

Report subject	Dorset Destination Management Plan
Meeting date	22 July 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	VisitEngland established the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) programme to create nationally accredited, strategically aligned destination management organisations capable of driving sustainable visitor economy growth. Dorset Council has worked collaboratively with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council, the Dorset Tourism Association and wider industry partners to secure LVEP status for Dorset. Dorset Council Cabinet approved the creation of Dorset LVEP with Dorset Council as Accountable Body in July 2024. The Dorset LVEP achieved formal accreditation with VisitEngland in May 2025. Being formally designated as an LVEP gives Dorset and BCP councils access to VisitEngland support including data, expertise, and marketing opportunities. A condition of all LVEPs is the creation of a Destination Management Plan (DMP). The Dorset LVEP DMP 2026-2035 sets out a plan to create a year-round destination: addressing seasonality, enhancing visitor spend, improving perceptions of Dorset, strengthening accessibility, embedding sustainability, and enabling sector-wide collaboration. This report seeks Cabinet approval to formalise the Destination Management Plan and Dorset Council's role as accountable body for the Dorset LVEP; endorsing the associated governance arrangements for partnering organisations to implement the Dorset LVEP Destination Management Plan Framework.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: 1. Adopt the Destination Management Plan (DMP) prepared by the Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). 2. Authorise the Director for Investment and Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Commercial Operations and Destination to enter into any agreements necessary to support delivery of the LVEP programme and LVEP accreditation in accordance with the Council's constitution and financial regulations. 3. Delegate to the Director for Investment and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Destination,

	Leisure and Commercial Operations to review and agree the role of the Destination Management Board and delivery of the DMP and strategy set by the LVEP.
Reason for recommendations	• Strengthen Dorset's position within the national visitor economy framework. • Support economic growth, employment and business development across Dorset. • Improve coordination of destination management and tourism promotion activities. • Provide access to future funding and investment opportunities. • Align local visitor economy activity with national tourism priorities.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Richard Herrett, Cabinet Member for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations.
Corporate Director	Glynn Barton, Chief Operation Officer
Report Authors	Amena Matin, Director Investment and Development Sam Richardson, National Coastal
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. VisitEngland has established the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) programme to create nationally accredited, strategically aligned destination management organisations capable of driving sustainable visitor economy growth.
2. The Dorset LVEP was established in July 2024 with Dorset Council as Accountable Body. Dorset LVEP achieved accreditation with VisitEngland in May 2025. Accredited LVEPs act as strategic partners to VisitEngland and are expected to provide leadership, coordination and delivery across the visitor economy.
3. Dorset Council has worked collaboratively with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council, the Dorset Tourism Association and wider industry partners to secure LVEP accreditation for Dorset. Dorset, as the strategic lead organisation for the visitor economy, provides access to enhanced engagement with VisitEngland, national programmes, investment opportunities and destination development initiatives. Being part of an LVEP gives BCP access to VisitEngland support including data, expertise, and marketing opportunities.
4. In 2024/25, both Councils committed UK Shared Prosperity Fund funding to prepare a Dorset Destination Management Plan (DMP). The visitor economy is a significant contributor to Dorset's economy, supporting businesses, jobs and investment across urban, rural and coastal communities and a DMP is a collaborative framework for investment and call to action.
5. The Dorset LVEP DMP 2026-2035 sets out a plan to create a year-round destination: addressing seasonality, enhancing visitor spend, improving perceptions of Dorset, strengthening accessibility, embedding sustainability, and enabling sector-wide collaboration. The full Destination Management Plan is provided in Appendix 1 to this report.
6. This report seeks Cabinet approval to formalise Dorset Council's role as accountable body for the Dorset LVEP, endorse the associated governance arrangements, and authorise BCP Council to adopt and implement the Destination Management Plan. The Plan is required to maintain the accreditation which recognises Dorset's strategic importance as a visitor destination and provides a framework for future growth and destination management for BCP's Destination Management Board.
7. Consultation has been undertaken with:
 - BCP Council
 - Dorset Tourism Association

- VisitEngland
 - Destination Management Board
 - Tourism and hospitality businesses
 - Cultural and heritage organisations
 - Economic development partners
8. The Visitor Economy affects tourists, businesses, jobs, the cultural and heritage offer, transport and infrastructure. The Destination Management Plan, developed by businesses, stakeholders, and cultural partners, provides a roadmap for a more resilient, sustainable, and competitive visitor economy that benefits all parts of Dorset year-round.
 9. Feedback has also informed the proposed governance arrangements and strategic priorities. Dorset Council's role as accountable body will require appropriate governance, financial management and compliance arrangements. Any partnership agreements, funding agreements or contractual arrangements arising from the LVEP and DMP programme will be subject to legal review and executed in accordance with the Council's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation.
 10. The Destination Management Plan also provides a framework for BCP's Destination Management Board which was constituted in 2020 and most recently updated by BCP Council in July 2025. The Board's role is to champion and advocate for the diverse interests of the visitor economy businesses across Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole. It will serve as a dynamic force, driving collaboration, innovation, and sustainable growth within the sector. By uniting businesses, stakeholders, and community partners, the Board will work to enhance the region's appeal, maximise economic opportunities, and ensure a thriving, competitive visitor economy.
 11. The DMP sets out a 10-year strategy to establish Dorset as a welcoming, vibrant, year-round visitor destination. Developed through extensive consultation with businesses, stakeholders and cultural partners, the plan responds to key challenges including strong seasonality, rising operating costs, limited national awareness, and pressure on local infrastructure.
 12. Dorset's visitor economy is a major economic driver, attracting over 22 million visitors annually and generating £1.66bn in direct spend, yet 36% of domestic overnight trips occur in July and August, demonstrating the need to spread demand more evenly across the year. The DMP focuses on addressing seasonality, enhancing visitor spend, improving perceptions of Dorset, strengthening accessibility, embedding sustainability, and enabling sector-wide collaboration.
 13. Growth opportunities centre on two high-potential year-round markets: the Nature & Culture segment and the Active & Mindful segment. By prioritising these audiences, Dorset can leverage its outstanding natural landscapes, rich heritage, cultural offer and variety of outdoor experiences.
 14. Key actions include developing off-peak product, targeted marketing, experience mapping, and building cultural programming in quieter months. Improving data quality, empowering local businesses, and increasing Dorset's national profile are critical to unlocking long-term economic, environmental and community benefits. Delivery of the DMP will rely on coordinated partnership across the industry, facilitated by the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). This plan provides the roadmap for a more resilient, sustainable and competitive visitor economy that benefits all parts of Dorset throughout the year.

Options Appraisal

15. To maintain the accreditation and access to funding this is the recommended option. The only alternatives to a Destination Management Plan with broad stakeholder support are having a more narrowly focussed Plan involving fewer participants or not having a Plan at all. The value of any plan would be reduced if it was not broadly supported, and it would also likely not meet VisitEngland's LVEP requirements, potentially leading to Dorset losing its LVEP accreditation, and therefore losing access to government-funded support. Having no plan would result in the same outcomes

Summary of financial implications

16. The establishment of the Dorset LVEP and DMP will be delivered within existing approved budgets unless otherwise reported to Cabinet. While no government funding has been offered to the LVEP, Dorset has already benefitted from non-financial support from VisitEngland due to it having an established LVEP. Having a satisfactory Destination Management Plan in place is a requisite of all LVEPs.
17. Future external funding opportunities may arise through VisitEngland and other government programmes. Any significant financial commitments or funding bids requiring Council resources will be subject to separate approval in accordance with the Council's Constitution and Financial Regulations.

Summary of legal implications

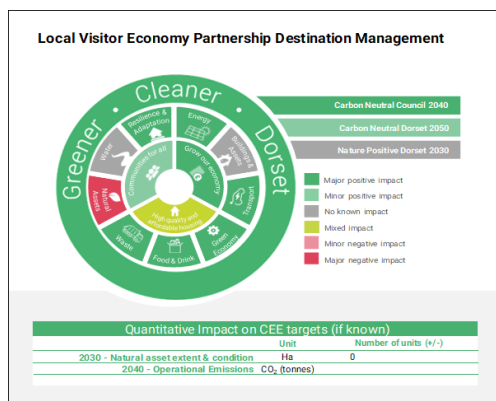
18. The Destination Management Plan is non-statutory and creates no legally binding obligations on any parties. There are no legal implications which arise from the Destination Management Plan as projects come forward these will require a legal review on a case by case basis.

Summary of human resources implications

19. There are no resource implications as the Partnership is led by Dorset Council.

Summary of sustainability impact

20. The Dorset LVEP will promote sustainable tourism principles, encouraging low-carbon travel options, responsible destination management and environmental stewardship. The visitor economy has a significant impact on Carbon emissions and the environment. Focus area five of the Plan is all about sustainability and regenerative tourism. This aligns with Dorset Council's ambitions in the natural environment, climate, and ecology strategy. The Climate wheel shows generally positive impacts and no negative impacts:



- 21.
22. The Growth Plan and Destination Management Plan will incorporate sustainability objectives aligned with the Council's climate commitments.

Summary of public health implications

23. An EQIA screening was conducted as part of approval for the LVEP. “Accessibility and welcome” is Focus Area 4 of the Plan, which will have positive implications for people with disabilities and mobility challenges. Improvements may also benefit Dorset residents.
24. The proposals are expected to have a positive impact by supporting economic opportunities across Dorset and improving access to visitor experiences for residents and visitors. The Plan places particular focus on the Nature & Culture and Active & Mindful market segments, both of which encourage access to greenspace and exercise, which is known to be beneficial for physical and mental health.
25. Any future projects delivered through the LVEP programme will be assessed individually where required.

Summary of risk assessment

26. Failure to participate in the LVEP programme could reduce Dorset’s influence within national tourism structures and limit access to future funding and development opportunities.
27. There is a risk that stakeholder expectations exceed available resources. This will be mitigated through clear governance arrangements, annual business planning and performance monitoring.
28. Future funding opportunities may require match funding or resource commitments. Such commitments will be subject to separate business cases and approval processes.

Background papers

[Decisions for issue Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership - Dorset Council](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Destination Management Plan