

Destination East Midlands – The East Midlands Tourism Strategy 2003-2010

A strategy prepared by *emda*

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DESTINATION EAST MIDLANDS

THE EAST MIDLANDS TOURISM STRATEGY 2003-2010

OCTOBER 2003

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Foreword

In April this year the Government announced that the Regional Development Agencies would be given the strategic lead for tourism. This move acknowledged the important role that tourism has to play in driving forward prosperity in the regions, and for the East Midlands, achieving our goal of becoming a top 20 region in Europe by 2010.

The number and quality of responses from industry during the consultation process has been tremendous, and I would like to thank sincerely all those who have taken the time to contribute to the strategy.

I would also like to thank all members of the East Midlands Tourism Advisory Group for their commitment and contribution to ensuring that this strategy fulfilled the expectations of the industry.

The publication of this Regional Tourism Strategy is the first step in taking tourism forward to a new and profitable future. It recognises the value of investing in our key regional assets, including world-class brands such as Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest, the Peak District, the National Forest and Silverstone, as well as emerging strengths such as sports and cultural tourism.

The strategy also recognises the breadth of activity relating to tourism, and the role that different organisations play in developing our tourism product. Coordination and collaboration between all these different organisations, from the small rural bed and breakfast through to the larger regional agencies, will be vital to ensuring its future success.

I look forward to working with our partners in taking this strategy forward over the next seven years and to celebrating the future success of tourism in the East Midlands.

Derek Mapp

Chairman

East Midlands Development Agency

1. Introduction

1.1 A Strategy for All Stakeholders

This Tourism Strategy for the East Midlands has been developed with the assistance of a wide range of stakeholders.

It is not just a strategy for the East Midlands Development Agency (*emda*), although it will guide *emda* in its development and funding of tourism initiatives in the region.

It is a strategy to help guide all stakeholders, whether they are from the public, private or voluntary sectors.

It has been prepared following extensive consultation, including:

- A consultation paper
- Seminars held around the region
- Seminars held on specific subjects – urban, rural, multicultural, sports, business and church tourism
- A regional tourism conference
- Responses to the draft strategy

In addition, a detailed Evaluation Report has been prepared. It analyses the current situation with tourism in the East Midlands and tourism trends nationally that the Strategy needs to take into account.

The strategy was prepared with the assistance of working groups, one for each of the strands.

The hundreds of people all over the region who gave up their time to participate in this consultation programme are sincerely thanked for their contributions.

1.2 Following a Framework

The Strategy has been divided into seven strands:

- Branding and Marketing. The objectives are to define and build a powerful set of destination brands, to rationalise and harness integrated marketing using new media techniques, and to appeal to clearly defined customer segments.
- Attractors. The objective is to invest in excellence in those products and experiences that relate to the lifestyles of contemporary visitors and are capable of attracting high value visitors.
- Infrastructure. The objective is to turn the theoretical accessibility of the region into a reality, across information services, transport, and getting around the region.
- Business Skills and Training. The objective is to encourage businesses that are capable of flourishing in the changing tourism environment and help to ensure that the skills that they need are readily available.
- Performance Measurement. The objective is to set up systems for comprehensively and reliably measuring and assessing the performance of the tourism industry to the benefit of both operators and public sector agencies.
- Special Projects. The objective is to prioritise and focus on projects that will have a major impact of the performance of the East Midlands as a visitor destination.
- Delivery. The objective is to establish the principles for mechanisms that will ensure the delivery of the Strategy.

Each strand in turn divides into a number of initiatives. Exhibit 1 summarises them. Action Plans to implement the Strategy will be developed by East Midlands Tourism (a new organisation overseeing Tourism Strategy in the region – see Section 12.6), sub-regional destination management partnerships and other stakeholders with specific interest in particular initiatives.

Exhibit 1: Initiatives

Branding and Marketing

A Challenger

Going with the Grain

Regional Brand Map

Investing in Icons - Attract and Disperse

Highlighting Themes

Communication Strategy

Marketing Imperatives

Attractors

Enjoying the Countryside

Happening Cities

Enhancing the Environment

Best for Business

Encouraging Events and Festivals

Trumpeting Treasures

Caution with New Attractions

Stimulating Sports Tourism

Accelerating Motorsports

Wonderful Waterways

Famous for Food (and Flowers)

Championing Church & Faith Tourism

Finding Family

Fashionable

Utilising Universities

Infrastructure

Easily Accessible Information and Booking

Rationalised Information Delivery

Influencing Transport Decisions

Encouraging Sustainable Transport

Arriving by Air

Good Directions

Business Support and Skills

Helping Heroes

Endorsing National Standards

Champion Projects

Plotting Pilots

Making it Easy to Access Advice and Training

Creating Clusters

Creating Careers

Training

A Place for Professionals

Enabling Informed Decisions

Performance Measurement

Efficient Systems for Collecting and

Disseminating Information

Creative Key Performance Indicators

Towards a Tourism Satellite Account

Understanding Visitors

Special Projects

Creating Major Destination Attractors

Perfecting the Peak

Integrating Sherwood Forest

Nottingham - a Leading European City

Growing the National Forest

Caring for the Coast

Leicester Revealed

Uphill Lincoln

Magnificent Market Towns

Nene Valley Regional Park

Delivery

A Cohesive System for Delivery of the Strategy

A Flexible Approach

Supporting the Sharp End

The Front Line of Support

Powerful Sub-Regional Backup

Strong Regional Co-ordination

Responsibilities

Use of the regional framework will be encouraged in the preparation of sub- regional and local visitor strategies. That will be one of the primary means by which the influence of the Tourism Strategy will extend throughout the region.

1.3 Measuring Performance

Detailed performance measures and targets will accompany action plans. Exhibit 2 shows key performance indicators for each of the strands of the Strategy.

Exhibit 2 : Key Performance Indicators

Overall

Share of GDP

Spend per visitor

Overnight stays, categorised by non-VFR related and VFR related

Repeat visits, non-VFR related

Quality of the visitor experience

Employment in tourism

Branding and Marketing

Expenditure on marketing behind iconic brands

Awareness and image of iconic brands

Attractors

Visitor spend generated under each initiative

Perceptions of the environment

Infrastructure

Business generated through destination management systems

Delivery of key transport infrastructure projects

Visitors arriving by air (to airports in and around the region) compared to those leaving

Visitors using public transport

Business Support and Skills

Entries in independent quality guides

Percentage of establishments in National Quality

Assessment Schemes

Number of operators receiving training and
assistance through accredited schemes

Performance Measurement

Percentage of establishments participating in data
collection scheme

Special Projects

Employment created and sustained

Visitor spend generated

Delivery

Tourism businesses' satisfaction with each
level/type of support

2 Tourism in the East Midlands

2.1 A Major Industry

- Contributes £5 billion to the economy
- About £3.5% of GDP
- 30,000 businesses
- 200,000 people employed
- 90% of trips are day trips, 9% are staying trips from other parts of the region, and 1% are from overseas
- 800,000 visits from overseas annually

2.2 Changing Times

Tourism markets have been changing rapidly and will continue to do so. They have been explored in more detail in the Evaluation Report that was prepared in conjunction with the Strategy.

Some of the key trends that are likely to continue for the medium - to long-term and therefore shape the Strategy, are:

- Day visits have been growing as car ownership has increased. Many tourism operations will continue to rely on day visits.
- Discretionary income will increase and, therefore, people will have more money to spend on leisure.
- Discretionary income will increase faster than leisure time (which may decrease) so people will be increasingly demanding when it comes to deciding how to spend it. Value for time will be as important as value for money.
- People will be better educated and want a broader range of experiences. Breaks that offer activities of various sorts will be in increasing demand. People will be increasingly interested in aspects of both built and natural environment.

- People will be increasingly concerned about leading a healthy lifestyle, and there will be increasing demand for activities and sports related breaks¹.
- “Out of the ordinary” experiences associated with venues will continue to grow in popularity – examples include civil ceremonies and business events in sporting venues, corporate days, functions and conferences with a tour, visit or talk.
- The ABC1 socio-economic group will represent an increasing share of the population.
- The average age of the population will increase and the “seniors” market will become increasingly important.
- There will be more households without children.
- There will be more single person households.
- City living will continue to grow in popularity, fuelling the increasing vitality of urban areas and, in turn, their attractiveness as destinations.
- More people will also want to live in attractive rural areas, often commuting from urban areas.
- The Licensing Act will change the nature of the night economy in towns and cities, perhaps leading to a more mature and welcoming ambience.
- Liberalisation of gambling rules will provide opportunities for casino developments and possibly, depending on the nature of the regulations, casino resorts.
- People will take more holidays, albeit short breaks.
- It will be easier to get abroad and to other parts of the UK, especially by air. This will create both challenges (domestic customers will find it easier to go elsewhere) and opportunities (people will find it easier to get to the East Midlands, especially from

¹ “We’re finding a gentle increase in ‘fresh air lovers’ – the cycling, walking, dog-on-holiday and hostel-lover fraternity” – consultation response from South Kesteven.

overseas). Unless it is balanced by more inbound arrivals, the UK's balance of payments deficit on tourism, currently £13 billion, will continue to grow.

- Long holidays taken in the UK will continue to decrease.
- Visits to friends and relatives, especially by young people, will increase.
- Business tourism will increase, although the trend towards smaller and shorter conferences will probably continue and growth is more likely to come from the public sector and associations than from the corporate sector. It is possible that the improving quality and accessibility of video conferencing may put a brake on the meetings and conferences market.
- There will be increasing demand for high quality self-catering for three night and seven night breaks. Self-catering operators will need to be able to offer short breaks.
- Congestion will increase, as will the desire to escape it. There will be an increasing premium placed on space, time to reflect, relax, and recharge batteries.
- The Internet will become increasingly important for accessing information and for making bookings.
- The Internet will also have other impacts on tourism. It will make it easier, for example, for people to trace their ancestors and will, therefore, stimulate genealogical tourism.
- There will be increasing demand for the reliable and consistent standards offered by branded products.
- There will also be increasing demand for the individuality of high quality independent product. There will, however, be less tolerance for an independent product that does not match the quality of equivalent branded product. Individuality will not be an acceptable excuse for poor quality.
- The unexpected can be expected – there will continue to be regular crises that will impact on the tourism.

These trends will create opportunities, but also pose challenges. Change will continue to be rapid.

2.3 A Visitor Strategy

Although it is called a tourism strategy, this is perhaps better described as a visitor strategy. The main markets are people living in the region or near it, including people who live locally. Although there is an emphasis in favour of attracting more people who will stay overnight, and that implies a further distance, the Strategy is realistic in its understanding that tourists from overseas or far distant places are unlikely to be the bread and butter of tourism in the East Midlands. That does not mean that attracting more people from overseas is not a priority, only that it is kept in proportion.

3 Helping to Deliver the Regional Economic Strategy

3.1 Aiming High

The ambition of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) is for the East Midlands to be one of Europe's top 20 regions by 2010.

It will be a place where people want to live, work and invest because of:

- Our vibrant economy
- Our healthy, safe, diverse and inclusive society
- Our quality environment

At the heart of the Regional Economic Strategy are three "drivers of success":

- A strong culture of enterprise and innovation, with a climate within which entrepreneurs and world-class businesses can flourish.
- High quality employment opportunities and excellence in learning and skills, giving the region a competitive edge in acquiring and exploiting knowledge.
- The physical conditions for a modern economic structure, including infrastructure to support the use of new technologies.

3.2 Tourism's Goals

The Regional Economic Strategy provides two specific targets for tourism:

- To raise the visitor expenditure to 4.5% of the region's GDP in 2010. In 1999, it represented 3.5% of GDP.
- To increase visitor value rather than volume, by placing emphasis on increasing overnight stays. The target is to increase visitor spend in the region by an average of 1.6% per annum by 2005 and by 2% by 2010.

3.3 12 Steps to 2010

The Regional Economic Strategy identifies 12 steps towards the achievement of the goal of being a top 20 region by 2010, and lists specific "priorities for action" under each.

Step 10 of the 12 steps is specifically devoted to tourism and culture. The priorities listed under this step are:

- Promote the use of on-line visitor booking and on-line business trading
- Increase access to specialist business advice to the tourism industry
- Develop tourism niche markets in the region – such as cultural tourism and business tourism
- Increase the region's capacity to attract major international events
- Develop the region's Creative Industries Cluster, with the focus on new media – and establish a sports cluster in the region linked to Loughborough University

In addition, Strand 5 of the Regional Economic Strategy (International Trade and Investment) includes as one of its key targets: "Increase the volume and value of international tourism " and goes on to refer to the region's International Students and Alumni etc and the "East Midlands International Connections initiative".

These priorities have been carried forward to the Tourism Strategy.

3.4 Other Strategies

There are other regional strategies, plans and studies that have a major impact on tourism and on this Strategy. They include:

- Time for Culture – the East Midlands Cultural Strategy
- East Midlands International Connections Action Plan
- Regional Tourism and Culture Workforce Development Plan
- Urban Action Plan

- Rural Action Plan
- Regional Transport Strategy
- Regional Environment Strategy
- Environmental Economy of the East Midlands
- Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food
- The Integrated Regional Strategy (prepared by the Regional Assembly)

Others are in production. The East Midlands Heritage Forum is producing an Action Plan relating to the East Midlands Historic Environment, and the Regional Sports Board (RSB) is currently preparing a regional Sports Strategy.

There are also numerous sub-regional strategies relating to tourism.

Tourism clearly does not exist in isolation. It heavily inter-relates with areas such as regeneration, inward investment, sustainability and culture. It depends upon a high quality environment. This Strategy has a lot to say on these issues although it is, above all, a strategy for *tourism* and that is where its priorities lie.

4 Aspirations

4.1 A “Greenscape” Theme

The East Midlands offers a fantastic diversity of places, products and lifestyle experiences for visitors.

It is an irony that the key image associated with the Midlands is urban sprawl and post-industrial decline.

The reality is not like that at all. The East Midlands is amongst the most rural of regions. It boasts iconic “green” brands such as the Peak District and Sherwood Forest. It is characterised not by vast industrial cities and conurbations, but by “routes of green” – rich agricultural land which feeds the farms and the market towns, the parks, forests, wetlands, waterways and lakes.

Its cities and major towns are fuelled by youthful energies and are melting pots of internationalism and talent, and it boasts highly attractive market towns and villages, nestled between the forests and fields.

This is not just a matter of the ‘natural’ environment, but also the historic environment which overlays it. The region’s heritage resides wherever the hand of man is superimposed on the natural world: in ridge and furrow (which is greater in the East Midlands than any other region), ancient trackways, dry stone walls, ancient hedge-lines, field barns, wells, churches, manor-houses, great estates, industrial activities, and so on.

The East Midlands is distinguished by this subtle blend of diverse natural and historic landscapes peppered with handsome villages and locally distinct buildings and estates².

The enhancement and development of these assets for the use of visitors and local people are the main threads through this strategy.

It is recognised that there is often tension between concerns to protect the environment and the desire of tourism operators to develop their

² Featuring traditionally distinct buildings from Derbyshire stone slates, to Nottinghamshire/Lincolnshire pantiles, to Northamptonshire Collywestons

businesses. This is particularly so in major tourist destinations such as the Peak District. There is not, however, necessarily an inherent conflict between the two objectives. Preserving and enhancing the quality of the environment is critical to the region's future success as a destination.

4.2 The Vision

The ambition of this strategy is that by 2010 tourism will be playing a significantly greater role in the prosperity of the East Midlands.

It will also be playing an even greater role than currently in enhancing the quality of life of local people.

The region will be famous for the quality of its rural destinations. Destinations like the Peak District, Sherwood Forest, the National Forest will be synonymous with quality in recreation, boasting world class facilities, accommodation, pubs and restaurants. They will be leaders in reconciling the increasing desire for environmental protection with the demands placed by the motor car.

The cities and towns will be popular destinations for short breaks. They will be known for their vitality and quality of their cultural offer and their nightlife, for the quality and variety of their shopping and of their sports and recreational offer. Their image will be of highly desirable places to live, work and visit, enriched by their ethnic diversity.

Nottingham will be commonly regarded as being in the top division of provincial short break and business destinations.

Lincoln will have been lifted into the top rank of heritage city destinations in Britain, its magnificent cathedral and castle recognised as glories and a "must see".

Leicester will have firmly established a reputation for having one of the most interesting and diverse communities, cultural offers, and festival programmes in the country.

The other cities and large towns will have continued their progress in creating a stimulating, cosmopolitan ambience that is attractive to visitors and locals alike. The region will be known for having some of the finest and most vibrant market towns in the country.

The coastline will be treasured as a recreational resource. The resorts will have embarked on a new era of prosperity and dedication to quality.

All over the region, the conservation and improvement of natural habitats will have created wildlife destinations of top quality.

There will be greater attention to the quality of the local environment – litter, dog-fouling, graffiti, fly-tipping and so on.

The region will boast outstanding pubs and restaurants, hotels, cottages for hire, and bed and breakfasts.

It will have developed a series of events that are known far and wide, but will also be known for the quality of community events that are deeply entrenched in local tradition. It will periodically host major sports and cultural events that will attract national attention.

It will be possible for customers to find out about and make reservations for all accommodation on-line. It will also be easy for them to get hold of printed information and to find the information that they need when they reach their destination.

The profile and reputation of the region's major destinations will have reached new heights. They will also be working well with surrounding destinations in dispersing tourists around the region.

The East Midlands will have improved its share of the market for meetings and conferences, taking advantage of the convenient location of many parts of the region in relation to major commercial centres. It will have invested in infrastructure in a way that responds to market demands.

Tourism will be regarded as an attractive career option with clearly defined career paths available.

All of this will have been achieved by a co-ordinated and cohesive delivery structure, with a strong and effective presence at local, sub-regional and regional levels.

Tourism will be widely recognised as a key factor in making the East Midlands one of the top 20 regions in Europe.

5 Principles

5.1 Principles Underpinning the Strategy

The following principles will apply to all work in developing tourism in the region:

- Building on Good Practice – wherever possible, examples of good practice will be used as platforms to guide future initiatives. Some of these have been highlighted in the Strategy, but there are many others.
- Committed to Quality – the only way to keep ahead of the competition is to keep improving the quality of the visitor offer.
- Responding to the Customer – tourism development will be market oriented, respond to what customers want, and be accessible for all visitors.
- Financially Sustainable – care will be taken when making investment to ensure that new developments have a secure income and do not become a burden to their local community.
- Environmentally Sustainable – it is recognised that the quality of the built and natural environment in the countryside and in cities, towns and villages is the region's primary asset. The objective is to enhance that quality especially in those areas that have the most appeal to visitors.
- Making the Best of Limited Financial Resources – unnecessary duplication and administration will be avoided so that financial resources are used as effectively as possible to the benefit of the tourism economy.
- Improving the Quality of Life – a compelling place to visit will be an attractive place to live and a good place to work. The Tourism Strategy is as much about improving the quality of life of local people as it is about attracting visitors.
- Obligations – if public funding is given in support of projects, recipients will be contractually obliged to contribute to key themes

in this strategy such as “Attract and Disperse” sharing best practice and co-operating in sharing visitor statistics and other material.

5.2 Prioritising Investment

Every corner of the region has a claim for investment in tourism, and an endless number of worthwhile tourism projects can make a case for funding.

In reality, however, there is a limit to the amount of funds from public sources.

It is therefore necessary to have some means of prioritising investment³.

The principles are that higher priority should be given to investment that:

- Supports Iconic Brands – the top priority is to make sure that the iconic brands are world-class destinations. They are the primary means by which people will be persuaded to visit the region. They are encapsulated in the Special Projects strand of the Strategy.
- Creates Destinations – it does not just create stand-alone attractions but works with other attractions and infrastructure to build the overall critical mass of the destination.
- Encourages High Value Staying Tourism – the focus of the Strategy is on value rather than volume, and investment that will help achieve that will be given priority.
- Protects and Improves the Region’s Primary Tourism Assets of High Quality Natural and Historic Environment – this is in accordance with strategic priorities for sustainability, the “Greenscape” theme of this strategy, and the importance of the environment to tourism development.

³ “The tourism appeal of the region is already too dispersed, and although the region might provide “diversity” it should not promote it – “diversity” actually means “nothing special”, and is an admission of defeat or failure!” Stakeholder comment.

6 Strand 1: Branding and Marketing

6.1 A Challenger

This Tourism Strategy begins with a realistic assessment of the region as a destination.

It has some great individual destinations, but, overall, it is not in the top division.

The West Country and Scotland are in the top division.

They have natural tourism assets that are difficult to compete against, but it is a similar situation that New Zealand used to be in when compared to Australia.

New Zealand positioned itself as a challenger, and challenged with gusto. They have achieved great success through smart product development and smart marketing.

Unlike New Zealand's situation, the East Midlands does not face one clear competitor, but the aim of the brand Strategy is, through similarly smart branding and marketing, to get the region to punch above its weight. Like the Leicester Tigers and Northampton Saints, the region is to move up to the "Premier Division" of destinations – and stay there.

6.2 Going with the Grain

The Tourism Strategy's approach to branding is based on the principle "Going with the Grain" – exploiting the natural assets of the region.

These are rooted in places and experiences that have the most power to connect with customers.

The starting point is to ask what brands exist in the East Midlands?

- Which are internationally famous?
- Which are nationally famous?
- Which are regionally famous?
- Which are locally notable?

There is a need to be honest in this assessment and invest in those brands and sub-brands that have the greatest appeal in domestic and overseas markets. There are lots of places/products that command attention and authority but they do not necessarily have brand status.

The East Midlands is itself a political/administrative entity. It is not a destination brand⁴.

Changing the image of the East Midlands as a whole would be a Herculean task.

The strategy is to focus on the iconic brands and sub-brands, and the notable places that are most capable of resonating with customers and attracting them to the region. “Going with the Grain” is the way to make marketing funds work hard, spending behind strength.

Destination branding is demanding. Successful destination brands have distinctiveness and memorability. There are many stakeholders in a destination and imperatives such as superb quality and excellent service must be achieved across the board for the destination to grow its brand equity. There are often conflicting political pressures which turn the focus away from the customer. Achieving joined up thinking requires appropriate organisational structures, often calling for stakeholders to give up a little to gain a lot. There is limited funding, yet brands require investment for the long haul across all of the communication platforms.

Overcoming these challenges is the task of this Tourism Strategy.

6.3 Regional Brand Map

The first task in implementing the branding and marketing strand of the strategy will be to agree with stakeholders a brand map of the region.

⁴ This is endorsed by research undertaken by Visit Heart of England on regional brands within its area of operation. The research indicated in general that awareness and interest in regional brands was lower than for sub-regional destinations/brands. County brands (e.g. Robin Hood County) and natural geographic areas (e.g. the Peak District) elicited a higher interest in visiting, even though their counties as places had higher awareness. Geographical knowledge of the Heart of England and other regional brands (e.g. East Midlands, Central England) was mixed. Lincolnshire and the seaside were not generally strongly perceived as being part of Heart of England. The Heart of England brand was less associated with more urban-based tourism product.

This map will be used to prioritise investment and to organise marketing and product development. It will include the iconic brands and those places and themes that have the most power to connect with customers.

A primary purpose of the brand map will be to achieve maximum profile and brand space from available funding. It will provide an overview to inform Communications and Marketing Strategies, will reduce duplication of marketing activity by the various tourism agencies, local authorities and private operators, and inform economic development and inward investment marketing.

The aim is that marketing initiatives will be agreed by all stakeholders within their respective sub-regional destination management partnerships following the guidance of the regional brand map.

The Strategy emphasises flexibility. The most appropriate destination brands to use in marketing a destination within the region will depend on the circumstances, especially the target audience and the nature of the promotional means being used.

For some parts of the region, for example, promotion under the banner of the Heart of England may be sensible for some tactical campaigns. For other parts of the region, promotion under the banner of the East of England for similar campaigns may make more sense. The Lincolnshire Fens might in some cases be promoted under the Lincolnshire banner, in others under the Fens. Some thematic campaigns may focus on large parts of the region and/or adjoining regions. Others may best be served if they focus on individual parts of the region.

There will, however, be agreed iconic destination brands, sub-brands, notable places and themes, under the banner of which a large amount of the marketing activity will take place. The Peak District is, for example, clearly an iconic destination brand and the Derbyshire Dales is a sub-brand that supports the Peak Experience.

The main task in preparing the brand map will be to identify these propositions.

Political boundaries will not be a major concern when drawing this map. Successful brands are market-led, customer-focused and research-based. Engaging the private sector will be critical to the process.

Some destination brands will take in other areas outside the region – for example, the Staffordshire Moorlands, which are in the West Midlands but also an important part of the Peak District. In such cases, the strategy is to seek to co-ordinate funding and other activities with other regions.

6.4 Investing in Icons - Attract and Disperse

In the face of competition and sustainability, the region must focus on brands that have the most appeal to visitors. It makes sense to give the greatest focus to the brands that either have iconic status already or are capable of achieving it.

The strategy is to “Attract and Disperse” – to use the iconic brands to bring people to the region and then to persuade them to visit sub-brands or less well-known destinations in the vicinity.

This is not intended as a straitjacket. There are parts of the region where Attract and Disperse is difficult because there are no iconic destinations in the vicinity – in those cases, a different approach is required.

The consultation for the Strategy showed that there is considerable consensus as to what the icons/potential icons are:

- The Peak District – the first and most popular of National Parks in the UK
- Sherwood Forest – world famous for its connections with Robin Hood, and a major contemporary recreational resource
- Nottingham – also world famous for its Robin Hood connections, and now on the cusp of being one of Europe’s leading provincial cities
- The National Forest – an international quality recreational resource in the making
- Lincoln – with its crowning glory, one of Europe’s finest cathedrals
- Skegness – home of Butlins and one of the UK’s top five resorts
- Leicester – quickly attaining a reputation for multi-cultural vitality

There are many other places that have an international or national reputation, a small selection being:

- The Fens - highly distinctive environment that is building a significant tourism infrastructure
- Buxton - with its festival and the forthcoming redevelopment of the Crescent and Spa
- Iconic battlefield sites Naseby and Bosworth Field
- Althorp - last resting place of Diana, Princess of Wales
- Chatsworth - one of the country's greatest country estates
- The Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site
- Stamford - arguably the finest market town in England
- Melton Mowbray - ancient market town that was once "painted red" by aristocratic revellers and is now synonymous with the eponymous pork pie and Stilton cheese
- Rutland Water - with its outstanding array of water-based activities, proximity to beautiful countryside and importance for wildlife
- Newark - a fine market town with an international reputation for its antiques
- Silverstone - home of the British Formula 1 Grand Prix
- Trent Bridge - world famous cricket ground

6.5 Highlighting Themes

The brand map will indicate the main themes where the region or parts of it have excellence by comparison to other regions and which will be the focus of marketing activity.

Some of the themes where the East Midlands excels are:

- Natural environment
- Outdoor activities – walking, rambling, cycling, sailing and other watersports, horse riding

- Motorsport
- Historic Houses
- Canals and waterways
- Festivals
- Local foods and produce
- Market towns
- Churches, cathedrals and other places of worship
- Shopping – both city and smaller atmospheric market towns

6.6 Communication Strategy

A Communication Strategy will accompany the brand map and sit alongside the Tourism Strategy. It will serve as a manual for everybody involved in developing and promoting the brands.

It will identify the markets at which communications will be directed, the positioning of the brand that makes it stand out in terms of its competitors, how the benefits of the brand will be communicated, and the images and messages that communications will convey about the brand.

6.7 Marketing Imperatives

The following principles will guide the marketing of the region and provision of information to visitors:

- Marketing spend will be sufficient to have a significant impact in key markets. This means extra resources will be made available for promotion of the iconic destination brands as part of an integrated “Attract and Disperse” Strategy.
- Marketing campaigns will be directed at carefully researched customer segments. They will be customer, not product, driven.
- There will be clear differentiation between marketing and provision of information, and customer requirements rather than political

boundaries will drive both. This is intended to encourage a move away from the situation where every district council feels that it has to produce and distribute its own material, to a more co-ordinated and consumer oriented approach (as many parts of the region are already doing).

- Thorough evaluation research will be an integral part of marketing campaigns so as to assess effectiveness and help shape future campaigns.

7 Strand 2: Attractors

7.1 Enjoying the Countryside

The extent to which the rural economy contributes to tourism, and vice versa, was shown during the Foot and Mouth crisis. The establishment of a sustainable rural tourism infrastructure became paramount⁵.

There are fine landscapes in all six of the counties. The importance of preserving and improving the quality of the natural environment is recognised to be essential to the region's success as a destination and the quality of life of those who live there.

The region boasts two iconic rural destinations in the Peak District and Sherwood Forest, and has made good progress in establishing another, the National Forest. All three are the subject of special projects in this Strategy.

There are numerous other rural attractions such as Rutland Water⁶ and Carsington Reservoir that offer top quality facilities, especially for outdoor activities, and the beautiful Wolds⁷ and Fens in Lincolnshire.

The strategy is that key rural destinations should match or better the quality of facility that could be found anywhere in the world. They will be famous for the non-car based recreational opportunities that they offer – cycling, walking, hiking, riding, watersports and so on – with high quality support services such as transport links, waymarking, equipment hire, accommodation, and food and drink. Provision of these services will often be a part of rural diversification, such as farm stay, and the sustenance of local services such as pubs and shops.

There is recognition of the need to balance the reasons why people choose to visit the countryside – peace & quiet, remoteness, unspoilt

⁵ "We need our own rural infrastructure to support rural initiatives and help country business". Seminar participant.

⁶ As evidence of interest in natural history, the British Bird Watching Fair, held in the region at Rutland Water each August, attracts about 10,000 visitors.

⁷ The Wolds are an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a national designation for areas recognised as Britain's finest landscape. Other than the Peak District, the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB is the only protected landscape in the East Midlands.

landscapes – with the demands that increasing visitor numbers place on these landscapes.

There is already a good network of cycle and walking routes that are off-road or on quiet roads. Organisations such as Focus Northamptonshire are working on extending that further. Their work is important if the region is to increase its reputation in the face of intense competition from other areas of the United Kingdom.

The products need to be packaged so they talk to their markets and provide a rich set of associations and benefits, both emotional (quiet, safe, space and a sense of freedom even though the city is only hours away) and rational (accessibility measured by the time it takes to get there, choice of activities, provision of support services).

There are many opportunities for making more of wildlife appreciation. They include bird-watching on the Wash, bird- and seal-watching on the Lincolnshire coast, upland birds and wildflowers of the limestone grassland of the Peak District, re-creation of wetland habitats in the Fens, and woodland wildlife in Sherwood, Rockingham and Lincolnshire limewoods⁸.

Taking full advantage of the visitor appeal of wildlife will require significant investment in enhancing existing natural areas and in creating new larger areas of wildlife habitat. Across the UK there are now a number of examples of major investments in establishing wildlife habitats on a hitherto unheard of size and scale – patchworks of linked sites, sometimes covering many thousands of hectares. Partners involved in helping to re-establish Sherwood Forest as a major wildlife habitat have recently embarked on the creation of just such a landscape, and the National Forest is a national benchmark.

⁸ The popularity and potential of nature based attractors is clearly illustrated by the success of the Whisby Nature Park on the outskirts of Lincoln. This former gravel pit site just south west of Lincoln, attracts approximately 60,000 people each year to enjoy passive recreation around the nature reserve, dedicated educational facilities and the new 'Natural World' centre.

Habitat restoration, particularly in respect of river corridors and wetland habitats, and seeking to enhance other existing wildlife areas, is seen as a major stimulus for sustainable development of tourism in the region.

7.2 Happening Cities

The strength of the East Midlands' cities (and, for the purposes of the strategy, Northampton is defined as a "city") is that they are big enough to matter, but small enough to access. They are located adjacent to extensive rural landscapes. They are "liveable" places.

They have vibrant, and increasingly self-confident, multicultural communities. Using a Creativity Index⁹ based on four indicators: creativity, ethnic diversity, sexual diversity and patent applications, Leicester and London are ranked joint second (after Manchester) in the ratings and Nottingham fourth.

The strategic aim is to ensure that the region's cities are increasingly well known for the quality of the urban experience that they offer¹⁰.

This will encompass the wide range of qualities that characterise vibrant, attractive cities: the built environment, green spaces, shopping, culture, heritage, night life, festivals and so on¹¹.

An important part of this is developing the cultural infrastructure, and the Arts Council plans to invest over £150 million of capital investment in visual and performing arts in the region over the next ten years. This includes a cultural centre in Northampton, upgrading the Broadway Media and Arts Centre in Nottingham, a Visual Arts and Media Centre in Derby, a new Performing Arts space and the Peepul Centre in Leicester, and a major new museum and gallery for Lincoln. Applications for substantial additional projects are in preparation. All of the region's cities are planning cultural quarters.

⁹ Think Tank Demos

Boho Britain Creativity Index www.demos.co.uk

¹⁰ Leicester Shire Promotions, under the banner of *Leicester Revealed*, is leading stakeholders and other partners in marketing a new vision for the city to put Leicester on the map for residents, workers, local people, businesses and visitors.

¹¹ "Bollywood says more about Hollywood than India!" Seminar participant describing the size of the film industry.

7.3 Enhancing the Environment

High priority will be given to improving the general environment of the areas that have the most appeal for visitors. This will extend to habitat enhancements such as the creation of green corridors and woodland screening along transport routes and adjacent to built attractions.

The quality of the built environment is a vital component in attracting visitors and in establishing their impression of a place.

All over the region, but especially in cities, towns and villages of historic importance and in areas which are frequented by tourists, improving the quality of the built environment is a key objective. Attractive cities, towns and villages are the most desirable places to visit and the most desirable places to live.

The Tourism Strategy acknowledges the contribution that regeneration can make to tourism. Conserving and regenerating historic areas, buildings, museums and monuments gives character and distinctiveness to historic towns and cities, and helps to reinforce the sense of identity and place. This increases their appeal to visitors as well as making them more attractive places to live and work.

As examples, since 1978, English Heritage, and latterly the Heritage Lottery Fund, have been in partnership with the County and District/Borough Councils in Derbyshire to run conservation area grant schemes whereby property owners in certain conservation areas can get between 25%-80% grants for repairs and reinstatement of lost architectural features. High quality tourism operations like The Old Hall Hotel in Buxton have found this invaluable.

Inner city regeneration schemes that are founded on improvements to the built environment, such as the Lace Market in Nottingham, have had a tremendous effect on creating quality destinations.

Work is also taking place in the region, by organisations such as the Greenwood Trust, to improve the appearance of transport corridors and urban areas¹². The Arts Council is investing significantly in public art,

¹² The Trust has, for example, planted almost 2 million trees in post industrial areas of Greater Sherwood.

another key factor in improving the appearance of the environment. Most Local Authorities are developing imaginative Public Arts and “Percent for the Arts” schemes to encourage private developers to provide enhanced environmental schemes. Chesterfield has been one of the national leaders in this approach. Arts Council England is keen to see further schemes develop and has money through the Grants for the Arts to invest in them.

emda has invested in a regional architectural agency – OPUN – to support the development of better quality of architecture.

The continuation and acceleration of such schemes will make a material difference to the success of the region as a visitor destination.

It is recognised, however, that there is a need for as much attention, perhaps more, to ongoing maintenance as to creation of new buildings and environments.

7.4 Best for Business

Business tourism has been growing and is responsible for much of the investment that has taken place in tourism infrastructure – especially hotels – in the East Midlands in recent years.

The easy accessibility of many parts of the East Midlands is the key advantage that the region has and can exploit.

There may be an argument for developing a regional conference and exhibition centre that can compete for international, national and regional events. It would take advantage of the region’s locational advantages. The strategy is to consider this issue on a regional basis and, if there is market demand, attempt to seek a location that can best capture that demand and maximise the benefits to the rest of the tourism economy.

The strategy is also to encourage the continued development of high quality facilities that attract and serve small corporate meetings and seminars, especially where they combine lifestyle pursuits as part of the offer. The aim is to promote, in tandem, extended stays, spouse’s programmes, and repeat visits. Aligned with this, the corporate activities

and corporate hospitality markets offer potential for further development and can especially benefit rural areas.

Consideration will be given to creating conference ambassadors' programmes that establish links with people working in the region, especially academics, who are well placed to bring conferences and exhibitions to the area. Manchester, Liverpool and Edinburgh have successful programmes that can be emulated.

Lastly, the strategy is to ensure that the region's business tourism offer is promoted through high quality, sustainable, conference bureaux. It is likely that they will be a core function of the sub-regional destination management partnerships, although the case for a regional bureau will also be examined.

In promoting conferences and exhibitions, there is particular scope for cross-regional co-ordination of presence at exhibitions, joint mailings and so on. Many of the region's conference bureaux find it difficult to afford that activity on their own, and customers are often likely to be thinking in terms of the M1 or A1 corridors rather than individual destinations within them.

7.5 Encouraging Events and Festivals

Events and festivals are also an important part of the tourism offer in the East Midlands¹³.

Some, such as the British Grand Prix, the Burghley Horse Trials, and the Spalding Flower Parade have international reputations. Some, like Nottingham's Goose Fair, remain highly popular after many centuries. Some, like Lincoln's Christmas Market, the Buxton Festival and Northampton's Balloon Festival, are newer but already attract large numbers of people from all over the country and have a major economic impact. Others, like Leicester's Diwali and Navratri celebrations, show how popular the region's multicultural vitality can be. There are top rate

¹³ Recent *emda* research showed the extent of this. Of 11 festivals surveyed, £1million investment was bringing £7 million spend into the local economy and there was strong potential for increasing this through better marketing and branding.

cultural events – Wirksworth Festival grows every year and Open Studio events now happen in all major towns and in both Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire.

The above listing is only a small selection.

The aim of the Strategy is to develop and enhance a programme of major events across the region that have a national and, as far as possible, international reputation. They will be co-ordinated so that they do not clash with each other.

The objective will be to help key events achieve security of funding in the medium- to long-term so that they can establish a reputation, there is certainty that they will take place, marketing is as effective as possible, and they maximise the linkages with supporting businesses.

Many successful home-grown events start from community initiatives but build such a reputation that they require more professional management. The strategy is to help them with management, capacity and co-ordination of infrastructure¹⁴.

There will be a system for identifying and attracting major one-off events that could bring widespread economic and image benefit to the region. These may be events that are created in the region or “footloose” events that can be brought to the region. They may include major sporting or cultural events.

It is also the aim of strategy to encourage community-based events that are attractive to tourists, especially where they are based on long-standing traditions. Well Dressing in Derbyshire is a good example. County shows and rural shows like the Bakewell Show are another. The World Conker Championships and the Oundle International Festival in Northamptonshire are others.

A dimension of this is the strong and growing range of arts and artist-led festivals and Open Studio events in the region. These events can be major attractors, can do a tremendous amount to enhance the depth of

¹⁴ The constraint to expanding Diwali is not the popularity of the event but the capacity of Belgrave Road, where the event is held, to cater for the vast numbers of people that flock to the festival.

the experience for visitors, and can engender considerable community pride and enthusiasm.

7.6 Trumpeting Treasures

There are cultural treasures in every corner of the East Midlands.

They include outstanding historic houses¹⁵, ranging from the world famous Chatsworth, Burghley and Althorp, to charming and lesser known gems such as Tissington Hall, Ashbourne, Grimsthorpe Castle and the tiny but fascinating Mr Straw's House in Worksop¹⁶.

The location of the East Midlands on the major south/north route and facing air attack from the east in more recent times has bestowed a rich resource of notable military sites. They include some of the most important and well-known battlefield sites in the UK such as Bosworth Field and Naseby, and other important and interesting defence related sites such as Rockingham Castle and the airfields of Lincolnshire.

There are top class gardens, such as Cottesbrooke, winner of the HHA/Christies Garden of the Year in 2000.

Creswell Crags has the most northerly Ice Age (12,000 years old) cave art in the world, and the first and only known cave art in the UK.

Northampton boasts 78, Derngate, the only Charles Rennie Mackintosh house south of Glasgow, and soon to be open to the public.

The region was at the heart of the Industrial Revolution. Derwent Valley Mills is a World Heritage Site.

The quality and range of the churches is similarly outstanding, ranging from some of the country's finest and most famous Saxon churches,

¹⁵ Historic Houses Association www.hha.org.uk HHA represents over 1500 properties, around 350 open regularly to the public on a commercial basis, attracting between them over 12 million visitors each year. Many more open on an occasional basis. There are more than 25 listed houses in the East Midlands.

¹⁶ Themed itineraries such as those promoted by the consortium Hidden England, could be developed. Hidden England comprises five houses and castles within the region (Belvoir, Rockingham, Belton, Grimsthorpe and Burghley) that now work together to deliver joint marketing promotions on behalf of the five properties.

such as Earls Barton and Brixworth¹⁷, to the fine but under-appreciated Southwell Minster in Nottinghamshire¹⁸.

The region has a particularly strong infrastructure of historic performing spaces such as Buxton Opera House, Nottingham Playhouse, Northampton Royal Theatre, and including architectural gems such as the Theatre Royals in both Lincoln and Nottingham.

The strategy is to provide more effective systems for highlighting cultural treasures and pointing visitors in their direction as well as more effective cross-marketing to encourage people to visit more than one attractor¹⁹. The strategy is also to encourage local communities to play a role in doing this and to use venues that might attract tourists – such as places of worship and pubs – as a means of disseminating this information.

As an example, *emda* is currently supporting the EMPACT project piloting the development of cultural tourism. Training, marketing and IT support are being provided to some of the region's gems including Lincoln Cathedral, Renishaw Hall in Derbyshire, the Ferrers Centre in Leicestershire, Fernywood Gallery in Northamptonshire and the Live and Local touring circuit in Derbyshire.

The national Heritage Open Days event, which encourages access to treasures that are normally closed to the public, is supported.

7.7 Caution with New Attractions

Nationally, many new visitor attractions have opened in recent years, but the size of the market has not kept pace. In consequence, many visitor attractions are struggling.

Sustainability and *complementarity* will be the key criteria applied before supporting the development of new visitor attractions.

¹⁷ Possibly the largest man-made structure north of the Alps 1,000 years ago.

¹⁸ Forming a superb heritage destination with nearby Victorian Workhouse.

¹⁹ The National Space Centre is a tourist attraction in a non-tourist area. The majority of the visitors to the Space Centre are only visiting this one attraction, and often come from within a one and a half hour travelling distance. Visitor numbers for both the Centre and other attractions in the area could be increased.

In other words, they need to secure revenue funding to sustain them over the long-term, even if visitor attendance is disappointing, and they should be well integrated with other attractions and infrastructure so as to create strong, integrated destinations.

7.8 Stimulating Sports Tourism

The East Midlands has a strong sports infrastructure. It has one Premier League football team, two premieriership rugby union teams, four first class cricket counties, two Premier League basketball teams, one premier league ice hockey team, two Grand Prix standard motor racing circuits, five horse racing courses, the headquarters of 10 National Governing Bodies, and National Centres for 13 sports.

In the last five years alone there has been £50m investment in the National Ice Centre, National Water Sports Centre, Highfields Hockey Club, Rutland Water Sailing Club, Nottingham Squash Rackets Club, and Loughborough University. Five entirely new sport stadia have been developed in that period.

Nottingham has a particularly strong cluster (the strength of which is not widely appreciated in other parts of the country).

There are many other aspects of sports tourism where the region has strength. For example, the Peak District is a national resource for climbing. More than 150,000 angling licences are sold in the East Midlands – about 13% of the national total – and there is a significant net immigration of anglers into the region. Stoney Cove Diving Centre has a national reputation for sub-aqua activities – both for leisure and training purposes.

There are proposals for the further strengthening of this infrastructure – for example, a National Centre for Equestrian Excellence in Leicestershire. Loughborough has established itself as the national centre for sports excellence and *emda* is investing in it as a focal point of a sports related cluster.

These facilities are vital parts of the tourism economy, attracting expenditure by participants, spectators²⁰ and administrators alike. The strategy is to promote the continued development of this part of tourism economy, in particular seeking to encourage and promote events²¹ and activities that stimulate overnight stays.

7.9 Accelerating Motorsports

Motorsport is a sports theme where the region has a particular strength compared to other regions. It is at the heart of Motorsport Valley – the brand name for the UK motorsport cluster, which is supported by *emda* and key to the retaining some of the region's highest skilled employees.

Silverstone attracts approximately one million visits a year. A 2002 economic impact assessment of the FIA Foster's British Grand Prix showed that 122,000 tickets were sold over the three-day event, expenditure of £6 million was made within 50 miles of the circuit, supporting 400 jobs within the same radius. The economic contribution to the country as a whole is much larger.

Donington Park hosts the British Motorcycle Grand Prix, and has done so on an annual basis since 1987. Attendance at the 2003 British Motorcycle Grand Prix was in excess of 130,000, a bigger one-day crowd than the F1 Grand Prix. It is also the home of the world famous Donington Collection of Grand Prix Racing Cars.

Rockingham Speedway is unique in Britain and has potential for substantial development to create a major leisure destination. Some race days attract over 30,000 people.

Santa Pod Raceway is the UK's premier Drag Racing circuit. Mallory Park is a unique venue located in a natural amphitheatre just eight miles from Leicester. And Cadwell Park holds major championships such as British Superbikes and British Touring Cars.

²⁰ In 1999, Derby Tourism, in conjunction with Derby County Football Club and Derby-based Lonsdale Travel, developed the Rams Football Weekends. This concept, the first of its kind, went on to win both regional and national Tourism Marketing Awards in 2000

²¹ Like the Robin Hood Marathon, becoming a significant attractor nationally and internationally

The strategy is to further develop this theme. One of the key objectives is the retention of the British Formula 1 Grand Prix at Silverstone.

7.10 Wonderful Waterways

Waterways lacing the region – canals and rivers – are an important part of the ambience of the rural environment and are increasingly seen as a focus for regeneration²².

The region has high quality canal attractions such as Foxton Locks and Inclined Plane, Northamptonshire's Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum and Braunston Locks. There are various initiatives to strengthen canal networks by filling in gaps and making connections²³.

The region's extensive wetland habitats, including rivers, streams, canals, reservoirs and river corridors, offer potential as visitor routes and destinations with scope to develop themed tourism experiences linking heritage and the natural environment²⁴.

The strategy is to assist the continual development and enhancement of the region's waterways as a focus for regeneration and attracting visitors. This links in particular to the Strategic River Corridors Initiative.

7.11 Famous for Food (and Flowers)

There is an increasing demand from consumers for quality eating experiences and to purchase authentic, locally sourced product²⁵.

²² Lincolnshire is introducing a new 10 year Strategy for its waterways and British Waterways, LCC, and the Environment Agency regard this as a pilot for the East Midlands on how waterways can add to the sense of place, create new leisure and commercial opportunities.

²³ A project already underway will make a new cut just outside Peterborough linking the Rivers Trent, Fosdyke, and Witham with the Nene; this will then connect with the Ouse, Middle Levels and Grand Union Canal to Nottingham. Once complete, this will open up the Fens waterways to the inland waterway network and offer more navigational routes than the Norfolk Broads.

²⁴ The Derwent Valley is an outstanding example of the potential.

²⁵ e.g. Highly successful internet site Farmshop.net – Seminar participant's endorsement.

Building the links between tourism and local producers is a key means by which tourism can be used to support the rural economy. The ready availability of locally sourced food is a fast track route to achieving a distinctive sense of place²⁶.

Excellent work is being done on this around the region. For example, the Peak District Foods for Tourism project resulted in the development of a new product – Wakes Cakes – to provide a local biscuit for hotels and B&Bs to put on tea trays. Restaurants in Lincolnshire that display the Tastes of Lincolnshire hallmark will be offering a minimum of three locally produced items on the menu. Ye Olde Pork Pie Shop is a major attraction in Melton Mowbray. The Farmers' Market shop in Bakewell is a major attraction and is helping bring local produce to customers without farmers having to spend their time running a market stall.

There is lots of potential. Leicester, for example, is already well-known for its ethnic food, but this could be built into a major attractor.

In a related way, there is potential for the region to further exploit the strength of its horticultural industry, especially in Lincolnshire²⁷.

The Countryside Agency is amongst organisations that want to work on developing the food theme²⁸.

The region could not only make more of its “foodie” places but use “foodie” people to promote the area.

In terms of the quality of the food offer there is still a long way to go. With the exception perhaps of the Peak District, the East Midlands is lacking in destination restaurants and pubs compared to other regions. There are comparatively few listed in the major guides and there are few

²⁶ “Local businesses need to be encouraged to work together, for example by using locally sourced produce” Seminar participant.

²⁷ The current £22 million development of the Springfields Outlet Shopping Village and Festival Gardens is a brand new addition to the tourist attractions of the region, which is indicative of the confidence of the developers, Thornfield Properties, to deliver up to two million visitors a year into the South Holland area of Lincolnshire. Spalding is a thriving market town with an international reputation for its Flower Parade with links to the horticulture and agriculture of the area.

²⁸ It, for example, sponsors the Regional Food Awards, based on a suite of county-level awards, which are still in development in some counties.

“celebrity” restaurateurs. Nottingham has only just received its first Michelin starred restaurant.

The strategy is to encourage the development of destination restaurants and pubs, and gastronomic quarters in the cities. They enhance the quality of the visitor experience, are major attractors in their own right, and are important to the quality of life of local people. They also act as outstanding training facilities and incubators to new businesses.

The strategy is also to support the development of high quality farmers’ markets and other outlets for local produce as an integral part of the tourism offer, especially where they support the continued success of existing markets. Also, to investigate floral and produce trails with "stop and buy stations" mapped out for seasonal tourist visits.

The Food and Drink in Tourism Toolkit developed by Visit Heart of England, provides a best practice guide which encourages businesses and destinations to investigate and develop the benefits which can be gained from innovative use of local food and drink produce.

7.12 Championing Church and Faith Tourism

The East Midlands is scattered with churches of the finest quality. It is a niche where the region has particular strength, ranging from Lincoln Cathedral – in the first rank of European cathedrals – to gems in country villages such as Melbourne. They give many parts of the region their distinctive sense of place and provide reasons to visit rural communities.

Developing church tourism is not, however, without its difficulties. In particular, the resources – human and financial – to support visitors are ever dwindling.

The Lincolnshire Church Tourism Initiative is a model for how it is possible to go about tackling these challenges.

The strategy is to encourage the development of a regionally co-ordinated infrastructure for the promotion of church tourism. This would aim to market the churches, and help them to provide a focal point in their communities for disseminating information to visitors, not just about the church itself but about the local community.

The region also boasts many places of worship for other faiths and attracts visitors to worship and to experience those faiths. The strategy is to develop and celebrate this diversity.

7.13 Finding Family

Genealogy is an underestimated driver of leisure tourism and a primary reason why overseas visitors might be attracted to the region²⁹.

The advent of the Internet has made it much easier for people to trace their family history.

The aim of the Strategy is to make it especially easy for people to trace their roots in the East Midlands, and then to entice them to visit.

This will start at the top level by ensuring that tourism websites explain how people can go about tracing their ancestors. Most church records are deposited in the region's five local authority record offices and much of this information is already available on the Internet. Museums also have a key role³⁰.

At the bottom level, endeavours will be made to establish a network of community-based volunteers to help visitors at local level in key locations such as churches and cemeteries.

The strategy is also to make links with tourism operators, especially accommodation providers, so that people who are interested in seeing where their ancestors lived are encouraged to stay in the area.

There will be a proactive approach to encouraging people to trace their ancestors in the East Midlands by marketing to those who are likely to have such descendants.

²⁹ Other dimensions of this include the links with the USA through the Pilgrim Fathers and other early Quakers who emigrated to New England to avoid persecution.

³⁰ A recent Heritage Lottery Fund project in the East Midlands – "Was Your Grandfather a Soldier?" has generated a lot of interest from people looking into family members with links to some of the region's regiments.

7.14 Fashionable

The region has an outstanding heritage and contemporary strength in fashion and textiles. Clothing and Textiles is also one of *emda's* priority industry clusters. This theme combines the vibrancy of the 'happening' cities of Nottingham and Leicester through fashion and design – the fashion icons Paul Smith and Vivienne Westwood come from the East Midlands – and link to Leicester's cultural diversity which was built on the development of the city's rag-trade.

The heritage dimension to the fashion and textiles theme runs down the M1 corridor and links cotton spinning in the Derwent Valley Mills, Nottingham lace and the regenerated Lace Market area, Northampton's reputation for quality footwear (the town's museum holds the designated national collection of footwear which was recently redisplayed with HLF assistance) and continuing niche industry with companies such as Church's, Trickers, Jeffery-West, and Gandalfi's ballet shoes and dance wear.

7.15 Utilising Universities

Universities and other institutions of higher/further education bring in large numbers of visitors both from outside the region and, perhaps more significantly, from outside the country.

This process has an immediate and significant economic impact and also contributes to creating greater awareness of the region and what it has to offer as a destination. As an example, the University of Nottingham has over 27,000 students, many of whom are from outside of the East Midlands. Over 3,600 are non-EU nationals. The additional expenditure of these students alone might amount to £20m before any multiplier effects are considered.

The strategy is to look for ways of developing the volume of tourism spend generated from the further education sector.

This pursues one the key strands of the East Midlands International Connections Action Plan.

8 Strand 3: Infrastructure

8.1 Easily Accessible Information and Booking

A key objective of this strategy is to make it easy for visitors to find information about all areas of the region and to book.

Linked destination management systems (DMSs) that cover the whole region, and are integrated with EnglandNet, will be an important part of this and will underpin radical improvements in the way that information about the region and destinations within it is disseminated to customers³¹.

A key imperative of linked DMSs is interoperability between the different systems implemented across the region.

Another key imperative is funding to sustain the operation of the systems.

The Strategy encourages the provision of broadband in rural areas to help rural businesses take advantage of the opportunities.

One of the major outcomes of a regional brand map will be to agree a set of specifications for marketing and information material based on the brands that are agreed to have the most power to visitors.

The aim is to make these “official” guides as comprehensive and people friendly as possible, with line entries in them as cost effective as possible for operators³²³³.

³¹ An example: Pulse, Lincolnshire Tourism’s on-line tourism management marketing and e-business development programme, is a £2.2 million investment in ICT for the tourism sector.

³² An example of this is the 2003 launch of the ‘National Forest & Beyond’ campaign, which included free entries for all attractions and accommodation (at significant cost to the local authority partners concerned). Some districts, such as Newark and Sherwood, do not charge local operators for admission in their literature.

Priority will be given to the display of these guides in Tourist Information Centres and leaflet dispensers across the region. Efforts will be made to establish a co-ordinated system of leaflet display so that the provision of information is more in line with what visitors are likely to find useful than purely commercial considerations.

Official visitor information that is of regional importance will be produced in the main foreign languages.

Destination Management Partnerships will maintain information databases on which entries in the official guides and the Internet will be based.

Operators will only need to keep this database up to date. Local tourism officers will play an important role in this.

The strategy is to make it easy for customers to book, whether they wish to book the components of their visit independently or whether they wish to buy a package, and whatever time of day they wish to book.

8.2 Rationalised Information Delivery

The delivery of tourism information is currently built on an extensive network of Tourist Information Centres. Most of them are funded and managed by district councils, which have no statutory obligation to do so. They have enthusiastic and highly knowledgeable staff. They usually perform a valuable service for the communities in which they are located and are the hub of the local tourism industry.

There is a role and need for face-to-face contact within tourism. Personal recommendation and advice still has a role to play. More

³³ "In an ideal world, all tourism providers and TICs would sing from the same hymn book in e.g. having a knowledge of what's available for visitors locally, using branded racking of branded brochures, having available standardised listings for visitor use of e.g. events, where to ride, fish, etc. At the moment there is so much ignorance of what's on our own doorsteps for visitors, lack of team work and co-promotion between businesses, overlap or confusion in brochure distribution, lack of co-ordinated print for the region and so on...." Consultation response from a district tourism officer.

detailed personal enquiries can also be effectively handled by personal contact.

Although it is envisaged that the TIC network will continue to be a bedrock of tourism information provision, the aim is to move away from the situation where the number and location of Tourist Information Centres is determined only by local authority boundaries. This is in line with the guiding principle of the Strategy that the needs of the customer will be a priority.

As an example of how this sometimes does not happen at the moment, there is a TIC in the Nottinghamshire County Council headquarters at West Bridgford but no such facility in the attractive cathedral town of Southwell.

Different models of visitor information/interpretation centres will be investigated, looking perhaps at a variety of levels of service, depending upon the type and size of information need and the location.

The wider use of contact centres³⁴ will also be investigated. They can be an efficient, effective and profitable way to ensure customers are receiving the right information, at the right time, through the right channel for them.

In developing an action plan for this, the intention will be to assess the effectiveness of different types of visitor centre and analyse in detail the information needs of customers and their behaviour in seeking information.

This will look at all sources of information, including the Internet, Tourist Information Points (TIPs), kiosks and contact centres.

It is also the aim to achieve better co-ordination of the management of visitor information, higher and more consistent standards, opening of visitor information centres at times when visitors most want to use them, and the best use of resources.

³⁴ Leicester Shire Promotions runs its own call centre and the Peak District is implementing a local contact centre as part of an I.E.G. initiative.

8.3 Influencing Transport Decisions

Transport infrastructure – road, rail and air – probably has more impact on tourism in the region than anything else.

Especially given the increasing importance of short-stay tourism – whether leisure or business – the efficiency and effectiveness of the transport infrastructure will have a crucial impact on the success of the region’s tourism offer.

Although north-south road and rail links are relatively good, east-west links are not so (although they are a strength in certain locations, such as Northamptonshire). Congestion on roads such as the M1, A453, A52 and A38 is becoming an increasing deterrent to visitors. One of the region’s key tourist destinations, the Lincolnshire coast, is served by single carriageway roads that get exceptionally congested on busy days, especially at Skegness itself³⁵. There is currently insufficient rolling stock on the Skegness rail line to meet peak demand.

Many rural areas suffer from poor transport both in public transport provision and strategic road networks.

The upgrade of transport infrastructure is typically highly expensive and contentious.

The main objective is, therefore, to ensure that tourism interests are given consideration in transport strategy and delivery. And vice versa – that transport is taken into account when planning major tourism attractions.

This is especially true of projects that would have a particular significance for tourism. For example, a Manchester to Derby rail link could be a major help towards sustainable tourism in the Peak District³⁶. A reopened ‘National Forest’ rail link from Leicester to Burton-on-Trent could be the focus of bus and cycle routes into the National Forest.

³⁵ “Our customers often complain that it took them two hours to get to Skegness from Leicester (or Nottingham, Derby, Sheffield etc) and two hours to get from Skegness to their accommodation” – John Chappell.

³⁶ Although there would need to be realignment of six kilometres of the Monsal Trail which are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Loss of the trail would displace tens of thousands of walkers and cyclists who use and enjoy the route each year.

The intention is to set up systems that ensure the influence of tourism is felt in these matters.

It is also the intention to identify the transport infrastructure projects that potentially will have the most impact for tourism in the region and ensure that the extent of that impact is understood by all the key decision makers in transport planning nationally and regionally.

8.4 Encouraging Sustainable Transport

The Strategy will take into account how people access areas and how infrastructure is delivered and maintained, such as through the Rights of Way Networks³⁷.

Providing non-car transport alternatives is a key priority. There are already many examples in the region such as the Saunterbus in Northamptonshire and the network of bus services to take people into and around the Peak District National Park, particularly at weekends and holidays³⁸.

The objective is to provide similar services, especially to support the growing demand for walking, cycling and riding, and minimise the environmental aspects of car parking in sensitive locations. Also, to promote links from city centres into the countryside on foot or bike.

It is also an objective to encourage seamless interchanges between different forms of transport, combination “day out” type tickets, and high quality information to make it easy for visitors to use public transport³⁹.

Transport can be a visitor attraction in itself – steam railways like the Great Central from Leicester to Loughborough, canal and boat trips, horse and carriage rides, and leisure bus services operated by vintage/older buses⁴⁰.

³⁷ “Areas which require improvement are co-ordination of definitive maps of bridleways and cycle routes”. Seminar Participant.

³⁸ Trent Barton’s bus services have been branded as ‘Serving the Derwent Valley’, highlighting opportunities to visit the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site and the many attractions in the corridor.

³⁹ The ‘Hope Valley Leisure Guide’ is a sustainable tourism brochure encouraging visits to the Hope Valley by public transport.

⁴⁰ Such as the Bolsover-Chesterfield Heritage Bus.

The Strategy recognises that encouraging the use of sustainable transport is a joint responsibility for transport planners, tourism professionals and attractions⁴¹.

Attractions will be encouraged to utilise the free consultancy provided by the Transport Energy Best Practice Programme to help them produce a travel plan⁴² for their site.

8.5 Arriving by Air

The East Midlands region is well served by airports either in or around it. East Midlands, Manchester, Birmingham, Stansted, Luton, and Humberside airports are all in or adjacent to the region. Plans for the transformation of Finningley airport near Doncaster into a major airport have started and will have a substantial impact on the north of the region when it opens in late 2004.

The key issue is how the airports can be exploited in terms of attracting tourists. At present, the number of people using them to visit other countries is far in excess of the number using them to visit Britain and, specifically, the East Midlands. Working with carriers and travel operators to redress this situation will be a focal task.

An important part of this is maximising the effectiveness of airports as gateways.

The East Midlands International Connections Action Plan will focus on these issues.

8.6 Good Directions

Another key aim is to make it easy for visitors to find their destination when they are in the region. This includes, in particular, accommodation, visitor attractions and Tourist Information Centres.

⁴¹ The Midland Railway Centre offers 2 for 1 entry to visitors arriving by public transport, and over 30 attractions in Derbyshire give discounts to people using the Derbyshire Wayfarer rover ticket.

⁴² A package of measures designed to reduce the reliance of staff and visitors on using the car to travel to an attraction.

Improving road signage is a priority. There is currently considerable confusion relating to the rules, with differing interpretation by councils. Other than the difficulty of getting signage, stakeholders' concerns include cost variations between councils, signs not being erected after permission has been granted, signs being left up when obsolete, and lack of inter-regional co-ordination.

There may be a case for greater use of 'brown and white' signs that advertise a number of attractions.

Another priority is providing more comprehensive and easy to use information about public transport, with links to visitor attractions, cross-referred to bus numbers, and tourist information on transport and at all termini⁴³. Also, fingerpoint signs and other directional and mapping services for visitors.

It is also an objective to make it easier to follow tourist routes that are scenic or link places of interest.

To this end, a first step will be to review and improve the signage systems. It is anticipated that sub-regional destination management partnerships will co-ordinate this so that a strategic approach is taken in each part of the region⁴⁴.

⁴³ Workshop participants cited Bristol's Legible City where pedestrian nodes feature pillars with maps. In a commercial partnership with Adshell, Derby gives out leaflets to people on the street where the maps are oriented according to where the visitor will be facing when they pick up the map. Norwich has a similar scheme with an emphasis on historic locations.

⁴⁴ "The issue of signage is important and needs to be tackled strategically. Signs could be co-ordinated regionally so that there would be continuity for visitors to the East Midlands, although the individuality of each area must be maintained". Seminar participant.

9 Strand 4: Business Support and Skills

9.1 Helping Heroes

“Heroes” will be people, especially in the private sector, who are capable of and willing to achieve excellence in their operations. Heroes within the tourism industry should be encouraged to become *emda* business champions.

The strategy is to help them to survive, succeed and prosper, and to recognise and celebrate their success.

They will be used to show other operators what is possible.

The region will be known for outstanding food, outstanding hotels, outstanding B&Bs, outstanding youth hostels, outstanding pubs, outstanding holiday parks, outstanding museums, outstanding visitor attractions – and so on.

Excellence in this sense does not necessarily mean 5 star. It means excellence in all types of offer, at all price ranges.

The aim is more establishments in the Good Food Guide, more in the Good Pub Guide, more in the Good Hotel Guide, and more with Michelin stars.

The strategy is to achieve more professionalism within an industry that is more prestigious as a career choice. Resources will be targeted where they have the greatest opportunity to contribute to this objective.

9.2 Endorsing National Standards

As part of endeavours to raise quality throughout the tourism offer, decisions will be made – through East Midlands Tourism (refer to 12.6) – as to what national quality assessment schemes the region will support, and operators will be encouraged to join those schemes.

This will be particularly true of accommodation grading schemes because there is so much reliance by consumers on the grading systems⁴⁵.

It will also apply however to schemes such as the Countryside Agency's 'Green Audit Kit', the Department of Culture Media and Sports Museums Registration Scheme, and National Accessible Standards.

In some instances, this is a difficult issue. Compliance with national quality assessment schemes can seem an unreasonable burden, especially with old and inflexible properties. Sometimes the assessment schemes do not seem to reflect the quality of the product adequately.

Also, the private sector is efficient at providing assessment for certain types of facility. Independent guidebooks do so, as do the brands that so many establishments operate under.

Nevertheless, especially for the unbranded independent sector, the national grading schemes are the only means by which consumers can make a reasonably reliable assessment of the quality of facilities. The development of local alternatives will not be supported because the consumer will have little chance of being able to understand them.

The National Fitness for Purpose project will be an important consideration. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Local Government Association have set it up. Leading local authorities will carry out pilot studies in 2004. The lessons from these pilots will form the basis of a full set of proposals and Fitness for Purpose will be adopted across England from 2004.

9.3 Champion Projects

A primary means of creating a greater awareness of quality and how it can be achieved will be to create champion projects that can be used to establish and disseminate best practice.

A champion project could be anything related to tourism – a hotel refurbishment, an eco-friendly self-catering unit, a way marking system

⁴⁵ There is currently a national review of them underway.

for a country walk etc. There are many already in existence, several of which are mentioned in this Strategy.

In return for funding support and designation, champion projects will agree to actively disseminate information to stakeholders all over the region about the standards that they have has been set, how they have been achieved, and the results. They will normally have an individual who takes responsibility for informing the region about the project.

9.4 Plotting Pilots

Because of the varying availability of funding from different sources and for different purposes, there is a plethora of different pilot schemes aimed at helping the industry. Some do well, some do not so well. Often, even those that do well fizzle out when the funding runs out.

The strategy is to achieve much better co-ordination of pilot programmes so that the region is more effective at learning and applying lessons from them.

In particular, the aim will be to ensure that the ones that work are extended to other parts of the region and that there is sharing of experience.

The intention is that all such pilots will be registered with the appropriate sub-regional destination management partnership and, through them, with East Midlands Tourism. They will normally be set up as champion projects with an active programme of dissemination to others in the region.

This is not intended to be a bureaucratic procedure – just a means of making sure that the region is efficient in the way that it experiments and rolls-out the results of those experiments.

9.5 Making it Easy to Access Advice and Training

It is difficult for operators to make sense of the plethora of support schemes that are potentially available to them.

At the heart of most destinations are small family businesses. A clear and well thought out support programme of meaningful and affordable and accessible training is needed for small businesses.

The strategy is to make it easy for them to find out about this assistance and easy for them to access it.

Working in conjunction with Business Links, the aim is to provide advisors that have specialist knowledge of tourism issues. They will particularly support clusters⁴⁶. They will not necessarily be directly employed. It may be preferable, for example, under the “brokerage” model, for each Business Link to contract tourism business support to established private sector providers of tourism support services.

Links will be provided to operators through sub-regional destination management partnerships and through local tourism officers acting as “account managers”. They will provide a “virtual” one-stop shop service for operators.

This will form part of the implementation of the regional Birth Rates Strategy.

9.6 Creating Clusters

Networks of individuals and organisations will be encouraged to work together to create a high quality tourism product.

There are already good examples of this in the region. A cluster approach is being taken, for example, to tourism development in and around the National Forest. Integrating major new attractions such as Conkers into the wider destination has helped to sustain all attractors. Loughborough University is at the heart of a sports cluster.

At a more local level, a village pub and church might get together to create a destination by improving the quality of the food in the pub, ensuring that the church is open when the pub is busy, and producing a way marked path and guide walking trail around the village and

⁴⁶ The Quality Tourism Cluster Initiative in Lincolnshire is a regional pilot and aims to deliver business advice to 5 tourism clusters in Lincolnshire, with the intention of being rolled out region-wide in 2005.

surrounding countryside. They might work in conjunction with local growers and farmers with “planting for tourism” and fresh produce stations and the provision of accommodation.

There are circumstances – such as at Rockingham Forest – where there is already a cluster of high quality attractors and infrastructure that, with investment, could create a major destination.

Again, the sub-regional destination management partnerships, working through local tourism officers, will have the prime responsibility for identifying the opportunities and helping the people on the ground access the information and funding to deliver their plans.

9.7 Creating Careers

Recruiting staff of the right calibre is one of the most difficult challenges for tourism operators in the region. The Regional Tourism and Culture Workforce Development Plan addresses the issue in detail. The proposed East Midlands Tourism Skills Network will have a hub and spoke structure with the sub-regions and provide a vehicle for sharing skills and training related information⁴⁷.

As is the case all over the country, jobs in the tourism industry are not highly regarded. Talented individuals are not choosing to make a career in tourism, and operators are suspicious of the quality of the output of our training colleges and universities.

There is also a need/desire for many older workers to work that should be harnessed, and a need to help volunteers play the vital and useful role that they often do in attractions, events and other tourism activities.

The situation is difficult not just within the obvious tourism operators. The decline in rural skills is a problem – the National Trust argues for a rural “careership” programme, sponsored students who spend time with a range of tourism providers, improved use and targeting of DEFRA’s Vocational Training Scheme, and development of rural tourism courses. Skills such as hedge laying are particularly valuable in a conservation

⁴⁷ LSC Nottinghamshire is taking the regional lead for this sector.

context as the region seeks to reinstate traditional, sustainable land management practices.

Equally, specialist knowledge is required for cultural businesses and cultural tourism⁴⁸.

The tourism industry's capacity to do much about this in isolation is limited, but the intention is to focus on creating training schemes and career paths that have genuine esteem in the industry and with potential entrants.

One aspect of this may be establishing and maintaining sub-regional Springboard UK⁴⁹ facilities and integrating them into existing mainstream education, careers and guidance services.

Participation in "good employer" schemes such as Profit Through Productivity and Hospitality Assured will be encouraged.

The strategy is to help create worthwhile and rewarding career structures in tourism in the region and to promote the availability and quality of careers through road shows and other promotional initiatives.

9.8 Training

The strategy is also to raise the quality and accessibility of training.

A priority is to establish and sustain training facilities of genuine quality and excellence, such as the University of Derby's plans for its Buxton campus.

Consideration will be given to more proactive promotion of the Welcome to Excellence suite of courses, perhaps supported by public sector subsidy to make them more affordable.

The region will also seek to offer a range of training opportunities in traditional skills such as hurdle making, hedge laying, charcoal making and basket weaving. This will respond to increasing demand for people to combine holidays with opportunities for self-improvement.

⁴⁸ The Empact project provides a role model of how this might be achieved and will provide a web-based toolkit to support development in this area.

⁴⁹ The National Careers Guidance Service.

It will also seek to offer a high quality of management development, especially for the huge number of small business operators in the industry.

9.9 A Place for Professionals

A key objective is also to help raise the professionalism and skill of those involved in supporting the industry, especially those involved in destination management and marketing. One of the aims of the delivery structure will be to provide better career opportunities and better employment practices for them.

9.10 Enabling Informed Decisions

Another objective is to reduce the number of people that enter the business without fully understanding the implications. People will not be encouraged to open tourism businesses unless they have the requisite skills, professionalism and understanding of the industry that they are getting into.

The strategy will be to familiarise relevant professionals – bankers, lawyers, business support agents etc – with the underlying tourism trends and opportunities and the implications for small, start-up operations. The number of small operations will not be regarded as the yardstick of the success of this Strategy – it will be measured by the success, growth and added value of tourism operations..

10 Strand 5: Performance Measurement

10.1 Efficient Systems for Collecting and Disseminating Information

Data about the performance of tourism in the region is patchy and inconsistent. It is almost impossible to identify trends and make reliable comparisons between the region and the rest of the competitors, both domestic and international. Data that is collected is often of limited use to operators.

An overriding objective is to move to a situation where there is more *consistency* in the way that data is collected, and where the data is of more practical use to all stakeholders, including operators. It is also an objective to feed data back to operators *quickly* so that it has practical use as management information, and to secure base-line data from across the region to underpin the measurement of the results of individual projects and the Strategy as a whole.

A focus for this will be strong regional co-ordination through East Midlands Tourism and working in close partnership with the Regional Observatory and the associated sub-regional observatories currently being set up. Sub-regional destination management partnerships, working with tourism officers at the local level, will have key roles.

It will accommodate other data systems at a national level, currently under review and development. For example, the review being undertaken by DCMS, the development of Visit Britain, Marketing England initiatives, the work of the 'Special Working Group on Tourism Statistics' and the National Tourism Best Value Benchmarking Group.

It is also anticipated that academic institutions such as the Centre of International Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure Research at the University of Derby and the DeHaan Tourism and Travel Institute at the University of Nottingham will have a key role.

The objectives are not easy to achieve. Operators are often reluctant to share data, and large hotel companies will often not do so now for fear of falling foul of competition law. It is expensive to carry out survey work that underpins an accurate assessment of visitor behaviour, and to apply economic impact assessment models.

It is possible that a rolling programme of more in-depth industry performance research exercises – such as in-depth studies of hotel performance, the self-catering market, attractions performance – will achieve better results than ongoing surveys.

There is also a need to obtain more effective tourism product supply data. Apart from the national TRIPS database, which is not comprehensive, at present, a comprehensive dataset providing information on supply across the region does not exist.

The first step will be a thorough assessment of research needs – mapping what exists at present, and identifying gaps in intelligence.

The next step will be to create efficient and prompt systems for collecting and disseminating performance data from relatively “pure” tourism businesses such as hotels, non-serviced accommodation, and visitor attractions.

The aim will be to achieve systems that enable data gathering and performance to build from the bottom up, via sub-regions, into a regional performance framework. The new destination management systems installed across the region will be an important part of the system.

The aim will also be to involve other organisations – such as the National Trust, the Forestry Commission and arts organisations – that collect statistics and carry out survey work.

As much as this will help monitor tourism in the region, it is also intended to be of use to operators.

10.2 Creating Key Performance Indicators

In creating more systematic processes for the monitoring of tourism, a priority will be to create a set of key performance indicators.

This will be a small set of specific statistics such as the number of overseas arrivals at key airports, the number of visitors from outside the region taking non-VFR related holiday staying visits in the region. The objective will be to ensure that these measures are meaningful and reliable. Exhibit 2 has an initial selection.

These will include measures of perceptions of the environment, in line with the measures included in the Regional Economic Strategy.

The aim will also be to ensure that the performance of the tourism sector is directly comparable to other industries, other regions, nationally and internationally and over time.

10.3 Towards a Tourism Satellite Account

Another key objective is to be able to accurately assess how tourism is doing, and to make investment decisions based on fact.

There is a need for a more accurate understanding of the true value of tourism to the economy, and how it compares to other sectors of the economy. This is not easy because it is difficult to measure that proportion of a business concern's activity (a restaurant for example) that is attributable to tourists.

At present, the "Cambridge" model for estimating tourism volume and value is the principal approach taken in the region, although not uniformly and consistently, mainly because of lack of resource.

Tourism Satellite Accounts are increasingly regarded as the international benchmark for the measurement of the economic impact of tourism. They require sophisticated and extensive data inputs and a pilot study in the North East has shown that there are limitations in this methodology as well.

The strategy is to work by steps towards the creation of a Tourism Satellite Account. This will start with local and sub-regional requirements and move upwards. The aim will be to co-ordinate data collection across the region so that it is consistent and comparable.

In the interim period before a Tourism Satellite Account might be introduced, consideration will be given to deploying one of the alternative economic impact models consistently across the region.

10.4 Understanding Visitors

A better and more consistent approach to understanding existing and potential visitors is at the heart of one of the Strategy's key principles – being more customer focused and market oriented.

This will mean being more effective in the analysis of visitor surveys, introducing systems for standardising procedures (so as to make the results comparable), filling in gaps where surveys are not currently undertaken, and using the results to establish performance benchmarks.

It will also involve the integration of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) processes into tourism systems in order to enable the personalised engagement of visitors.

This will involve co-ordination with agencies such as the Countryside Agency, which is currently completing an analysis of those visiting the countryside and the 2002/03 GB Day Visits Survey.

It is also envisaged that there will be greater use of geo-demographic profiling software to build a more accurate picture of our visitors and markets. Doing this requires the systematic collection of the postcodes of UK visitors.

11 Strand 6: Special Projects

11.1 Creating Major Destination Attractors

The aim of this strand of the Strategy is to identify a selection of key projects that are expected to have a major impact on the region as a tourism destination. These are destinations where the greatest capability to grow tourism exists.

It is the intention that each of these key projects will have a clear strategy and/or masterplan, delivery vehicle and champion, agreed by all major stakeholders.

East Midlands Tourism, working in partnership with sub-regional destination partnerships, will have a major role in this.

There are many other candidates, and it is not the intention to exclude them. As with the projects described in more detail in this section, they will be assessed against the objectives and principles in this strategy and other economic development, regeneration and environmental objectives. A sample of other potentially important tourism related projects not described here include:

- The On Trent Initiative – a project to restore habitats and create high quality recreational opportunities along the length of one of Britain's great rivers. Within its ambit are large-scale opportunities such as Attenborough Gravel pits, on the western edge of Nottingham.
- The regeneration of Derby – including major enhancement in the public realm, retail and cultural offer, with increasing potential to position itself as a gateway to the Peak District, to the National Forest and to the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Centre.
- The continuing revitalisation of Northampton – also featuring large investment in the cultural offer.
- Rockingham Forest – outstanding environmental and recreational offer at the heart of a cluster of attractions.

- Rockingham Motor Speedway – major destination development potential associated with unique oval circuit.
- The Fens – nationally known and unique environment, with an increasingly strong tourism infrastructure and product.
- The Lincolnshire Wolds – apart from the Peak District, the region’s only Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and thus of similar status to a National Park.
- The “Welland Vale” – the “Cotswolds of the East” with some of the finest stone built towns and villages in the country, and the major wildlife and recreational attraction of Rutland Water.

11.2 Perfecting the Peak

The Peak District is the oldest and most popular National Park in the country and an invaluable economic and recreational resource for the region. It is one of the country’s most iconic destination brands.

It is envisaged as having a particularly important role in the “attract and disperse” principle underpinning this strategy.

Its popularity and its position in proximity to so many urban centres puts it under great environmental pressure. The strategy is to work with the Peak District National Park Authority and other stakeholders – in and around the National Park – to make sure that the Peak continues to be a cherished resource and a top quality tourism attractor. The creation of a Rural Action Zone for the Peak enhances the prospects of being able to achieve this, and will be a focal point for delivery of the objectives of this project.

It means looking for new ways of defining what it means to be a National Park in the 21st century, and assisting the national initiative to raise the profile and status of National Parks in the United Kingdom⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ The UK National Parks are seeking to promote a new sustainable tourism initiative at national level using the brand of the national parks and the associated countryside, wildlife and heritage sites of partners such as English Nature and the National Trust.

This will include a focus on continued renewal and investment in the key resorts such as Buxton and Matlock Bath where revival of the traditional spa facilities and success in developing festivals can provide important tourism drivers.

Within the broad context of the Peak, the “gateway” Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site is a key tourism development project in its own right. It has outstanding potential for the promotion of sustainable development⁵¹ with a mix of heritage, environmental and cultural offers.

11.3 Integrating Sherwood Forest

Sherwood Forest is already a major destination brand and international icon.

It has an outstanding and varied product including Centre Parcs, the Warners Hotel at Thoresby Hall, Clumber Park, Rufford Abbey, Thoresby Gallery and Riding Stables (a new venue for touring theatre productions), and the Harley Gallery at Welbeck (a first rate gallery and cluster of craft workshops, alongside the Portland collection of ducal heirlooms).

There are many other top class attractions in the vicinity, including Creswell Crags and Lord Byron’s ancestral home, Newstead Abbey (which has potential to be upgraded as part of an immensely strong and dynamic cluster of heritage cultural attractions).

As well known as Sherwood Forest is however, it has still only scratched the surface of its potential.

The key challenge at Sherwood is to provide better integration of the elements that make up the traditional “Dukeries”. This is a challenge in terms of physical infrastructure, marketing and management.

Sherwood Forest Country Park, site of the Major Oak and the “heart” of the current forest offer, has recently been designated by English Nature as a National Nature Reserve in recognition of its unique and sensitive

⁵¹ Enhanced by the Derwent Valley Railway.

ecology. This has placed greater impetus behind the desire to move the visitor centre and improve the general experience there.

The aim of this key project will be to combine the many attractions that give Sherwood so much potential into an integrated destination with an international reputation for the quality of its recreational and cultural facilities.

Conservation of the environment is a key requirement for the long-term sustainability of the destination. It is an area of historic landed estates in a cohesive habitat of lowland heath (one of the UK habitats that has most declined) and woodland.

The Sherwood Forest Trust is already working towards these goals. Funded by Heritage Lottery grant for five years, and working with many partners and local landowners, it has begun work to regenerate the authentic landscape of Sherwood Forest, for example, using 'flying flocks' of Hebridean sheep⁵² to re-instate grazed woodland pasture and co-ordinating tree planting schemes. The Trust is also working on interpreting the story of Sherwood Forest, and marketing the Forest, in a coherent, holistic way.

11.4 Nottingham – a Leading European City

Nottingham enjoys recognition as the most high profile city in the region and a member of the UK Core Cities Group, set up to represent the country's eight cities of international significance.

The aim of this project is to bring Nottingham up to compete as an equal player with other regional cities such as Manchester, Newcastle and Liverpool.

Nottingham is well known internationally because of its association with the Forest and Robin Hood, but is moving its associations and those of its heritage roots (the Lace Market) to build a new national and European reputation as a vibrant modern city. Nottingham's dynamic city centre has the fourth most successful shopping centre in the country,

⁵² Owned and managed by the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. It is believed to be the largest pedigree flock in the world.

includes a major arena for events, and its nightlife is a magnet for young people from many miles around, as are its two popular Universities. Nottingham's museum and art galleries, attracting around 620,000 visitors each year, include Nottingham Castle, Wollaton Hall & Park and the ancestral home of Lord Byron at Newstead Abbey. Nottingham also provides leading national and international sports facilities that act as regional centres of excellence such as the National Ice Centre, the National Water Sports Centre and the Nottingham International Tennis Centre. Broadway Media Centre is in the middle of a £5 million enhancement scheme that will make it one of the most significant media centres in the country.

There are many projects that would help in enhancing Nottingham's status as a leading European city. For example, a top-class visual arts venue as part of the continued development of the Lace Market, redesign of Old Market Square to create a focal point for the city and top class venue, and development of an upgraded offer in the Castle.

11.5 Growing the National Forest

The National Forest is a major new resource with the potential to become a uniquely contemporary recreational facility and destination.

Transforming 200 square miles, it is a truly large-scale example of sustainability. About 15–20 new woodlands are being created each year. Tree cover has increased from 6% to 14% in less than 10 years and will ultimately reach 33%. It is rapidly transforming a former coal and clay extraction area.

Around 18 new facilities have been created since the beginning of the Forest's development including Conkers, Beehive Farm, Rosliston Forestry Centre and the National Memorial Arboretum. Recent figures show 5.7 million visits per year (mostly day trips), £128 million spend and 3,700 jobs supported⁵³.

The National Forest is an excellent example of partnership working. It covers two regional development areas, three county and six different

⁵³ National Forest Company.

local authority boundaries. It is being promoted as *The National Forest and Beyond*⁵⁴.

There are a number of challenges to be overcome if it is to succeed as a destination. For example, improved public transport⁵⁵ and assisting young businesses. Additional attractions may be appropriate, so long as they are properly integrated into the destination as a whole.

Although it will take many years for it to fulfil its full potential as a destination brand, with continued investment, it could become a recreational facility and destination of national significance.

11.6 Caring for the Coast

The Lincolnshire coastal resorts account for a large proportion of the region's tourism and are an important recreational resource for the region's population.

Skegness and Ingoldmells are within the top five holiday resorts of the UK. Because of its inaccessibility, tourism is a particularly important part of the coastal economy.

As with other coastal areas in the UK, the Lincolnshire coast has endured difficult market conditions. Resorts like Skegness are operating in a completely different environment to that which existed in their glory days. The transition has not been kind and has resulted in problems of socio-economic deprivation.

Nevertheless, the coast still attracts a large customer base and the popularity of holiday centres, especially those based on static caravans acting as second homes, is growing.

The Lincolnshire coast caters for a section of the market very well but does not have an offer that is attractive to all visitors, and the low cost

⁵⁴ Using a public/private partnership between the National Forest Company, North West Leicestershire District Council, South Derbyshire District Council and East Staffordshire Borough Council.

⁵⁵ Establishment of a passenger rail service between Leicester and Burton-upon-Trent to link the area regionally and nationally.

mono-culture and poor quality of the urban environment in the resorts makes them vulnerable.

For coastal resorts to be an attractive and prosperous part of the region and a resource to everyone living there, there needs to be an enhancement of the quality of the offer. This needs to start with the built environment in the resorts. It needs to extend to the standards offered by accommodation, food providers and attractions.

It will include consideration of potential reform of gambling legislation to create casino resorts, perhaps working in collaboration with other destinations⁵⁶ that stand to benefit from reform that is structured in such a way as to encourage resort casinos.

There is also the opportunity to diversify the tourism offer on the coast, attracting different audiences, based on the natural and wildlife assets.

11.7 Leicester Revealed

Leicester has already achieved a reputation as a particularly vibrant multi-cultural society. It has a large and vibrant Asian community. There are Hindu, Muslim, Jain and Sikh temples as well as excellent Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani restaurants. Many of the city's most interesting events are staged around festivals such as Holi, Diwali and Eid-ul-Fir. Leicester is raising the interest threshold for the creative industries and investment, especially in its diversity of ethnic mix and the businesses clustered around its multi-cultural assets – for example Belgrave Road and its “Golden Mile”⁵⁷.

A noticeable recent development has been an increase in Bollywood production activity. East Midlands Media is promoting Leicester as the European Capital for Indian Film and Television.

In addition to being recognised as a successful festival and city of impressive cultural events, Leicester is developing a reputation and offer based on innovation, creativity and a technologically based environment

⁵⁶ Especially Blackpool

⁵⁷ Belgrave Road trades the highest amount of gold outside London with typical wedding gold purchases beginning at £5000. Seminar participant.

centred on the ongoing and considerable achievements of the National Space Centre.

The soon to be opened (2005) Cultural Quarter is another such example of the vibrancy, creativity and excitement being expressed by Leicester in its aspirations and development. At its heart will be a new Performing Arts Centre, designed by Rafael Vinoly, an architect of international standing. It has been described by the Arts Council as 'one of the most significant theatre developments taking place in the UK today'.

The aim is to build on the creative revolution and the physical regeneration that is taking place in the city and to contribute to its aspiration to be considered a leading European regional city.

11.8 Uphill Lincoln

Lincoln Cathedral is in the first rank of cathedrals in Europe. In combination with the Castle and the medieval streetscape it is a major attractor and icon for the region. It has the genuine "class" to be a major attractor for overseas visitors. The uphill area currently falls short of its potential. Cultural icons of international significance – such as the Magna Carta and the Romanesque frieze – are inadequately displayed, and in parts there is a general shabbiness and evident lack of investment. The intention is to ensure that Lincoln firmly establishes itself in the top rank of European cathedral cities and the priority for achieving this will be to ensure that the core of the experience – the uphill area – is immaculate.

11.9 Magnificent Market Towns

Market Towns have, for a long time, played a pivotal role as service centres to the wider rural communities – providing a focus for economic and social activity.

The region is fortunate to have so many market towns of exceptional quality. Some like Stamford with its outstanding architecture and stone buildings have attracted national recognition through television productions such as Middlemarch. Others have established strong niches – Newark, for example, still has a traditional market place where

regular open markets and fêtes are held and is fast growing as an antiques centre of international significance.

This Strategy sees them playing a more integral role in dispersing the benefits of tourism to the surrounding rural communities. The popular Farmers' Market shop in Bakewell is an example of how this can work. Sleaford's new 'The Hub' is the largest centre for contemporary craft outside London – closely allied to it is the ConnectUK project, linking buyers and sellers of craft design and making, and providing business support.

The Countryside Agency is developing additional advice on how to address tourism in the Market Towns healthcheck.

The main aim of this project is to raise the overall profile of the region's Market Towns and to identify a group of towns around the region that have the potential to attract visitors and distribute the benefits to the rural areas.

It is envisaged that the towns selected will have the potential to offer distinctive features – for example, outstanding historical, commercial and cultural attractions and an attractive rural hinterland.

The aim of the project will be to enhance their appeal to visitors and their effectiveness in attracting visitors, and to put in place mechanisms to maximise their effectiveness in generating economic benefit both within the town and its surrounding communities.

This project will align with the Regional Market Towns Initiative.

11.10 Nene Valley Regional Park

The Nene Valley Regional Park is being planned by the East Midlands Regional Assembly and Northamptonshire County Council. It could be a major contributor to the tourism economy of Northamptonshire, building upon the river and former quarry sites for watersports and leisure boating, as well as on-land access for recreation – horse-riding, cycling and walking. It is already recognised as an important corridor for wildfowl. A network of waterside country-parks will link into nearby market towns like Oundle and Thrapston.

12 Strand 7: Delivery

12.1 A Cohesive System for Delivery of the Strategy

The strategy is to apply the principle “form follows function” in creating delivery mechanisms for the Tourism Strategy.

Some of the key functions that the Strategy calls for are:

- Focus on sub-regional brands rather than a regional brand
- Tourism marketing and information provision based on destination brands that make sense to consumers rather than being determined by political boundaries
- The marketing of themes that apply across the region or parts of it;
- Efficient systems of providing tourism information
- Better engagement and representation of the private sector
- More direct and straightforward means of delivering business support and training to tourism businesses
- More effective planning and co-ordination of events and major tourism developments
- Efficient and co-ordinated systems of data collection and dissemination
- Better use of resources and less duplication

In summary, effective delivery of the Strategy will require better co-ordination at regional level, better co-ordination at sub-regional level, and better co-ordination at local level.

Probably the most common complaint emerging from the consultation was about “fragmentation” of tourism organisation. The objective of the strategy will be to reduce confusion by developing Destination Management Partnerships, which recognise the different brands across the region.

12.2 A Flexible Approach

While the objective is to ensure that the delivery mechanisms are fit for purpose to deliver these objectives and that there is a better co-ordinated system, circumstances vary greatly across the region and it would be a mistake to impose a straitjacket.

There are models of organisational best practice in the region that follow a variety of types ranging from local authority management through to private sector destination management partnerships. There is no need for a one size fits all solution.

The aim is, however, to develop a totally cohesive system that can deliver the Strategy. This will be achieved by helping sub-regional and local areas to develop a model for themselves that does this. It may represent little change or it may represent big change.

12.3 Supporting the Sharp End

The focus of the delivery structure should be on helping those at the frontline of the tourist industry – operators, especially those in the private sector but also those in the public and not for profit sectors.

The aim is to help them to prosper and to deliver an outstanding product that is in tune with what customers want. This is the core objective of the Strategy and, thus, the core objective of the delivery structure.

12.4 The Front Line of Support

Local tourism officers have a critical role in providing support, assistance and representation for operators. They will be the bedrock of the delivery structure.

The aim is to work with local authorities and existing private destination management organisations to enhance the role of local tourism professionals, thinking of them as “account managers” – although they will not necessarily have that as a job title.

They will be encouraged to establish and maintain strong relationships with operators in their areas, providing support, guidance and expertise.

They will work closely with tourism business advisors and other sources of information and expertise.

They will have critical roles in maintaining the databases that will inform the destination management systems, feeding data into the system.

They will also have vital roles in the improvement of the product and infrastructure in their areas, working closely with local authorities and other key stakeholders.

In order to ensure their effectiveness in doing this, the aim will be for them to fit into a stronger professional infrastructure – to be key members of the sub-regional organisations. This does not necessarily mean that they are employed by those organisations, but that they are integral members of them.

The areas covered by these account managers may match local authority boundaries, but they may not, and the strategy will be to encourage account managers to cover areas that make sense from the point of view of tourism operators and visitors and fit in with the regional brand map.

12.5 Powerful Sub-Regional Backup

The sub-regional organisations will be the main delivery agents of the regional Tourism Strategy, working in partnership with the local officers.

They will have the primary responsibility for marketing, for product development, for managing the destination management system, creating business and skills support schemes and collecting data.

They will work in close conjunction with the Sub-Regional Strategic Partnerships (SSPs – the main delivery agents for *emda's* programmes) but, because tourism priorities do not necessarily match those of wider economic development, the boundaries will not necessarily be the same.

They might be private sector destination management partnerships or public sector dominated partnerships but, in order to ensure effective regional co-ordination, there will only be a few. Because, whatever their actual form, they will always represent a partnership of the main public and private sector stakeholders, they have been called “destination

management partnerships". Most parts of the region have already taken steps to establish such partnerships.

One of the first tasks will be to decide how the region should be divided. Not only are some of the sub-regional destination partnerships likely to cross SSP and county boundaries, they are likely to cross regional boundaries (the Peak District, the National Forest and the Fens are all examples, and all currently have strong cross regional partnerships). It will be the intention to ensure that there is liaison between SSPs and Regional Development Agencies when destination projects cross boundaries.

Because of the size of the region, most of the partnerships will cover a number of individual destinations and may have "brand managers" for each of the leading brands within that destination.

The sub-regional organisations may have formal membership, but not necessarily. There are advantages and disadvantages to membership and it will be appropriate for each area to decide how it wishes to tackle this. Each sub-regional organisation should, however, be a clear focus for private sector representation in its area, working in conjunction with the local account managers.

12.6 Strong Regional Co-ordination

Many of the programmes in this Strategy call for strong regional co-ordination, and that will be achieved through East Midlands Tourism. It will have a small executive team of four with a board of 15 and will provide a co-ordinating mechanism for the sub-regional organisations.

It will be responsible for the determining and delivering the regional Tourism Strategy, and for co-ordinating the work of the sub-regional destination management partnerships.

It will also represent the region on national tourism bodies and be responsible for the delivery of programmes that are agreed nationally. It may do this using sub-regional Destination Management Partnerships as the "lead agencies" for the region, where they have particular expertise.

12.7 Responsibilities

Exhibit 3 shows the type of function that might be undertaken at the different levels of the delivery system.

Exhibit 3: Types of Functions Undertaken by the Three Levels in the Delivery Hierarchy

Local Tourism Officers

Contact with local providers

Delivery of advice

Co-ordination with specialist Tourism

Business Advisors

Local management of Tourist Information Centre(s)

Entry of information into destination

management system

Collection of performance data

Specification of local marketing requirements

Co-ordination with key local authority stakeholders

such as Planning and Highways

Local events planning and co-ordination

Sub-Regional Destination Management

Partnerships

Marketing

Lead agency for advocacy and representation of tourism at sub-regional level

Destination development and delivery of “Special Projects”,
“Virtual” “One Stop Shop” for training and business advice

Liaison with Learning and Skills Council and Business Links

Provision of resources to local account managers

Management of destination management system

Conference Bureaux

Conference Ambassadors

Co-ordination of data collection

Project development and funding

Research programmes and Economic

Impact Analysis

East Midlands Tourism

Implementation and monitoring of Regional Tourism Strategy

Co-ordination of work of sub-regional organisations

Representation on national organisations

Co-ordination and collection of regional data

