

HINKLEY TOURISM STRATEGY 2020 - 2023



‘Successfully maximising the opportunities and managing the challenges during the development of Hinkley Point C for tourism in Somerset and Exmoor’

Hinkley Tourism Action Partnership



Executive Summary

This document sets out the strategy for tourism activity across Somerset and Exmoor by the **Hinkley Tourism Action Partnership (HTAP)** aimed at maximising opportunities and managing potential challenges that arise from the construction of the **Hinkley Point C (HPC)** nuclear power station.

The overarching vision is that Somerset and Exmoor will have a strong tourism industry that has successfully capitalised on opportunities from the HPC development, leaving a legacy as one of the best managed visitor experiences in the country where businesses are dynamic, resilient and working in partnership to compete at the highest level.

The Hinkley Tourism Strategy 2015-20 was developed following consultation with the tourism industry in 2014. A mid-term review was undertaken, and minor revisions made this covered the period of delivery until 2020. A final update of the Strategy will cover the final three years of delivery covering the period 2020 to 2023.

A number of opportunities are highlighted, including raising the profile of the area, the development of new products and the potential to support larger projects that will provide a legacy for tourism beyond the funding timeframe. At the same time the strategy refers to potential challenges around negative perceptions, increased traffic levels, worker accommodation, and factors such as the decision to leave the EU.

Four phased action plans are being used to deliver the strategy until the end of 2023.

Four strategic aims provide the focus of strategic activity. These are underpinned by eight cross cutting priorities and measured by six key targets.

1. **‘Generating positive perceptions’** – Provide support for both DMO’s (Visit Somerset & Visit Exmoor) in attracting new customers by targeting key markets with innovative PR and digital marketing campaigns that showcase to visitors the variety and sophistication of things to do in Somerset and Exmoor.
2. **‘Delivering an exceptional welcome’** – Building an in-depth understanding of visitors’ requirements and behaviour in order to develop information tools and service that help businesses, communities and Information Centres deliver excellent visitor experiences.
3. **‘Developing new experiences’** – Creating and enhancing distinctive visitor experiences through match funding opportunities that contribute to sustainable growth, destination competitiveness, and improved perceptions of the area.
4. **‘Supporting industry growth’** – Fostering business resilience, confidence and higher value growth by focussing on quality and skills.

Introduction

Hinkley Point C (HPC) is being built next to the existing power station over ten years at a cost of some £19.6 billion. It will provide more than 25,000 employment opportunities and eventually power five million homes.

As part of this development two Section 106 planning agreements for Site Preparation and the Development Consent Order are in place. These agreements include schedules for tourism that set out the conditions and allocations made available by EDF Energy to assist in maximising opportunities and mitigating potential challenges for the industry from the development.

The Hinkley Tourism Action Partnership (HTAP) was set up in accordance with the Site Preparation agreement. Its members are: the recently formed Somerset West and Taunton Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, EDF Energy, Exmoor National Park Authority, Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor.

Together the two planning agreements outline £2.1m of allocations for tourism payable in six instalments. With indexation added £1.2m is available for tourism marketing and development purposes. Separate allocations exist for tourism information centres and officer resource.

Launched in 2015 by HTAP, the Hinkley Tourism Strategy and Action Plans were formulated while site preparation was underway. At the time, a final go ahead from the Government was expected imminently but was in fact delayed until September 2016.

The original HTAP Strategy was developed initially in 2014 to cover the period up until 2020. A mid-term review of this initial document was undertaken in 2018. This document will set out the context in which the strategy will operate for the period 2020 – 2023. The priorities and strategic ambitions have been revised slightly to reflect the evolving situation with the HPC development and industry trends as well as a desire to create a legacy for tourism beyond the scope of S106 funding. A number of key documents have been used in the development of this document, which include:

- Somerset Destination Management Plan
- Visit England Strategic Framework for Tourism in England 2010-2020
- Somerset Volume and Value Data 2015 (Cambridge Model)
- Greater Exmoor Value of Tourism Report 2016, 2018 (Steam Model)
- Exmoor Strategic Action Plan 2018-20
- Hinkley Tourism Action Partnership Somerset Visitor Survey 2015-17
- Exmoor Visitor Survey 2016
- Somerset Growth Plan 2014-20
- Visit England Domestic Leisure Tourism Trends for the next Decade
- www.visitbritain.org/insightsandstatistics
- Ofcom Communications Market Reports 2016, 2017 and 2019
- Internet Advertising Bureau 2016 Digital Ad Spend Report
- UK Inbound Brexit Principles

The Value of Tourism

Tourism is a key sector in Somerset's economy generating £1.3bn turnover, 2.5m staying visitors, 22m day visitors and employing 9% of the workforce.

Around the immediate area of Hinkley Point in West Somerset and Sedgemoor, tourism activity is particularly significant, accounting for 45% of all staying visits and some £280m of visitor spend. In West Somerset 26% of the workforce is engaged in Tourism, although in places like Minehead and Brea this figure rises to over 50%.

The landscape of Somerset & Exmoor is the area's biggest strength in terms of attracting visitors and in defining what it is they can see and do. It is characterised by its dramatic coastal scenery, areas of protected countryside, seaside resorts, rural charm, historic towns and villages, festival culture, wildlife habitats, and food and drink.

This view is backed up in visitor surveys, whereby visitors cite the 'beautiful unspoilt scenery, tranquillity, heritage and opportunities for outdoor recreation' as being the most important factors when choosing to visit the area.

Many of the best examples are iconic, such as Glastonbury Tor, Cheddar Gorge, Exmoor National Park, Wells Cathedral, Glastonbury Festival, the Somerset Levels and Moors, South West Coast Path, Cheddar Cheese and Cider.

Leisure and visiting friends and family are the two most important types of visits made, with a limited amount of business tourism being restricted to key towns. HTAP visitor surveys demonstrate that Somerset's visitors either tend to be older in the post-family life stage, or are families with younger pre-school age children. A high proportion of visitors are from higher socio-economic grades.

The vast majority of visitors are from the UK from within a three or four hour drive (e.g. West Midlands, South West, London and South East). Typically UK visitors visit on short breaks and stay 3 to 4 nights on average. Overseas visitors, particularly German, Dutch and French markets, account for between 8% (Somerset) and 12% (Exmoor) of all visits across the area and tend to stay for about 7 nights on average.

Group visits are an important sector for some businesses, although limited research exists to indicate its wider value. Some 1300 coaches pass through Cartgate Services on the A303 on annual basis, and key attractions and places like West Somerset Railway and Burnham-on-Sea spend considerable time and effort in targeting groups specifically.

The make-up of accommodation across the area varies markedly. West Somerset has 27% more bed spaces in small serviced hotels and B&B's and self-catering cottages than in Sedgemoor. While Sedgemoor has 47% more bed spaces, pitches and units in camping, static and touring caravans and holiday centres. Taken together the caravan parks at Berrow and Brea and Butlins in Minehead account for about a third of all visits to Somerset.

In recent years, a reduction in public sector funding has led to a fundamental change in how local authorities support tourism. Funds for activity are typically sourced from external funding bodies and industry advertising contributions, and are delivered through local authority officer time in partnership with industry bodies and community groups.

A good example of this was the COOL Tourism Project in 2012-15, which involved the four local authorities in HTAP working with partners in France and South West England to successfully secure EU Interreg funding. The project aimed to

develop new rural visitor experiences, and delivered new marketing tools, training programmes and products. The project served to provide a good template for HTAP in terms of strategic partnership working and maximising funding potential.

This has been carried forward in work undertaken to develop the England Coast Path, the newest National Trail running between Brean Down and Minehead. Local authority partners in HTAP have developed a relationship with, and secured funding from, Natural England and have carried out PR and marketing and business engagement activities.

Information centres in the area have also been affected by cuts to public funding, with many centres closing in recent years. Some public funding is available via Section 106 agreements with EDF Energy for some centres in the area, but by and large centres are having to re-evaluate their business models and generate more of their own income. Most rely on volunteers and operate limited opening hours.

Supporting the industry are two tourism industry bodies. The Somerset Tourism Association, now trading as Visit Somerset, has some 360 members and takes the lead in marketing and championing the county nationally. Its social media channels have a 7m reach, while its website attracts just under 1m visits per year.

The Exmoor Tourist Association, now trading as Visit Exmoor, has been in existence since 1981 and has 150 members. It leads the marketing of the Greater Exmoor area (National park, West Somerset and Quantock Hills) utilising the Exmoor: Dream, Discover, Explore brand, and has a website, which attracts nearly 500k visitors annually, and social media channels.

In terms of the wider strategic picture, ambitions for tourism are cited in a variety of regional economic documents. The Exmoor Strategic Action Plan, sets out a plan for 2018-20 to:

'successfully market the area as a leading destination for year-round, countryside, coast, heritage and outdoor experiences. To encourage people to visit more than once and to inspire Exmoor 'fans' to become ambassadors and influencers in promoting Exmoor. To engage local businesses to support our aims and ambitions and to create a unified tourism voice for the area'

At a national level Visit England's The Strategic Framework for Tourism in England 2010 – 2020 sets out ambitions to increase global market share, deliver compelling destinations of distinction, champion a thriving industry and improve engagement with visitors. This is supported by Visit England's Domestic Leisure Tourism Trends document, which helps to set the context of the needs of future visitors.

Opportunities

The Section 106 tourism allocations constitute a significant increase on previous levels of funding for developing tourism. It paves the way for a wide ranging and co-ordinated strategic approach to tackling industry issues.

During the development of HPC 25,000 jobs will be created, with 6,000 people employed during the peak of activity. Many of these workers will originate from outside of the area and therefore caravan parks, B&B's and hotels will all benefit from increased business.

Local shops and services, which support indirectly related tourism jobs, will also benefit from the worker presence. For the wider industry the opportunity exists to target workers and their families directly with holiday and days out visitor offers.

The influx of workers should help to address some of the traditional seasonality issues that the industry faces. Visit England report that 70% of day visits to the countryside take place in spring and summer. A more even spread of visitors across the year could lead to an increase in sales, more permanent jobs and improved winter opening hours.

The increase in Section 106 funded officer team will enable greater financial and advisory support to local community and business groups, in both developing local marketing activity and/or the planning of new tourism infrastructure projects.

During this strategy a variety of projects will have been supported, including: a new EDF Energy Visitor Centre at the HPC site, the Steam Coast Trail and Brean Down Way, Watchet Boat Museum and Visitor Centre, Bridgwater Docks Interpretation Trail, Exmoor Astro Tourism Project and England Coast Path.

For perhaps the first time, funding has enabled HTAP to deliver more targeted marketing activity, which is fundamentally underpinned by visitor research and that better reflects the constantly evolving needs of customers.

For instance, Visit England indicates that families (a key market for the area) are 'changing in size, shape and composition'. Families are often smaller with single parents and fewer siblings, and have a greater range of disability and language needs. Although society is ageing, people are utilising holidays to fulfil health and well-being needs. With greater time and disposable income, grandparents are more involved in childcare and family holidays.

Short breaks by domestic markets - or the 'staycation' - have grown in popularity. This is in part due to fluctuations in the economy, including recession, a restriction in wage growth and more recently the devalued pound, which can be attributed to the impact of Brexit.

The devalued pound is one of the reasons given by Visit Britain to explain increases in overseas visits; although they have also carried out significant marketing activity in this area in recent years. None the less an opportunity exists for businesses to adapt their marketing messages to new types of customers.

Evidence suggests that leisure spending is being prioritised over other luxuries, particular by younger generations. The rise in short breaks has seen less emphasis placed on choosing a destination to visit, and more demand for themed or experiential breaks that help fulfil needs in busy lives. It is predicted that the health, active and skills tourism markets are set to grow, which should play into the hands of

strong 'landscape' based destinations like Somerset and Exmoor.

Although people are recognised as being 'time poor', they still desire choice. The internet has been crucial in satisfying this trend and making things simple for all ages. In 2019, Ofcom reported that 99% of 16-24 year olds and 53% of over 74's had a home broadband connection, while 76% of adults now have a smartphone. Online shopping accounts for 69% of activity, social networking 57%, and 66% of teenagers use YouTube to watch TV. People have become used to searching for deals, and buying holidays online.

The use of technology has led to an enormous shift by companies in targeting customers. Advertising on digital channels was up 26% in 2019 to £13bn. While traditional TV and print advertising growth slows and declines, spend on mobile

Challenges

During consultation, one of the key concerns expressed by tourism businesses centred around the perception of the area, particularly in regards to the use of the name 'Somerset' alongside HPC, but also in relation to the sheer scale and potential impact of one of Europe's largest construction sites on the wider Somerset and Exmoor area.

This concern stems from previous experiences with the Foot & Mouth crisis of 2001 and flooding of parts of the Levels and Moors in 2014. Although only 2% of the land area was flooded, the perception was that the County was a 'no go' area. This led to a drop in visitor numbers and bookings. There are valuable lessons to be learnt in terms of media coverage, managing perception and building business resilience.

Traffic congestion is another concern. The development of HPC will see on average 500 lorry movements per day, at peak,

advertising was up 51% in 2016 to £3.9bn. Paid for search advertising (e.g. google) is now worth in excess of £5bn, there have been huge increases in recent years in online display video pre and post roll and social media advertising. This is an opportunity for Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor to promote the area to a wider audience.

The Tourism Sector Deal announced by Government in July 2019, recognises for the first time the importance of tourism. The deal between Government and tourism sets out an ambitious agenda that will deliver investment and increases in productivity that will benefit local visitor economies. There will be opportunities for skills, management and leadership training and investment in infrastructure that will ensure that the UK's tourism industry is world class.

lorry movements up to 750 per day, and an additional 6000 workers in the area. EDF and Somerset Highways have plans in place to manage lorry flows and have created park and ride systems but this traffic will still add to an already challenged and limited road system.

More than 90% of visitors travel to Somerset and Exmoor by road, as public transport is very limited, and even without the development of HPC, it can take over an hour to travel 25 miles from the M5 to Minehead. Monitoring will be required, particularly at key pinch points and at certain times of the week (e.g. change-over days for big operators like Butlins).

Many Hinkley workers will make use of local accommodation. Away from Bridgwater and Minehead, the area round HPC is rural and includes limited numbers of accommodation businesses. Monitoring of occupancy, caravan park licensing and management of planning

applications is being undertaken to manage these challenges.

It is important that Somerset and Exmoor can continue to compete with other destinations. Particularly in relation to developing high quality visitor experiences, for instance the area lacks a good spread of medium sized accommodation suitable for group tours and consistency in quality amongst places to eat tends to be variable.

The industry has some challenges in terms of the nature of employment, a reference to the often seasonal, part time and low paid employment that is available. With the potential for some people to earn more from better paid roles at HPC, it is important that HTAP supports businesses in addressing quality and skills needs.

Other major challenges exist: such as the rise in popularity of online travel agencies (such as booking.com) which require businesses to high commission rates; unregulated booking services such as Airbnb; and the need to support Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor to grow their income streams so that they can continue to lead the industry once public funding disappears.

Another challenge for the tourism industry is Brexit, and what the future for inbound visitors from Europe might look like, in terms of welcome and perception; the customs union; visa free travel; tariffs, the value of the pound, once the UK has formally left the EU. Consideration will need to be given around how best to support the industry during the lead up to leaving and once the country has formally left.

The Strategic Vision

The review of tourism, set against the backdrop of the HPC development, reveals a complex picture. Consultation revealed a number of concerns around areas such as visitor travel, perception, accommodation shortages due to Hinkley workers, and employee migration to better paid jobs at HPC. These concerns are further exacerbated by already existing issues such as a restricted road network, inconsistent levels of quality and a challenging economic picture.

On the positive side the tourism industry can now benefit from consistent levels of funding over an 8 – 10 year period. This has allowed for the development of a truly industry wide and strategic approach to managing issues and promoting what's already on offer, as well as supporting the development of new products; all of which will lead to a more competitive and resilient industry.

The resulting strategy needs to sensitively handle challenges from HPC, while being bold in delivering on opportunities. In a similar way to how the National Park Authorities operate, if a clash between the two strands of thinking occurs, priority always needs to be given to protecting the industry and the environment it operates within.

The concerns, issues and opportunities raised throughout the consultation process and situational analysis can be distilled into eight key priorities. These can be split between the four strategic aims; although in reality they are eight cross cutting and inter related priority themes. Achieving one usually requires the delivery of at least two or three others.

Priorities

Promoting a positive image – protecting and enhancing the reputation of the area by raising awareness of what there is to experience.

Growing the customer base – using a targeted approach to attract new customers from existing and new markets.

Enhancing the welcome – working closely with all tourism organisations and across networks to ensure positive visitor experiences.

Understanding the customer – Monitoring visitors to better understand behaviour, motivations, and issues in order to improve visitor experience.

Destination competitiveness – supporting the development of new visitor experiences based on local distinctiveness.

Maximising the legacy – making the most of Section 106 allocations by working with partners to deliver match funding bids.

Industry capacity building – support industry to develop and deliver new tourism products and experiences.

Encouraging quality growth – support businesses in growing quality and skills; to improve the bottom line, increase wages and reduce the seasonality issue.

Structure and Delivery

The strategy is structured around a vision and four strategic aims, underpinned by eight priorities and six key targets. Action Plans delivered in four phases will support delivery of these strategic ambitions: Phases 1 and 2 in 2015 – 2017, Phase 3 2018 – 2020 and Phase 4 2020 – 2023.

Strategic Aim 1 - 'Generating Positive Perceptions'

Promoting a positive image

During the construction of HPC, the perception of the area as a place to visit is likely to be influenced by press coverage. The media has a tendency to focus on the negative so it must be expected that there will be stories about congestion, upheaval and disruption to normal life, issues of managing nuclear waste, and links made to other nuclear energy stories around the world. Even if this is not the case, the constant reference to 'construction of a nuclear power station in Somerset' will have connotations for some that the area is a place to avoid.

Previous phases have focussed on counteracting negative news stories by procuring the services of specialist PR agencies. This approach has been very successful securing over 400 pieces of media coverage. Many of which have been published in broadsheet travel sections including The Telegraph, The Times and more recently The Guardian.

All the PR activity undertaken to date has always included promotion of the two destination brands Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor. In the final Phase support will be provided directly to Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor to enable them to promote the area effectively and maintain levels of coverage.

Growing the customer base

The ambition is to grow the customer base by increasing visits by existing key markets and new markets with the potential to grow. This requires a more targeted approach looking to inspire visits based on the 'experience' rather than placing the focus just on the destination.

People have numerous reasons to have holidays, whether it is in pursuit of a hobby, celebrating a family occasion, personal well-being, achieving ambitions or to simply to show off to others. This provides an exciting opportunity for Somerset and Exmoor to help visitors to 'get under the skin' of what can be experienced in the area.

In 2017 HTAP procured a specialist agency who created the successful 'Welcome to the Wild West – Somerset & Exmoor Campaign' the creatives produced by this campaign have been used and will continue to be used to promote Somerset and Exmoor.

Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor are both best placed to undertake this element of the plan. Both destinations have individual targeted marketing plans which are focussed on matching the visitor's requirements with a bespoke holiday experience. The aim will be to increase and retain visitors across the region.

Delivery: The two destination management organisations responsible for tourism across Somerset & Exmoor (Visit Somerset & Visit Exmoor) will be provided with HTAP funding to deliver this strategic aim. Both organisations will be working to an approved 3-year Business Plan, to promote the region to visitors via marketing, PR campaigns and advertising including traditional, online and social media, provide support and networking opportunities to tourism businesses, grow their membership and income streams to ensure that they are financially self-sufficient beyond 2023

Target: Annual average growth of at least 10%

Strategic Aim 2 - 'Delivering an exceptional welcome'

Enhancing the welcome – The concerns surrounding the impact of impact of HPC on travel into and around the area provide the starting point of the 'welcome experience'. In this scenario it can be defined as what visitors experience when they reach, and travel about, the destination.

In terms of the development at HPC the main challenges relate to travel and accommodation. In relation to travel, planned roadwork improvements to accommodate HPC traffic could potentially increase travel times to popular visitor destinations in West Somerset and Sedgemoor.

Whilst HPC workers provide an opportunity for tourism in the region, extra people looking for places to stay could impact negatively on accommodation choices for holidaymakers.

HTAP has worked with EDF and Somerset Highways over the past five years to ensure that the industry is well communicated with in terms of planned roadworks and disruption. As well as exploring ways to improve the visitor experience including new circular walking routes, itineraries, guided walks and regular industry e-newsletters.

West Somerset and Sedgemoor have in the past five years have worked to defined policies and undertaken monitoring of HPC workers accommodation including caravan park licenses and planning applications for extensions and new sites. This work will continue in Phase 4.

Understanding the customer – As part of the Section 106 agreements local authorities and EDF Energy agreed on the delivery of visitor surveys to monitor potential impacts on visitor experience. An accredited research company was procured by HTAP to devise and develop the research methodology and implement questionnaires on the ground using professional researchers. Nearly 1800 surveys were carried out with visitors over four waves, over two years in 25 locations across Somerset. Each survey included around 30 questions and took around 30 minutes to complete. The process was invaluable in defining visitor profiles, understanding visitor motivation and decision-making, and satisfaction with experience. A key measure of visitor satisfaction is the Net Promoter Score, across all four waves of the survey Somerset had a 72% Net Promoter score. (This means 72% of visitors would be happy to promote Somerset to others an excellent destination for a holiday)

In this final phase of the HTAP strategy the intention is to carry out further visitor surveys. This time the focus will be on visitor satisfaction, holiday experience with a focus on travel and accommodation experiences. A much shorter survey will be carried out with more visitors in key locations at peak times of the year

Delivery: In Phase 4 HTAP will continue to monitor and respond to travel and transport issues. This will be undertaken in consultation with industry and monitoring undertaken via the visitor surveys. Within these priorities HTAP will monitor the performance of an existing PR contract to ensure Somerset and Exmoor continue to feature highly in the media. A reserve fund will be used to fund any 'one off' advertising opportunities or to mitigate any unexpected impacts

Target: Over 50% of visitors to recommend the area to others & 200 additional pieces of media coverage from existing PR contract

Strategic Aim 3 - 'Developing New Experiences'

Destination Competitiveness – In order for destinations to remain competitive they need to be providing visitors with exciting and fulfilling experience and activities. The best way for destinations to do this is to develop visitor products that utilise local distinctiveness to shape the design of products and focus on developing a 'few' products really well.

Opportunities exist in Somerset around the natural landscape – which is regarded by Somerset's visitors as the most important motivating factor for visiting the area.

Not all product development requires the need to evolve new expensive infrastructure however, in some cases it is about an integrated approach working with businesses to better package up and sell existing experiences. Well planned developments are key drivers in attracting new types of visitors throughout the year and in helping businesses expand.

HTAP will focus on developing coastal tourism using Somerset's section of the England Coast Path as a draw. The approach will work to maximise the opportunities for developing visitor products and experiences along Somerset's coast. This will include working with local businesses and networks to refine the experience in order to ensure that the best possible legacy can be developed.

Maximising the legacy – In recent years Somerset local authorities have focussed efforts on developing new strategic partnerships and securing match funding bids to deliver tourism projects and products. Among the successful bids made, was the £2.2M EU Interreg funded 'COOL Tourism' project; and other local bids such as re-development of Watchet Boat Museum.

HTAP has always had the ambition to support larger local tourism development projects and in Phase 4 of is committing to providing support for larger tourism projects across West Somerset and Sedgemoor. The rationale behind supporting larger development projects is to provide a lasting legacy for tourism from the S106 funding.

The funding allocated by HTAP will provide match funding for larger projects including the Steam Coast Trail in West Somerset, Enterprising Minehead and tourism projects in Burnham, Bridgwater and Cheddar. Each project has been accessed by HTAP as providing a considerable contribution to the tourism offer across the area. These developments will draw more visitors to the area and increase spend thus supporting businesses across Somerset.

Local authority partners will continue to provide advice, guidance and letters of support to groups bringing forward tourism projects

Delivery: Steam Coast Trail – providing multi-use accessible paths between Minehead and Williton. Managed and delivered by the Steam Coast Trail project officer steered by the friends of the SCT.

Enterprising Minehead Phase 2 – continued roll out of Minehead seafront enhancements and raft of additional activity to boost the tourism offer. Multi-stakeholder activity led by Somerset West & Taunton Council, steered by Minehead Coastal Community Team.

Sedgemoor Tourism Projects – Bridgwater Quayside Festival, Burnham Evolution & Cheddar.

Target: £320,000 of match funding provided to support new tourism products/services

Strategic Aim 4 - 'Supporting Industry Growth'

Industry capacity building – HTAP has decided to focus on supporting a wider range of small tourism projects across the region as a way building capacity amongst the industry. There is many low cost, high impact tourism projects that could be supported via a Small Grant Scheme.

The aim of the Small Tourism Grant Scheme is to support the provision and development of new visitor tools and products. This could include something as simple as production of a leaflet to support a new visitor trail or exhibition, or supporting a business to develop a new visitor offer or experience that would allow them to extend the season or serve a wider audience. All will improve the visitor offer and bring in more visitors and encourage spending across the County.

The Small Business Grant will be for tourism businesses or organisations to bid into. All bids must support and meet HTAP's priorities. All potential bids will have to be approved by all HTAP partners and the scheme will be administered and managed by Somerset West and Taunton Council. All grant recipients will have to spend their allocation within the Phase 4 timeframe and will be expected to provide a short report back to HTAP the outcome of the support.

Encouraging quality growth – The strategic focus must be one of achieving growth by focussing on quality. Typically the tourism sector is characterised by what is termed as 'low value activity'. This refers to the often seasonal, low paid and part-time nature of work that is found in the industry.

HTAP will focus efforts on supporting businesses to make the most of new attractions and experiences such as the England Coast Path, Dark Skies and food and drink tourism. This will include utilising tools such as the COOL Tourism Toolkit and support businesses in delivering service excellence through training and in sponsoring involvement in key regional award schemes, in particular the Bristol, Bath and Somerset Awards, which feed into regional and national award schemes overseen by Visit England. This approach will help to raise the profile of the area, encourage other businesses, and ultimately help to tackle some of the traditional employment issues. HTAP will continue sponsor two award categories at the Bristol, Bath and Somerset Awards.

Another important aspect of supporting the industry is to understand how it is made up. For many years Somerset has paid for tourism volume and value data to help in understanding the scale of the industry and spot any trends. HTAP will continue to purchase the data for Somerset.

Delivery: Small Business Grant Scheme – bids to be approved by all HTAP partners and scheme will be managed and administered by Somerset West and Taunton Council
Quality raising through award sponsorship – sponsorship of two award criteria at the Bristol, Bath and Somerset Tourism Awards
Value of Tourism Research Data – purchase of Value & Volume data for Somerset districts and towns

Target: 5-7 new tourism products or services developed through the Small Grant Scheme
110 business supported to improve their quality

Strategy Targets 2020 – 2023

Target 1

Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor to grow by 10%	Definition: Growth in performance across key digital and social measures: website visits, social media engagement, membership and networking.
	Monitoring: Statistics reported at HTAP meetings, with annual review of SLA.

Target 3

Over 50% of visitors recommend the area to others	Definition: Net promoter score gathered via Visitor Surveys – net promoter score is calculated by taking ‘promoter’ scores (visitors who scored of 9 or 10) away from ‘detractors’ (those that give 0 to 6).
	Monitoring: This data will be gathered via HTAPs new visitor survey. Reports provided at HTAPs meetings.

Target 5

5 - 7 New tourism products / services.	Definition: New tourism products or services supported by HTAP’s Small Business Grant Scheme.
	Monitoring: Bids will be received from tourism businesses, organisations or networks for a Small Business Grant of up to £5,000 to develop a new tourism product, service. Bids approved by HTAP.

Target 2

200 additional pieces of media coverage.	Definition: Media coverage both online and offline as a direct result of existing PR Contract.
	Monitoring: Monthly report from agency detailing all activity undertaken as part of the HTAPs Contract.

Target 4

£320,000 of match funding provided for new tourism products / services.	Definition: HTAP has allocated £320,000 of match funding to increase destination competitiveness and create a legacy (Coastal tourism, Steam Coast Trail, Enterprising Minehead, Burnham on Sea, Bridgwater & Cheddar plus Small Grant Scheme).
	Monitoring: Recipients of funding will be required to provide quarterly progress reports to HTAP.

Target 6

110 tourism employees supported via training.	Definition: Tourism employees provided with training provided via HTAP, Visit Somerset, Visit Exmoor to improve quality and skills.
	Monitoring: Data will be collected from Visit Somerset, Visit Exmoor and local authorities. Reported to HTAP.

16%

GROWTH IN ONLINE PRESENCE FOR DMOs



48%



OF BUSINESSES EXPRESSING BUSINESS CONFIDENCE

19

INITIATIVES TO HELP VISITORS



400+

PIECES OF MEDIA COVERAGE



£165K+

OF MATCH FUNDING FOR NEW PRODUCTS

20

NEW PRODUCTS



16

SURVEYS



290

INDUSTRY INDIVIDUALS SUPPORTED

