

LIVERPOOL HOSPITALITY & TOURISM ACTION PLAN 2021



Introduction

Coronavirus is reshaping Liverpool City Region's visitor economy. The global scale of the crisis makes it unlike any previous shock to the sector.

The speed of our recovery will depend on a number of interlinked economic and health factors – mass testing, the availability and roll out of the vaccine, travel restrictions, the survival of the businesses eco system, consumer confidence and developments in the wider economy.

Getting the city and wider region's visitor economy ecosystem back to pre-COVID levels will require a co-ordinated and integrated approach, across both the public and private sector. The city centre is the heartbeat of the visitor economy offer but it has been the most affected and will be the slowest to fully recover so this one-year plan needs to reflect that . We need to be ambitious and think big, but we must be rooted in practicality and fact.

The city has reacted with characteristic grit and solidarity and although things are still hard, every day brings us one step closer to a better and brighter future.

What are we going to prioritise? What hard choices are we going to need to make? Where are we going to spend our money? How do we make sure the devastation caused does not linger in our economy and communities while the new found appreciation it has created in some area of our lives is nurtured and allowed to flourish?

Our recovery will be defined by:

1. Being flexible – willing to change our plans when the situation demands
2. Being innovative – embracing unique thinking
3. Being hopeful – we know that will end and we must instill that hope into our businesses
4. Being relentless – our energy to comeback must match that of the virus
5. Being compassionate – we only matter at all in so far as we matter to each other
6. Being collaborative – working effectively in partnership



Image courtesy of Gareth Jones

The Impact of COVID-19 on the LCR and UK Tourism Industry

In 2019, 67 million people experienced the city region's culture, sport and hospitality. The visitor economy contributed £4.9 billion to the local economy last year and employed 57,000 people. Liverpool as the main economic driver for the LCR represents £3.33Bn and employs 33,000.

Within Liverpool, LCC data illustrates the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the city's visitor economy. The sector lost an estimated £1 billion between March and August. The hotel sector has been hit hard with just 425,000 hotel rooms sold from March to August. For the same six-month period in the years from 2015 to 2019, there was an average of more than 1 million rooms sold. Six month average occupancy dropped from 80% in 2019 to just 33% in 2020.

Nationally, COVID-19 has triggered a near-total shutdown in international and domestic tourism. Visitor numbers to the UK and Liverpool City Region are a fraction of their usual level.

The severity of the impact of Coronavirus on the LCR tourism and hospitality sector shows that

- A significant proportion of accommodation and food service activities business have no or low confidence that their businesses would survive the next three months.
- The arts, entertainment and recreation industry has the highest proportion of its workforce on partial or full furlough leave.
- Approximately half of accommodation and food businesses have less than 3 months cash reserves while just 18% have more than 6 months cash reserves

The size and value of the tourism and hospitality sector to our economy and its contribution to UK PLC, combined with the severe impact that Coronavirus is having on the viability of businesses and the difficulty that these businesses are having accessing Government business support funding means that a sector-specific recovery programme is required for the industry.

Within that is an acceptance that Cities and City Regions were already behind the curve when it came to the Governments levelling up promise but the impacts of COVID and BREXIT are likely to have made that task 5 times harder.

Aside from the measures we need to take to protect the Visitor Economy we will need to review carefully other planned major investment initiatives such as the new stadium for EFC as it will be very important that these are successfully delivered.

Throughout the pandemic businesses have been particularly innovative and creative with diversifying their offer particularly within the restaurant sector so it is likely that many of these "at home" services will remain in place post pandemic.

A Vision for the Sector

Liverpool's vision for hospitality and tourism should be ambitious, aggressive and innovative. We aren't planning to recover we are planning to return bigger and better than before.

Collaboration and urgency

We will retain the sense of emergency that has seen us perform so well together through the recent challenges and continue to work in close partnership to develop our plans

A Bigger Slice

We will plan to increase our market share in all segments through a phased strategy – regionally, nationally and then internationally.

A World Leader in Good Business

We will continue to emphasise the quality of our offer but also begin to differentiate Liverpool's brand through embracing all aspects of the Good Business agenda – from embracing environmental responsibility to creating social value and demonstrating that our workforce matters through investing in training, progression and improving pay and conditions.

A Better Place

We will collaborate on a long term city centre Place Making strategy to animate and enhance the quality of the urban environment



Business Support for the Sector

To support and protect the related businesses and employees through the Coronavirus outbreak requires a recovery plan that comprises three key components

Short-Term Business Support

- Signposting and effective communication re existing grants available
- Retain the 5% VAT Rate for 2021 and expand it to help pubs
- Extend Business Rate Relief and Reform Business Rates
- Retain furlough for Businesses impacted by social distancing or travel restrictions
- Bringing the support available to the business – a communications challenge
- Retaining the £20 universal credit
- Lobbying support for extension of VAT relief, furlough and Business Rates relief
- Maintain and explore extension of Cultural Tax relief programmes

Medium – Long term Business Support

- The Centre for Cities report indicates that the levelling up challenge has got 5 times harder for City Regions like ours so significant support will be required
- Local Authorities so badly hit will need re – financing in order to be able to support and rebuild local services
- Flexible licensing and approach
- Increased focus on fiscal devolution
- A well thought through and considered plan to rebuild the sector

Stimulating Demand

In order to do this we will focus on

- Product audit of businesses that have survived and the impacts of restrictions/testing/vaccines on capacity levels – within this we need to acknowledge the importance of our tour guides and other entrepreneurs who have made the city a special place
- Using the principles of the Comeback drivers we will create innovative and new offers
- Be ready to target initially local, regional and domestic markets in the knowledge that near European and International markets will take longer to return – attracting the domestic staycation market will be particularly important to rebuild our hotel sector
- Put in place resources that will sustain a concerted long term approach to marketing the destination
- The Business and Events sector and its supply chain is vitally important to us and we will need to support its return to business recognizing the huge impact that COVID has had upon it
- Using our differentiators and distinctiveness to project our message and in so doing maximise the close proximity between the city centre and our wider rural and coastal offer – importance being about reflecting access to open space
- Work closely with our North West colleagues to promote cross marketing noting that having a similar set of restrictions will help this
- Work closely with colleagues at VisitBritain and VisitEngland to ensure that our content and messaging is included within their campaign activity

Continued...

Stimulating Demand continued...

- Look at new opportunities to work with Cultural Partners on joint marketing and communication initiatives
- Work closely with LJA to support not only the need for a travel road map but also the need to work to rebuild and put back in place access to key European markets like Barcelona and Paris
- Build on initial discussions with destinations such as Belfast to be ready to work with them on cross promotional activity
- Work closely with public sector bodies primarily LCC and the CA/Growth Platform to ensure that we have clear levels of support to promote our offer in place as competition will be intense
- Film Tourism and the Cruise market have been of considerable benefit and whilst the former goes from strength to strength we will need to look more closely at the impacts that COVID has had upon the latter. Opportunities for summer cruises coming into Liverpool provide a great opportunity
- The High street retail offer was already under threat from online retail and that is likely to be increased so a focus to acknowledge and tackle this will be needed
- In a similar vein the cities night time economy has been a major asset in creating the exciting and vibrant city that attracted our University students and visitors so rebuilding it in the context of restrictions will need to be actively addressed
- Universities and their students have in common with all cities had a dreadful year and rebuilding the place that students want to come to will happen through strong collaboration with our University partners
- Whilst it is accepted that International visitors from short and long haul markets will take longer to return we must put in place our plans to rebuild our connections and be ready to welcome their return particularly within a post BREXIT era - within this domestic coach tourism will be very important and we know that we have work to do re 24/7 secure parking portanrt need to be monitored



The Comeback

The Comeback is designed for the visitor economy sector to re-emerge safely, led by science, yet at speed. The mass testing infrastructure has given Liverpool a head start on other UK cities, and Liverpool must move to consolidate that advantage safe in the knowledge that the battle for a domestic audience is going to be fierce over the next 18 – 24 months against the backdrop of severely reduced international tourism.

The Comeback has five interlinked strands each with its own delivery plan.

Liverpool Without Walls

The hugely successful first phase of this project in 2020 will be extended and increased from mid February 2021 as infrastructure projects are instigated which allow the hospitality sector to viably operate.

Programme of Content

A curated programme of content from March 2021, which will see investment into the local arts and culture sector to create high levels of safe but ambitious creative content.

Safe events

The re-emergence of major events is crucial to the Liverpool economy, across music, culture and sport. A number of projects are already underway to start this return, with the creation of a covid safe 'festival arena' across the summer at the centre of this thinking.

New consumer products

We are entering a unique moment in the way that audiences will want to consume content and the experiences they will be looking for. 'Hometown Tourist' is a project which is recreating the concept of a package holiday – cost effective, easy and exciting – for a new era.

Domestic marketing campaign

In 2021, Liverpool will be a place of hope, creativity and excitement. This is the message we will be targeting at the audiences we know are ready and willing to travel.



Comeback Pledge Action Plan

Comeback Pledge Action Plan					
	ACTION	PARTNERS	KEY CRITERIA	PROGRESS	OPEN or CLOSED
1	Powerful marketing message for 2021 to rebuild audiences across all parts of the hospitality, tourism and retail sector	Private sector , LVEN Board , LCC, Cultural Sector, Visit England, Marketing Liverpool	Driving overnight stays - reinforcing the fact that Liverpool and its product is safe and Covid ready - providing confidence that cities are great places to meet	May 17th will be the starting point for the beginning of a campaign working under the banner of "Get Away to it All" - this will raise the profile of the compelling offer of Liverpool and the wider LCR for primarily a domestic audience to have us at the top of their list for a UK city break - this will be aligned to the Visit England national campaign- we will run an initial burst targeted at the period 17th May - 21st June and recalibrate depending on the message after the 21st	OPEN
2	Liverpool Without Walls - the next phase building upon last year.	BID, Chamber of Commerce - Businesses, LCC - Licensing and Highways	Building on the success of last years initiative by giving more opportunities to businesses to grow their outside offer	The initiative was being supported at a CA level as well as within LCC and the former is under review as the funding being considered is not now eligible due to a change in direction within Govt - We are also looking to utilise ERDF High Streets Funding and the Welcome Back Fund and the plan for this needs to be agreed and signed off by the end of May	OPEN
3	Curated Cultural and animated program within public spaces to drive footfall to city centre	Culture Liverpool , Cultural partners	Working within COVID safety guidelines there is an opportunity to help the City centre recover by bringing to life public spaces through innovative and well programmed cultural content that will help drive footfall and enhance the city centre experience	There is an initiative called the "8 Quarters" that aims to pull this altogether	OPEN

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4	Ensure we have a vision, plan and execution to support and rebuild the sector	All parts of the visitor economy eco - system	The plan must focus on short, medium and long term initiatives that will be based around our learnings from the pandemic and the challenges facing our businesses	We have developed a clear plan through LIVEN that is based on a one year set of actions - this is an ongoing, evolving and fluid plan that will be continually updated to reflect the changing circumstances	OPEN
5	Rebuild our Business Tourism offer	ACC , Marketing Liverpool, Event Companies and Venues, Visit Britain	Liverpool has built up a great reputation for holding Major International Conferences and Conventions and it has become a vital part of the offer of the City driving business into all areas of the visitor economy	We recognise that the pandemic has severely impacted the ability of our venues to attract conferences and conventions and that this still remains the case - the recent successful pilot events have really helped Liverpool's profile but we are developing a bespoke business tourism recovery plan	OPEN
6	Support recovery of cultural sector through a joint marketing	All parts of the Cities cultural offering	Must be a plan that is owned by the partners and delivered through a partnership of Culture Liverpool, Marketing Liverpool and the sector itself - it must also be aligned and connected to the wider campaign	We have set up and held 2 workshops with cultural partners to establish the key elements of the plan and also secured additional funding to support it so now its about finalizing that and agreeing timelines and milestones	OPEN
7	Develop a markets plan to revitalise the city centre and to support communities	LCC , BID, Private Sector	Building on the existing program to help boost footfall so content needs to be great	This initiative is still in discussion so will be updated in due course	OPEN
8	Use the forthcoming Rugby League World Cup and the World Gymnastics 2022 as models for how to maximise major events for social and economic benefit	Culture Liverpool , Event Organisers, Sport Liverpool Board Private Sector	Events generally focus on their economic impact - we need to use these two events to create a model that attains both economic and social impact	We are well underway with developing the model that we believe needs to be in place but ensuring that we effectively tackle health inequality, social inclusion and accessibility, sustainability and also make sure the event is successful for the organisers will take areal TEAM Liverpool effort	OPEN

Strategic challenges and Opportunities

The pandemic has laid bare the fact that we have a complicated eco system that can often operate in silo but that if it doesn't work together collectively the individual elements are not strong enough.

- We need to review the way that Culture, Tourism, Events, Music, Hospitality and Sport work together and how through the leadership bodies we find better ways to join up the interests of businesses that are part of these elements of our eco – system
- Review the relationships between the City, City Region, Growth Platform and Combined Authority that can help reduce duplication and help promote a more joined up set of messages and stories to national and international audiences
- We must ensure a coordinated and cohesive way to ensure we continue to bid for major events recognizing that all destinations will be seeking to do exactly the same
- A cultural strategy has been launched and within that we need to address consumer facing issues that hinder our offer such as a centralised box office
- Lobbying within Government to strengthen the positioning of the sector particularly within Treasury but also across the other government departments
- The pandemic has showed that many of our businesses are not digitally prepared so we have to prioritise business support to improve the current situation or else the potential of accessing digital platforms and new audiences will not be maximised
- Our approach to coordinating the food and drink and music product of the city and wider city region needs to be addressed
- Destination Management and Marketing organisations have faced reduced funding over the last decade as result of austerity and this needs to be addressed through the current ongoing DMO review that could provide a core funding solution.
- Discussions pre-COVID about the role of BID's needs to be continued with a particular initial focus on the forthcoming Culture and Tourism BID ballot .



PARTNERS

