



VISIT
TELFORD

TELFORD AND WREKIN

Destination Management Plan 2024 – 2029

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER A THRIVING VISITOR ECONOMY | VERSION: 2024

THE IRONBRIDGE GORGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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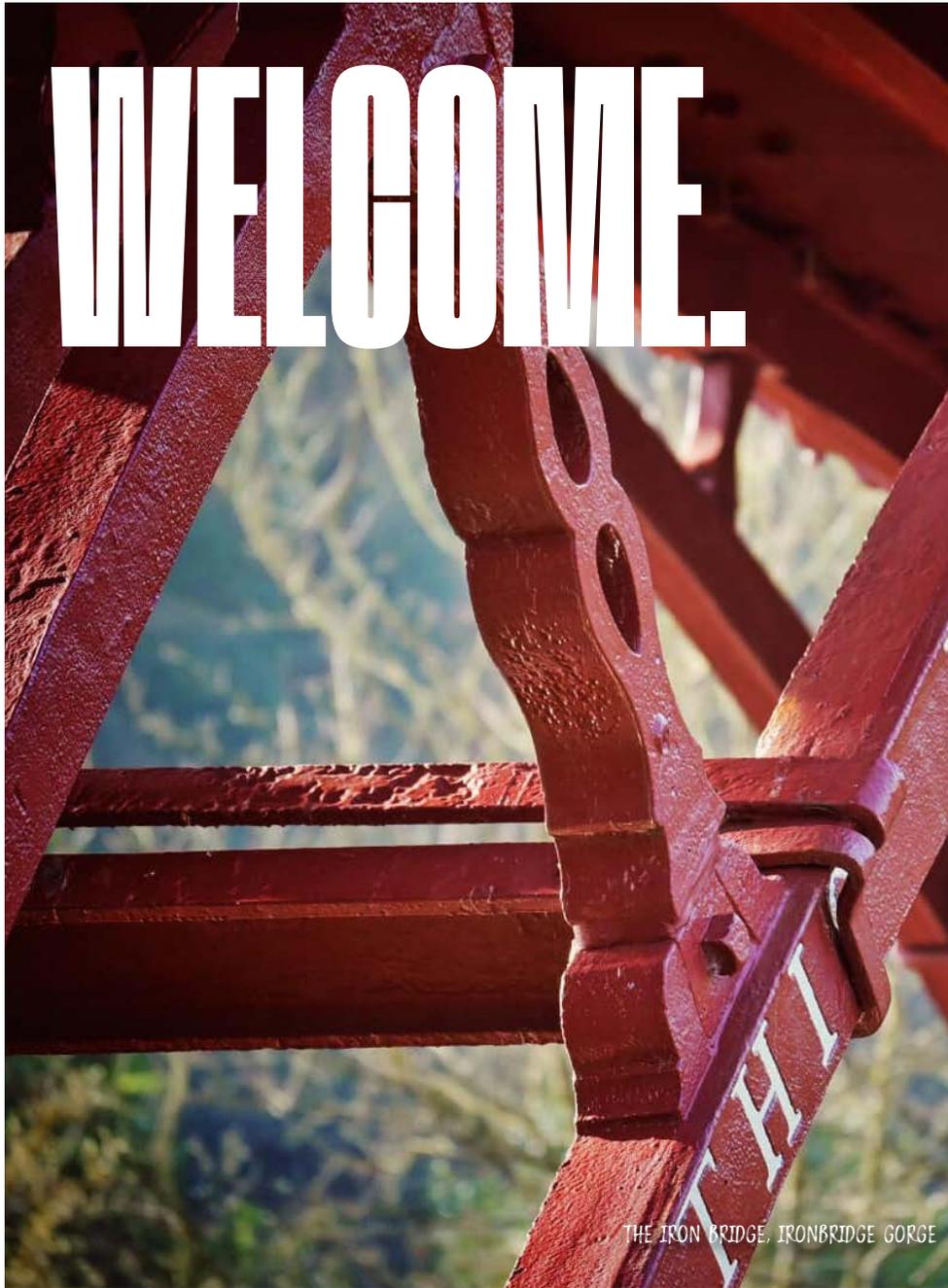
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THE IRON BRIDGE, IRONBRIDGE GORGE



Welcome to our Destination Management Plan

The visitor economy makes a positive contribution to all aspects of life across our borough. Tourism shapes our places, high streets, and rural communities, creating prosperity, confidence, and employment, protecting and celebrating our unique heritage, culture and landscapes and enhancing the quality of life for all.

We are proud to introduce you to the new Destination Management Plan for Telford and Wrekin. This ambitious five year plan has emerged from great collaboration between all partners, stakeholders and policy organisations and an energy to unlock the opportunities and benefits of tourism for everyone across our destination.

Telford & Wrekin Council are just one of a number of key stakeholders and partners that have a part to play in delivering this new plan. We know that the future success of our destination is fully reliant on great collaboration, investment, and innovation between the public and private sector.

Let's start this exciting new journey together.

COUNCILLOR EILEEN CALLEAR
CABINET MEMBER: EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & VISITOR ECONOMY.



Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

ABOUT THIS PLAN.

This Destination Management Plan (DMP) sets out a five year growth strategy which aims to connect, galvanise and energise key stakeholders and partners with a shared commitment to develop, manage and market Telford and Wrekin’s visitor economy in a way which benefits all those involved in it – businesses, suppliers, visitors, local communities, and the environment.

This plan has been shaped, informed, and created in collaboration with our local tourism stakeholders, key regional and national partners, and policy makers to ensure that the needs of the sector are recognised and reflected inclusively.

The plan has been informed by in depth research, consultation, and analysis, considering our visitor economy now and the real future prospects for growth.

DELIVERING IN PARTNERSHIP

To be effective the plan will need to be owned by all stakeholders across the destination. The plan will be a shared road-map for growth and set the course for the sustainable destination management and development.

A successful visitor economy involves many players, and this Destination Management Plan will rely on shared ownership, with everyone playing their part through effective partnerships operating locally, regionally and nationally to align effort and resources.

It will be overseen by a tourism advisory group (TAG). Operating at a strategic level the TAG will bring together members from the public and private sector with a vested interest in the borough’s visitor economy. The council’s existing internal place working group will align strategy and implementation and we will create regular networking opportunities to bring together those working within the borough’s visitor economy.

The Visit Telford brand relates to and represents the whole of the borough of Telford and Wrekin. In the document, any references to either Visit Telford or Telford encompasses all of Telford and Wrekin. Recognising the importance for visitors of working across geographical boundaries, this document includes some references to attractions that are either close to Telford and Wrekin or span across more than one geographical area.



HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

Led by Telford & Wrekin Council, the plan was developed between August and December 2023, following a three stage process shown below. As part of the process, primary consumer research was undertaken to understand the growth opportunities for Telford & Wrekin as a visitor destination among audiences from national, regional and local catchment areas.

Over 110 key stakeholders and businesses were also engaged across two workshops, a number of one-to-one and small group conversations and an online survey.

A brief overview of the research is provided in the following sections of the plan with more detail on the findings sitting in accompanying appendices.



SECTION 1:

SETTING THE SCENE.



Tourism in Telford and Wrekin now

Over two hundred and fifty years ago, great minds here transformed the world, and that ambition and innovation drives us forward as a borough today – it's in our DNA and our visitor economy is no different.

We are a vibrant, contemporary destination, built on our distinctive history as an industrial powerhouse and pioneer of change: a unique blend of old and new, heritage and innovation, leisure and business, a centre for creativity and home to some truly iconic landscapes.

Our visitor economy plays an important role in making Telford and Wrekin the lively place that it is to live, work and study in, as well as a special place to visit. It supports our visitor attractions, develops our high streets and retail destinations, elevates the quality and diversity of our food and drink and hospitality sector, outdoor, and leisure industries and our fantastic events and festivals. It sustains successful businesses, contributing to a high quality of life and thriving places for our residents and communities.

We have a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Ironbridge Gorge, telling powerful stories about how the region shaped the modern world. We are home to The Wrekin, part of the designated Shropshire Hills National Landscape (previously known as the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB))', which overlooks our other impressive natural landscapes. Our Green Flag award-winning 450 acre Telford Town Park is one of the largest urban parklands in the country and has been voted one of the UK's Top 10 favourite parks. Telford International Centre is a world-class centre of excellence for business events, attracting many national and international events and exhibitions every year. Our historic market towns, high quality visitor attractions, cultural events and enviable retail and hospitality offer, all add vitality to the sector.

But more than that, tourism plays a crucial role in supporting the vibrancy of our places and contributing to the quality of life of our residents and communities; and there is an opportunity for it to do even more. Our visitor economy is already one of the top industries for Gross Value Added (GVA) and growth, but it could make a much more visible and valuable contribution to both our social and our economic success as a borough.



Visit Telford and governance

Visit Telford is the team within Telford & Wrekin Council that is responsible for the development, management, and marketing of the visitor economy across the borough, positioning Telford as a leading cultural, leisure and events destination of choice. We are a partner and enabler providing the strategic support, development, marketing and collaboration to stimulate and sustain growth in the visitor economy and to work hand in hand with our stakeholders to create a supportive framework for development and progress.

The council has been part of the national tourism framework for over 50 years offering consistent support to the sector and establishing our reputation and profile at local, regional and national level.

We collaborate closely with a range of partners on the ground in the destination with a focus on integrated and high-quality place making, business support and generating great outcomes for a thriving economy.

At the heart of Visit Telford are our businesses and, together with them, we champion Telford through a unified voice, great content and reach, to shine a light on Telford's vibrant proposition and story with an unwavering pride, to inspire new visitors to come, explore and experience Telford.

Visit Telford is a membership organisation, working hand in hand with partners across the private and public sector to grow the visitor economy. We have over 250 business members and partners across a whole range of areas from accommodation, attractions, activity providers to cultural organisations and travel companies.

Our national and localised marketing and seasonal campaigns are animated through a range of high performing marketing channels

including Out of Home advertising, lifestyle media and national press coverage and bloggers.

[VisitTelford.co.uk](https://www.visitelford.co.uk) launched in Summer 2022 and has 129,000 unique visitors per annum. Our social media has 83,000 followers and 60,000 average monthly reach, connected to an e-marketing channel that has over 20,000 engaged consumers. Great content is at the heart of the success of our marketing and with a daily growth in our followers, the time is ripe to grow our profile and market.



NATIONAL AND LOCAL REACH

Engagement from local residents demonstrates strong community support and involvement, contributing to the destination's appeal among both locals and visitors.



WEB TRAFFIC INSIGHTS

Over 129,000 web users (23-24) indicating strong engagement both nationally and internationally and potential growth in this overseas market.

PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION



Collaborative marketing initiatives have amplified reach and engagement, fostering partnerships that drive mutual benefits and promoting Telford as a vibrant destination.



SOCIAL MEDIA BUZZ

Over 83,000 followers

across Visit Telford and associated platforms. With consistently high engagement rate and follower growth, indicating increased audience interaction and interest.

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Telford features in lifestyle, travel and tourism press. These publications capture the attention of national audiences, enhancing brand visibility and place appeal.

The Guardian



Discover Ironbridge Gorge this summer

Telford, home to one of the nation's best kept secrets and has been described as the 'most beautiful town in the world'. The Ironbridge Gorge is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a must-visit destination for anyone looking for a unique and scenic experience. The gorge is a beautiful and historic site, with a mix of natural beauty and industrial heritage. It's a great place to spend a day, whether you're looking for a peaceful walk, a scenic view, or a bit of history. The gorge is a beautiful and historic site, with a mix of natural beauty and industrial heritage. It's a great place to spend a day, whether you're looking for a peaceful walk, a scenic view, or a bit of history.



Telford History meets creativity

Telford is a beautiful town with a rich history and a vibrant community. The town is known for its historic architecture and its proximity to the Ironbridge Gorge. The town is a great place to visit, whether you're looking for a peaceful walk, a scenic view, or a bit of history. The town is a beautiful and historic site, with a mix of natural beauty and industrial heritage. It's a great place to spend a day, whether you're looking for a peaceful walk, a scenic view, or a bit of history.

Telford tourism leaders develop new international opportunities after Canadian Ironbridge Gorge visit

Telford tourism leaders have forged new international tourism links following a high-profile Canadian media visit to Ironbridge Gorge, the world famous UNESCO World Heritage site.

Some of the biggest titles in Canadian lifestyle, travel and cultural press were hosted on the press tour by Visit Telford - the official tourism organisation for the area and part of Telford & Wrekin Council.

OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

Campaigns with in excess of 1 million impressions

strategically placed out-of-home campaigns maximise visibility and brand exposure, reaching diverse audiences across key locations in the Midlands.



Welcome to Telford

Welcome to Telford, a charming destination nestled between Birmingham and the West Midlands, offering a rich tapestry of activities, culture and engagement.

Discover delightful experiences of our beautiful, scenic parks, and dining establishments, immerse along the winding River Severn and enjoy the views, while UNESCO World Heritage Site the Ironbridge Gorge and the scenic beauty of the Weir Road.

Connect with vibrant artists and creators in their busy creative spaces.

Read More >



Plan your trip...

Telford's landscape



2000 YRS of
history to explore



1335ft
highest
summit
(The Wrekin)

188,000
vibrant population



100,000m²
shopping paradise

1000+ miles of
walking trails



700-acre UNESCO
World Heritage Site
Ironbridge Gorge

178 miles of
cycle trails/tracks



Award-winning
450 acre
Telford Town Park



a designated country park, and voted
one of the UK's Top 10 favourite parks

100's of
historic buildings
landscapes and collections



27 Protected heritage
monuments



23 nature
reserves



Where outdoors meets heritage,
from Granville Country Park to
Limekiln Woods



8 conservation areas

6 historic
Market Towns



2 major
waterways



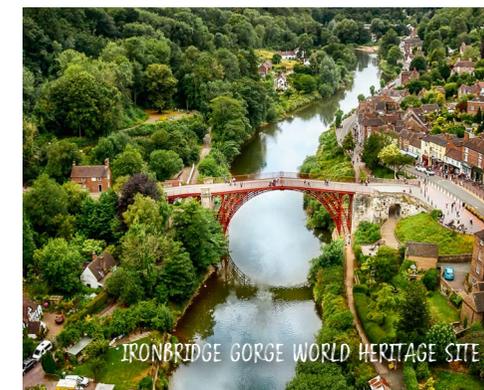
Destination snapshot

IRONBRIDGE GORGE, birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, valley of invention and creativity. The gorge comprises five distinct villages, including the iconic Ironbridge Town and its historic Wharfage, its heritage streets, independent shopping, quintessential tea rooms, vibrant nighttime scene with traditional inns and brew houses. The destination is home to the award-winning Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust, boasting 10 immersive attractions, 700-acres of heritage woodlands and trails managed by the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust. The Gorge offers outstanding artisan experiences as well as waterway leisure activities, including kayaking, canoeing, and coracle drifts on the great River Severn.

TELFORD AND SOUTHWATER, inspired by England's original Garden Cities, Telford is a thriving hub for business, talent, and innovation. Recognised as a Town of Trees in 2023 and ranking in the Top 10 Green Town Index for the UK, Telford boasts a vibrant academic, events, and leisure scene. Home to indoor shopping resort, The Telford Shopping Centre, a 450-acre Town Park and the 15,000sqm Telford International Centre overlooking Southwater, the town offers a diverse range of amenities. With excellent connectivity via the M54 motorway and a mainline train station, Telford continues to grow, with the upcoming Station Quarter development set to include a resort hotel, urban living, a digital centre of excellence. Expected to be completed in 2025.

NEWPORT, a historic market town in the north of the Borough, boasts a Norman-designed main street, charming, cobbled St Mary's Street, and a 19th-century Town Hall and Market Hall. The town's distinctive High Street features independent shops, an indoor Market, cafes, inns, and eateries, attracting visitors, residents, and a significant student population from Harper Adams University. Situated near the Aqualate Mere, the largest natural lake in the English Midlands, Newport is close to Norbury Junction, the Shropshire Union Canal, and the Lilleshall National Sports Centre, known for elite sports and large-scale business events.

WELLINGTON, one of England's oldest and most historic market town and home to one of the UK's most treasured national landscapes. Wellington is a gateway to the famous Shropshire Hills, a cycling and walking paradise, and a market town of scale and history. The historic market, one of the oldest in the region, is today a popular indoor market with regular night-time Street Food events. The Town Railway Station connects to the Shropshire main line bringing visitors from Wales, the Midlands and London. There are miles of walking routes across the rural and urban centre and two major cycling trails, Route 55 and 81, both on the National Cycle Network. The town is surround by many historic villages connecting with a number of heritage attractions including the National Trust's Edwardian house, Sunnycroft and local nature reserve, Apley Woods.



BIRTHPLACE OF THE Industrial Revolution



Powering the modern world

What makes Telford extraordinary

World firsts and world famous



Home to the Iron Bridge, a modern wonder of the world



Epic inventors, giants and pioneers

Discover epic stories of amazing people past present and future



MADE IN TELFORD, sold to the world

From iconic handmade heritage tiles and teddy bears to cutting edge technologies



Telford Town Park

A top 10 UK Park with heritage walks, nature trails, adrenalin sports, wildlife attractions and more



Journey through history

Explore 2000 years of history from Romans, Victorians, to giants of our time

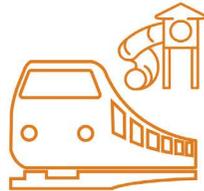


UNESCO World Heritage Site

Ironbridge Gorge, explore heritage icons, attractions, collections and trails

Award winning Family attractions

World of fun for big and little ones, from planes, trains to science museums



Top 10 UK Convention Centre

Telford International Centre hosts some of the biggest and best national events. A place where great minds meet and great events happen

Cycling Paradise over 178 miles of it

Artisan, makers and creators

Discover one of England's most creative places. With heritage craft makers, artisans and some famous art icons

Wonderful waterway adventures

Take a kayak, corcalle or canoe on the great River Severn or a short break on the Shropshire Union Canal



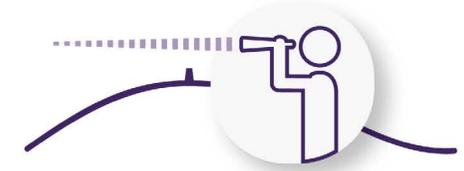
UK home for elite sports

Lilleshall National Sports Centre, home to some of the UK's sport champions, Olympians and Paralympians



Heart of the UK

2 Hours from London, 45 minutes from Birmingham and with miles of adventure and joy to explore



THE WREKIN Voted one of the best viewpoints in England

1335ft Summit, five epic ranges, an Iron Age Fort and inspiration to JRR Tolkien's Middle Earth in the Lord of the Rings



Hero attractions, hidden gems, world heritage and wonderful adventures.

Product

For our size we pack a big punch in terms of our tourism offer. We have a range of distinctive quality assets, experiences, and events across six clear thematic strengths:

WORLD HERITAGE, CULTURE AND ICONS

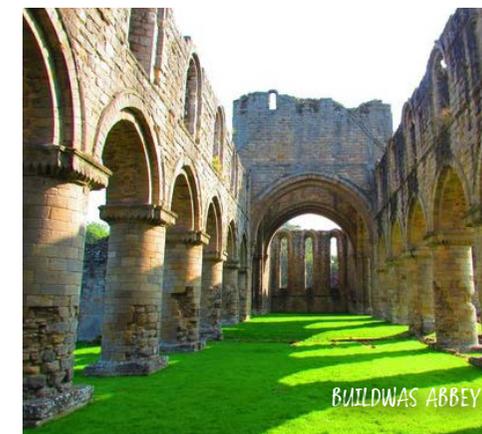
Our UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS), the Ironbridge Gorge and its globally famous Iron Bridge, is the headline act in our heritage and cultural offer, but our hidden histories, cultural experiences and events combine to make us a unique and enriching destination. With outstanding attractions, including the many Ironbridge Gorge Museums, from the 52 acre Blists Hill Victorian Town to Jackfield Tile Museum to Lilleshall Abbey, Telford Theatre, our historic market towns of Newport and Wellington and just over the border, the RAF Museum Midlands and Weston Park, as well as a burgeoning range of traditional crafts and artisan maker experiences and workshops like those on offer at Maws Craft Centre.

FAMILY FUN, DISCOVERY AND ENRICHMENT

Many of the museums and heritage attractions listed above have strong family appeal and also multigenerational family attraction thanks to their nostalgic experiences eg Enginuity, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Wonderland and Telford Steam Railway. Our other family related experiences include our award winning 450-acre Green Flag Telford Town Park, tree top adventures, rock climbing and trampoline centres, wildlife and theme parks. Indoor attractions include Telford Theatre and Telford Ice Rink, home to National Ice Hockey League team the Telford Tigers. Together these attractions offer a strong mix of indoor and outdoor options, and a balance of fun and learning through enjoyment and discovery as well as a destination for all weathers.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE IN LEGENDARY LANDSCAPES

Not only do we have incredible natural assets like The Wrekin, part of the designated Shropshire Hills National Landscape, previously known as the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the meandering River Severn, we also have an extensive walking and cycling network including some long distance routes like the Silkin Way, Ironbridge Way and Telford T50 which connect some of our towns and attractions. Waterway leisure, adventure parklands, heritage woodlands and over 23 nature reserves. And our two annual Walking Festivals held at Ironbridge and Wellington offer another way of exploring the borough on foot.



CENTRE FOR BUSINESS EVENTS

We are destination of choice for business events, home to a range of high quality business event venues including the impressive 15000sqm Telford International Centre (TIC), located at the heart of our Convention Quarter, Lilleshall National Sports & Conferencing Centre, Harper Adams University and the Engine Shop at Ironbridge Gorge Museums. These, coupled with our hotel offering, central location, a 4000 strong business community with notable sector strengths in industries such as Agritech and Advanced Engineering, and great leisure offer, provides a destination of quality, scale and distinction for events.

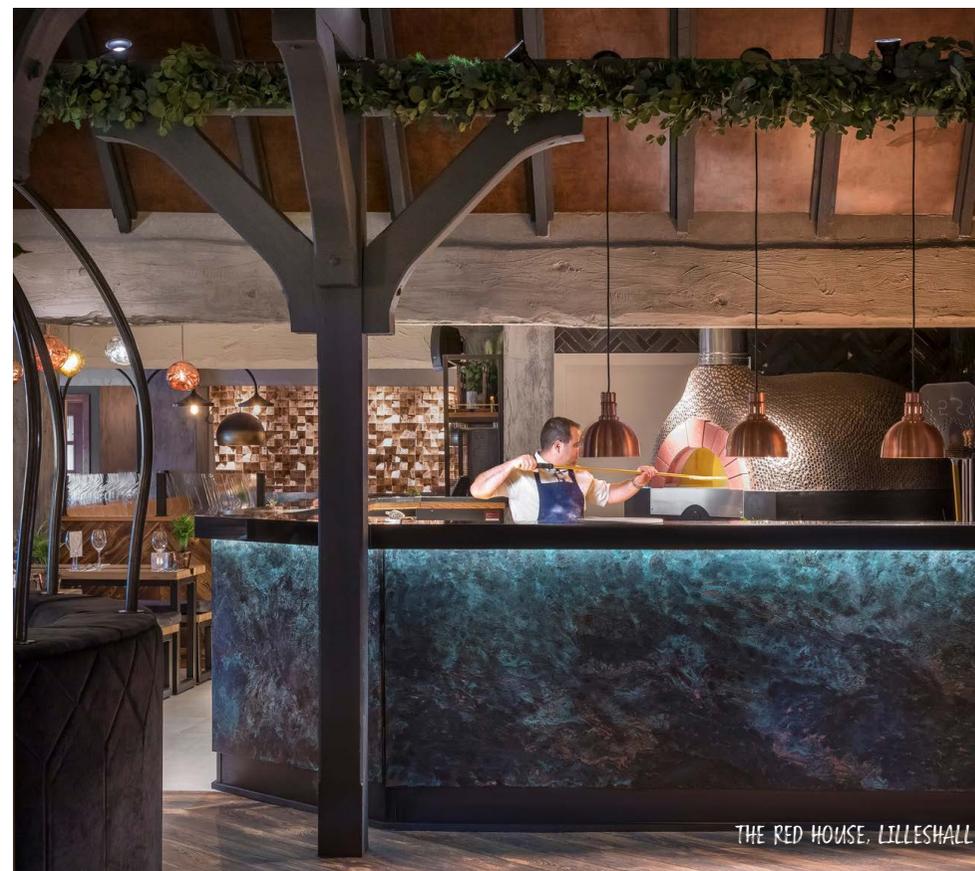
CREATIVE PEOPLE AND AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

We are home to artisan communities, makers and creators. From the 'ribbon of creativity' embracing the artists and crafters in the Ironbridge gorge to the Wellington Arts Collective, creative practitioners are an inspirational community that stretches across the borough. We celebrate and protect traditional crafts and immerse our visitors in creative, enriching and educational experiences.

CULINARY RICHNESS

We are home to major food and drink growers, makers and manufacturers and to one of the UK's leading agricultural universities, Harper Adams, which is shaping the future of farming and food for a greener and healthier world. All of this manifests itself in a well-rounded food and drink offer with a growing independent scene in our towns and markets, from pop up street food markets to tea emporiums, pubs, inns and with many big-name chains that families and groups love.

These themes don't include everything that the borough has to offer but they are the stand-out areas of Telford and Wrekin's tourism offer. Across all five there are exciting market and development opportunities to seize and further motivate day and staying visits.



Visit facts and figures

Volume:

3.2 Million
visitors per annum

Value:

£220 Million
direct economic impact

Day trippers spend:

£44 average spend per person

Stay trippers spend:

£179 average spend per person

Type of visits:

81% of visitors are day visitors **DAY TRIPS**

19% are stay and overnight visitors **STAY TRIPS**

DAY TRIPS 81% visitors
50% of our economic return

STAY TRIPS 19% visitors
50% of the economic return

Typical for a destination like Telford and Wrekin which has a large population within a 90-minute drive time

AVERAGE NIGHT STAY **2.5** compared to the national average of 3.1

VALUE VOLUME

Day trips dominate in volume but stay visits offer the biggest value driver

RECOVERY 2022 visits are at 91% of 2019 levels indicating that the destination has not fully recovered to pre pandemic levels

48% **VISITING FRIENDS AND FAMILY**

This is significantly higher than the national average which is just 32%

Performance

Headline numbers show the very significant contribution our visitor economy makes to the prosperity of Telford and Wrekin, with 3.2m visitors driving £220m of economic impact. They also reveal some interesting findings with implications for this plan:

DAY TRIPS AND STAYCATIONS

Day trips account for a high proportion of all visits (81%) – quite typical for a destination like Telford and Wrekin which has a large resident population within a 90-minute drive. 50% of our economic impact from tourism is currently driven by day trips.



And while day trips predominate in terms of volume, staying visits are an important value driver – delivering the remaining 50% of economic impact but accounting for only 19% of all visits.



DRIVING UP VALUE

2022 visits are at 91% of 2019 levels indicating that the destination has capacity to welcome more visitors over the lifetime of this plan. However, whilst driving volume is important in achieving post-pandemic recovery, a focus on increased value will be key to the sustainable growth of our visitor economy over the next five years and beyond.

Therefore, encouraging more day trippers to take a 'daycation' – leading to longer dwell times, more exploration and more spending across the borough – alongside growing the proportion of staying visitors we attract will deliver strong value returns.

VISITING FRIENDS AND FAMILY

A high proportion of our overnight visitors are visiting friends and relatives (VFR) – 48% vs the national average of 32% – many of whom will be staying with someone rather than spending on accommodation. The average value of a VFR stay in the borough is £103, whereas for those using paid accommodation it is £252.

Consequently, there is a strong rationale to increase the number of holidaymakers choosing to visit us – to stimulate more staying visits overall and more nights in paid accommodation – in order to drive further value growth from our staying market. There is also an opportunity to try and extend length of stay which is lower than the national average (2.5 nights vs 3.0 for England).



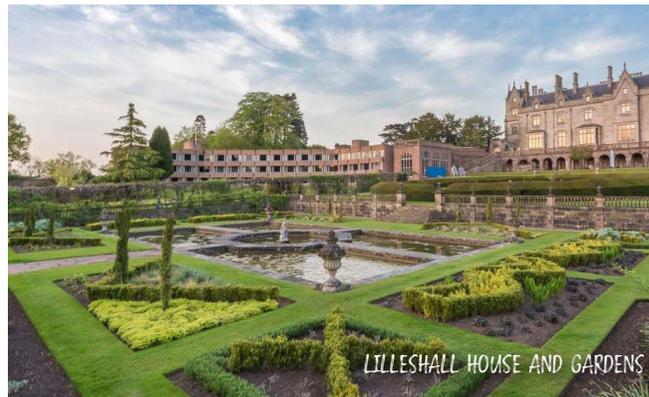
SEASONALITY AND SPREAD

Seasonal distribution in Telford and Wrekin is more concentrated in Q2 (Apr-Jun) and Q3 (Jul-Sep) than the national average, accounting for 33% and 32% of annual visits vs 23% and 29% respectively for England. April, May and August are our peak visitor periods. Only 17% of annual visits to Telford and Wrekin occur within Q4 (Oct-Dec) vs 29% for England, suggesting an opportunity to extend the season into the winter months.



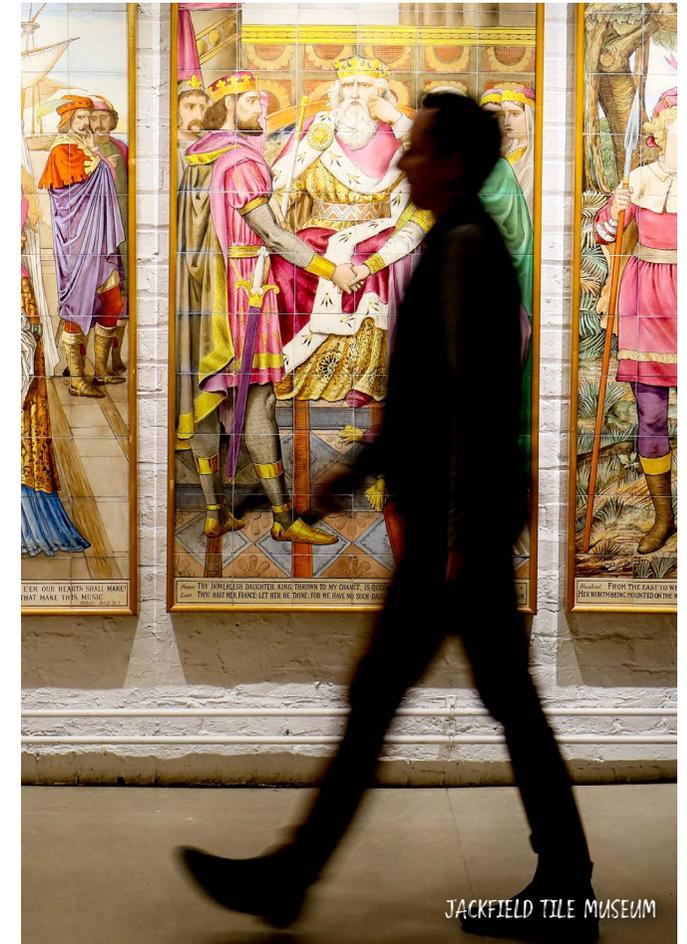
BUSINESS EVENT TOURISM

Business tourism is strong in Telford and Wrekin accounting for 14% of domestic trips. Telford is home to one of the UK's top 10 Convention centres, positioned as a national centre for business events, while its academic and heritage venues attract industry leading events in key sectors including food and drink, agriculture, design, digital and sport.



INTERNATIONAL VISITOR APPEAL

Data on international visitors is not available for Telford and Wrekin but Shropshire as a whole saw fewer international visitors between 2009 and 2019 than other destinations with trips only up by 28% compared to 36% nationally.



1. Data sources: 2022 Telford and Wrekin STEAM; 2022 England data via Great Britain Tourism Survey & Great Britain Day Visits Survey. Monetary values at 2022 prices.

2. Great Britain Tourism Survey (2017-2019 3-year average)

3. Ibid 4. British Meeting and Event Industry Survey (2020) 5. International Passenger Survey



What visitors say

Our Visitor and Consumer research survey was extensive. Through the primary research undertaken as part of this process we spoke to nearly 900 people via an online quantitative survey to understand current perceptions of the destination. Findings are shown on the next page. The primary conclusion is the need to raise awareness and deepen understanding of the breadth and depth of Telford's offer among existing and prospective visitors.

Our consumer surveys covered three core consumer groups, visitors who had visited in the last five year, prospective visitors, who had not visited in the last five years but would consider a future visit and finally residents.

MCFLY CONCERT AT QE11 ARENA TELFORD TOWN PARK

VISITORS

42% 'know Telford well'

Trips to Telford



EVER VISITED...

Central Telford: 66% Ironbridge Gorge: 44%

TELFORD KNOWN FOR...



47% Know Ironbridge Gorge is in Telford

TOP 5 ASSOCIATIONS:

Family-friendly: 39%
Historical: 37%
Relaxing: 37%
Beautiful: 33%
Easily accessible: 32%

IS VERY APPEALING FOR...

Days out: 53%
Overnights: 38%

PROSPECTIVE VISITORS

Would consider visiting Telford:



58% Have 'just heard the name Telford before'

TELFORD KNOWN FOR...



24% Know Ironbridge Gorge is in Telford

TOP 5 ASSOCIATIONS:

Historical: 46%
Family-friendly: 38%
Beautiful: 34%
Traditional: 33%
Welcoming and relaxing: 31%

IS VERY APPEALING FOR...

... days out: 48%
... overnights: 36%

HEARD OF...

Telford town centre: 45%
Ironbridge Gorge: 40%

RESIDENTS

In Telford

92% say 'tourism has positive effects in Telford and Wrekin'

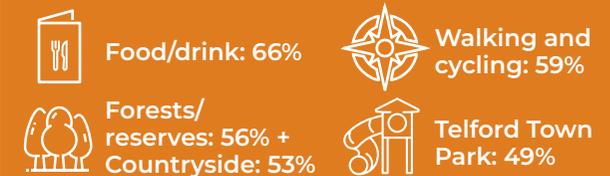
LEISURE DAYS OUT IN TELFORD AND WREKIN...



TOP LOCAL PLACES VISITED FOR LEISURE...

Ironbridge Gorge: 91% Southwater: 75%
Telford Shopping Centre: 82% Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust: 74%
Telford Town Park: 80% The Wrekin: 66%

FAVOURITE ACTIVITIES:



TOP 5 ASSOCIATIONS:

Family-friendly: 49%
Historical: 46%
Affordable: 33%
Easily accessible: 32%
Beautiful: 26%

IS VERY APPEALING FOR...

...days out for you: 44%
for visitors: 43%
... overnight for visitors: 30%

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Visitors	Prospective visitors	Residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Strong pull for families and culture seeking couples for day trips and enormous potential to grow staycation market. ▶ Appeal levels are high, and this is something to grow on. ▶ Less than half know Telford and Wrekin well (42%) – no significant differences regionally and nationally. ▶ Dominant position as a day trip destination, although just over a third think visiting overnight would be ‘very appealing’. ▶ Strong visitor composition combining off peak and peak demand. ▶ Most likely to visit as a family, visits as a couple second most popular. ▶ Telford Town and Ironbridge Gorge are the most visited locations. ▶ Outdoors, heritage, and shopping, the biggest current drivers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Most prospective visitors (58%) do not know the destination beyond recognising the name. ▶ Key associations are history, family-friendly credentials, and beautiful outdoors – strengths to leverage. ▶ Showcasing local food and drink also likely to pay dividends. ▶ Latent positive perceptions, open-minded about visiting – either day or overnight. ▶ Strong appeal of the destination when prospects prompted illustrates major opportunity to grow both the daycation market and short break market. ▶ Lack of real understanding of the visitor offer, including low awareness of local attractions. ▶ Heritage is a key attractor, with Ironbridge the standout brand – although less than a quarter are aware that Ironbridge Gorge is within Telford. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ With 67% of residents taking frequent leisure day trips within the borough at least once a month – and as a couple, or family, retention of local spend is very high here. ▶ More than 9 in 10 are positive about the effect of tourism – particularly around economic impact and employment, heritage preservation and events. ▶ With positivity for tourism and our topping the national numbers on Visiting Friends and Family, there are powerful growth opportunities here. ▶ On favourite leisure activities residents emphasise the local outdoors offer. Food & drink also a key motivator. ▶ Alongside Ironbridge Gorge, most likely to visit central Telford attractions for leisure. ▶ Affordability & accessibility are priorities. ▶ A perception that Telford and Wrekin could shout more loudly about its tourism offer to attract more visitors. ▶ Residents likely to support activity to sustainably grow visitor economy.

What stakeholders say

Our Stakeholder Consultation was a very invested process for all and engagement was substantial showing the real passion and positivity for tourism across our destination.

Consultation through two workshops and a number of one-to-one and small group conversations has helped us understand the views and perspectives of stakeholders and informed the development of this DMP.



Participants included representatives from tourism businesses and organisations from across the borough and beyond, officers and councillors from across Telford & Wrekin Council and Parish and Town Councils, Shropshire Council, West Midlands Growth Company, Visit England, and Arts Council England.

We also ran a business survey to capture the views of tourism businesses and business owners from other related sectors who were not involved in a workshop. We invited them to share their opinions on the borough's visitor economy – including its current strengths, areas for development and their priorities for the Destination Management Plan.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The headlines	Strengths to build on	Factors to support growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 9 in 10 businesses say that Telford's primary attract brand for leisure is Ironbridge Gorge, our heritage and family attractions and our landscapes and outdoors. ▶ Regional audience in a 2hr catchment defines their key target market. ▶ Priority is to grow visitor dwell time and spend, drive repeat visitors and loyalty and widen visitor exploration. ▶ Visitor welcome is vital to improve on both pre and during the visit with improved wayfinding, in-destination maps/welcome signage. ▶ Consistent availability of high-speed data connectivity needs improvement. ▶ Ironbridge Gorge – rated as attractive and with high quality attractions but infrastructure needs enhancement. ▶ Telford and Southwater attractive and easy for parking, accessible via public transport, good retail & hospitality, and attractions. ▶ Low awareness of Wellington and Newport's offer as visitor. ▶ Generating more visits and improved destination perceptions. ▶ Raising the destination's profile across leisure and business markets cited as vital to growth – as is effective county/regional collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Building brand identity and appeal on the back of a great start to Visit Telford. ▶ Making more of the assets on offer at Telford Town Park. ▶ Encourage more exploration of our destination beyond the honey pots to the hidden gems. ▶ Encouraging greater usage of our trails and cycleways for active sustainable travel. ▶ Improving the visitor welcome. ▶ Improve green linkages between places. ▶ Improve digital connectivity in rural areas. ▶ Ensure we are investing in good development and maintaining and improving our visitor infrastructure. ▶ Harness our engaged residents as advocates and ambassadors for Telford in the national market. ▶ Enhancing the vibrancy and distinctiveness of individual towns. ▶ Maximising the potential of new developments e.g. new Theatre, Station Quarter etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Focus should be on key markets for growth and not geographical boundaries. ▶ Funding and resources are needed to drive actions forward. ▶ A focus on good growth and taking sustainability seriously is vital. ▶ The need for knowledge and insights to enable future decision making so good data is important. ▶ Recognising the support needs of businesses and providing clarity around roles and responsibilities. ▶ Priorities should benefit and include local residents as well as visitors.

Policy context

Our Destination Management Plan focuses by definition on the visitor economy; however the wider economic, cultural, social policy and environmental context is important. This context, and the strategies and plans which comprise it, give direction to the DMP at a strategic level. While the various local, regional, and national strategies set out actions (and potential investment) which can benefit the visitor economy, it is important to acknowledge that a vibrant, successful tourism sector can contribute towards many of the objectives, targets and delivery of these strategies. Alignment and influence works both ways.

Primary strategies for alignment	What are the benefits of alignment
West Midlands Growth Company Regional Tourism Strategy	Extending Telford's marketing to domestic and international markets specifically around the drivers of heritage, sport and culture.
Shropshire Council Destination Management Plan	Exploring opportunities for collaborative working around tourism development across the geographical county of Shropshire.
Invest Telford Strategy	This framework and priorities for economic development provides some key areas to grow the profile and performance of Telford around Place.
Vision 2032	Telford & Wrekin Council sets out a vision for the sort of place we want the borough to be in 2032 and how we will work together to get there.
Becoming Carbon Neutral Action Plan	The Plan sets out the approach for sustainability across the borough.
Telford & Wrekin Local Transport Plan and Growth Strategy	The Council Strategy addressing transport, connectivity and active travel.
Cycling & Walking Strategy	The Council's strategy for active travel development and the green network infrastructure.
Ironbridge Gorge WHS Management Plan	Our UNESCO governance document, covering Telford's world-class designated landscape and actions to protect and maintain its uniqueness.
Telford Town Park Strategic Framework	The ambitious development plan for one of Telford's key leisure assets. Revised in 2023.
Indoor Sports and Leisure Strategy	The Council framework for the development of and investment in indoor sports and leisure provision across Telford and Wrekin.
Skills Strategy	The Council's Skills Strategy for the Borough will set out the councils vision and priorities for raising aspirations in delivering the training and skills needed for our future workforce. To be adopted in Summer 2024.

OPPORTUNITIES OF VISIT ENGLAND'S LOCAL VISITOR ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP (LVEP)

Of particular relevance nationally, is the De Bois review, commissioned by Government and published in 2021, which highlighted the challenge of a highly fragmented Destination Management Organisations (DMO) landscape across England.

As a result, a new tiered structure of DMOs was proposed with a pilot first tier Destination Development Partnership (DDP) taking place in North East England, and more recently across the West Midlands Combined Authority area.

Visit England is currently rolling out a national network of second tier DMOs called Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) and there are discussions ongoing between Telford & Wrekin Council and Shropshire Council about the formation of a Shropshire-wide LVEP.

In light of the new structure, Visit England is now developing a new national strategy with the key themes of accessibility, sustainability, skills, business visits & events, innovation and business support at its core.

This DMP for Telford and Wrekin has been developed with the new national structure, potential formation of a Shropshire-wide LVEP and Visit England's new strategy in mind to ensure synergy across the various levels.



SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Beautiful landscapes and a National Landscape designation ▶ Great landscapes, waterways and green offer ▶ Award winning Park, one of the leading parks in the UK ▶ Range of family attractions and all-weather attractions ▶ Profile as a centre for national business events and exhibitions ▶ Range of accommodation for leisure and business visitors ▶ Good road and rail connections from major cities ▶ Shopping and retail experiences from big brands to independent ▶ Supportive and engaged tourism community ▶ Friendly community who champion and recognise the value of tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Public transport links to major attractions ▶ Stubborn seasonality especially during Autumn and Winter ▶ Low visibility of local food offer ▶ Low market awareness of Visit Telford ▶ Low visibility of Telford in UK Business Events listings ▶ Low awareness of other major attractions ▶ Lack of large-scale quality family accommodation ▶ Lack of distinctive offer in individual towns ▶ Lack of packaging of the visitor offer for key markets ▶ Lack of Visitor information and interpretation in main towns ▶ In-distinctive evening and night time offer ▶ Poor public transport links to World Heritage Site
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ High quality distinctive offer for families and explorers ▶ Staycation product and capacity to grow this ▶ Daycations, growing visitor exploration and spend ▶ Strong brand with an even stronger narrative ▶ Sweating the assets and getting visitors to explore more ▶ Potential for more outdoor festivals and live events ▶ Market trends include experiences, co-creation, learning and well-being ▶ Developing more distinctive towns and places ▶ Regional and county collaboration opportunities ▶ More attractor destination developments (Station Quarter/Telford Theatre) ▶ Commitment to green agenda and sustainable tourism ▶ Collaborations with other UK World Heritage Sites and AONBs ▶ Investment in data, research and insights ▶ Loyal local residents spending and exploring at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Competitiveness within tourism marketplace ▶ Comparative strengths of nearby destinations. ▶ Cost of living crisis and visitors spending less ▶ Business resilience (post Covid) and increased operating costs ▶ Increased pressure on public sector resources ▶ Drive for sustainability could limit growth ▶ Need to address issues around transport access and congestion in and to honeypot areas e.g Ironbridge Gorge and the Wrekin ▶ Workforce skills and labour supply

SECTION 2:

FIVE YEAR GROWTH PLAN.



The plan

OUR VISION

TELFORD, WHERE WORLD HERITAGE THAT SPARKS THE IMAGINATION MEETS LANDSCAPES MADE FOR GREAT ADVENTURES

OUR PURPOSE

A SUSTAINABLE, COMPETITIVE VISITOR DESTINATION WITH A GROWING REPUTATION, PROVIDING A DISTINCTIVE QUALITY EXPERIENCE ACROSS ALL ASPECTS OF THE VISITOR JOURNEY.

OUR OBJECTIVES

1. PROFILE

Establish a unique, strong and visible identity for Telford. Positioning it as destination of choice for leisure, heritage, adventure and business.

2. QUALITY

Elevate the visitor experience and increase Telford's visitor satisfaction levels.

3. GROWTH

Build a diverse, year-round, high value tourism sector for Telford.

4. REPUTATION

Establish Telford as a first-class UK business event destination.

5. ADVOCACY

Elevate local pride, resident's visitation and advocacy of Telford.

6. ENGAGEMENT

Build an engaged and collaborative sector that champions Telford and delivers tourism in a sustainable, inclusive way.

OUR TARGETS

15% increase in the value of the visitor economy in real terms over five years.

5% growth in brand recognition and reputation for Visit Telford in the next five years.

5% increase in Visitor Satisfaction

Telford to become a Top 10 UK destination of choice for business events.

Achieve a healthy year-round visitor economy-value over volume.

75% of tourism business actively engaged with Visit Telford.

OUR KEY PRIORITIES

Distinctive identity, visibility and appeal.

Great products, places and experiences.

Market focused and customer driven.

A great place for business and events.

Building strong foundations and excellent tourism infrastructure.

OUR VISITOR

FAMILIES

Aspirational families and multigenerational families

EXPLORERS

Culture and countryside explorers

LOCAL RESIDENTS

Local families, couples, groups and more

BUSINESS EVENT ORGANISER AND DELEGATES

Spending more (daycation/staycation)

Exploring more

Year-round

OUR CORE OFFER

Heritage, culture and icons

Family fun, discovery and enrichment

Centre for business events

Outdoor adventure in legendary landscapes

Creative people and authentic experiences

Culinary richness

Targets and monitoring performance

To monitor our progress against these objectives there are six measures and targets to aim for over the next five years. They are:

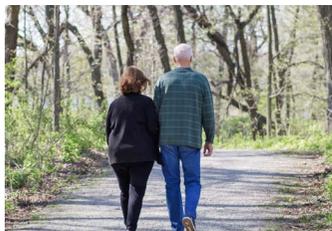
Target	What this means	Objectives achieved	Measure	Baseline ^[1]	Target by 2029
Growth 15% increase in the value and 20% increase in volume of the visitor economy in real terms over 5 years	This is the overall target and measure of success. Economic impact derived from visitor spend will lead to increased prosperity, profitable businesses and jobs.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	STEAM economic model	£220m	15% increase in Value of Visitors to Telford 20% increase in Volume of Visitors to Telford
Profile 5% growth in Brand recognition and reputation for Visit Telford in the next 5 years	Growing the profile of Telford, we will track progress around awareness, perceptions, attitudes and propensity to visit from actual and potential visitors. This will help us understand our identity in the marketplace, and inform development.	1, 3, 4	Omnibus Survey[2]	New baseline to be established	Increase of >5% across key measures vs baseline for our target markets
Quality 5% increase in Visitor Satisfaction (baseline required)	To assess how well we are delivering as a destination we need to ask those who actually visit. This will allow us to identify those areas requiring more intervention and those we can confidently promote.	1, 2	Visitor survey of database	New baseline to be established	Increase of >5% across key measures vs baseline
All year Appeal 19% increase in staycation visitors, developing a year-round visitor economy with a focus on value	An increase in the proportion of people staying overnight means more higher value visitors, thus increasing tourism spend within the borough.	1, 3	STEAM economic model	19%	>5% percentage point increase
Reputation Telford to become a Top 10 UK destination of choice for Business Events	Asses how we are profiled by Event Buyers against other UK destinations, to identify our ranking and reputation as a Business Events destination.	1,2,4	ICCA and Meeting industry Association	Top 10	UK Top 10 Destination in ICCA
Engagement 75% of tourism business actively engaged with Visit Telford	Growing our collaboration with and support of the tourism sector businesses. We will continue to grow our Membership model and provide great returns for sector businesses through our partnership activities.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Total number of businesses to total number in VisitTelford Membership	75%	75% of tourism sector businesses engaged with and part of the VisitTelford Membership model

Visitors and markets

In the next 5 years our growth plan will focus on the markets where we have the strongest fit and the highest propensity and appeal.



We will build on our success in the **family and multigenerational family market**, increasing our appeal for longer daycations during peak periods and during key short holiday and seasonal break periods to package and promote high appeal staycation and short break propositions with a focus on our all-weather attractions, multi day offer, enriching and immersive experiences, fun for all ages and our accommodation offer for all budgets from resort hotels to budget or big house retreats.



With our **explorers and culture seekers** we will elevate our offer through quality influential marketing and better packaging and home in on the trend for creative breaks and authentic experiences by leveraging our year-round creative and artisan offer for short breaks.



We will harness our **local residents**, embracing their positivity for tourism and their hosting to increase their role as insider guides and Telford ambassadors to create and share content whilst also providing incentives for them to increase the value of visiting friends and family.



Whilst for **business tourism buyers** we will focus on leveraging our reputation for business events, our industry specialists in global business and our destination factor, to keep winning events and to also increase the value of the events by improving the packaging of the visitor experience to inspire extended stays.

We will use a combination of experience marketing and the attract and disperse model to increase tourism appeal, expand visit dwell time, increase visitor exploration, increase visitor spend and ultimately enhance the experience that our visitor has, creating a new bond with our destination as a place that fulfils and delivers and inspires them to come back for more. We will do this by:

DAYCATIONS

With over 2 million people living within a 45-minute drivetime of Telford, its success and pull as a day trip destination is clear, so here we can really harness that strength and focus on inspiring our trip makers to extend their visit into what we are calling a daycation, defined by longer dwell time, more places explored, more experiences had and increased spend across the destination. To achieve more daycations we will focus on packaging the offer to our key leisure markets:

- ▶ **Family markets** (peak travel and seasons) we will package the offer and position Telford as the ultimate family day out, positioning Visit Telford as the go to for inspirational ideas and itineraries for great days out. We will combine great content and the latest what's on as well as with animated media that visualise the experience, focuses on the 'feeling' and emotional drivers and fulfilment that Telford delivers family. We will further elevate our destination for daycations through user generated content on our social media platforms, use local insider guides and regional bloggers.
- ▶ **Explorers' markets** (off peak travel) we will focus more on reputational content development in key regional press and media, build better online bonds with our Explorers by capturing them to follow Visit Telford and join the adventure. We will use great content, inspiration and ideas online as well as targeted e:marketing and propositions around key drivers for this market including artisan experiences, well-being adventures, heritage and culture. We will build strong and impressive content around the dining and shopping offer to reinforce independence and quality.

STAYCATIONS

We will focus on building our profile as a staycation and short break destination both stand alone and working with regional and county partners. We will concentrate activity on the identified key markets to drive more staycations and employ a number of key market trends to position Telford as a destination of choice that delivers and fulfils.

- ▶ **Family market** - with our Family markets we will tap into Seasonal and Experience breaks for all the Family, with a focus on key themes with highest appeal including adventure, attractions, adrenalin, and time travel, with a nod to the seasons. Whilst we market strongly during the main holiday periods, we will frame our appeal for short holidays and Weekend Wonders, as well as a further tapping into our nostalgic attractions, to position Telford as the perfect place for Family Reunions.
- ▶ **Explorer market** - building on our exceptional heritage, creative and countryside offer, with our Explorers, we will focus on better packaging and elevating the profile and reputation of Telford for short breaks - focusing on creative breaks, countryside escapes and heritage holidays, exploring multi destination collaborations to heighten appeal. The off peak and mid-week nature of this market provides significant opportunities in the Autumn and early Spring period.
- ▶ **Business visitors** – we will revitalise our Meet Telford programme to build the reputation, profile, and identity of Telford for Business Events and through this focus on a Stay Longer message targeting both delegates and their spouses as well as inspiring repeat Short Break visits with inspiration.

Delivering our Growth Plan

Governance structures and new mechanisms for partnership and collaboration will be required, some of which will build on what already exists. The ideal structure is explored in the diagram below.

Visit Telford

The destination management organisation. Administrator for the partnerships.

Existing 'Place' Working Group

This group brings together Directors with responsibility for place making and development and oversees the delivery of key Council actions in relevant strategies, including the DMP.

Tourism Advisory Group

The group will comprise representatives from across the private and public sector and be chaired by a respected private sector leader; meeting quarterly with a role to oversee the delivery of the DMP,

activating wider contacts and networks in support of the plan, monitoring progress and refining and adjusting priorities over the 5-year life of the plan. In due course this could be incorporated into the LVEP board, in full or in part.

Regional Partnerships

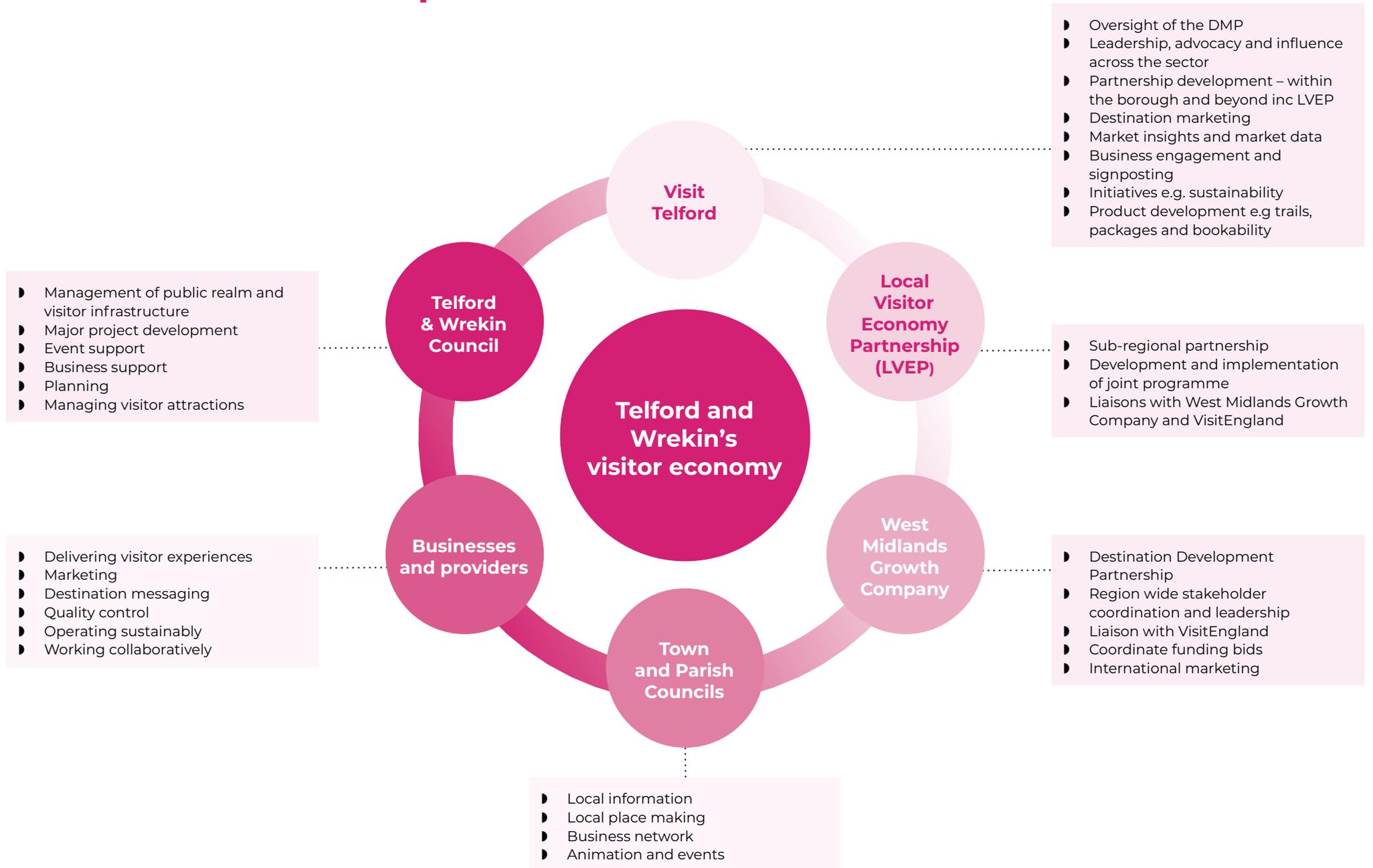
Liaison and constructive collaboration via government and Visit England's structure for supporting tourism i.e. Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (ie with Shropshire) and Destination Development Partnerships (i.e. West Midlands Growth Company) – to agree common approaches and joint activity ensuring Telford's needs and priorities are reflected.

Annual Tourism Conference

An annual event for visitor economy businesses and providers to build a sense of joint purpose, opportunities for networking, dissemination of good practice and inspirational ideas from within the district and beyond, updates on marketing, product development and new projects etc – as well as the chance to listen to business/provider needs, wants and ideas. And vitally to recognise and celebrate success.



Roles and relationships



Stronger policy alignment

The Visitor Economy does not work in isolation, there are a range of key strategies where collaboration with policy and place leaders, we will deliver stronger, cohesive outcomes.

Key themes contributing to a vibrant visitor economy	Strategy and plan	
Improved profile and place promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ WMGC Regional Tourism Strategy 2019 – 2029 ▶ Invest Telford Economic Strategy 2024-2032 ▶ Shropshire Destination Plan 2023 – 2025 	<p>Through telling the stories of our destinations we will reveal our hero themes and products to attract visitors, transform perceptions and promote inclusive growth to ensure our industry, our places and all our partners thrive.</p> <p>Clean, green and resilient Telford.</p>
Climate crisis and sustainable growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Vision 2032 Telford and Wrekin Council ▶ Invest Telford Economic Strategy 2024-2032 ▶ Becoming Carbon Neutral Action Plan Telford & Wrekin Council ▶ Telford and Wrekin Local Plan 2011 – 2031 ▶ Telford and Wrekin Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026 ▶ Shropshire Destination Plan 2023 – 2025 	
Special landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Management Plan 2017 ▶ Telford Town Park Strategic Framework 2023-2032 	
Quality of life, community benefits, well-being and inclusive growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Vision 2032 Telford and Wrekin Council ▶ Invest Telford Economic Strategy 2024-2032 ▶ Telford and Wrekin Local Plan 2011 – 2031 ▶ Telford and Wrekin Cycling and Walking Strategy 2017 	<p>Exceptional active transport and sustainable travel for all, a safe and attractive network for our visitors and residents promoting healthy lives.</p>
Infrastructure to support growth – rail, road, transport, digital, sites, premises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Invest Telford Economic Strategy 2024-2032 ▶ Telford and Wrekin Local Plan 2011 – 2031 ▶ Telford and Wrekin Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026 ▶ Telford & Wrekin Transport Growth Strategy 2011 - 2026 ▶ Telford and Wrekin Council Digital Strategy 2023 	
Thriving towns, villages and streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Invest Telford Economic Strategy 2024-2032 ▶ Telford and Wrekin Local Plan 2011 – 2031 ▶ Telford & Wrekin Transport Growth Strategy 2011 - 2026 	
Business prosperity and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Vision 2032 Telford and Wrekin Council ▶ Invest Telford Economic Strategy 2024-2032 ▶ Skills Strategy (in development) 	<p>More vibrant, prosperous and connected place for all, a place that punches above its weight, celebrating its past and embracing its future.</p>
Talent retention, quality jobs, skills, fair work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Vision 2032 Telford and Wrekin Council ▶ Invest Telford Economic Strategy 2024-2032 ▶ Skills Strategy (in development) 	

Guiding principles underpinning the Destination Management Plan

To guide the priorities and actions within the DMP we asked:

- ▶ Does this respond to the needs and desires of visitors? Will it meet their expectations?
- ▶ Will it benefit local people and local businesses, supporting good quality jobs and a high quality of life?
- ▶ Will it help animate the place across the day, week, year, providing more reasons to visit and stay longer?
- ▶ Does it help us become a leading business events destination?
- ▶ Does it help visitors understand and celebrate our unique culture and heritage? Does it nurture a sense of place and local pride?
- ▶ Does it help connect the borough's key assets and attractions and drive visitor dispersal across the destination?
- ▶ Is it environmentally sustainable in design and management? Does it contribute to achieving net zero and support the idea of 'clean, green, resilient Telford' as set out in our new Economic Development Plan?
- ▶ Does it help protect our natural environment, heritage and cultural assets?



SECTION 3:

OUR FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN.

The Action Plan is an evolving document. Key actions have been identified but these will evolve and grow over time through informed partnership work and delivery.



SECTION 4:

APPENDIX.

The following documents are available on request and are appendices to this Destination Management Plan.

- ▶ Telford & Wrekin Council STEAM Survey 2023/24
- ▶ Telford & Wrekin Council Stakeholder consultation findings 2023
- ▶ Telford and Wrekin consumer summary
- ▶ Telford and Wrekin business survey summary



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TELFORD BALLOON FIESTA