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Guide to Regenerative Destination Management

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VisitEngland™

Contents

Credits

This guide has been written by Guy Bigwood and Janie Neumann of the *Global Destination Sustainability Movement* with structure and content co-created with VisitEngland. Graphic design was by TAG.

GLOBAL DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY MOVEMENT

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A. Foreword

As the Director of VisitEngland, I am delighted to introduce the **"Guide to Regenerative Destination Management"**. This resource is designed to enhance the positive impact of the tourism industry and destinations, paving the way for a more sustainable future. The guide is part of a series of tools that showcase our commitment to improving our environments and communities through collaboration, addressing global sustainability challenges.

Tourism is a vibrant force in the economy capable of delivering significant socio-economic benefits to communities across England. There is a clear and compelling need to shift towards regenerative practices. Regenerative tourism goes beyond sustainability; it aims to leave places better than before, fostering resilient businesses and communities with flourishing natural ecosystems and thriving cultural heritage. This guide was born out of a collaborative project with the Global Destination Sustainability Movement (GDS), initiated and supported by VisitEngland. It was created to help destinations across England to implement a regenerative destination management approach. It offers practical steps and strategies that can be adapted by urban and rural destinations.

Additionally, it emphasises measuring impacts and sharing success stories to inspire further action and innovation across the tourism sector. We are at a critical juncture in the management of our tourism destinations. This Guide to Regenerative Destination Management provides the tools and inspiration to move forward, ensuring that our beautiful landscapes, vibrant cities and rich heritage can be enjoyed by generations.

Let's take this opportunity to transform England's visitor economy into a leading model of regenerative tourism worldwide.

Andrew Stokes
Director, VisitEngland

B. Introduction

Tourism's footprint is increasingly scrutinised and the call for a fresh approach to destination management is louder than ever. Traditional plans that focus primarily on growing visitor numbers are evolving to include sustainable and regenerative strategies which enhance tourism's benefits for residents, communities, and the environment.

Background

Initiated by VisitEngland, this guide builds upon a pilot project catalysed and supported by VisitEngland in 2023 and 2024, which saw the eight English Core Cities (Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, and Sheffield) partner with the Global Destination Sustainability Movement (GDS-Movement).

These cities benchmarked their sustainability practices using the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index) in 2023 and 2024. They participated in various online and offline capacity-building workshops and received coaching support from the GDS-Movement with a core objective to develop and enhance their action plans and performance in sustainable and regenerative tourism management.

Why Now? The Urgency of the Moment

The global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and over-tourism require a shift from traditional tourism models. Regenerative destination management offers a proactive and holistic approach which recognises the opportunities for destinations to both mitigate negative impacts of the visitor economy and drive positive transformation within their environments and communities.

Recent research underscores this shift: The 2024 Sustainable Travel Report from Booking.Com highlights that 75% of global travellers say that they want to travel more sustainably and that 71% of travellers say they want to leave the places they visit better than when they arrived. Skift research indicates that there is an increasing demand for regenerative tourism especially from millennials and Gen Z, who will account for nearly 90% of all trips and will inherit nearly $68 trillion from older generations. In their Regenerative Tourism Report, Skift identifies that 54% of travellers in the 25 to 34 year old bracket show strong interest in regenerative tourism options, even if it involves paying a premium.

> "Collaboration amongst the (English) Core Cities, with support from VisitEngland, has been hugely beneficial for Marketing Manchester. In a unique pilot, we have been able to 'fast track' our learning about developing a more sustainable approach to the visitor economy, drawing on best practice from around the world, collaborating with peer cities and benefiting from the expertise of GDS-Movement".
>
> **Nick Brookes-Sykes,**
> *Director of Tourism, Marketing Manchester.*

Purpose of This Guide

Based on learnings from the English Core Cities pilot project and case studies from other English destinations, this guide offers a sustainable and regenerative framework that can be used by both urban and rural destinations. It can be worked through as a series of steps, or drawn from in sections, as is most useful. The framework incorporates a maturity pathway acknowledging that destinations are at different stages of the sustainability journey and will vary in terms of knowledge and capacity for implementation.

The guide will:

- Inspire action by helping destinations understand and implement sustainable and regenerative tourism principles.
- Provide a starting point for measuring and reporting on current sustainability efforts.
- Share learnings and good practices identified as part of the English Core Cities project supported by VisitEngland.

For information about the English Core Cities project, please consult Appendix 2.

The Primary Audience

While the insights and strategies contained within are universally applicable, the primary audience for this guide is English Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) and Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs). These organisations stand at the forefront of redefining what it means to be a tourism destination in the 21st century - balancing the needs of the visitor economy with the imperative to protect and enhance their natural and cultural assets.

Becoming a more regenerative destination is a journey, with each destination at a unique starting point based on its available resources such as time, money, and knowledge. Some destinations may just be beginning this journey, while others are considerably further along. The important thing is that every destination identifies and seizes the opportunities to progress, understanding that even small steps can accumulate and gain momentum over time.

Becoming a regenerative destination is achievable for everyone, although the pace of progress and scale of actions may vary, the most important is to start the journey.

> "Sheffield has been excited to begin our transformative journey into regenerative tourism alongside the other English Core cities, supported by VisitEngland. Breaking down high-level objectives into smaller, more manageable actions is a great way to get started and has helped us take those first steps."
>
> **Wendy Ulyett**
> *Marketing Manager, Visitor Economy, Marketing Sheffield.*

C. What is Regenerative Destination Management?

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Foundational concepts of regenerative tourism

If sustainable tourism aims to maintain existing systems, without causing further harm, regenerative tourism goes further in aiming to actively rejuvenate and restore the vitality of ecosystems, communities, and cultural heritage in destinations. By doing so, it promotes positive transformation and leaves a beneficial footprint.

Regenerative Destination Management

Regenerative destination management therefore aims to enhance the environment and communities within the tourism sector, engaging those involved in tourism activities to work together to develop practices that bolster local culture, economy, and natural habitats. It represents a shift from traditional, linear models of tourism, towards more resilient and inclusive systems, which address key environmental, social, and economic challenges.

How is this different to sustainability?

While sustainability focuses on balancing today's needs without compromising the future, regenerative tourism goes further by creating benefits and shared value for local communities, businesses, the environment, and visitors. Sustainability is the essential first step, but regenerative tourism challenges us to ensure this sector not only sustains but thrives.

Benefits and opportunities of this approach

Regenerative tourism offers new avenues for enhancing destinations, leading to increased visitor satisfaction and more enriching experiences that appeal to conscientious travellers. This approach not only makes destinations more attractive and ecologically healthy, but can also create new jobs, preserve cultural heritage, and enhance the quality of life locally. The results foster a sense of pride and active engagement among local communities in the development of tourism.

Regenerative Destination Management

Doing harm

Doing less harm

Restore and rejuvenate

DEGENERATIVE
Deplete, Degrade, Destroy.

SUSTAINABLE
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

REGENERATIVE
Rethink, Rewild, Regenerate.

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D. The Journey to Regenerative Destination Management

The path to regenerative destination management typically progresses through three phases of maturity: Startup, Integrated, and Empowered. Each phase signifies a deepening commitment to sustainability, gradually integrating regenerative practices into the destination's brand and operational ethos.

Startup phase

The initial phase is typically driven by one or more passionate volunteers within the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). If you are in the startup phase you will need to focus on building internal support (for example, creating a Green Team with representatives at each level) and engaging interested parties locally to get an understanding of the sustainability initiatives already underway in your destination (there will almost certainly be more than you think!) and start to plan future actions.

Your goal is to bring interested parties together (starting small if you have to), then laying a solid foundation by mapping and understanding current sustainability efforts, fostering collaboration and innovation, and developing an initial sustainability action plan - ideally with some quick wins.

Integrated phase

As efforts mature, a dedicated sustainability manager, often promoted from within, will probably need to be appointed. An external advisory taskforce can also be formed to provide diverse perspectives and input into your strategy and direction. The organisation conducts sentiment analysis of data from surveys, reviews and social media to determine opinions and support about the destinations, its businesses and services from a wide selection of interested parties.

The type of sustainability activities you might undertake should evolve from basic environmental actions (such as reducing energy use in your office) to include activities that promote and encourage social and environmental actions across the destination. Education, capacity building and sustainability certifications are typically key considerations at this stage, ensuring comprehensive integration of sustainability practices across your destination.

The Journey to Regenerative Destination Management

Startup Phase
- Passionate volunteer
- Creation of green team
- Basic stakeholder Engagement
- Measured, benchmarked and developed basic action plan

Integrated Phase
- Sustainability manager
- Sustainability taskforce formed
- Conducted stakeholder sentiment analysis
- Created strategic partnerships to educate and build capacity
- Measured enviromental and social imapcts
- Focused on activites and outputs

Empowered Phase
- Appointed a lead of sustainability, impact, or stewardship
- Sustainability at the heart of strategic activity
- Installed a stewardship governance council
- Embedded regeneration into business models
- Empowered businesses to take ownership
- Advanced impact measurements and achieved destination certification

Empowered phase

At this more advanced stage, which will take some years, sustainability will be deeply embedded into your destination's core. Depending on the size of your organisation, you may have an experienced director, or head of sustainability leading activities. In time, the focus should start to shift from embedding sustainable practices into promoting regenerative business models and accelerating positive impact.

Working with key interested parties in your destination, you will have or develop a long-term (10+ years) regenerative destination management strategy to define goals and set out a roadmap to tourism that has a measurable positive impact, underpinned with data that evidences this. The strategy will also have mechanisms that harness the opportunities for tourism and events to help solve local environmental, social, and economic challenges. Residents will be at the centre of the plan, and businesses will be encouraged and empowered to take ownership of regenerative initiatives.

Listen and adapt

At all phases of the journey, your destination will need to remain adaptable, continuously listening to those interested parties locally who may have a view, collaborating with them to create new solutions and learning from both successes and challenges. Engaging in national and international networking enables you to keep up with the latest thinking and allows for sharing stories and strategies, fostering a community of learning and mutual support. Benchmarking against established Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), certification and transparent reporting, such as that offered by the GDS-Index and others, can help destinations stay aligned with their long-term goals, but is not essential to move forward.

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E. The Seven Phases of Regenerative Destination Management

From the work with the English Core Cities and the experience of other destinations around the world who have worked with the GDS-Movement, seven key steps have been identified as a roadmap to success for destinations wanting to implement a regenerative management approach. Destinations new to sustainability should start at Step 1. Other destinations that are further along in their journey can start at whichever step feels most appropriate.

Overview

1. **Commit:** Begin your journey by securing a strong commitment. This involves obtaining executive sponsorship, appointing a passionate programme leader, and publicly declaring your intentions. For Startup-Phase destinations, this may mean gaining senior leadership's support to dedicate time and resources and identifying a volunteer to initiate grassroots efforts. If full commitment seems challenging, utilise the other steps and tools provided to help catalyse your progress.

2. **Assess:** Conduct a baseline assessment to understand the current state of sustainability within your destination. Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The VisitEngland self-assessment tool, the GDS-Index , and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Destination Criteria offer valuable and

publicly available criteria for evaluating your current performance and developing an improvement plan.

3. **Engage:** Build relationships and encourage collaboration by engaging employees, local businesses and those involved in, or impacted by, tourism activities. Establish working groups, join existing networks, and empower local communities by involving them in decision-making processes. This inclusive approach builds support and helps ensure a sense of local ownership.

4. **Come together:** Organise forums and workshops to co-create a shared vision and agree actionable goals for the destination. Form a taskforce of experts to refine, endorse and help drive the plan, ensuring diverse representation and commitment.

5. **Implement:** Put the agreed plans into action. Start with an internal sustainability programme, (promoting green office practices, and engaging employees at all levels). Then implement destination-wide initiatives, focusing on agreed priorities.

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6. **Measure and report:** Be data-led and measure progress to understand the impact of your strategies. Collect quantitative and qualitative data, analyse performance, and regularly monitor and report progress. Transparency and continuous learning are crucial for accountability and improvement.

7. **Tell the story:** Communicate your journey and successes to inspire action and build trust. Share stories that highlight positive transformations, support certified sustainable businesses, and community engagement. Use various platforms to maintain context and avoid greenwashing, ensuring honesty and transparency in your messaging.

Step 1: Commit

The hardest step in regenerative destination management begins with a commitment. This foundational step sets the tone for the organisation's shift towards a future where tourism serves the community and its environment. A strong commitment includes an executive sponsor from senior management, a passionate leader for the programme, allocation of staff time and budget, and a public declaration of intentions.

Executive sponsorship

Executive sponsorship involves more than approval; it requires passionate advocates at the highest levels. These leaders endorse and actively champion the initiative as a strategic priority. This could be the LVEP's managing director, chairperson of a DDP or an external influential board member.

Sometimes the executive sponsor can initially also be from outside the LVEP, like an external board member or a leader from an organisation that has influence and is keen to drive forward the positive impact of tourism and events. For example, it could be the chair of a tourism association, the CEO of a major anchor attraction, agency, or conference centre.

Key responsibilities of an executive sponsor:

- **Advocacy:** Communicating the importance of regenerative practices within and outside the organisation.

- **Alignment:** Ensuring regenerative goals align with the organisation's vision and mission.

- **Resource Allocation:** Providing necessary financial, human, and material resources.

- **Learning:** Developing and transferring knowledge throughout the destination and its work.

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When you do not have commitment and resources

Initiatives are often forced to begin without an executive sponsor or identified leadership. Grassroots efforts can lead the way, starting with pilot projects that demonstrate tangible benefits. Consider organising workshops, presentations, and discussions to engage stakeholders and form partnerships with local businesses, educational institutions, and community groups. These efforts can build advocacy, influencing decision-makers to allocate necessary resources to expand the programme across the destination. At which time an executive sponsor may be found to accelerate implementation.

"Making a commitment to regenerative tourism helps destinations work together towards a common goal. In Leeds, working with colleagues from other departments within the council and key partners has created a #TeamLeeds approach and helped sharpen our focus on how the visitor economy can be stronger when committed to action together".

Claire Heap,
Visitor Economy Manager,
Leeds City Council

Designating a programme leader

The day-to-day management of the regenerative programme requires focused attention and success relies heavily on identifying a dedicated programme leader or champion. This individual will steer the initiative, engage both internal and external parties and maintain momentum.

Ideally, the LVEP or DDP would allocate resources for a full-time position dedicated to leading its regenerative tourism efforts. However, in the initial phase, a practical starting point would be to appoint an existing team member who is capable and enthusiastic about taking on this responsibility within their current role. This person could initially dedicate one day per week to start the regenerative tourism activities, and this time could increase as the programme delivers positive results and additional financial resources are identified.

Traits of the ideal programme leader

- **Passionate:** With a strong interest in social and environmental sustainability. This passion is often contagious to other colleagues and interested parties.

- **Visionary:** Clear, compelling belief and vision for how the new strategy should be integrated within the organisation.

- **Influence:** Have influence and connections to gather support and implement actions. This can also be achieved by any colleague who has active and vocal executive support.

- **Collaborative:** Ability to work across departments and teams, building partnerships and enabling a culture of co-operation.

- **Persistence and patience:** They should recognise that change does not happen quickly and are skilled at maintaining momentum and overcoming hurdles for long-term benefit.

Formalising the commitment

A public declaration of commitment should be made, outlining the organisation's intention to pursue and integrate regenerative practices into the destination management plan. This declaration can take the form of a written statement, press release or video, signed by the executive sponsor, LVEP lead accountable body, and shared with all interested parties.

To ensure steady progress and success, it is best to reinforce this commitment by allocating a budget and assigning staff to develop and implement your plan. This investment will provide the necessary resources to achieve your objectives effectively.

Even with budget constraints, you can still demonstrate commitment to sustainable tourism. Encourage your colleagues to incorporate these responsibilities into their existing roles, using their skills and passion to propel the initiative forward, even without additional funding.

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Step 2: Assess

A baseline assessment provides insights into current practices and identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. You will almost certainly find that there are more social and environmental initiatives already underway in your destination than originally thought.

Understanding the current state

How to get the information needed to make a baseline assessment:

- **Destination Sustainability Self-Assessment:** Use VisitEngland's tool to gauge if your LVEP or local authority is a sustainable Destination Novice, Learner, or Leader.

- **Destination strategy and initiatives:** Review the destination's current strategies, policies, and initiatives. Are any of the focus areas from the VisitEngland framework and/or the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) already incorporated into the visitor economy brand and plans either for events or tourism?

- **Strategy alignment:** Find and introduce yourself to the sustainability, climate change and/or waste service lead of the local authority. Through this you should be able to build a picture of local or regional climate action/net-zero, circularity, sustainability, social impact, or food strategies and see where your own plans could align.

- **Supplier mapping:** Develop a survey to understand and map the sustainability practices of local tourism and events businesses, identifying leaders in the area and potential champions for the work you are planning.

- **Resources:** Inventory available funds, local expertise and natural or cultural assets for sustainable and regenerative initiatives.

Benchmarking

- Use the results of the self-assessment to benchmark your LVEP against other LVEPs.

- **Sustainability benchmarks:** Use benchmarks like the GDS-Index or the destination criteria developed by the GSTC, or certification standards such as Green Destinations, EarthCheck or Biosphere.

- **Gaps and opportunities:** Based on the benchmarks and the information identified in the assessment, pinpoint gaps, and areas where your destination can enhance its performance and use these insights to create an initial action plan.

"The GDS-Index brings a rigorous approach to monitoring and measuring the impact of tourism on our destinations. This framework supports improvement and collaboration which has to be at the heart of how we develop and manage tourism for a sustainable future."

Becky Frall,
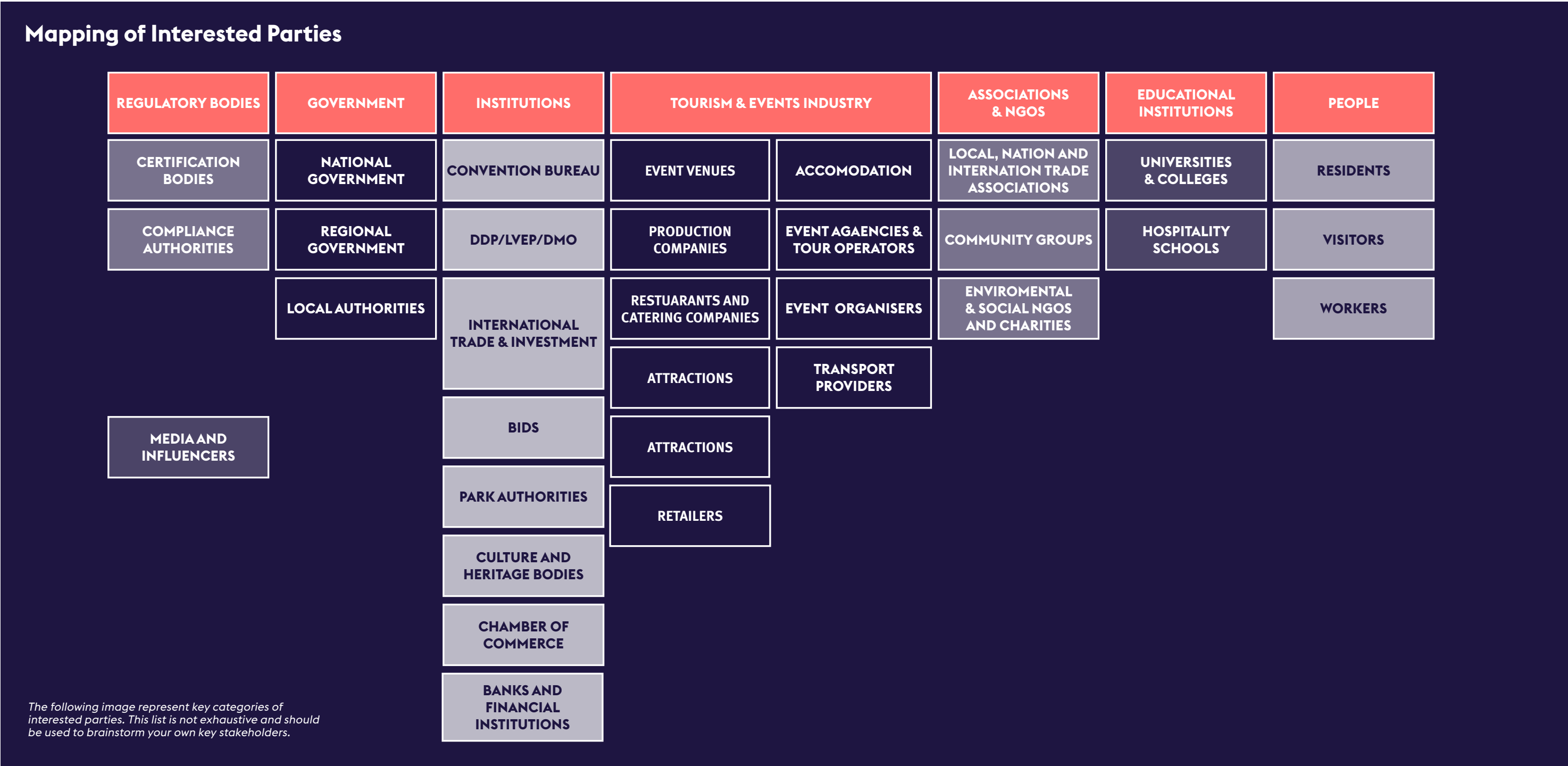**Head of Tourism at the West Midlands Growth Company.**

Identify interested parties

Mapping interested parties is an essential step in grasping the full scope of who is affected by and who can influence your destination's shift toward more regenerative management. This process involves identifying and categorising all parties involved in or impacted by tourism and event activities in the destination.
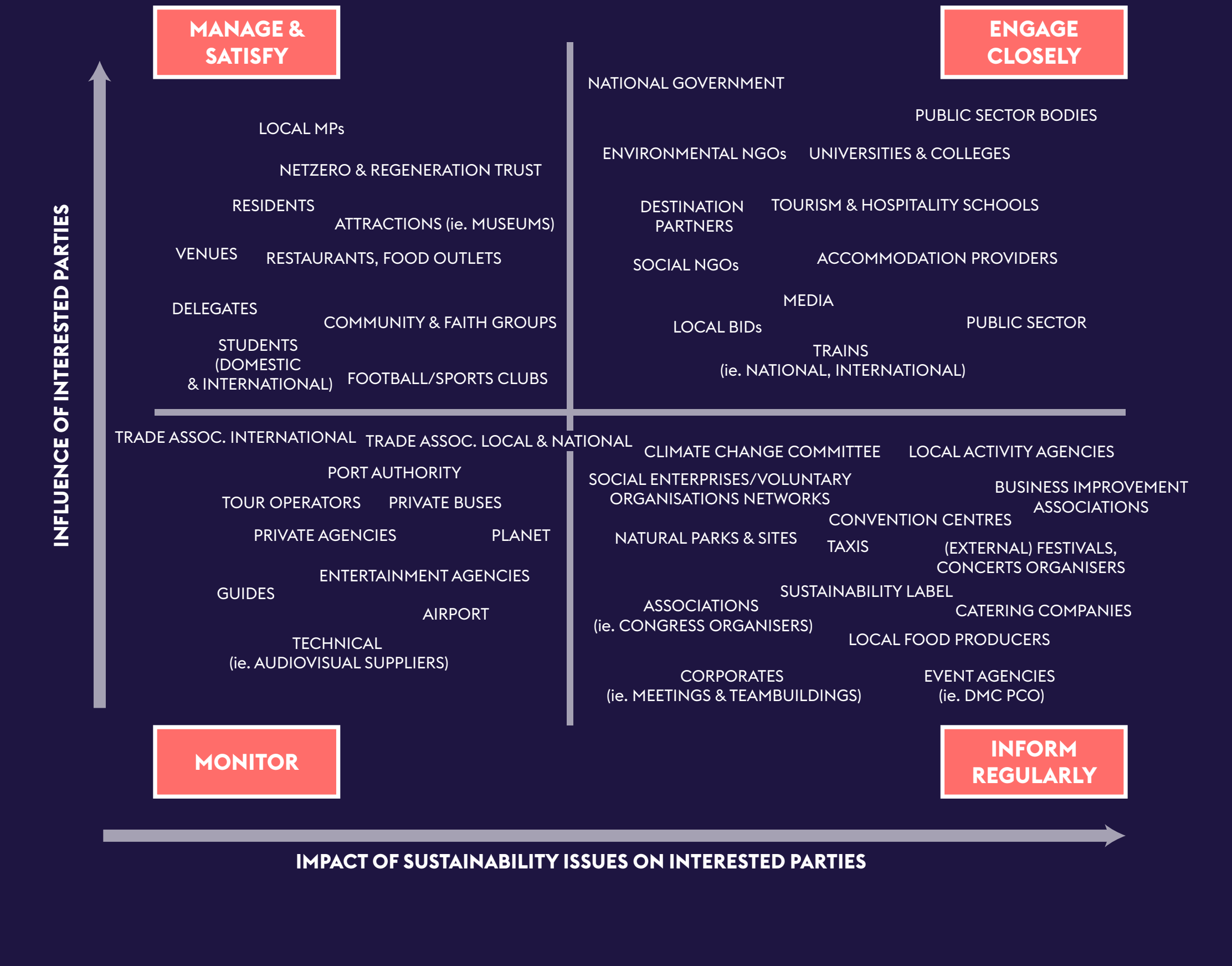
Organising a small, knowledgeable group of individuals from various parts of the LVEP for an initial mapping session can be highly effective. Whether conducted online or in person, this session should last a minimum of a couple of hours and will provide a solid foundation for ongoing engagement. It is important to continually refine this map, always considering the question, "Who are we missing?"

Steps for mapping:

- **Identification:** List all potential interested parties, including local businesses, community groups, government entities, environmental organisations, tourism operators, and visitors. See the example framework, highlighting potential categories of interested parties.

- **Categorisation:** Organise interested parties into categories based on their role or interest in tourism (for example, service providers, regulatory bodies, community members).

Mapping of Interested Parties

REGULATORY BODIES	GOVERNMENT	INSTITUTIONS	TOURISM & EVENTS INDUSTRY		ASSOCIATIONS & NGOS	EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	PEOPLE
CERTIFICATION BODIES	NATIONAL GOVERNMENT	CONVENTION BUREAU	EVENT VENUES	ACCOMODATION	LOCAL, NATION AND INTERNATION TRADE ASSOCIATIONS	UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES	RESIDENTS
COMPLIANCE AUTHORITIES	REGIONAL GOVERNMENT	DDP/LVEP/DMO	PRODUCTION COMPANIES	EVENT AGAENCIES & TOUR OPERATORS	COMMUNITY GROUPS	HOSPITALITY SCHOOLS	VISITORS
	LOCAL AUTHORITIES	INTERNATIONAL TRADE & INVESTMENT	RESTUARANTS AND CATERING COMPANIES	EVENT ORGANISERS	ENVIROMENTAL & SOCIAL NGOS AND CHARITIES		WORKERS
			ATTRACTIONS	TRANSPORT PROVIDERS			
MEDIA AND INFLUENCERS		BIDS	ATTRACTIONS				
		PARK AUTHORITIES	RETAILERS				
		CULTURE AND HERITAGE BODIES					
		CHAMBER OF COMMERCE					
		BANKS AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					

The following image represent key categories of interested parties. This list is not exhaustive and should be used to brainstorm your own key stakeholders.

Example Prioritisation of Interested Parties

INFLUENCE OF INTERESTED PARTIES →

MANAGE & SATISFY

ENGAGE CLOSELY

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

PUBLIC SECTOR BODIES

LOCAL MPs

NETZERO & REGENERATION TRUST

ENVIRONMENTAL NGOs   UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES

RESIDENTS

ATTRACTIONS (ie. MUSEUMS)

DESTINATION PARTNERS   TOURISM & HOSPITALITY SCHOOLS

VENUES   RESTAURANTS, FOOD OUTLETS

SOCIAL NGOs   ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS

DELEGATES

MEDIA

COMMUNITY & FAITH GROUPS

LOCAL BIDs   PUBLIC SECTOR

STUDENTS (DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL)   FOOTBALL/SPORTS CLUBS

TRAINS (ie. NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL)

TRADE ASSOC. INTERNATIONAL   TRADE ASSOC. LOCAL & NATIONAL   CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE   LOCAL ACTIVITY AGENCIES

PORT AUTHORITY

SOCIAL ENTERPRISES/VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS NETWORKS   BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATIONS

TOUR OPERATORS   PRIVATE BUSES

CONVENTION CENTRES

PRIVATE AGENCIES   PLANET

NATURAL PARKS & SITES   TAXIS   (EXTERNAL) FESTIVALS, CONCERTS ORGANISERS

ENTERTAINMENT AGENCIES

SUSTAINABILITY LABEL

GUIDES

AIRPORT

ASSOCIATIONS (ie. CONGRESS ORGANISERS)   CATERING COMPANIES

LOCAL FOOD PRODUCERS

TECHNICAL (ie. AUDIOVISUAL SUPPLIERS)

CORPORATES (ie. MEETINGS & TEAMBUILDINGS)   EVENT AGENCIES (ie. DMC PCO)

MONITOR

INFORM REGULARLY

IMPACT OF SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES ON INTERESTED PARTIES →

Prioritise interested parties

After mapping your interested parties, the next step is to prioritise them based on their impact, influence, and interest in your destination's efforts. This helps focus your engagement and resource allocation on those who can significantly promote or prevent progress.

Criteria for prioritisation

- **Influence:** Interested parties with the power to effect changes or mobilise resources should be given priority. This includes government bodies, major tourism operators, and influential community leaders.
- **Impact:** Prioritise interested parties who are most affected by tourism activities and sustainability efforts. Often, these are local communities, cultural, and environmental organisations.
- **Engagement level:** Interested parties who are already engaged or show a strong interest in sustainability initiatives are valuable allies and should be high on your priority list.

Prioritisation Matrix

Create a matrix to visualise interested parties based on the criteria above, allowing you to easily identify which groups require immediate focus and engagement. This matrix will guide you in tailoring your communication and collaboration strategies effectively.

Step 3: Engage

Engagement involves building relationships, fostering collaboration, and joining forces to create a shared vision for a regenerative future. Effective engagement ensures that all voices are heard and are actively involved in shaping the destination's path.

Engaging employees:

The LVEPs' and DMOs' internal teams are an important element of the successful development and implementation of more regenerative tourism practices. Engaging a wide range of team members is important in the initial phase, to get input and ideas, as well as building on existing skills and expertise. On an ongoing basis, engagement will helpfully embed new practices and continue to maximise positive impact internally and externally.

Strategies:

- **Build your 'green' team:** Assemble a diverse team of voluntary members from across different functions and levels within your LVEP or DDP.
- **Cultural shift:** Foster a cultural transformation within the organisation where sustainability and regeneration become core values.
- **Ownership and innovation:** Encourage employees to take ownership of and pride in their contributions.

Actions:

- **Workshops and training:** Conduct regular workshops and training sessions to deepen employees' understanding of regenerative practices and clarify their role in advancing them, GSTC, GDS-Academy and the Travel Foundation provide online training in sustainable destination management.

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- **Recognition programmes:** Develop award programmes to acknowledge and reward employees for their meaningful contributions to the organisation's sustainability and regeneration initiatives, reinforcing the value placed on individual and collective efforts.

Building Partnerships

Wider stakeholders are an important element of the successful development and implementation of more regenerative tourism practices.

- **Working groups:** Encourage participation from diverse stakeholders through groups, roundtables, or partnerships, particularly with those organisations identified as high priority during the assessment phase. Make sure there is a diverse representation of organisations, such as businesses, non-profits, educational institutions, community groups and government agencies.
- **Join existing networks:** From the mapping exercise, prioritise and join local networks focused on regeneration and sustainability. It is important that tourism is at the 'table' and part of the conversation about the sustainability transition, inclusion, and social impact in your area.
- **Empowerment through involvement:** Involve stakeholders in decision making to increase ownership and commitment.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships that can leverage resources, expertise, and networks from both sectors.

"Engagement with members, visitors and suppliers is an integral part of our strategy at VisitWest. It allows us to understand the challenges and needs of the sector, whilst enabling us to provide the relevant tools and advice required to support the destination's overall goals for a sustainable and resilient economy."

Kathryn Davis,
Managing Director of VisitWest

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Educating and empowering

Capacity building is essential. Offer training and resources on sustainable practices, funding opportunities and best practices. Support champions within the community to inspire and educate others. Suggestions include:

- **Capacity building:** Offer workshops on sustainable practices and funding opportunities such as circularity, net-zero pathways, accessibility, AI innovation.

- **Support champions:** Identify and support community influencers to inspire and educate.

- **Leverage local knowledge:** Engage local experts for valuable insights.

Using technology to improve engagement

Using advanced technology can significantly enhance destination engagement with stakeholders and the collection of diverse inputs. Digital collaboration platforms facilitate seamless communication, collaboration and innovation among tourism managers, local businesses, government bodies, and community members, ensuring everyone stays aligned, informed, and can propose their ideas and feedback.

For the more advanced, local engagement platforms such as Next Door enable dynamic interaction through surveys, polls, idea submissions, and open discussions, allowing community members to contribute.

Business Support

VisitEngland has a range of resources to help businesses and other interested parties learn more about sustainability and regenerative tourism. The VisitEngland Business Advice Hub is the first stop for tools, guides and information. Keep checking back as new resources will steadily be added. VisitBritain also offers a suite of tools on the Business Events Learning and Development Hub to support development

and implementation of sustainable events and help ensure business events have a lasting legacy.

The Regenerative Tourism Guide is a valuable resource for LVEPs to use when working with local businesses. Wherever businesses are in their sustainability journey, The Regenerative Tourism Guide aims to give businesses the practical tips, and the reassurance and confidence, to move forward.

> "The regular workshops we attended as part of the English Core Cities project allowed us to share experiences, challenges and identify opportunities. Its immensely valuable when you start to feel that you are not on your own."
>
> **Annette Thornley,**
> **Business Development Manager, VisitNottinghamshire**

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Step 4: Come together

Transitioning toward regenerative destination management requires thoughtful collaboration. Co-creation involves establishing shared goals and values, identifying immediate wins, and setting long-term objectives. This process transforms the community's vision into a practical roadmap for action.

Organise a forum with your key stakeholders

Engage interested stakeholders from across the destination to shape the regenerative tourism strategy. An inclusive forum ensures diverse perspectives and expectations are considered. Use an experienced facilitator for best results and to avoid being seen to 'take sides' and follow a pre-arranged process to:

- **Define a shared vision:** Establish a clear, long-term vision for regeneration that reflects collective values and realities and guides all subsequent strategic planning.

- **Visualise goals:** Break down the vision into actionable objectives covering environmental, social, economic, and cultural themes.

- **Create Key Performance Indicators:** Identify KPIs that measure progress across all sustainability dimensions, ensuring continuous improvement.

Build a regenerative tourism taskforce

Form a taskforce of industry and local experts to co-create, refine and endorse the plan. This group ensures commitment, accountability, and ongoing support. If the taskforce is effective, maintain it for regular input and advice during implementation and review stages. Here are some guidelines for building a taskforce:

- **Diverse expertise:** Include experts in sustainability, tourism, local business, environmental, social, and community development for an inclusive approach.

- **Size and scope:** Aim for 12-20 members to ensure variety while facilitating effective communication and decision-making.

- **Representation:** Ensure a broad spectrum of stakeholders, balanced in gender, age, race, and sexual diversity.

- **Influence and commitment:** Select individuals with influence and dedication to regenerative destination management principles.

- **Collaborative spirit:** Choose members known for productive dialogue and compromise.

- **Accountability:** Establish clear terms of reference outlining responsibilities, expectations, and goals, ensuring the taskforce operates effectively.

Developing the plan

- **Align with existing frameworks:** Integrate goals and initiatives that align with existing sustainability frameworks identified in Step 2, such as the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), and local and national government commitments to net-zero and biodiversity.

- **Quick wins:** Prioritise initiatives that can be implemented quickly to demonstrate early success. Examples include developing a regenerative tourism section on the LVEP website, sharing VisitEngland sustainability resources with local tourism businesses, supporting local conservation projects, or organising a community sustainability workshop. These build momentum, showcase benefits, and help secure further support, and funding.

"It has been hugely beneficial to bring together the local and regional tourism and events community, from Newcastle and North East England, to co-create a framework for our region's journey towards becoming a more regenerative destination. This collaborative effort has significantly amplified our sector's voice and enabled us to incorporate diverse ideas and perspectives. I'm sure that uniting in this way will lead to a more impactful outcome for both the visitor economy and our local communities."

Shelley Johnson,
Head of Market Insights, Newcastle Gateshead Initiative (NGI)

Catalysing action – the Liverpool Visitor Economy Sustainability Taskforce

In 2021, Liverpool recognised the need for cohesive action in its Visitor Economy sector to address sustainability. Joining the GDS-Index revealed areas of strength environmentally and socially but exposed gaps in collaboration and leadership, particularly with suppliers and the DMO. Realising the necessity for pooled resources and collaboration, the Liverpool Convention Bureau established the Visitor Economy Sustainability Taskforce in 2023.

Comprising representatives from various sectors like hotels, restaurants, and city councils, the taskforce aimed to enhance sustainability efforts by co-creating and implementing an action plan through monthly meetings and collaborative initiatives. With no dedicated sustainability staff at the DMO, the combined expertise of the taskforce was essential in enabling sustainability improvements across Liverpool City Region.

In its inaugural year, the taskforce achieved significant milestones. A conference and exhibition during Global Goals week in September 2023 attracted over 100 attendees and featured 20 speakers covering topics such as waste management and sustainable travel. Winning The Most Improved Destination Award at the GDS-Awards 2023, highlighted the group's impactful efforts in educating and engaging the sector.

The success of the taskforce was attributed to the collective efforts of passionate individuals from Marketing Liverpool, who led the initiative. Their commitment and collaboration drove positive change and ensured ongoing success. Moving forward, the taskforce is refining its structure, expanding representation, and developing a clear vision and more advanced action plan, exemplifying a commitment to tangible progress rather than mere discussion.

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Step 5: Implement

The implementation phase transforms strategies and goals into tangible outcomes for regenerative destination management. This crucial step applies the collective vision and co-created strategies to achieve change.

Walk the talk: internal action

Destinations must embody the change they seek. This begins with a comprehensive internal programme reflecting their organisation's commitment to regenerative tourism.

- **Sustainability audit:** Begin with a thorough sustainability audit of your organisation's operations. Identify areas for improvement in energy use, waste management, procurement, equality, diversity and inclusion, HR, community, and employee practices. This audit lays the groundwork for targeted action

- **Internal goals and action plan:** Based on the audit findings, set clear, measurable goals for reducing your organisations environmental footprint and increasing its positive social impact. Goals might include reducing energy consumption, increasing the use of renewable energy sources, reducing waste, promoting low-carbon transport and active travel options among employees, volunteering in community initiatives, and developing partnerships with local charities and non-governmental organisations. Develop a clear action plan for the next 18-24 months, setting out priority actions to work towards achieving your goals.

- **Sustainability policy:** Outline the organisation's commitment, vision, and goals to sustainability in a publicly available policy, signed by the Senior Executive. If the LVEP is part of a local authority, review and align with existing policies.

- **Employee engagement:** As the programme develops, it is important to engage the organisations' employees at a deeper and wider level, making it relevant to their work and role. Encourage participation through training sessions, workshops, and team projects. Creating a culture of awareness within the organisation amplifies the message that change starts with individual actions. When setting team objectives, ensure everyone has a sustainability related goal to work towards - this helps to ensure that sustainability becomes everybody's job and responsibility and helps embed it into all aspects of the organisation.

- **Community actions:** Implement actions that benefit the community. Initiatives could range from adopting a local green space for regular clean-ups to sponsoring educational programmes for local schools.

- **Sharing best practices:** Share the challenges and successes you have with interested parties and the wider community. By documenting and disseminating best practices, the DMO can inspire similar actions across the destination.

- **Pursue certification:** Consider obtaining external validation by working towards certifications recognised by entities such as the GSTC or Travelyst. Consider accredited destination certifications like Green Tourism, EarthCheck, Biosphere, or Green Destination. All have environmental, social, and governance criteria verified by independent third parties.

Destination wide implementation

Following the assessment and co-creation stages, key priorities within the destination will have been identified, good practices among local businesses recognised, and partners and organisations that are spearheading sustainable development and support pinpointed. The next step is to develop these into a strategic action plan. Here is a list of some potential initiatives you could consider including as part of your action plan:

- **Low-carbon transport campaigns:** Develop campaigns that encourage visitors to adopt active and/or low-carbon transport options such as biking, walking, and using public transport. Collaborate with transport providers to enhance travel and transport infrastructure, for example footpaths, bike lanes, and EV charging stations. Consider offering incentives for eco-friendly travel choices and make planning and develop partnerships that help make booking public transport as easy as possible.

- **Resource use and waste reduction:** Promote circular economy principles to minimise resource consumption and waste production in the tourism industry. Encourage energy and water efficiency, and the use of recycled materials. Support local businesses in initiatives that reduce food waste and single-use plastics, reinforcing community-wide sustainability.

- **Sustainable culinary experiences and local sourcing networks:** Promote local, seasonal, organic food in tourism and hospitality. Foster sustainable supply chains between tourism businesses and local producers.

- **Biodiversity and cultural heritage conservation:** Collaborate with local businesses, conservation organisations and community groups to invest in biodiversity regeneration projects. Focus on restoring habitats and raise awareness of the role well-managed tourism plays in generating revenue for these. Identify cultural heritage sites at risk, balancing conservation with community and visitor needs. Encourage the co-creation of experiences that celebrate and preserve local traditions.

- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Enhance the diversity and inclusivity of tourism offerings and marketing efforts to attract a wide array of visitors and talent. Provide training and awareness programmes to tourism staff to promote understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural backgrounds and accessibility needs. Implement key actions from and raise awareness of the VisitEngland Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses.

- **Workforce development:** Collaborate with educational institutions to deliver diverse, inclusive vocational training in hospitality and sustainable tourism, equipping individuals with key industry skills. Advocate for fair labour practices, ensuring living wages, equal pay, and safe conditions to create a diverse and sustainable workforce in the sector.

- **Certification:** Encourage the sustainability certification of tourism businesses, products/services to aid consumer decision-making and enhance transparency. Promote businesses that achieve sustainability certifications through all marketing channels of the LVEP, enhancing the destination's credibility and trustworthiness.

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Top Tips

- **Launch quick wins:** Start with initiatives identified for early success to build momentum and demonstrate the benefits of regenerative practices.

- **Roll out initiatives:** Implement the key strategies and actions developed through the planning phase. Ensure each initiative aligns with the long-term vision for regeneration, addressing environmental, economic, and social dimensions.

- **Use the taskforce:** Consult or create the regenerative tourism taskforce for ongoing advice and problem-solving, particularly when facing unforeseen challenges or when making significant adjustments to the plan.

- **Improve the consultation processes:** Broaden the spectrum of interested parties engaged in providing input on refining initiatives, ensuring that the regenerative destination management plan remains inclusive and reflective of diverse community needs and aspirations.

- **Invest in learning and development:** Support capacity building among interested parties, in the destination and within the community, to maintain implementation efforts. Training in regenerative practices ensures that momentum continues, and the vision continues to evolve.

- **Secure long-term support:** Seek long-term funding and resources to support the success of regenerative initiatives. Measuring impacts, communicating successes, and building partnerships with government and private entities, can help provide the necessary support for ongoing projects.

CASE STUDY:

Enhancing accessible tourism: Birmingham's collaborative approach
Birmingham has refined its approach to accessible tourism, engaging in initiatives from city centre access audits to 'Welcome All' training, led by people with health conditions and impairments. The city has maintained its commitment to involving all community members throughout its programmes and partnerships.

In collaboration with Birmingham City Council and AccessAble, industry access statements have been updated, a website developed and a toolkit for businesses has been developed in conjunction with Mima Group. Access Guides, covering parking, site entrance, indoor access, and facilities, have been enhanced with photos for clarity. This information is essential for disabled people. Accessing verified information about the services available enables them to plan ahead of their visit.

To target visitors with accessibility requirements and to showcase the efforts of business partners, the West Midlands Growth Company, enlisted freelance content creators who themselves have lived experience of disability, through AccessAble. Pippa, a wheelchair user, shared her journey from York to Birmingham, using the Access Guide for her hotel stays and enjoying cultural experiences like the Thinktank Science Museum. Alex, a leading Autism travel & tourism expert, detailed his experiences in Birmingham, highlighting staff attentiveness and knowledge at various establishments. The next phase of the project involves further improvements to Visit Birmingham, aiming for a comprehensive resource of travel and accommodation information for people with accessibility requirements. Additionally, video content created by people with accessibility requirements will provide valuable insights for future visitors and their companions.

Flavourful Journeys - Bristol's Culinary Tourism Evolution

Bristol's culinary scene, brimming with independent flair, spurred the development of a strategic culinary tourism initiative. Inspired by Kalpna Woolf's 91 Ways project, which celebrated diversity through food, the city sought to showcase its rich communities and sustainable practices.

Despite initial funding hurdles, a successful bid for Discover England Funds (DEF) paved the way for collaboration with the World Food Travel Association (WFTA). Through stakeholder engagement, surveys, and local industry meetings, Bristol crafted a comprehensive food tourism strategy, complete with itineraries and guides, finalised in 2018/19.

The initiative garnered widespread media attention and prestigious accolades, including the 'Best Culinary Destination' award at the 2019 Food Travel Awards, cementing Bristol's status as a culinary hub. Even amidst pandemic challenges, online initiatives maintained support for local businesses.

Additionally, the initiative increased commercial membership from food and drink establishments, highlighting the strategy's credibility. Its enduring relevance, referenced years later, speaks to its impact.

Building on this success, Bristol extended its approach to Bath, enriching the region's culinary offerings and integrating local cuisine into their destination management plan. Bristol's attainment of Gold Sustainable Food City status in 2021 further underscored its commitment to sustainable food systems. Looking ahead, aspirations include pursuing the Culinary Capitals programme and deepening collaboration with the World Food Travel Association, leveraging global insights to further enhance Bristol's culinary reputation.

Bristol Food Network, in collaboration with Bristol City Council, has now released Bristol Good Food 2030: A One City Framework for Action. The framework aims to transform the city's food system within the decade, supporting its ambitions on health, climate, biodiversity, and social justice.

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Step 6: Measure and report

After setting a strategic course and defining clear KPIs, Step 6 focuses on measuring the effectiveness of your collective activities. Evaluating the progress that both your organisation and your destination have made against those KPIs in Step 4, is crucial for understanding impact, ensuring accountability, and guiding continuous improvement.

Setting and monitoring progress

- **Performance metrics:** Outline specific indicators your destination can track to measure the effectiveness of sustainable and regenerative tourism practices. The indicators should be measurable and meaningful to stakeholders, informing SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound). Here are some examples:

Impact Area	Example KPIs
Environment impacts	• Carbon footprint per visitor and carbon footprint reduction per business • Water and energy efficiency within the tourism sector • Waste reduction rates • Percentage increase in renewable energy usage • Improvements in local biodiversity rates • Percentage of land designated managed to support wildlife • Number of businesses offering 20% or more plant-based food items on menus • Number of businesses holding a GSTC recognised sustainable tourism certification (e.g. B-Corp, Green Tourism, Green Gauge, Green Key, Travelife).
Economic impacts	• Employment from sustainable tourism ventures • Revenue increase from eco-friendly and local businesses • Investments in sustainable infrastructure • Increase in spread of visitor across the LVEP, dwell time and spend • Percentage growth of businesses in neighbourhoods and/or traditionally less-visited areas • Percentage of local businesses paying a living wage
Social impact	• Resident satisfaction with tourism • Tourism impact on residents' sense of place • Number of impact projects initiated or supported by the LVEP annually • Funds (£) raised through charitable/non-profit DMO supported initiatives • Number of volunteer hours delivered by LVEP staff for community-based projects • Visitor and resident satisfaction • Number of engagements between residents and the LVEP • Number of collaborative projects co-designed and developed in partnership with local neighbourhoods and communities • Sense of civic pride, ownership and/or belonging for their city and/or neighbourhood

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- **Frameworks:**
  - **Tourism focused:** GDS-Index, GSTC Criteria, UN Tourism Framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism (for advanced users), European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS) for sustainable destination management (2016).

  - **Generic:** Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), UN SDGs.

- **Data collection:** Implement a system that regularly collects data for each KPI. This involves gathering quantitative and qualitative data from public authorities, suppliers, NGOs, surveys, and companies offering services like resident sentiment analysis and social media listening. AI-powered tools can also reduce the workload.

- **Data management:** Develop a strategy with reliable tools to capture and manage data centrally. This can be done in Excel, but a purpose-built database or a tool such as the GDS-Index simplifies this approach and can also provide benchmarking and analysis of performance (see Appendix 2). For advanced users with a dedicated budget for measurement, there are tools from vendors such as Mabrian or DataAppeal that provide high end functionality for measuring sustainability in a destination.

- **Analysis:** Analyse the collected data to assess progress towards each goal. This analysis should highlight successes, identify areas for improvement, benchmark against peers where possible, and detect any deviations from expected outcomes.

- **Monitoring and reporting:** Regularly monitor progress towards the internal goals. Transparency not only builds credibility but also holds the organisation accountable to its commitments.

Reporting and Transparency

- **Internal review:** Share findings internally to ensure that all team members are informed of progress, challenges and areas requiring attention. This fosters a culture of transparency and collective responsibility for meeting goals.

- **Engagement with interested parties:** Communicate progress through detailed reports and updates. This open line of communication ensures they are engaged and can provide feedback or support as needed.

- **Public reporting:** Share progress publicly to demonstrate accountability and celebrate achievements. Use frameworks like the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards to disclose details about strategies, initiatives, and impacts. Use various platforms to highlight successes and address challenges. For example, Gothenburg in Sweden demonstrates good practice in destination reporting. Check out their annual sustainability reports.

- **Data based policy development:** Use insights gained from measurement activities to refine and adjust destination policies, strategies and actions. This approach ensures that the destination remains on track to meet its goals and can respond effectively to changing circumstances or new opportunities.

- **Continuous improvement:** Encourage a culture of continuous learning within the destination and among interested parties. Share lessons learned, best practices and case studies to build knowledge and inspire further action.

Step 7: Tell the story

Storytelling is vital in strategic communications and stakeholder engagement, weaving narratives of a destination's environmental, social, and economic initiatives. Yet, its potential is often overlooked hindered by obstacles like lack of understanding and limited information.

Stories have the unique capacity to engage, enlighten and inspire action among diverse audiences. By narrating your journey through the challenges and triumphs of adopting regenerative practices, destinations can make a deeper connection with their audience, inspiring new products, attracting visitors in the off-season and highlighting innovative events.

Great stories enable the destination's brand to become more:

- Relevant
- Inspiring
- Trusted
- Innovative
- Differentiated and unique

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Inspire action through stories

In shaping communication strategies, reflect on how your destination actualises the transformative aspirations of today's responsible visitor. Consider the following:

- **Positive transformation:** Good communication can demonstrate to visitors and event organisers how they can contribute to improving a destination, whether by preserving its natural beauty or enriching its cultural heritage.

- **Certification promotion:** Support those accommodation providers, visitor experiences and restaurants that have achieved sustainability certifications. Spread the word and make this information readily available to visitors, as well as tour operators and event planners. This helps them to support responsible businesses.

- **Community engagement:** Where can your communications shine a light on the active support for local community projects - from food distribution programmes to educational initiatives and nature-based actions, as well as community led tourism projects?

- **Honesty and transparency:** Be careful of overstating and keep your communication honest in its sustainability claims and challenges. An open dialogue about these challenges not only builds trust but also invites collaborative solutions.

- **Integrated marketing:** Make sure your brand values include the regenerative goals embedded within your strategy. Each campaign should be appealing to responsible travellers and position your destination as a leader in responsible tourism.

A destination's storyline does not just inform, it inspires action and builds stronger bonds between your destination, visitors, and the wider world.

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F.   Conclusion

Creating a legacy

The ultimate goal of regenerative tourism is to leave places better than we found them. By adopting a holistic approach, destinations can ensure their landscapes, communities, and economies remain vibrant and resilient for current and future generations.

With the rollout of the new LVEP destination landscape across England, which has created a national portfolio of strategy and high-performing LVEPs, we are at a unique point in time where we have the right organisations in place across the country to be able to drive forward this important work, working collaboratively across the public and private sectors.

Becoming a more regenerative destination is a journey, and all destinations will have a unique staring point and path to take. The journey will be fluid and ever-changing, and the pace of progress may depend on various factors, but the most important thing is to start. Together, we can position our destinations as global leaders in responsible tourism, fostering a sustainable and regenerative future.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. We look forward to working closely with you, and to witnessing the positive changes you will bring to your communities and the world.
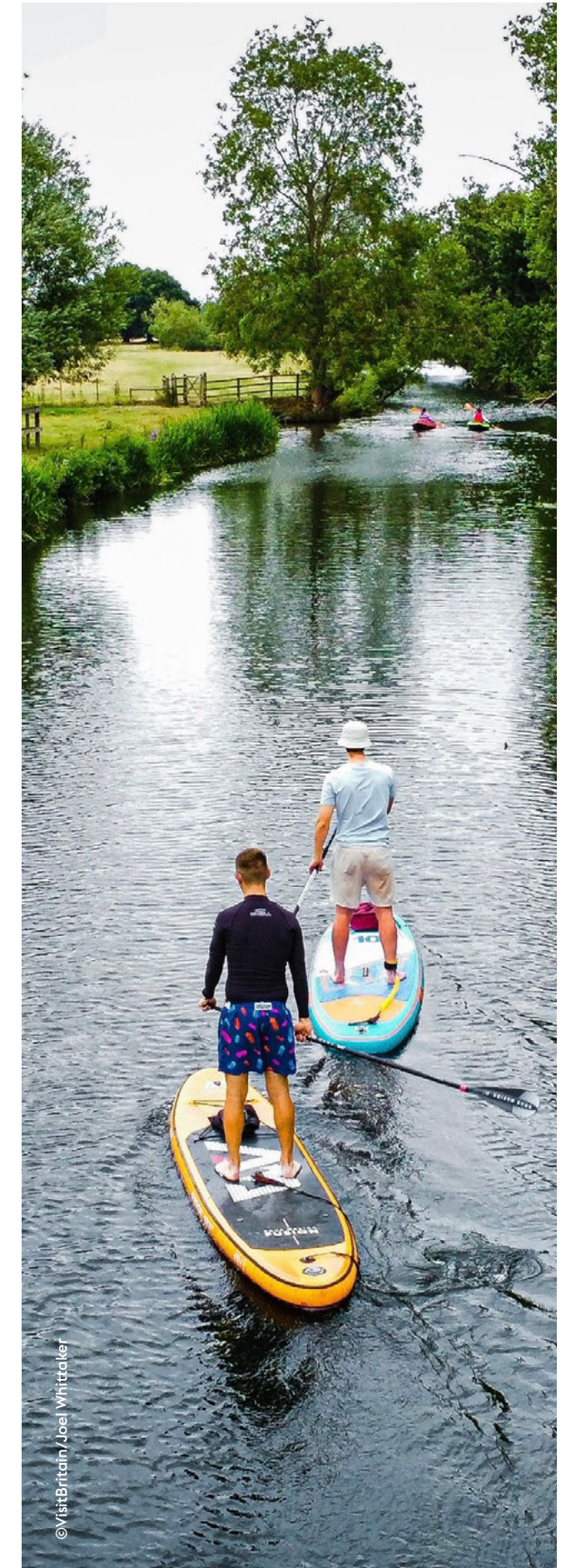
G.   Appendix 1: Useful Links

VisitBritain Business Events Learning and Development Hub

- Sustainable Events Guide and Checklists
- Advice for delegates and Event Venues on Sustainability
- Events Legacy and Impact Toolkit
- DEI Pathway for Events
- VisitBritain Business Events Legacy and Impact Toolkit

- VisitEngland Business Advice Hub
  - VisitEngland Guide to Regenerative Tourism - Guide for businesses

- Visit England Accessibility and Inclusion Toolkit for Destinations (available to LVEPs on request from VisitEngland)
- Global Destination Sustainability Index GDS-Index – sustainability benchmarking and performance improvement programme for DMOs and LVEPs
- GDS-Academy – learning and development for destination professionals and their value chains

Further reading

- Redefining Success – How DMOs can Drive Social & Community Well-Being. Excellent whitepaper from City Destination Alliance and Toposophy.
- VisitBritain Business Events Legacy and Impact Toolkit – developed in partnership with #Meet4Impact. Provides superb approach and recommendations on measuring impact of events in a destination.
- Navigating the Sustainability Journey: The Impact of Mandatory Reporting on Travel & Tourism
- Global Sustainable Tourism Council Destination Criteria.

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H. Appendix 2: English Core Cities Project Overview

VisitEngland is committed to supporting destinations across the country to become more sustainable. In 2023 VisitEngland initiated a pilot project in collaboration with the English Core Cities (Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield) to kick start their journey to a regenerative destination management approach, working in partnership with the GDS-Movement.

As part of the pilot project the English Core Cities benchmarked their sustainability practices using the GDS-Index in 2023 and 2024. They participated in various online and offline capacity-building workshops and received coaching support from the GDS-Movement with a core objective to develop and enhance their action plans and performance in sustainable and regenerative tourism management.

Global Destinations Sustainability Index (GDS-Index)

The GDS-Index is a performance improvement programme to assess and accelerate the progress of a destination's regenerative journey. As a paid service, the GDS-Index measures, benchmarks, and enhances the sustainability strategies, action plans, and initiatives of over 100 destination management organisations, municipal authorities, and their tourism supply chains.

Co-founded in 2016 by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), City Destinations Alliance (CityDNA), IMEX Group, and MCI, the GDS-Index offers an unparalleled resource for visitors, destinations, municipalities and event planners looking for destinations that offer the best in sustainable performance. Find out more at www.gds.earth/index/

In 2024 the GDS-Index is used by 17 UK destinations, including the Core Cities and over 100 destinations globally.

How the GDS-Index Works:

- **Benchmarking:** The GDS-Index comprehensively assesses the sustainability performance of destinations based on 77 quantitative and qualitative criteria, providing a benchmark against which they can measure themselves against local, competitor and international destinations. It holistically looks at aspects such as environmental strategy and infrastructure, social sustainability performance, industry supplier support, and the destinations own strategy and initiatives.

- **Knowledge sharing:** Destinations participating in the GDS-Index gain access to best practices and case studies from around the world, allowing them to learn from others' successes and challenges.

- **Collaboration and engagement:** By providing a common framework, the GDS-Index facilitates collaboration between different interested parties in the tourism and events industry, including local governments, businesses, and residents.

- **Action plan:** By identifying specific areas of strength and weakness, and matching them to best practice examples, the GDS-Index helps destinations quickly set objectives, develop an action plan and priority list that is aligned with global standards, such as the UN SDGs.

- **Performance measurement:** The index offers a powerful online system to measure and report on the sustainability performance of destinations, covering both the management of the destination itself and its supply chain. Destinations can use the GDS-Index to track their progress over time, identifying trends and making data-driven decisions to improve their performance.
- **Marketing advantage:** It provides recognition for destinations that are leading in sustainability, helping them to market themselves as responsible destinations to event organisers and visitors.

"The GDS-Index has been invaluable in identifying our gaps and areas for improvement as well as demonstrating where our destination is performing well. The report and session with the GDS-Movement team provides a robust analysis of our performance and gives ideas and feedback on how to move forward for the next year. The team is really supportive and has guided us every step of the way."

Lisa Owen,
Head of Business Tourism,
Marketing Liverpool.

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I. Appendix 3: Glossary

Biodiversity Conservation - Efforts aimed at protecting and restoring biodiversity within tourism destinations.

Capacity Building - Efforts to enhance the skills, knowledge, and abilities of individuals and organisations involved in tourism.

Circular Economy - An economic system aimed at eliminating waste and the continual use of resources.

Climate Action - Efforts aimed at reducing carbon emissions to net zero to mitigate climate change and invest in resilience and climate adaptation.

Community Involvement - The active participation of local communities in the development and management of tourism initiatives.

Community-Based Tourism - Tourism initiatives that are planned, managed, and benefited by local communities.

DDP (Destination Development Partnerships) - Will set regional priorities for the visitor economy and receive government funding to focus on key objectives. Each DDP will be a partnership of LVEPs across a geography, with one taking the lead.

Destination Organisations - Are likely to be operating below county or city region level. They will contribute to the management and marketing of destinations, maintaining close contacts with tourism businesses. They will need to collaborate with LVEPs to ensure that local needs and priorities are represented in the destination management plan.

Destination Sustainability Self-Assessment - A tool provided by VisitEngland to help destinations evaluate their sustainability practices.

Economic Development - Efforts to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community by creating and/or retaining jobs and supporting or growing incomes.

Economic Impact - The effect that tourism activities have on the local economy.

Environmental Certifications (e.g., B-Corp, Green Key, Travelife) - Certifications that validate an organisation's commitment to environmental sustainability.

Environmental Conservation - Efforts to preserve, protect, or restore natural environments and ecosystems.

Environmental Impact - The effect that tourism activities have on the natural environment.

EU Green Claims Directive - EU regulations aimed at ensuring the accuracy and transparency of environmental claims.

GDS-Academy (Global Destination Sustainability Academy) - An educational platform for destination professionals provided by the GDS-Movement.

GDS-Index (Global Destination Sustainability Index) - A benchmarking tool used to measure and improve the sustainability performance of destinations.

GDS-Movement (Global Destination Sustainability Movement) - A pioneering, data-driven international change agency that acts to catalyse socio-economic and environmental transformation in cities and regions across the world.

Green Team - A group of employees within an organisation dedicated to promoting and implementing sustainability practices.

Greenwashing - Misleading claims about the environmental benefits of a product, service, or organisation.

GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Council) - An organisation that establishes and manages global standards for sustainable tourism.

Impact Metrics - Measurements used to evaluate the positive and negative impacts of tourism activities.

Inclusive Tourism - Tourism that is accessible and beneficial to all, including marginalised and underserved communities.

KPI (Key Performance Indicator) - A measurable value that demonstrates how effectively an organisation is achieving key business objectives.

LVEP (Local Visitor Economy Partnerships) They will lead, market and manage the destinations in their geography, collaborating with other destination organisations, local government and businesses.

Maturity Pathway - The stages of development that destinations follow to achieve sustainability and regeneration.

Net-Zero Tourism - Tourism practices that result in net zero carbon emissions.

Public-Private Partnerships - Collaborations between government entities and private sector companies to achieve mutual goals.

Public Reporting - The practice of sharing progress and outcomes of sustainability initiatives with the public.

Regenerative Tourism - A tourism approach that aims to leave places better than before, enhancing ecosystems, communities, and cultural heritage.

Resident Sentiment Analysis - The process of gathering and analysing data on residents' opinions and attitudes towards tourism in their community.

Social Equity - Fairness and justice in social policy, particularly in terms of access to resources and opportunities within tourism.

Social Impact - The effect that tourism activities have on local communities and their well-being.

Stakeholder Engagement - The process of involving those who are affected by or can affect tourism activities in decision-making processes.

Sustainability - Meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainability Certifications (e.g., Green Tourism, EarthCheck, Biosphere) - Certifications that validate a business or destination's commitment to sustainable practices.

Sustainability Policy - A publicly available document outlining an organisation's commitment and goals related to sustainability.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - A collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.