

Yorkshire DMO Summary for Media Enquiries

1. The Government's Tourism Recovery Plan and the DCMS De Bois review of destination management organisations (DMOs) in August 2021 set out a possible agenda for future Government investment in regional tourism activity. This includes recommendations on the creation of a hierarchy of regional and sub regional DMOs, with an upper tier that receives multi-year public sector funding, and on the adoption of criteria for a high performing DMO as set out in the De Bois review.
2. Pre-covid patterns of the visitor economy in Yorkshire set a baseline for recovery ambitions, although both previous regional analysis and the recent national reports suggest the potential for exceeding this in future.
3. The DMO landscape in Yorkshire mirrors the findings of the De Bois report on DMOs nationally: hard-working but underfunded, fragmented and confusing to the point of ineffectiveness in strategic terms. There are a plethora of private and public DMO websites, membership organisations, and accommodation portals.
4. Welcome to Yorkshire (WtY) itself also reflects national findings. It evolved from a traditional Tourist Board offering services not available elsewhere, to a highly funded partner of the Regional Development agency, Yorkshire Forward, with a broader economic remit, and then to an organisation whose core offer was becoming outdated in the modern digital age and whose financial stability has been increasingly uncertain. This has been exacerbated by both reputational damage from the legacy of weak managerial leadership and the impact of Covid 19 on all those operating in the tourist environment.
5. There is widespread support for a regional DMO although WtY under its current operating model is not sustainable.
6. The majority of businesses support the concept of regional level marketing but do not want to pay a significant amount and see this as public sector role linked to economic growth and skills and jobs creation. Local Authorities understand the principle of this strategic role but would expect core public sector funding to be underpinned by robust and transparent governance.
7. This review has considered the national report and views of stakeholders (primarily the main funders, Local Authorities), and recommends that any future approach should:
 - Have a clear purpose, agreed and supported by all key stakeholders, widely communicated and used to set equally clear expectations, encompassing elements of *'live, work and play'* rather than tourism alone and should be the product of consultation with all stakeholders.
 - Take a high level strategic role, built from a rolling 5 year strategic vision setting out the Yorkshire brand and how this will be developed and maintained and a long-term marketing strategy with annual deliverables. This should include the relative balance to be given to elements of Yorkshire's diversity e.g. rural/urban, inland/coast, heritage/modernity.

- Receive multi-year funding certainty which reflects its purpose to deliver for Yorkshire, not for individual members:
 - i. Does not operate a membership model, which is shown to both distort strategic intention and compete with stakeholders.
 - ii. Core strategic funding comes from national and Local Authority
 - iii. Additional funding from the business sector to be in the form of sponsorship of specific events and campaigns
 - iv. Businesses within the tourism sector have a free self-service offer within the overall marketing offer.
 - Has sound and open governance, with grant conditions to ensure features such as voluntary participation in the Freedom of Information regime and an annual governance review.
 - Has the internal capacity and capability to:
 - i. deliver effectively and equally across two main functions: marketing and stakeholder relationship management
 - ii. weave collaboration across the tourism sector, distilling often competing and conflicting interests into an effective regional offer.
 - iii. both collaborate with other regional DMOs in UK wide endeavours and compete with them, ensuring a competitive advantage for Yorkshire.
 - iv. Agreed qualitative and quantitative performance metrics supporting the above
8. Yorkshire Leaders were invited to consider three options for achieving an effective regional DMO in the context of the above and of the current circumstances of WtY.
- Re-invest in and relaunch Welcome to Yorkshire with a revised operating and funding model
 - Cease Local Authority funding of Welcome to Yorkshire and consult with businesses and other stakeholders on a new regional DMO with different operating model and funding and possible different organisational structure
 - Cease funding WtY and create an inhouse Local Authority service for strategic marketing of the region.
9. The conclusion of the report was that the option of creating a new organisation offers the best opportunity to design a regional DMO that is strategic, responsive to the needs of stakeholders and able to operate effectively with national agencies.
10. On the basis of the findings contained within the report, the Leaders Board meeting on 28 February agreed the following recommendations:
- a. Yorkshire Councils formally agreed the need for strategic marketing of Yorkshire as a whole.
 - b. Yorkshire Councils agreed that Welcome to Yorkshire is not the optimum delivery mechanism for this and agreed to cease funding Welcome to Yorkshire.

- c. Yorkshire Councils agreed to lead a period of consultation with businesses within the tourism sector and other stakeholders to ensure a new delivery organisation is designed to meet all possible interests as well as building in the key features noted in this report.
- d. Yorkshire Councils will open such consultation with an agreement that the funding model should not be membership based but should be a collectively managed grant from Local Authorities as core funding, with business sponsorship for specific campaigns/events, and that Local Authorities should have a collective, rather than individual, relationship with the new organisation.
- e. This decision will be communicated to Welcome to Yorkshire.
- f. Negotiations commence with Welcome to Yorkshire with a view to acquiring, at appropriate value, assets including the brand name.
- g. A Local Authority project group will immediately be established to produce a plan for:
 - ii. Stakeholder engagement.
 - iii. Subsequent agreement of functions to be included in new DMO and the organisational form it should take.
 - iv. Finalising the costs for a new DMO and the total Local Authority grant needed.
 - v. Agreement of apportionment of grant between Local Authorities.
 - vi. Timetable for establishing new organisation.
- h. The project group to produce an initial report back to Yorkshire Leaders in May 2022 (date to be confirmed).