



# 2022

Nottinghamshire County Council

## Visitor Economy Strategy

**Consultation  
Draft**



**Nottinghamshire  
County Council**

# Nottinghamshire County Council's Visitor Economy Strategy

This strategy has been created for:

Visitor Economy businesses

External stakeholders and partners

Sectors in the Visitor Economy supply chain

Internal stakeholders within the County Council

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# Foreword

Our newly refreshed Visitor Economy strategy is focussed upon drawing the best out of the County’s unique selling points, rich history and natural environment for our visitors and the businesses and organisations that serve them.

The pandemic has seen significant shifts in the ways people wish to spend their leisure time and it is important that we reflect these behavioural changes in our long-term plans. The Visitor Economy Strategy will play a key role in ensuring we deliver our Council ambition to make Nottinghamshire somewhere people love to live, work and visit.

Businesses need to understand what our target markets are looking for and how to make our global brand of Robin Hood work for their business. They need to be up-to-speed on the latest market and product trends to make wise business investments and have the latest digital knowledge to take their business to market effectively. The County also wants to engage local people in tourism and for them to share Nottinghamshire’s stories.

This plan is one that will continue to evolve in response to changing circumstances and has been built in a way that will allow us to continue to draw on the expertise and knowledge available in our region. It is fundamental that we continue to build a Visitor Economy that is resilient, sustainable and agile to be able to respond to opportunities and challenges that may arise from changing market demands.

There is work to be done to re-energise the visitor economy, boost performance and realise potential. Nottinghamshire needs a much clearer identity and a higher profile in the marketplace.

This means capitalising on our global brand of Robin Hood, new digital opportunities, including virtual and augmented reality and focusing on quality experiences to ensure Nottinghamshire is competitive in the marketplace. Nottinghamshire has great natural capital, inspiring stories and heritage with wide appeal – this strategy is the first step in converting these opportunities into sustainable growth

The plan focusses on continuing the great work we are already delivering, unlocking previously untapped potential and engaging regional and national partners to drive our vision forwards.



Cllr Keith Girling



The Courtyard Thoresby

# Introduction

In 2018, the Visitor Economy was one of the UK’s largest and fastest growing industries, generating £106 billion Gross Domestic Product (GDP) a year. It employed over 2 million people and supported thousands of businesses.

In response, Nottinghamshire County Council produced its first ever Visitor Economy Strategy (VES) in 2018. The strategy was about delivering five years of change for tourism in Nottinghamshire, with an eye on the longer-term opportunities.

However, the arrival of the Covid 19 pandemic in 2020 resulted in the Visitor Economy being one of the worst hit sectors. Barely a business avoided taking some damage from Covid-19 but the ONS figures show just how dire it was for tourism businesses. Turnover in travel and tourism businesses fell to its lowest level in 2020 in May, at just 26 per cent of February levels.

To meet the demands of the changing times that we now find ourselves in, Nottinghamshire County Council is looking to refresh the original Visitor Economy Strategy to enable the sector to recover and thrive into the future.



Healthy Prosperous Green

Rufford Abbey Country Park

# What is the Visitor Economy and how is this different to Tourism?



'Tourism' is a person-centred concept. It is the process of spending time away from home in pursuit of recreation, relaxation, pleasure or business, while making use of the commercial provision of services in the place being visited.

The 'Visitor Economy' includes tourism but goes beyond this and encompasses all the things that attract visitors, the infrastructure that supports their visit and the services provided to them. All tourists are visitors, but not all visitors are tourists. The pandemic has taught us to appreciate that local visits are important too.

The County Council wants residents and visitors to explore and enjoy the Nottinghamshire countryside, attractions, market towns and villages, and to enjoy the County's fascinating stories. Therefore, the Visitor Economy is the preferred term used by Nottinghamshire County Council due to its wider economic impact and role in place-shaping.

## Purpose of this strategy and the role of the Nottinghamshire County Council

This strategy has been created and refreshed to clearly communicate the ambition and priorities of Nottinghamshire County Council and the Visitor Economy, especially after the recent Covid 19 pandemic. During the refresh of this plan, we have been in close consultation with our district and borough council colleagues to ensure an informed, joined up approach.

The role of the County Council is one of leader, enabler, facilitator, influencer, accountable body, investor, partner, supporter, collaborator and advisor around a shared, inclusive and well communicated vision and plan.

We will use assets in collaboration with our strategic operating partners to develop and trial Visitor Economy projects. The learning from these initiatives can then be rolled out across the county.

## The Nottinghamshire Plan

The Nottinghamshire County Council Plan 2021-2031 has an overarching vision of **"A healthy, green and prosperous Nottinghamshire"**. The direction of the refreshed Visitor Economy strategy is taken from Ambition 5 – 'Strengthening businesses and creating more good-quality jobs' and Ambition 6 – 'Making Nottinghamshire somewhere people love to live, work and visit'.

## The Economic Transition Plan

Nottinghamshire County Council has developed this plan focussed on transforming our local economy through placing the interests of our communities and businesses at its heart, whilst also driving investment and improvements across the county. The plan is built on six themes of people, business, the visitor economy, infrastructure, digital connectivity and place, which will collectively enable Nottinghamshire to emerge as a county moving forward.

Several other County Council plans will touch on or interconnect with the refreshed strategy including:

- NCC Cultural Services Strategy
- Strategic Infrastructure Plan
- Devolution
- Levelling Up
- Local Transport Plan

# Who is this strategy for and how can you use it?

Delivering this strategy will contribute to achieving the aspirations of the County Council but we realise that this cannot be done in isolation. This document has been created in consultation with key partners and that collaboration underpins the entire strategy.

This strategy has been created for:

## 1) Visitor Economy businesses

One of the County Council's main objectives is for Nottinghamshire to stand out as a great place to start and grow your Visitor Economy business. This document will highlight the priorities and direction of travel for the county so businesses know where they fit into the bigger picture and how they can contribute and get support. They will be able to use the information provided to inform their business planning.

## 2) External stakeholders and partners

This document can be the basis of working in partnership on Visitor Economy projects and programmes and in building supportive, sustainable networks. It can be referenced in bids or grant applications to demonstrate a clear and joined-up approach to funders.

## 3) Sectors in the Visitor Economy supply chain

The Visitor Economy sector works hand in hand with a wide range of other sectors across England at all levels of the supply chain including planning, construction, food and drink, farming, transport, retail, sport, museums and the arts to name but a few. This strategy will be the first place for these sectors to look to understand more about their role, our priorities, and how they can contribute towards the Visitor Economy of Nottinghamshire.

## 4) Internal stakeholders within the County Council

We want to champion and embed a culture within the County Council that recognises the value of the visitor economy. This document will raise awareness and provide our staff with enough information and focus to enable them to consider the impact of their service planning on the sector e.g. when making transport, infrastructure or planning decisions.



# What is the future for Nottinghamshire's Visitor Economy?

**Our goal is to return to pre-pandemic levels as quickly as possible by 2025.**

Currently we are working to establish a county-wide Visitor Economy Data Partnership, to centralise information and share costs. When this data is available, we will confirm our targets.

This strategy is about adding value and stimulating growth in our visitor economy sector whilst reducing our carbon impact.

**Therefore, the Council wants:**

## **A higher market profile and a clear identity**

– We want to raise awareness of who we are and what we offer. Nottinghamshire needs a clear identity. The most successful destinations are clear about what is special about their place. They single-mindedly use these qualities to prioritise investment and to communicate consistent messages to their target markets.

## **A great experience and more local visits**

– We want the County to be a must-see destination. The Council wants residents and visitors to explore and enjoy Nottinghamshire and become immersed in its experiences.

**New and repeat visitors** - The intent is to attract new visitors for a day out or a short break and to ensure they enjoy an excellent experience, so they come back again and again.

**Increased dwell time in the county and more spending** - At the same time, the Council wants to encourage people who are already visiting to stay longer, explore further and spend more during their trip. That will generate jobs, growth and opportunity for local people.

**Pride in our county** - We also want to encourage the people who live, work and study in Nottinghamshire to become ambassadors for their county and to spread the word by showcasing it to their visiting friends and relatives.

## **Green and environmentally sustainable**

– About a quarter (27%) of the UK's carbon emissions come from transport and our car use has doubled since the 1980s. The County Council has declared a climate emergency and committed to be carbon neutral in all its activities by 2030. We want to support others to do the same by 2050. We need to shrink our car use or make it more environmentally sustainable and grow public transport, walking and cycling.

## **Thriving Visitor Economy businesses** -

Critically, we want to create an environment that stimulates and supports small businesses to thrive – now and in the future.

## **Transition and Recovery**

The visitor economy was one of the worst hit sectors during the Covid 19 pandemic. We want to build back better and stronger by creating the conditions for visitor economy businesses to thrive.

**Our Transition plan highlights several ways that we will do this:**

- Training and funding opportunities to support businesses, especially small and lesser-known businesses that need more support.
- Championing and recognising the value of the visitor economy within the Council and across partners, creating a culture where service planning always considers the impact of decisions on the visitor economy e.g. when making transport/infrastructure/planning decisions.
- Adopt a strategic coordination role for the visitor economy across Nottinghamshire, working with partners to plan for future growth, maximise funding opportunities and work together to resolve issues facing the visitor economy sector today

- Working corporately to influence the design, commissioning and delivery of programmes of activity that impact on the visitor economy.

The success of the visitor economy means creating thriving businesses with the potential to boost productivity in the county and the region. It is essential that our businesses are provided with the relevant high-quality business support they want and need, delivered in ways that encourage them to take part.

Businesses need to understand who our target markets are and what they are looking for. They need to understand how our key themes can work for their business. They need to be up-to-speed on the latest market and product trends to make wise business investments and have the latest digital knowledge to take their business to market effectively.



Newstead Abbey



Bennerley viaduct

## Who are Nottinghamshire's target Markets?

Nottinghamshire's central location means it has a large audience within a two-hour drive time. However, as a destination, it is impossible to be everything to everybody. In consultation with our stakeholders and partners, we believe the following target markets are a good fit for what Nottinghamshire has to offer – these target markets will be confirmed and underpinned by evidence.

### Domestic target markets:

**Country Loving Traditionalists** – empty nesters with traditional values, who are likely to have recently taken a countryside break in England. They travel as a couple, looking for unspoilt countryside and want to feel “connected to the country's history and heritage” with opportunities to eat local food and produce.

**Active fun families** - information-hungry, living in cities and suburbs with children at home. They regularly take breaks where they can indulge in active, family-friendly pursuits, such as events and festivals. They like activities. They are active on social media.

**Business (including education) visitors** - visiting for work or educational purposes such as conferences and meetings. More wealthy than an average leisure tourist, expected to spend more money. They will extend their visit by dining out, recreation, shopping, sightseeing and meeting others for leisure activities.

**Millennials** - highly active on social media, Millennials are prone to postpone completing education, getting jobs, marrying and having children. They are sociable and want to make a difference to society. They prefer experiences like festivals, concerts, meals, movies and drinks after work.

### Overseas target markets:

International visitors make up a very small percentage of visitors to the majority of UK destinations but the profile of international tourism and the spend per head of international visitors means we will explore targeted opportunities in collaboration with regional and national partners.

Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest continues to be well known and a big draw amongst our overseas guests.

### USA

Statistically speaking, the average American traveller is roughly 40 years old. They often visit with a partner, or on a multi-generation family holiday. Generally, they are from a high socio-economic and educational background. They are in search of good value across the trip, as well as the chance to experience and participate in culture. They want to visit destinations that combine culture, history and gastronomy – for example, historical sites, rural areas that offer local produce, museums, restaurants and sightseeing spots.

### China

China is a key source of study visitors. Chinese visitors tend to be younger than the average visitor mostly aged 16-34 years old. Going shopping is the number one activity which most Chinese visits will feature, followed by dining in restaurants, sightseeing, visiting museums and parks and gardens. They have a special interest in British football teams and are most likely to visit for cultural attractions.

### Emerging

We would like to test if there are any emerging markets resulting from migration, war or employment opportunities e.g. Ukraine, Syria, Hong Kong.

## What are Nottinghamshire's key themes?

The most successful destinations are clear about what their unique selling points are as well as how and why these appeal to their visitors. By setting out these themes and target markets and communicating them clearly, it is hoped that all organisations in the sector can see where they fit into the bigger picture and how to prioritise their thinking and resources.

The five themes Nottinghamshire will lead with are:

1. Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest
2. Free and forward thinking, innovative, challenging and inspirational
3. Green and Active (includes sport)
4. History and heritage
5. Towns and villages

These are, without challenge, the competitive strengths of the county. Nottinghamshire has a head start over many other places as it can lay claim to the global brand of Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest, something that is known worldwide. There is a broader history of the Sherwood Forest area that needs to be told as well as recognition of its special habitats and species.

### Theme 1 Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest

Nottinghamshire is known across the world for Sherwood Forest, the home of the legendary Robin Hood. As well as the role Hollywood and popular culture has played in creating an icon, the ideals that Robin Hood stands for including freedom, social justice, living with nature and the fair distribution of wealth resonate with many of us today. He is an enduring figure that speaks to us across the centuries. It is imperative we make the most of him and use him to act as the “hook” to introduce our visitors to all the other wonderful things our county has to offer.

### Theme 2 Free and forward thinking, innovative, challenging and inspirational

In Nottinghamshire, we think outside the box. We are not afraid to challenge norms and champion innovative and inspirational thinking. The tales of Robin Hood are just one example of the county's free-thinking spirit that has shaped our history. Other powerful free-thinking themes are The Civil War and the Nottinghamshire Pilgrims who travelled to North America in 1620; stories that we can help build regionally, nationally and internationally.



The Major Oak  
Sherwood Forest

### Theme 3 Green and Active (including Sport)

Nottinghamshire is a rural county. We value our green spaces and our commitment to the environment. In fact, the County Council has committed to become carbon neutral in all its activities by 2030. The pandemic showed us just how important our green spaces are in getting active outside and in helping our mental health and wellbeing.

Recently, Nottinghamshire was named as the Home of Sport by Visit England. Sport is a great driver for the visitor economy. Our sporting offer and heritage is strong, from legendary sporting heroes to world class sporting facilities.

We will use our themes and stories to deliver experiences that inspire visitors to explore and build new and enduring relationships with the county.

Some of this is happening already with local partners developing new initiatives to strengthen the experiences. But there is more to do to realise the county's full potential as a visitor destination.

This will not be a one-off process but a long and continuous one that will need constant review and investment.



### Theme 4 History and heritage

Although world famous for Robin Hood, we have a fascinating history and heritage that goes far beyond our legendary outlaw. Some of our other heritage includes caves, castles, farming, monasteries, the Dukeries, our literary greats, mining and the English Civil war and much more. The county also possesses a battlefield, the site of the last battle in the Wars of the Roses.

### Theme 5 Towns and Villages

Nottinghamshire's towns and villages are bursting with history and culture and they are a unique insight into the Nottinghamshire way of life. We possess some real hidden gems including, markets towns that have rich historical backgrounds, former industrial towns which once helped to power the country and quaint rural villages with architecture dating back centuries.



Mansfield Market Place

# This is what we will do:

## Invest in People

We will build skills, knowledge, jobs and capacity so people can thrive in the sector. We will develop an inclusive approach that people can relate to that puts Nottinghamshire people at the heart of the story. We will empower people to share, enjoy, respect, understand and care for our county and unique assets.

- Creating jobs and capacity, building skills, improving conditions, and developing knowledge so people can thrive in the tourism sector. Retain this talent.
- Creating an environment that allows business owners to recover and thrive.
- Excellent customer service and a special welcome for our visitors.
- Increasing the health, well-being and quality of life for our visitors.
- Change the perception of jobs in hospitality.
- An approach to tourism that people can relate to that puts Nottinghamshire people at the heart of the story.
- Empowering people to share, enjoy, respect, understand and care for our environment and heritage and what makes Nottinghamshire unique and 'visitable'.
- Those with additional needs who want to experience tourism are catered for.
- Encouraging the practice of employing local people and contracting to local businesses.
- Build supportive peer tourism networks that empower local communities to deliver a high quality, stronger, more coherent offer.
- Enable communication and two-way dialogue between decision makers, authorities and funders and tourism consumers, businesses, organisations and employees.
- There is cross departmental and cross district buy-in, awareness and support at local authority level.



## Invest in Promotion

We will develop a distinctive and unique brand for Nottinghamshire. Through promotion and marketing, we will raise the profile of our county, locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

- Promotion of Nottinghamshire assets to target markets through bespoke and county-wide campaigns, with an inclusive approach that allows all businesses and organisations to contribute and benefit.
- Development of guidelines and training to enable any business or organisation to promote their tourism service or product.
- Encourage cross-promotion among sites, businesses and organisations.
- Support Visit Nottinghamshire to promote the county to visitors.
- Communicate the key themes and target markets to all businesses and organisations to enable them to focus their promotion and messaging.
- Create and embed a distinctive, instantly recognisable, compelling brand proposition for Nottinghamshire – we know and communicate our USP, what we stand for and what we want to be.



Reenactment of Battle of Stoke Field East Stoke





## Invest in Product

Stimulating investment in developing relevant, high-quality products while protecting and preserving our assets for future generations. We will bring together providers to create a stronger, more coherent, joined up offer.

- Stimulating funding and investment in a high-quality tourism product that plays to the county's strengths and target markets.
- Protecting the tourism environment and assets and encouraging others to do the same.
- Improving the current visitor journey from pre-booking to visiting/staying and beyond.
- Creating great new permanent and temporary experiences that will inspire new and repeat visitors to come.
- Stimulating funding and investment in the Accommodation offer especially for standardised and boutique accommodation.
- A focus on local food and drink.
- A connected tourism product offer, both physically and digitally.
- An accessible tourism experience for those with additional needs.

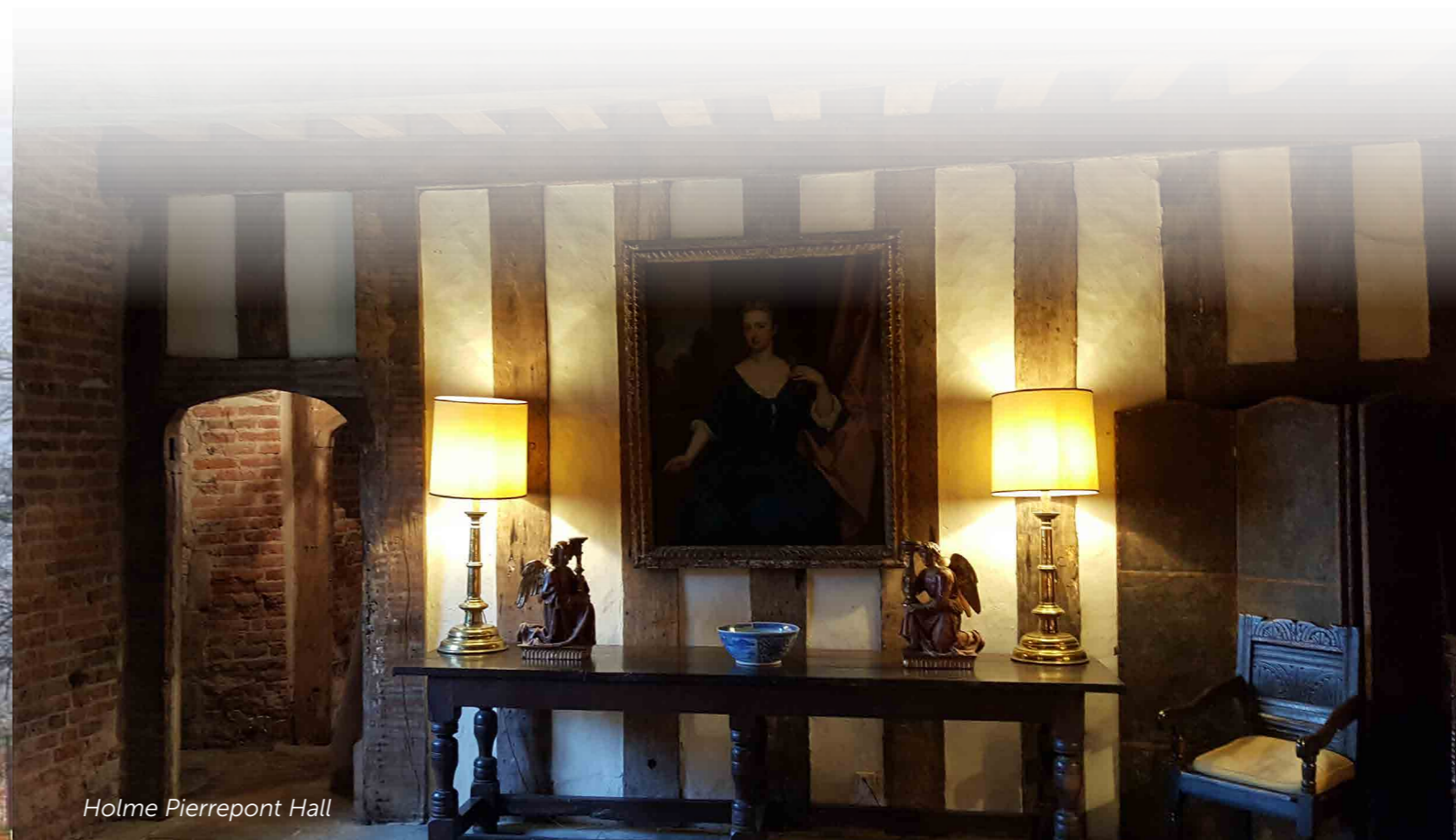
## Invest in Performance

We will build on our strengths and increase Visitor Economy related visits and spend. We will base our strategies and actions on data and evidence. We will measure the results regularly and share our learning and best practise.

- Increasing tourism-related visits and spend and measuring results.
- Increasing the amount of funding and investment in tourism sector businesses and infrastructure within the county.
- Collating useful market intelligence and data, sharing this with all stakeholders, partners and businesses.
- Increasing the number of visitor economy jobs within the county.
- Sharing best practise.
- Build performance and 'bounce back ability' after the effects of the pandemic.



St Mary Magdalene Church, Hucknall. Burial place of Lord Byron and Ada Lovelace



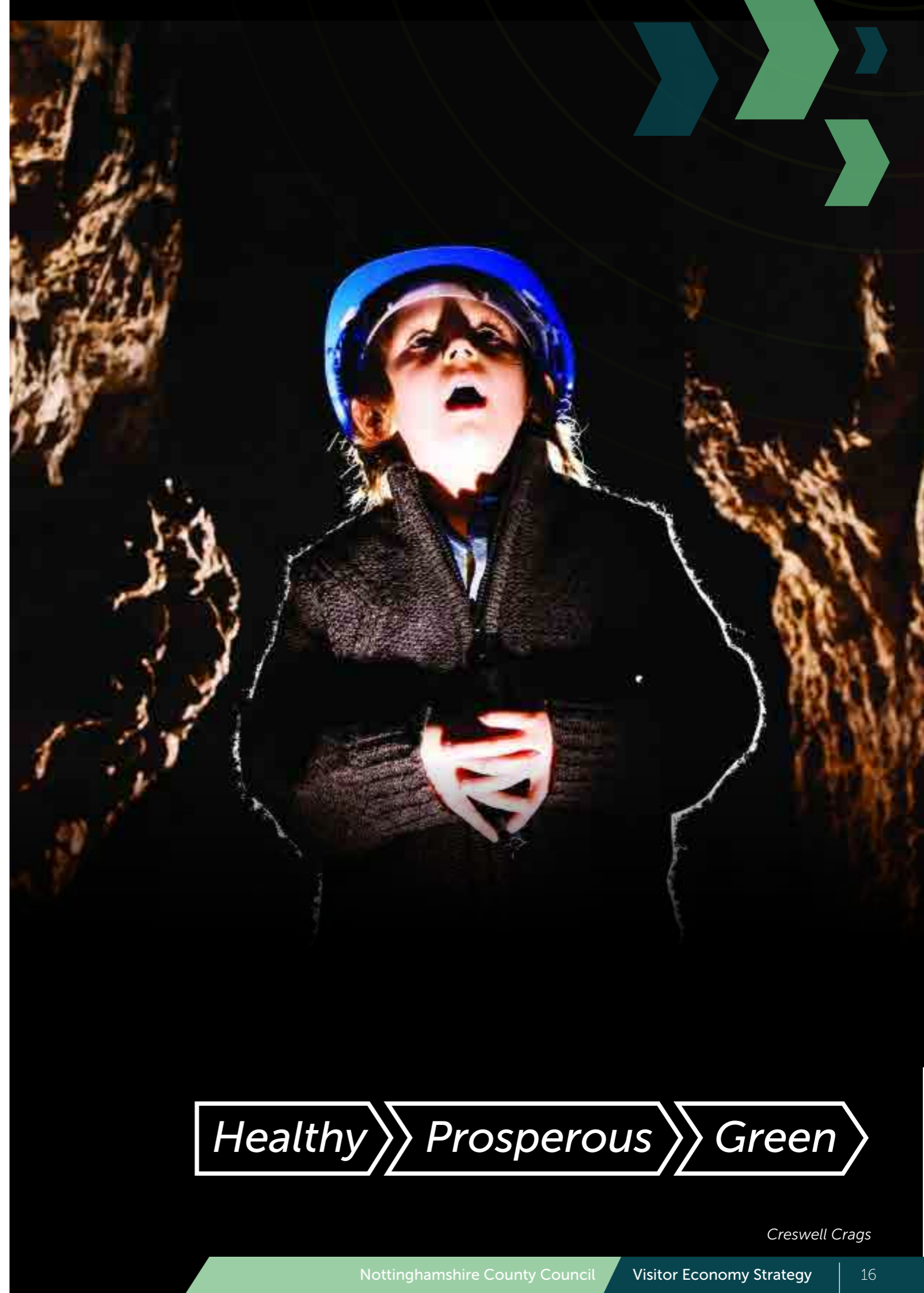
Holme Pierrepont Hall



## Invest in Place

We will establish a sustainable, co-ordinated approach to develop Nottinghamshire as a destination that people will want to visit, stay in and return to. We will create improved facilities, infrastructure and connectivity, bringing everything together to create a unique identity and 'sense of place' across the county.

- Improve, develop and create the sustainable and accessible infrastructure needed for the visitor economy to flourish in transport, people, accommodation, retail, food and drink, experiences, digital and promotion resulting in a destination that people will want to visit, stay in for longer and return to.
- Create and embed a quality, sustainable, inclusive, co-ordinated approach that is sensitive and distinctive to the character of the county and to the environment, nature and heritage.
- Key tourism themes and stories will be communicated clearly internally and externally in order to create a distinctive, compelling, instantly recognisable 'sense of place' across Nottinghamshire. We know and communicate our USP and our assets. We know what we stand for and what we want to be. Visitors know what to expect when they visit – and can visualise what a visit would be like (as they do for York or the Lake District).
- Using tourism as a catalyst to revitalise our market towns, villages, and highstreets.
- Create a place to visit that is environmentally sustainable and ensure those visits do not negatively impact on our beautiful county.
- Better connectivity that appears seamless between the city, county and neighbouring districts as well as individual sites e.g. a visitor economy shuttle bus connection between Rufford Abbey, Sherwood Forest and Clumber Park.
- An approach that embeds the latest digital infrastructure to facilitate the visitor journey from start to finish and creates a sense of place.
- All major County Council projects take into consideration the impact on the visitor economy and try to add a positive contribution to the sector wherever possible.



Healthy Prosperous Green

We want visitors to **explore** and **enjoy** the Nottinghamshire countryside, attractions, market towns and villages, and to enjoy the county's fascinating stories.



*Healthy* *Prosperous* *Green*

