

APPENDIX 3

# Birmingham Visitor Destination Plan 2022-2027

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## Executive Summary

- The value of Birmingham's visitor economy peaked at £7.9 billion in 2019. However, this figure has dropped by 56% in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not expected to fully recover until 2024.
- The market will be more competitive than ever before as all destinations around the world look to recover from COVID-19.
- Perceptions of Birmingham and the West Midlands are often outdated.
- Birmingham has a low profile as a leisure destination outside of the region.
- Accessibility information amongst hospitality businesses is inconsistent.
- Managing seasonality will be a challenge for attractions in addition to COVID-19 recovery.
- Coach travel market has been neglected.

## Birmingham Visitor Destination Plan Objectives

- Increase awareness of the product in Birmingham.
- Increase the number of visitors from the UK staying in Birmingham.
- Encourage greater numbers of international visitors to visit Birmingham.
- Increase the length of visits in Birmingham.

## Birmingham Visitor Destination Plan Actions

Action 1: Develop cohesive tourism identity for Birmingham

Action 2: Promote connectivity between city centre and outlying attractions and the region

Action 3: Monitor impact of COVID-19 and promote safety measures

Action 4: Feasibility Study for a City Attractions Pass

Action 5: Commission Study of Major Cultural Events & Award Shows to Bid For

Action 6: Support for Accessible Tourism

Action 7: Support for Sustainable Tourism

Action 8: Audience Data Workshops

Action 9: Engaging with the Travel Trade & Coach Tour Operators

Action 10: Support JRR Tolkien & Fantasy Literature Scoping Project

## Introduction

Birmingham's former destination management organisation (DMO), Marketing Birmingham, closed in 2017. A new regional body known as the West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC) was created with a broader remit in keeping with the geography of the then new combined authority. WMGC provided continuity in managing Marketing Birmingham's Partnership Programme, Business Birmingham (inward investment), Visit Birmingham (leisure tourism) and Meet Birmingham (business tourism).

However, the development of a Visitor Destination Plan for Birmingham was identified as a priority by the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture in March 2020. As there was no strategic lead or full-time officer support for leisure tourism at the Council, a new role of tourism officer was created in 2021 to support the continued development of Birmingham as a leisure destination, particularly in light of the opportunities that the Commonwealth Games will bring to the city in 2022.

This Visitor Destination Plan provides a roadmap for supporting the development of leisure tourism in Birmingham. It has been developed by Birmingham City Council in collaboration with key partners within Birmingham's visitor economy. The plan reviews the performance of Birmingham's visitor economy, how it has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and addresses the need to support its recovery and continued growth following the Commonwealth Games. The plan sets out 10 priority actions to assist in raising greater awareness of Birmingham's tourism offer and as an attractive leisure destination to domestic and international consumer and travel trade markets.

## Birmingham – a city in transformation

Birmingham is undergoing significant regeneration in not only its built environment and public realm, but also culturally and creatively, providing an almost tangible sense of positive energy in the UK's youngest, most diverse and best-connected city. The scale and momentum of change that it has experienced in the last decade however is at odds with outdated perceptions of a post-industrial city. The Commonwealth Games represents an unprecedented opportunity to show people from the UK and around the world how much the city has transformed through media coverage.

Just as its nickname at the height of the Industrial Revolution, 'a city of thousand trades', speaks of diversity and specialisms, Birmingham today echoes the past with the high quality and diverse nature of its tourism offer. Its museums, art galleries and historic houses proudly display internationally important collections. Visitors can experience luxury and high-end shopping, award winning family-friendly attractions, high profile sporting occasions, and beautifully landscaped gardens and canals.

Birmingham has a strong and diverse cultural sector and is home world class performance venues and institutions such as Birmingham Royal Ballet, Symphony Hall, The Hippodrome and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra to name but a few. The city's vibrant events calendar is underpinned by an eclectic range of festivals including the Sandwell and Birmingham Mela (the largest South Asian music festival in Europe), Birmingham International Dance Festival, B-Side Hip Hop, Pride and the Birmingham Weekender. Cultural tourism is an important economic driver across the West Midlands bringing domestic and international tourists to the area. The development of a new Cultural Strategy 'Statement of Intent' for Birmingham will highlight the city's ambitions in developing its cultural tourism offer.

Birmingham was named one of the world's best holiday destinations for 2022 by Condé Nast Traveler (November 2021), praising the city's vibrant culinary scene and describing it as 'best for foodies'. The feature cited Birmingham's five Michelin starred restaurants (the most in the UK outside London), street food, fine dining and experimental cuisines. The Balti Triangle is the

birthplace of one of Birmingham's great modern, cultural exports, and the Chinese Quarter continues to draw visitors from across the Midlands to the region's Chinatown. Neighbourhoods such as Moseley, Harborne, the Jewellery Quarter and Stirchley are fast gaining excellent reputations for food and drink. The street food scene has also helped put Digbeth on the map with The Sunday Times naming it the 'number 1 coolest place to live in the UK' in 2018.

The city centre is very 'walkable' and visitor economy businesses in nearby districts are well served by public transport. The continued expansion of the West Midlands Metro and the highly anticipated arrival of HS2 will only serve to make Birmingham even more connected to the region and the rest of the country; and an attractive place to live, work, study and visit.

## Birmingham Visitor Destination Plan Objectives

The plan complements WMGC's Regional Tourism Strategy 2019-2029 by helping to generate greater awareness of Birmingham as a leisure tourism destination, its tourism assets and key themes. The main objectives of the visitor destination plan are to:

- Increase awareness of the product in Birmingham
- Increase the number of visitors from the UK staying in Birmingham
- Encourage greater numbers of international visitors to visit Birmingham
- Increase the length of visits in Birmingham.

## WMGC Regional Tourism Strategy Objectives

- Raise the visibility and awareness of the region to international markets
- Improve the image and the perceptions of the Region to UK audiences
- Ensure greater awareness of the business tourism product
- Develop the leisure product using hero themes, attracting visitors across the region
- Provide new jobs and skills for people living in the region
- Connect tourism activity with other regional programmes to maximise impact.

## Context

### Methodology

This plan was developed using research drawn from multiple sources including:

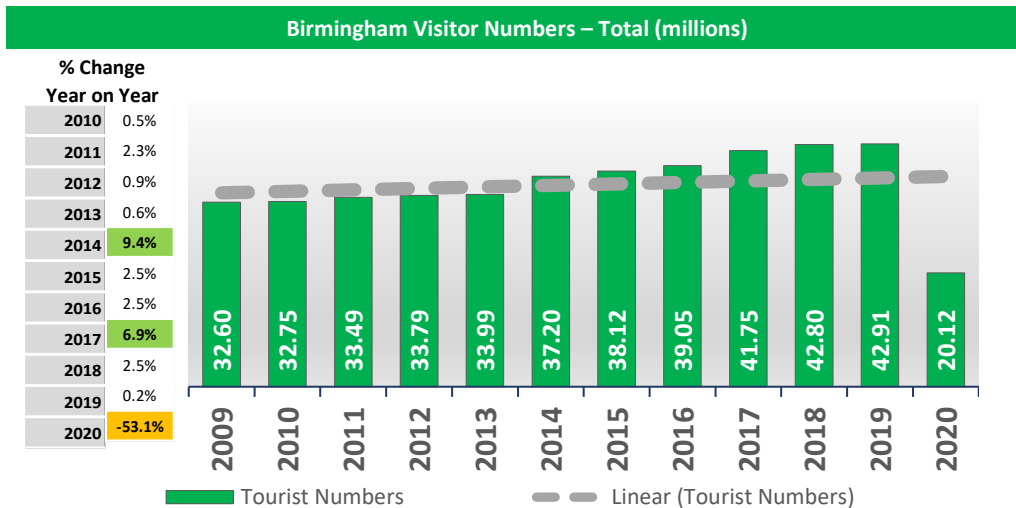
- In depth analysis of trends in tourism volume and value across the region
- A comprehensive product audit of over 300 visitor economy businesses in Birmingham
- Original perceptions and awareness research undertaken in the UK and overseas markets
- Over 15 individual consultations with senior stakeholders working in Birmingham’s visitor and cultural economies.
- Ten one-to-one interviews with industry leaders in Birmingham’s visitor economy conducted against a standard framework
- Five workshops focusing on:
  - The market, industry trends and the factors that have the potential to influence the growth of tourism in the city
  - The strength of Birmingham’s tourism offer
  - The challenges Birmingham faces in the development of its leisure tourism sector
  - How Birmingham can become a more accessible and sustainable destination
  - The views of the private sector in terms of the core priorities for the city
  - Maximising the benefits of the Commonwealth Games.

### The Significance of Tourism

Prior to COVID-19, Birmingham and much of England’s visitor economy had been experiencing a period of steady growth over the course of the decade leading up to 2019. Birmingham’s visitor economy was worth £7.90 billion in 2019 and attracted nearly 43 million visitors, supporting 79,000 full-time jobs in the tourism sector.

However, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the trend of year-on-year growth came to an abrupt end. The value of the visitor economy in 2020 had shrunk by 56% to £3.48 billion and visitor numbers dropped by 53% to just over 20 million. The total number of jobs supported dropped by 56% to 34,882.





### Trends Influencing Tourism

The tourism industry has been forced to adapt like many consumer sectors to significant disruptions such as online sales, increased marketing channels and more discerning and digitally savvy customers. The visitor of today tends to book later, is faced with more choice and holds more power within the market.

Tourism and hospitality have been particularly impacted by COVID-19 with furloughs, travel restrictions, safety measures and testing regimes. The industry was also amongst the last to reopen following multiple lockdowns. These factors placed unprecedented pressure on a labour market compounded by shortages due to Brexit as they were previously dependent to some degree on EU nationals.

As destinations around the world recover, there will be more competition than ever before to rebuild visitor numbers to pre-pandemic levels. According to Oxford Economics ('The slow road to recovery for city tourism', May 2021),

*“City destinations will encounter a more challenging recovery compared to non-city destinations as tourists increasingly opt for less crowded destinations.*

*Domestic tourism, benefiting from an earlier easing of restrictions and quicker rebound in traveller confidence will lead the overall recovery, regaining pre-crisis levels by 2022.*

*International visitor arrivals to cities will be slower to recover, not exceeding 2019 levels until 2024.”*

Other impacts associated with Brexit include consumer sentiment towards the UK from EU nationals, confusion over visas requirements and increased logistical costs for the industry.

The cost of living crisis precipitated by an unstable energy market due to the war in Ukraine and wider macro-economic uncertainty caused by tensions between the US and China, and the impacts of climate change must also be taken into consideration.

## Addressing the risks to the tourism and hospitality sector

The Visitor Destination Plan seeks to address the risks of financial instability caused by COVID-19, the cost of living crisis and a recession by helping the visitor economy to build new audiences and improve engagement with existing ones.

The **Support for Accessible Tourism** workstream will seek to improve understanding, practises and customer service amongst businesses to ensure that customers with accessibility needs are welcomed and valued, whether they are residents, tourists or parents who require changing facilities.

In the UK alone, the 'Purple Pound' - the spending power of disabled people and their families - is worth £274 billion and is estimated to be rising by 14% per year, yet less than 10% of organisations have a targeted plan to access the disability market. This is not only a huge frustration for customers but is also a huge missed opportunity for organisations who could be benefiting both socially and commercially by accessing the disability market.

- 1 in 5 of the UK and EU population is living with a disability.
- 80% of disabled people have hidden impairments. Only 9% use a wheelchair.
- 75% of disabled people and their families have walked away from a UK business because of poor accessibility or customer service.
- 73% of potential customers with disabilities experienced barriers on more than a quarter of websites they visited.

The product audit conducted for the Visitor Destination Plan found that large attractions and hospitality chains demonstrate good practice in being accessible and providing comprehensive details about their accessibility on their websites. In contrast, an alarming 90% of food and drink businesses had no information at all. This presents a potential growth area where introducing accessible practises and providing detailed and easy-to-find information on their websites would demonstrate a level of commitment to a potentially loyal customer. Businesses will also be provided with advice on marketing their accessibility to a wider, relevant audience.

Travel restrictions at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to build a loyal and more engaged customer base closer to home. The **Cultural Audience Data Workshops** workstream will also help tourism and cultural attractions to widen their customer base and become more inclusive of the diverse communities in Birmingham. This will be achieved with one-to-one workshops to help businesses understand the comprehensive local audience data from the WMCA's cultural audience research. The workshops will provide the tools to identify local audiences within the West Midlands with potential for growth based on the type of culture consumed and likelihood of uptake, and recommend the optimal channels to promote to them.

### **Skills and Recruitment in the visitor economy**

The plan acknowledges how the sector has been severely impacted by Brexit and COVID-19 in terms of staffing and recruitment. The tourism officer will support the efforts of WMGC, Hospitality UK, the Tourism Management Institute and other trade bodies to seek greater assistance from Government to address the skills and recruitment gap. The tourism officer will also seek to play a role in any local initiatives to promote viable career paths in Birmingham's visitor economy.

## Tourism Landscape

Birmingham operates in a complex tourism landscape. Whilst other districts in the West Midlands manage tourism through their own DMO or local authority, Birmingham City Council is the only destination which does not run its own tourism website. Instead, Visitbirmingham.com is managed

by WMGC as a legacy of its previous identity as Marketing Birmingham. As a new service within Birmingham City Council, the tourism officer supports the city's visitor economy by working closely with the digital, travel trade, PR and marketing teams within WMGC.

As the most well-known district with the highest concentration of visitor economy businesses in the West Midlands, Birmingham naturally benefits from the branding, promotional and business support activities of WMGC. This is most notable in the £24 million Business and Tourism Programme which is supporting the development of the sector in the Commonwealth Games Host City of Birmingham, and to a smaller but no less significant extent, other West Midlands destinations.

A review of the Destination Management Organisation landscape in England was commissioned by the Government in March 2021 following concerns raised about their financial stability. The COVID-19 pandemic only made the case for a review more urgent, with the knock-on impact of pandemic restrictions causing massive reductions to DMO commercial revenue streams at the very time tourism businesses needed their support most. The Government du Bois Review: An Independent Review of Destination Management Organisations in England was published in September 2021.

Many of its recommendations mirror those put forward by WMGC in their submission for the review. The proposed structure largely aligns with what is already in place in the West Midlands. WMGC acts as the strategic regional 'hub' with district DMOs acting as the 'spokes'. The DMO function for Birmingham is currently served by the 'Visit Birmingham' team within the WMGC and supported by the tourism officer at Birmingham City Council.

The Government has yet to act on the du Bois Review due to the competing priorities of other UK industries at present. Tourism bodies and professionals will continue to lobby the Government on the importance of the sector and the need for further support through campaigns such as English Tourism Week.

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

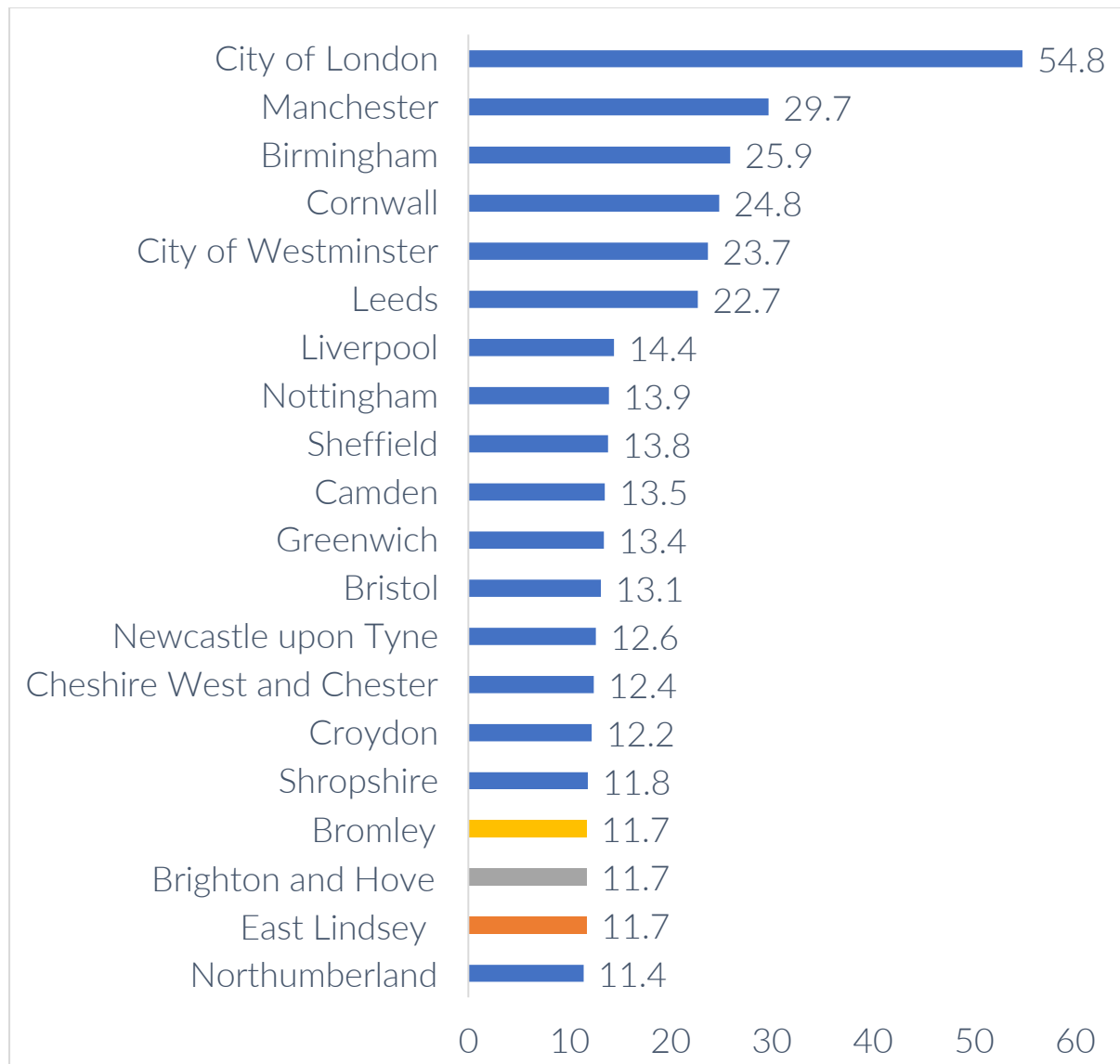
### A) Destination Performance

Across England, Birmingham ranked 3rd highest in the number of tourism day visits, with only the City of London and Manchester receiving more day visits. The West Midlands received over 55 million day visits with Birmingham accounting for 46% of all tourism day visits across the county as a whole.

#### Tourism Day Visits

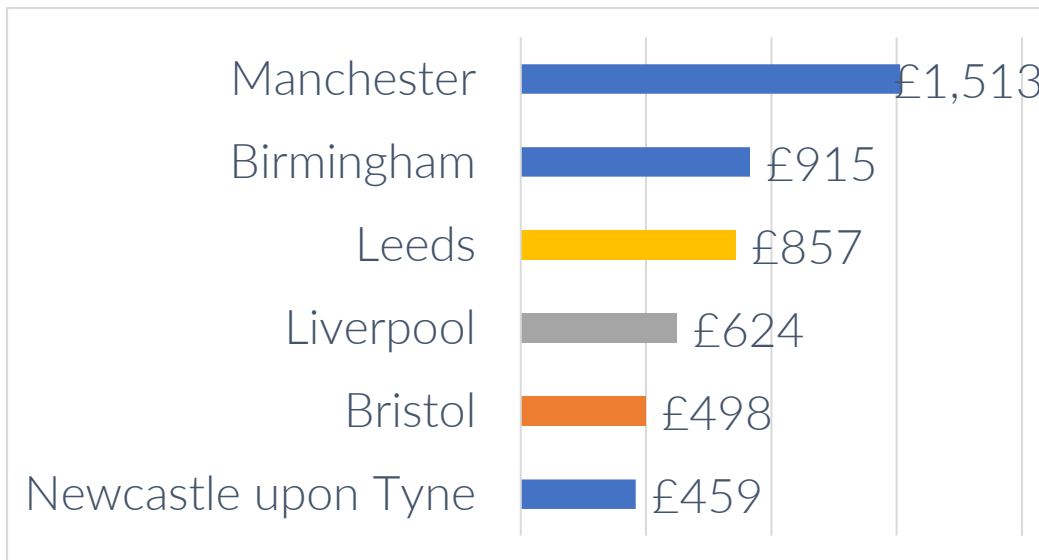
##### Most Visited Local Authorities in England

Volume of Tourism Day Visits 2017-2019 3-year annual average (millions)



Source: VisitEngland - GBDVS & GBTS 3 year averages 2017-2019

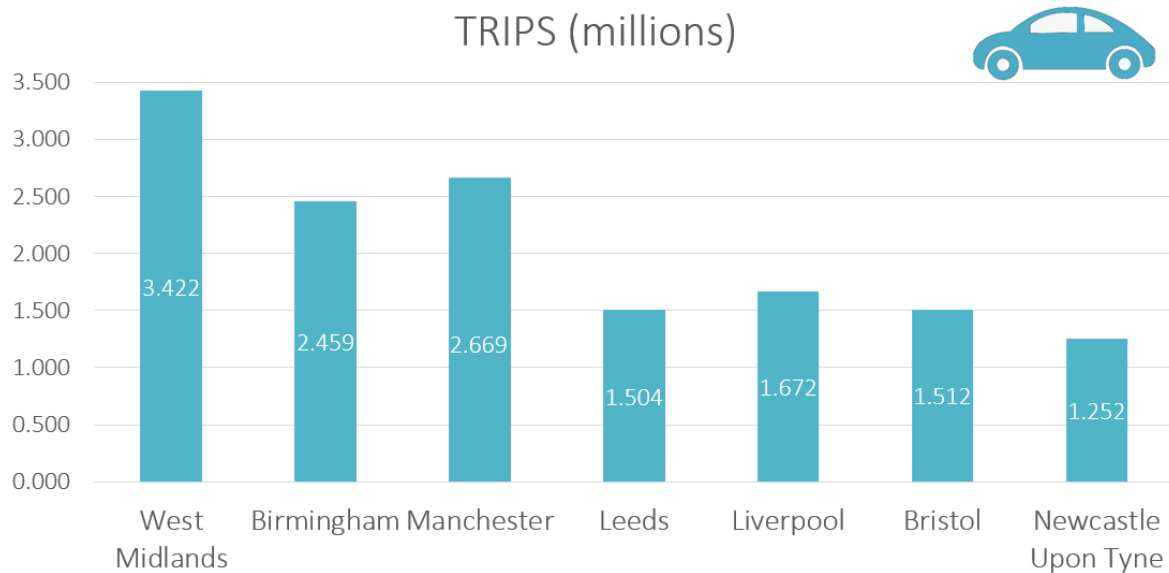
Volume of Tourism Day Expenditure 2017-2019 3-year annual average (millions)



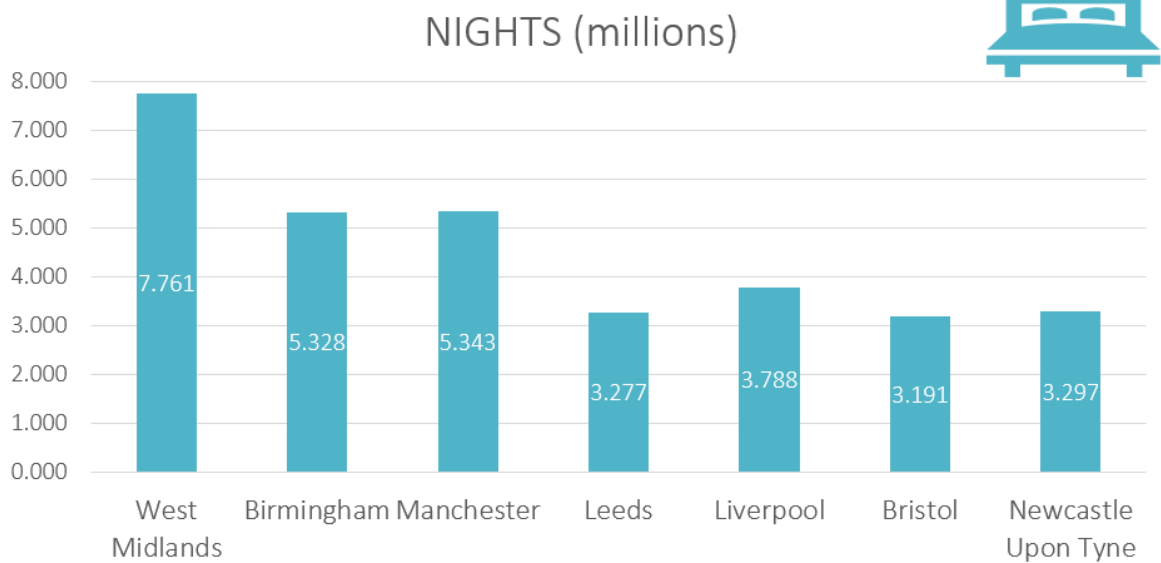
Source: VisitEngland - GBDVS & GBTS 3 year averages 2017-2019

In terms of expenditure, Birmingham ranked 4th highest, with the City of London, Manchester and the City of Westminster achieving higher spend levels. The West Midlands received £1,749 million with Birmingham accounting for 48% of all tourism day spend across the county.

Overnight Tourism



Source: VisitEngland - GBDVS & GBTS 3 year averages 2017-2019



Source: VisitEngland - GBDVS & GBTS 3 year averages 2017-2019



Source: VisitEngland - GBDVS & GBTS 3 year averages 2017-2019

Birmingham performs comparatively well in the number overnight trips and stays, placing third just behind Manchester. However, it is the difference in spend overnight spend where Birmingham trails significantly behind Manchester by £60 million. This may indicate less spend on hospitality, culture and entertainment.

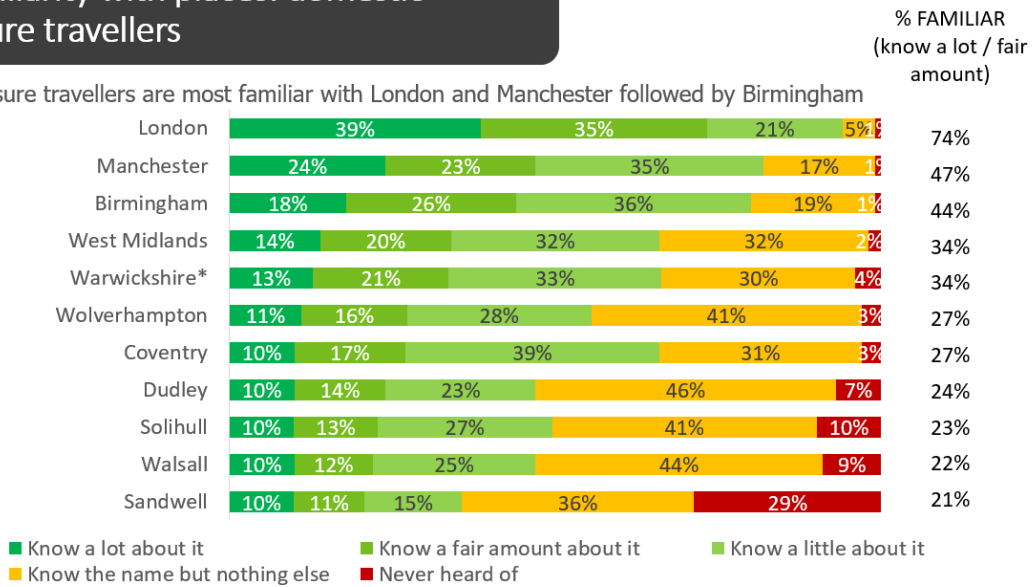
### Perceptions of Birmingham

Birmingham places third behind London and Manchester in terms of its familiarity amongst domestic and international travellers. However, it does suggest that knowledge of Birmingham's leisure offer needs to improve to compete nationally.

## Familiarity with places: domestic leisure travellers

Q. How familiar are you, if at all, with the following places in the UK?  
Base: n=508 UK leisure travellers

UK leisure travellers are most familiar with London and Manchester followed by Birmingham

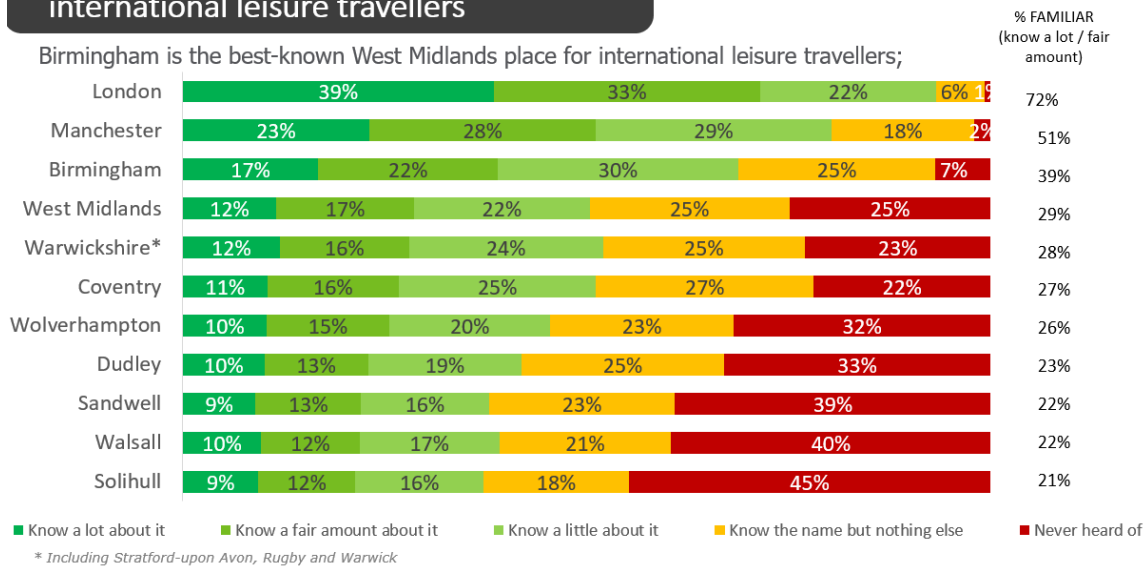


Source: BATP PERCEPTION STUDY 2021 | Echo Research | November 2021

## Familiarity with UK places: international leisure travellers

Q. How familiar are you, if at all, with the following places in the UK?  
Base: n=1512 international leisure travellers

Birmingham is the best-known West Midlands place for international leisure travellers;



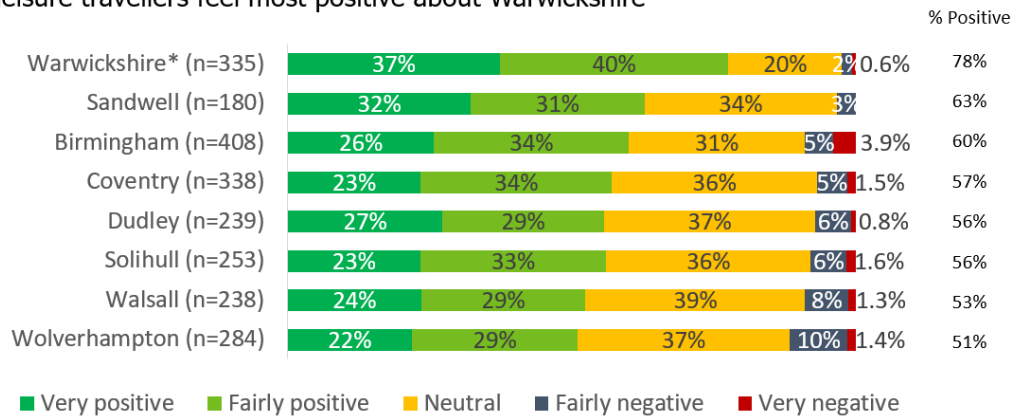
\* Including Stratford-upon Avon, Rugby and Warwick

Source: BATP PERCEPTION STUDY 2021 | Echo Research | November 2021

As the charts below indicate, there is much room for improvement in how Birmingham is viewed as a leisure destination amongst domestic travellers. Birmingham performs more favourably with international travellers.

## Sentiment towards West Midlands places: UK domestic leisure travellers

UK leisure travellers feel most positive about Warwickshire



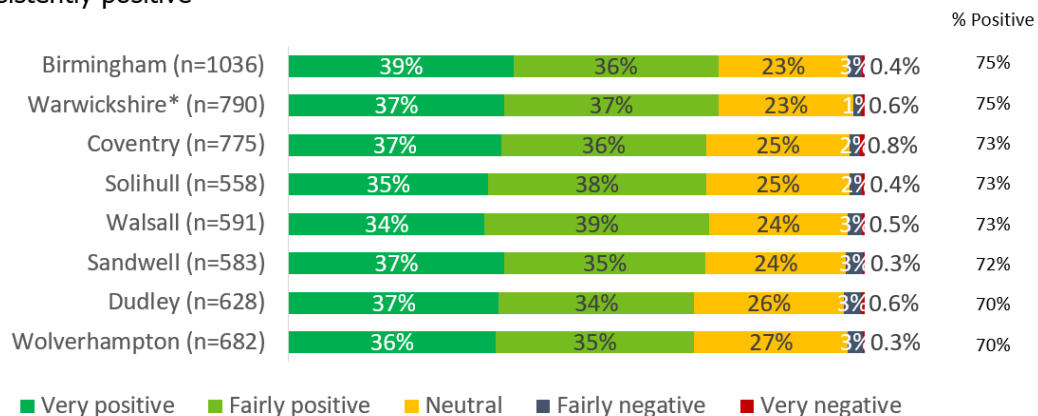
Q. How positive or negative do you feel about the following places in the West Midlands as a tourist destination?  
Base: domestic leisure travellers who know at least a little about each place

Source: BATP PERCEPTION STUDY 2021 | Echo Research | November 2021

## Sentiment towards West Midlands places: international leisure travellers



Where international leisure travellers know about a specific place, sentiment is consistently positive



Q. How positive or negative do you feel about the following places in the West Midlands as a tourist destination?  
Base: International leisure travellers who know at least a little about each place

Source: BATP PERCEPTION STUDY 2021 | Echo Research | November 2021

## Birmingham Visitor Destination Plan Actions

### Action 1: Develop cohesive tourism identity for Birmingham

Develop an outward facing brand for Birmingham's Visitor Economy

Creating a tourism brand for Birmingham has been highlighted as the main priority for the city during almost all of the stakeholder interviews and focus groups. It is felt that in consultation with visitor economy stakeholders, a new cohesive brand would underpin what the city stands for and offers to visitors.

One of the common themes raised in the stakeholder interviews and focus groups was that Birmingham needed to promote itself more, but its tourism brand lacks clarity in comparison to Manchester or Liverpool. Birmingham's identity as a leisure tourism destination was described as difficult to pin down as its offer is quite wide ranging. The sector has also lacked the co-ordination to promote the tourism offer since the closure of Marketing Birmingham, with WMGC focusing on the region instead.

There was an acceptance that there are strains on individual marketing budgets, however many respondents understood the need for the public and private sectors to collaborate and jointly fund marketing campaigns.

The tourism officer will work with Corporate Communications to explore how the Be Bold Be Birmingham brand could be tailored to suit the needs of the visitor economy to develop co-ordinated marketing campaigns. Ideally this would require additional budget to work with a specialist Place branding consultant. In the interim, the Hero Theme Development below would provide the initial groundwork to help crystallise Birmingham's tourism offer.

#### 'Hero Theme' Development

Birmingham has an incredibly diverse, high quality tourism offer that appeals to many different markets. The majority of visitors who experience the city's attractions leave with a positive impression. However, without consistent co-ordination in recent years, the marketing message to visitors has been unfocused with many in the sector feeling that there has been a missed opportunity to compete with other core cities. We should take more advantage of individual tourism themes where Birmingham is strongest and identify high quality, unique and distinctive 'products' that would resonate with consumer markets and the travel trade sector.

By fostering collaboration amongst stakeholders and creating combined itineraries featuring the best products for each theme, Birmingham will be able to present a much stronger tourism offer to appeal to consumer and travel trade markets. This will provide structure and a foundation for marketing campaigns to build on, providing more focused messaging and to challenge outdated perceptions of the city.

#### **Hero Themes**

A number of tourism themes already stand out for Birmingham based on the quality of the offer. Whilst Birmingham's strengths are well known within the region, the challenge will be to profile them nationally and internationally and to communicate the vast change that has taken place in Birmingham and shift outdated perceptions. The plan will focus on:

- Food & Drink
- Culture & Festivals
- Shopping
- Heritage
- Waterways
- Historic Houses & Gardens
- Family Friendly

- Christmas
- Screen, Music & Literary
- Sport
- LGBTQ experiences
- The Jewellery Quarter
- Digbeth

For each theme, Birmingham City Council will:

- Conduct product audits for free and independent travellers (FITs) and the travel trade
- Identify which are the best examples and who has the most potential to improve
- Host workshops to explore collaboration, product development, combined itineraries and create bookable products
- Market test itineraries with the travel trade
- Promote itineraries via [visitbirmingham.com](http://visitbirmingham.com), social media, VisitEngland, travel press and trade shows
- Devise elevator pitches to allow tourism partners and ambassadors to upsell the city to visitors.

### Action 2: Promote connectivity between city centre and outlying attractions and the region

Birmingham is home to a wide variety of high-quality attractions along with suburbs that have a strong or emerging visitor offer. There are concentrations of tourism businesses outside the city centre in the Jewellery Quarter, Edgbaston, the University of Birmingham campus; whilst Birmingham's busiest attraction, Cadbury World, is based in Bournville. Food and drink clusters exist in Digbeth, the Jewellery Quarter, the Balti Triangle, Moseley, Stirchley and Harborne.

However, whilst the UK's second largest city's public transport network is constantly improving, it is often difficult for visitors to visualise and embark on trips beyond the city centre.

Birmingham City Council will work with public transport bodies, Business Improvement Districts and tourism partners to:

- Identify the optimal and easy to follow routes for visitors looking to explore outside of the city centre.
- Repurpose existing map assets (including those updated for the Commonwealth Games) to provide collateral downloadable from [VisitBirmingham.com](http://VisitBirmingham.com).
- Create custom itineraries and downloadable maps using [VisitBirmingham.com](http://VisitBirmingham.com)'s online planner tool and promote them with blog content specific to locations.

### Action 3: Monitor impact of COVID-19 and promote safety measures

All COVID-19 restrictions in the UK having been lifted at the time of writing, however the situation still requires careful monitoring. There is still the potential of rising case numbers or a new variant to disrupt international travel or renew restrictions on UK businesses. An inbound visitor's country of origin may still require proof of a negative test before returning home.

Should England be placed under restrictions again, Birmingham City Council will engage with partners to:

- Encourage businesses to update their COVID-19 webpages.

- Sign up to national We're Good To Go safety scheme and encourage to promote safety measures and the certification to customers.
- Work with Visit Birmingham to promote businesses taking safety measures via We're Good to Go blogs and social media posts.

#### Action 4: Feasibility Study for a City Attractions Pass

A city attractions pass has been identified as a potential solution to:

- Drive multiple attractions visits to Birmingham
- Increase length of stay and visitor spend in the destination
- Provide much needed exposure for smaller attractions and experiences with restricted marketing budgets
- Demonstrate a cohesive tourism offer in Birmingham
- Potentially link with a public transport promotion or expand to include regional attractions.

A feasibility study for a Birmingham Attractions Pass has been put out to tender. The successful consultant will:

- Investigate attractions pass developers and white label options
- Investigate opportunities that integrate with other digital platforms
- Investigate how a pass would be managed and promoted
- Investigate how revenue is shared and what commission rates would be acceptable to businesses.

Should the consultant identify a critical mass of interested businesses and recommend solutions that are viable for Birmingham City Council, a contract to develop a city attractions pass will be put out for tender.

#### Action 5: Commission Study of Major Cultural Events & Award Shows to Bid For

The city is home to established annual events and festivals including Sandwell and Birmingham Mela, Birmingham International Dance Festival, Pride, Flatpack and the MADE Festival. Birmingham has also hosted high profile events in the past including BBC Sports Personality of the Year, Pride of Britain Awards, Brit Asia TV Music Festival.

Birmingham City Council recently published its Major Sporting Events Strategy 2022-2032 which looks to capitalise on the expertise and significant investment in infrastructure from the Commonwealth Games.

The Commonwealth Games and the Birmingham 2022 Festival present a once in a lifetime opportunity for sports, culture and tourism. The Birmingham 2022 Festival takes place between March and September and will see a busy calendar of cultural events taking place across the West Midlands. The 2022 festival culminates with PoliNations, one of the ten major art installations curated for UNBOXED – previously known as Festival UK 2022.

It is vital that the city builds on the momentum of 2022 to ensure the continued growth of the cultural and visitor economy in subsequent years. A study into major cultural events and award shows is currently out for tender. The study will:

- Investigate major national and international cultural events to stimulate cultural tourism

- Evaluate which events fit Birmingham’s narrative and strengths
- Assist in understanding bidding processes, costs, subvention and timescales
- Inform a bidding strategy for a pipeline of events for the next 10 years.

### Action 6: Support for Accessible Tourism

It has been identified that the provision and promotion of accessibility information on the destination and individual businesses’ websites is an area for significant improvement.

Many local government-managed and publicly funded attractions and larger hospitality chains in Birmingham provide comprehensive accessibility information. However, SMEs make up the majority of the visitor economy where the level of detail in accessibility is inconsistent at best or non-existent. Disabilities affect a fifth of the UK’s population, where the ‘Purple Pound’ represents significant spending power and a potentially loyal customer base.

- Smaller businesses may not have the resources or budget to improve their facilities.
- The level of information provided by businesses can be vague or focus solely on wheelchair access, neglecting customers with hidden disabilities.
- The lack of information may also deter parents who require baby changing facilities from visiting destinations and businesses.
- There are cases where businesses that have become more accessible are not promoting their facilities to customers effectively.

Birmingham City Council and its partners including the West Midlands Growth Company are committed to making the city a welcoming and inclusive leisure destination for visitors and residents. The opportunity of hosting the Commonwealth Games, which includes para sporting events, is seen as a driver for positive change in the West Midlands Region. Birmingham City Council’s Adult Social Care directorate supports businesses through grant applications to make accessibility changes, and works with AccessAble to provide comprehensive accessibility information for its buildings and is keen to drive more organisations to follow suit.

A contract for a consultant to support accessible tourism is currently out to tender. The consultant will provide advice on:

- Training webinars
- Good practice guides
- Getting started
- Accessibility quick wins
- Creating an accessibility guide
- Further training and support
- Marketing your accessibility

### Action 7: Support for Sustainable Tourism

Birmingham 2022 aims to be the first carbon neutral Commonwealth Games in history and the Council introduced a Clean Air Zone in June 2021. The Council also has plans to further combat carbon emissions over the next ten years through its transport plan.

There is a requirement to support the development of sustainable tourism to help bring along visitor economy businesses in Birmingham with the Council on the journey to become more environmentally sustainable. Whilst sustainability is not currently a key priority for visitors in choosing a destination, it will become an increasingly important factor as younger market segments mature and will be an area where cities around the world will compete.

A contract for a consultant to support sustainable tourism is currently out to tender. The consultant will provide:

- Training webinars
- Good practice guides
- Getting started guides
- Advice on sustainability quick wins
- Links to further training and support
- Advice on marketing sustainability
- Links to sustainability awards

### Action 8: Audience Data Workshops

COVID-19 has highlighted the need to engage with hyperlocal audiences. Attracting local audiences from diverse communities presents the opportunity to cultivate a loyal customer base and authentic ambassadors for Birmingham's tourism and cultural sectors.

The West Midlands Combined Authority published a study on regional cultural audiences in summer 2021. One of the outputs was a dashboard that segments audiences in the West Midlands by type of culture consumed, socioeconomic group, ethnicity, geography (down to ward and street level), and by Audience Agency spectrum.

Birmingham City Council will deliver tailored workshops for tourism and cultural attractions to:

- Help attractions understand WM Cultural Mapping data
- Support the development of audiences in local diverse communities
- Identify local and regional audiences with growth potential
- Identify how to market to target audience segments.

The data from the study is only available until December 2022.

### Action 9: Engaging with the Travel Trade & Coach Tour Operators

One of the main challenges for tourism attractions and activities is managing seasonality. The organised groups and educational visits of the travel trade have the potential to provide vital off-season and weekday business.

Birmingham City Council has been working with WMGC to provide training opportunities to understand the travel trade and organising familiarisation trips for key Commonwealth markets as part of the Business and Tourism Programme.

Following the Commonwealth Games, the Council will continue to work with WMGC to develop Birmingham's travel trade offer by:

- Developing themed itineraries based on Birmingham's key strengths and hero products
- Organising familiarisation trips for tour operators

### Coach Drivers Information Pack

Another challenge for the travel trade in recent years has been the lack of up-to-date information and maps for coach drivers detailing drop-off/ collection points, parking, facilities and incentives. Continuous improvement works for the Metro and major regeneration projects have resulted in the coach maps (last published in 2015) becoming obsolete. This has proved to be a barrier for coach groups visiting attractions and major events such as the Birmingham Frankfurt Christmas Market.

Birmingham City Council will work with transport partners, major tourist attractions and cultural venues to:

- Consult with coach tour operators
- Identify official drop-off/ collection locations
- Develop an information pack and map with parking, drop-off/collection points, coach driver facilities and incentives.
- Promote the information pack to the travel trade, travel trade press and distribute to tourism and cultural partners.

### Action 10: Support JRR Tolkien & Fantasy Literature Scoping Project

Birmingham has become increasingly popular with film and TV production companies from the UK and around the world. There is a burgeoning screen tourism industry with tour companies taking visitors to filming locations and places that inspired Peaky Blinders, Ready Player One, Line of Duty and many more international hits.

One production on the horizon is Amazon Studio's prequel series to The Lord of the Rings. It is scheduled for broadcast in September 2022 and is reported to be the most expensive TV series in history costing 1 billion US dollars. The author, J.R.R. Tolkien's formative years spent in Birmingham present unique tourism opportunities for the city to drive visits to the places that inspired his stories such as Sarehole Mill and Moseley Bog along with locations where he grew up.

The University of Birmingham and Arts Council England have commissioned a project to develop an extended programme of cultural and educational activity around Tolkien and his legacies to coincide with the launch and continuation of the Amazon series over a five-year period. The project will champion inclusive and diverse cultural engagement and creativity with communities in the city and the region, as well as enhance national and international recognition of the city and region.

Birmingham City Council will support the project by providing tourism data and trends, and offer insight to the feasibility study on the development of a JRR Tolkien-inspired attraction, tour experience or festival.

## Additional Actions

### Media Relations

To work with WMGC and the Birmingham City Council Press Office to promote Birmingham to consumer and travel trade media to achieve positive editorial coverage of the destination that helps build the brand and drive visits.

### Content Marketing

Create, curate, share and syndicate content to promote Birmingham to a growing and engaged audience.

### Visitor Services

To work with visitor information providers including the Tourist Information Centre at the Library of Birmingham to ensure that they have superior destination knowledge and collateral to help create an unforgettable travel experience and extend length of stay.

### Accountability

Birmingham City Council will set up a Tourism Advocacy Panel with members drawn from key stakeholders within the local visitor economy. The advocacy panel will help to champion the Visitor

Destination Plan within the industry and ensure that its objectives are met. The panel will also help set the direction of new initiatives as the plan evolves.

## Sources of Funding

The annual revenue budget for Tourism is £25,000 and has been supplemented in 2022-23 by an additional allocation of £50,000 from the Tourism Development Fund. Total resources available to meet the commitments in this report is £75,000.

The £25,000 budget allocation in 2022-23 will support Tourism initiatives and campaigns, memberships of travel trade associations and attendance of travel trade events to promote Birmingham (e.g. UKInbound), organising and hosting familiarisation trips for group travel operators, and for producing tourism collateral (e.g. bespoke visitor maps and itineraries).

It is anticipated that further spend will be identified through the findings of the tourism commissioning briefs such as costs for implementing a City Attractions pass, promoting the accessible tourism hub, hosting sustainable tourism events etcetera. The Council will work with WMGC to create a plan on how BATH support programmes can be carried forward. The Tourism team will have the ability to access resources from the £50,000 development pot, the remit of which is to pump prime and support Tourism initiatives.

The Council does not run a membership scheme such as those managed by DMOs to collect revenues. As a scheme is already in place with the Visit Birmingham arm of WMGC, it would not be feasible for the Council to raise funds in this manner.

It is more likely that funds could be raised from public and private sector partners for joint marketing campaigns such as co-ordinated initiatives to support the local visitor economy.

Further sources of grant funding could arise from VisitEngland/ VisitBritain for specific projects.

## Footnote

It is accepted that this document is expected to be continually evolving and shaped by continued dialogue with our Tourism stakeholders and partners – both in response to their needs and in adapting to the changing context and environment.

## Annex: Visitor Destination Plan Actions Table

Goals	Aims	Partners	Activity	Key Metrics and Milestones
1. Develop cohesive tourism identity for Birmingham	<p>Develop Birmingham's tourism hero themes to raise national and international profile:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food &amp; Drink</li> <li>• Culture &amp; Festivals</li> <li>• Shopping</li> <li>• Heritage</li> <li>• Waterways</li> <li>• Historic Houses &amp; Gardens</li> <li>• Family Friendly</li> <li>• Christmas</li> <li>• Screen, Music &amp; Literary</li> <li>• LGBTQ experiences</li> <li>• Sport</li> <li>• Digbeth</li> <li>• Jewellery Quarter</li> </ul>	<p>Visitor economy partners, WMGC</p> <p>BCC Corporate Communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct product audits for each theme in relation to free and independent travellers (FITs) and travel trade</li> <li>• Identify best quality examples and who has the most potential to improve</li> <li>• Host product development workshops to explore collaboration, product development, combined itineraries and create bookable products</li> <li>• Market test itineraries with the travel trade</li> <li>• Explore how Be Bold Be Birmingham branding can be tailored to suit the needs of the visitor economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote itineraries via visitbirmingham.com, social media, VisitEngland, travel press and trade shows</li> <li>• Elevator pitches for each theme to allow tourism partners and ambassadors to upsell the city to visitors.</li> </ul>
2. Promote connectivity between city centre and outlying attractions and the region	<p>Help visitors to understand public transport connectivity and to encourage trips beyond the city centre</p>	<p>TfWM, WMGC, BIDs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the optimal and easy to follow routes for visitors to explore outside of the city centre.</li> <li>• Repurpose existing map assets (including those updated for the Commonwealth Games) to provide collateral downloadable from VisitBirmingham.com.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Custom itineraries and downloadable maps using VisitBirmingham.com's online planner tool and promote them with blog content specific to locations.</li> </ul>

<p>3. Monitor impact of COVID-19 and promote safety measures</p>	<p>Ensure Birmingham's visitor economy is supported in response to further outbreaks</p>	<p>VisitBritain, WMGC, BIDs</p>	<p>Should England be placed under restrictions again, Birmingham City Council will engage with partners to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage businesses to update their COVID-19 webpages.</li> <li>• Sign up to national We're Good To Go safety scheme and encourage to promote safety measures and the certification to customers.</li> <li>• Work with Visit Birmingham to promote businesses taking safety measures via We're Good to Go blogs and social media posts.</li> </ul>	
<p>4. Feasibility Study for a City Attractions Pass</p>	<p>Identify the feasibility of a city attractions pass to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drive multiple attractions visits</li> <li>• Increase length of stay and visitor spend in the destination</li> <li>• Provide exposure for smaller attractions and experiences with restricted marketing budgets</li> <li>• Demonstrate a cohesive tourism offer in Birmingham</li> <li>• Potentially link with a public transport promotion or expand to include regional attractions.</li> </ul>	<p>External consultant</p>	<p>Consultant will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate attractions pass developers and white label options</li> <li>• Investigate opportunities that integrate with other digital platforms</li> <li>• Investigate how a pass would be managed and promoted</li> <li>• Investigate how revenue is shared and what commission rates would be acceptable to businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of final study, recommendations and presentation</li> </ul>

5. Commission Study of Major Cultural Events & Award Shows to Bid For	Support growth of cultural tourism in Birmingham	External consultant  Visitor and cultural economy partners, WMCA, WMGC	Consultant will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate major national and international cultural events that fit Birmingham’s narrative and strengths</li> <li>• Assist in understanding bidding processes, costs, subvention and timescales</li> <li>• Inform a bidding strategy for a pipeline of events for next 10 years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of final study and presentation</li> </ul>
6. Support for Accessible Tourism	Support visitor economy businesses in becoming more accessible and welcoming to customers with accessibility needs	External consultant  BCC Adult Social Care, WMGC, BIDs, visitor economy partners	Consultant will develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training webinars</li> <li>• Good practice guides</li> <li>• Getting started guides</li> <li>• Advice on accessibility quick wins</li> <li>• Links to further training and support</li> <li>• Advice on marketing accessibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch Accessible Tourism Hub to the sector.</li> <li>• 40 organisations to engage with the training programme on the Accessible Tourism Hub</li> </ul>
7. Support for Sustainable Tourism	Support visitor economy businesses in the journey to becoming more environmentally sustainable	External Consultant  WMGC, BIDs, visitor economy partners	Consultant will develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training webinars</li> <li>• Good practice guides</li> <li>• Getting started guides</li> <li>• Advice on sustainability quick wins</li> <li>• Links to further training and support</li> <li>• Advice on marketing sustainability</li> <li>• Links to sustainability awards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch Sustainable Tourism Hub</li> <li>• 40 organisations to engage with the training programme on the Sustainable Tourism Hub</li> </ul>
8. Audience Data Workshops	Support visitor and cultural attractions in understanding and utilising regional cultural audience data to develop hyperlocal audiences	WMCA, WMGC, visitor economy partners	Design and deliver tailored 1-to-1 data workshops to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help understand WM Cultural Mapping data</li> <li>• Support development of audiences in local diverse communities</li> <li>• Identify marketing channels to target audience segments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with 15 organisations through audience data workshops</li> </ul>

<p>9. Engaging with the Travel Trade &amp; Coach Tour Operators</p>	<p>Improve awareness of Birmingham's travel trade offer.</p> <p>Improve information for coach tour operators</p>	<p>WMGC</p> <p>BCC, transport partners, major tourist attractions, cultural venues, Birmingham Frankfurt Christmas Market, coach tour operators</p>	<p>Work in partnership with WMGC to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop themed itineraries based on Birmingham's key strengths and hero products</li> <li>• Promote destination and itineraries at travel trade events</li> <li>• Organise familiarisation trips for domestic and international tour operators.</li> </ul> <p>BCC will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify official drop-off/ collection locations</li> <li>• Develop an information pack and map with parking, drop-off/collection points, coach driver facilities and incentives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance at travel trade events</li> <li>• Hosting of familiarisation trips</li> <li>• Distribute pack to tour operators, coach federations, travel trade press, cultural venues, business tourism venues, attractions and hotels.</li> </ul>
<p>10. Support JRR Tolkien &amp; Fantasy Literature Scoping Project</p>	<p>Identify and develop tourism opportunities based on Tolkien's connection to Birmingham</p>	<p>University of Birmingham, Arts Council England and Wales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide tourism data and trends</li> <li>• Offer insight to the feasibility study on the development of a JRR Tolkien-inspired attraction, tour experience or festival.</li> </ul>	