



Visit **West Lothian**

Visit West Lothian
Strategic Action Plan

2016-2020



Visit West Lothian in association with **West Lothian Council**



West Lothian
Council



Visit **West Lothian**

Visit West Lothian's **Mission, Vision & Values**

Our Vision is:

To position West Lothian as a desirable Scottish destination for leisure and business tourism.

Our Mission is:

To raise the profile of West Lothian as a visitor destination through maintaining and further developing an effective partnership network.

Our values are:

Collaboration, Leadership, Quality, Integrity

To underpin this we have three priorities for 2020, which fit with the national strategy vision for 2020 of making Scotland 'a destination of first choice for a high quality, value for money and memorable customer experience, delivered by skilled and passionate people'.

Visit West Lothian's three priorities are:

1. To promote West Lothian as a visitor destination
2. To lead on networking and collaborative working within the sector
3. To encourage quality and authentic experiences





Visit West Lothian's Aspirations for 2020

The Rocket

Visit West Lothian have adopted the 'rocket' from the National Strategy: Tourism Scotland 2020 and adapted it to fit West Lothian's current situation and objectives. We recognise that Visit West Lothian cannot deliver all of these elements independently. Partnership working with West Lothian Council & numerous other agencies and businesses is essential.

Our Target Markets

The latest visitor survey conducted in West Lothian (2012) indicated that the visitor profile was; 70% from elsewhere in Scotland, 7% from elsewhere in the UK and 24% from outside the UK. From those from elsewhere in Scotland, most were from the closest surrounding local authority areas. The USA was the most common source of overseas visitors. A broad age and gender profile was apparent and 55% of visitors fell into the ABC1 social classification; broadly in line with the social class profile of the UK population. The majority of visits were day trips and a significant proportion of overnight stays were with friends and family. The average party size was 2.99 and the most common party type was a couple with children, followed by couples.

In addition to this, a key part of VisitScotland's role is to bring international visitors into Scotland, at which point it is up Visit West Lothian to encourage these visitors to include West Lothian as part of their stay. VWL recognises the value of its local market and will be prioritising this visitor group as the organisations main focus. Latest figures suggest that the Visiting Friends and Relatives market (VFR) account for 37% of the economic impact of all overnight stays in West Lothian. This gives VWL an opportunity to target local residents, informing them of West Lothian's visitor assets so that they can enjoy them and also be inspired to adopt an ambassadorial role for their guests.





The family market is the priority sector for West Lothian. Our visitor offer, which includes a good range of affordable, family friendly attractions and places to visit, is also a good fit with our young and growing population. Our area offers a varied range of indoor and outdoor venues which can cater for all year round activities. Engaging with schools and local residents to communicate these assets will therefore be a key target for the organisation.

VisitScotland has updated their research identifying five new visitor segments coming to Scotland which they believe provide a good return on investment. By using this information and cross checking it against the data collected in West Lothian's visitor survey, this allows VWL to get to know the visitor types most likely to visit West Lothian. The VisitScotland categories below hold the most relevance for West Lothian:

Engaged Sightseers

“They enjoy general sightseeing and touring, taking in historical places as well as scenery and nature”

Mid affluent, typically over 45 years, most would choose Scotland for a short break, the majority live across England (79%) key areas being the North (26%), Midlands (13%) and London (16%) whilst 13% reside in Scotland (VisitScotland 2014).

Coach tours and sightseeing appeal to this category, making them a good fit for West Lothian with the area's heritage and retail offer.

Food Loving Culturalists

“Food Loving Culturalists will seek out a relaxing holiday experience where they can enjoy great food and drink and engaging cultural activities”

Highest spenders, predominantly 25-54 years, most would choose Scotland for a short break, the majority live across England (81%) , key areas include: London (25%) and the South(9%), the North (21%) and the Midlands (14%), whilst 15% reside in Scotland (VisitScotland 2014).

West Lothian offers authentic history and heritage, some quality accommodation and examples of great food and drink.

Natural Advocates

“Natural Advocates are passionate about Scotland as it offers everything they want from a holiday; breath-taking scenery, a connection with nature and the chance to get away from it all” (VisitScotland 2014).

Predominantly 35-54 years, almost half would choose Scotland for their main holiday of the year while one in five would choose Scotland for a short break. 35% are based in Scotland which breaks down as 21% in Central Scotland and 11% in Northern Scotland. Almost 60% live across England with 29% living in the north.

This group are repeat visitors to Scotland. They love the scenery and nature and sense of getting away from it all, all of which West Lothian offers.



What is Visit West Lothian?

What is VWL?

Visit West Lothian (VWL) is a destination marketing organisation which was established as a company limited by guarantee in 2008. It provides a partnership through which West Lothian Council (WLC) and local businesses can work together to promote West Lothian as a visitor destination.

The VWL Board represent key sectors of the visitor economy such as attractions, accommodation and heritage, and national organisations including VisitScotland and Historic Environment Scotland. VWL is also a membership organisation, with over 50 businesses currently involved that benefit from a range of promotional activity and networking opportunities that VWL coordinates.

The daily operations of the company are primarily driven by 2 staff members - 1 x full-time and 1 x part-time post, both of which are based in West Lothian

Council's (WLC) Economic Development department and work from offices in Livingston and Linlithgow.

VisitScotland's involvement gives VWL access to a wealth of knowledge in relation to their national perspective of the tourism industry, marketing, PR and strategic skills and knowledge of visitor markets. They are also a key marketing channel for VWL via their regular communication and themed year opportunities.

Historic Environment Scotland manage a number of properties in West Lothian including Linlithgow Palace and Cairnpapple. Their input is key to helping us maximise the potential of these venues and conserve them for future generations.



WLC provides staff resource which enables the company to deliver as much as it does and it also makes available the skills and contribution from other members of the team. Combined, VWL has a strong team and with extensive knowledge with which to push forward and promote West Lothian's offer.

The company makes use of short-term working groups to deliver key activity, eg. developing the VWL strategy, marketing campaigns and growing the membership. VWL also utilises its links and contacts in the business community which allow us informally to consult and access the appropriate knowledge and skills.

New Direction

After benefitting from WLC funding support since 2008, in 2015 this was withdrawn due to significant reductions in the council's budget. In response, VWL brought in external help to lead on a thorough consultation with the sector and VWL membership, to establish how best to go forward.

As part of this process VWL have taken into consideration the views of local tourism businesses, the recommendations of the report, the funding and limited resource of the organisation, and intends to now focus on; destination promotion and acting as collaborator and leader within the industry.

VWL is currently not in a position to fund events, PR campaigns or paid advertising but will continue to work to maximise the profile of the area. VWL aims to be more engaging, open and sustainable and will strive to demonstrate the value it can deliver so that WLC will reconsider it as a viable option for future investment. The company needs to be smart about getting good value and seeking out investment and revenue generating opportunities. This will be achieved by following the example of other destination organisations by delivering the services that members value, increasing membership fees, charging for networking events and growing membership numbers. Coordinating more promotional activity and tapping into funding streams that meet the needs of the sector thereby encouraging their investment is also critical. This more focused approach is reflected in VWL's updated strategy which will contribute to the

wider West Lothian Tourism Plan and overall Local Development Plan, while aligning with the objectives of the National Development Plan.

Now adopting an even greater focus on promotion, VWL will develop a clear communication & marketing strategy which sets out targeted communication to consumer and stakeholders, maximising income where appropriate. Taking advantage of the national 'themed years' (2017, History, Heritage & Archaeology) and utilising our key assets eg. Family Friendly Attractions, Country parks, Union Canal, Retail and Heritage to their best potential.

VWL will contribute to addressing these Targets:

- Increase visitor numbers to our key attractions by 10% by 2020. (Baseline - 438,445 visitors, 2015)
- Increase economic impact of the West Lothian visitor economy by 10% by 2020 (Baseline - £168.56m, 2015)
- Grow the visitor numbers staying overnight in West Lothian by 10% by 2020 (Baseline - 361,000 overnight visitors, 2015)
- Grow visitor days by 10% by 2020 (Baseline - 776,000 visitor days, 2015)

These targets have been set to be aspirational and achievable and compare with the national tourism strategy aspiration of increasing visitor spend by at least £1bn (over 20%) by 2020. The VWL targets will be reviewed as part of the development of the Tourism Action Plan for West Lothian. As part of VWL's own communication strategy we will set out a number of measurable targets relating to our promotion and its performance.

VWL will provide promotional support and market intelligence to deliver this strategy, but it will only be successful through strong collaborative and partnership working.

VWL's 3 priorities are aligned to the National Strategy: Tourism Scotland 2020. The priorities are interlinked and will utilise the national agenda including the tourism themed years as set out by VisitScotland. Ensuring that we utilise technology is essential for VWL and provides a good value mechanism for the organisation to communicate and promote activity.



Strengths & Opportunities for West Lothian as a destination

Strengths

- VWL has strong links with the sector who are engaged and keen to be involved in joint promotion
- Central location and proximity to Edinburgh, Airport and Glasgow
- Strength of product: heritage and history, outdoors, retail
- Diversity of product & contrasting to a city visit
- Space for relaxation, attractive landscape, open spaces
- High quality smaller accommodation

Opportunities

- More effective development and promotion of Linlithgow, Livingston as destination towns.
- Coordinating promotion of our business/ wedding tourism venues
- Closer working with Falkirk / Union Canal - tapping into landmark assets eg. Kelpies & increased visitor numbers
- Establishing cross border funded projects in partnership with key tourism businesses
- Further developing & promoting our outdoor pursuits (John Muir Way, walking, cycling, fishing, golf, canal etc)
- Growing local population with a demographic that fits our target market and offer – young families.
- Exploiting proximity of Edinburgh, Airport & Glasgow



PRIORITY 1

To promote West Lothian as a visitor destination

(National Tourism Strategy Priority - Marketing)

We will utilise all platforms available/affordable to us to promote the destination, with a particular focus on online marketing.

1 Maximise awareness and profile of West Lothian visitor assets with a focus on online activity

Actions

- 1.1 Increase traffic and continue to develop engagement via website and social networks (FB, Twitter, Instagram, Tripadvisor, LinkedIn)
- 1.2 Deliver targeted online seasonal promotions utilising VWL's consumer database, increase database to build further awareness
- 1.3 Explore solus email opportunity to VWL members in order to maximise income potential
- 1.4 Promote activity and awareness of VWL brand online and via sustainable methods of printed communication eg. Konect, Bulletin
- 1.5 Continue to produce annual printed visitor guide – maximising revenue potential & partner collaboration eg. country parks/rangers events
- 1.6 Progress with the development of an improved online destination presence for Linlithgow
- 1.7 Develop a coordinated online presence for Business Tourism

2 Work with the sector to encourage local knowledge sharing

Actions

- 2.1 Continue to raise the profile of West Lothian as a destination for coach groups as part of the Lothian Group Travel partnership
- 2.2 Continue to support key project groups which promote key assets /activities in West Lothian - Lothians Cycle Project, John Muir Trail and Union Canal
- 2.3 Target existing and new tourism businesses to join as members / connect them into sector via networking events/ VWL free & paid for marketing opportunities / local info sharing and free familiarisation visits

3 Build and maintain a brand which represents West Lothian's unique identity

Actions

- 3.1. Refresh VWL brand and suite of communication to reflect new sub-brands and strengths of the area eg. Visit Linlithgow
- 3.2. Utilise new branding and messaging to showcase West Lothian's key activities/offering eg. Edinburgh's Playground.

PRIORITY 2

To lead on networking and collaborative working within the sector

(National Tourism Strategy Priority – Leadership & Collaboration)

We will strive to facilitate cross-selling as part of our promotion and will host networking events in order to assist the sharing of knowledge and best practice.

4 Ensure regular communication to stakeholders

Actions

- 4.1 Produce monthly e-newsletter to members and via website. Include data on business support and local industry performance measuring & reporting eg. visitor numbers, hotel occupancy & stakeholder information
- 4.2 Host two meetings a year to share success, best practice and skill sharing
- 4.3 Launch annual membership renewal, improve suite of benefits for VWL membership and enhance / improve all stakeholder collateral

5 Support collaboration between attractions and providers

Actions

- 5.1 Host networking event twice a year –use as platform for introducing businesses, sharing / best practice and learnings
- 5.2 Create and encourage initiatives and events which encourage collaboration with our flagship venues and focus on national ‘themed years’ – access appropriate funding eg. LEADER, HLF
- 5.3 Annual feedback survey from membership to inform successful collaborations /information sharing

6 Work with travel partners and promote VWL through them

Actions

- 6.1 Utilise working relations with travel partners to improve information on routes into and around West Lothian. Provide an input into initiatives that improve the travel experience
- 6.2 Work with Chamber of Commerce to assess travel to and from WL and benefits for tourism and business

7 Actively participate in national initiatives and consultations for the benefit of West Lothian

Actions

- 7.1 Attend networking meetings, conferences and national initiatives when appropriate. Communicate to membership

8 Identify and promote skills based programmes and share with membership and wider sector

Actions

- 8.1 Work in collaboration with Business Gateway, Chamber of Commerce & WL College to ensure ongoing communication of training/ funding support for members

PRIORITY 3

To encourage quality and authentic experiences

(National Tourism Strategy Priority – Quality & Skills)

We will monitor and report what is happening in the sector and communicate it with the aim of learning and making improvements.

9 Promote quality and improve the consumer/visitor experience

Actions

- 9.1 Review and improve online presence for West Lothian on key sites eg. on google, TripAdvisor. Work with partners to ensure businesses are aware and take advantage of digital support available to them
- 9.2 Showcase best practice examples from in and out with WL at networking events and through VWL member communication

10 Establish benchmark targets, monitor and report to relevant stakeholders

Actions

- 10.1 Use STEAM, visitor attraction performance and hotel occupancy report to benchmark annual success on a quarterly basis
- 10.2 Annual presentation of industry & VWL performance to stakeholders/WLC.

11 Build better customer knowledge

Actions

- 11.1 Using information in the Oatridge College report, use data to inform our visitors
- 11.2 Ask partners what data they collect to inform good practice models.

12 Monitoring & disseminating information on planned tourism investment up to 2020

Actions

- 12.1 Maintain knowledge of planned tourism investment in West Lothian over next five years from road, airport, public, green transport providers plus all visitor related businesses and public agencies.
- 12.2 Promote current and new investment projects via our media, ensuring we target WL development areas such as Heartlands, Whitburn, East Calder and bordering housing developments

Total for Quality – 15%





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