



CONFIDENTIAL

Wrexham County Borough Destination Management Action Plan 2018-20



Contents

Executive Summary	i
1 Introduction	1
2 Progress and Change since 2012	2
2.1 Market and Consumer Trends	2
2.2 The Policy Context	2
2.3 The Impact of Tourism in Wrexham County Borough.....	4
2.4 Tourism Developments	4
3 Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities.....	5
3.1 Strengths	5
3.2 Challenges.....	6
3.3 Opportunities	6
4 Guiding principles	8
4.1 A long term process	8
4.2 A market focus	8
4.3 Partnership working.....	9
4.4 Cross border working	10
4.5 Sense of place.....	10
4.6 Cross selling and itinerary development	10
4.7 Prioritising activities.....	11
5 Priorities for Action.....	12
5.1 The World Heritage Site plus	12
5.2 Wrexham town	13
5.3 Sense of place.....	15
5.4 Visitor management and Information	16
6 Implementation	17
7 Action Plan.....	19

TEAM Tourism Consulting

9 Cuthbert Way
Collingwood Manor
Morpeth, Northumberland
NE61 2FQ
Richardsmith@team-tourism.com

www.team-tourism.com

Executive Summary

Introduction

This Destination Action Plan covers the period to 2020. It:

- Provides a strategic focus to the development and management of the visitor product/ experience;
- Identifies clear, co-ordinated and prioritised actions;
- Outlines a partnership delivery framework for both the public and private sectors.

Progress and Change since 2012

In 2012, Wrexham County Borough Council produced its first Destination Management Plan. Much has changed in the area since then.

Tourism spend is estimated at £116m and supports over 1600 jobs in the County Borough. Since 2012, there has been significant investment in Chirk Castle, Erddig Hall, the Trevor Basin, Bangor-on-Dee racecourse, and a new town centre Premier Inn. The bar and restaurant scene has had new operators and investment, and a number of major events have been developed.

The 'This is Wrexham' initiative includes a proactive tourism trade partnership and a wider network of engaged operators, and a range of marketing collateral.

There are also new developments in the pipeline – e.g. Ty Pawb cultural centre.

Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

Wrexham County Borough has a number of **strengths**. These include iconic heritage sites, its location and accessibility, the outdoors and outstanding landscapes, a strong sense of place, and the strong support infrastructure that has developed over the last five years.

Looking to the future, there are **challenges**. Resources remain limited. Key sites (like Chirk Castle, Erddig Hall and the Trevor Basin) are increasingly operating at capacity which limits opportunities to promote them as key draws. Wrexham town centre does not currently have a compelling visitor offer.

There are, however, **opportunities** for the future. In Wrexham, Ty Pawb, events, redevelopment of General Market, and Butchers Market create an opportunity for a visitor quarter. The World Heritage Site Masterplan represents an opportunity for resolving long standing visitor issues in the Trevor Basin and creating an iconic visitor product. The 'This is Wrexham' Tourism Partnership creates opportunities to access funding, and there is an opportunity to further develop the travel trade market.

Guiding Principles

The Destination Action Plan is underpinned by a number of guiding principles:

- Destination development can take decades – this plan is a part of that longer and wider process;
- A focus on two broad markets and market positioning concepts – Rural Explorers and Culture Wrexham;
- Partnership working through the ‘This is Wrexham’ Tourism Partnership;
- Cross border working, particularly with the NE Wales marketing partnership;
- Further developing the ‘sense of place’ in the County Borough;
- Cross selling opportunities and developing visitor focused itineraries to add depth to the visitor experience;
- Prioritising activities.

Priorities for Action

The Destination Plan is designed to address destination product development and management priorities through four project areas.

World Heritage Site plus

The Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal WHS is a key asset for Wrexham CB and north Wales but is not performing to its potential. Priorities for development include improved visitor management and wider site development, cross selling and creating stronger connections with other assets in the area. The development of the Masterplan will be instrumental in this.

Wrexham Town

Wrexham town presents significant opportunities for the development of tourism in the Borough – it can attract a different audience to the rest of the Borough, and the spend opportunities for visitors are potentially significant. The visitor economy needs to develop in parallel with the broader regeneration of the town centre.

Priorities include a more distinctive positioning as the cultural centre for North Wales (building on the opening of Ty Pawb), development and diversification of the retail and evening economy offers, events and animation of the town including the development of a signature event, and further accommodation development. Development of visitor infrastructure (like coach parking and a better located TIC) and further product development (of e.g. the General Market and Butchers Market) are also priorities.

Sense of Place

Sense of place is about building a distinctive and quality visitor experience and celebrating the assets of the area (the heritage, the food, the environment, the culture). Significant progress has been made over the last five years and this should continue. Elements of this include promoting local produce, business networking, familiarisation visits. There is also a need to promote the sector locally through, for example, colleges and a ‘hearts and minds’ campaign targeting not only residents of the county borough but also non-tourism businesses.

Visitor Management and Information

The World Heritage Site has a key role in attracting visitors to the County Borough, and this should be a central of promotional activity. However, there is a need for a separate promotion of Wrexham town, with different messaging and targeting a more local audience.

There are currently two campaigns covering Wrexham CB - i.e. NE Wales and This is Wrexham. There is scope and a need to continue both of these – both ‘brands’ have a relevance. There is a need to cross-sell other opportunities more – e.g. through itineraries or giving visitors suggestions of additional things to see or do.

Other opportunities to be pursued include potentially developing the travel trade market, relocating the TIC, and developing signage schemes.

Implementation

Partnership is a key principle of this plan – in terms of e.g. public-private sector partnership, cross border partnerships. At the centre of these partnerships is the Wrexham CBC tourism function. They have multiple roles:

- Taking the strategic lead on the destination plan implementation and ensuring the co-ordination).
- Supporting the delivery of the This Is Wrexham Tourism Partnership
- Direct delivery of projects
- Developing other partnerships – e.g. North East Wales Marketing, Visit Wales

Other key players will include the This is Wrexham Tourism Partnership, the North East Wales marketing partnership, other departments of Wrexham CBC, Visit Wales and the Canal and River Trust.

1 Introduction

In 2012, Wrexham County Borough Council produced its first Destination Management Plan. This covered the period 2012 to 2017. This plan was based around five key principles: partnership working; cross border working; contributing to the regional agenda; focussing on key attractors/hubs and prioritising activities.

Priority projects were based around six action areas:

- Investment in the Key Hubs
- An Events Strategy for the Town of Wrexham
- Visitor Accommodation Development
- A Sense of Place
- Visitor Management
- Partnerships and Performance.

While much of this plan remains valid, much has changed. Tourism in Wrexham has progressed enormously since 2012, the destination partnership has developed, Visit Wales has produced its Partnership for Growth Plan up to 2020, and regional tourism partnership arrangements have changed.

In 2017, the need to devise a new action plan to shape the direction of the local tourism development for the next three years was identified.

The following Destination Action Plan aims to:

- Provide a strategic focus to the development and management of the visitor product/ experience in Wrexham County Borough;
- Identify clear, co-ordinated and prioritised actions which will:
 - Significantly improve the visitor experience and levels of visitor satisfaction;
 - Drive up tourism business performance;
 - Enable to Destination Partnership Board to identify projects that can be supported via external funding
- Outline a partnership delivery framework for both the public and private sectors.

2 Progress and Change since 2012

2.1 Market and Consumer Trends

Over the next decade, the visitor market place will be influenced by a range of factors – economic, demographic, social and technological. The key ones are:

- **Continued growth in demand** – both domestic tourism and inbound are forecast to grow in the medium term.
- **Domestic visitors are often creatures of habit** – most people booking a UK destination do not consider another destination and the vast majority will have visited that place previously. Visitors will typically be looking at options in their immediate region (up to 2 hours away).
- **Changes in the UK population** with an ageing population, a growth in younger generations, and a smaller time-poor middle generation. All have different travel requirements. Family structures are evolving with the rise of the 'Vertical Family'.
- **Online booking and marketing** - the internet is the primary source of visitor information with a number of well-established travel sites in the market place, Destination sites are only one of these - they tend to be used at the planning stage of the customer journey.
 - The direction of travel in information provision is '**mobile first**'. Rating experiences, **making information simple, and developing customised unique experiences** are also key trends in customer demands.
 - **Social networking will increase in importance** - online networks will be a vital channel for businesses for distribution, awareness creation and recommendations.
- **Tourism is becoming increasingly experiential** - the 'what' is more important than the 'where'. We are also **more 'active'** (i.e. doing many things) creating time pressures and a subsequent desire for control in our lives. This means a desire for greater **simplicity** in some of our choices and, linked to the technology trend, is the move to 'Individualocracy' and the desire for personalised products.
- **Skills and recruitment** – skills, recruitment and staff turnover remain a problem for the hospitality sector. There are multiple reasons for this – image of the sector, pay, working conditions. Brexit is likely to be a threat to the sector.

2.2 The Policy Context

This Destination Plan is set within the context of a number national and local policies.

The **Wales Partnership for Growth Plan** (2013-20) provides the **national** framework for tourism development. It focuses on five key areas:

- Promoting the brand
- Product development
- People development
- Profitable performance
- Place building.

The strategy has a product-led approach that identifies compelling reasons to visit Wales. It outlines five areas of competitive advantage: Natural environment; heritage and culture; activities and adventure; events and festivals, and distinctive destinations.

At a **local** level, the **Wrexham Council Plan** (2017 – 2022) is based around three interlinked themes – economy, people and place. An element of the economy theme is concerned with encouraging people to visit the Borough and measures to help achieve this include:

- Improving the visitor experience within the whole of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct & Canal World Heritage Site including support for the development of tourist facilities and attractions at key locations such as Trevor Basin and Chirk;
- Achieving completion of the conversion of the People's Market into a new arts / market space - Ty Pawb - which will be a new national / retail space in the town-centre. It will create a platform for major events.
- Pursuing funding opportunities for the physical improvements for identified town centre indoor markets.

The Wrexham **Town Centre Masterplan** (adopted 2016) highlights that the historic core of the town centre and the markets are potential opportunities. Building on the 2012 Destination Plan, the town centre is identified an emerging tourism hub. It identifies seven objectives - to:

- Improve the identity of the town centre
- Improve the visitor experience
- Improve town centre accessibility, both into the town and circulation within the town
- Improve the evening economy
- Provide opportunities for town centre living
- Accommodate the needs of a growing population
- Provide opportunities to improve green infrastructure.

Part of the strategy will be to build on Wrexham's sub-regional position as a major shopping destination, diversifying its offer and developing complementary leisure, cultural and arts attractions in an attractive environment. The Masterplan has several themes including a 'place to shop' and 'a place to visit'.

The place to visit theme identifies the need to:

- Develop the town centre as an attractive place to visit and enjoy, with new and enhanced attractions to encourage people to visit more frequently and stay longer when they visit;
- Create opportunities for a diverse evening economy;
- Attract a more rounded mix of complementary shops, leisure/arts/cultural uses and restaurants;
- Develop niche, specialist offers, including higher quality independents.

Ty Pawb is a central part of this.

2.3 The Impact of Tourism in Wrexham County Borough

Tourism in Wrexham County Borough was estimated to be worth approximately £116m of direct and indirect expenditure in 2016.

The following table summarises the impacts of tourism.

Wrexham County Borough – Tourism Impact 2016	
Number of visits	1.85m
- % day visits	78%
- % staying visits	22%
Number of visitor days	2.57
- % day visits	56%
- % staying visits	44%
Total spend (direct and indirect)	£116m
No. of FTE Jobs supported by tourism spend	1,663

Source: STEAM, GTS (2017).

2.4 Tourism Developments

During the last Destination Management Plan, there has been significant progress in the development of the tourism sector in Wrexham County Borough. These include:

- Investment in key hubs - e.g. Chirk Castle (parking), Erddig Hall (new café), and the Trevor Basin (parking and catering) – and at Bangor-on-Dee racecourse;
- An 83-bedroom Premier Inn in Wrexham town centre;
- New operators and investment in bar / restaurants – e.g. the Fat Boar, Lemon Tree and Mulberry Inn, and the Hand at Llanarmon and the Machine House in Rossett achieving Michelin guide listings;
- Major events – e.g. major concerts at the Racecourse Ground, FOCUS Wales, the Wrexham Victorian Christmas market, and Underneath the Arches at Pontcysyllte;
- Development of a proactive tourism trade partnership with 22 members, and a wider network of engaged operators. The ‘This is Wrexham’ membership scheme and visitor card was launched in June 2017. A range of marketing collateral has been developed – the This is Wrexham website (and supporting social media), the North East Wales website, and a series of innovative promotional videos;
- Launch of a new Tourism, Hospitality and Events Degree course at Glyndwr University in 2015.

There are also **new** developments in the pipeline. **Ty Pawb** will be a re-development of the People’s market. Due to open in April 2018, the centre will include two gallery spaces, a performance and cinema space, a flexible performance and events space, three creative industries studios, a learning studio and programme, a retail and applied arts offer; alongside existing and new market stalls, and a

food hall with up to three café/restaurants. The aim is to regenerate an area of the town centre, catalyse arts provision and stimulate the early evening economy.

The Brymbo Heritage Project is seeking to conserve Brymbo's industrial heritage and develop a visitor attraction, learning centre and small business hub. It has secured nearly £2m from the BIG Lottery's Create Your Space programme to deliver a 7-year programme that will re-develop many ex-industrial sites in and around Brymbo.

3 Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

3.1 Strengths

Wrexham County Borough has a number of strengths. These include:

Iconic heritage sites.

Wrexham CB's key heritage sites are its prime asset. The World Heritage Site (including Pontcysyllte Aqueduct) is only one of three such sites in Wales. It has national and international appeal.

Chirk Castle (which also sits in the WHS corridor) and Erddig Hall, are key attractors for the area and, as National Trust properties, have a strong brand.

There is also a rich industrial heritage including Minera Quarry, Bersham Ironworks, Brymbo Heritage Centre, and the Wrexham County Borough Museum.

Location and accessibility

Wrexham has easy access from major population centres (particularly the Liverpool City Region and North West England) with a good road network (including the A483, A5, A539). It is also a gateway to other parts of Wales – especially Snowdonia and is in close proximity to the Welsh Government's key A5 "Routes of Wales" corridor which will feature heavily in the national tourism marketing post 2018. Wrexham is also the largest town in North Wales.

The Outdoors

Wrexham CB has several outstanding landscapes including the Ceiriog Valley / Berwyn Mountains and a large part of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are opportunities for outdoor activities like walking, cycling and water sports.

Sense of place

There is a potentially strong sense of place to Wrexham CB which visitors can experience to differing degrees. This includes:

- A rich industrial heritage (see above);
- The Borderlands with the Wrexham offer overlapping to neighbouring counties and towns of Flintshire, Denbighshire, Shropshire and Cheshire. Wrexham CB is a gateway to Wales and Welsh heritage;
- Food with both quality pubs and restaurants, and a growing number of local food & drink producers who retail locally through marketplaces and independent shops & cafes.

A strong tourism support infrastructure:

The support infrastructure includes:

- Tourist Information with an established TIC in Wrexham town centre, a visitor information point at the Trevor Basin, and a number of information and interpretation boards throughout the County Borough.
- Promotional frameworks – particularly This is Wrexham (website and supporting social media campaign) and NE Wales (web tourism marketing campaign in partnership with Denbighshire and Flintshire).
- Partnerships including the This Is Wrexham Tourism Partnership, good working relationships with neighbouring counties / DMOs and Visit Wales, the WHS partnership, the Chirk & Ceiriog Valley Tourism Group, and the Wrexham Town Centre Steering Group.

3.2 Challenges

There are however a number of challenges:

Wrexham town centre

While Wrexham has strengths and opportunities, from a visitor perspective, the town lacks a strong identity, is dominated by discount retailers and has a number of vacant premises in prominent locations, lacks an evening dining economy, is looking tired and at times unattractive, and is spread out making orientation for visitors difficult.

Capacity at key sites

The last five years have witnessed a growth in visits to the key sites of Chirk Castle, Erddig Hall and the Trevor Basin (Pontcysyllte Aqueduct). Increasingly these sites are operating at capacity which limits opportunities to promote them as key draws. All three sites are looking at opportunities to increase their capacity.

Finance and resources

Resources for future promotion and development remain limited with little prospect of substantial change from the Local Authority.

3.3 Opportunities

Wrexham Town Centre

Ongoing development and changes in Wrexham – e.g. a developing events programme, Ty Pawb, purchase of the Henblas Street site and subsequent potential lets / unit sales – will create opportunities to animate the town, re-position it and strengthen the retail and evening economy offers.

The re-development of the General Market and Butchers market, if re-developed with more of a visitor and food/drink focus, offer a strong opportunity for change in line with the expectations of tourists. If combined with St. Giles, the attractive High Street and Ty Pawb, this could form a visitor cluster / quarter. The availability of parking in the town centre, particularly on Chester Street, also creates an opportunity for dedicated coach parking and, in the longer term, development of the travel trade market. This, however, requires an integrated approach across the Local Authority.

The World Heritage Site Masterplan

The WHS is currently developing a new masterplan. Unlike previous plans this is looking at the wider opportunities of Trevor Basin and the neighbouring ex-chemical works site with a view to resolving a

number of long standing issues – like car parking and visitor arrival points. The Masterplan is also looking at on-site branding and interpretation and potential connectivity to Ty Mawr Country Park.

Resolving issue like car parking creates an opportunity for wider promotion of the site and distribution of visitors around the 11-mile area.

This is Wrexham Tourism Partnership

The Tourism Partnership has recently moved from a network of businesses to a formally constituted Community Interest Company. This, allied to Wrexham CBC's own activities creates opportunities to access funding like Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF), the Tourism Product Innovation Fund (TPIF), and the Tourism Amenity Investment Support (TAIS). The Partnership can generate its own funds via Membership fees and This Is Wrexham Tourism card sales – funding that can also be used more flexibly than some government grants can be.

Accommodation

The last five years have seen development in the accommodation sector but Wrexham County still lacks any destination hotels with quality spa facilities – although has three on its periphery (Lion Quays, Grosvenor Pulford and Carden Park). There are opportunities for further accommodation development – for example, more town serviced accommodation in Wrexham town centre (probably relatively small scale – e.g. boutique guesthouse - or budget/mid-scale), and quality rural accommodation – boutique bed and breakfast, glamping, and self-catering. For tourism to continue to develop, it is important that there is adequate supply and range of accommodation throughout the county.

Travel Trade Market

Wrexham County Borough is potentially well placed to further develop its travel trade market building on strengths like its location and accessibility, status as a gateway to Wales, and its key attractors – particularly the World Heritage Site (which has no admission fee). Further product and market development would be required around parking, itinerary development and relationship building with UK and inbound (e.g. cruise) operators.

Innovation

The Country Borough is looking at potential opportunities from new and innovative technologies to further develop the visitor economy. These include electric charging points and I-beacons (in the Ceiriog Valley). There are also innovative approaches being adopted in other areas – e.g. the Development of Ty Pawb, and events like the drive through cinema.

4 Guiding Principles

4.1 A long term process

Developing a destination, building awareness of it, and establishing its position in the market-place is a long-term process – one that takes decades. This three- year plan should be regarded as part of a longer and wider process. There is a need to continue the activity of the previous Destination Management Plan – most of it remains valid and needed. However, the plan needs to look forward and there are new opportunities that should be explored and exploited to develop Wrexham CB as a visitor destination.

The action plan (section 5 and 7) identifies two types of project – maintenance (i.e. continuing to undertake the basics of destination management) and catalytic (projects that have the potential to further transform the destination).

The aspiration over the next three years should be to progress significantly at least two ‘catalytic’ projects.

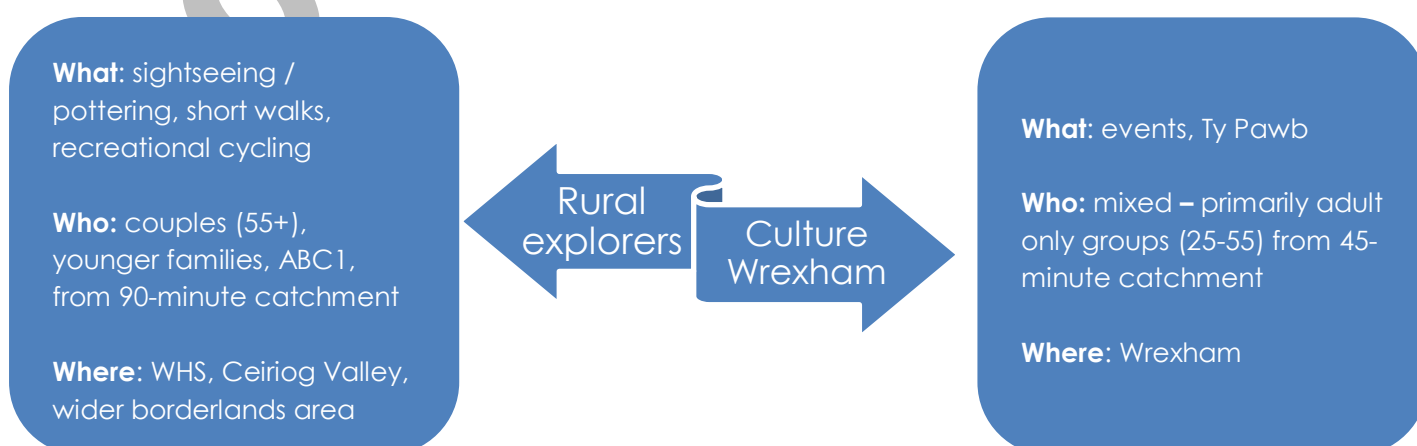
4.2 A market focus

The development of Wrexham CB needs to be realistically focused on the needs and motivations of its potential visitor markets.

Wrexham CB attracts a number of different markets. Some of these are non-discretionary (like business visitors) or semi-discretionary (like visiting friends and relatives and some leisure markets – e.g. for certain events) and difficult to influence.

Leisure markets are more discretionary and will be coming for a range of different reasons – e.g. sightseeing, walking and cycling in the rural areas, and shopping, entertainment and events in Wrexham town.

Moving forward the focus should be on two broad markets and market positions:



These markets will require different offers and different messages but should not be regarded as mutually exclusive.

4.3 Partnership working

The development of the This is Wrexham Tourism Partnership and the wider network has been one of the major successes of the last Destination Management Plan. There is a need and appetite to continue this.

This needs to be a true public / private partnership and their recent change into a Community Interest Company is the first step in this process. Direction and funding needs to be driven by the private sector, with support and facilitation on delivery coming from the public sector.

Partnership should not just be about public / private activity. There are opportunities to strengthen tourism delivery across all directorates of Wrexham CBC particularly for those operation not involved with tourism on a day-to-day basis. Development of a task and project specific working groups is a way to address this.

Case Study: Partnership working – the Chilterns Tourism Network

The Chilterns Tourism Network (CTN) was developed in 2010 to support the visitor economy. It incorporates over 200 businesses, and is an incorporated, not-for-profit business. It has no paid staff and is managed by the board of directors.

With LEADER funding, and financial support from businesses, CTN developed a visitor facing website. This is arranged around six themes; the countryside, historic houses and gardens, food & drink, film locations, market towns and the four seasons.

CTN is responsible for:

- Regular business networking events.
- Tourism information exchange and regular e-newsletters.
- Maintaining and promoting www.VisitChilterns.co.uk.
- Continuing the Chilterns accommodation occupancy surveys.
- Continued promotion of the free online marketing resources for businesses.
- Press, PR and social media programme.

Businesses joining CTN are asked to sign a Members Charter, requiring them to promote the Chilterns through their marketing activities. This supports the priority activity – raising area awareness.

4.4 Cross border working

Visitor research has highlighted that visitors to the area are visiting a much wider destination than just Wrexham CB. This is strongest with Llangollen (and Denbighshire) but visitors are also going to and/or staying further to the west into the rest of Snowdonia, to the south (Shropshire), and east (Chester and Cheshire). These visitors correspond to the 'Rural Explorers' market outlined above (section 4.2).

Cross-border partnerships, particularly the NE Wales marketing partnership, should continue and be strengthened. They provide an opportunity to respond consumer need and also to maximise available resources (see section 6).

4.5 Sense of place

There is strong potential sense of place (see Strengths – section 3.1 above). Themes like industrial heritage and its relationship to the current landscape, food, the (north)Welsh culture should continue to be explicitly featured in the Wrexham CB narrative (content and imagery), market propositions, suggested itineraries (see section 4.6) and training. They also need to be featured by operators – e.g. in the food, and imagery they use.

Developing a unifying brand for Wrexham CB is a difficult proposition given the diversity off its offer, the different audiences, the fact that for many visitors the destination offer is much broader than just Wrexham CB, and a lack of resources. A more practical approach is to work around two market propositions (section 4.2) which incorporate the themes identified above.

4.6 Cross selling and itinerary development

The Wrexham CB area has strong attractors but with increasing capacity related issues at certain times of the year. Other parts of the Borough are much less visited and have capacity for more visitors – e.g. Chirk, the Ceiriog Valley, parts of the WHS away from the Trevor Basin, Wrexham and the Dee Valley.

There is a need to cross sell opportunities in and around the destination more and develop visitor focused itineraries. This has started to happen through one-to-one business relationships (fostered

Case Study: Cross border partnership – the National Forest

The National Forest Company has been operating since 1991. It is not a DMO but works through the mechanism of the National Forest & Beyond Tourism Partnership.

Instead of charging tourism businesses for marketing services, the company has trialled a contribution model, where businesses who see an alignment to the Forest ask their customers for a donation or contribution towards the Forest.

They also work closely with their three surrounding DMOs. The four organisations have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that outlines their responsibilities in different areas of operation. They have also explored joint membership/partner schemes across the area.

Arising from this MoU, Destination Staffordshire and the National Forest are now working together to deliver joint business support services.

through the Tourism Partnership) but needs to feature more centrally in destination promotion (e.g. 'you like x, have you thought of y'). Hubs in the area (like Erddig Hall, Chirk Castle and the Trevor Basin Visitor Centre) have a key role here in providing the hook to attract people, and then disperse them around the areas but the process needs to go beyond this.

4.7 Prioritising activities

Resources are tight. The tourism sector in Wrexham CB has been successful collaborating and working in a smart way for the last five years. This should continue with a focus on deliverable projects that will impact in the short to medium term. For projects and opportunities with a longer-term timeframe, investment should be considered against strategic need and the scale of future potential impact.

The action plan (section 7) identifies priority actions.

Case Study: Prioritisation. - Bridgend County Borough Council. Tourism Services Reprioritisation.

Bridgend as a destination has many similarities with Wrexham. The town itself, the tourism challenges, its partnership with neighbouring local authorities in tourism marketing and its location surrounded by strong traditional honey pot destinations are similar in both destinations.

Up until 2010, the Bridgend Tourism Unit delivered a traditional and consistent approach to public sector tourism services. There was a tourism development function and a tourism marketing function. However, in light of imminent budget cuts, the service was reviewed and a new innovative approach to tourism was adopted that delivered only on what the local authority deemed as a priority.

As the town of Bridgend required a higher profile for potential regeneration investment, and that the appeal for visitors was somewhat limited in terms of visitor attraction, it was decided that the image of the town could be improved by implementing and delivering a new events strategy which was now to become the priority for the tourism unit, who previously had very little experience in the strategic and operational delivery of events. The result was a more efficient and focussed approach to tourism that had the aims of place building, raising the profile of the town and engaging the local population. A series of high profiled and unorthodox events attracted a substantial amount of public and media interest, and Bridgend started to develop a reputation for doing things differently. The events projected the town of Bridgend and its values to a global audience in some cases with some of the event footage achieving viral status in Europe and the US.

5 Priorities for Action

The Destination Plan is designed to address destination product development and management priorities over the next three years through four project areas.

5.1 The World Heritage Site plus

Rationale and strategic need

The Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal WHS is a key asset for Wrexham CB and north Wales. It is a significant draw (with a wide appeal and number of themes – e.g. heritage, walking and cycling, canal boating). However, it is not currently performing to its potential with e.g. constraints at the Trevor Basin (particularly in terms of parking).

The WHS has the potential to not only draw people but also disperse them, and provide a hook to help cross sell the rest of the destination (beyond its own boundaries). It should be centrally positioned within any promotion of the area.

In terms of the Destination Plan, the priority will be around increasing the impact the WHS site can have on the wider destination. This includes increasing appeal, dwell time, and spend through:

- Improved visitor management – particularly car parking and access at Trevor Basin;
- Spreading the benefits – promotion and development of the tow path as a linear recreation route and creating more commercial opportunities in and around the site;
- Cross selling and creating stronger connections with other assets in the area – e.g. Ty Mawr Country Park, Chirk Castle, the Ceiriog Valley.

There are a number of options to explore here – for example: joint WHS/NT events across multiple sites, better physical links (e.g. to TY Mawr), itineraries, circular walking/cycling routes, signing and interpretation panels.

- Broadening the offer – e.g. increasing the appeal for families and a younger demographic through product development – potentially like a play park, treasure trails, youth hostel development.

Case Study: Linear destination development – York /Selby cycle path

The 15-mile old railway route between York and Selby is part of the Sustrans national route.

It features a 10.4 km scale model of the Solar system (planets and the distance between them are all to scale). The route starts with the sun as you progress down the route you move outwards into the solar system. The model provides added interest to the route (particularly for children) and acts as a mechanism to draw the visitor further on.

Potential projects

The **priority** project is the development of the Masterplan and its on-going delivery over the next three years.

However other related heritage projects should be pursued including:

- Brymbo Heritage Project (see section 2.4)

- Developing the Borough's wider heritage offer through enhanced traditional and digital interpretation.

5.2 Wrexham Town

Rationale and strategic need

Wrexham town presents significant opportunities for the development of tourism in the Borough – it can attract a different audience to the rest of the Borough, and the spend opportunities for visitors are potentially significant. However, as section 3.2 identifies Wrexham has significant challenges but also opportunities (section 3.3).

While tourism can play a role in the regeneration of the town, the visitor economy will only develop in parallel with the broader regeneration of the town centre via the masterplan (see section 2.2) and a Local Development Plan that reflects the potential of tourism through support for new investment such as accommodation and visitor attractions. Visitor

research highlighted that the town centre has a different visitor profile to the rest of the Borough. While the town can (and does) attract visitors that are, for example, going to the WHS or Chirk Castle, there is also a need for it to be positioned separately and to attract a separate audience. Stimulating visits from a local and regional catchment is key to helping the town regenerate itself. This in turn will increase its attractiveness to visitors from further afield.

From a visitor perspective (and this includes local visitors), priorities for Wrexham town include:

- Distinctive positioning. Wrexham has either no image or a poor one for visitors. It needs to position itself more strongly and distinctly within the region (i.e. up to an hour's travel time). It cannot compete with Chester in terms of its retail and heritage offer. A more distinctive and realistic positioning would be as a cultural centre for North Wales – building on Ty Pawb, the events the town attracts, and its status as the largest town in north Wales (see section 4.2)
- Development and diversification of the retail and evening economy offers. These will be largely driven by the local population – particularly if more higher quality town centre accommodation is developed for young professionals and families.
- Events and animation of the town. Events not only draw people but help position the town/borough (see above) and animate it – i.e. give a sense of things happening. Wrexham's event programme has developed in the last five years and a priority is to continue this process, particularly with more private sector led events. Allied to this the town would benefit from formalising its event offer into a promotable annual (or seasonal) programme possibly

Case Study: Events driven tourism - Malton Food Town

Malton (in North Yorkshire) was a struggling market town near York. However, it has re-positioned itself as the "food capital of Yorkshire". This initiative has been driven by the private sector (championed by the Raithwaite Estate) supported by the Local Authority.

It has been a decade long process but catalytic to success has been the refurbishment of the Talbot Hotel, and the Malton Cookery School (both owned by the Estate) but a series of events, particularly the annual Food Festival.

There is depth to the product with an annual beer festival (organised by two local breweries), a successful farmers' market, and the Made in Malton branding initiative.

under different thematic umbrellas (food, heritage/culture, party....). Town dressing and banners, and digital entry signs would also help to promote forthcoming events and animate the town. The aspiration, during the course of this action plan, should be to develop one major multi-day annual cultural event for Wrexham that has sufficient appeal to attract from a regional audience (possibly through further development of Focus Wales and the Wrexham Food Festival). The majority of successful events are typically driven by a 'visionary' individual (or group) (e.g. Hay, Bradford Literature, Malton Food Festival) or by a venue (Buxton, Whitby) or both. Ty Pawb offers a potential medium-term opportunity. The role of Wrexham CBC should be a mixture – developer (and funder) of some events (e.g. the drive through cinema), and facilitator / supporter to other events.

- Accommodation development. Development of further serviced accommodation would be desirable (particularly in the three to four star range)– ideally this should be in the town centre to maximise secondary destination spend.
- Further product development. Ty Pawb will help to increase the appeal of Wrexham but further development of further product will be required. Ideally this should be clustered around places with existing visitor appeal and there is potential to create a visitor focused quarter within the St Giles / Ty Pawb area. Within this, the General Market and Butchers Market offer opportunities for a stronger visitor product – similar to the successes of Altrincham food market, Mackie Mayor in Manchester and Bury Market (see right) where the visitor experience and local produce offer is brought to the fore (see section 3.3).
- Visitor infrastructure. Having the right infrastructure in the right place is also important. Elements of this should include coach parking (possibly on Chester Street), a better located TIC (see section 5.4 below), and a visitor management and signing scheme.

Case Study: Bury Market

Bury market is an award-winning market. It provides the central focus for visitor activity in Bury.

The market is proactively marketed to the travel trade on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. These are Open Market days with over 300 stalls and a range of eating options. It attracts visitors from the Midlands, Wales and North of England.

It cross promotes other attractions in the area.

Potential projects

Tourism specific projects that should be progressed over the next three years include:

- Strong positioning and promotion of the town centre's destination offer through the This Is Wrexham promotion (see section 5.4);
- Opening of Ty Pawb and ensuring its integration within the visitor economy – this will require strong working between the operations manager and the destination manager to ensure that the experience is visitor focused and that Ty Pawb offers a competitive offer;
- Further development of the events programme;
- Investigating the feasibility of coach parking and development of General Market and Butchers Markets as more visitor focused resources (see above);
- Facilitating accommodation development – both in the town but also in the broader County Borough area through supporting and advising potential developers;
- Investigating the options for a broader visitor management scheme including banners, digital, entry signs, and a 'legible' Wrexham type scheme.

5.3 Sense of place

Rationale and strategic need

Sense of place is about building a distinctive and quality visitor experience. Significant progress has been made in this respect over the last five years through, for example, championing local food and producers.

Developing a strong sense of place is about celebrating the assets of the area (the heritage, the food, the environment, the culture), and about ensuring that the players in the destination are all involved in that celebration in a consistent way. This includes not only the tourism sector (which is largely engaged in Wrexham CB) but also the local community.

Case Study: Hearts and Minds

Engaging local populations in a destination helps to create pride and buzz in that area and engagement with a town centre or visitor product. However, this tends to be focused around high profile events – e.g. Glasgow and Hull (City of Culture), Yorkshire (Tour de France), London (Olympics).

Other destinations have successfully worked with businesses in their area to become brand ambassadors – i.e. adopting the destination brand and carrying it on / in their communication assets (e.g. websites, lorries, print) thus reinforcing the destination brand. Examples include the North East and Yorkshire.

Wrexham CB is not a traditional tourism destination and, particularly for the town, much of its visitor market is relatively local. Engaging with the local population and engendering a sense of pride in the area will help to raise the profile and importance of the tourism sector as an industry and help to stimulate local markets.

There is therefore a need to continue with similar activities to the last five years – promoting local produce, business networking, familiarisation visits – but also a need to promote the sector locally through, for example, colleges and a ‘hearts and minds’ campaign. The latter would be a long-term project targeting not only residents of the county borough but also non-tourism businesses. The benefits and aspirations would be wider than the tourism sector and link to agendas like inward investment.

Potential projects

Over the next three years projects that should be potentially progressed include:

- Promotion of local food and local food producers (possibly on a NE Wales basis);
- Promotion of the tourism sector as an industry within school and colleges;
- Continued networking and familiarisation visits;
- Development of an on-going This is Wrexham ‘hearts and minds campaign. This should include the development of appropriate brand collateral, a local PR and social media campaign, and engagement with local businesses (possibly through a Wrexham Ambassadors Programme);
- Development of a photo and content library to provide tourism businesses with standard resources for use in their own marketing.

5.4 Visitor Management and Information

Rationale and strategic need

There is an opportunity within the Destination Plan to not only attract visitors but also broaden the visitor's understanding and appreciation of the area, encourage visitors to explore wider, stay longer and spend more, and tempt them to return.

As section 5.1 highlights, the World Heritage Site has a key role in attracting visitors to the County Borough, and this should be a central of promotional activity. However, there is a need for a separate promotion of Wrexham town, with different messaging and targeting a more local audience. There are currently two campaigns covering Wrexham CB - i.e. NE Wales and This is Wrexham. There is scope and a need to continue both of these – both 'brands' have a relevance. NE Wales should continue to focus on the wider area and target visitors less familiar with it. Within this campaign there is a need to focus on the key assets across the whole area and breakdown the divisions between the respective Local Authority areas.

This is Wrexham should focus on building the Wrexham town brand, targeting a more local audience that is more familiar with the area – content should be more dynamic focusing on ideas of what there is to do in the Borough in the week or month ahead (e.g. a particular event, a gig, a walk that is particularly nice for that season etc.). The This is Wrexham card should also provide a part of the promotional mix – providing a mechanism for developing a customer database and special promotions.

In both promotions there is a need to cross-sell other opportunities more – e.g. the development of itineraries and giving visitors one or two suggestions of additional things to see or do (possibly on a sponsored basis).

As section 3.3 identifies, the travel trade (including cruise ships) presents a potential market opportunity for Wrexham CB and the potential for growing should be further explored. This could include the development of specific itineraries for the area - possibly via the This Is Wrexham Tourism Partnership. It is important that work continues with Visit Wales to promote the County as a viable cruise ship (coach) destination from those liners docking at Holyhead and Liverpool.

Visitor management is about more than promotional activity. The Wrexham TIC would benefit from a better position and more space. There is a rationale to re-locating it to a more visitor orientated area – probably Ty Pawb – and expanding it to increase revenue opportunities with a view to making it more self-sufficient.

Signposting is also a key part of visitor management and there is a need to review current white on brown signposting and information points to ensure they are both relevant and in good condition. Entry signs for the county borough should focus more on the unique asset of the World Heritage Site.

Potential projects

Projects for the next three should include:

- Investigating and pursuing the re-location and expansion of Wrexham TIC;
- Continuing the This Is Wrexham website and social media campaign, and further developing the This is Wrexham card;
- Continuing and redeveloping the NE Wales promotion;

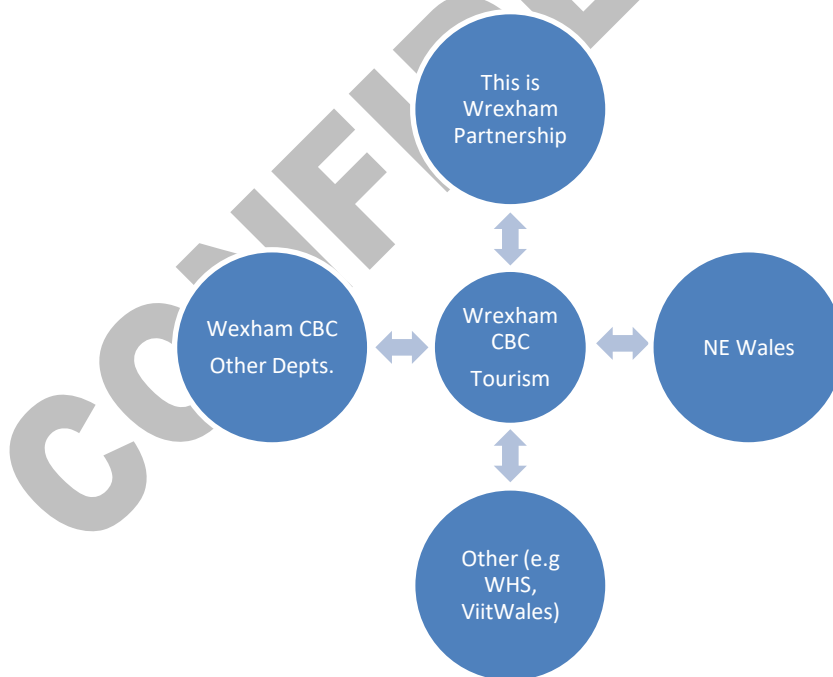
- Exploring the potential of further travel trade promotion;
- Reviewing white-on-brown signing and information points.

6 Implementation

Partnership is a key principle of this plan – in terms of e.g. public-private sector partnership, cross border partnerships.

At the centre of these partnerships is the Wrexham CBC tourism function. They have multiple roles including:

- Taking the strategic lead on the destination plan implementation and ensuring the co-ordination, from a tourism perspective, of a range of different partnerships and agendas (see below).
- Facilitating delivery of the This Is Wrexham Partnership – through, e.g. networking, website management, social media etc.
- Direct delivery of projects – e.g. travel trade marketing (with the This is Wrexham Partnership).
- Developing other partnerships – e.g. NE Wales, Visit Wales



T

he **This is Wrexham Tourism Partnership** has a key role in the Destination Action Plan. Its role is about:

- Advocacy, and providing leadership and a united voice for the tourism sector;
- Attracting and drawing down funding
- Networking
- Delivery of certain key activities (facilitated by Wrexham CBC) – like the This is Wrexham website and card, social media, PR, and itinerary/ experience development
- Development of marketing collateral e.g. standard copy, image library for industry use.

This partnership needs to be continued to be a proactive public private partnership and continued support from Wrexham CBC will be essential to its continued success.

Cross-border partnerships, particularly the **NE Wales marketing partnership**, should continue and be strengthened. This provides a vehicle to promote the wider area, attract funding and achieve economies of scale. The development of a more formal Memorandum of Understanding (see the National Forest case study) between the three Local Authorities would provide a framework to identify respective responsibilities and activities (for example, who manages PR, social media, website etc).

Wrexham CBC undertakes activities across a range of areas that also impact on tourism – e.g. town centre management, rights of way, heritage, culture, highways. Levels of integration with the tourism agenda vary across different directorates. Implementation of this Destination Plan depends on successful internal co-ordination in Wrexham CBC – a process that will be achieved through on-going officer work but also possibly a more formal tourism working group, or project specific working groups.

Continued development of other partnerships – e.g. Visit Wales and the Canal and Rivers Trust – by Wrexham CBC will also be important.

7 Action Plan

Introduction

Projects have categorised in two ways:

- Catalytic and maintenance products – catalytic projects are projects that have the potential to further transform or develop the destination. Maintenance projects will continue to develop the destination in terms of continuing to undertake the basics of destination management, marketing and product development that adds to the overall depth of the offer (but without the transformative impact of catalytic projects).
- 'Must do's' and 'nice to have's' – 'must do's' are simply that – essential projects that need to be delivered (or progressed) over the next three years. 'Nice to have's' are desirable projects that should be taken forward if resources permit. These have been divided into high priority and medium priority.

The following table summarises projects against these two categories.

	Catalytic Projects	Maintenance
Must do's	WHS Masterplan Ty Pawb	Wrexham Positioning Networking This is Wrexham NE Wales Hearts and Minds
Nice to have's – high	Signature cultural event	Events programme Group visits – Wrexham infrastructure Brand Collateral Travel trade
Nice to have's - medium	Accommodation development and welcome	Brymbo Heritage Wrexham CB Heritage Wrexham Visitor management Food – promotion of local food Skills / Sector Development White on brown & gateway signage

The following table summarises an outline action plan which is primarily for the This is Wrexham Tourism Partnership and Wrexham Country Borough Council. It covers the period to 2020 but is expected to evolve during this period.

Glossary:

WCBC – Wrexham Country Borough Council

CRT – Canals and Rivers Trust

TiW – This is Wrexham Tourism Partnership

Project	Description	Project type/ priority	Timescale			Opportunity for joint funding?	Project lead
			2018	2019	2020		
World Heritage Site Plus							
WHS Masterplan	Complete the production of Masterplan and adopt it	Catalytic Must do	✓				WCBC, CRT
	Implementation	Catalytic Must do	✓	✓	✓		WCBC, CRT
Brymbo Heritage	On-going tourism & marketing support for implementation of the seven-year BIG Lottery's Create Your Space programme	Maintenance Nice to have – medium	✓	✓	✓		Brymbo Heritage Project
Wrexham CB heritage	Investigate the feasibility of a borough wide heritage interpretation programme as part of the Heritage Strategy. This could include I-beacons / digital interpretation, or more human based interpretation and storytelling (probably through guided tours).	Maintenance Nice to have – medium		✓		Yes – Cadwyn Clwyd and Lottery	WCBC Heritage Services
Wrexham Town							
Ty Pawb	Opening of Ty Pawb and ensuring its integration within the visitor economy	Catalytic Must do	✓				WCBC

Project	Description	Project type/ priority	Timescale			Opportunity for joint funding?	Project lead
			2018	2019	2020		
Signature Event	Development of a signature cultural event – ideally annual, multiday with a regional pulling power.	Catalytic Nice to have - high		✓	✓	MEU (Visit Wales) and private investment	Ty Pawb / Private Sector / WCBC
Positioning	Stronger positioning and promotion of the town centre – particularly through This is Wrexham website, social media and PR (targeting a catchment of approximately an hour's travel time).	Maintenance Must do	✓	✓	✓	TIW funds, Together in Wrexham	WCBC / TP
Events programme	Further development of the events programme.	Maintenance Nice to have - high	✓	✓	✓	MEU (Visit Wales) and private investment	Private sector WCBC /
Markets	Investigate the development of General Market and Butchers Markets as more visitor focused resources	Maintenance Nice to have - high	✓				WCBC
Group visits - infrastructure	Start investigating the feasibility of a specific coach parking location in town and marketing of town as a group travel destination	Maintenance Nice to have - high	✓	✓			WCBC
Visitor management	Investigate the options for a broader visitor management scheme including visual visitor information and promotion of events in a smart, sustainable way in the town and on the approaches.	Maintenance Nice to have - medium		✓			WCBC
Sense of Place							
Accommodation development and welcome	Encourage accommodation development – both in the town but also in the broader area. Diverse accommodation needs for broad audience, including alternative accommodation such as glamping. Also, invest in developing the front of	Catalytic Nice to have - medium	✓	✓	✓		WCBC

Project	Description	Project type/ priority	Timescale			Opportunity for joint funding?	Project lead
			2018	2019	2020		
	house and in-room visitor welcome at existing providers.						
Networking	Continued networking and familiarisation visits to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop business awareness / opportunities Improve inter relationships in COUNTY To support collective improvement in tourism industry 	Maintenance Must do	✓	✓	✓	RDP & TIW Memberships	WCBC / TP
Hearts and minds	Development of an on-going This is Wrexham 'hearts and minds' campaign. This should include the development of appropriate brand collateral, a local PR and social media campaign, and engagement with local businesses to cross promote the brand.	Maintenance Must do	✓	✓	✓		WCBC / TP
Brand collateral	Development of a photo and content library to provide tourism businesses with standard resources for use in their own marketing Brand collective / print & digital to raise awareness of TIW brand	Maintenance Nice to have - high	✓	✓	✓	RDP	WCBC / TP
Food	Promotion of local food and local food producers within tourism businesses	Maintenance Nice to have - medium	✓	✓	✓	RDP	WCBC / TP
Skills / Sector Development	Promotion of the opportunities tourism sector within school and colleges / work with businesses to provide quality opportunities. Link into good practice with other North Wales Authorities.	Maintenance Nice to have - medium	✓	✓	✓	RDP	WCBC / TP

Project	Description	Project type/ priority	Timescale			Opportunity for joint funding?	Project lead
			2018	2019	2020		
Visitor Management and Information							
This is Wrexham	Continue the This Is Wrexham website and social media campaign, (with a focus on cross-selling opportunities) and further developing the This is Wrexham card.	Maintenance Must do	✓	✓	✓		TP
NE Wales	Continue and redevelop the NE Wales tourism partnership with Denbighshire and Flintshire, with aim of promoting offer to wider UK audience	Maintenance Must do	✓	✓	✓	RTEF (Visit Wales 2018)	WCBC plus Denbighshire and Flintshire
Travel trade	Explore the potential of further travel trade and cruise promotion and develop targeted itineraries	Maintenance Nice to have - high	✓	✓	✓	RTEF (Visit Wales 2018)	WCBC / TP
Wrexham TIC	Investigate and pursue the expansion and improved offer and opportunities for the Wrexham TIC	Maintenance Nice to have - high	✓	✓		Welsh Government	WCBC
White on brown & gateway signage	Review white-on-brown signing policy and application process to make it more transparent for the tourism industry 'Wrexham County Borough' Gateway signage on key routes into County (review & replace)	Maintenance Nice to have - medium	✓	✓			WCBC