

Kirklees Tourism Strategy 2025- 28

Foreword

Welcome to Kirklees!

This Tourism Strategy is a vision for tourism and visitor economy activity in the West Yorkshire district of Kirklees. Nestled in the heart of Northern England, Kirklees boasts a rich tapestry of experiences including heritage, culture and natural beauty. This strategy compliments and enhances work across Kirklees to engage and attract visitors and other stakeholders to the district.

We are committed to promoting our cultural heritage, improving visitor infrastructure and fostering sustainable tourism practices that benefit both residents and visitors alike. We will use a place-based approach to recognise unique stories and work in a collaborative way, engaging local businesses, community groups and stakeholders to ensure that tourism development aligns with the needs and aspirations of our communities.

We are excited to introduce this Tourism Strategy as a significant step forward in enhancing our tourism sector. With a focus on practical and achievable goals, this strategy acknowledges the current financial challenges faced by both the country and Kirklees. By establishing a strong foundation now, we are setting the stage for future growth and ambitious initiatives in our subsequent tourism strategies.

We invite you to explore the potential of Kirklees and join us in our journey to make Kirklees a destination of choice, where every visit is a memorable adventure.

Tourism, Heritage & Culture Strategies

The Kirklees Tourism Strategy forms part of a suite of documents that work together for the district. The Kirklees Heritage Strategy 'We Are Making History' was written to create conditions which enhance, celebrate, care for heritage in Kirklees. The Heritage Strategy recognises the broad role of heritage, including Kirklees' assets, the stories of communities and the museum and gallery collections, as integral to place and identity.

The Heritage Strategy informs us of Kirklees' history and heritage. The Cultural Strategy celebrates the district's creative expression, talent and skills plus its wider culture, which includes our festivals, events, exhibitions, performances and programmes across our diverse venues. The Heritage Strategy may tell us who we are and why, but the Cultural Strategy focuses on how we share our identity, showcasing our innovation and creativity. The Tourism Strategy helps to shape how we invite people to experience our heritage and culture.

Kirklees Council Partnership Strategies

The four key Kirklees Council partnership strategies are developed and delivered with partners across the district. In supporting our shared outcomes and vision for Kirklees, they complement each other and our Council Plan.

The economic and financial pressures facing Kirklees make it even more important that we have a shared understanding with partners of the challenges and opportunities our current context brings. These strategies are partnership-led. They explain our context, what our opportunities and challenges are, what we need to do most to improve and the role each of us has to make this happen.

The Inclusive Economy Strategy (in development) will outline how the council and key partners across the district are working to build a more inclusive and sustainable economy.

The Kirklees Health and Wellbeing Strategy (KHWS) sets out our priorities for improving health and wellbeing and what we will do as partners to achieve those improvements. Through the strategy, partners are prioritising good mental wellbeing, connected care and support, and healthy places.

The 'Environment Strategy; Everyday Life' sets out our borough's commitment and ambitious vision for greater action on environmental issues, whilst also addressing the ecological and climate emergencies.

The Inclusive Communities Framework (ICF) is a partnership commitment to work better with communities on local issues. Through the ICF, partners are committing to take action showing our belief that communities have solutions to problems, promoting a shared sense of belonging in communities and caring about what communities care about.

Like our outcomes, success in one strategy depends on the others. For example, a sustainable environment supports a healthy and well population, which in turn supports a stronger workforce and a more inclusive economy. Likewise, inclusive communities support improvements in wellbeing and the environment in local communities.

This Tourism Strategy will support the delivery of the wider aims of the Council and its plans and will engage with key initiatives that influence its work.

Placing Kirklees

Kirklees has an impressive industrial heritage, contemporary culture and outstanding countryside. Our connections to major cities creates a fantastic foundation for connectivity and further tourism experiences. It is well situated in relation to national parks and combined with the wider Kirklees offer, it is a great place to live and work.

Bordered by the M62 to the north and the M1 to the east, Kirklees is at the centre of the Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield City Regions, with easy access to the north's major cities, airports and ports.

There are direct rail links to Huddersfield and Dewsbury from Leeds in under twenty minutes. London Kings Cross is just over two hours away and Edinburgh just over three, via a fast rail connection from Leeds. Leeds Bradford Airport sits to the north of Kirklees and direct trains connect Huddersfield and Dewsbury to Manchester Airport, giving access to more than 200 inbound tourism markets worldwide.

Where Are We Now?

Our Visitors and Priority Areas

A public consultation in March 2022 revealed key motivators for travel to the district. The following top five reasons for visiting the district inform our work in the first few years of developing our tourism offer:

- Visiting friends, family and relatives
- The History, industrial heritage and cultural events
- Walking holidays with a pub and food theme
- The villages and valley scenery, with specific interest in our canal
- Screen tourism, inspired by filming locations for television and film productions.

This research supported the identification of six areas of strength for Kirklees to prioritise in meeting its tourism aims. The six areas are:

- Music festivals and culture
- Heritage
- Food and drink
- Landscape and wellbeing
- Screen tourism
- Sport

Music Festivals and Culture

Music tourism is significant and includes attending concerts, festivals and visiting historic music sites. Kirklees Year of Music was held in 2023, showcasing the diversity of musical heritage and talent in the region and appealing to all generations. There are music festivals in Kirklees of varying sizes and genres, together with small music venues delivering year-round live performances.

Wider Kirklees culture includes theatre, museum and gallery offers, providing a strong appeal to visitors, and in the future the offer will be even better when the Our Cultural Heart development opens from 2026. Visitors for all cultural activities and events create revenue streams for other parts of the visitor economy, such as hospitality and local businesses.

We will:

- Build on Kirklees Year of Music 2023 by developing opportunities to attract and host music and culture events.
- Work with West Yorkshire partners to develop opportunities in the region, including region-wide cultural events following Bradford 2025 City of Culture.
- Inform and promote regeneration and development schemes, especially Our Cultural Heart.

Heritage

Kirklees has a range of Heritage assets, including Oakwell Hall, Bagshaw Museum, Castle Hill, the National Coal Mining Museum and Standedge Tunnel. There are strong links to the Brontës, the English Civil War and Industrial Heritage. The cultural offering extends with day excursions to experiences such as Haworth's Brontë Country, Halifax's Piece Hall and The Royal Armouries in Leeds.

We will:

- Support the delivery of the Kirklees Heritage Strategy and promote the assets of the district, helping our visitors to discover our heritage through different experiences and culture.

Food and Drink

Many visitors discover a destination through food and drink. Kirklees has a diverse range of restaurants, cafes, markets, pubs and bars - including small food and drink festivals, Holmfirth Vineyard plus several coffee roasteries and micro-breweries. Kirklees can provide food and drink experiences with a year-round appeal.

We will:

- Support Food & Drink festivals and highlight restaurants, bars and cafes across the district.
- Promote our food and drink businesses and events to industry events and awards.
- Raise the profile of quality employment in the hospitality and tourism sector.

Landscape and Wellbeing

Kirklees is well positioned geographically and has outstanding natural assets. It makes up around 10% of the Peak District Park and has other national parks nearby. Walkers, cyclists and homeowners cite its green spaces as a major appeal for visiting and spending more time in the district.

We will:

- Develop routes across our landscape that encourage and help visitors to explore Kirklees.
- Position Kirklees as a destination for active holidays.
- Capitalise on Kirklees' natural scenery to develop walking, cycling, canal and Green Flag park tourism with health and wellbeing benefits.

Screen Tourism

We would like to grow our opportunities for screen tourism. Currently, *Last of the Summer Wine* in Holmfirth provides an exhibition, tour, gift shop and stayover experiences. Oakwell Hall was featured in *Anne Boleyn* and the series *Gentleman Jack*. Towns across the district also play host to film festivals throughout the year. Screen tourism can attract national and international audiences and plays a crucial role in raising awareness of destinations.

We will:

- Use classic and contemporary screen locations in the district to showcase Kirklees and inform, inspire and influence travel decisions.
- Promote local film festivals and develop itineraries for the district, including heritage locations such as Oakwell Hall and multi-day trips that include neighbouring locations and media attractions.
- Look to attract new productions to Kirklees with our West Yorkshire colleagues to build business and screen tourism.

Sport

The region is well regarded in the sporting world, with prominent football and rugby league clubs Huddersfield Town, Huddersfield Giants, Batley Bulldogs and Dewsbury Rams. The region also has high-rated golf clubs. Sporting visitors to Kirklees often repeat their visit and recommend the destination to others.

We will:

- Encourage sport enthusiasts to extend a day visit to overnight stay with suggested itineraries.
- Establish a profile for different sporting options, such as attracting golf enthusiasts from other areas of the UK to stay and play the Kirklees golf courses and enhance the green profile of the district.

Further to the key motivators for travel to the district, the following tourism trends and markets will inform our work:

Tourism Trends

Visitors learn about destinations online as well as through traditional marketing channels and will travel to Kirklees in different social groups, such as travelling solo, with family, with friends or on business. Tourism sentiment surveys conducted by Visit Britain, YouGov and World Travel and Tourism Council show that tourists and residents are motivated by wellness, outdoor activities, gastronomy, heritage or a specific interest such as nature, sports and music.

Consumer trends and overriding trends such as climate change or shifts in economic power inform and influence how people spend their leisure and visit time. Based on travel motivations, the results of our Kirklees public consultation and consumer behaviour, eight trends have been identified to inform our work. These are relevant to shaping visitor demand nationally and locally:

Shorter Breaks, More Often

Visitors are opting for shorter stays that feature experiences. There is a diversity of profiles that may opt for a shorter stay, for example travel groups of different ages, mixing business and leisure, staycations or different cultural motivations

Rural Retreats

Consumers are leading increasingly busy lives. Holidays and short breaks often have a focus on recovery, self-improvement, wellbeing and outdoor activities.

Wellbeing Holidays

Interest in physical and mental health has increased demand for pursuits such as walking and cycling or social activities such as yoga retreats and craft courses.

Fluid Itinerary Travel

Visitors travel with no fixed itinerary, giving them flexibility to act on opportunity. This creates demand for last-minute bookings for hospitality such as restaurants and accommodation and visits to attractions and outdoor sites.

Authenticity

Interest in Kirklees' heritage and localism will lead people to pay greater attention to local culture. Visitors to Kirklees will also seek opportunities to understand the area through its unique past and current offer.

Tech Everywhere

Our every-day use of technology has impacted the Tourism Sector. It is used for research, booking, managing trips and even experiences at visitor attractions and sites.

Screen Tourism

VisitBritain's research shows that film and television are powerful motivators for travel – from classic television to contemporary film, as-seen-on-screen itineraries are important to visitors.

Target Markets

Using the VisitBritain identified market segmentation released in 2023, we have identified profiles to help target our work. Our offer and messaging will need to be relevant to the different markets. The relevant market segments below identified by VisitBritain will shape our approach:

Green Explorers & Culture Buffs

Likely to be older couples and empty-nesters, split by those interested more in the traditional outdoor offering and those slightly younger motivated by cultural activities alongside the outdoors.

With a high interest in the outdoors and local heritage, this group is active and looks for attractions such as parks and gardens, National Trust properties and walking routes. Activities such as garden tours, foraging, vineyard visits and those relating to local produce will appeal. Although there is an interest in luxury, they will also be conscious of wanting to get value for money and added elements.

Experience Seekers

Outgoing, adventurous and experience-driven, predominantly the Millennial market aged 18-35, comprising couples and small groups of friends. Likely to be from towns and cities, they lead active lifestyles and are naturally curious about the world, keeping up with a variety of news sources and travel interest publications. They seek out novelty, exciting and luxury experiences. Social media is a key point of influence and plays a very important role in brand discovery. Experience Seekers expect brands to be eco-friendly and help them improve their knowledge and image. Accommodation choices may include unique self-catering accommodation, Airbnb and mid-range Hotels.

Experiences around wellbeing, sustainability and self-improvement will appeal strongly alongside shared, creative and cultural activities. They also look for locally sourced produce, music and food festivals, street food, microbreweries and shared space venues.

Hyper Local – Sightseers and Explorers

This includes residents and the VFR (visiting friends and relatives) market, likely to make a day trip or take a short break. Rediscovering local hidden gems, discovering places they may not have known existed and supporting local businesses will be important to this market segment. They are likely to look for unique and one-off accommodation options.

Accessible Tourism

Further to the ambition to make opportunities accessible to all, there is a compelling business case for making tourism venues and experiences inclusive. VisitBritain currently indicates that people with health conditions and disabilities and their travelling companions spend around £15.3 billion on trips in England each year. People from this market are more likely to take longer trips and are very loyal to places that meet their requirements.

Multi-generational Family

Families are made up in different and unique ways, we shouldn't simply expect the traditional nuclear family. This segment also ties in with trends around multi-family travelling, which is likely to increase. They look for child-friendly activities that are educational and hands-on. Likely to look for day trips alongside stays in self-catering accommodation, potentially close to nature and nearby to planned activities.

Our Partners and Sector Context

We will work in partnership across the wider region and beyond with key initiatives and industry partners to deliver our aims. We will respond to tourism trends and target markets to bring focus to our work, as described in the passages below.

The West Yorkshire LVEP

Developed and administered by VisitEngland following close consultation with Destination Management Organisations in autumn 2022, the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) programme is one of the key recommendations in the previous Government's response to the independent de Bois Review of Destination Management Organisations in England.

As well as achieving a nationally recognised official status, LVEPs are expected to provide strong leadership and management of their destinations, working collaboratively with the public and private sector. They help to shape and deliver national strategy and activities. Their important role has been promoted across government and national agencies, ensuring the local visitor economy is an active and valued contributor to the wider economy.

Kirklees Council formed part of the successful West Yorkshire LVEP in July 2023. The regional development and delivery work established through the LVEP will play a key role in supporting the delivery of this strategy.

Working with our Industry Partners

We will work with others to achieve our aims and form part of the tourism ecology to share knowledge and expertise, create opportunities and support the delivery of the priorities outlined in this strategic plan. Examples of our partners include visitor attractions; tourism businesses; visitor services; West Yorkshire LVEP; West Yorkshire Combined Authority; West Yorkshire local authorities; community groups; and local business associations.

We will also work with regional and national partners such as North & West Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce; transport Services; other Yorkshire LVEPs and visitor attractions; the National Trust; the

Canal & Rivers Trust (Yorkshire); near neighbours and Distant Cousins ¹; UK Inbound; National Sector Association; travel agencies & tour operators; tourism industry associations; Arts Council England; National Lottery Heritage Fund; Department for Culture, Media & Sport; VisitBritain; and VisitEngland.

How Will We Get There?

A set of aims and actions will deliver a vision for the district. Our aims and actions are born out of our priority areas and opportunities defined above. Our aims and actions will develop over time to support a tourism vision for Kirklees:

Embracing the essence of Kirklees — including its stunning landscapes, rich textile heritage, vibrant music scene and the diversity of its community — we will create and highlight unforgettable experiences for all. By sharing the unique stories of Kirklees’ people and places, delivering exceptional quality and making every visitor feel at home, we will achieve:

An Enhanced Visitor Experience:

Through innovation and collaboration, we will celebrate Kirklees’ cultural richness and pioneering spirit, crafting a destination that stands out and captivates visitors.

Growth in Visitors and Economic Impact:

By offering inclusive and extraordinary experiences, we will highlight the diverse attractions, lively events and warm hospitality that make Kirklees a must-visit destination, driving an increase in tourism and economic vitality.

Sustainable Development:

We are committed to preserving our heritage and ensuring long-term economic and environmental sustainability, creating lasting benefits for future generations while protecting the unique character of Kirklees.

We want to create and promote a vibrant tourism offer with year-round compelling experiences. To achieve this we will:

1. Define our offer and the national positioning of Kirklees through innovative product and visitor experience development.
2. Encourage more visitors to the district and inspire them to stay longer, by developing day visits and overnight stay opportunities.
3. Reduce seasonality and spread the benefit of tourism across the region through strategic promotion.
4. Increase Kirklees community-based tourism and encourage the people of Kirklees to explore their local offer and businesses to realise benefits from tourism.
5. Raise awareness of the significance of tourism by highlighting its economic and cultural value.
6. Ensure the Kirklees offer is considered within the broader Yorkshire experience.

The following aims and actions on the next page build on the previous pages and will guide our work at the outset:

¹ “Near Neighbours refers to out-of-county places such as Manchester, Liverpool and the Peak District, as well as London and Scotland with quick train connections. Distant Cousins refers to in-county areas such as Sheffield, York and Doncaster.”

Aims	Actions
Encourage tourism businesses to use B2B and digital channels to deliver their products and experiences to market.	<p>Identify market readiness initiatives and digital training to help businesses understand the tourism aims.</p> <p>Support work looking to address gaps in digital connectivity to allow easy navigation for visitors and businesses</p>
Develop a wider range of experiences in and around Kirklees to attract a more diverse group of traveller profiles.	<p>Facilitate a Visitor Economy Group involving key sectors and tourism business stakeholders to identify and create new opportunities aligned with the overall Tourism Strategy.</p> <p>Establish advice for businesses on how to develop new visitor experiences.</p> <p>Develop and define itineraries and experiences that include our six priority areas, with the goal to attract visitors all year round</p> <p>Build a greater understanding of Kirklees' accommodation options and how to promote them.</p> <p>Uncover new experiences and attractions, whilst making more of our known opportunities and attractions, such as Oakwell Hall and Our Cultural Heart.</p>
Attract visitors with our story, with a focus on growth segments and year-round tourism.	<p>Develop a Destination Kirklees brand; build the brand and engage local communities to help define and tell the destination story</p> <p>Develop a Destination Kirklees site with a web page for use by tourism stakeholders, with online guidance and branding toolkit.</p> <p>Promote Kirklees' tourism experiences through digital and non-digital platforms.</p> <p>Support the development of a skilled and welcoming labour force for the visitor economy of Kirklees.</p>
Develop Kirklees reputation for sustainability and encourage best practices in environmental process	<p>Work with Kirklees Council environmental leads to develop relevant plans with partners.</p>
Optimise connectivity in Kirklees from both domestic and international destinations.	<p>Work with airline, train and coach companies, directly and through the WY LVEP, to strengthen connections and promote new visitor experiences among operators.</p> <p>Work with transport operators to develop and better promote transport locally and with 'near neighbours and 'distant cousins'.</p>
Work with other destination management initiatives and organisations.	<p>Identify potential partners and campaign promotions offering the greatest potential for visitor growth and spend.</p> <p>Contribute to WY LVEP delivery and related action plans. Strengthen relationships across West Yorkshire and the wider Yorkshire region.</p> <p>Work with national bodies such as VisitBritain and VisitEngland – apply national strategy activity and classifications (e.g. Near Neighbours and Distant Cousins)</p>

Table 1: Aims and Actions

Measuring Success

Performance Indicators will be used to measure the development of tourism activity in Kirklees and indicate areas for growth or additional focus. We will work with the STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) model to align with local authority partners across West Yorkshire, as part of the WY LVEP activity. The STEAM model will provide data in areas such as visitor numbers, visitor expenditure and the economic contribution of tourism, accommodation data and impact on employment.

The visitor economy is complex; demand fluctuates from a wide range of markets and supply is delivered across a range of sectors and activities. Gathering data helps everyone ensure we're delivering on our objectives and all the tourism stakeholders in Kirklees will have a role to play in collecting this information in an accurate and timely manner.

Of course, success will go beyond data. The success of this strategy, and of tourism and visitor economy activity more widely in Kirklees, will require stakeholders to work in partnership with generosity to achieve the ambitions of the district. Our collective effort will enable us to deliver on the vision for Kirklees.

This strategy is based on the research and development undertaken by The Fabl.