

# Southwell

## Destination Management Plan

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## **1 What is a Destination Management Plan?**

As defined by Visit England, destination management is a process of leading, influencing and coordinating the management of all the aspects of a destination that contribute to a visitor's experience, taking account of the needs of visitors, local residents, businesses and the environment.

A Destination Management Plan (DMP) is a shared statement of intent to manage a destination over a stated period of time, articulating the roles of the different stakeholders and identifying clear actions that they will take and where appropriate the apportionment of resources.

## **2 Visitor Economy of Newark & Sherwood District**

Whilst Newark & Sherwood District has a strong visitor economy, it undoubtedly has the potential to grow further. According to the Scarborough Tourism Economic Assessment model (STEAM data), the visitor economy of the District was estimated to be worth around £260m in 2016 with a growth of 2.7% on the previous year. The District also saw a 3% year on year improvement in visitor numbers in 2016 overall to 4.351m of which just under 90% were day visitors. See Appendix 2 for more detail.

However, overnight visitor spend is, on average, over seven times more than that of day visitors (compared with around five times more for the wider County). Consequently, Destination Plans are critical to help determine those key actions which will not only increase visitor numbers but also extend the dwell time of the offer in the District, encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more to deliver the concomitant increase in economic impact.

## **3 Current Position of visitor economy activity in Southwell**

Since this plan covers a tight geographical area, its actions are focused on those issues and activities where Newark & Sherwood District Council can have maximum influence and impact. It will also highlight those organisations with which effective partnership working will deliver maximum impact.

Unlike Newark, none of the Southwell tourism assets are under the direct control of the District Council. This serves to emphasise the need for the District team to work closely to support those in the public and private sectors whose roles are about delivery - both the visitor 'product' and the marketing of it. There is a strong offer, attracting not just regional but national visitors in and around the town with, for

example, the Minster, the Racecourse, the National Trust Workhouse property attracting national as well as regional visitors. These attractions operate alongside an interesting and varied programme of Festival activity of which the Southwell Music Festival, in particular, brings visitors from far and wide.

Southwell currently 'punches above its weight' both in terms of its tourism product offer with several attractions that draw interest nationally and in terms of its promotion of the town. This is managed and coordinated across the town because Southwell is in the fortunate position of having a well-established Tourism Town Partnership. Representatives from all key visitor economy assets, key Town Councillors and others are in regular attendance at this meeting. This in turn is supported by a small but extremely dedicated resource focused on delivery. In recent years, when supported by the Destination Management Organisation for Nottinghamshire, Southwell benefited from PR coverage of around £60k advertising equivalent spend per year.

So long as everyone remains engaged, this partnership can serve as a very effective means to both disseminate information and to coordinate activities across the town's offer. It has delivered some positive results for events such as the Bramley Apple Festival and coordinated activities to support wider initiatives such as the cycling Tour of Britain. Southwell has the potential to be a significant hub for an attract and disperse strategy across the District, i.e. increasing visitor dwell time and moving them on to other attractions around the area. In collaboration with Southwell Town Council, NSDC needs to find the most successful way to support this group in its work.

A great deal of excellent work is also being undertaken by key stakeholders around the town to develop the visitor offer and these will create significant opportunities for the town in the next few years.

For example,

Major plans are afoot for a new offer at the Workhouse, the National Trust property on the outskirts of the town which sees them investing both NT monies and grants from the Wellcome Trust, not just in conservation but in the development of new interpretations of space. These developments are due to open Spring 2019 and will form part of a masterplan to increase visitors, their dwell time and to encourage repeat visits to the site.

The Museum of Timekeeping has recently been successful in securing some philanthropic funding to enable it to refurbish public areas and to upgrade its displays with a view to improving the visitor experience. The Museum also has plans in place to develop four key strands of activity around group visits, an events programme, working closely with local schools and to increase general opening of the facility.

The Nottingham Trent University Brackenhurst campus is currently undergoing £50m of significant building works to extend not just the campus reception but teaching facilities. The University is keen to build connections to the town's visitor economy particularly through the history of the Bramley Apple and from the campus to town via a discretely lit footpath. Visiting families of their students will also bring further economic prosperity to the area.

Southwell racecourse is a significant attractor to the town and over the course of year attracts approximately 100,000 visitors of whom 80% are from within a 20-mile radius. However, when races are screened on Sky Digital channels, over 250,000 people per day are exposed to Southwell. The racecourse is also seeking to attract a wider range of visitors from both the locality and farther afield not just on race days but with other events such as antique fairs, the Gate to Southwell festival and around their golf course.

Coordinating the promotion of the town around a series of agreed key stories / messages, especially when resources to undertake this work are limited, will ensure that the maximum impact is gleaned from such activity no matter who is undertaking it. Some suggestions for key messages are made in this plan as these have emerged from the consultation work undertaken in the preparation of this plan. Going forward, these will need to be discussed in more detail with key stakeholders to ensure that everyone has bought in fully to the implications. Consideration may need to be given by the Southwell Town Council to the usefulness or otherwise of the current Tourist Information Centre as it both difficult to locate and limited in scope in an age when most information is being gleaned online.

Southwell has the potential to develop and grow its tourism and the concomitant economic impact this has on the town and surrounding area if this plan is implemented successfully.

#### **4 Aims of the Destination Management Plan for Southwell**

- The overarching aim of the plan is to increase the economic impact of the visitor economy sector in the Southwell area. This will be achieved by:
  - Creating a management plan behind which all key stakeholders can align. This will then need to be supported by a detailed action plan.
  - Supporting the sector to improve both the attractiveness and promotion of its offer to encourage more visitors to visit.

- To help the sector with its plans to increase visitor dwell time, thereby keeping visitors in the area for longer. As a consequence of which they will then spend more on accommodation, restaurants etc.
- Working closely with partners to identify areas both in terms of product on offer and its promotion that need improvement and developing action plans to address this.

## **5 Key visitor economy messages / stories**

Southwell has an interesting but rather wide-ranging selection of stories to tell. It will be challenging to distil these into a single message. However, by carefully matching the stories to the appropriate target audience it should be possible to make links and connections across the offer to create an intriguing tapestry of visitor opportunities – presenting potential visitors with good reason to consider spending more than one day in the area. Albeit this will be constrained by the limited accommodation that is currently available.

Southwell is a place to:

- Be challenged about how life in nineteenth century workhouse can give cause to reflect upon the issues faced in today's society by those with mental health issues and learning difficulties.
- Explore and enjoy an insight into the County's and indeed country's ecclesiastical history.
- Enjoy a day at the races and stay a while longer in the delightful town of Southwell.
- Indulge in the town's varied independent shopping opportunities and its wide selection of intimate cafes.
- Delve into the intricacies of telling time over many centuries.
- Experience a great atmosphere at one of Southwell's Festivals.
- Receive an exemplary Environmental, Ecology and Conservation education at NTU's Brackenhurst campus. Southwell offers a warm welcome to visiting friends and families of those studying in this delightful location.

## **6 Maximising the potential of stories via wider partnerships**

- Taking advantage of the cross-District opportunities that having a Tourism Marketing Manager will bring forward.
- Working closely with national Visit England campaigns either directly or via Marketing NG/Visit Notts to capitalise on all opportunities as they arise.

- Nottingham City of Literature – Burgage Manor in Southwell was the home of the teenage Lord Byron while his recently inherited property of Newstead Abbey was rented out. Consequently, Southwell can rightfully take its place on any literature tour of the County.
- Discover England project The Explorer’s Road (formerly East of England Touring Route) is being designed to identify and promote bookable product within easy reach of the A1 aimed at the German Market. NSDC is now working closely with this project and the opportunities it offers (see Newark DMP for details). Southwell Minster is one of the six attractions across the District to have signed up to the project.

## 7 Key Visitor economy stakeholders and opportunities for Southwell in the next two to three years

- **Existing visitor economy assets that attract significant numbers to the town.**  
All have active programmes in place to develop their offer further and are members of the Southwell ‘Tourism Town Partnership’
  - Southwell Minster and Archbishop’s Palace
  - Southwell Racecourse
  - National Trust Workhouse
- **Festivals**
  - Bramley Apple Festival – potential to attract more regional visitors
  - Southwell Music Festival – as this continues to develop, it offers national potential but is currently heavily reliant on volunteers providing accommodation to both performers and to some extent visitors
  - Gate to Southwell – whilst the organisers make every effort to connect to the town, given its base at the Racecourse this now has less potential to provide additional economic benefit to the town

Collaborations either already exist or are being planned by NT Workhouse and Brackenhurst with the town’s festivals and these should be encouraged and supported wherever possible.
- **Independent Retail, Food & Beverage offer**
  - Southwell’s independent retail offer is a major asset for the town – the retailers themselves have created a small working group and are working well as a team to develop new initiatives.....this is to be encouraged & supported wherever possible.
  - There is an excellent selection of day time cafes which are well used.
  - However, although there are a couple of restaurants open in the evenings, Southwell’s night-time economy is limited.

- **New Developments** - see point 3 for some detail
  - In addition to the current tourism assets, several stakeholders have planned developments which present quite significant opportunities for the town over the next couple of years
  - NT Workhouse
  - Southwell Minster
  - Museum of Timekeeping
  - NTU Brackenhurst campus

## 8 Recommendations

- Newark & Sherwood District Council needs to work in close partnership with Southwell Town Council, not just to help attract additional visitors to the town but to encourage those already visiting to spend time elsewhere in the District, be it Sherwood Forest or Newark. In what is known as an ‘attract & disperse’ strategy, Southwell has the potential to act as a key attractor for the District as a whole albeit that a greater selection of accommodation options in the town and surrounding areas would greatly assist in this objective.
- Supporting the Southwell Tourism Partnership as the lead strategic body for tourism in Southwell. This partnership engages with all the key stakeholders although not all attend all meetings. Having a proactive programme of activity to support the Destination Management Plan would provide added focus and might help engage partners more strongly and encourage consistent attendance. This group certainly has the potential to be the key driver for the visitor economy of Southwell and the wider District. NSDC should support this initiative through regular attendance and, as budgets permit, provide support for key projects.
- Newark & Sherwood District Council and Southwell Town Council will need to work closely together to ensure that strong, consistent messages are delivered to potential visitors. In close collaboration with all key stakeholders, the key communications messages and most appropriate target audiences need to be refined so there is good ‘buy-in’ and the limited resources available to undertake this work are used to maximum impact.

Also, with respect to the town’s online presence, consideration needs to be given to information being held in one core place and then disseminated to others. At present there is a plethora of places to find information and it isn’t always entirely consistent in its messaging. What is also critical is that information must be updated and refreshed on a regular basis. However, this is resource heavy activity, hence this recommendation to do it once via an



effective CRM system (logically wherever the largest resource exists) and then disseminating elsewhere will maximise the impact of limited marketing budgets.

- Accommodation - In simple terms more of the right calibre and location is required. For the major attractions and festivals in the area (e.g. Southwell Racecourse, NT Workhouse & Southwell Music Festival) to fulfil the potential from the investments they are making, there is a need to encourage suitable investment in accommodation in the area.

## **Appendix 1: Consultees**

In addition to those consulted during the preparation of the Newark DMP

Southwell Festivals - Bramley Apple Festival and Gate to Southwell

Museum of Timekeeping

NT Workhouse

NTU Brackenhurst

Southwell Minster

Southwell Racecourse, Mark Clayton

Southwell Tourism Partnership

Southwell Town Council inc

Clerk, Tracey Broughton & Honor Dunkley

Cllrs Peter Brooker, Peter Harris

District Councillors Penny Rainbow, Bruce Laughton

Southwell Traders Richard Carnill, Helen



## Appendix 2: 2016 STEAM data for Newark & Sherwood District Council