



Visit Dean Wye Destination Marketing Plan 2023



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1. Introduction

The Destination Marketing Plan for the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley outlines the objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the destination in 2023. The Head of Tourism along with the Board of Directors will use this plan to develop marketing tactics for campaigns and monitor and evaluate all marketing activity against KPIs. It will be reviewed by the Marketing Subgroup quarterly, and by the Board bi-annually (March and October in line with SLA reporting to the Forest of Dean District Council). The marketing priorities set out in the plan are identified by the Marketing Subgroup, the Board of Trustees and Ignyte.

2. Situational Analysis

The Organisation

Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism Limited operating under the brand name Visit Dean Wye is a membership-based Destination Management Organisation (DMO). We support over 300 business across the visitor economy through our partnership packages. We are a cross-border DMO businessesnting both businesses in England and Wales and covering the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Monmouthshire. Our Board of Directors consists of 8 individuals. The Board is elected every year with the newest 3 directors remaining in place to ensure a diverse mix of businesses and individuals are represented. In addition to the board, the organisation employs a freelance Head of Tourism.

We have a very close working relationship with the Forest of Dean District Council who fund us annually as part of a Service Level Agreement. The Service Level Agreement is reviewed every three years in March 2023.

We outsource our partnership support to a company called Ignyte who specialise in destination support.

Visit Dean Wye works collaboratively with the DMOs in the region: Cotswolds Tourism (Visit Cotswolds), Marketing Cheltenham, and Visit Gloucester, and, further afield, Visit West. We also work with Visit Gloucestershire who are a CIC wholly funded by Gloucestershire County Council to provide support to the tourism sector through skills generation and sustainability.

We also work closely with national tourism bodies, Visit Britain and Visit England, through regular DMO calls and on projects like TXGB (Visit Britain's ticket selling

site). Through funding from the Department of International Trade we have been able to join the European Travel Organisers Association in 2023 and benefit from shared UKInbound Membership with Visit Cotswolds.

3. Market Conditions

Market Conditions There have been many dramatic changes in the tourism industry over the past couple of years which will continue to have an impact in 2023.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

Prior to 2020 the UK tourism industry had become one of the fastest-growing sectors, with previous value forecasts predicting that it would reach £257bn by 2025. On March 9, 2020, a state of emergency was declared in Britain due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Historic downturns in business activity and travel occurred – with devastating impacts. From mid-March to mid-July 2021, COVID-19 triggered a near-total shutdown in international tourism to and from the UK with a few specific exceptions. Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the hospitality and leisure sectors have been the worst affected by this coronavirus, losing over half (54%) of their monthly business income (Aldermore). As the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley's tourism infrastructure is dependent on these small businesses helping them survive the pandemic was crucial.

During this time Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism dramatically adjusted plans and resources to ensure organisational sustainability and adapted strategies to serve the needs of its visitor economy businesses. We were fortunate to see very few of our tourism businesses fold through help and support such as the furlough scheme and also the funding through business grants and the recovery effort. The Forest of Dean and Wye Valley was also in the fortunate position of being one of the destinations that audiences were crying out for, our wide-open spaces, lush green forests were a haven to city dwellers who longed for the outdoors. The Forest of Dean and Wye Valley also benefitted as people migrated out of London into the area as the working from home lifestyle outlasted the pandemic. In 2020 and 2021 London saw more millennials leave than move into the area, a trend that had not been seen before in decades.

Health and safety campaigns such as the 'We are Good to Go' mark from Visit Britain were instituted to secure the trust of the traveling public and residents. Sales and marketing recovery plans were also created to ensure a rebound in the travel and tourism industry. Over two years later, FDWVT is still in the recovery stages. Vaccinations and pent-up demand over the summer period in 2021 (when restrictions were eased) showed strong signs of recovery with businesses reporting strong occupancy and visitation levels. As we enter 2023, we again find ourselves entering uncharted territory as the with strong domestic leisure seen during the pandemic didn't transfer into 2022 with many of our partners struggling to recover to

pre-pandemic levels.

World Economy and the Cost-of-Living Crisis

Travel volumes in 2022 still remain below pre-pandemic peaks and household spending power is coming under immense pressure from rising costs. This coupled with the likelihood of a global economic recession makes for bleak reading for tourism. Nonetheless, stronger demand and rising commodity prices and the ongoing weakening of the US dollar should all be supportive of the outlook for tourism especially for destinations deemed value for travellers.

Visit Britain prediction for 2023 is to achieve 16.9 million visits, up 73% on 2021 but only 41% of the 2019 level; and £9.0 billion to be spent by inbound tourists, up 59% on 2020 but only 32% of the 2019 level. Several other factors are likely to prevent inbound tourism recovering to pre-COVID levels even by the end of 2023. These include the economic situation, with demand hit by unemployment and fiscal tightening; new behavioural habits affecting leisure and business travel, both is likely to have a major impact on the levels we can expect to see in 2023.

Technology

Technology continues to play a fundamental role in the travel and booking process. The tourist industry is increasingly using information technology to try to serve their consumers better, technology has become critical in ensuring business continuity. Most industries have become increasingly digitised over the last decade. The tourism industry has gone to great lengths to cultivate its online presence. The growth of Online Travel Agents in 2020 was staggering due to the pandemic and customers wanting to book with trusted brands with flexible booking and cancellation policies and providing the ability to create an itinerary. In 2019, 66.7% of bookings were made directly on operator websites while online marketplace bookings made up 9.1%. In 2022 57% of global travellers booked with an OTA compared with booking directly. Encouraging visitors to book through our website will be key in 2023 to show our value to our accommodation partners will also be a priority.

AirBnB, Flipkey and other similar organisations have grown the accommodation sector. Alongside that, the 'experience' market has expanded with accommodation providers such as Airbnb and Booking.com branching out to offer experience packages alongside other providers TripAdvisor, Klout (Hong Kong company) and GetYourGuide. According to this year's Booking.com trends research, almost half (46%) of global travellers state they will use an app that makes it fast and easy to explore and book activities in real-time while travelling, and a similar number (44%) plan to use an app that allows them to pre-plan activities, so they always have the answers in one place. The Forest of Dean and Wye Valley have lots of our accommodation partners that are bookable through OTAs however little or no

attractions and experiences. Encouraging partners to embrace this new travel trend will be key in driving recovery in 2023.

There are still serious questions of the lack of regulation required for these providers and the impact they have on the rental market for residents. However, the Welsh Government is currently out to consultation on [new regulations and licensing of its guest houses and non-serviced accommodation](#). This coupled with the new law that second homes which states that currently, properties that are available to let for at least 140 days, and that are actually let for at least 70 days, will pay rates rather than council tax. The change will increase these thresholds to being available to let for at least 252 days and actually let for at least 182 days in any 12-month period. Ensuring that our Welsh partners have the correct information and feel supported in feeding back to government on these changes will be a priority in 2023 as well as making sure that any changes made to legislation are communicated in timely and impartial manner.

The Filter Bubble

Despite the endless resource offered by the internet, future travellers will live in a filter bubble created by personalisation algorithms and homogenous social networks. Algorithms are becoming increasingly sophisticated as artificial intelligence takes the lead offering tailored suggestions of destinations to visit, places to stay and things to do based on your current preferences, previous trips, and key contextual factors such as weather and popularity. According to this year's booking.com trends, six in 10 people who say they want tech to offer them a 'wildcard destination' and surprise options that would introduce them to something entirely new in the coming year. This is of benefit to the Forest of Dean as it is not a tick box destination such as Bath and the Cotswolds. However, on the other hand, it means that less well-known Tourism brands like ours will have to work hard to stay on the traveller's radar as the filter bubble will serve content that people are searching for.

Artificial Intelligence

The role of Artificial Intelligence is increasingly streamlining customer service. Chatbots are becoming one of the most used tools on websites and messenger apps due to their efficiency. Chatbot technology continues to get more sophisticated with AI and machine learning and is getting better in simulating human-like conversation. Increasingly chatbots will be used as a personalised booking assistant helping tourists make the right decisions based on their preferences and budget. In 2020, 67% of consumers worldwide used a chatbot for customer support. According to Gartner research, by 2025, 85% of customer interactions will take place via these "smart" conversationalists. We will explore the Chatbot option for the www.visitdeanwye.co.uk website as the technology develops as part of the bigger considerations around the role and resourcing of the DMO. Having monitored the

marketing inbox for a few months it seems most content people are contacting us about could have been served to them through the website.

Influencers and social media

According to a Nielsen study, over 90% of consumers from various markets trust people in their network—people they know and follow. An influencer is a user on social media or a blog who has established credibility in a specific industry. The influencer has access to a large audience and can persuade others by their authenticity and reach. There are mixed opinions on the effectiveness of influencers to businesses within the tourism sector however with TripAdvisor placing more emphasis on them it is likely they will become an increasingly important part of the booking process in 2023. A survey conducted by Skift in US, UK, Australia, China and India showed 45% of travellers aged 16-38 (Millennials and Gen Z) across all countries considered a destination's "Instagram worthiness" when planning a vacation and at least 26% following travel-related accounts or influencers. There is a growing significance of word-of-mouth and social proof marketing of prompting visitors. For the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley to remain visible to travellers in 2023, influencer marketing will need to be a key part of the marketing plan for the destination. We will build customer reviews into our online presence. Working with our local influencers such as Igers Herefordshire, Iger Glos and Igers Monmouthshire will help us deliver content to other influencers and help us be seen as an influencer friendly destination. In 2022 as part of the Find Your Freedom Campaign we worked with Encore PR to source a range of influencers to experience the destination. The campaign was incredibly successful achieving a reach of XXX (Mark can you add in influencer stats for campaign). This year's campaigns require investment through sponsorship, working with social influencers to raise the profile of the destination but also any associated sponsor's brands could be a good option for campaigns.

Sustainability, growth of eco-tourism and over tourism

Sustainability continues to be a key concern in tourism. From managing the ecological impact to waste management, all these concerns are important for sustainability of our tourism partners. In 2020 the conversation about over tourism was put on the back burner due to COVID-19 however we can expect it to ramp up again in European city hotspots such as the Cotswolds as visitor numbers begin to recover. There is more scrutiny over the balance between protecting communities and cultural capital. In a study carried out by Skift, 60% of travellers would be keen to have access to a service (app/website) that recommends destinations where an increase in tourism would have a positive impact on the local community. This presents an opportunity for the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley by weaving sustainability messaging throughout of the community and consideration should be given to undertaking research on the Economic Impact of Tourism and how that improves the resident's way of life.

The authentic experience and the rise of 'slow travel' for future travellers, will be important than price. Travellers are opting to purchase experiences over things. Skift's Affluent Traveller Survey 'found that 67% of travellers would rather spend their money on activities than on a nicer hotel, up 8% from last year.' Choosing experiences is a travel trend that has grown across all generations and demographics. There is also an emerging trend for "slow travel" – making genuine connections with local people and cultures along the way. There is a huge opportunity here to provide visitors with added value experiences that fulfil more than just the tick-box factor. According to TripAdvisor's 2020 Experience Trends Report, family-friendly activities, classes and workshops, and health/wellness experiences are the top-growing categories that travellers are booking during their trips. Promoting the Forest of Dean as a place of authentic experiences will be important in positioning in 2023 and will be an important selling point for the destination.

The Competitive Landscape and Local Visitor Economy Partnerships

Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) across the country will continue to compete for the domestic market in 2023. This has serious implications for our ability to deliver visitors firstly in terms of numbers as the domestic market is a lot smaller than the global market but also because of budget. FDWVT has a small core marketing budget of £36,000 to spend on advertising. Campaigns will need to be financed through external sources of income. Other DMOs in the area have much bigger budgets to work with for example Visit Bath has a marketing budget of over £500,000.

In 2023 we will differentiate ourselves from our nearby DMO's by positioning ourselves as an adventure destination for GenZ and Millennials focusing on our close to nature glamping and camping offer and through promoting our high-end boutique accommodation alongside our incredible outdoor activities offer and excellent food and drink. We will also use our distinct history and heritage and the stories associated with the landscape to engage audiences and pique interest of slightly older audiences. Resource wise our DMO is much smaller. We are fortunate to be able to outsource effectively a lot of our core activity such as partner relationships and our digital marketing. Our relationship with Visit Britain needs to be nurtured to ensure that we are considered not just for funding opportunities but as a potential content partner.

At the time of writing the landscape for DMOs is changing. The de Bois report, the government's response to the report, and a national series of DMO round tables have now left a fairly clear progression for the planned future structure of tourism in England. There will be three levels of DMOs/tourist boards in the national structure:

Tier 1 (Destination Development Partnerships): there would eventually be 15-20 nationally, covering the whole country, but only 1 pilot DDP in current CSR period.

Their role would be to develop and oversee the delivery of a Destination Development Plan and lead on advocacy, partnership working, funding bids, major events, data and business support. They would receive some core funding from central government in order to meet the strategic challenges identified by Government (e.g., sustainability, skills, inclusive tourism and levelling up

Tier 2 (Local Visitor Economy Partnerships): c.40 nationally. They would work closely with their DDPs, have strategic input and be a key delivery partner. They would co-ordinate bids for external funding both for themselves and for Tier 3 DMOs within their partnership. They will be engaged in destination 'management', not just marketing but need a geography makes sense to the consumer and businesses.

Tier 3 (other DMOs): unsupported by Visit Britain they are generally primarily focused on marketing and local priorities.

The proposal is for a Cotswolds+ LVEP to cover the whole area of the Cotswolds AONB, all of Gloucestershire and all of West Oxfordshire. While Cotswolds Tourism would be the accountable body they would work in partnership with Visit Gloucestershire, who would lead on strategic work around the key strategic challenges (inclusion, skills, sustainability, data, transport, levelling up, etc), and in a more formalised way with the other DMOs (Cheltenham, Forest of Dean, Gloucester) in the area.

The application for LVEP status is currently underway and we hope to submit our application under a working name of Cotswolds + in the second wave of application in April. Subsequently approaches will be made to neighbouring areas to assess potential partners for a larger DDP area. The expectation is that a successful LVEP would position the area well for a leading role within any future DDP. An expression of interest has been submitted to Visit Britain to indicate the future way of working for our LVEP. A MOU/Agreement is being created which outlines roles and responsibilities of each DMO and the future arrangements with regards to funding.

Finding our Cornerstone

Every destination must compete for their share of the world's attention, customers and investment. To compete, people need to be aware of a destination, have a positive impression, and want to visit to experience the community and meet its people. This is achieved through clearly developing, articulating and managing the destinations brand. Efforts must be made to promote, market, sell and engage potential visitors. And all of this must be reinforced again and again. Destination organisations are uniquely positioned to do this. Addressing this need for destination promotion and tourism product development is for the benefit and well-being of every person in a community. It is a common good. It is an essential investment to develop opportunities and build quality of life to benefit all the residents. It should be perceived as a shared community value by residents. A lot of emphasis has been placed on creating our brand pillars and messaging – working with our local authorities we should start to build our pillars into their messaging especially around placemaking. The three distinct Pillars that set the apart from other destinations are:

The natural environment – wild, untamed, wildlife, adrenalin fuelled; ancient forests and wild rivers, tranquil and unspoilt; the topography: cliff tops and valleys;

The heritage & culture – local history/heritage and folklore and events, arts and crafts, sports

Unique and independent – food and drink, retail – local products, unique accommodation (types/views/situations)

4. Current Audiences

As with many DMOs there has been a lack of coordinated audience research over the past three years due to the exceptional circumstances created by the pandemic. The one source of consistent information we have is from the South West Research Company and the Economic Impact Reports they create each year for the year before. This report examines the volume and value of tourism and the impact of visitor expenditure on the local economy in the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley in 2020. The Forest of Dean and Wye Valley marketing area consists of the Forest of Dean local authority district and also extends into Monmouthshire and Herefordshire counties and a small section of Tewkesbury local authority district. From this we can see that in 2020 the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley had:

- 3,478,700 total staying and day trips
- visitor related spend of £169,534,000
- 3,470 (2,479 FTEs) estimated people employed by tourism
- 3,131,000 total day trips
- day trip visitor spend of £101,600,000
- visiting friends and relatives spend of £2,018,000
- 323,500 domestic overnight stays
- 24,200 international overnight stays
- 983,200 domestic visitor nights
- 148,200 international visitor nights
- £57,121,000 domestic visitor spend
- £8,701,000 international visitor spend

Key statistics	
UK average nights per trip	3.04
UK average spend per trip	£176.57
UK average spend per night	£58.10
Overseas average nights per trip	6.12
Overseas average spend per trip	£359.55
Overseas average spend per night	£58.71
Average spend per day visit	£32.45

Forest of Dean and Wye Valley – Impacts of Covid-19

Staying visitor measures % change compared to 2019	Trips	Nights	Spend
UK staying visitors	-55%	-52%	-49%
Overseas staying visitors	-76%	-81%	-82%
All staying visitors	-58%	-60%	-59%

Day visitor measures % change compared to 2019	Trips	Spend
Urban day visitors	-62%	-62%
Countryside day visitors	-42%	-42%
Coastal day visitors	0%	0%
All day visitors	-50%	-51%

Business turnover change compared to 2019	Staying visitor related	Day visitor related	Total visitor related
Value lost	£124,244,000	£117,459,000	£241,703,000

It's important to note that 2020 was the height of the pandemic and restrictions for the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley to achieve these figures during a pandemic year is an incredible achievement and testament to the marketing undertaken to domestic visitors during the periods when restrictions were lifted.

In 2021 the South West Research Company were commissioned to undertake an Economic Impact study for the Forest of Dean only. We cannot therefore make comparisons when looking at the data together. Whilst this does pose a problem in giving a picture for the whole of the destination, the height of the pandemic years (2020 and 2021) was so dramatically different to other years and each other that any comparisons that could be made would not enlighten us to any booking patterns. The data must also not be looked at to make assumptions about the Wye Valley by deduction as both years were very different. We cannot look at the data to gauge recovery across the destination. The Economic Impact Study for the Forest of Dean (only) showed that:

- 2,029,000 total staying and day trips
- Visitor related spend of £105,053,000
- 210,000 overnight trips amounting to 726,000 staying visitor nights and a staying visitor spend of £42,065,000
- 1,819,000-day trips, with a visitor spend of £62,988,000
- Tourism industry supported 2,180 Full Time Equivalent Jobs.

COVID Recovery

The 2022 Economic Impact data for the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley will not be available until later this year. However, we can use other data to inform us to the recovery of the destination.

Passenger Study

We can track passenger figures from our rail and bus networks to see usage into the destination. Although these figures cannot account for the majority of the destination's audience, being a rural location most of our visitors travel by car, they do give a useful base for us to track into the future from.

Bus usage figures show a really strong recovery with most routes beating pre-pandemic figures. This could be driven by the different initiatives that have been introduced including Kids Travel Free schemes and the £2 flat fare. It is also interesting to note that figures coming out of Gloucester are beating those going into the city. Stagecoach have been working closely with GWR in 2022 to try and ensure their arrivals into Gloucester align with departures from the Transport hub, it is likely that this is paying off for the Forest of Dean.

Rail Travel

Station name	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022 Entries and exits: Total	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022 Entries and exits: Rank	Apr 2020 to Mar 2021 Entries and exits: Total	Change between Apr 2020 to Mar 2021 and Apr 2021 to Mar 2022 (percentage)	Apr 2019 to Mar 2020 Entries and exits: Total	Change between Apr 2019 to Mar 2020 and Apr 2021 to Mar 2022 (percentage)
Chepstow	147,434	1,305	35,062	320	229,288	-36
Gloucester	1,213,642	309	394,698	207	1,546,910	-22
Lydney	128,444	1,383	34,990	267	193,248	-34
Newport (South Wales)	1,753,550	216	543,356	223	2,717,124	-35

Rail travel unfortunately has not fared so well. This can be attributed to the loss of commuters due to changes in working patterns and the rise of working from home especially for the urban destinations of Gloucester and Newport. Anecdotally GWR have said they are seeing a rise in Leisure trips to help take the place of the lost commuters.

Town Centre Footfall Reports

We are also able to use Forest of Dean District Council's footfall data to look at visitation into the towns. Again, this data is only for the Forest of Dean so doesn't represent the whole destination but does provide a general trend for recovery.

2022 figures not out yet – due in February check back

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/regeneration/town-centre-monitoring/>

5. Target Audiences

We can split our target audiences into two categories quick win/warm audiences and cool/developmental audiences.

Domestic Millennial Couples Dual Income No Kids (Dink)

Traditionally we have targeted a slightly older age bracket for DINK couples of 45+ however research by Culture Hive undertaken in how that millennials now have more disposable income and are more likely to spend it on leisure activities and going away, they are also one of the highest arts attender categories. The high price point of some of our accommodation providers means that targeting this more affluent audience will be key. They are also an audience that is highly susceptible to digital marketing especially influencer marketing. This is an area of marketing we want to build on in 2023 following the success of the Find Your Freedom campaign influencer work in 2022. We will also use the UK Shared Prosperity Funded Film Tourism Campaign to bring younger millennials into the destination through shared Social Media campaigns with Stepping Through Film and new film content through the website.

Domestic Solo Traveller

It used to be the case that in most consumers' lives periods of solo living were concentrated in young adulthood and later life. As life stages become more flexible and traditional milestones like marriage get shuffled, postponed and even repeated, consumers are experiencing life on one's own across any number of points in their life; this brings with them all the related consequences of single living into their leisure activities. The 2021 Traverse study 'Future of Millennial Travel' report said that 25% of Millennials plan to travel solo in the next 12 to 24 months. Solo travellers want memory-making experiences. Our natural backdrop and adventure activities will be appealing to the solo traveller if they are firmly positioned as enriching opportunities for self-discovery. They also allow solo-travellers to have a low-pressure experience as part of a wider group.

Domestic Family Audiences

Growth in family bookings has outpaced non-family sales since summer 2012, with the sector now accounting for almost 40% of summer bookings compared with 20% of winter sales. With a predicted revival of the dominance of the Staycation market due to the cost-of-living crisis, the domestic family audience will remain an important audience for the destination in 2023. Messaging around value for money will be important. The relatively low cost of attractions and food and drink in the city will provide good low-cost options for families concerned about money management. Families are changing in size, shape, and composition, and are far removed from the traditional 'nuclear' family. In 2023 we will make capturing these new family units through filming and photography a priority to promote inclusivity. CNN recently reported that single-parent families now make up almost 30% of families worldwide. We will also encourage our attractions in the city to consider introducing a single parent/guardian family ticket through our pricing strategy session.

6. Developmental Audiences

Marketing to bring online new audiences especially inbound visitors can take up to two years before you can expect them to visit. It involves a lot of promotion through travel trade events and through working closely with Visit Britain. We will employ a mixture of B2B and B2C marketing to target visitors to the UK. This means that in 2023 we need to build on our existing relationships with trade and tourism bodies to allow us to promote the destination meaningfully to these new audiences. We can look at Visit Britain data and our Google Analytics data to see the international audiences to target in 2023.

North American and Canadian independent travellers

The US market remains an attractive market for growth with many Americans using the low pound as an opportunity to make that once in a lifetime trip to the UK. America is the second biggest market for inbound visits (450m) to the UK and the 1st in terms of spend (£4.8bn). In 2019 the average US visitor spend was £930 on leisure in the UK. They are also a market which is more likely to travel offseason with 69% of their travel taking place between October and June. Americans have a positive perception of Britain as they ranked Britain 3rd overall among 50 nations to visit. We already have a good starting point for a strong relationship with the US as we are a key member of the Visit Britain Discover England Fund (DEF) Uncover the Cotswolds project which looked to develop the relationship between the wider Cotswolds Area and key international audiences such as North America.

The UK was the 3rd most visited European destination by Canadians in 2019 although the numbers are modest at 874,061 visitors to the UK in 2019. Top activities featuring visits from Canada to the UK include dining in restaurants, shopping and going to a pub. Culture and history are strong pulls to the UK. Canadians have a higher-than-average propensity to visit museums and art galleries, and over 4 in 10 visit historic houses and castles so the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley's rich history and heritage will appeal to this audience. Canadians are positive about Great Britain: the nation is ranked 2nd among 50 nations. The Forest of Dean and Wye Valley have an advantageous position in marketing to Canada through the Uncover the Cotswolds project. They are passionate about the outdoors. Ancestry and family history are big draws for the Canadian market and using this may be a good angle to promote the destination to the Canadian market, they are known to be repeat visitors to England and therefore deliver a good ROI (return on investment) on marketing spend.

7. Marketing Objectives

The overarching aim for the destination is one that does not change.

Mission: Grow the Tourism Economy in the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley

To position the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley as the UK's premier tourism destination

The tactics we employ to deliver this may change year on year to adapt to the changing audiences, behaviours and the landscape that we operate in. This year our objectives are as follows.

1. Create a strengthened brand by delivering activity that builds on Awareness, Image and Intention
2. Grow visitation to the destination by in 2023 (+34% from 2020) and recover economic impact by 25% to 3,478,700
3. Create organisational stability by diversifying income streams
4. To support our regional DMO partners by embedding an ethos of sharing to guide us through the LVEP formation process
5. To gather data on our visitors to inform our marketing and share our data and learning with our partners to support their promotion

6. Action Plan (strategies and tactics)

The following section is designed to be a guiding force to the Visit Dean Wye team. It will be reviewed by the Marketing Subgroup Team to ensure we are delivering on behalf of the destination and the businesses we support.

1) Create a strengthened brand by delivering activity that builds on Awareness, Image and Intention

Action: Launch brand campaigns across all channels (paid and owned).

Work with Navigate to create seasonal campaigns that show more approachable and casual experiences alongside our tried and tested adrenaline/outdoors experiences.

Populate website with significantly more seasonal images featuring seasonal campaign tone.

Develop new campaign activation in London and the South East to launch in the Autumn campaign.

Work with Navigate to leverage latest research tools to track brand and campaign performance.

Ensure destination sustainability by appropriate dispersal of visitors to less

visited areas through increased content in all communication channels creating a hidden moment or braggable experience for the visitor.

Action: position the destination as a clear DMO leader in digital marketing across all channels (social, paid, owned).

Develop a new customer/visitor data programme to significantly increase data capture.

Integrate all marketing channels into one database growth strategy.

Ensure that location tracking data is integrated into all digital performance tracking.

Drive social follower acquisition to achieve 10% growth in channel followers 2023.

Expand presence in local community social media conversations.

Work with local IGERS to experience the destination and turns locals into tourism advocates through content development.

Action: Produce significantly more content (video, photos, social, blogs, editorial, etc.) to tell the destination brand story and highlight key attributes and personas in a way that is welcoming to everyone.

Working with Navigate create a new social content series and storyboards

Produce and post new website imagery

Revise and update the format of all outbound email campaigns and blogs

Create updated brand anthem video for landing page to feature new off-peak content Allocate and invest production budget to achieve revamped content.

Action: Create enhanced PR opportunities to build relationships with key media representatives and influencers to make Visit Dean Wye top of mind through proactive pitching/hosting in destination.

Develop a comprehensive pitch calendar detailing target publications and topics.

Build an influencer calendar targeting key audiences.

Increase efforts to pitch stories that reinforce and amplify our destination brand promise. These pitches will emphasise the rich history of leisure in the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley.

Action: Develop a new Spa and Wellness Program to enhance partnership engagement and foster community participation.

Support the health, active lifestyles and wellbeing agenda by creating a campaign around wellness.

Support spas and wellness centres by creating an innovative brand for the destination

Drive staycation business by targeting neighbouring counties

Emphasise the commitment to "Tourism as a shared community value" through program messaging.

Create content that showcases the destination as a place for R&R and taps into the Sleep Tourism trend.

Create wellness itineraries for the trade.

2. Grow visitation to the destination by in 2023 (+34% from 2020) and recover economic impact by 25% to 3,478,700

Action: Develop website online booking capabilities

Add enhanced booking facilities to our website to capture and convert upper funnel traffic into lower funnel bookings.

Partner with an OTA to endorse attractions sales in 2023

Report on monthly website booking conversions and provide reporting to hotel partners

Increase training opportunities for hotel partners with key OTAs

Action: Build on the Easter Passport Scheme that provides each guest with added value or incentives to encourage expanded cross-visitation between towns and attractions.

Gather partner offers in collaboration with partnership team.

Identify promotion and distribution plan for Passport.

Report and measure on offer redemption.

Action: Increase domestic and international overnight stays through trade opportunities and partnerships.

Working with the LVEP attend key travel trade and Visit Britain events to encourage working with FIT operators.

Deploy marketing efforts with intermediaries including but not limited to tour operators, travel agencies and trade publications.

Structure webinar series to incorporate marketing collateral and act as an additional educational resource for travel trade.

Action: Develop international marketing campaigns to counterbalance domestic seasonality curve.

Design and deploy timely marketing campaigns to support specific need periods and seasonality downturns for example working with the SE Asian markets to maximise on public holidays such as Singles Week for the Chinese.

Impact seasonal visitation from international markets through time sensitive sales and call-to-action campaigns presented during off-peak periods.

3. Create organisational stability by diversifying income streams

Action: Leverage more money from sponsors

Create an engaging sponsorship deck which lists all the ways business could support the FDWVT.

Action: Maintain financial sustainability by advocating for the protection of tourism promotion funding and implementing prudent reserve and contingency planning policies.

Highlight the positive impact and economic opportunities created by destination marketing on communities through effective messaging advocating for tourism as a “shared community value”.

Establish scenarios that inform members and residents of the importance of a vibrant tourism industry highlighting the potential damage and loss of economic opportunity when improperly funded.

Action: Develop our Film Tourism Promotion to attract younger domestic Gen Z and Millennial audiences

Commission research to look at the value of film tourism and film production on the destination. Consider creating a Film microsite with a visitor facing area to attract film tourists. Work with stepping through film to create a new content for the website. Consider film specific social media channels.

Action: Leverage more income from partner sales.

Work with Ignyte to create a spreadsheet of prospective partners for the destination.

Revise the partnership model for 2024. Move away from the small business, large business model to one standardised pricing in line with what our comparable DMOs charge (Cheltenham/Wiltshire).

Target and expand our local membership with organisations that support the evolving needs of the MICE market.

Work with Ignyte to enhance onboarding program for partners to showcase marketing and sales capabilities.

Action: Adopt measures that allow organisational adaptability and scalability to changing market and political environments.

Leverage lessons from 2020 pandemic to build processes that can react to sudden stoppages in business activity or surges in demand.

Develop a comprehensive crisis management strategy with new protocols related to various crises.

Expand networks and collaboration with health, safety and security organisations to improve our destination’s resilience to future shocks.

Action: Explore all alternative revenue options and select key initiatives and create strategic alliances

Identify community organisations, NGOs and major corporations to forge strategic alliances in support of new funding and common goals.

4. To support our regional DMO partners by embedding an ethos of sharing to guide us through the LVEP formation process.

Action: Forge new partnerships to elevate the destination brand including possible city, local, regional or national brand partnerships.

Actively seek out new partnerships with other tourism organisations to keep up to date with latest market intelligence.

Expand on established partnership/alliance efforts and collaborate with other DMOs create a culture of data sharing and partnership working.

Formalise the LVEP relationship by creating a MOU/SLA/TOR document all DMO partners can buy into.

Create a vision for the structure of the LVEP for 2025 onwards.

Create opportunities to be displayed as the LVEP for example hosting major tourism events such as the TMI or UKInbound.

Action: Support initiatives to address hospitality industry workforce shortages.

Collaborate with higher public/private education organisations to increase knowledge and present a positive image of the tourism industry and the benefits for new entrants into workforce and skill acquisition.

Work with industry leaders and stakeholders to promote sector at career days, job fairs and support internships and apprenticeships locally such as the Inspiring Forest activity.

Reactivate discussions for hospitality product development across the destination through series of industry specific net-walking events.

5. To gather data on our visitors to inform our marketing and share our data and learning with our partners to support their promotion.

Action: create a data dashboard to foster data sharing amongst partners and DMOs.

Reactivate support to Tourist Information Centres (Coleford and Ross-on-Wye) in order to enhance countywide awareness of Visit Dean Wye to elevate the visitor experience.

Action: Utilise data (visitor profiles, market research, and demographics) to incorporate and evolve existing content, activities, and messaging for all audiences: both domestic and international

Establish appropriate review process for all customer facing marketing materials to ensure we are creating the most effective and engaging content.

Create a strategy to promote underserved cities and areas to improve economic opportunity within the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley and ensure that honeypot sites such as Symonds Yat Rock and Beechenhurst do not get overcrowded during high season.