

**Local Visitor
Economy
Partnership**

Recognised by



VisitEngland

West Yorkshire

Local Visitor Economy Partnership
Destination Management Plan

2025-2028

We're
Yorkshire's
cultural and
vibrant heart

We're West Yorkshire

We're Bradford

We're Calderdale

We're Kirklees

We're Leeds

We're Wakefield



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1 Introduction

The visitor economy in West Yorkshire is at an **exciting point**. Prior to the Covid pandemic, it generated **over £2.2 billion** of direct expenditure to our economy.

Although the last few years have seen enormous change and uncertainty that have impacted and continue to impact on our visitor economy – Covid, Brexit, the cost of living crisis and inflation – we are emerging strongly from it. We have all the ingredients to not only recover, but to **grow substantially**.

There are many positive changes taking place across West Yorkshire. We have achieved the status of a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) from **VisitEngland** – a recognition of our importance as a visitor destination.

The partnership across West Yorkshire Local Authorities and the Combined Authority sparks new opportunities and allows for a strategic, regional approach.



Photo VisitBradford. City Park, Bradford

Bradford UK City of Culture 2025 is delivering a thrilling year of culture, creativity and the arts right across West Yorkshire, building on the successes of **Kirklees Year of Music 2023** and **LEEDS2023, Culturedale 2024, and Our Year – Wakefield District 2024**. These events are showcasing, and will continue to showcase, our exceptional cultural offer.

We are Yorkshire's cultural and vibrant heart. But more than that - West Yorkshire is an area of unique landscapes that resonates with our proud past and our heritage, it's a major conference and business destination, and a renowned film location. We have three National Museums, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Saltaire and a UNESCO City of Film in Bradford.

This Destination Management Plan (DMP) provides a galvanising framework for the whole of West Yorkshire to move forward together, building on our collective and individual strengths. This plan focuses on the priorities and collaborative activities that, at a **West Yorkshire level**, will build a better and more productive visitor economy sector. It is intended to complement (but not duplicate) the more detailed plans that exist for our individual areas – Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield.



Current situation



Impacts



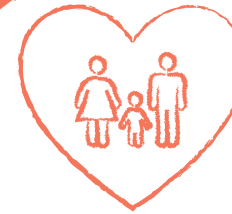
Benefits



Enhances our image and profile not just as a place to visit but also as a place to move to, invest in, or study



Develop a sense of place and community pride amongst our residents



Supports a wide range of facilities that enhance the quality of life for our residents



Supports a range of businesses from micro to multi-national; jobs with different skills and creates entry level employment

Benefits of our visitor economy



Animates and drives footfall into our town centres

Visitor economy

Type of visitor	Visits ('000)	Nights ('000)	Spend (£m)	% total spend
Domestic overnight	2548	5981	391	17.1%
International overnight	506	3,718	228	10.0%
All Overnight Visitors	3,054	9,699	619	27.1%
Tourism Day Visitors	50,100	N/a	1,665	72.9%
All Visitors	53,154	N/a	2,284	N/a

Source: GBTS, IPS and GBDVS.¹

The value of our visitor economy is considerable. The table summarises the estimated economic impact of the visitor economy to West Yorkshire in 2019 (the last full year of available data).

Our **visitor economy**, in 2019, generated **£2.3bn of direct expenditure**. The majority of this was generated by day visits from home – **73% of expenditure and 94% of trips**.

This expenditure spreads far and wide – from our city centres to our local high streets and towns, and from direct spend on hospitality, retail, and entertainment, through the supply chain and - via the people employed in the sector - into numerous other areas.

¹ At a district level, local impact is available for Bradford, Calderdale, and Wakefield (through the Cambridge Model) and Leeds (through STEAM) but not Kirklees. Data from IPS and GBDVS is not available at a district level.

Our markets

Our visitors come in many guises and for many reasons: someone coming for work, business or a meeting; an international academic coming for a conference; a sports fan going to the football, cricket or rugby; a family visiting one of our many museum or gallery; someone visiting for a gig, show or play; a couple visiting the sights for a day or a week; a shopper to our unique retail experiences; friends on a night out.

They come from all areas – from within West Yorkshire itself; from the rest of Yorkshire and Greater Manchester; from Scotland and the rest of England; and from overseas.

Some key points about our visitors:

- **Visiting friends and relatives (VFR)** accounted for the **highest proportion of our overnight trips (47%) and spend (35%)** in 2019. The market accounted for 42% of international spend
- **Business visits** are an important market for us – in 2019 they accounted for about a **fifth of overnight trips (19%) and spend (22%)**
- West Yorkshire’s holiday market, while significant, is not as well developed as other destinations in the UK. They accounted for a third (31%) of domestic trips and a quarter (25%) of international trips compared to an England average (of 47% and 41% respectively)
- However, **we underperform in overseas markets** - in 2019 domestic visitors accounted for 83% of overnight visitors with **international visitors accounting for 17%** (compared to 27% at an England level)²

² Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS) and International Passenger Survey (IPS). Based on a three year average of data (i.e. 2017 -19)

Our offer

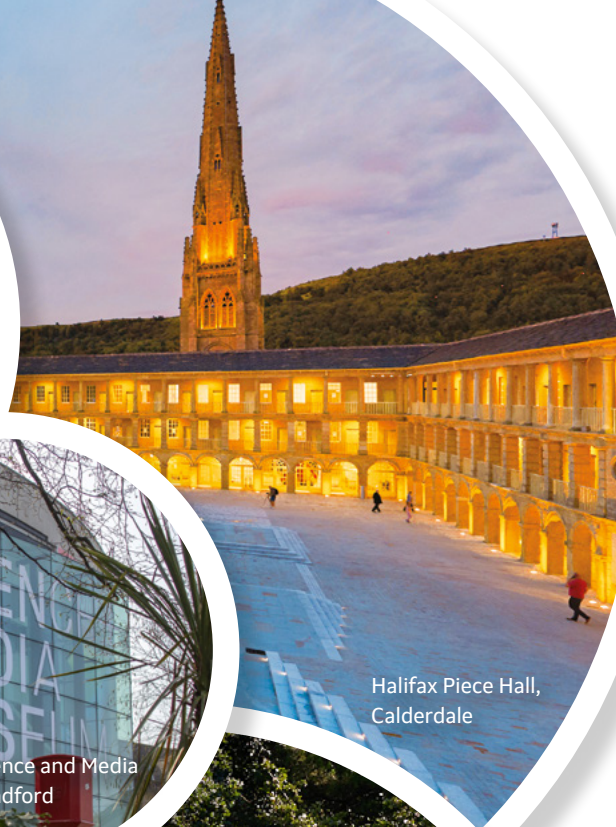
We're discovery & enrichment

This is arguably our strongest theme with a breathtaking portfolio of museums, heritage and cultural attractions. These include:

- **Arts and cultural attractions** like the Brontë Parsonage Museum, Leeds Art Gallery, Henry Moore Institute, Yorkshire Sculpture Park and The Hepworth Wakefield
- **Heritage / industrial heritage** such as Saltaire, and the Piece Hall
- **National museums** - including the Royal Armouries, National Coal Mining Museum for England and the National Science and Media Museum
- **Historic houses and sites** such as Harewood House and Kirkstall Abbey in Leeds, Cliffe Castle in Bradford, Nostell, National Trust and Pontefract Castle in Wakefield, Shibden Hall in Halifax (Calderdale) and Oakwell Hall in Birstall (Kirklees)



Oakwell Hall, Kirklees



Halifax Piece Hall, Calderdale



National Science and Media Museum, Bradford



Royal Armouries and Leeds Dock



Daniel Arsham at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield. Photo by David Lindsay

Our offer

We're places

We have some great and distinctive places that are a draw for visitors. They include Haworth, Ilkley, Saltaire (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), Hebden Bridge, Holmfirth, Slaithwaite and Otley.



Photo VisitBradford.
Haworth, Bradford



Eureka in Halifax, Calderdale



Photo VisitBradford.
Ilkley Moor, Bradford



Saltaire Canal



Calderdale Let's Grow
Todmorden, Calderdale

We're family

Many of our 'discovery' attractions on page 9 have a strong family appeal but other family related experiences include the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, Eureka!, Lotherton Wildlife World at Lotherton Hall, and Xscape Yorkshire.

Our offer

We're performance & entertainment

Live entertainment is a key motivator for many visitors – the hook is the particular performance they are interested in.

Facilities include:

- **Theatres** like the Alhambra Theatre in Bradford, Victoria Theatre in Halifax, Leeds Playhouse, The Lawrence Batley Theatre in Huddersfield and Theatre Royal Wakefield
- **Music, concert and comedy venues** such as Bradford Live (due to open in 2024) Huddersfield Town Hall, First Direct Arena, Northern Ballet and the O2 Academy in Leeds
- **Sports stadiums and grounds** including football, cricket, racing, and rugby league



Our offer

We're a wealth of events

We have regular events with strong **cultural, media and music** themes including:

- Bradford Literature Festival
- BD: Festival
- Halifax Piece Hall summer music and events
- Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival
- Light Night Leeds
- Leeds Fest
- Leeds International Festival of Ideas.
- Huddersfield Food and Drink Festival
- Marsden Jazz Festival
- Pontefract Liquorice Festival
- Wakefield Rhubarb Festival

Sports events are also important including:

- World Triathlon and Test Cricket in Leeds
- Horse racing in Pontefract
- Tennis in Ilkley
- Rugby League and football matches across the region
- We have a record of success in cycling



Pontefract Racecourse



Photo by Danny Payne.
Calderdale Live at
Halifax Piece Hall



Wakefield
Rhubarb Festival

Photo VisitLeeds.
Leeds Pride 2019



Photo VisitBradford

Bradford UK City of Culture 2025 and the build years – **Kirklees Year of Music 2023**, **Leeds 2023**, **Calderdale Year of Culture 2024** and **Our Year – Wakefield District 2024** are major high profile one-off events.

Our offer

We're retail

Leeds is a key shopping destination however we also have a range of other opportunities - local high streets, independent special interest 'destination' shops like Salts Mill, the Mill Outlet Batley, and Redbrick Mill and Farm Shops selling locally sourced produce.

We're sociable

Like shopping, there are food and drink opportunities throughout the area. Potential differentiators are curry in Bradford, and Leeds city centre with its concentration of bars, clubs and independent restaurants.

We're active

We have distinctive rural areas - the Pennine areas of Calderdale and Kirklees and notable sites like Ilkley Moor, Top Withens in Haworth, and Marsden Moors. There are opportunities for walking, cycling, climbing (indoor and outdoor).

We're hosts

There are a range of conference and meeting venues across our area and the conference market is an important one, particularly in Leeds which hosts a number of larger multi-venue conferences.

We're niche

There are some niche and special interest offers in West Yorkshire with the capability of generating visits or contributing to the decision to visit. Increasing screen tourism is one of them – particularly in Calderdale and Kirklees with a strong TV presence with ITV Studios and Ch4 in Leeds.



Film set in Bradford



Nexus Building, Leeds

Photo by Joolze Dymond
Cyclists in Calderdale



Photo by Tom Martin for
VisitLeeds. The Alchemist



Current delivery arrangements

Stakeholders

The visitor economy in West Yorkshire is complex and has many stakeholders:

- Business Improvement Districts
- Trade organisations like the Leeds Hotel and Venues Association
- Strategic groups like the Calderdale Tourism Board
- Area and town based groups like the Bronte Country Partnership and local Civic Societies

Reflecting our product offer, there are also a huge range of individual operators, including:

- Hotels
- Attractions
- Tours
- Conference venues
- Bars and restaurants
- Nightclubs
- Breweries and distilleries
- Music venues
- Event organisers
- Universities
- Our high streets and retailers

Some of these are wholly visitor focused, others have interests that overlap the visitor economy.

Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)

As an **official LVEP**, we work with **Visit Britain** and **Visit England** on national and international promotional activities and development.

Local Authorities

Each of our **Local Authorities** takes a lead on the visitor economy in their respective areas – effectively acting as the **Destination Management Organisation** (DMO) leading on leisure and conference tourism. The size of dedicated teams and their resources varies. Other functions within our Local Authorities also play a role in the visitor economy teams:

- Filming support
- Running museums, galleries, parks and venues
- Developing, managing and bidding for events
- Providing business and skills support
- City centre, place and World Heritage Site management

West Yorkshire Combined Authority

The Combined Authority does not currently have a specific visitor economy function but does interact with the sector through different agendas:

- Passenger transport executive for the region
- A growing culture, heritage and sports workstream
- Devolved business support and skills and employment functions
- Proactive in promoting West Yorkshire to certain audiences – particularly potential inward investors – and fund, along with the Local Authorities, the area's Business Growth Service which provides support to SMEs

Leeds Playhouse





Strengths, challenges and opportunities

Our strengths

- We are a key part of the Yorkshire brand which has strong associations, images and a sense of place, particularly Pennine West Yorkshire enhanced by our TV, film and literary connections
- We have very **strong products** with national museums, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, iconic cultural and historic sites of international stature. These enhance the area's distinctive architecture, reinforcing our sense of place
- Our range of **well-established events** – many with distinctive audiences that are drawn from all areas of the globe. We have momentum and profile in our cultural events and facilities, and have particular strengths in music (Kirklees), literature (Bradford) and food (Kirklees and Wakefield) with the local culture reflected strongly in a number of events such as the Lamplighter Festival
- A reputation for hosting **large scale sporting events** e.g. the Rugby League World Cup across multiple venues and previous cycling events including the Tour de France Grand Depart
- A track record in **location work for TV and film**. We are featured regularly on high profile programmes such as Gentleman Jack, Happy Valley, Last of the Summer Wine, showcasing West Yorkshire on screens across the world
- A reputation as a **LGBTQIA+ destination** particularly Calderdale and Leeds
- Our **conference tourism** offer in Leeds
- Commitment across the area to developing our visitor economy
- Our **diverse population** adding to a rich cultural heritage and our huge resident population. We are the fourth largest conurbation in the UK with 2.3million residents. Day visits and visiting friends and relatives are our two largest visitor groups
- Our **excellent road and rail** transport communications with direct links to London from Halifax, Bradford, Leeds and Wakefield. Plus good access to international airports



Photo by Calderdale Museum. Shibden Hall, Halifax

Our challenges

- A lack of critical mass in any one place except Leeds City Centre. Our 'must do' experiences are **dispersed** across the area which impacts on the way people visit, or do not visit the area with **transport** around the area a **potential barrier**
- In relative terms, our holiday and international markets are under-developed
- Inconsistent and sometimes limited levels of private sector engagement and investment. Our regional working, whilst strong, is in its infancy compared to competing destinations such as Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle. The legacy of previous regional approaches and our tendency to have worked separately in the past has led to some duplication of approach and activity with a destination / product focus to marketing – as opposed to a consumer focus
- Our **funding** for developing the visitor economy is currently limited and well below our competitors. Allied to this, private sector investment in destination programmes is limited – partly a result of the make-up of private sector operators with few large commercial attractions and an accommodation supply dominated by branded chains
- **Place perception** – some areas have low awareness among consumers, and perceptions are sometimes negative i.e. northern and industrial. West Yorkshire is a relatively meaningless concept to consumers who tend to think of either Yorkshire or individual places/products like Holmfirth or Bradford, for example
- Limited hotel capacity and variation outside of Leeds exacerbated by a number of hotels currently unavailable due to Government contracts
- The **lack of a purpose built convention centre** of any capacity in Leeds limits the events the city can attract and its profile
- **Competitor destinations** – we have strong competitors such as Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and York for city breaks or culture and business events, the Yorkshire Dales and Moors and Peak District for rural or outdoor experiences



Our opportunities

- Becoming an accredited LVEP for West Yorkshire formalises and **strengthens the existing collaborative relationship** of partners
- LVEP status affords us the opportunity to develop **strategic West Yorkshire** approaches and build stronger partnerships, leading to better co-ordination.
Examples include:
An events clash-diary
Cross-selling products
Stronger economies of scale
Consumer marketing
Research
Product development
Ambassador programmes
- Bradford UK City of Culture 2025, and the build years (Kirklees Year of Music 2023, Leeds 2023, Calderdale Year of Culture 2024 and Our Year – Wakefield District 2024) represents a **huge opportunity to raise our profile**- regionally, nationally and internationally. There is also the exciting opportunity to learn from the experience and develop legacy events
- Exploration for the development of a legacy 'signature' event such as the Manchester International Festival or Liverpool Biennial, potentially across the whole of West Yorkshire. Alternatively more peripatetic, moving from area to area, which could develop to eventually achieve national and international status
- Major new developments coming on stream – e.g. Bradford Live, Tileyard North, Wakefield Exchange, potential development of Huddersfield art gallery and museum, and new hotels in Leeds, Wakefield and Huddersfield which will increase capacity and appeal at a destination level
- Developing a **private sector and attractions consortium** right across the area, bringing together the most outstanding products and experiences, to **generate investment** and a compelling offer that generates overnight visits.



Tileyard North, Wakefield Photo by Kick Rocks Creations



Widdop Reservoir above
Hebden Bridge Calderdale

Our strategy



Our vision

To develop a **strong** and **proactive LVEP** that brings together the West Yorkshire visitor economy into a compelling and powerful partnership – that **adds real value**, delivering exciting new projects, economies of scale, and which engages in creative ways with visitors **to support the tourism sector** across the region.

Aims

The work of the West Yorkshire LVEP and this Destination Management Plan aims to:

- To use the visitor economy to continue to develop and enhance the appeal and image of places in West Yorkshire to a range of audiences
- Generate more and longer overnight stays to benefit the economy and support jobs
- A third underlying aim – Enhance the quality of life and social value for residents of West Yorkshire through the visitor economy

Priorities

This will be achieved through the delivery of three priorities:

Priority 1

Increase awareness and appeal of West Yorkshire as a destination (refer to p23)

Priority 2

Develop our product and places (refer to p26)

Priority 3

Manage our visitor economy effectively (refer to p30)

Strategic drivers

Underpinning these aims and priorities, there are a number of strategic drivers. These include:

Regional and local partnerships

Partnership will be key to the delivery of this DMP. We will strengthen partnerships at the national level with VisitEngland and VisitBritain through the West Yorkshire LVEP. The LVEP will form the basis of a stronger regional working relationship between our Local Authorities and the Combined Authority which will provide the basis for delivery of many of the actions in this DMP. At a local level, we have individual partnership arrangements, and we will look to strengthen these to meet our local priorities.

Resources

Currently, the resources to deliver an ambitious growth plan are not well enough developed or co-ordinated across our area. Collectively we need to develop new and sustainable resources to enable us to compete with other destinations and grow our visitor economy. We will need to invest time in this process (refer to section 5).

Sustainability

Sustainability will be central to everything we do – a fundamental part of the way we approach developing our visitor economy. Elements of this will include:

- Prioritising value over volume through encouraging a greater length of stay and spend
- Encouraging efficient use of energy and resources among businesses and visitors
- Encouraging use of public transport
- Spreading visitor benefits through the region's economy and communities, whilst recognising and mitigating against negative impacts on our communities and natural environment.

Accessibility, inclusivity and diversity

We will work towards a shared vision of making West Yorkshire a **truly accessible** and welcoming destination for all. We will, where possible, make our marketing and communications, place and partnership working accessible to all and work with our partners to **raise awareness** of the social and legal obligations to provide services and facilities that are as accessible. Encouraging the development and promotion of accessible information, business and product development, customer service and physical facilities throughout the region.

Strategic drivers

Target Market Groups

We have many markets and different types of visitors. The core ones that we will proactively focus on through either regional or local activity will be:

- **Our events**

We have some excellent events that are West Yorkshire 'owned':

- Bradford Literature Festival
- Halifax Piece Hall summer series
- Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival
- Light Night Leeds
- Wakefield Rhubarb Festival

These generate business and profile for our destinations. Each event has a different market, but we need to build on these and develop their profile to help build awareness and develop reasons to visit in the off-season. We have an opportunity to work together to attract more 'bid for' events, both Sports and cultural.

- **Conferences**

While primarily a Leeds market, conferences positively impact on the whole of West Yorkshire in many ways – spend, profile, and potential investment. We will focus on multi-day conferences that attract national and international delegates and corporates.

- **City breaks are a key market**

Leeds is likely to be the focus of visitor demand given its accommodation base and wider product, however this market has the potential to impact across the area and we need to focus on showcasing the best of the region. This is likely to be a 'couples or groups of friends' market, primarily travelling by public transport – corresponding to the Project Lion Free and Easy Mini Breakers segment.³

- **Rural holidays**

Short breaks to West Yorkshire are not just city based. There is an opportunity to generate more rurally based visits, potentially involving longer stays. Motivations for these visits will be around not only our heritage and cultural attractions, but also our places and outdoor offer. This market will be more likely to be travelling by car, and slightly older than the City Breaks market corresponding to the Project Lion Country-loving Traditionalists.

- **Visiting friends and relatives (VFR)**

Our VFR market is an important, but secondary, audience – typically with a lower spend. The focus is less on promoting reasons to visit but more **showcasing the breadth of the West Yorkshire offer** when they are here. Core Project Lion segments include Aspirational Family Fun and Fuss-Free Value Seekers.

- **Residents and day visitors**

An important market, particularly for our attractions and places. They are less of a focus at a West Yorkshire level but will be an important part of the market mix at the local level.

³ Project Lion is a VisitEngland segmentation approach – see [Visitor Segmentation](#)

A phased approach

This DMP will be delivered and developed in two broad phases:

Phase 1

Foundations (2023-2025)

The plan will focus on building the foundations – developing our LVEP partnerships and delivery structures across West Yorkshire, implementing new programmes of activity and beginning to develop more sustainable funding and resources.

Phase 2

Development and delivery (2026-2028 and beyond)

We will consolidate our partnerships, deliver sustainable funding streams, enhance our delivery and activities, and look to maximise our opportunities for growth.

Priority 1

Increase awareness and appeal of West Yorkshire as a destination

Potential proposition framework

Inspirational Yorkshire

Proposition pillars	A Unique Landscape Full of Emotion	Yorkshire's Cultural Heart	Proud and Independent – Past and Present
Consumer benefit	<p>Inspiration and well-being on your doorstep Need: Self-enhancement</p>	<p>New adventures and a sense of belonging Need: Excitement and Belonging</p>	<p>Memories that are never bland Need: Experience</p>
Proof points ⁴	<p>Haworth – Wuthering Heights Pennine West Yorkshire – film/TV e.g. Happy Valley, Gentleman Jack Saltaire – UNESCO site / Hockney Wakefield – Yorkshire Sculpture Park The Hepworth Wakefield/ Henry Moore</p>	<p>Arts and Festivals City of Culture Royal Armouries National Science & Media Museum Eureka Diverse communities e.g. Bradford and curry</p>	<p>Industrial heritage National Coal Mining Museum Luddite movement Ann Lister Rugby League 1895 Independent retail / food and drink e.g. Piece Hall, Leeds, Hebden Bridge Quirky events e.g. Rhubarb Festival</p>

⁴ Under each proposition pillar, we have given some example 'proof points' of experiences that might be used in support. These are not intended to be exhaustive but an example of how West Yorkshire's products could be communicated through the framework

Priority 1

Increase awareness and appeal of West Yorkshire as a destination

It should be noted that the proposition framework on page 23 has not been market tested and this is a critical next step before any marketing activity is developed. We need to research our primary target audiences and identify the key messages and concepts that will motivate them.

Once developed, the proposition framework could form the basis of marketing campaigns centred around partnerships of our key players and extend the reach of the West Yorkshire offer beyond the work of the individual destination campaigns.

These would be supported by appropriate on and offline assets such as content, digital advertising, a fully optimised and accessible website, social media channel support, and PR activity.

Underpinning this proposition, there is a tremendous diversity of experiences that appeal to both broad and niche audiences. Key theme areas that support our core proposition include:

- Film
- Literary
- Visual art and sculpture
- History and industrial heritage
- City culture, and festivals
- Cultural events and performance

At a more local level, there is a clear opportunity for us to work individually and together on developing these themes and featuring them strongly in our own promotional activity. This can be taken forward by an individual area, a collective of areas, or a consortium of operators such as the Yorkshire Sculpture International.

Allied to a West Yorkshire promotional campaign, there is a need to develop more bookable products – for both group travel and individual consumers – through specific itineraries that tie into our promotional themes with potential distribution through TXGB and other channels.

Photo by Jason Ingham. The Hepworth Wakefield



Priority 1

Increase awareness and appeal of West Yorkshire as a destination

There are huge economies of scale and opportunities for working together within group markets – for both, building products for group tour operators (day trip and staying visitors) and creating inspirational content for group organisers from a diverse range of backgrounds to create exciting opportunities for their members and partners.

West Yorkshire's residents audience presents a significant opportunity to further grow the value of tourism, through a more formal approach to the cross-marketing of experiences and events between our individual destinations.

This approach offers important benefits:

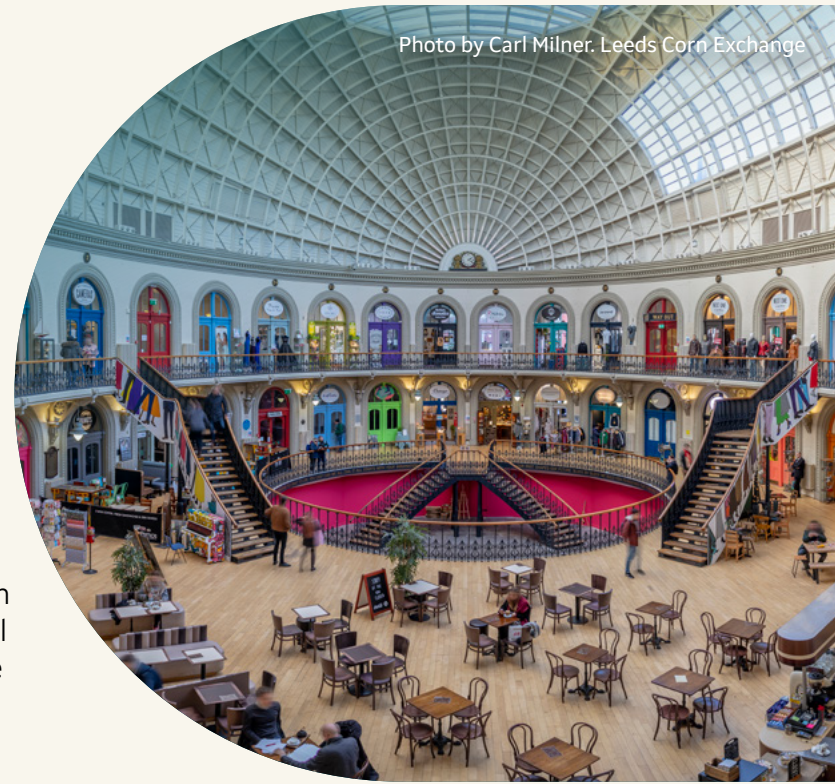
- Extends the reach of local experiences and events and ensures greater inclusivity for West Yorkshire's resident population
- Amplifies the existing work done by our individual destinations
- Taps into the sizeable 'Visiting Friends and Relations' (VFR) market, increasing the range of products and experiences for VFR visitors

Moving forward, we propose that a formal cross-marketing network is created that identifies which channels each destination can use to promote neighbouring areas to its local resident population. A process should then be put in place for distributing content and monitoring usage.

Conference tourism is an important market group for us – **business tourism generates over a fifth of spend** in the area and, in 2022, conference tourism in Leeds was estimated⁵ to have generated 32,600 conferences and meetings, approximately 2.5 million delegates and £412.6m of direct expenditure.

An overview of Conference Leeds, the only dedicated business tourism body in the region:

- Marketing effort and activity is largely focused in and around Leeds although their online database does feature venues from across West Yorkshire
- Primarily impacting economically on Leeds although large events like UKREiiF impact much more widely



Benefits and opportunities to West Yorkshire conference tourism include:

- Increasing profile and investment
- The opening of Bradford Live and the potential for attracting larger destination conferences to Bradford
- Potential to expand the Leeds Ambassador programme to include ambassadors for West Yorkshire
- Possibility of developing a portfolio of regional character, bespoke venues focused on smaller events such as team meetings or corporate away days

⁵ Leeds Conference Impact 2022 - (RJS Associates – 2023)



Priority 2

Develop our product and places

Places are core to the visitor experience – they drive interest, satisfaction and spend. Across our area we have some great places with strong appeal, a sense of place, ambience and an infrastructure that generates spend.

However, some of our places, including major city centres, have less appeal and are blighted by issues that impact on many of the UK's towns and cities – anti-social behaviour, poor perceptions and safety concerns, slightly run-down high streets with declining footfall and a functional retail offer, and a bland bar and restaurant offer. This is a 'chicken and egg' situation – while the visitor economy can play an important part in this regeneration of our places it cannot work in isolation – people will not visit an unwelcoming place.

Making a difference

Across the area there are some excellent initiatives that are making a significant difference:

- The work of our BIDs and City and Town Centre Management teams in creating footfall, animation and ambience, and safe, clean places for visitors and residents alike
- The spirit of our entrepreneurs developing exciting food and drink outlets
- Major investment schemes and developments that will have a transformational impact including: the Piece Hall in Halifax; Bradford Live; Tileyard North and Wakefield Exchange in Wakefield; Leeds City Square; the Light in Kingsgate and Our Cultural Heart development in Huddersfield

This process of improvement and investment will need to continue as visitors become ever more demanding and have increasing options.

The needs of visitors should be embedded in local regeneration plans, and place making initiatives including attractive gateways, transport, signing, interpretation, urban realm, regeneration and animation.

Achieving the welcome

The welcome our places and visitor experiences afford visitors needs to be not only physically accessible and inclusive to a diverse range of visitors, recognising and addressing different needs and interests where appropriate. While a lot of good work has taken place, we cannot be complacent and need to ensure this continues. Achieving this welcome will be delivered through a range of action streams – collaborating with planning departments, , master planning and urban realm development, programming and events (as detailed on page 27), our marketing and itineraries (refer to Priority 1) and working with businesses (refer to Priority 3).

Priority 2

Develop our product and places

Getting around

West Yorkshire is a large but polycentric conurbation; our product is dispersed, and public transport, particularly for a visitor, can be a barrier. Addressing this is a long term undertaking but one we should not collectively shy away from.

In the short term, we need to work with our existing provision and ensure that it is more legible to visitors. Tying into our core principles of sustainable, accessible and inclusive visitor economy development, we need to focus on promoting easy public transport connectivity to our core experiences and integrating them into itineraries (refer to Priority 1).

There may also be an opportunity to develop a Visitor Pass for West Yorkshire that combines public transport, attractions, and possibly food, drink and retail options. These work well in destinations like London, New York, and Barcelona but the feasibility would need examining for our area.

Staying over

We have a good, varied accommodation stock in Leeds city centre, with additional capacity coming on stream across the area, with proposals for Leeds, Wakefield and Huddersfield, in the near future. However, we would benefit from expanding the provision of accommodation across the rest of the area.

In our rural areas and smaller towns, accommodation development may take place organically with the emergence of self-catering, glamping and small serviced establishments in line with market demand. However, in our larger towns and cities a more strategic intervention maybe required to identify and support the development of larger serviced accommodation properties. This is an opportunity for the area that requires an assessment of our current provision and demand, gaps, opportunities for growth and potential interventions.



Photo by Yorkshire Frontiers.
Sowerby Bridge Wharf, Calderdale



Halifax Train Station, Calderdale

Priority 2

Develop our product and places

Conferences and venues

We do have a variety of conference venues across the area, with a particular concentration in Leeds city centre, however our larger capacity ones tend to be multi-functional e.g. the First Direct Arena, Leeds Town Hall, or the Royal Armouries. They are not always available for conferences. Our dedicated and purpose built conferencing spaces tend to be smaller – typically in hotels and our universities which offer dedicated conference space like Cloth Hall Court.

An additional venue with dedicated availability and capacity with associated exhibition space would strengthen our offer and provide an opportunity for Leeds and West Yorkshire to bid for larger conferences. New hotel developments might increase the number of venues but will not diversify the offer.

A purpose-built centre, either dedicated or a good multi-purpose venue, represents an opportunity and would enhance our offer but its potential viability needs to be assessed. A Leeds project that would have wider West Yorkshire benefits – in terms of profile, potential investment, related activities, employment and legacy.



Priority 2

Develop our product and places

Events

Events are **fundamental** to our visitor economy. Participants and organisers in sports events fill our hotel bedrooms and restaurant tables. Attendees to gigs, festivals and concerts, our performing arts and cultural events also **contribute massively** to business levels across our area – generating footfall and spend. Events bring people into the region who might not have visited West Yorkshire or our destinations. They **showcase the area**, support our brand(s) and profile, and typically enhance the quality of life for our residents by providing opportunities to be involved.

Our events take many forms and have many different organisers – we have had high-profile multi-destination events like the Tour de Yorkshire, district or city wide events like Leeds 2023 or Pontefract’s Liquorice Festival, special interest events like WOVEN in Kirklees, and local events that animate a town centre. They are all important and work in different ways and it is integral to our visitor economy that they continue.

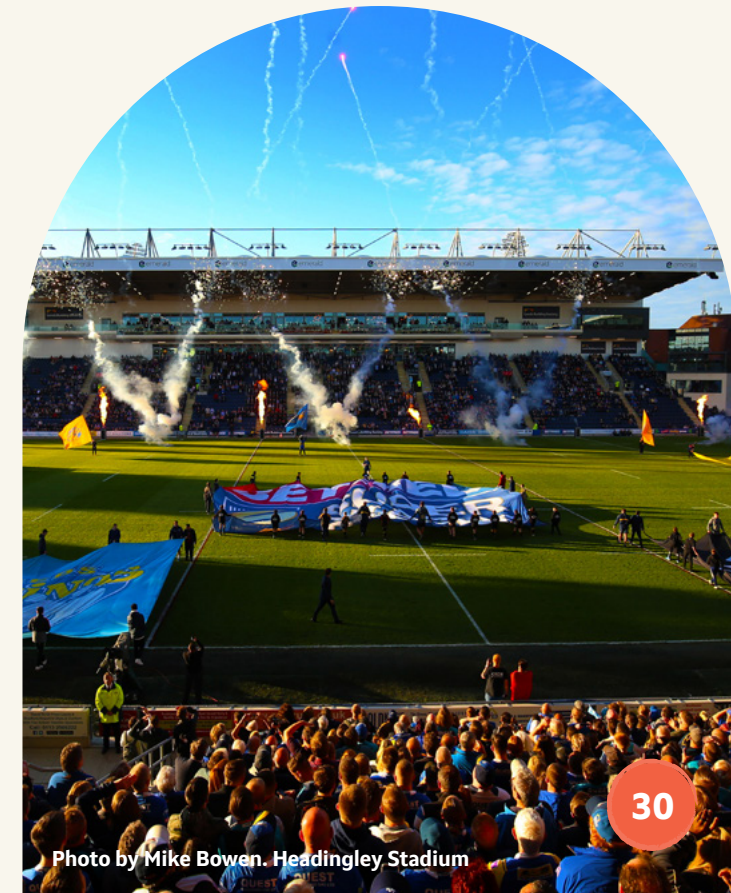
In general, our events are organised and delivered at a district or local level by a range of players – our Local Authorities, BIDs, sporting venues and cultural institutions. At a West Yorkshire level, there are opportunities for collective work but these, it needs to be recognised, are subject to resources. Area wide opportunities include bidding, or trying to attract, major events to West Yorkshire – e.g. the Tour of Britain or National or International Music Awards. We will continue to investigate these as opportunities arise.

We lack a signature international scale cultural event (like Liverpool’s Biennial or Manchester’s International Festival). There is a potential opportunity to develop something like this as a legacy from 2025 and the build years, however there would be significant challenges in terms of viability and potential resourcing, and it would require careful consideration.

At a West Yorkshire level, a more realistic opportunity will be to take our collective events programme, identify common themes or audiences e.g. music, visual arts, heritage, particular sports, amalgamate those and



present them to the market place as a series of ‘highlights’ packages and /or showcase those events that will strengthen our consumer facing campaigns (refer to Priority 1).



Priority 3

Manage our visitor economy effectively

Coordinating our activities

Our visitor economy is complex. It involves many players from the private, public and third sectors. **Co-ordinating our activities** and developing partnerships is a **key priority** for the delivery of this DMP. There are numerous partnerships that link to the visitor economy and these typically exist at a district or local level. Our engagement will continue on this basis, but we recognise we need to be more **proactive** as we emerge from the Covid years and as we pick up from the vacuum left by Welcome to Yorkshire.

We understand although stakeholder engagement is primarily the responsibility of the LVEP partners at their respective levels, there will also be a need for area wide coordination at **the West Yorkshire level** – particularly to develop:

- Our consumer focused campaign (Priority 1)
- Itineraries - potentially saleable (Priority 1)
- Possible Visitor Pass (Priority 2)
- Area wide stakeholder events – for example an annual conference and/or awards ceremony that provides a pathway for our businesses to be recognised nationally

We already have private sector engagement on the LVEP Governance Board and will consider how best to both widen and deepen that engagement across West Yorkshire.

Engagement and developing relationships with stakeholders will not only help us develop campaigns but also create the **opportunities** and **the means to deliver** a range of other priorities.

Across West Yorkshire, LVEP partners provide an extensive business support offer. The Combined Authority's Growth Hub, which is regionally managed and locally delivered, acts as an **entry point into the business support eco-system** for businesses and entrepreneurs across the region. The focus is on supporting businesses to become more resilient and sustainable, as well as on growth and improving productivity.

The Combined Authority also delivers the **Adult Education Budget** for West Yorkshire, to engage adults and provide them with the skills needed for entering and sustaining work, an apprenticeship or other learning.



Existing regional and local business and skills support touch on the visitor economy in varying ways.

There is an opportunity, through our stakeholder engagement, to ensure that we **make the connection** between our existing support and stakeholders. However, we need to ensure the **needs of our businesses are truly reflected** and we will investigate options with stakeholders where appropriate – examples include recruitment, arguably a more pressing issue than skills, and the development of tailored training courses that address particular needs to be delivered at a West Yorkshire or local area.

Priority 3

Manage our visitor economy effectively

Sustainability and accessibility

Sustainability, in terms of a wider move towards a net zero economy, but also considering a fair and just transition for our communities and residents, accessibility and inclusivity are core principles of this DMP. These will be addressed through:

- Our place and product welcome (refer to Priority 2)
- Working with our stakeholders and businesses to raise awareness of the issues and barriers, provide solutions and facilitate their own implementation. Examples of this include showcasing good practice and adoption of certification schemes like Green Tourism or Green Key. Developing our stakeholder relations will be key to this element

Research and intelligence

Improving our intelligence and knowledge is also key to improving our destination management and to support our independent stakeholders with their plans. Currently the regional data picture is inconsistent. For example, we have conference performance data from the UK Conference and Meeting Survey, occupancy and Airbnb data for Leeds, some data on our visitors for Leeds and Bradford, and economic impact modelling data for the whole area.⁶

Early intelligence priorities at a West Yorkshire level will be about understanding how visitors and non-visitors perceive us, identifying target audiences, and developing a campaign concept that will reach consumers (refer to Priority 1).

We also need to understand the dynamics and performance of our accommodation – not only from the perspective of potentially developing new accommodation but also to help monitor performance. At a local level, understanding our audiences, their characteristics, behaviour and motivations will be important.

Developing and evolving our LVEP will be a key priority – it will be an enabler of action delivery – refer to section 5.

⁶ NB with the exception of Kirklees. This is also based on slightly different approaches (STEAM and Cambridge models).



Middleton Park, Leeds



Implementation



Our LVEP partnership and responsibilities

West Yorkshire LVEP Governance Board will oversee the activities of the LVEP and the delivery of this DMP. Chaired by West Yorkshire's Mayor Tracy Brabin, the Board will bring together members from the public, private and third sector with vested interest in the region's visitor economy. Our LVEP is a partnership of equals, but that partnership will need co-ordination which will need to be identified.

We will also have several working groups to co-ordinate specific activities and agendas – refer to the organogram on page 34 for more details.

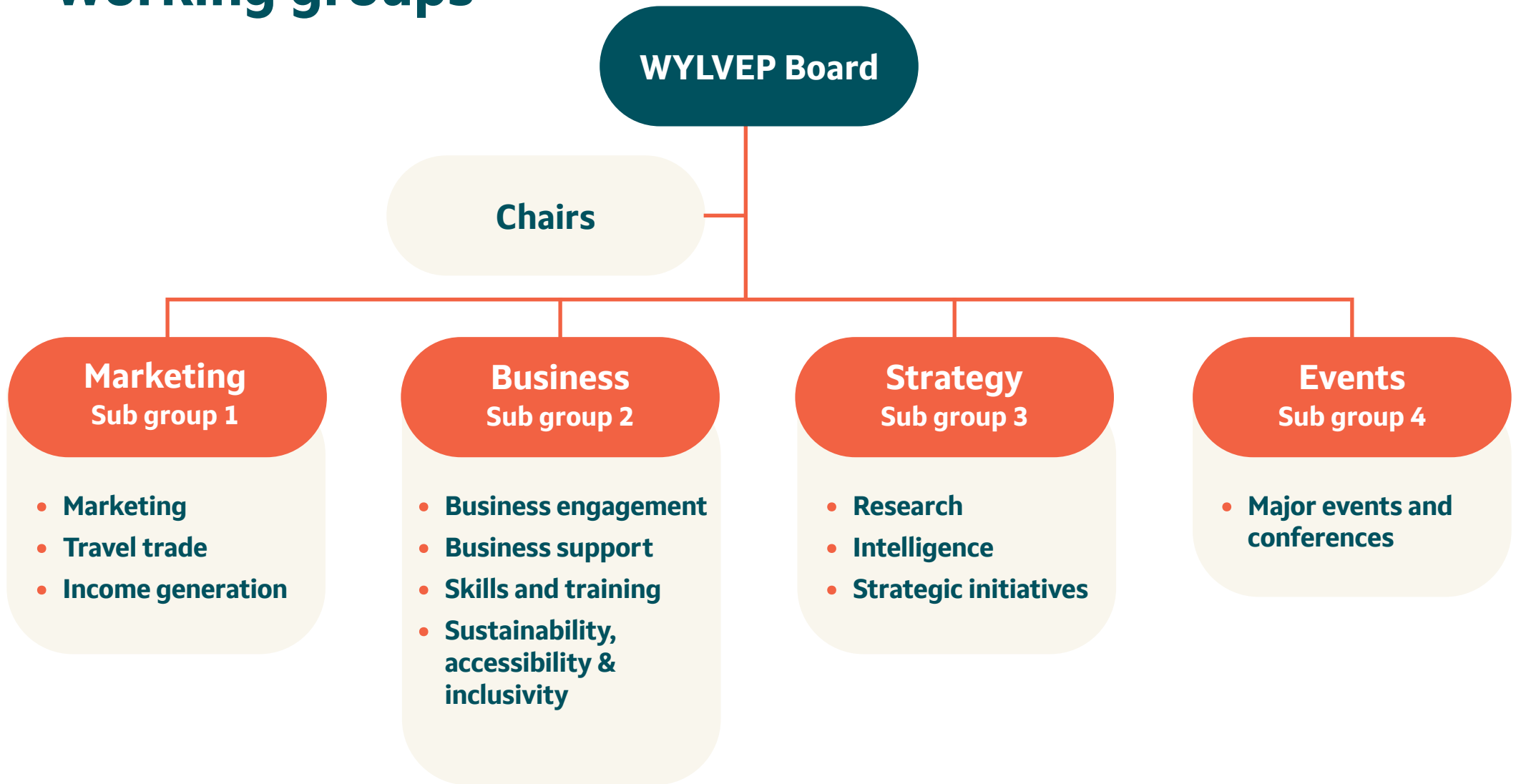
These working groups will report to the board through the co-ordinator and the combined chairs. Our partnership is relatively new, experience will dictate the eventual structure.

Each group will be chaired by the most appropriate partner, with representation from all local authorities within the region. We will investigate attracting private sector attendance, supplemented by specialist advice from key public sector agencies such as the Growth Hub.

Initial responsibilities

- **The Chairs** will concentrate on developing the agenda for, and ensuring strong two-way communication with, the LVEP Governance Board
- **Marketing: sub group 1** will have a remit that is largely promotional and outward facing, it will lead on all marketing aspects, excluding conferences/business tourism, and also consider income generation opportunities to support marketing activity
- **Business: sub group 2** will lead on business engagement including an eventual awards programme. It will work with partners to advocate, develop and signpost appropriate business support, skills and training initiatives for visitor economy businesses. The Group will also consider the critical agendas around sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity
- **Strategy: sub group 3** will lead on a coordinated approach to research and data across West Yorkshire, ensuring consistent and comparable evidence to support the LVEP's work. The Group will also take an overview of strategic initiatives e.g. the accommodation development programme, heritage and cultural projects
- **Events: sub group 4** will concentrate on two key priorities: Major events (i.e. those that take place and/or generate impacts at a WY level) and business tourism/conferences. It will also maintain a major events clash diary and work with key partners e.g. the Cultural Leads, Sports bodies, on developing the event programme for the region

Working groups



Investment and funding

Our existing resources are limited, particularly in comparison to some of our main competitors. This impacts on our ability to deliver activity for the LVEP. We cannot realistically grow the visitor economy without additional investment.

A budget proposal for the foundation period West Yorkshire LVEP is being taken through the Combined Authority's Assurance Process. In the medium term, the LVEP and LVEP partners will need to develop more sustainable financial resources to avoid losing momentum and/or a potential cycle of short term activity to meet available funding criteria.





West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority

Tracy
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