

BRIEFING NOTE FOR TOURISM REVIEW STEERING GROUP

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS DELIVERY MODELS AND OPTIONS

Challenge questions

“What are Destination Management Organisations (DMO's)?”

“What is the model, work priorities and impact of Cotswolds Tourism DMO?”

“Has the Council and Cotswolds Tourism DMO got a strong clear voice with the LEP?”

“What is the right DMO model for the future? - Identify what is fit for purpose?”

“What governance and monitoring is required of Cotswolds Tourism DMO?”

BACKGROUND

As part of the scoping for the review work the challenge questions set out above were raised with regarding gaining an understanding of the role and function of Destination Management Organisations (DMO's).

The reason for raising this query was that in order to carry out a review of the Joint Tourism Team and understand their work and priorities, it is necessary to understand '**Cotswolds Tourism**', which is a Local Authority led DMO. This internationally recognised brand brings together over 450 business members, 5 local authorities and the Cotswolds National Landscape (formally known as Cotswolds AONB). West Oxfordshire and Cotswold District Council are lead funding authority with Stroud, Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Borough Council as partner members.

The following paper brings together examples of DMO's, provides details of the priorities and impact of the Joint Tourism Team (under the umbrella of Cotswolds Tourism) and sets out the measures of success for a fit for purpose delivery model for the future. It focuses on the operating model and how it supports the visitor economy, it does not address the funding split between the two lead authorities which is subject to separate consideration.

The paper finishes with a set of recommendations of actions to support the operation of a successful DMO and vibrant local visitor economy. Feedback is sought from the Steering Group regarding the outcomes of the review and proposed recommendations.

CONTEXT

In 2019, the Government published the Tourism Sector deal setting out the Government's future vision for the British tourism sector. In launching the Deal, Business Secretary Greg Clark said: "Tourism is one of our most valuable industries and it plays a vital role in our economy, with nearly two million people employed in the communities across the country and £23 billion pounds spent by visitors in the UK last year".

The Government recognises the Visitor Economy, within which Tourism sits, as vital in supporting local economies and thriving places. Prior to 2020, Tourism was one of the largest and best performing sectors of the UK economy, generating £155,4bn and was forecast to be worth over £257 billion by 2025.

The impact of the pandemic has further highlighted the importance of the sector which is seen as being uniquely placed to support the government's levelling up agenda of sharing the benefits of growth. To support that end, the Government is currently developing a Tourism Recovery Plan.

Qu1. "WHAT ARE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS"? Role and functions

To make the very best of the opportunities associated with the spend in the visitor economy, Destination Management Organisations, (DMO's) as local tourism organisations, meet the need identified by Central Government for strong, independent, effective management and development of visitor destinations.

As visitors to a 'destination' will be blind to administrative boundaries or areas of responsibility, DMO's need to work collaboratively with public bodies and local organisations to provide a holistic approach to the strategic leadership of a defined genuine visitor destination. The areas covered by DMO's therefore reflects the natural geography of an area's visitor economy rather than local public sector or electoral boundaries.

DMO's have a critical role in coordinating efforts through implementation of an agreed strategy as set out in an approved Destination Management Plan.

The benefits of co-operation are also unusually important for the visitor economy compared to many other sectors due to:

- Very high proportion of small and medium sized enterprises
- Large number of different destinations of varying sizes, types of attractions, local political leadership, transport links etc.

Co-operation enables promotion of a shared visitor destination rather than just individual attraction, restaurant or hotels.

The value placed on the work of DMO's was acknowledged early into the pandemic when in April 2020 Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston launched £1.3m fund to support Destination Management Organisations (DMO's), stating that "This funding will ensure that DMO's can continue to provide critical business support and start to prepare for recovery".

DMO's and the Sector are also represented and supported at a national level by two tourism agencies, Visit Britain (VB) and Visit England (VE), who act as the key relationship and interface at a local level with the network of Destination Management Organisations. VB/VE provide direct financial support through access to funding for the sector; however, this is only available to DMO's and not Local Authorities or Local Enterprise Partnerships.

VB/VE are currently engaging closely with the Government in the development of a Tourism Recovery Plan as part of their statutory duty to advise Government on tourism policy. As part of the preparation of the Recovery Plan the Department Culture, Media and Sport has

announced their intention to carry out a DMO review in Spring 2021, though details for the review have not yet been announced.

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS – Delivery and funding models

As noted above, the Governments view is that England needs DMO's to manage and develop different destinations effectively, but doesn't prescribe a particular model.

DMO's therefore are atypical organisations, the choice of the most appropriate model for a particular destination being influenced by local priorities and issues that need to be addressed in the local Visitor Economy. Across the Country, each DMO develops their own working arrangements

The Visit Britain site identifies DMO s in Gloucestershire as:

- Cotswolds Tourism
- Destination Bristol
- Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism Association
- Marketing Cheltenham
- Marketing Gloucester

The Visit Britain site identifies **DMO** s in Oxfordshire as:

- Cotswolds Tourism
- Experience Oxfordshire
- Tourism South East

The characteristics of a successful DMO can be defined as:

- Strategic leadership - A clear destination management Plan or Tourism Strategy and secure funding. Visit England suggest this is ideally from a combination of commercial income and local authority grants
- Branding - A defined geographical area which recognises visitor boundary and combines smaller destinations where relevant
- Strong support from and for local businesses
- Balances the needs of members and visitors
- Strong partnership and collaboration with local and national decision makers - (LA's, LEP, Visit Britain and Visit England)
- Understanding of domestic and international visitors and where the DMO fits into the national regional picture

TYPES OF DESTINATION MANAGEMENT MODEL

The chosen DMO model, for a particular destination, will take on board the critical success factors noted above and the functions of the DMO will reflect, promote and manage the identified priorities in the agreed Destination Management Plan.

Broadly, there are three types of DMO models: Private Sector Led company models; Private and Public Sector Partnerships or Local Authority Led models. Each may or may not have

public sector / local authority funding. Annex 1 provides a summary of each type of DMO model against the costs, funding partners, monitoring and governance and SWOT/risks.

Qu2 “WHAT IS THE MODEL, WORK PRIORITIES & IMPACT OF COTSWOLDS TOURISM DMO?”

As noted at the start of this paper the Joint Tourism Team lead and run **Cotswolds Tourism** DMO partnership. The DMO is a hybrid model. It is Local Authority led with core funding coming principally from West Oxfordshire District Council and also Cotswold District Council.

Cotswolds Tourism DMO hybrid model also enables operating as a **membership organisation**, which as noted at the start of the paper includes over 450 business members providing an operating budget which funds a Tourism Partnership Manager and support activities for the business members.

Furthermore, this hybrid model enables the Team to provide support to businesses who are not members of the DMO, something private commercial models don't allow.

The DMO has a visitor 'destination' boundary which covers the Cotswold National Landscape (AONB boundary) as well as all of West Oxfordshire and Cotswold District Council area. The vast majority of the business membership is within West Oxfordshire and Cotswolds district areas.

Cotswolds Tourism is the umbrella organisation which provides strategic leadership, support and visibility for the destination but it operates with financial support and buy-in from the local authority partnership leads. The DMO's adopted Destination Management Plan (2014 – 2024) is a critical document setting out an agreed set of objectives which represents the interests and commitment from both public and private sectors.

The agreed vision for tourism in the Cotswolds DMO area is:

“To ensure that the Cotswolds is a vibrant year round destination where visitors enjoy high quality, authentic experiences and tourism makes an increasing contribution to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the local economy”.

The agreed priorities of the Cotswolds DMO are:

- *Partnership – Shaping the Approach Together*
- *Product – Enhancing the Visitor experience*
- *Marketing – developing the Cotswolds Brand and its core values*
- *Knowledge – Establishing a thriving tourism industry*
- *Performance – building excellence through networking and collaboration*

A Partnership Agreement for the DMO strategic partnership was also drafted in 2017 but is not signed but the partnership is currently managed by an officer team of representatives from each local authority and the Cotswolds National Landscape.

The Agreement states that the priorities of Cotswolds Tourism DMO partnership are:

- To promote the Cotswolds area as a destination of choice for domestic and international visitors.
- To work with local businesses to promote their goods and services as an integral part of the local tourism offer, and enhance business understanding of the importance of the visitor economy.
- To highlight tourism issues to elected Members and to parish and town councils.
- To influence national, regional and local strategies that impact on tourism and the visitor economy.
- To identify common themes and issues relevant to the Partnership, explore solutions and agree joint actions where appropriate.
- To promote the Partnership and secure resources to ensure its continuation and development.
- To agree spending on campaigns, publications, or additional staffing in line with the Partnership's priorities.
- To jointly commission research to inform the Partnership's activities.
- To feed information upwards to regional and national tourism bodies to ensure that the Cotswolds is recognised and promoted as a destination in national and international campaigns.

Cotswolds Tourism DMO work by the Joint Tourism Team includes visitor management, product development and controlled marketing which aims to influence visitor behaviour to extend the season, to encourage visitors to less visited areas and to try to encourage active tourism rather than passive sightseeing.

The Team work with local communities to help manage the pressure on 'honeypot' locations from over-tourism promoting a broader range of destinations and experiences in order to spread the economic benefits of the visitor economy more widely and minimise the adverse impacts.

Unlike other commercial tourism marketing organisations, commercial DMO or other tourism teams, it's not just about promotion. The Joint Tourism Team adopts a holistic, place based approach, which maximises the benefits of the visitor economy, whilst recognising the need to address the pressures of too much focus on one tourism destination, a green economy and of course sustainable development and climate change. This means that they not only work with tourism operators, destinations and accommodation, they also work with the High Streets to secure a better visitor experience

Other areas of work for the Team include Press & PR - image requests, organising farm trips, attending press events, follow up of events and content creation. Film & TV requests for information provision. Attendance at travel trade shows including IMM and VIBE events. The creation and publication of town and virtual guides.

The hybrid model therefore enables the joint Tourism Team to fulfil a much wider remit including working with a large number of towns, dealing with town councils and business trade bodies. This has included work on specific events such as Tour of Britain or Cotswold

Hare Trail or more recently on efforts to boost the high street, and recovery from the effects of Covid 19.

This hybrid model has proved resilient, thanks to the on-going commitment and financial support of the lead Councils for the local economy. This has enabled the DMO to provide critical support for businesses within the sector that has been devastated by the impact of Covid-19.

Key activities during Covid-19 to support businesses:

- Stakeholder engagement
 - Free membership and individual contact ; 23 Sector led meetings
 - Guidance and best practice; Messages – ‘know before you go’
 - Support to move online and to digital
- Marketing and Promotion
 - Marketing skills and Networking / Business Communications
 - Signposting to business support / advice / training
- Reopening of town centres
- Pilot Project for Local Tour Operators and Accommodation Providers
 - ‘Experiences’ with local business – domestic packages
 - Woodstock Project. First of the projects across two authorities: Witney, Burford, Cirencester, Tetbury and Northleach to follow.
- Targeting Overseas residents – particularly in London
- Local ‘staycation market’
- Digital Connectivity: business survey, digital health check and planned training

A further value of the DMO partnership, rather than just a Tourism team within a Local Authority, is that the DMO can access external funding which is not available directly to the Council. The team have been highly successfully in recent funding bids some of which is detailed below.

Key areas of work, including externally funded projects:

- Discovery England Fund – ‘Uncover the Cotswolds’ (£250k 3 year funding - just secured £90k to extend to 5 year funding)
- DMO Resilience Scheme – enabling DMOs to support their businesses (approx £17k)
- DMO Recovery Marketing Fund – deliver local marketing activities aligned to national campaign (£73,500 funding)
- Business Advice Hub – support finder, latest guidance (online website promoted by team)
- Recovery Webinar – research and insights, guidance and marketing (showcases work to support local tourism businesses to get on-line bookable service through TXGB)
- ‘Where Good to Go’ – Scheme to demonstrate businesses adhering to public health guidance (Visit England run system extended to June 2021. Team promotes businesses to sign up)
- Business Engagement

- Networking and Local Connexion (business interaction)
- Consumer newsletter (every 2-4 weeks) to 38,500
- Attract new members
- Support existing membership
- Training – co-ordinate, best practice, case studies
- Special Projects – Pub Hubs / Women’s Tour of Britain

Membership has grown significantly from 260 in 2017 to over 450 in 2021. Business engagement and involvement has increased dramatically. Businesses have benefited from the strength of the DMO digital marketing, with membership giving businesses listings on Cotswolds.com, the DMO’s official website which acts as a marketplace, showcasing the area and its businesses.

The marketing reach is significant with the Cotswolds brand as follows:

- Unique visitors to **Cotswolds.com**:
 - From 751,864 to 1.2 million (60% growth)
- Facebook followers:
 - From 5,286 to 42k (694% growth)
- Twitter followers:
 - From 15,150 to 25k (65% growth)
- Instagram followers:
 - 2,100 to 52k (2376% growth)

The impact of the Joint Tourism Team’s work is significant and far ranging. They have, as noted above an enviable high profile website and strong social media presence which enables them to connect visitors with local businesses, attractions and events.

Support for businesses

The work of the Team demonstrates a real concern for businesses rather than a commercial interest. The strengths of Cotswolds Tourism DMO, which has been built by the Team are of high value to businesses in that it enables them to have access to:

- A globally recognised brand and high profile and accessible website – top ranked on Google with 1.2 million unique visitors a year
- A channel to press and pr at a national and international level
- Active social media channels including over 100,000 followers and high engagement rates
- Strong links/channels of communication to national tourism bodies and access to funding
- Industry advice, targeted training and support

The Team has been proactive in providing support for businesses during Covid-19 pandemic and has grown its membership over the past year. A recent business survey has informed the planned programme of work and support including a need for training associated with digital services and a desire to learn more about green tourism.

ASSESSMENT Sections

Qu 3 “HAS THE COUNCIL AND COTSWOLDS TOURISM DMO GOT A STRONG CLEAR VOICE WITH THE LEP?”

Whilst the work of the Joint Tourism Team with local businesses and projects with local communities has made a positive impact and is addressing key issues which have been identified, the messaging about the work wasn't getting back to the Council or shared more widely. The concerns around visibility and sharing success stories were picked up as part of the review paper on Communication which was presented to the Steering Group at the last meeting.

A paper had also been presented to the Steering Group on the relationship with the LEP as again it was considered that more could be done to present a strong clear narrative on the work which was being undertaken to support businesses in the local visitor economy.

Recommendations from that paper highlighted the new working relationship and participation on LEP groups by the Business Manager for Localities and Joint Tourism Manager and the contribution towards recovery plans. This approach needs to be developed further to ensure that the Council clearly articulates its position. This could be further enhanced by undertaking a review of the DMO Destination Management Plan (DMP) and involvement of the LEP and other key stakeholders in co-creating and agreeing a new DMP.

Qu4 “WHAT IS THE RIGHT DMO MODEL FOR THE FUTURE? - WHAT IS FIT FOR PURPOSE?”

The work on Horizon Scanning as set out in the associated Briefing paper for the Steering Group, identifies areas of challenge and the on-going uncertainty for the visitor economy. Whilst Boris Johnson has now announced the roadmap for reopening the economy there is a need for a flexible and adaptable model of delivery for the DMO which can respond to issues as they arise.

The review of the different DMO models does flag risks around wholly private sector/business models which are commercially rather than politically driven. The priorities of these DMO's could result in conflict between the strategic objectives of the Council (managing the impact of tourism, environment impacts) with the commercial objectives of the business members.

This has arisen during Covid-19 when a number of DMO's have ceased operating. This does not suggest that they are a model that remains fit for purpose. Furthermore, DMO's which focus on overseas markets or city breaks or business led DMO's which rely heavily on ticket sales or membership fees are closing, reducing activities and facing redundancy. Fundamentally, commercial operations are also more susceptible to economic shocks and loss of private sector funding.

The other key issue of concern for the Council, which has emerged during the review work, is that commercial DMO's don't work with businesses or organisations unless they are members. Feedback from the Steering Group is the desire to enable a wider level of support for business and the communities most impacted by visitors to the area.

Contrary to the potential risks of a commercial model, the existing Cotswolds Tourism DMO does enable influence and involvement of the Council in setting the priorities of the Destination Management Plan. It also ensures that the Corporate Priorities and actions agreed in the Recovery Plans can be delivered by the Joint Tourism Team, collaborating with colleagues working in Economic and Business Development to support a vibrant local economy.

Cotswolds Tourism DMO focus on the domestic visitor market has also placed them in a better position to respond to the challenges of Covid. They also have a breadth of public sector partners focussing on recovery, are able to co-ordinate resources to support the visitor economy and places beyond honeypots.

QUS “WHAT GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING IS REQUIRED OF COTSWOLDS TOURISM DMO?”

In answering this final challenge question, a paper was produced for the Steering group which set out recommended approach to the Governance of the DMO. This included setting up an Advisory Board to be led by the lead Portfolio Holders for West Oxfordshire and Cotswold District Council with the primary functions of endorsing the DMO’s Management Plan, reviewing discretionary spend on projects, quarterly review of planned and delivered work and input into the Destination Management Plan refresh.

CONCLUSIONS

The review work has highlighted the strong support from Central Government for Tourism, Visitor Economy and the work of DMO’s in optimising the value and contribution of the sector to a vibrant local economy.

The review work has identified how Cotswolds Tourism DMO and the Joint Tourism Team meets list of characteristics of a successful DMO including: Strategic leadership, Branding, Strong support from and for local businesses, Balances the needs of members and visitors, Strong partnership and collaboration and Understanding of domestic and international visitors.

In the current economic climate, the hybrid model of Cotswolds Tourism DMO is fit for purpose. The Team and DMO are extremely effective in supporting businesses in the sector and have potential to grow that offer for the benefit of businesses in the wider local economy. The DMO’s successfully social media following and customer base is a huge asset for local businesses. The team have also accessed funding to support digital health checks and training and are working with towns to grow visibility of their offer and businesses.

However, the DMO and Team are only able to do the work they do through the commitment and support of the Council and on-going access to external funding from Visit Britain/Visit England.

The Teams work in enabling delivery of the Council priorities and agreed actions to support the Council’s plans for recovery, should continue to work with businesses to support

marketing and digitally enabled solutions; develop the relationship with the LEP and engage with communities on place shaping and management of visitors.

When the economic climate is more stable and the future of the visitor economy is clearer, the recommendations are that work is undertaken to explore the options around the balance of private/public sector funding. The current focus however is on recovery.

The review did however identify a number of areas where change is needed or particular areas of work needs to be prioritised and these are set out in the recommendations below.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Implement the agreed governance arrangements to support delivery of DMO Management Plan
- Develop an agreed set of Key Performance indicators including:
 - Gross Value Added
 - Wider public recognition of role of visitor economy in recovery from Covid and added value
- Prepare and present an annual report on the state of the visitor economy and contribution by the Team and DMO to a vibrant local economy
- Work with key stakeholders and businesses in the visitor economy to carry out the refresh of the Destination Management Plan to ensure that the focus of work remains appropriately prioritised
- Provide a clear narrative which explains the Council's role as are part of a Strategic Partnership and highlights the return on investment for the Council and local tax payers
- Continue to build connections with wider business ecosystem to maximise spend from visitors, including plans for High Street recovery
- Enable training and support for businesses to be digitally enabled and provide a high quality customer experience including building confidence and value in employment in the sector as a career and not a job
- Support businesses to make a transition to zero carbon and enable green and sustainable business models
- Grow DMO membership and enable local businesses to understand and access the significant value of the Cotswold Tourism brand
- Build collaborative and partnership relationships on place shaping and management of visitors in order to maximise the benefits of visitor spend and minimise the impact
- Continue to access opportunities for funding to support existing and future projects
- Works and connects with the LEP on the delivery of Local Industrial Strategy and recovery plans.
- Highlight the opportunities and qualities of the area as a place for businesses in the wider economy to invest.

ANNEX 1: DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS

PRIVATE SECTOR LED MODEL

The first type of model can be a Limited Company, Community Interest Company or not for profit (with or without local authority funding), partnership model, Business Improvement District (funded by levy on local businesses).

The key purpose of this model is marketing and co-ordinating the promotion of the area as a leisure, conference, business, and educational visitor destination. This can include operating a Visitor Information Centre (VIC's), operating a membership schemes, providing accommodation-booking services, marketing the area to leisure, business and overseas travellers, PR activity, developing destination websites and organising events.

Costs

In a fully commercial DMO, operating costs are covered by commercial funding streams. This could include income from membership fees, patrons, sponsorship from larger local companies, profits from events, retail sales (usually including a VIC), walking tours, providing marketing consultancy for other DMOs/LA/LEP, website income or other advertising revenue streams. The necessary income to support a private sector DMO is not insignificant.

Funding Partners

Funding partners for a private sector model can include sponsorships, patrons, membership funding models that provide a commercial income stream ensure that local businesses have a stake in the success of the DMO and hold it accountable. Conversely, as a commercial company, without contributing to the funding stream, the strategic interests of the local authority are not secured. Any local authority priorities would be commissioned from the DMO at cost. However, a local authority can be a contributing partner or as in the case of Visit Bath, a shareholder.

Monitoring and Governance

A commercial company would be answerable to its board of directors which can include a local authority member. A company would produce annual accounts and hold an Annual meeting with its shareholders.

SWOT / Risks

- They are commercially rather than politically driven.
- DMO has strong private sector led business agenda which would normally include the breadth and experience to operate a commercial business.
- As a commercial interest, the DMO can become vulnerable to economic crises and indeed during the Covid pandemic at least one of this type of DMO has ceased to

exist due to the lack of incoming funds (Visit Cambridge and Beyond) and others are looking at contingencies to continue operating.

- The model excludes non-members even if they are a key product in the area.
- A BID company would only address the specific area rather than a wider local visitor economy.
- As a commercial interest, members could demand immediate returns and not necessarily take a long-term strategic view, spend excessive time chasing financial contributions and only deliver what businesses will pay for.
- The model, relies upon maximising the potential of sales in tourism and visitor economy and seeking a financial return rather than managing tourism in a way that takes on board the economic and social impacts of additional visitors to a locality.

PRIVATE / PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP MODEL

This is a hybrid model that includes a partnership of both private sector and public sector (normally local authority) interest. It can be part of the LEP or part of the local authority (with or without additional commercial funding) but has a degree of arm's length and independent operation. (Example includes Cambridge and Beyond which has just ceased trading). The remit of the DMO can be wide, not simply including a contractor of services. It is different to the public sector model in that it would choose the investment priorities and opportunities for intervention.

Costs

There is an opportunity for public sector funds to leverage private sector investment. Private sector partners will expect a return on the investment and will need to ensure that the priorities and interventions are aligned.

Public sector will be expected to bring secure funding which may conflict with annual budget planning.

Funding Partners

Public sector funding is still required, however, opportunities for alternative funding should be pursued.

As with funding partners for the partnership model there are opportunities to lever in private sector funding and commitment from tourism businesses. This can include sponsorships, patrons, membership funding models that provide a commercial income stream ensure that local businesses and the local authorities have a stake in the success of the DMO and hold it accountable. As a partnership, the strategic interests of the local authority are better secured by the election of local authority members on the board.

Monitoring and Governance

This can include an operation similar to a company with a board of directors with the local authority members sitting as board directors.

SWOT – Risks

- This model can be seen as an independent operation with buy in from both public and private sectors. It needs a strong and defined management plan with key objectives that represents the interests and buy in from both public and private sectors. As a partnership with businesses there may be conflicts between the strategic objectives of the local authority (managing the impact of tourism, environmental impacts) with the commercial objectives of the business members.
- As a commercial operation, it will be impacted by economic shocks and this has been the case during the current pandemic.
- Stronger opportunity to lever in additional private sector funding and commitment from tourism businesses

Note: In April 2020, the Government announced financial support to DMO's who usually received 50% of their income from commercial sources recognising that they were at severe risk of closure due to the pandemic. This was to ensure that they were able to continue to operate.

PUBLIC SECTOR MODEL

The public sector model can be a destination management function within a lead local authority. Alternatively, the responsibilities can be transferred to a local authority controlled company.

A public sector led approach reflects the need* for local authority leadership in destination development, management of infrastructure and place based marketing which reflects the objectives of the local authority including economic development, planning, wellbeing, transport, culture. It facilitates an integrated approach.

** This model supports the need for local leadership and a shared vision and commitment to place shaping for an area. This is particularly important where there is a risk of over-tourism and the management of the pressures and tensions associated with honey-pot locations.*

Costs

The Local authority led funding models have provided a relatively secure funding model and are been able to take a longer term, strategic view, provided an incentive for other local partners to work together. Being part of a wider organisation, it also has reduced overheads.

The DMO need to remain mindful of business needs and security of sufficient funding can change dependent upon individual Local Authority resources. As a DMO it is also able to access other funding streams including Discover England Fund and most recently Resilience Funding and Emergency Funding.

Funding Partners

The funding relies entirely upon each Local Authority (LA) partner committing funding to tourism as a priority product and one where it is important for the authority to make an intervention.

In response to Covid – 19 and the need to support recovery in the visitor economy, Local Authorities are reviewing their priorities and funding commitments to ensure resources are focused to where they can make most difference.

In a local authority controlled company prominent businesses, academic and tourism figures can sit alongside members of the local authority, typically with a Board chaired by LA representative.

Monitoring and Governance

The governance can be a simple Terms of Reference or the full considerations of a Company in the case of a local authority controlled company and a Board of Directors including people representing the visitor economy sector in the locality.

The DMO must ensure that it retains the support and participation of the private sector visitor economy businesses. It is therefore important that it retains a business sector profile which is recognised by partners as a business facing organisations rather than a local authority profile. However, it is also important to engage businesses more directly in the decision making processes and this can be successfully completed by input into the preparation and review of Destination Management Plans, which are then adopted or approved by the partner Local Authority.

SWOT – Risks

- The determining factor is the strength of political support and ability to translate that into financial support.
- A local authority controlled company model gives reassurance to the industry that there are business rather than politically led decisions and that there is commercial expertise at the heart of the company whilst the public sector can be assured that its strategic aims are aligned with its political ambitions.