times as much as day visitors in Wirral. In order to further increase the input of this group to the visitor economy, an increase in hotel capacity will be necessary.
- We must build on the **growing younger and family markets** through expanding on our current leisure offer and capitalising on our close proximity to Liverpool.
- The focus should be on those **near visitor markets** within a 60-90 minute drive time from the Wirral Peninsula, while also strengthening links with Liverpool and Chester to boost our offer to domestic visitors, from further afield and overseas visitors.
- The **group travel** trade is a key area for growth which would benefit from coordination across Wirral in terms of itinerary planning and promotion.
- There is the opportunity to bring more day and multi-day conferences to Wirral and to capitalise on the peninsula's close proximity to Liverpool, Cheshire and North Wales to further increase **business trips**.
- We need to harness the power of **well-known brands** such as Birkenhead Park, Cammell Laird and Port Sunlight, home to Unilever, to raise awareness of Wirral's wider offer and reinforce its sense of place.
- A new **destination marketing strategy** for Wirral, which is market-focussed and develops our capability for using digital media, will further promote the peninsula on a national and international scale.
- Developing **major events** which align to Wirral's distinctive themes and partnering with Culture Liverpool will help to attract emerging visitor markets and staying visitors to Wirral Peninsula.



WHAT MAKES WIRRAL DISTINCTIVE AND SPECIAL?

The motivation to see and explore the Wirral 'peninsula' is an overwhelming feature that differentiates it in terms of the broad range of things to do and experiences visitors can access. This is further supported by the exclusive and individual nature of being a peninsula and is distinguished by Wirral's unique coast, countryside, parks, gardens and towns as well as its independent accommodation, quality restaurants and rich supply of local produce.

Our Core Proposition

- A peninsula that defines Wirral's sense of place through its coast and countryside and ability to deliver wide ranging recreational, cultural and leisure experiences.
- Untapped built, industrial, maritime and social heritage that is internationally significant and provides compelling reasons to visit.
- An independent and exclusive destination that mixes award-winning food and accommodation with quality driven attractions, amenities and experiences.
- An alternative base for exploring the internationally renowned cultural and tourism destinations of Liverpool and Chester.
- A range of unique settings and venues make for a compelling destination for celebrations and alternative settings for conferences and business meetings.
- A well connected and accessible leisure destination and a place to do business.
- A view of the Liverpool waterfront, our open spaces, international sporting occasions and array of cultural activities make Wirral a destination for major events.

CORE PROPOSITION



PRIORITIES FOR GROWING WIRRAL'S VISITOR ECONOMY

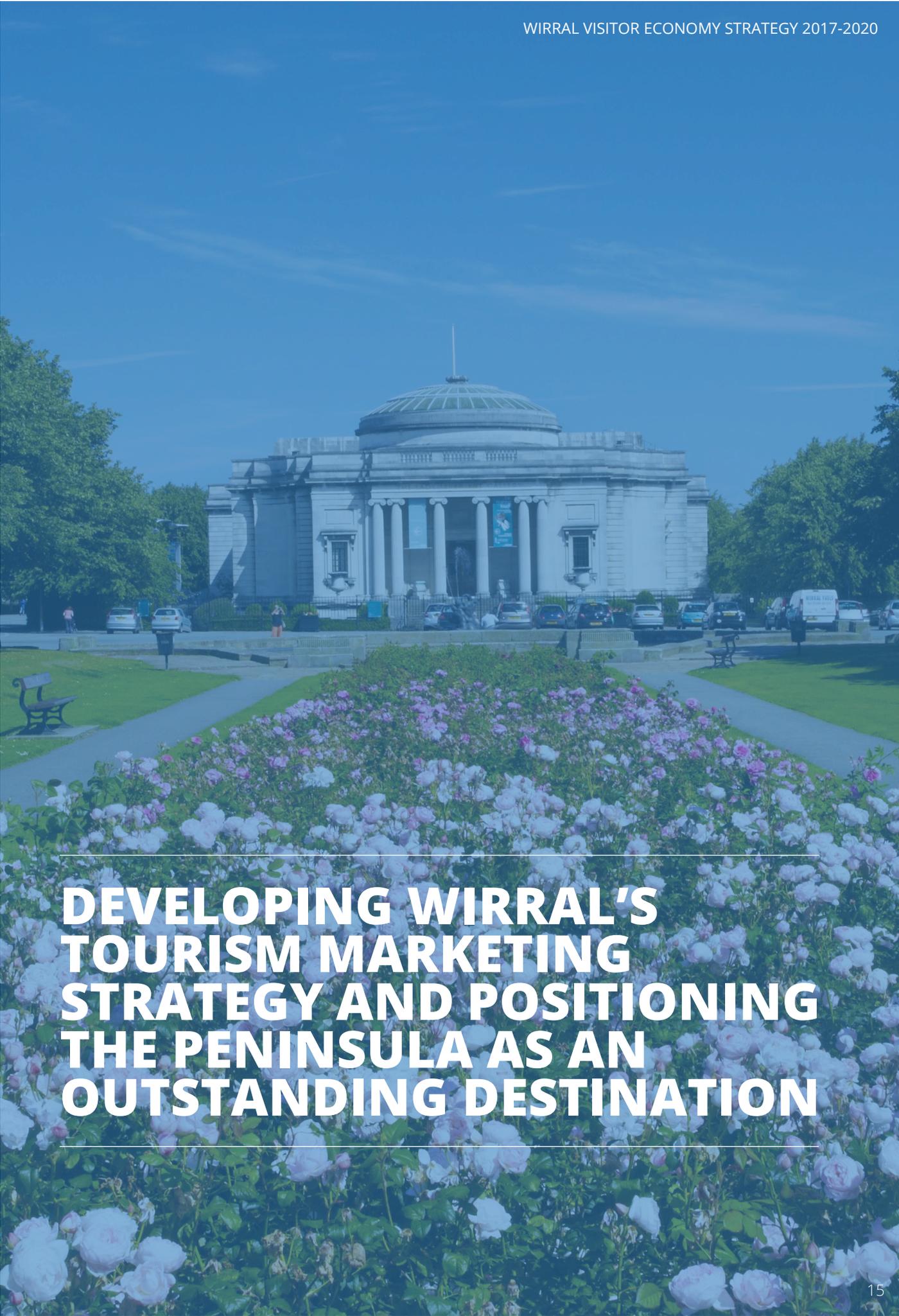
Our strategy recognises the value of the assets and experiences which make up Wirral's core proposition. As a result, we have set clear priorities to help galvanise and grow existing stakeholder partnerships, support decision-making and drive the required level of investment to ensure our growth targets can be met.

Importantly, we recognise tourism is part of a much broader picture which will deliver sustainable social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits to Wirral. This will support Wirral's overall competitiveness and its wider contribution to the success of the Liverpool City Region.

The priorities underpinning this Visitor Economy Strategy are:

	Priorities
1	Developing Wirral's tourism marketing strategy and positioning the peninsula as an outstanding destination
2	Generating greater benefit from conferences, business meetings and events
3	Developing Wirral's tourism assets and experiences to increase competitiveness and attract new visitor markets
4	Encouraging sustainable and accessible tourism in Wirral

In order to achieve these priorities we will strengthen our networks, increase support for tourism businesses and develop the skills of the visitor economy workforce. We will also continue to enhance our intelligence to ensure we take an evidence-led approach to growing Wirral's visitor economy.



**DEVELOPING WIRRAL'S
TOURISM MARKETING
STRATEGY AND POSITIONING
THE PENINSULA AS AN
OUTSTANDING DESTINATION**

1

Developing Wirral's tourism marketing strategy and positioning the peninsula as an outstanding destination

Our aim is to position the Wirral Peninsula as an outstanding leisure destination to regional day visitors and short break markets in order to attract more visitors to explore and enjoy Wirral. A new destination marketing strategy will be developed to promote our unique location and its great range of leisure, culture, arts, heritage and recreational activities and to raise awareness of Wirral's tourism offer.

The new marketing strategy will place greater emphasis on the use of digital channels and social media, and will propose themed and seasonal marketing campaign activity. The strategy will also seek to improve the effectiveness of traditional marketing approaches through a rationalisation of printed materials, with greater use of digital marketing to improve the effectiveness of campaigns and to encourage target audiences to visit Wirral.

Wirral's idyllic scenery, fantastic venues and easy transport links mean it is the perfect place for celebrations and events. New marketing approaches will promote the range of unique and distinctive venues for weddings or boutique experiences, to attract more visitors to Wirral.

There are considerable opportunities to grow the group travel market in Wirral through developing and attractively presenting packaged products and themed itineraries for visitors. This will require engagement with travel trade operators and greater coordination with local stakeholders to strengthen our approach to group travel.

For wider national and international markets, our aim is to enhance visibility and stimulate interest by exploiting Wirral's key brands and assets. We will build partnerships with organisations on a wider geographical basis, such as Marketing Liverpool and Marketing Chester and Cheshire to ensure our most prominent attractions and experiences, from Port Sunlight to Birkenhead Park, have visibility in domestic and international marketing and sales activity.

We will also build relationships with our ports of entry and passenger carriers to raise awareness of Wirral among inbound markets, as well as developing our major river based events to enhance our associations with Liverpool and the resulting opportunities for joint marketing. This will increase exposure to those visiting friends, relatives or family, and present additional, attractive choices to staying visitors.

What will we do over the next three years?

- We will produce a new destination marketing strategy to attract more visitors to enjoy Wirral's unique tourism offer;
- We will explore opportunities to work with Marketing Liverpool and Marketing Chester and Cheshire to attract visitors across a 90-minute drive time and beyond;
- We will develop our digital capability and use of social media marketing to enhance the reach and cost effectiveness of our marketing activity;
- We will identify a dedicated resource to develop our approach to group travel, which will build relations with the travel trade, produce itineraries at a destination level and deliver sales and marketing activity;
- We will create opportunities for event led marketing through participation in Liverpool's major waterfront events programme and by placing greater emphasis on Wirral's global cultural events.

How will we measure if we are getting it right?

- Increase in the value of visitor spend in Wirral to £450 million by 2020, an increase of 5% year on year.
- Increase in the number of visitors to Wirral to over 9 million by 2020, an increase of 4% year on year.

1 Case Study – Port Sunlight Village

The village is home to Lady Lever Art Gallery, winner of 2017 ‘Wirral Attraction of the Year’, which attracted over 225,000 visitors. It also incorporates Port Sunlight Museum, which scooped the ‘Independent Business of the Year’ at the 2017 Wirral Tourism Awards and ‘Attraction of the Year’ in 2016 & 2015, and the museum was also presented with the Historic England Heritage Angels Best Research Project award in 2016.

The model village was built in 1888 for Lord Leverhulme’s Sunlight Soap factory workers, and includes approximately 900 listed buildings, and is Britain’s finest example of a purpose built ‘workers’ village’.

The village includes a Grade I listed, granite monument, designed by Welsh sculptor Sir William Goscombe John, and unveiled by two Lever Brothers employees in 1921. It is one of only seven war memorials in the country covered by the coveted heritage accolade. The village celebrated its 125th anniversary of its founding in 2013, and now includes Leverhulme Hotel, a former cottage hospital with its own 2 AA rosette restaurant called Riviera.

www.portsunlightvillage.com

Working Wirral
Building a strong and vibrant economy



GENERATING GREATER BENEFIT FROM CONFERENCES, BUSINESS MEETINGS AND EVENTS

2

Generating greater benefit from conferences, business meetings and events

Wirral is an ideal location to host business meetings and events, and our aim is to build on the current market and establish Wirral as a regional conference destination by 2020, by developing plans to attract organisations from across the public and private sectors.

Wirral has fantastic transport connections including ferry links to Liverpool and Ireland; easy access to the rail service and airports, as well as direct links to the M6 motorway. Wirral also benefits from a range of branded and independent mid to upper grade hotels, which are situated in distinctive locations and have modern facilities for hosting conferences, events and business meetings for 50 to 800 plus delegates.

We recognise that Wirral should be generating greater returns from securing day and multi day conferences that attract staying visitors. Through offering incentives such as discounted venue hire, fixed room rates and guaranteeing room availability to conference organisers we will seek to generate more returns from this sector and attract greater visitor interest. We will also put in place plans to attract business from the public and not for profit sectors, including Governmental, Political, Health and Third sector organisations, as well as Northern Associations, smaller corporate organisations and regional exhibitions.

Whilst venues will naturally compete with each other for conferences, business meetings and events, we believe there is greater opportunity to attract regional markets by integrating our approach in areas such as business tourism marketing, forward planning and conferences/exhibitions bidding. As a result, we will work with destination partners to improve coordination between venues and accommodation providers to incentivise conference organisers through packages including discounted venue hire, fixed room rates and guaranteeing room availability.

We will also develop our commercial model, to bring in additional income from the business tourism industry as a means to resource other marketing and promotional activity, for example attendance at trade shows and exhibitions and hosting familiarisation visits in order to encourage conferences to come to Wirral.

We will also invest in developing a Wirral ambassador scheme to welcome conferences and event attendees to effectively promote the Wirral offer. This approach will help develop lasting relations with conference and event's organisers, as well as establishing partnerships with the Liverpool Convention Bureau and participation in Liverpool's conference ambassador programme.

What will we do over the next three years?

- In conjunction with our local hotels and conference venues, we will develop a business plan to attract more conference and exhibition business to Wirral;
- We will develop a commissioning-based model to support investment in conference marketing, research and sales;
- We will establish new working relationships with Marketing Liverpool/Liverpool Convention Bureau and Marketing Chester and Cheshire to position Wirral's conference offer with national and international conference organisers;
- We will enhance the visibility of Wirral's conference offer on www.visitwirral.com and develop a digital venue directory.

How will we measure if we are getting it right?

- Increase the number of day/multi day conferences.

2 Case Study - The Floral Pavilion

The Floral Pavilion is an 800 seat theatre and conference centre situated in a spectacular position on New Brighton's promenade, offering panoramic views of the Mersey Estuary, and across to Liverpool's waterfront. It is a key asset within the £70 million regeneration programme that includes a hotel; an 8 screen digital cinema; superstore; children's play centre, restaurants and bars, and was rebuilt at a cost of over £11 million.

The venue continues to host leading national artists including comedy, dance, drama & music. The Floral won the 'Volunteers of the Year' and 'Outstanding Customer Care' categories at the Wirral Tourism Awards in 2016 & 2015 respectively.

www.floralpavilion.com



**DEVELOP WIRRAL'S TOURISM
ASSETS AND EXPERIENCES TO
INCREASE COMPETITIVENESS
AND ATTRACT NEW
VISITOR MARKETS**

3

Develop Wirral's tourism assets and experiences to increase competitiveness and attract new visitor markets

Wirral's close proximity to Liverpool, Chester, North Wales and Manchester means that visitors can benefit from an array of nearby cultural, retail, leisure and recreational experiences. This unique location in conjunction with Wirral's rich and diverse tourist attractions and heritage provides visitors with a unique proposition that other destinations would struggle to match. The significance and appeal of Wirral's rich heritage and assets will be promoted to attract new visitor markets to experience Wirral's diverse tourism offer.

Research shows that many day visitors travel for retail therapy or sporting events, such as football matches, golfing tournaments and horse racing. By working in partnership with Mersey Ferries, Cheshire Oaks, Liverpool One, as well as iconic sporting clubs in the Liverpool City Region, we will design attractive packaged experiences to offer visitors a rich and diverse leisure, culture and sporting experience both within and in close proximity to Wirral. The overarching ambition is to encourage more visitors to stay in Wirral for short breaks or visit as part of their existing day trip. From large-scale regeneration projects including Wirral Waters and the new Hoylake golf resort, to improving signage and accessibility to attractions, investment in Wirral's tourism infrastructure will broaden the peninsula's appeal and ensure longer visitor stays.

Wirral's unique location overlooking the impressive Liverpool waterfront will help unlock the ambitious developments and regeneration along the east of Wirral including the range of visitor attractions. Consequently, the river will cease to be a barrier between Liverpool and Wirral, and instead become a key feature of Wirral's visitor economy. This will complement Wirral's popular seaside resorts of New Brighton and West Kirby, which provide great days out for families and visitors wishing to experience a traditional 'day at the beach'.

Increasingly visitors are seeking new accommodation experiences, with trends such as rural camping, yurts, caravanning and eco-lodges all becoming more popular. These new forms of accommodation will be explored in order to encourage more visitors to take short

breaks and experience more attractions in Wirral. We will also focus on our hotel development plans and increase the number of independent, boutique hotels to further enhance Wirral's offer.

Wirral's unique venues and open spaces will also be better utilised to deliver blockbuster events that build on the peninsula's brand and celebrate the Borough's distinctiveness. This will enable us to attract more visitors from both within the region and from across the UK as a whole.

What will we do over the next three years?

- We will work with stakeholders to develop themed itineraries that are bookable and reflect the needs of our target audiences;
- We will develop an investment plan to improve access to and interpretation of our core visitor amenities and assets;
- We will exert greater influence over land use planning and major regeneration initiatives to ensure the potential for attracting new visitor markets to Wirral are met;
- We will commission a hotel development strategy for Wirral and an associated investment plan with existing land owners and potential developers/operators;
- We will develop a major events strategy for Wirral, establishing key partnerships, opportunities for commercial development and the development of our key event sites and spaces.

How will we measure if we are getting it right?

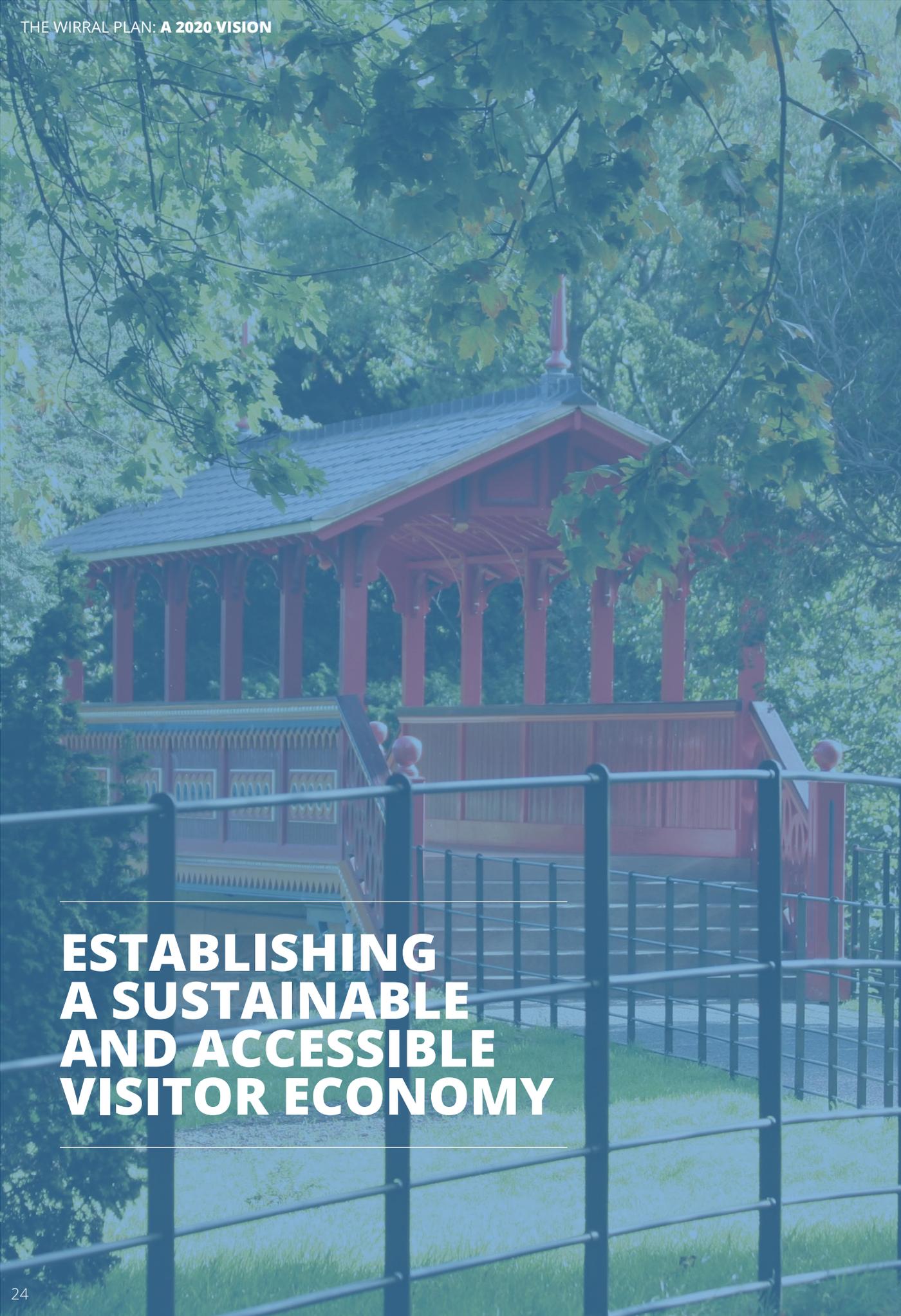
- Increase the amount grant funding received to support product development.
- Increase overnight stays and increase annual hotel occupancy by 5% from 78% in 2016 to 83% by 2020.
- Increase commercial revenue generated from major events.

3 Case Study – Royal Liverpool Golf Club, Hoylake

Royal Liverpool hosted The Open Championship in July 2014 and attracted 203,000 golf enthusiasts. It achieved a 94% overall satisfaction rating of 'very good' and had a total economic impact of £76million to the north west of England (i.e. Wirral's economic impact was £19million).

The club will host The Walker Cup in 2019 and hosted the Ricoh Women's Open Golf Championship in September 2012. Wirral has an impressive 14 golf courses including Wallasey – home of the Stableford scoring system.

www.royal-liverpool-golf.com



**ESTABLISHING
A SUSTAINABLE
AND ACCESSIBLE
VISITOR ECONOMY**

4

Establishing a Sustainable and Accessible Visitor Economy

Wirral's rich heritage and spectacular natural assets are an important part of what makes Wirral special and unique for visitors to explore. Places like Port Sunlight Village, Birkenhead Park, Hilbre Islands, the natural countryside and coastline as well as the wildlife are precious and unrivalled. As such, it is important that the demands of visitors do not jeopardise their existence and their unique features are conserved to be enjoyed by this and future generations.

The overall ambition of this strategy is to grow Wirral's visitor economy and increase visitor numbers, which in turn will create jobs and build our reputation as an outstanding destination. We will work in partnership to balance these ambitions against the need to protect our assets. In recognition of this, through this strategy and our Growth Plan we will develop sustainable approaches to new and existing tourism opportunities, especially in those areas sensitive to increases in visitor numbers or infrastructure developments.

A sustainable approach to developing tourism opportunities will be at the heart of our ambition to increase visitors to and attractions in Wirral. Planned and future tourism opportunities will aim to increase our visitor economy and create more jobs across the borough. By engaging with communities, stakeholders and interest groups about our future plans, we will ensure that Wirral's reputation as an outstanding place to visit, live, work and invest continues to grow and improve.

Wirral's existing and new attractions will be modernised with new technology so that visitors are able to better engage with attractions. Through better signage and improving physical accessibility to our visitor attractions we will aim to improve the experiences of visitors and enhance the sustainability of Wirral's unique tourism offer, to ensure that it continues to be enjoyed by residents and visitors now and in the future.

However, our approach will not be one of constraint, and through a structured approach we will maintain opportunities for visitors to enjoy and understand our heritage and natural environment. We will also promote better physical access to avoid unnecessary damage at our key visitor sites and amenities, as well as encouraging modern approaches to promoting the history and heritage of the Wirral Peninsula, through better use of technology and augmented reality-based solutions.

What will we do over the next three years?

- We will review our local planning frameworks to seek to safeguard our assets whilst maximising visitor access;
- We will work with local groups, land managers and custodians to ensure our heritage and natural visitor assets are accurately mapped and adequately protected;
- We will actively support the ambitions of Birkenhead Park and Port Sunlight Village to be recognised as UNESCO World Heritage sites;

How will we measure if we are getting it right?

- Increase the number of awards and accreditations for sustainable tourism initiatives.
- Increase the number of grant funding applications secured for improvements to visitor amenities and interpretation.

4 Case Study – Birkenhead Park

Officially opened in 1847, Birkenhead Park was designed by Sir Joseph Paxton as a ‘Park for the People’, and was the first publicly funded park in the world.

Named as one of the top 10 urban green spaces in the world by The Guardian in 2015, it is widely accepted that after visiting Birkenhead Park in 1850, American architect Frederick Law Olmsted incorporated many of the features in his design for New York’s Central Park.

In 2004, Birkenhead Park underwent an £11.3million renovation scheme which saw the park’s famous Swiss Bridge, Boat House and Grand Entrance restored, along with new bridges, paths, and railings. Much of the original planting has also been restored, reinstating the park’s status as a national treasure.

Today, Birkenhead Park is a Grade I listed historic landscape and conservation area, with many Grade II and Grade II listed buildings and structures. It is recognised as a site of excellence by Green Flag and holds the prestigious Green Heritage Award.

www.wirral.gov.uk/leisure-parks-and-events/parks/birkenhead-park

HOW WILL WE DELIVER THIS STRATEGY?

Developing our partnerships and governance, investing in skills and training and ensuring decision-making that is intelligence-led will underpin our approach to delivery.

In taking this forward, we recognise the achievement of Wirral's Visitor Economy Network in bringing together public, private and voluntary organisations to increase visitor numbers; however we must use this opportunity to exert greater influence at city region and national level. We will actively engage Marketing Liverpool, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Visit England and other regional and national funding agencies to ensure active engagement and securing their support for our key priorities.

These relationships will be brokered through a new Visitor Economy Board for Wirral who will take responsibility for delivering the strategy and strengthening the Network. This will include creating a new, commercially orientated membership scheme focussed on increasing revenue to reinvest back into the sector and the resources that support it. The Board will be supported by a new specialist Visitor Economy delivery team based in the Wirral Chamber of Commerce. The team will be accountable for our tourism growth priorities and will have responsibility for destination marketing, membership services, business tourism and events.

These arrangements will not only allow us to work smarter and more efficiently, they will enable us to harness Wirral Chamber's knowledge and expertise in business growth and support. This area is a fundamental element of developing the breadth, diversity and quality of our offer, particularly as over the last 10 years many of Wirral's small and medium-sized enterprises have flourished with the growth of the sector. Not only have they expanded as businesses, they have diversified in areas ranging from farm diversification, food and beverage

production and brand new visitor attractions to the provision of guided tours, new events and digital services.

This is a strong selling point for the peninsula and we will continue to prioritise business assistance and advice to sustain growth in a way that contributes to Wirral's distinctive sense of place. We will also work collectively with Wirral Metropolitan College and other education providers to ensure the skills gaps and needs of the businesses operating across Wirral's visitor economy are met.

We recognise the significant role played by volunteers across Wirral, whose support in operating visitor centres, organising events, assisting research and securing grant funding opportunities are just as essential in delivering a quality experience as they are in preserving our assets for future generations of visitors. We will explore opportunities to support and strengthen our volunteer networks in order to ensure sustainability, and make sure their views are reflected in the decision making of the Visitor Economy Board.

We will continue to build upon the findings of the 2016 Visitor Research Study and undertake further research to enhance the understanding of our priority visitor segments, particularly their key characteristics, life stage and preferences. We will also develop our destination research programme to establish the levels of satisfaction and look to capture shifts in the type and volume of visitors to Wirral. This will include benchmarking our performance against comparator destinations, and evaluating the impacts of our marketing and product development initiatives. We will also draw on secondary analysis of shared sales and marketing data secured through www.visitwirral.com and through new data sharing agreements with our stakeholder partners.

Finally, we will increase monitoring and analysis of our key digital channels including web and social media performance. We recognise the increasing importance of these platforms in the way visitors consume information, as well as being an effective tool to identify trends in behaviour, and in measuring the impact of our digital marketing. As a result, we will proactively use these insights to inform our marketing campaign planning, media selection and in optimising our promotional content across the digital channels available to us including web, social media and email.

What will we do over the next three years?

- We will develop a Visitor Economy Board for Wirral to oversee the delivery of this strategy and review existing structures and resources to ensure they are aligned with our priorities;
- We will explore opportunities to work with and support local groups and volunteers to help realise the potential of Wirral's visitor economy;
- We will work with Wirral Metropolitan College and other educational providers to deliver the region's Visitor Economy Skills for Growth Agreement;
- We will commission regular programmes of destination research to understand visitor behaviour, profiles and levels of satisfaction, as well as benchmarking our performance against other destinations.

How will we measure if we are getting it right?

- Increase the Wirral Visitor Economy Network membership from 85 members in 2016.
- Increase in number of business/SMEs operating in the Visitor Economy.
- Increases in the number of Wirral residents employed in the Visitor Economy.
- Increase in the number of volunteers engaged in the visitor economy.

ACTION PLANS

1 Developing Wirral's tourism marketing strategy and positioning the peninsula as an outstanding destination

What do we need to do?	By when?	Responsible
Develop a 3 year marketing strategy targeting leisure and business visitors	July 2017 to October 2017	Wirral Chamber of Commerce
Maximise the use of VisitWirral, digital and social media channels	October 2017	Wirral Chamber of Commerce
Deliver joint event schedule with Culture Liverpool to maximise opportunities to promote Wirral	December 2017	Wirral Council / Wirral Chamber of Council / Culture Liverpool
Develop partnerships to support product packaging and development of themed itineraries for the travel trade	March 2018	Wirral Chamber of Commerce / Marketing Liverpool / Marketing Chester & Cheshire

2 Generating greater benefit from conferences, business meetings and events

What do we need to do?	By when?	Responsible
Develop a digital destination venue directory hosted on Visit Wirral	October 2017	Wirral Chamber of Commerce
Develop a new model through the SIF business tourism bid to attract conference organisers to Wirral	October 2017	Liverpool City Region LEP / Marketing Liverpool
Develop a 3 year business plan to attract more conferences, exhibitions and events	October 2017	Wirral Chamber of Commerce
Establish destination lead for conference & corporate events and develop marketing, research and bidding opportunities	December 2017	Wirral Chamber of Council / Liverpool Conference Bureau

3 **Develop Wirral’s tourism assets and experiences to increase competitiveness and attract new visitor markets**

What do we need to do?	By when?	Responsible
Establish destination partnerships with key sector stakeholders (hoteliers, restaurants and attractions) to develop themed itineraries and packages	March 2018	Wirral Chamber of Commerce / Wirral Visitor Economy Network
Develop initiatives with Port Sunlight, Birkenhead Park and coastal resorts to strengthen Wirral’s Tourism Offer and attract external funding	March 2018	Wirral Council
Develop a hotel development strategy to attract multi-day conferences and develop key leisure markets	March 2018	Wirral Council
Develop a commercially led events model to focus on key events space in Wirral	March 2018	Wirral Chamber of Commerce / Wirral Council
Develop strategic partnerships with key stakeholders to invest in Wirral’s Tourism Offer	March 2018	Wirral Council

4 Establishing a Sustainable and Accessible Visitor Economy

What do we need to do?	By when?	Responsible
Review local policy and planning frameworks to ensure they support ambitions for World Heritage status at Port Sunlight and Birkenhead Park	September 2017	Wirral Council
Review conservation and heritage plans to ensure the appropriate measures are in place to support the visitor experience and safeguarding assets	September 2017	Wirral Council
Engaging local heritage forums and partnerships to map heritage assets	March 2018	Wirral Council
Develop a Wirral wide volunteer programme to support the Visitor Economy	March 2018	Community Action Wirral

To find out more:



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