

JOINT TOURISM TEAM – ACTION PLAN

Short term recovery and immediate actions in response to Covid:

- **Digital marketing:** with businesses having been closed for so much of the last year and struggling to survive financially the tourism team need, as soon as restrictions are lifted, to prioritise domestic marketing. Digital marketing allows the team to determine markets and messages but with the flexibility to change these at short notice and DMO Recovery Marketing Fund money has been secured to assist with this.
- **Over tourism:** the easing of restrictions after the first lock down saw a few places receiving more visitors than they had the capacity to absorb comfortably, which caused some tensions. It is anticipated that this will again be a feature of this summer and, while acknowledging the limits of the joint tourism team's influence over day visitor numbers, the team need to agree actions to try and mitigate the effects.
- **Messaging:** in order to ensure a safe re-opening of the visitor economy, the tourism service needs to emphasise to visitors the importance of maintaining social distancing and respect for local residents and the areas they visit. The messaging should also emphasise and promote other, less visited, areas that might offer a better visitor experience at peak times.

Short to medium term:

- **Support business resilience:** as part of the Uncover the Cotswolds project the tourism team are identifying the digital training needs of the local businesses and sourcing training to help them improve their online presence and to become bookable online.
- **Build local supply chains:** through networking events and information provision to local businesses the tourism team will foster cooperation between businesses and help them link into local supply chains.
- **Training and development:** working with relevant partners the tourism team will support local businesses to ensure that their staff can access suitable training in order to counter potential recruitment problems caused by Brexit, to maximise opportunities for locals particularly young people and to ensure their staff offer the best customer service possible
- **Development of experiences:** in order to encourage overnight stays and to enrich the visitor experience the tourism team will continue to work with local businesses, especially in less visited areas, to develop engaging experiences that are available all year and that can be marketed online.
- **Repurposing businesses:** some businesses were previously heavily reliant on markets that are unlikely to recover for some time to come. With overseas visitor numbers currently projected to return to 2019 levels only in 2024 or 2025 and with some areas of the visitor economy (for example business meetings and weddings)

unlikely to recover any time soon, hospitality businesses previously reliant on these markets need support and advice to repurpose, as much as possible, their operations and target markets.

- **Support for the retail sector:** a high proportion of visitor spend goes to local retailers. The tourism team will continue to work, via their Real Cotswolds project and with colleagues in Business Support, to maximise the benefits of visitor spend in the wider local economy and to support retail in the market towns.
- **Sustainable tourism:** the shared tourism service, working with Climate Action colleagues and external partners, to encourage local businesses to improve the sustainability of their operations and to encourage visitors to minimise the impacts of their own behaviour while visiting. The team will need to consider visitor payback schemes like the additional parking charge in Bourton that will be used for local initiatives and the Cotswolds National Landscape's 'Caring for the Cotswolds scheme.
- **Local plan policies:** the tourism team needs to develop better communication channels with planning colleagues to ensure better input on planning applications, influence upon Local Plan reviews to highlight the need for any particular policies to provide strategic support to the visitor economy.

Longer term:

Digital and technological advances: in the longer term the joint tourism team need to keep abreast of digital and technological advances that are being made. Advances that may shortly have a significant effect on the running or marketing of local visitor economy businesses include the use of voice searches (like Siri and Alexa), virtual and augmented reality, recognition technologies, personalisation, conversational commerce (like WhatsApp) and the use of chatbots and AI, especially in customer service and information provision.

Provision of information by digital means will be prioritised and there will be a continued need for digital training for businesses and help to improve their digital presence and keep abreast of changes.