

Executive Summary, Purpose & Vision - Pages 2 - 4

1. Does the vision on how the future of the Visitor Economy within Cheshire East will look set the right level of ambition? (E.g. are the targets realistic and challenging?)

- There are many other attractions which contribute to the visitor economy which are not mentioned.
- The vision should look to retain potential tourism from residents of Cheshire, and understand, and try to fill the gaps in the offering to tourists.
- It omits important detail, such as theatres, music and other cultural events, both professional and amateur
- When identifying areas within Cheshire East the canal system should be considered as a major attraction.
- Written before the demise of the NWDA. How will this affect the feasibility of reaching the targets?
- Welcome the recognition that the public realm improvements are given in the developing the VE.
- Welcome the vision that Cheshire East will SUPPORT and encourage a programme of sustainable events and festivals.
- Look at developing environmentally sustainable tourism products/services, including, for example, Peak Connections. This would reinforce the strategic intent of protecting and enhancing the environment. It might be appropriate to state an intention to encourage awareness among visitors who, in turn, really value the environment and actively contribute to environmental sustainability – in a way that they can be ‘proud’?
- The National Trust is supportive of the levels of growth that are aimed for and will contribute to their achievement with an ambitious programme of growth at several of our own sites. We also support the ambition to grow visitor numbers at Tatton and further develop the offer so that it continues to contribute significantly to the region’s economy and help to ensure a sustainable future for the estate.
- Welcome the recognition that the end goal is not just economic, but also that a strong visitor economy will improve quality of life for local people. An attractive, accessible and inspiring environment with interesting cultural opportunities is just as beneficial to residents as to visitors.
- The 2% increase in value seems to be a low target and not even in line with predictions for inflation, which if the strategy was implemented, would be quite disappointing - even given the present economic climate. We feel that it is difficult to justify such a large investment of time and money for such a poor return when resources are at a premium. The total value of tourism to the UK is set to rise by more than 60% to £188b over the next decade, says an independent report commissioned by VisitBritain. Research from Deloitte and Oxford Economics forecasts that the favourable exchange rate, the lure of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games and the appeal of our world-renowned attractions, should ensure the sector grows at an above-average 3.5% per annum between now and 2020.

- P2 mentions a Cheshire East visitor economy worth of over £600m, p4 & 5 includes reference to £653m.
- The vision and targets have been developed alongside the Visitor Economy Framework for Cheshire & Warrington so are realistic and challenging within the bigger picture. We need to highlight the importance of the VE which nationally contributes £115 billion to our economy every year. There is great potential for business tourism and Cheshire East now have a mapped out strategy to enhance this offer. We need to look at activities and themes for the programme alongside the venues.
- Visit Chester & Cheshire's response to the projected growth of 2% is that it would be reasonable to say that a growth rate between 2% and 5% during an economic recovery and possible double dip recession over the time period given in the CEC VEF, is challenging for East Cheshire and would perhaps suggest extending your target date from 2012 to 2015. The VCC VEF predicts a growth for the Cheshire & Warrington area at around/over 5% by 2020.
- RDPE should go in your action plan for delivery over the next 3 years as an activity to achieve your goals. When you are developing the action plan we can build in the outputs and detail

Vision - Page 4

2. Does it highlight the correct objectives and act as a strong call for action?

- All references to the Regional Economic Strategy should be deleted following the Government's announcement that they are to be abolished.
- To deliver a quality visitor experience – the whole customer journey needs to be mapped out and needs to look at working with retailers, taxi drivers, bus drivers, street scene attendants, alongside the more recognized accommodation and attractions sector.
- Those businesses/attractions on the periphery of the area must raise their profile within surrounding counties. For example, accommodation providers in Crewe and Alsager have overnight stays from visitors going to Alton Towers in particular.
- It omits culture as a fundamental component of the objectives, in terms of events and facilities.
- The canals and the buildings alongside are of great historical interest and this could be highlighted as more people are choosing to spend their leisure time and holidays in the UK.
- It doesn't really say what we are moving from to what standards we will be or who will be responsible for the movement from A to B. In Congleton we are really struggling to get premises accredited. They don't want to spend the money, but without accreditation they can't be recommended by the TIC or appear on CEBC web information. A Call for Action with lines (page 5) visitors expect an attractive environment and facilities like public toilets...etc ... while all very worthy, in another part of Cheshire East these are being seen as discretionary services which may be closed in two years. On one hand

Cheshire East is saying this is important for the visitor economy but then on the other that they will close them down!

- As Cheshire East's heritage attractions and historic environment are fundamental to its ability to attract visitors, suggest that 'historic environment' is added to the reference to built and natural environment in bullet point four.
- The objectives should provoke a strong call to action which is needed as the private sector will play an important and growing role in our visitor economy. One of our biggest challenges is to create a robust, clear and defined local agenda that matches the ambition and vision of the private sector and makes Chester and Cheshire a great place to invest and do business.

Markets, Assets & Brands - Pages 7 - 10

3. Are the key themes/brands highlighted under markets, assets and brands the correct themes/brands?

- The document underplays the areas waterways/canals strength, and its association with the author Tom Rolt.
- It is anticipated the £2.7m development will encourage canal tourism within Cheshire and the region as a whole. There are now a record 32,000 boats on British canals and rivers. Demand for boating has increased by an average of 2.6% every year over the last 15 years and is expected to continue to grow over the next 10 years.
- More could be made of the railway and canal heritage offer and how this could be developed
- There is an opportunity to develop activity sports holidays.
- Very little information is included about the types of accommodation on offer and the need for and potential for developing visitor accommodation.
- The Biennial demonstrates the potential for economic impact delivered by the arts and artistic endeavour. It should continue to be treated like an economic 'jewel' and in so doing it should become more ambitious particularly in breaking down the boundaries between public art and performing arts as well as seeking a dramatic step increase in the scale of participatory projects. Also, the potential to use the arts to 'draw attention' to other 'gardens of distinction' and the Cheshire Peak District is a relatively unexplored idea in the framework.
- Under events, need to include the Nantwich Jazz Festival at Easter, the International Cheese Show and Nantwich Show in July, the Food & Drink Festival in September or the Words & Music Festival in October.
- Pleased to see the recognition of parks, countryside, rights of way as visitor attractions and thematic brands and the ROWIP within the document.
- I'm not sure if the use of the word 'lazy' is quite right. Most of the activities listed in the thematic brands involve activities. 'Lazy' perhaps has negative connotations – are there alternative phrases that could be used such as 'relaxed outdoors activities' etc?
- There is a over emphasis on a small number of attractions and their development.

- Completely missing are: Nantwich Show / International Cheese Show, Nantwich Jazz & Folk Festival, Nantwich Players Theatre, Nantwich Food Festival, Nantwich Holly Holy Day, Nantwich Classic Car event, Crewe Railway Heritage Centre, Crewe Lyceum Theatre
- As Hoof Cheshire has now been secured, equestrian should be included as it becomes better known.
- Cheshire East struggles with an identity, and more could be made of the canals and meres.
- More co-ordination, as this year the Folk and Boat, Congleton Food and Drink Festival and the Barnaby Festival all happened on the same weekend and are all organised and promoted by the individual towns in isolation of each other.
- No mention of Embracing the Games and using that as a pull for tourism except as an add on at the end on the priorities?
- There is a very big difference between "Cheshire's Peak District" and "The Peak District & Derbyshire" - the first implies ownership of a geographical part of the area, whilst the second acknowledges that the Peak District is one unique place with its own identity and then tags a second (slipstream) destination onto it for obvious benefits. However, if Cheshire continues to promote it the other way round this will result in fragmentation, duplication and market confusion. I think Cheshire DMP's will struggle to fund solus "fragment" Peak District campaigns in future, because they really don't fit with VE's or the Government's picture of tourism destination management vision. Our current thinking could be to move to style of "Peak District & Beyond" on our attack marketing (to embrace the wider area) if Cheshire dropped its tags and threw their funding in with us.
- Cheshire is both blessed and challenged by the geography of its surroundings. On the one hand it has to compete with major destinations such as Manchester and Liverpool, the Peak District and Lake District – and can often seem to exist in their shadow. On the other hand, the proximity of urban centres to Cheshire presents an opportunity to penetrate relatively untapped markets, for example South Manchester and Staffordshire. Getting the branding and the marketing right is key - finding a distinctive image for Cheshire East destinations that will motivate visits. But also having the right products and constantly improving what is on offer for our key segments.
- It would be useful in the final version of the document to outline more clearly what the key themes and brands will be (e.g. through a diagram) as the text is quite dense in this section and it is not easy to see what are proposed as brands and what is a general acknowledgement of assets and approaches. E.g. is 'lazy outdoors' proposed as a theme or just an observation? Clarity on how such themes and brands might work and support each other would also be useful. For example, is 'Knutsford' proposed as a brand and if so, how will it be supported by other brands, such as 'Tatton' and themes such as food?
- It would also be helpful to share a clear understanding of the key audiences and market segments that such themes and brandings are targeting so that the organisations can better buy in to it.
- Support the focus on heritage assets and gardens because these are genuinely distinctive Cheshire features that have been proven to have a broad appeal and encourage out-of-season and repeat visits. It is clear,

though, that wider recognition of Cheshire's character is behind that of its competitors such as Yorkshire or Derbyshire.

- Continual improvement of the offer through new and innovative programmes and attractions will help to grow even further Cheshire's reputation for heritage, gardens and the outdoors. The National Trust, for example, is looking to add to its appeal with the newly acquired Norcliffe garden within the Quarry Bank Mill estate, as well as the new children's play area at Lyme Park and new ways of bringing Little Moreton Hall to life for visitors.
- There is a lot of emphasis on themes but not really the inclusion of places. We feel the Market Town feature box on p 13 (Moving Forward) would be better placed in this section.
- More could be made of our excellent country towns and pubs, where good quality food is served, Beer festivals are increasing in popularity and are a good product to help grow the visitor economy - attracting staying visitors and converting 'days' to 'stays'.
- While Macclesfield and its silk heritage are referred to on page 12 and 15, it is felt that reference should also be included here – as the development of Macclesfield in terms of tourism is a vital component in the successful promotion of Cheshire's Peak District, it appears to have been omitted. Macclesfield town redevelopment should also be referred to, as this could have a major impact on the infrastructure.
- Waterways - a real asset to this area, but underplayed in the strategy.
- Market segments –It would be clearer if this section was separate to the themes and brands.
- As Macclesfield is the major town in Cheshire's Peak District, work is needed to develop a tourism interest and theme in Macclesfield. Efforts similar to that used to develop, what until recently was an unrecognised but most valuable asset, Cheshire's Peak District, could result in a totally different impression of Macclesfield in terms of its contribution to the VE.
- Cheshire's Peak District has to be **THE** brand/theme for Cheshire East in terms of tourism. It is Cheshire East's equivalent to Chester in terms of attack brand for the future and encompasses the majority of the key themes and brands identified in the document!
- Marketing is key to attracting more or longer staying visitors. No matter how good our offering, if people don't know it's there, or don't recognise it as relevant to them, they won't come. The council (along with VCC) has an important role here in co-ordinating the approach of organisations which are linked either geographically or thematically and providing support for small establishments.
- The publication of any useful research would be appreciated.
- There is considerable prominence given to Tatton Park and Jodrell Bank, which is understandable given their substantial individual contributions to the visitor economy, but to achieve even more they need the support of the rest of the area's attractions.
- It is necessary to recognise the wide variety of visitor experiences within the area. The report makes almost no reference to the extensive museum and heritage provision and the contribution it makes to the visitor economy, for example its part in the success of the textile festival.
- Few people will come to Cheshire East specially to visit, say, Congleton Museum, but those who come to Tatton Park or Jodrell Bank may stay longer and spend more if they know that other attractions are available to them.
- In the past the significant daytrip recreation and tourism potential of the Pennine fringe area of the former Macclesfield Borough has not been fully

exploited. The area offers wonderful scenery, stunning views, industrial archaeological interest, the Macclesfield canal, the Macclesfield Forest and “Cheshire’s Matterhorn” at Shutlingslow and is both a gateway to the wider Peak District as well as having potential as a destination in its own right.

- The conference market is important for the Bollington area. There are two major hotels which have regular conferences – the Hollin Hall Hotel and the Shrigley Hall Hotel. In addition Savio House, a Catholic run retreat on the outskirts of Bollington, is the location of plans to develop a heritage skills training and environmental studies centre (to be called the Ingersley Centre), with enhanced accommodation and facilities.
- Macclesfield Silk Museum not highlighted and Macclesfield’s link with silk not explored.
- Crewe Rail Heritage Centre receives no mention at all (SHAME)
- Villages such as Prestbury are not the subject of any initiatives
- The key themes and brands do have synergy with the wider Cheshire and Warrington framework. We must make sure we work with neighbouring border towns and cities as they also have a part to play in creating a clear vision and meeting the challenges.

Moving Forward - Pages 11 - 14

4. Does the Strategy framework make a strong enough case for developing the Visitor Economy in Cheshire East?

- Overlooks some key elements to the detriment of South Cheshire.
- There is an abundance of interesting buildings and thriving pubs along the canal system, many of which have been restored and are of great interest, as well as being of a high standard.
- What about the Nantwich Show?
- I wouldn't like to see reliance on the web take over from TIC's which provide an incredible service.
- Where do you need a Government Grant for parallel opportunities to grow organic locally distinctive events? Does this include market towns, or is this a Tatton development?
- We need to develop the visitor economy, but it doesn't build any confidence that Cheshire East will contribute much. It reads to me like a case for others to do more to help their areas.
- Useful to highlight what the potential for long-term growth would be. For example, if this strategy was followed, what could the contribution to local GVA and quality of life be by 2015 – 2020?
- The potential of the Visitor Economy in Cheshire East has to be greater than a 2% growth and therefore the strategy should reflect this. For so long the Visitor Economy in Cheshire East has had little attention in terms of pro-active promotion or investment. A re-balance of VCC's approach will undoubtedly give a better return. Active promotion of the “Cheshire Peak District” as an attack brand for the Cheshire East Visitor Economy has to give significant growth for the Visitor Economy. Research carried out recently, has demonstrated that Cheshire's Peak District is a recognisable brand of value and is very relevant in the big picture of the Visitor Economy.
- Bollington has a large arts and music based festival every four years (The Bollington Festival), an annual weekend transport extravaganza in the

autumn and is introducing a week long Walking Festival in October 2010. Financial and marketing support for our festivals would be greatly appreciated.

- The strategic framework calls for better place marketing and we feel that Bollington could benefit greatly from this
- Where do we go from here on page 11 is not fully explained.
- App 1 – Demonstrate commitment – should say, an unequivocal commitment to protect natural assets, including the countryside for its own sake, and to operate within environmental limits.
- The Market Towns box does not mention Macclesfield.
- If CEC means what it says it should be doing a lot more in working with train operating companies to open up previously used railway stations such as Middlewich, and improving the service at Prestbury.
- We need to make sure that the action plan is flexible and responds to opportunities and changes that meet the visitor economy in the future.

Strategic Framework - Pages 17 - 21

5. Do you think that the strategy action plan is correct? If not, what changes would you suggest?

- Implementing the strategy is the critical part and requires backing from the right resources and involvement of the local communities and organisations.
- While the measures of success can be easily determined by increased visitor numbers at Tatton and Jodrell Bank how will success be determined for the towns and villages?
- Potential tourism related activities should be flagged up wherever the local authority capture point is, from enquiries regarding business rates to booking of C.E facilities and every assistance given to enable businesses to maximise their impact and effectiveness.
- Needs much more focus on working with specific development projects and already successful events and activities.
- There are numerous small independent businesses that rely on tourism & collectively work long hours to achieve their goals and in many cases just to survive. They provide much needed employment and their contribution must not go un-noticed.
- Is it right to prioritise funds to Tatton and Jodrell and secondly to Little Moreton Hall and other gems? Be careful of language as often CEC Councillors use the word a 'jewel in our crown' and 'hidden gem' – so if you are using these words in a strategy document and linking it in with what should get funding then there's a need to tighten up on language
- It would be helpful to ensure that an environmental sustainability strand is clearly identified, highlighting the contribution that the visitor economy makes to the 'low carbon' ambitions of the North West and Cheshire East. For example, there is a lot that the visitor economy can do to improve sustainable transport links, local food sourcing and energy efficiency/renewables. The National Trust is particularly active on this issue, sourcing local produce for its cafes, developing a hydro scheme at Quarry Bank Mill and taking a range of measures to improve the energy efficiency of its buildings.
- On branding, it is not clear how a 'consistently incorporated' approach to branding would work and how this delivers the previously noted need to go

with the strongest brands – which is probably not ‘Cheshire East’. Would National Trust attractions, for example, be expected to apply another brand as a result of this strategy?

- The action plan is not directly related to the priorities. Already the implementation of the strategy is behind schedule; your stated aim is to have it in place by September 2010, but it will not go to council until October. If your targets are to be achieved in less than two years a more detailed action plan with a clearly defined owner for each task and target completion date is essential and urgent.
- Explain what Macclesfield Futures involves and what Crewe Vision includes.
- The action plan has been written ahead of the action plan for the wider Cheshire and Warrington area so should be flexible in the light of ideas and challenges arising from that.

Key Priorities - Pages 14 - 15

6. Do you agree with our key priorities? If not, what alternatives do you feel should be included?

- The concept of the traditional 'TIC' may have to change and that alternative outlets and ways of providing the service may have to be considered
- The day-to-day participatory arts infrastructure is an essential part of many, particularly residents' lives across Cheshire East. This infrastructure requires relatively little investment to remain healthy and supportive of these specific economic outcomes. The 2012 Games represent a real opportunity to draw these ideas together, to crystallise the Cheshire East offer and branding in the eyes of the visiting and internal visitor. Sensible investment now could reap considerable rewards later on.
- In addition to Nantwich Players, Cheshire East boasts many of the most successful theatres in the Cheshire Theatre Guild as well as the Lyceum at Crewe and Clonter Opera. Any opportunity to encourage participation in Arts events should surely be more actively encouraged in the document.
- Promote Access to Attractions by Public Transport / Rail through our Community Rail Partnerships
- Upgrade key links of our Canal Towpath network in Partnership with British Waterways
- Review the provision of road signage to our key visitor attractions
- More focus on market towns, and physical investment in natural assets such as the comprehensive footpath network around Alsager.
- Nantwich is totally omitted, as is Crewe. South Cheshire needs its own sub-section, without which the plan will be incomplete, unsatisfactory and will not maximise the benefits.
- What about funding in this difficult economic climate?
- The lead up to the 2012 games reads like an add on. The Strategy work needs to last well beyond 2012 otherwise as soon as one strategy has been approved all the effort will go into the next strategy rather than delivering!
- A joined up approach on signage, licensing and transport is welcomed
- Concerned about the 3rd from last priority could be interpreted as getting rid of TICs. These provide a very valuable service.
- Will there be incentives to encourage businesses to achieve quality accreditation as some have decided that they can't afford it.
- As part of the Visitor Economy Strategy and Forum actions, there needs to be an acknowledgement that the Forum will have to be responsive to the political changes that are taking place, including the loss of NWDA, changing levels of tourism investment and structures (such as tourism boards) and the general devolution of power to the local level. Throughout this period of change the Forum and others in the sector need to proactively advocate solutions which work to improve the visitor economy in Cheshire East.
- Under the Gardens of Distinction priority, we would argue that that this needs to extend beyond branding to encompass the development of a distinctive and high quality offer, which would include product and facility development, new forms of income generation from gardens (e.g. seasonal events) and developing their appeal to wider audiences.

- We support the action to promote access to the countryside. This should include finding new ways of making access more attractive to more people – e.g. through a better family offer (such as adventure and sport) and integrating access to the countryside with the other destination brands (e.g. historic parks or towns).
- It would be helpful to identify which organisation has lead responsibility for each of the priorities.
- Quality should be emphasised - in terms of accommodation, attractions and all visitor related products – including country inns and pubs. Quality should be included in The Vision and in The Priorities
- Good transport is important, both locally and at the North West regional level. It's included in the strategy but not in the priorities. In east Cheshire, communications/ transport is good north to south, but not so east to west and in some rural areas.
- The priorities need prioritising.
- The strategy calls for targeted investment in a number of key projects and we would like to request that Bollington is considered as a focus for one of those investments – possibly in the Clarence Mill/ Bollington Recreation Ground area.

- Look at how to take new approaches to the provision of visitor information.

It will be vital to develop new partnerships to radically take this forward. To deliver a quality visitor experience, the whole customer journey needs to be

mapped out and this strategy sets the scene for this. It needs to look at working with retailers, taxi drivers, bus drivers, street scene attendants alongside the more recognized accommodation and attractions sector.

- The waterways and walking themes are very important and ones to develop, perhaps linked to events.

Full Document

7. Is there anything that you feel the strategy has omitted?

- It needs to be broadened to include more, The Lyceum Theatre in Crewe and Knutsford Civic Hall are good examples.
- Culture, theatres, music, arts
- What will happen now the NWDA is no more?
- History e.g. civil war, Romans, Normans
- How can local businesses access help?
- Unsure the strategy really recognises the work going on in individual towns to really promote themselves
- How will Cheshire East cope with the significant loss of public funding both at a regional and a local level? For example, many of the flagship projects identified in the Framework have relied on the promise of NWDA funding, including the Visitor Attractions Fund and the Heritage Tourism Fund, both of which will no longer be available.

- What will the future support structures look like with the loss of NWDA and its core funding of VCC? Throughout the document there are proposed actions but no clear indication of how or by whom they will be delivered.
- There appears to be no interest in or inclusion of disabled visitors. There are between 9 - 11 million registered disabled people in the UK, who if travelling would do so with a carer.
- Green tourism, sustainability and the environment: quality accreditation for green tourism businesses – east Cheshire has the potential to score very well in this respect and this should be integrated into the strategy
- All regional strategies are revoked as of now