

Dorset

Destination Management Plan 2026 - 2035



Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership – creating a year-round destination

The Dorset Destination Management Plan (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.

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.

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.**

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.

This strategy has been funded by UK Government via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund





**Vision for a vibrant,
sustainable year-round
visitor economy**





About Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership

In 2025 Visit Dorset and Dorset Council were awarded Local Visitor Economy Partnership status (LVEP) for the county of Dorset, covering the Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council geographies.

A requirement of the newly formed LVEP was to create a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for the county of Dorset.

Destination Management Plan Methodology

In 2025 Dorset Tourism Association (the LVEP advisory board) commissioned a Destination Management Plan for Dorset. Businesses and stakeholders across the county were consulted on their ambitions for the LVEP and the visitor economy through a series of online business and stakeholder surveys, and in-person workshops held in four locations across Dorset.

This DMP has considered the strategic context of the visitor economy, a review of current performance in the sector, product audit, market trends, competitor analysis and business and stakeholder needs to ascertain the key opportunities and challenges for the visitor economy.

This is the first Destination Management Plan covering the whole County of Dorset.

About Dorset LVEP

Visit Dorset, part of Dorset Council, is the accountable body for the LVEP.

Established as a result of the De Bois Review into Destination Management, LVEPs are officially recognised by VisitEngland as the lead organisation for the development of the visitor economy in England and typically represent counties or core cities.

The Dorset Tourism Association CIC (DTA) covers the whole of Dorset and has representation from the Portfolio Holders for tourism from each local authority and representation of every constituent sector of the visitor economy.

As part of the LVEP development process the DTA has taken on the role of LVEP advisory board. The DTA in partnership with Visit Dorset will oversee the delivery of the DMP and encourage stakeholders to adopt the plan.

About Visit Dorset

Visit Dorset is the official destination management organisation (DMO) for Dorset, responsible for promoting the county as a high-quality visitor destination and supporting the growth of its visitor economy. It works in partnership with over 500 tourism businesses, local and regional stakeholders to deliver marketing campaigns, develop tourism products, and improve the visitor experience.

Visit Dorset's activity includes destination marketing and managing the official www.visit-dorset.com website and social media channels, industry collaboration, business support, and using data and insights to drive sustainable tourism growth. It aims to increase visitor spend, extend the tourism season, and ensure Dorset remains competitive and attractive.

Visit Dorset is the accountable body for the Dorset LVEP and in this role, leads on destination development, aligning local priorities with national tourism goals, and acting as a key voice for Dorset at a national level.

Dorset's Visitor Economy

Home of the iconic Jurassic Coast - Discover Dorset, a land of epic coastline, rolling hills, and timeless charm. Dorset is your gateway to unforgettable experiences!

Dorset has a strong visitor offer with over 22 million visitors, award-winning products and globally important landscapes.

This snapshot of the Dorset visitor economy highlights the importance of the visitor economy to the county and the quality of the offer to a domestic UK and global audience.*

- Home of the UK's only natural **UNESCO World Heritage site**, the **Jurassic Coast** celebrates its 25th anniversary of World Heritage Status in 2026. It is globally renowned for its near-continuous geological record spanning 185 million years of Earth's history and extends from Old Harry Rocks near Poole to Exmouth.
- **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole** are home to award-winning sandy beaches, Europe's largest natural harbour, three universities, international language schools, Arts and Conference centres.
- **Dorset National Landscape** covers just over 40% of the county, stretching from Lyme Regis to Poole Harbour and inland to Blandford Forum. This beautiful and thriving landscape is actively protected and regenerated so that everyone can enjoy it and feel connected to it.
- **Purbeck** Heaths is the UK's first "super" National Nature Reserve. Purbeck's key attractions include Swanage Railway, Corfe Castle and internationally recognisable landmarks such as Durdle Door, Lulworth Cove and Old Harry Rocks.
- **Weymouth** has an award-winning beach, adjacent to the unique Chesil Beach and **Portland** cruise port serving international cruise lines.
- **Dorchester** is a thriving county town known for its Hardy connections, Dorset Museum and Art Gallery and the unique Poundbury development.
- North Dorset with its market towns of **Sherborne, Shaftesbury** and **Gillingham** are the hidden gems of the county. Encompassing the Cranborne Chase National Landscape and International Dark Sky Reserve.
- West Dorset including **Bridport** and **Lyme Regis** are famous for fossil hunting and popular as film and TV locations.

The impact of the visitor economy is equally impressive. 22.8 million visitors came to Dorset in 2024 generating £1.66bn in spend in the local economy and creating 22,693 full-time equivalent jobs.

- Staying visitors (domestic and international) make up 12% of visits but **42% of all spend**.
- **International visits** account for just 2% of all visits but **generate £209m spend** (12.5%) and tend to be focussed on the Jurassic Coast.
- It is estimated that there are 29,997 actual jobs related to tourism – equivalent to 22,963 full time jobs or **8% of all Dorset employment**.
- There is significant seasonal variation in overnight visitors with **36% of all domestic overnight trips taking place in July and August**.
- Business events is a key sector for Bournemouth but represents just 3% of domestic and 6% of international visits for the whole county



22.8 million visitors

£1,663m direct visitor spend



**Staying visitors
12.3% of visits and
42.5% of spend**

22,693 FTE jobs



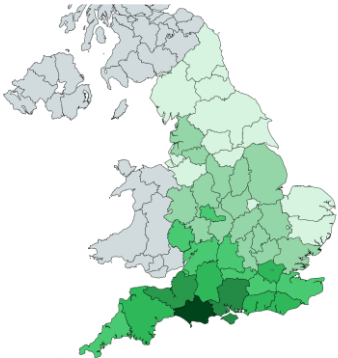
Dorset's Visitor Economy

Understanding our visitors

In 2022 detailed visitor research was undertaken for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. This research was then repeated for Dorset in 2024. There was also a consumer survey conducted in 2023 of Visit Dorset's customers. This insight enables us to understand what visitors like about Dorset and how it compares to other areas.

75% of past visitors to Dorset would visit again and 39% of adults living in the South and Midlands have visited Dorset for a day visit or holiday

The map below shows the location of Visit Dorset consumers across England in 2023



Key perceptions of Dorset:

- 51% place of **natural beauty**
- 49% beautiful **beaches**
- 37% can get close to **nature**
- 31% fun, **relaxed** vibe
- 29% significant **cultural** interest

Top Barriers to visiting Dorset

- 38% too far to travel
- 23% **don't know enough** about area
- 18% Unpredictable weather
- 17% too expensive
- 11% prioritise other places

78

Net Promoter Score

Both sets of visitor research identified the current market segments and key growth opportunities. Dorset currently attracts five market segments, but the two that showed the greatest potential for **year-round growth** in Dorset were:

Active and Mindful

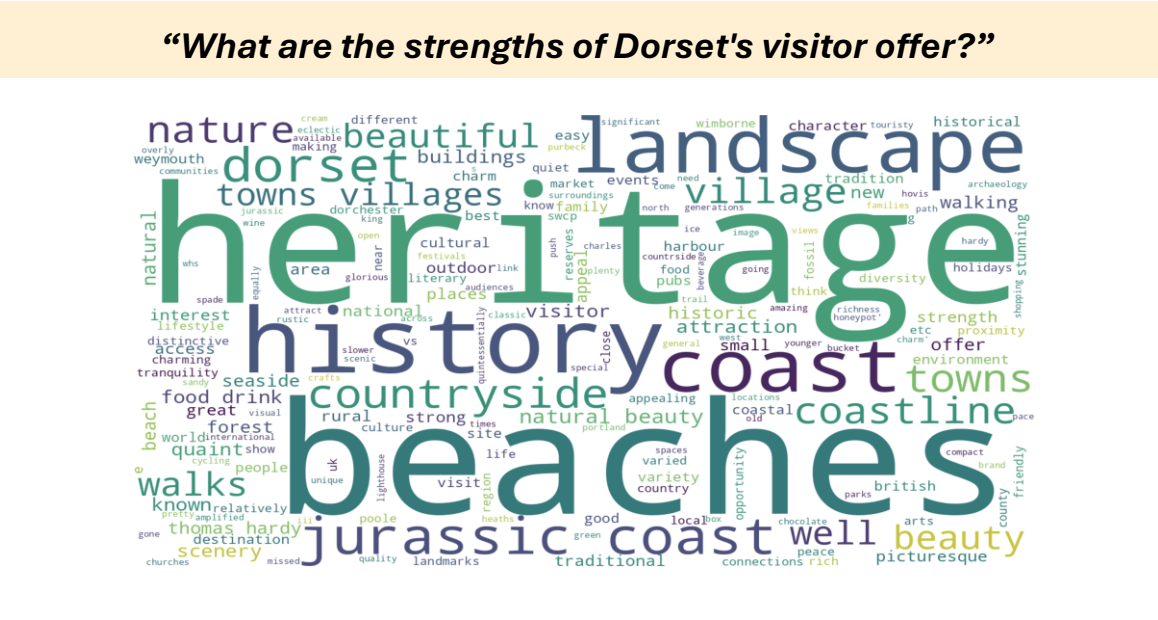
This group are physically active, like a challenge and enjoy new experiences. They like a combination of physical, mental and social stimulation as well as opportunities to relax. They tend to be younger (55% under 35), working, with children and higher than average household income. They are more likely to live in urban areas.

Nature and Culture

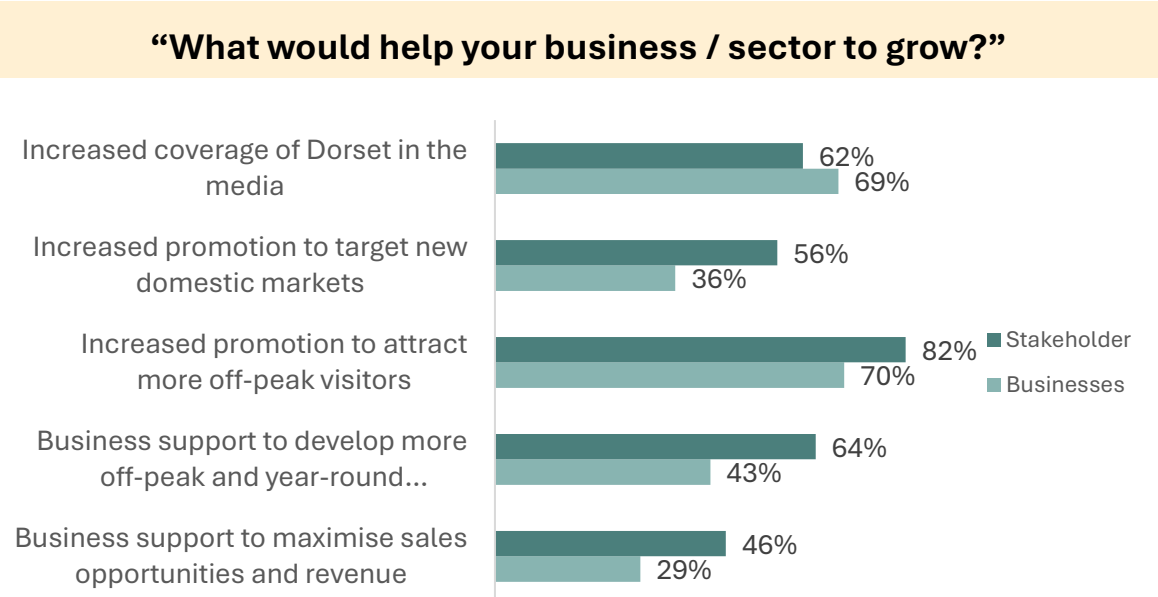
These are nature lovers with a practical approach to life. They like to explore beauty spots, arts, culture and heritage treasures. Holidays are driven by the destination and activities available. They do lots of research in advance of booking, tend to be older, and are more likely than average to be retired.



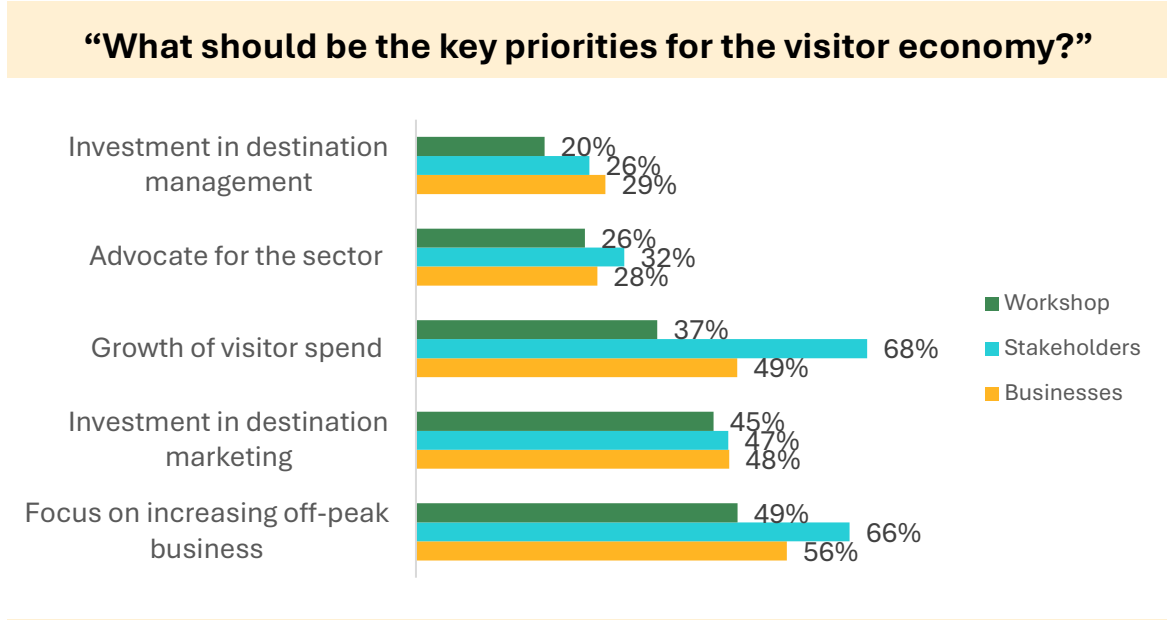
“What are the strengths of Dorset's visitor offer?”



“What would help your business / sector to grow?”



“What should be the key priorities for the visitor economy?”



What investment would you like to see?

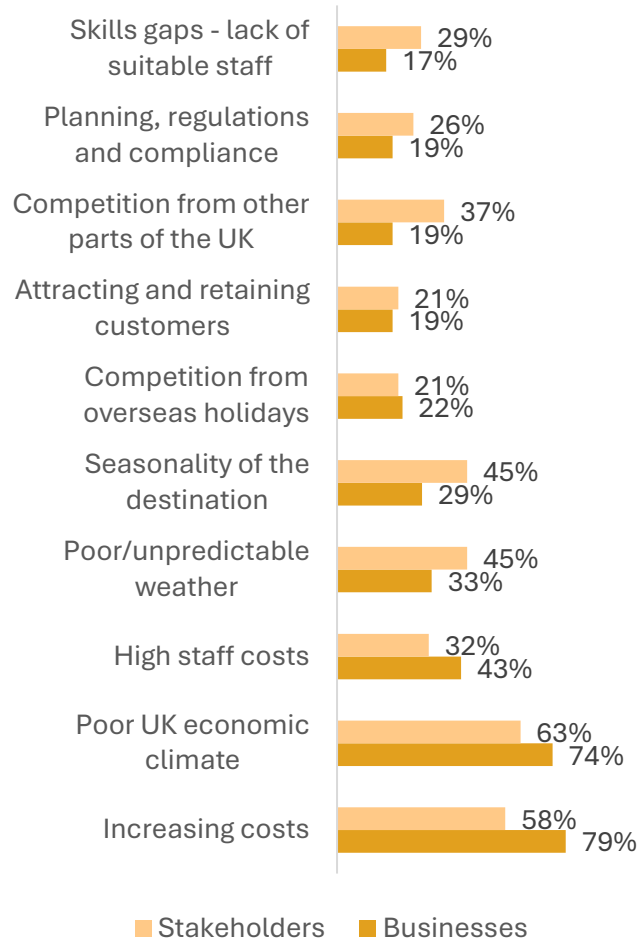
64% More products, events and experiences for off-peak visitors

62% Regional / national brand awareness campaigns

58% Better transport

Dorset's Visitor Economy

Key challenges facing the visitor economy in Dorset



Business performance in Dorset

Business confidence is relatively strong - two-thirds (66%) are very or somewhat confident about the next year of trading.

Seasonality is a key issue with almost a third (30%) of businesses stating that they take more than 50% of their income in July and August.

The majority of Dorset tourism businesses are open year round (80%), January and February are the key months businesses tend not to be open.

Businesses are “committed to growing and investing in their business” (60%) while 25% say they are “maintaining the current level of performance”, just 6% are “Establishing a new business” and 11% are either “planning to downsize” or “planning to sell/retire in next 3 years”

Key challenges (see chart) are increasing costs and the poor UK economic climate. Weather, staff costs and seasonality also get a high response from businesses and stakeholders.

Policy context

The Destination Management Plan takes into account a number of relevant local, regional and national policy and plans that will impact on the Dorset LVEP.

Dorset LVEP works across two local authority boundaries, Dorset Council and BCP Council.

Dorset Council Plan 2024-2029 and Dorset's Economic Growth Strategy 2025 to 2040 include a focus on growing the visitor economy with an aim to increase total visitor-related spend in Dorset by 5% by 2029.

This will be achieved through encouraging more off-peak visits, increasing spend per visitor and spreading the benefits of tourism across the county to ensure tourism provides year-round economic activity.

BCP: Working together to deliver a great destination 2023-2027 prioritises building a year-round economy. It also set the ambition for the industry to take a

lead role in destination management, which has now been realised through the BCP Destination Management Board.

At a regional and national level there is a focus on:

- **Increasing visitor spend** and reducing reliance on day visits, as well as spreading the benefits of tourism to all areas of the country.
- Tourism being more **accessible**.
- A shift towards a more **responsible** visitor economy and realising the **social and environmental benefits** of tourism.
- A more **strategic** and **collaborative** approach.

These are also points featured in local policies.

Destination SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Quality product, nationally and international recognised
- Outstanding natural landscape (UNESCO World Heritage, National Landscapes,
- Well-known brands and icons (e.g. Jurassic Coast, Bournemouth, Weymouth, Gold Hill, Cerne Abbas Giant, Pliosaur, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra)
- Proximity to London, Bristol and West Midlands
- Strong business confidence and engagement
- Wide range of sustainable tourism products
- Unique access to full range of watersports – via harbours, coast and rivers
- Growing cruise market (Portland)
- Good mix of accommodation, venues and attractions
- Strong cultural offer (Hardy, Blyton, Arts by the Sea, Inside Out, BSO, Lighthouse, Dorset Museum & Art Gallery, Tank Museum, Camp Bestival, BIC events)

Opportunities

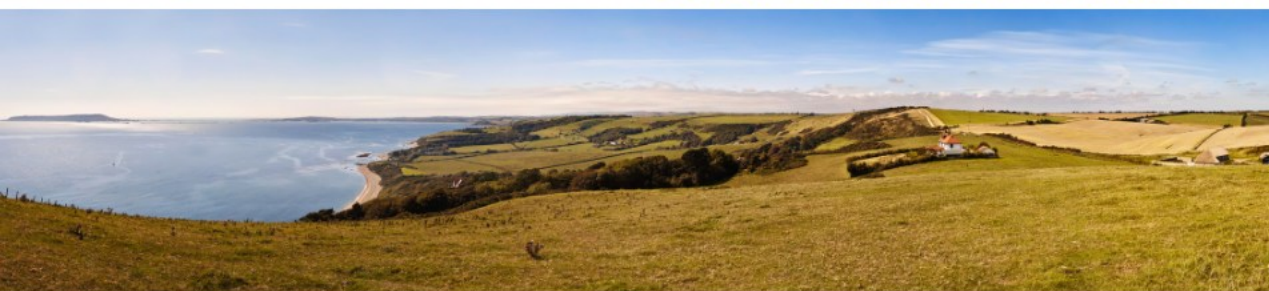
- Priority growth market segments – Nature and Culture, Active and Mindful are aligned to consumer trends and a wide range of products and experiences that are available across Dorset
- Dorset Council identified tourism as high level priority for growth
- Joined up approach across Dorset and BCP Councils
- Wessex Partnership to form a strategic authority strengthening collaboration across the region and should unlock new funding and opportunities for growth
- Government focus on regional dispersal and increasing attention on seaside towns
- Dorset has achieved LVEP status which enables access to support from VisitEngland and engagement with DCMS to raise the profile of the county.
- Strong cultural programme across the county
- Weymouth & Portland regeneration
- Investment in MEMO Portland project will unlock new markets and large-scale interest
- Portland well positioned to benefit from Cruise growth in Northern Europe itineraries

Weaknesses

- Low awareness of Dorset among non-visitors
- Diversity and range of product make it challenging to articulate key strength
- Industry believe there is no one stand out “attraction”
- Limited resources for Destination Management
- Investment in tourism (public and private) is lower than competitor locations
- Impact of the reduction in funding for Local Authorities - BCP Council no longer have a tourism function and increased pressure on support for Cultural services and venues
- Reliant on volunteer support from industry to realise benefits of LVEP
- Relatively low level of new business development
- Lots of small and micro businesses to coordinate
- Limited direct access routes from International markets (Bournemouth Airport and the Port of Poole are predominantly outbound traffic)
- Public transport within the county can be limited especially in North and West Dorset

Threats

- Economic climate driving later bookings, limited spend and competitive market
- Competition from international destinations, and reduced investment in domestic marketing, strong competition from city-based UK breaks
- Competitor investment in Tourism is higher than Dorset (e.g. Destination North East, Visit West, Yorkshire, Tees Valley)
- Climate change and rapidly evolving coastline impacting on Dorset experience – especially if trying to grow shoulder and off-peak visits
- Geo-political situation causing fluctuating costs and demand
- Increasing operating costs for businesses making small independent businesses less viable
- No agreed date for Mayoral Strategic Authority that includes Dorset
- Resource needed for coordination and mobilisation of industry engagement
- Government focus on and investment in the North



The ambition

Dorset is known as a welcoming and vibrant year-round destination which offers quality experiences

Priorities

- Welcoming visitors to all parts of Dorset all year round
- Increase the spend per visitor encouraging visitors to stay longer, buy local and return
- Improve awareness and perceptions of Dorset - known as the key destination for natural landscapes, heritage, rural and coastal breaks, a culturally vibrant, sustainable and accessible place
- Working collaboratively to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and advocate for the sector at regional and national level

Areas of focus

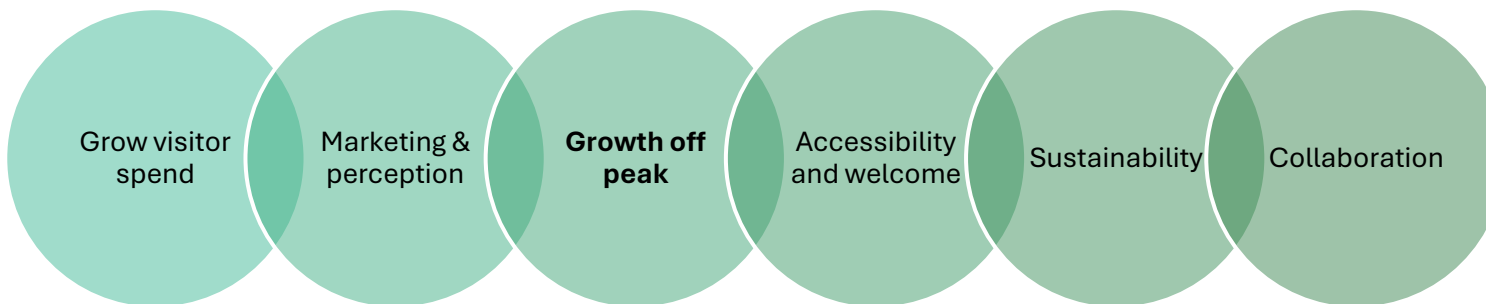




Photo by [Freysteinn G. Jonsson](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Dorset is known as a welcoming and vibrant **year-round destination** which offers quality experiences

The key ambition for this destination management plan is that **Dorset becomes a year-round visitor destination**.

Throughout the consultation process for this DMP, businesses and stakeholders **repeatedly stated that the key focus of this strategy must be to tackle seasonality** and support the industry to encourage visitors to come all year round, to all parts of the county and increase the spend of visitors by encouraging them to stay longer, support local suppliers and come back to Dorset.

The county already has a **reputation for being a quality destination** – with high number of entrants into the Dorset Tourism Awards, and many businesses with TripAdvisor Travellers Choice Awards and a high number of top 10% winners. Weymouth and Bournemouth Beaches are consistently ranked amongst the best in the World. Dorset has also had three winners in VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2025 and two winners in VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2024.

Visitor research showed that Dorset is known as a friendly place, where visitors feel welcome.

Dorset has a strong cultural offer creating **a vibrant place** for people to visit, live, work and invest.

The destination management plan aims to cement Dorset's position as a welcoming, vibrant and quality destination but drive growth in shoulder and off-peak period so that visitors can have that experience all year round.



Areas of focus

Focus area 1

Delivering a year-round destination

Growth off-peak

Addressing seasonality to encourage more visitors to come in the shoulder and off-peak period and supporting more business to create experiences that can be enjoyed and viable all year round is the key priority of the DMP.

Priority:

Welcoming visitors to all parts of Dorset all year round

Why?

- There is huge seasonal variation in overnight visitors with 36% of all domestic overnight trips taking place in July and August.
- The recent VisitBritain report “Economic Value of tourism in the United Kingdom” highlighted Dorset as the 5th most seasonal county for international visits.
- Almost a third (30%) of businesses state that they take more than 50% of their income in July and August.

Where to focus?

In order to reduce the seasonality of visits to Dorset the LVEP will need to work with partners and businesses to tackle key issues of awareness, product offer and experience. Using data to guide and shape decisions.

1. Improving data to inform decisions

The Dorset Economic Impact data shows January - April are the quietest months in terms of overnight visitors to the county, then May, June and October, November perform similarly with c. 6-7% of visits.

However, occupancy data provided by a selection of key businesses across the county shows us this data may contain inaccuracies that are misleading. Whilst there is no doubt that Dorset is a seasonal economy, variations within the county are likely to be much more nuanced than the data implies.

Once the LVEP has a greater understanding of where the potential for growth exists both in terms of months of the year, parts of the county and days of the week an action plan can be developed to target markets with a high propensity to travel at those times.

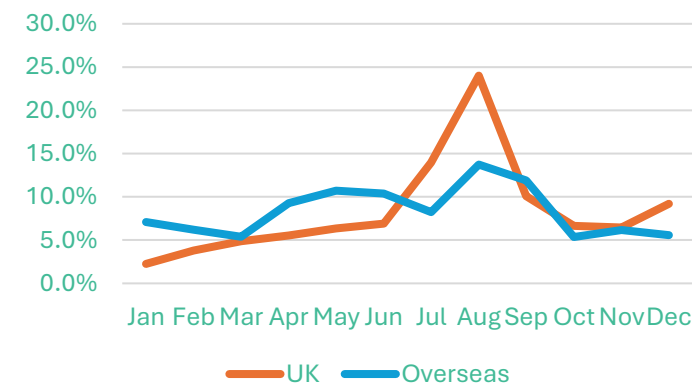
Recommended actions:

Work with businesses to develop a more accurate understanding of visits and seasonality. Monitor annually to track progress

2. Experience mapping

Whilst a more in-depth understanding of the data is gathered the focus could be on understanding the current and potential product offer for the shoulder and off-peak period. Being realistic about what visitors can expect to experience and how to ensure that visitors that do come in the shoulder and off-peak period have the best possible experience.

Seasonality of overnight stays (2024)



Focus area 1

Delivering a year-round destination

Growth off-peak

2. Experience mapping cont.

Working with businesses, initially those that have expressed interest in developing their year-round availability, Dorset can facilitate product development by providing insight on the growth markets and their interests and encouraging businesses to work together to create packages and cross-promote their products to visitors.

In addition, Dorset stakeholders can utilise the information gathered to adapt their current marketing activities to reflect the current product available.

Recommended actions:

Review current product offer in off-peak

Hold regular networking and workshops across the county to share insights and facilitate networking to develop new products.

3. Raising awareness

The visitor research undertaken in 2022 and 2024 identified the two key visitor segments for growth across the county as “Nature and Culture” and “Active and Mindful”. Both of these segments are aligned to the product available and have potential for all year-round visits.

Focussing marketing efforts on these two segments and encouraging businesses that are open all year round to do the same will grow reach and awareness with these segments.

The new **Culture strategy** for the county highlights the importance of growing the economic impact of Culture and encouraging more cultural visitors to the county. Working in partnership with the Cultural sector, Dorset can increase the profile of the heritage and cultural offer and develop new products and experiences that appeal to the Nature and Culture segment.

Recommended actions:

Prioritise existing or new marketing activity on Nature and Culture and Active and Mindful segments. Encourage businesses open year-round to do the same.

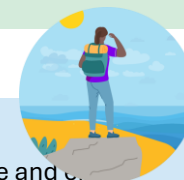
Work with Cultural sector to build events, festivals, heritage and cultural programme in shoulder and off-peak period including an innovative cultural and arts offer that will appeal to a wide range of ages and interests beyond traditional cultural programming.



Nature and Culture

These are nature lovers with a practical approach to life. They like to explore scenic landscapes, heritage, arts and cultural attractions and events. They state weather matters less because they like learning, culture and nature. Specifically, 27% would visit off-peak. Market size is 7 million in Dorset drive-time regions.

- 65% Visit parks and gardens
- 56% Visiting Museums and Art Galleries
- 55% Visiting Historic or Heritage sites
- 54% Hiking or Walking
- 52% Visit street markets
- Accommodation is not important its just a base to explore the destination
- 27% have children so are looking for family activities



Active and Mindful

This group are physically active, like a challenge and new experiences. Many of their favourite activities can be enjoyed in Dorset in the shoulder and off-peak period and 15% would visit off-peak. Market size is 6.4 million in Dorset drive-time regions.

- Running (37%), walking (35%), cycling (26%) and swimming (34%) are popular
- 46% enjoy cooking and 44% prioritise healthy eating
- 47% visit parks and gardens
- 35% prioritise self-improvement
- 32% Visiting museums and art galleries
- Attracted to accommodation and activity providers who support environment initiatives
- Over half this segment have children

Focus area 1

Delivering a year-round destination

Growth off-peak

4. Additional opportunities:

Other key markets that travel all year round are Business & Conference visitors, Groups and Travel trade and increasingly cruise visits. These three sectors are important in varying degrees across the county depending on the product and facilities available, but working collaboratively and enabling those stakeholders and businesses to take advantage of the support the LVEP can access will be key to delivering growth.

Business & Conference visitors

represent 6% of International visits and 3% of Domestic visits to the county, but with key facilities in Bournemouth and Poole in particular it is a market that could be expanded to deliver year-round growth.

The growing trend for “Bleisure” and Association travel presents opportunities to showcase attractions and towns across the county for days out around the business visit.

Research conducted by BVA BRDC in 2022 identified the key opportunities as:

promote accessibility of the location, engage with planners, and broaden awareness of the offer.

Groups and travel trade – partners across Dorset have been working together over the last few years to represent Dorset at domestic and international group and travel trade events focused on growing leisure coach groups and tour operator engagement.

Supporting those businesses and enabling access to the opportunities made available to the LVEP will be key to delivering growth in this market.

Cruise – Portland has seen significant cruise growth in recent years achieving almost 100,000 passengers and more than 60 calls in 2025. Predominantly German, USA and UK visitors with an average spend of £100 per day, cruise tourism is a high-value sector that operates year-round and offers an opportunity to give international markets at taste of Dorset and encourage them to return to the county for a longer holiday.

Recommended actions:

Enable businesses and stakeholders to realise the full benefits of LVEP status and encourage engagement with VisitEngland for support.

Identify “lead” contacts / volunteers for Business Events, Travel trade and Cruise for the LVEP to maximise opportunities made available through the LVEP within resource constraints.

Explore opportunities to work in partnership to build dedicated content on Visit Dorset website for these markets to support growth of these key sectors.



Focus area 2

Delivering a year-round destination

Growth in visitor spend

Add value by encouraging visitors to spend more, spend differently and support local

Priority:

Increase the spend per visitor encouraging visitors to stay longer, buy local and return

Why?

Dorset Council and Visit Dorset have an objective to increase visitor spend by 5% by 2029

68% of stakeholders and 49% of Businesses said growing visitor spend was one of their top three priorities for the Destination Management Plan

Where to focus?

Growing spend from all visitors is a top priority for the DMP, gaining maximum economic benefit with minimal environmental impact. Adjusting the mix of tourists can also deliver growth in spend.

Key areas of focus could include:

- **Encouraging day visitors to stay overnight**
- **Encouraging existing overnight visitors to stay longer**
- **Encouraging visitors to spend differently** prioritising local businesses and supporting the local economy. Highlighting local markets, featuring local businesses in communications and considering initiatives that enable visitors to easily recognise Dorset products.
- **Supporting local producers** (especially food and drink) to meet visitor businesses and collaborate so that more local businesses stock local products.

- **Attracting more international visitors** – international visitors stay longer than domestic visitors and on average spend £6.45 more per person per day than a domestic overnight visitor and £16.79 more per day than a day visitor. Key markets for growth are Netherlands, Germany and other near European countries alongside long-haul English speaking countries.

Delivering growth off-peak will also contribute to a growth in visitor spend.

Recommended actions:

Review marketing activity to encourage overnight stays and buy local messaging

Facilitate networking events between local producers and visitor economy businesses

Utilise VisitEngland opportunities to grow international markets aligned to Dorset product



Focus area 3

Delivering a year-round destination

Marketing and Perceptions

Raise awareness of the Dorset visitor offer to target audiences and build brand awareness of key themes whilst maintaining existing visitor markets

Priority:

Improve awareness and perceptions of Dorset - known as the key destination for natural landscapes, heritage, rural and coastal breaks, a culturally vibrant, sustainable and accessible place

Why?

Almost half of all respondents to the DMP surveys and workshops (47%) said one of their top 3 priorities was “Investment in destination marketing”

Visitor research identified that 47% of non-visitors would consider a visit to Dorset. However, 23% of non-visitors said a key barrier to visiting was “I don’t know enough about the area” this rose to 29% of non-visitors to Bournemouth.

Where to focus?

Dorset has an enviable position of having a wide range of high-quality visitor experiences and products. However, this can make it more difficult to achieve a clear brand position for Dorset.

During the consultation the key strengths of the county visitor offer were identified as:

- **Natural landscapes**
- **Heritage and Culture**
- **Food and drink**

With the key USP for **new visitors** (especially international visitors) being **the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site**. Using this hook to attract new visitors to the county and then encouraging visitors to explore all areas of the county is key.

Consumer marketing

Develop a clear brand narrative for the overall visitor offer for the whole of Dorset as a vibrant place for outstanding natural landscapes, culture and heritage.

Focus targeted marketing messages with key audiences to increase awareness of the Dorset visitor offer year-round.

Consider creating a brand toolkit that can be shared with businesses to ensure Dorset is promoted in a consistent style and tone of voice.

Proactively seek and maximise opportunities to gain free media exposure with press visits, influencers and media aligned to the priority growth segments.

Undertake research to understand the perceptions of Dorset as a year-round destination and test the strength of Dorset’s associations with the key themes compared to competitor locations.

Review communications within the county to **encourage visitors to explore ALL parts of Dorset**, especially the north and west of the county. Work with Town Councils and provide tools and copy to enable businesses to spread the word.

Recommended actions:

Develop a brand toolkit with clear brand narrative for each audience and share with businesses to increase reach and awareness

Proactively search for media opportunities that align to key growth markets and year-round objectives

Undertake perception research to inform marketing communications

Review communications within Dorset to encourage regional dispersal of visitors

Focus area 4

Delivering a year-round destination

Accessibility and welcome

Inspiring growth across Dorset through local exemplar businesses

Priority:

Improve awareness and perceptions of Dorset - known as the key destination for natural landscapes, heritage, rural and coastal breaks, a culturally vibrant, sustainable and accessible place

Why?

The accessible Tourism market is worth £14.6bn in the UK and improving the accessibility and inclusivity of the visitor economy is a national and regional priority.

26% of stakeholders and 20% of businesses in Dorset stated it was a key priority.

Accessible visitors travel all year round so growth in this market can support the ambition to grow year-round demand.

Where to focus?

Businesses and stakeholders identified key areas of support needed to improve their accessibility and inclusivity:

- Accreditation and legal compliance
- Funding or financial incentives to invest
- Inspiration and best practice from other businesses

In addition, the consultation highlighted a need to support businesses to understand what is the minimum standard and inspire them to see what it means to be truly accessible and inclusive as well as understand the market potential to providing accessible facilities.

The **Dorset National Landscape** (DNL) has invested nearly £500,000 in improving access with further funding secured for more activity.

The **Coast For All** project aims to position Dorset as the UK's most inclusive blue space, ensuring beaches and coastal environments are fully accessible to visitors and residents

with a wide range of access needs, enabling them to fully participate in beach and water-based activities.

The LVEP should work in partnership with initiatives like DNL and Coast For All to help realise product development and promote accessibility improvements to visitors.

Recommended actions:

Use local “exemplars” to showcase and inspire businesses to invest

Signpost businesses to support available via the LVEP

Utilise VisitEngland expertise and support through the LVEP to understand Dorset's current position and key areas to improve

Encourage investment in accessibility improvements and work in partnership with initiatives like DNL and Coast For All to enable product development and support with promotion to visitors.



Credit: Marsham Court Hotel

Focus area 5

Delivering a year-round destination

Sustainability and regenerative tourism

Tourism can be a force for good in Dorset

Priority:

Improve awareness and perceptions of Dorset - known as the key destination for natural landscapes, heritage, rural and coastal breaks, a culturally vibrant, sustainable and accessible place

Why?

65% of businesses in Dorset said improving Sustainability was very important and 59% are actively progressing their approach to sustainable or regenerative tourism.

Improving the environmental, social and community benefits of tourism is a key national priority.

32% of consumers claim they look for sustainable accommodation

Where to focus?

Businesses in Dorset have made great progress improving their sustainability over the last few years, but as the industry moves towards aspirations of more regenerative tourism, the key areas of support businesses and stakeholders in Dorset would like are:

- Inspiration and best practice from other businesses (76%)
- Funding or financial incentives to invest (69%)

Just 15% of businesses said sustainability was fully embedded in their businesses so there is still a lot of work to be done.

Recommended actions:

Use local “exemplars” to showcase and inspire businesses to invest

Signpost businesses to support available via the LVEP

Utilise VisitEngland expertise and support through the LVEP

What is regenerative tourism?

Going beyond minimising impacts of tourism, tourism should leave places better than they were before actively improving places, communities, and ecosystems.



Regenerative tourism helps businesses to build resilience, integrate sustainability and support long-term economic, community and environmental benefits.

Delivering a year-round destination

Collaboration

In order to deliver change Dorset LVEP must work collaboratively within and across the sector

Priority:

Working collaboratively to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and advocate for the sector at regional and national level

Why?

Dorset LVEP is a partnership of businesses, stakeholders and organisations involved in the visitor economy. Resources are limited but collaboration creates a shared ownership of the DMP and enables the LVEP to access a wide range of skills in the sector to deliver change.

Businesses and stakeholders highlighted collaboration as key to delivering change.

Where to focus?

The Dorset LVEP have a clear leadership role in the county, but with resources limited the sector needs to work in partnership to deliver the ambitions of the DMP.

Gaining support for change

Visit Dorset working in partnership to deliver the LVEP have access to a wide range of expertise in the advisory board and supporting groups and associations. With representatives from each sector of the industry the LVEP can ensure that the industry is kept informed and involved in the delivery and development of the DMP.

Regular engagement events and workshops to inform priorities for action and gain support for deliverables will be key to realising the DMP, alongside a committed board and working groups focussed on key areas.

Advocating for Dorset

A third of businesses and stakeholders prioritised a greater focus on advocating for Dorset's visitor economy at a regional and national level.

Achieving LVEP status creates an opportunity for the County to raise its profile with VisitEngland and DCMS at a national level but also highlight the importance of the visitor economy at a regional level. Dorset is also a key partner in the Great South West Tourism Partnership. However, these partnerships place greater demands on the Visit Dorset team to attend and engage with events, conferences and meetings.

In order to realise the full benefits of the LVEP and raise Dorset's profile there is a need to create a network of "Ambassadors" who can represent the county at key events, conferences and meetings.

Working in partnership

The LVEP will work in partnership with other organisations to ensure that the Visitor Economy is represented on issues such as skills development, transport infrastructure, innovation and inward investment.

Recommended actions:

Regular engagement events to inform and engage the sector in the delivery and development of the DMP.

Create a network of "Ambassadors" who can represent Dorset at key events and are well informed about the industry's priorities, challenges and performance.

Work in partnership with other sectors and specialists to influence investment in skills, transport and economic development.

How will we monitor progress and change?

In order to understand whether the ambition of this plan has been met, the LVEP must monitor progress. **Action plans should be developed in three-year cycles with progress reviewed annually.**

Measuring change in the visitor economy is not without its challenges though, national data is often slow to be published and can be inaccurate at county level and below. It does however provide a consistent benchmark of performance and the ability to track trends. The table below identifies ways in which key performance indicators can be measured, this is not intended as an exhaustive list as research techniques are continually improving. Therefore, an additional recommendation of this DMP must be that there is continued investment in data and improving the quality of the data.

What to measure	How
Seasonality	National surveys (GBTS, GBDVS, IPS) Accommodation occupancy and Visits to attractions
Visitor spend	Cambridge economic impact research, national surveys, visitor surveys (in-situ and / or online), VE card spend data
Length of stay	Cambridge economic impact research, national surveys, Business survey
Dispersal of visits	Visitor survey (in-situ and / or online), footfall
Accommodation occupancy	Business survey, T-Stats, software providers (e.g. Amadeus)
Perception and awareness	Visitor survey (in-situ and/or online), National omnibus survey
Marketing impact	Campaign performance, website stats, perception research, visitor numbers
Type of visitor	Segmentation research, business surveys

Budgets permitting, utilising more than one method for each measure helps provide a more robust view of performance and reduce the inaccuracies of national data where sample size at county level is often relatively small.



Delivery of this DMP requires partnership working

This Destination Management Plan has been created to identify the role and priorities of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). Although the LVEP is coordinated through Visit Dorset it is responsibility of the whole tourism sector in Dorset to contribute to the delivery of the DMP. The Dorset Tourism Association CIC acting as the advisory board for the LVEP will oversee progress on delivery of the ambitions of the DMP across all parts of Dorset.

Key performance indicators

Delivery of the DMP will be measured by the following KPIs

- Change in seasonal spread of visits – reduction in the dependence on summer visits by 10%
- 5% growth in visitor spend by 2029
- Growth in visitor numbers to North & West Dorset

Next steps

The DMP will be published and shared with the industry then workshop(s) and engagement events will take place across the county to inform an Action Plan for the first 3 years of delivery.

Action plans will be set for a three-year period with progress monitored annually via the LVEP advisory board.

With thanks to our supporters and contributors

Visit Dorset – lead for Dorset LVEP, Dorset Council's Tourism Team

Dorset Tourism Association - Advisory board for the Dorset LVEP

Local Authorities

- Dorset Council (accountable body for the LVEP)
- BCP Council

Town Councils and BIDs

Sector organisations

- Arts Development Company, Dorset
- Best of Dorset Attractions
- BH Area Hospitality Association
- Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Destination Management Board
- Dorset Food and Drink
- Dorset Museum Group
- Dorset National Landscape
- National Trust

The consultation involved online responses from 124 business and 45 stakeholders.

Four workshops were then delivered across Dorset in November 2025. These were attended by 83 businesses, stakeholders and interested parties.

With thanks to the businesses that hosted the workshops: The Grosvenor, Shaftesbury, The Kings Arms, Dorchester, Marsham Court Hotel, Bournemouth and Highlands End, Eype, Bridport.

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