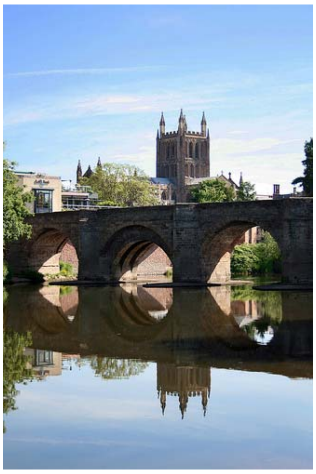
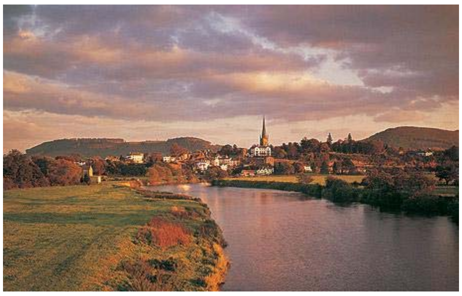
A Tourism Strategy for Herefordshire 2010 - 2015

Final Report

for

Herefordshire





3RD SEPTEMBER 2010

Stevens & Associates

view marketing let's go

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Executive Summary

There are very significant opportunities to grow the visitor economy of Herefordshire over the next five years and, as a result, help make the County an even better place to live, work and visit. Achieving the Vision and goals set out in this Strategy will not be without its challenges, especially with prevailing economic conditions.

However, with the full support of the tourism industry, the Council, the County's leading brands and the community, this is a Strategy that can produce results and a great return on investment.

The Benefits

If the outcomes of this Strategy were simply to deliver a level of spending from current visitor numbers comparable with some of our competitors then there would be an additional £105 million injected into the local economy supporting an additional 1,500 – 2,000 jobs.

But this Strategy has the potential to deliver more in economic terms and much more in terms of a wider set of benefits to business and the community.

The Model

The Business Model for this Strategy is based upon international best practice and from successful rural destinations around the world. At the heart of this model is the need for the bold, ambitious vision with clear branding and positioning of Herefordshire supported by appropriately creative and innovative marketing and product development.

The Vision

> … to firmly establish Herefordshire as a **must visit** rural destination for leisure and business tourism in England for both high value international and domestic tourists based upon creating a unique range of year round Herefordshire creatively presented visitor experiences. These will feature the area's 1,300 years of history, its 'terroir', its artisan produce (food, drinks, crafts and art) and rural activities set in characterful locations that will allow visitors to enjoy traditional wholesome and uncomplicated English rural life at its very best.

The Ambition

> … to use tourism as a means of helping to make Herefordshire a better place to live, work and visit by growing the value of tourism over the next ten years at a rate per annum that is higher than the national average and in so doing generate more jobs in tourism-related work and grow the number of businesses involved in tourism-related activities across the County.

How This Will be Achieved

… through bold, aspirational branding, positioning and marketing that captures the 'essence' of Herefordshire.

… implementing a focused, unambiguous, strategy that develops market-led products that are distinctly Herefordian.

… capturing the imagination of the communities, the residents, the tourism stakeholders and others who want to help Herefordshire achieve its potential.

… sharing our way of life, our heritage and culture and our countryside with guests who wish to experience the "best of traditional English life with 21st Century style".

… working closely in partnership with the brand winners in food and drink with the ability to market the 'terroir', as well as other leading brands and businesses across the County.

The Proposition

The proposition aims to build on Herefordshire's unique properties and use its values and personality together with interesting product development to creatively present the new proposition, boldly, confidently, and giving Herefordshire stand out and making it more appealing as a year round short breaks destination.

Escape the pressures of modern living, visit Herefordshire –
English Rural Living – with traditions and values just as they used to be

Herefordshire – The Place

Herefordshire is a predominantly rural county of 842 square miles situated in the south-west corner of the West Midlands region bordering Wales with a population of nearly 180,000. The City of Hereford (pop 50,000) with its iconic Cathedral and its major attractions (Mappa Mundi and Magna Carta) is the major location in the County for employment, administration, health, education facilities and shopping. The five market towns of Leominster, Ross-on-Wye, Ledbury, Bromyard and Kington are the other principal centres.

Herefordshire has beautiful unspoilt countryside, distinctive heritage and culture, remote valleys and rivers (including the Rivers Lugg, Teme, Frome, Leadon and Wye which flows east through Hereford City (Wye Valley)), the Malvern Hills to the east of Herefordshire which rise to over 400 metres above sea level and the Black Mountains in the south west. There are two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the Wye Valley and the Malvern Hills) in the County. There is a distinctive 'terroir' about Hereford reflected in the County's motto: "*This fair land is a gift of God*".

Growing the Visitor Economy

Herefordshire's visitors (combining overnight tourist and day visitor spending) produced almost £416 million for the local economy in 2009. That is approximately £2,311 for every resident in the County per annum – a pretty good return for the Council's current investment in supporting tourism of £456 per person: a 900% ROI. Visitor spending also helps support over 8,500 jobs in the County.

But, there is clearly scope to do better: to grow the value of tourism in the economy and to maximise the wider benefits. Analysis of recent tourism trends in Herefordshire reveals a complex picture of winners and losers whilst, overall, the industry has been in decline. It is now time to reverse this trend and get '*fit for the future*'.

Current Situation (2009 figures)

These figures highlight these key messages and issues:

- The domination of the numbers of day visitors (83% all visitor days) but their low spend per head per day (£27.64) and small overall contribution (28.5%) to the visitor economy;

- The relatively small number of tourists staying for at least one night in **commercial tourist accommodation** but the importance of their contribution to the economy total ,,, **such that 11.5% of all visitors to Herefordshire produce 64% of all visitor expenditure**;

- Self-serviced accommodation (especially in cottages and apartments) is important in Herefordshire producing 76% of all overnight stays in commercial accommodation and 46% of **all** tourist spending (and 72% of all income from commercial accommodation);

- The serviced accommodation sector is an underperforming area of tourism in the County responsible for just 18.5% of all visitor expenditure.

Tourism in Herefordshire, however, remains heavily seasonal with less than 25% of the total expenditure by visitors in the six months October – March in 2008. The seasonal concentration, particularly in the July – September period is particularly pronounced in terms of trip taking and visitor numbers but is also reflected in employment statistics.

SWOT Analysis

A comprehensive analysis of the County's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats as a tourism destination is included as Appendix 3. The following table summarises the key aspects of this SWOT analysis.

Summary SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses
➢ Accessible countryside, scenic landscape with characterful towns, villages ➢ Food and drink brands and local producers ➢ Strong self-catering sector (cottages) ➢ Heritage with iconic features and intimate heritage sites, gardens, religious buildings ➢ Creative industries and literary connections ➢ Wide range of large and small festivals and events	➢ Low profile and awareness ➢ Absence of strategy and vision ➢ No integration with leading brands ➢ Weak serviced accommodation sector ➢ Over-reliance on day visitors ➢ Low spending visitors in large numbers
Opportunities	**Threats**
➢ Reposition and re-brand Herefordshire integrated with leading brands ➢ Harness major investments in Hereford and Cathedral to raise awareness ➢ Develop rural experiences and unusual venues to attract new audiences in leisure and business markets ➢ Increase length of stay and visitor spend ➢ Encourage more characterful serviced accommodation and a unique range of local 'dining facilities' (such as Cider Houses, Farmhouse Restaurants, Tasting Houses)	➢ Strong competition in UK and Europe ➢ Potential of diseases affecting key crops and local produce ➢ Increasing demand for low cost domestic tourism

Market Trends

There are a number of important trends that are influencing the decision making of all market segments with an interest in a leisure trip to a rural destination in the UK. The trends in growth are summarised as:

- The continued demand of short breaks that can take place any days of the week and any month of the year;

- The importance of characterful accommodation that is designed and operated to meet the particular needs of the market;

- The search for unique, often personalised, experiences that reflect the story, history, heritage, culture of the destination;

- Increasing desire to participate in activities in order to learn a new skill, craft, sport or subject;

- The need to reflect lifestyle with leisure experiences especially in terms of wellness and well-being involving activities for the mind, body and soul;

- The specific interest in outdoor activities notably walking and cycling;

- The importance of quality design, architecture, public spaces, landscape and arts / crafts;

- The ability to and importance of access to local food and drink as a decision-making factor.

The key messages and priorities from this research are clear and important for Herefordshire:

- The need to provide and promote accommodation choice;
- The prime importance of quality local produce;
- The critical role of good customer service.

The international markets will be primarily those resident in the UK or on extended stays in the UK (for study, work, health) and located in the main centres of population (as above) or international markets who have already made a previous visit to the UK and who now wish to "get to know" more about rural England. These markets are likely to be European (especially Netherlands, Scandinavia, France, Germany, Italy and Spain).

The Strategy

The Business Model for Herefordshire's Tourism Strategy 2010 – 2015 is based upon:

- Confident branding;
- Focused product development based on:
    - Heritage and culture;
    - Serviced accommodation;
    - A new approach to events and festivals;
    - Business tourism product (linked to authentic venues and experiences);
    - Enhanced leisure and entertainment experience;
    - Customer Care – "The Herefordian Welcome";
    - Developing specialist retail;
- A well structured Destination Development Organisation with effective communication;
- Brand winners;
- Public sector support.

Potential Returns

The Strategy is primarily geared to growing the value of the visitor economy on a sustained year-on-year basis. As a minimum the benchmark should be to:

(i) grow the spend per person per day using serviced accommodation by achieving an additional length of stay of 0.5 days per person (e.g. +£50 ppp day).

This would immediately produce £13.9m of addition spend per annum;

(ii) grow the spend per day of day visitors to a level at least comparable to that in neighbouring destinations (e.g. +£120 ppp day).

This would immediately produce £79.2m of additional spend per annum.

(iii) grow the number of overnight stays by 5% in a year to produce an additional £14.7m per annum

= This would secure an uplift of £107.8m (or 25.6%) for the local economy

Additional and further benefits will also accrue including:

1. Increased levels of **collaboration and partnership** working with brand winners.

2. An **integrated approach to branding and marketing** Herefordshire resulting in increased levels of consumer awareness.

3. Enhanced **quality** of the visitor experience and the creation of **unique, enriched** visitor experiences.

4. **Added value** for tourism and non-tourism businesses and products.

5. **Increased levels of dispersal** of visitors across the County.

6. Increased opportunities for creating **local jobs, generating local spending by visitors and establishing local tourism enterprises**.

7. **Reduced levels of economic leakage** from the rural economy by creating tighter systems and networks of local businesses.

8. Establishing a **central role for Hereford City and the market towns** in shaping the visitor experience.

9. Stimulating **innovation and creativity** by bringing together different creative skills and talent to develop new ideas for marketing and product development.

Chapter
1

Introduction: A New Era for Tourism in Herefordshire

The Vision

… to firmly establish Herefordshire as a **must visit** rural destination for leisure and business tourism in England for both high value international and domestic tourists based upon creating a unique range of year round Herefordshire creatively presented visitor experiences. These will feature the area's 1,300 years of history, its 'terroir', its artisan produce (food, drinks, crafts and art) and rural activities set in characterful locations that will allow visitors to enjoy traditional wholesome and uncomplicated English rural life at its very best.

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How will this be achieved?

… through bold, aspirational branding, positioning and marketing that captures the 'essence' of Herefordshire.

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… sharing our way of life, our heritage and culture and our countryside with guests who wish to experience the "best of traditional English life with 21st Century style".

… working closely in partnership with the brand winners in food and drink with the ability to market the 'terroir', as well as other leading brands and businesses across the County.

Herefordshire the Place: An Overview

1.01 Herefordshire is a predominantly rural county of 842 square miles situated in the south-west corner of the West Midlands region bordering Wales with a population of nearly 180,000. The City of Hereford (pop 50,000) with its iconic Cathedral and its major attractions (Mappa Mundi and Magna Carta) is the major location in the County for employment, administration, health, education facilities and shopping. The five market towns of Leominster, Ross-on-Wye, Ledbury, Bromyard and Kington are the other principal centres.

1.02 Herefordshire has beautiful unspoilt countryside, distinctive heritage and culture, remote valleys and rivers (including the Rivers Lugg, Teme, Frome, Leadon and Wye which flows east through Hereford City (Wye Valley)), the Malvern Hills to the east of Herefordshire which rise to over 400 metres above sea level and the Black Mountains in the south west. There are two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the Wye Valley and the Malvern Hills) in the County. There is a distinctive 'terroir' about Hereford reflected in the County's motto: "*This fair land is a gift of God*".

1.03 Herefordshire has limited access to the motorway network via the M50, which starts Herefordshire has limited access to the motorway network via the M50, which starts near Ross-on-Wye and joins the M5 north of Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire. The other main road links, which all pass through Hereford City, are the A49 (running from north to south), the A438 (running from east to west) and the A4103 to Worcester. The A44 is the main east / west trunk road into the north of the County linking with the Midlands and, ultimately, connecting to the international ferry ports. Nonetheless it is estimated that over 15 million people live within a 120-minute drive from Hereford. Hereford, Ledbury, Leominster and Colwall (towards Malvern) are the only railway stations in the county, and many of the lines are single tracks. In addition, the Heart of Wales line (Swansea – Shrewsbury) touches the north of the County and is served by Hopton Heath and Bucknell Stations – an important link for walkers and cyclists.

1.04 In 2007, the majority of agricultural land in Herefordshire was either permanent grassland (43%) or cropping (including bare fallow 37%). The largest proportion of agricultural cropping land in Herefordshire is used for wheat (38%) and has been so for the last six years. 95% of the entire land area is green space. The Hereford Bull and Hereford Cattle are globally recognised icons of the County.

1.05 The underlying geology of Herefordshire is predominantly Devonian 'Old Red Sandstone'. In the southern part of the county near Ross, Upper Old Red Sandstone and Carboniferous limestones and shales occur. In the Malverns, a very old, pre-Cambrian area occurs, comprising metamorphic rock with igneous intrusions. Beds of Silurian limestone occur beyond the Malverns, which dip downwards towards the west, re-emerging at the Woolhope Dome. On the Welsh border, Silurian and Ordovician deposits occur.

1.06 Herefordshire's rivers and associated floodplains are of enormous conservation importance and are among the characteristic landscape features of the county. The rivers are home to twaite and allis shad, otter and crayfish and a wide range of birds and invertebrates. The river valleys are a patchwork of habitats, including wet grassland, hay meadows, orchards, improved agricultural grassland, wet woodland, ponds and in a few places remnants of reedbed and grazing marsh.

1.07 Herefordshire supports the greatest length of river designated for its conservation value of any county in England; the River Wye, with part of the Lugg, is a candidate Special Area for Conservation (SAC).

1.08 Upland areas in the Malvern Hills, Black Mountains and north-west Herefordshire support a mosaic of upland grassland and heathland habitats interspersed with wet flushes. Commons occur throughout the county in both upland and lowland situations.

1.09 Herefordshire is the most wooded county in the West Midlands. The majority of this woodland is ancient semi-natural, generally the most biologically rich, supporting characteristic plant and animal communities which are not found elsewhere. These woods are by definition irreplaceable and cannot be re-created once damaged or destroyed. Herefordshire's ancient woods are recognised as some of the most important in England.

1.10 Established traditional orchards may have a long history of continuity on the same site. They will often contain a number of trees of considerable age (e.g. perry pears 100-150 years old). Because of the replanting that has gone on over many years, in-filling gaps and replacing blocks of trees, there will be a great mixture of trees of different varieties and ages throughout the orchard.

1.11 Parklands are the products of historic land and estate management systems. Most important sites support veteran and mature trees, open-grown or high forest trees (often pollards) at various densities, in a matrix of grazed grassland, trees of various ages and woodland floras. These sites are frequently of national historic, cultural and landscape importance. Many Herefordshire parklands are of national importance and are even amongst those in the UK which are outstanding at a European level. Moccas Park is amongst the finest examples of parkland habitat in the country.

The Prime Minister's Challenge to the Tourism Industry

1.12 On 12 August 2010 in a major speech on the future of tourism in the UK[1], Prime Minister, David Cameron, challenged the tourism industry, together with Government at all levels to do better after it was revealed that the UK has fallen from sixth to eleventh place in the World Economic Forum's last global tourism competitiveness index. He said:

> "*Tourism presents a huge economic opportunity driving new growth I the regions and helping to deliver the rebalancing of our national economy … we must not let opportunities slip through out grasp but quite frankly we are not doing enough to make the most of our tourism … by getting local incentives right that will stimulate the private sector … and let's no long put bureaucratic boundaries over our natural geography*"

1.13 This follows a hard-hitting report in August 2009 from the British Chambers of Commerce called, '*Backing UK Tourism: Destination Recovery*' which concluded that "*figures show that the UK is the second worst performing country in the EU27*" and that this was primarily due to "*an inadequate support structure for tourism development in all levels of government and the need for a new approach to destination development*".

1.14 Both the Prime Minister and the British Chambers of Commerce recognised the quality and richness of the UK's tourism assets, especially the natural and cultural heritage, but highlight that we must become more competitive, more destination focused and more market-led if we are to grow the value of tourism to the UK's economy at a time when the UN's World Tourism Organization is predicting year-on-year growth of tourism to 2020.

[1] PM's "Speech on Tourism", the Serpentine Gallery, London. Thursday, 12th August 2010.

Rising to the Challenge

1.15 Tourism is already the world's largest industry with growth predicted by the UNWTO at 3 – 5% per annum around the world. Despite the economic downturn optimism abounds within the industry as traditional tourist markets remain committed to taking holidays and business trips whilst new markets in developing countries are investing heavily in overseas travel.

1.16 The UK domestic tourism market for holidays has strengthened over the past 18 months in the current recession with more people taking at least more of their leisure holidays 'at home' – the concept of '*staycation*' – involving more short breaks and a small uplift in the longer-stay holiday.

1.17 In leisure tourism new interests amongst consumers and changing trends in the marketplace are giving rise to a growth in special interest and niche activity tourism. Consumers have an increasing desire to find '*escape*' from stressful 21st Century living; to find experiences that are good for the '*mind, body and soul*'; and to search out '*the authentic*' (locally produced food and drink; hand made crafts and art; traditional customs; and personal experiences) and to secure a high quality, **value-based** holiday experience.

1.18 The business tourism industry closely reflects many of these trends. In all sectors of the MICE[2] markets there is evidence of a shift in demand rather than a sustained downturn in business. Consequently, destinations that offer something different in terms of their venue, experiences and value proposition are likely to see an increase in demand from these markets.

1.19 Against this backcloth, with the appropriate branding, marketing and development of Herefordshire as a tourist destination there is every reason to positively and confidently plan for growing the County's visitor economy over the next ten years and achieving the vision stated earlier.

1.20 Succeeding in this ambition in an era of an enforced reduction in public sector funding, continuing uncertainty about person finances for many consumers and the growth of new forms of consumer purchasing of holidays requires a new strategic approach for Herefordshire's tourism industry – **the old ways of working will not deliver in the future** … and the warning signs are already apparent.

1.21 This is a Strategy for moving forward at a pace with a focus and with a confidence necessary to be differentiated and successful in a very competitive marketplace. The Strategy is based upon (i) a new style of leadership and organisational structure; (ii) a strong, bold branding of Herefordshire; (iii) an innovative and creative approach to developing and investing in products and experiences for future visitors; and (iv) ensuring the appropriate type of policy and business support, as well as skill training to underpin these physical developments.

[2] Meeting, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions.

Delighting the Visitor: The New Focus

1.22 At the heart of this Strategy is the requirement to harness the County's hospitality and genuine warmth of welcome combined with the creation of planned rural life experiences that will exceed visitor expectations and be a pleasant surprise. The concept of "***satisfying and delighting rural tourists***"[3] is an emerging trend in destination development in leading international rural destinations. The concept is based upon creating a direct link between rural accommodation and a '***delightful experience***'[4].

1.23 Research shows that the most success in creating these experiences has been achieved with:

(i) organised or recommended visits to rural or community / village fetes, shows, events, celebrations, festivals;

(ii) participation in a traditional rural activity (such as collecting fruit, stacking hay, tasting cider);

(iii) trying to make something local with a local person / expert (such as jams, cheese, cider);

(iv) learning an artisan skill or handicraft.

1.24 The evidence suggests that successfully delivered creating experiences that have the potential to '*delight*' the visitor can result in a wide range of benefits for the destination including:

- increased customer loyalty and repeat stays;
- increased length of stay;
- enhanced levels of satisfaction;
- increasing the value of visitors by creatively presenting unique experiences;
- adding value to existing goods;
- generating positive PR and media interest;
- involving local people;
- spreading the economic and other benefits of tourism throughout the community;
- strong differentiation in the marketplace;
- regeneration of craft skill, rural traditions / customs and investment in local assets.

[3] The concept was first discussed by McNeilly and Barr in the Journal of Services Marketing Vol 20 No 3 2006 and has subsequently been researched in Portugal by Loureivo (reported in Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing June 2010) and applied in rural destination strategies in Croatia, Austria, Switzerland and Finland. It is a concept which Warner Leisure are now applying to their leisure breaks products including that provided at Holme Lacy House in Herefordshire.

[4] An experience that goes beyond the expected, beyond surpassing and is entirely authentic and often personalised.

Herefordshire is Ahead of the Game

1.25 In November 2009 Herefordshire Council, with the support of the County's Destination Management Partnership, commissioned a Review into the effectiveness and efficiency of the way tourism was organised in the County in order to meet the challenges of a changing economic environment. The DMP had been established in 2006 as the primary vehicle for developing tourism in Herefordshire working closely with the Council's in-house tourism team.

1.26 The Review concluded that change was needed to meet the challenges facing the industry over the next 5 – 10 years and that there was scope to apply good practice evidenced in successful destinations elsewhere in the UK and Europe.

1.27 In particular the Review recommended the need for:

- a more strategic focus to the work of the DMP;
- a stronger private sector involvement as especially engaging with leading non-tourism and tourism brands in the County;
- a more commercial and business-focused approach with a good ROI;
- a strong brand and positioning for Herefordshire;
- supporting a stronger network of locally focused tourism membership organisations.

1.28 In spring 2010 the findings and recommendations of the Review were accepted unanimously by the Council and the Directors of the DMP and a Transition Group established to implement the recommendations, including a branding exercise and the preparation of a tourism strategy that will deliver an integrated, vibrant, sustainable and market focused tourism destination capable of rising to the Prime Minister's challenge.

1.29 As a result of these changes and the work undertaken over the past three years, firm foundations for a successful future development of tourism have been put in place in the County, including:

- a refreshed and restructured tourism organisation;
- strong industry collaboration with public sector partners and locally across the County and with near neighbours;
- an impressive network of influential 'Ambassadors' from and of Herefordshire;
- a selection of core tourism 'packages' for exploring and accessing the County now exist;
- an interesting programme of events and festivals take place throughout the County;
- a political desire to see tourism play a full role in the economic, social and cultural life of Herefordshire.

Growing the Visitor Economy: The Starting Point 2008

1.30 Herefordshire's visitors (combining overnight tourist and day visitor spending) produced almost £411 million for the local economy in 2008. That is approximately £2,292 for every resident in the County per annum – a pretty good return for the Council's current investment in supporting tourism of £456 per person: a 900% ROI. Visitor spending also helps support over 8,500 jobs in the County.

1.31 Throughout the West Midlands it is estimated[5] that tourism is worth £6.3 billion or 6.2% of the total Gross Value Added (GVA) of the regional economy. This figure is slightly below tourism's contribution to GVA in England. As a result, Advantage West Midlands[6] has recognised the potential to grow the region's visitor economy with the overall vision for the region to be "*a global visitor destination where people, businesses and culture choose to connect*" in its 2008 '*Visitor Economy Strategy* by focusing upon:

(i) food and drink experiences (especially in market towns);

(ii) culture and cultural heritage;

(iii) year-round businesses;

(iv) creating interesting business / corporate venues.

1.32 On the surface, therefore, Herefordshire appears to be a reasonably successful visitor destination located in a region that recognises the importance and benefits of tourism … benefits that extend beyond just the measurable economic indices (see Appendix 1) of spending and jobs.

1.33 But, there is clearly scope to do better: to grow the value of tourism in the economy and to maximise the wider benefits. Analysis of recent tourism trends in Herefordshire reveals a complex picture of winners and losers whilst, overall, the industry has been in decline. It is now time to reverse this trend and get '*fit for the future*'.

1.34 The **implications** for Herefordshire are simple to identify in this dynamic but challenging new environment. There are the need for:

1. A clear, bold **vision** for the destination.
2. An ambitious, aspirational and strong brand and positioning to achieve '*standout*' in the marketplace.
3. A focused, market led and innovative product development strategy.
4. Committed, tenacious and creative leadership.
5. Different ways of doing business based upon forging new partnerships and alliances.
6. Community and political support for tourism.

1.35 It is time for the industry in Herefordshire to become more strategic in its outlook; more collaborative in its approach and more inventive in its delivery if tourism is to achieve its full potential during these more difficult times.

[5] 'The Economic Impact of Tourism across the Regions and Nations of the UK'. Office of National Statistics in *Economic and Labour Market Review* Vol 4 No 5 May 2010.
[6] AWM is the current Regional Development Agency (bus is due to be wound up later in 2010).

Chapter
2

Herefordshire: The Current Situation

Volume and Value of Tourism and Day Visitors[7]

2.01 The visitor expenditure, comprising spending by staying tourists and day visitors, makes a significant contribution to Herefordshire's economy. In 2008 this '*visitor economy*' was worth almost £411 million to the County. Almost two thirds of this total (£262m) came from direct visitor spending with £149 million produced by indirect spending and VAT payments. Almost 8,900 jobs are supported by visitors to Herefordshire (see Table 1 and Appendix 1).

Table 1: Overnight Stays, Herefordshire 2008

	Trips	**Nights**	**Avg Stay Nights**	**Total Spend**	**Avg Spend Per Person / Day**
A. Commercial Accommodation					
▪ Serviced	278,000	549,000	1.98	£72.9m	£132.78
▪ Non Serviced	275,000	1,972,000	7.17	£198.0m	£100.40
Sub Total	553,000	2,521,000	4.57	£270.9m	£116.59
% of all Tourism	11.5%	35.0%	-	66.0%	-
B. Non Commercial Accommodation					
▪ SFR[8]	276,000	656,000	2.37	£30.6m	£46.64
Total	829,000	3,177,000	3.84	£301.5m	£93.27
% of all Tourism	17.0%	44.5%	3.84%	74.0%	-

(Source: STEAM 2008)

2.02 In 2008 the County welcomed 4,79 million visitors, the vast majority of whom were day visitors (83% or 3.96m),whose total spending resulted in £109.4 million (27%) of all expenditure (day visitors spent £27.60 per person, per trip).

[7] Tourism statistics for Herefordshire are measured using a model known as STEAM. This model, or the Cambridge model is used by the majority of local authorities in England and Wales to measure the volume and value of tourism based upon local authority areas. National tourism statistics are derived from the annual UK Tourism Survey and the International Passenger Survey. Day visitor numbers are derived from the UK Day Visits Survey. The Office of National Statistics measures the GVA of tourism from these sources.
[8] Staying with Friends or Relatives

2.03 The number of tourists who stayed for at least one night totalled 829,000. They stayed for a total of 3.1 million nights. However, there are important differences in the economic impacts of tourists staying in different types of accommodation as can be seen in Table 1.

2.04 These figures highlight these key messages and issues:

- The domination of the numbers of day visitors (83% all visitor days) but their low spend per head per day (£27.60) and small overall contribution (26%) to the visitor economy;

- The relatively small number of tourists staying for at least one night in **commercial tourist accommodation** but the importance of their contribution to the economy total ,,, **such that 11.5% of all visitors to Herefordshire produce 66% of all visitor expenditure**;

- Self-serviced accommodation (especially in cottages and apartments) is important in Herefordshire producing 76% of all overnight stays in commercial accommodation and 48% of **all** tourist spending (and 73% of all income from commercial accommodation);

- The serviced accommodation sector is an underperforming area of tourism in the County responsible for just 18% of all visitor expenditure.

2.05 When further analysis is undertaken on how visitors spend their money and the sectors within which jobs are created we can identify a number of additional important features of tourism in Herefordshire (see Table 2). For example:

- There is already a strong relationship between visitors and the local food and drink industry;

- Visitor spending on retailing and recreation (things to do) is relatively weak;

- Direct employment and value in the accommodation sector is relatively low due primarily to the overall weakness of the serviced sector.

Table 2: Visitor Spend and Employment by Sector, 2008

Sector	**Total Spend (direct)**	**%**	**Total Direct Employment**	**%**
Accommodation (all)	£28.6m	11%	1,884	27%
Food and Drink	£118.0m	45%	2,752	40%
Recreation	£20.3m	8%	575	8%
Shopping	£63.7m	24%	1,356	20%
Transport	£30.9m	12%	322	7%
Total Direct	£261.5m	100%	6,889	100%
Indirect	£103.6m		1,597	
VAT	£45.8m			
Total	£410.9		8,485	

(Source: STEAM, 2008 and Stevens View Partnership, 2010)

Seasonality Remains an Issue

2.06 One of the key requirements of a successful tourism and visitor economy is the ability for a destination to attract visitors on a year-round basis. Seasonality constrains business performance, limits employment and restrains investment opportunities. Market trends clearly show demand for year-round products and destinations for both the leisure and business markets.

2.07 Tourism in Herefordshire, however, remains heavily seasonal with less than 25% of the total expenditure by visitors in the six months October – March in 2008. The seasonal concentration, particularly in the July – September period is particularly pronounced in terms of trip taking and visitor numbers but is also reflected in employment statistics.

Recent Trends (2006 – 2008) – Headline Figures

2.08 The STEAM figures for the three years 2006 – 2008 highlight the following trends:

- The overall value of tourism has declined by £10 million from over £421 million to £411 million;
- Expenditure by visitors staying in the serviced accommodation sector directly accounted for the majority of this downturn;
- Expenditure by visitors staying in the non-serviced sector had been the only significant growth market;
- The number of trips involving a stay in services accommodation had declined by 80,000 (-13%) trips and 57,000 visitors (-17%);
- The number of trips involving non-serviced accommodation has grown by 14,000 (+5%) producing an extra 110,000 (+6%) visitor days in Herefordshire;
- The volume of day visitors decreased by 251,000 (6%).

How well is Herefordshire Doing Compared to Others?

2.09 It has been possible to compare (2008 figures) Herefordshire to some near neighbour counties with a similar tourism appeal and asset base (Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset[9]). Unfortunately 2008 figures are not available for Worcestershire, Shropshire, Cheshire or Warwickshire. A complete set of the comparable performance indicators is shown in Appendix 2.

2.10 Further benchmarking is now required examining Herefordshire's wider competitor set (Cumbria, Cornwall, Yorkshire Dales). However, the important headlines from this current benchmarking exercise are that:

- Herefordshire achieves a higher average spend per person per day from staying tourists than its local competitors at £93.27 – twice as much as the spend by staying visitors in Gloucestershire (£46.58) and Wiltshire (£53.09);

[9] It is recognised that Somerset has a coastline and, therefore, statistics for South Somerset are separated from Somerset as a whole to allow relevant benchmarking to take place.

- The day visitor spend per person per day is £27.60 compared to £43.75 in Gloucestershire and £43.52 in Wiltshire;

- The overall total spend per head per day by all types of visitors is £57.56, approximately £10 per person higher than the next highest yields (in South Somerset @ £48.14 and Wiltshire @ £46.50);

- Herefordshire has the highest ratio of day visitor to staying visitors at five day visitors for every one staying visitor, compared to 1 : 1.9 for Gloucestershire; 1 : 22 for Wiltshire; and 1 : 1.1 for South Somerset.

2.11 In a wider context when measured against leading international rural destinations (such as Istria (Croatia), Slovenia, South West Finland and parts of Denmark) it is clear that Herefordshire needs to (i) inject more creativity and innovation into its marketing and product development; (ii) develop stronger linkages with other brand winners and non-traditional tourism investors; and (iii) create a new style of public : private partnership to lead the tourism effort if it is to achieve its ambition and vision.

The Destination SWOT Analysis

2.12 Herefordshire's inherent and innate potential to attract visitors is strong, especially in terms of the appeal to the markets that are in growth and are willing to spend to enjoy the type of experiences Herefordshire can provide.

2.13 A detailed SWOT analysis of this, one of England's most rural and sparsely populated of the 39 historic shire counties, highlights the County's key tourism strengths, weaknesses and opportunities (see Appendix 3). Of particular significance and strength is the way the geology, topography, climate and geography give rise to a landscape of considerable beauty, intimacy and character – countryside that may be regarded as being quintessentially English.

2.14 Yet this is a border county. It is, *ipso facto*, contested land fought over by the Marcher Lords by English and Welsh Princes and by opposing sides in the English Civil War. The landscape bears the marks of this disputed history with a selection of small castles; an admix of Welsh, Norman and Saxon influenced place names; with architecture and the layout of villages and market towns reflecting these different influences. Giving it a unique sense of place and an important strength from a tourism perspective.

2.15 A comprehensive analysis of the County's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats as a tourism destination is included as Appendix 3. Table 3 summarises the key aspects of this SWOT analysis.

Table 3: Summary SWOT

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
➢ Accessible countryside, scenic landscape with characterful towns, villages ➢ Food and drink brands and local producers ➢ Strong self-catering sector (cottages) ➢ Heritage with iconic features and intimate heritage sites, gardens, religious buildings ➢ Creative industries and literary connections ➢ Wide range of large and small festivals and events	➢ Low profile and awareness ➢ Absence of strategy and vision ➢ No integration with leading brands ➢ Weak serviced accommodation sector ➢ Over-reliance on day visitors ➢ Low spending visitors in large numbers
Opportunities	**Threats**
➢ Reposition and re-brand Herefordshire integrated with leading brands ➢ Harness major investments in Hereford and Cathedral to raise awareness ➢ Develop rural experiences and unusual venues to attract new audiences in leisure and business markets ➢ Increase length of stay and visitor spend ➢ Encourage more characterful serviced accommodation and a unique range of local 'dining facilities' (such as Cider Houses, Farmhouse Restaurants, Tasting Houses)	➢ Strong competition in UK and Europe ➢ Potential of diseases affecting key crops and local produce ➢ Increasing demand for low cost domestic tourism

The Product Base

2.16 It is estimated that there are currently some 1,500 – 1,600 businesses offering tourism or tourism-related services and facilities in Herefordshire. Of this total approximately 20 – 25% are members of the existing Visit Herefordshire organisation. Many of these businesses are members of the nine local tourist associations and / or other special interest organisations in the County.

2.17 The majority of tourism businesses are micro or small / medium enterprises mostly owner managed and employing less than five people. There are few nationally recognised tourism brands operating in Herefordshire. The main exceptions are: Warner Leisure (at Holm Lacy House); PGL Adventure Activities (based in Ross-on-Wye); the Land Rover Experience (based at Eastnor Castle); Festival Republic (operating '*The Big Chill*' at Eastnor Castle) and, although not mainstream tourism, it is a major generator of business stays in the County, the Leadership Trust (at Weston-Under-Penyard). The Duchy of Cornwall, English Heritage and the National Trust have important property portfolios in the County.

(i) Accommodation Base

2.18 The County's **accommodation base** (establishments, bedrooms and bedspaces) is relatively small in overall scale and comprising of establishments with less than five letting rooms. The non-serviced sector is well represented, performs well and achieves good rates. Seasonality is an issue for this sector. The service sector is weak. There are relatively few serviced bedrooms; those that exist are dominated by 3-star provision (or below) and exist in establishments with limited guest facilities. This sector is under represented and under performing. Seasonality is less pronounced in this sector but occupancy rates are low.

2.19 The most recent bedstock survey for the West Midlands Region (2006) showed a total **known** bedstock of 90,177 bedspaces in 42,437 rooms. The total for the shire counties (excluding the Birmingham Metropolitan area) was 50,978 bedspaces in 22,048 bedrooms (see Table 4).

2.20 Of this total for the shire counties, Herefordshire has 8,390 bedspaces (16.5% of total in shires) in 2,069 rooms (9% of total in shires). These figures (i) reflect the dominance of self-catering provision with high room capacity and (ii) the small scale of bedroom provision in existing establishments (average size four bedrooms).

Table 4: Bedstock in Shires of West Midlands 2006

County	**Bedspaces**	**%**	**Bedrooms**	**%**	**Avg No Beds / Room**
Herefordshire	8,390	16.5%	2,069	9%	4
Shropshire	7,558	15.0%	3,412	15.5%	2
Staffordshire	12,362	24.0%	5,549	25.0%	2
Warwickshire	14,632	29.0%	7,208	32.5%	2
Worcestershire	8,009	15.5%	3,810	18.0%	2
Total	50,978	100.0%	22,048	100.0%	-

(Source: AWM, 2010)

(ii) Attractions Base

2.21 There are 44 visitor attractions listed as operating in Herefordshire in 2010. Of this total, only ten publicly report their annual attendances to Visit England. A full listing of these attractions and their visitor numbers is included as Appendix 4.

2.22 The attractions are predominantly small scale and heritage related with 21 being museums or heritage properties and a further 12 being gardens or parks. Of the ten that report visitor numbers only Hereford Cathedral attracts more than 50,000 visits per annum. Five average between 30,000 and 49,000. This is too small a sample to determine any trends in demand over recent years.

2.23 Ownership of the attraction base is dominated by the private sector (26 attractions) with a significant representation of community-run facilities. The Local Authority (4), National Trust (4) and English Heritage (4) operate the other attractions. Two thirds of the attractions charge admission fees. In addition the Herefordshire Churches Tourism Group promotes visits to over 70 religious sites across the County. However, no numbers are recorded for admissions.

2.24 Herefordshire has a number of interesting sporting and non-sporting venues that are also attractors generating significant numbers of day and overnight staying visitors to the County. Their potential to grow overnight tourism numbers is related to the development of experience based packages. These venues are:

- Hereford Racecourse;
- Edgar Street, Hereford City Football Club;
- The New Cattle Market;
- Belmont Abbey;
- The Hilltop Cross Country, Ledbury;
- The Hereford Equestrian Centre.

2.25 Across the West Midlands attendance trends over recent years have shown growth in demand for rural heritage and cultural attractions. Visit England (August 2009) reports that in the period 2007 – 2008 there was an overall increase of 3% in visits to attractions in the region with particular growth reported in the following categories, each of which are strongly represented in Herefordshire:

- Farms + 8%
- Gardens + 2%
- Art Galleries / Museums + 7%
- Places of Worship + 5%
- Heritage Centres + 6%

(iii) The Outdoor Activity Base

2.26 There are some 20 activity providers in Herefordshire offering cycling, walking, canoeing and other adventure experiences. The River Wye has a long and established reputation for canoeing, kayaking, floating and rowing. In addition, Herefordshire has an impressive network of horse riding, cycling routes and trails and an infrastructure of over 3,400 km of walking routes. There are ten golf courses in the County.

2.27 According to the '*Complete Long Distance Footpath Director for the UK*' there are 11 recognised long-distance routes in Herefordshire. In addition the recent AA publication '*Best 100 Walks in Wales and The Marches*' lists 12 themed routes in Herefordshire based upon local villages.

(iv) Events and Festivals

2.28 Today Herefordshire hosts an interesting range of relatively high profile events that headline a programme of more local festivals and events that take place at major venues such as the Courtyard in Hereford, the Cathedral and at Eastnor Castle. The high profile, annual signature events include:

- Borderlines Film Festival — Spring
- Shobdon Food Festival — June
- Ledbury Poetry Festival — July
- The Three Choirs Festival — August (every three years)
- The Big Chill — August
- Herefordshire County Fair — August
- Herefordshire Art Week — September
- Bromyard Folk Festival — September
- Flavours of Hereford Food Festival — October
- Hereford Contemporary Arts Festival — November

and just outside Hereford but making a significant impact is:

- Guardian Hay Literature Festival — August

2.29 In addition, there are a number of other events with the potential to grow in the future such as:

- Various walking festivals (Hereford, Ross-on-Wye);
- The Big Apple, October;
- Hereford Photography Festival, Autumn;
- Much Marcle Steam Fair;
- The Bromyard Gala.

(v) Food and Drink

2.30 Locally produced and accessible food and drink is now an essential part of the visitor’s experience and a key influencer in their decision-making process. Herefordshire has a unique, distinctive range of local produce. The County has also pioneered ways to celebrate its award winning ciders, perries, beers, wines and vodka alongside its cheeses, berries, root crops and, of course, meats. A True Taste of Herefordshire, the Flavours of Herefordshire Food Festival, the Hereford Food Champion and the Cider and Beer Festivals offer important ways for visitors to connect with the producers. Many producers are developing new ideas to get their products into the local marketplaces … visitor centres, hampers, food boxes, tasting events. There is also an innovative producer of ‘*country-style goods*’ (Wriggly Wrigglers) that allows consumers to prepare local produce using traditional utensils.

The Destination Scorecard: Results

2.31 The '**Destination Scorecard**'[10] is a simple evaluation technique that allows anyone involved in tourism to subjectively score 33 different components that make up a visitor destination on a scale of 0 (very poor / non-existent) to 5 (exceptionally good / strong provision), as well as giving an overall 'score' for the destination as a whole.

2.32 The composite scorecard for Herefordshire with the average scores from inputs by over 50 stakeholders across the County is at Appendix 5. The key findings of this exercise (see Table 5) are as follows:

On the positive side …

Herefordshire has a **strong** natural and built heritage within attractive countryside that offers good access and a range of outdoor activities; it is a destination with good access and close proximity to its core markets; and offers a warm welcome to its visitors.

On the negative side …

Herefordshire needs to more aggressively promote awareness of the existing range of attractions but has to develop core areas of its service and infrastructure provision, notably those areas that can generate higher levels of spending by visitors: serviced accommodation, dining out facilities and specialist / niche retailing.

Table 5: Herefordshire Destination Scorecard: Final Results 2010 (all scores out of 5)

Component Scores 2.5 or less			**Component Scores 3.0 or above**	
Attractors (overall = 36.5 / 70 = 52%)				
Serviced accommodation	2.0		Outdoor activities	3.0
Leisure attractions	1.0		Camping / caravanning	3.5
Sports facilities for visitors	2.0		Self serviced	4.0
Entertainment	1.5		Heritage / culture	3.0
Interpretation	0.5		Art / craft	4.0
Wildlife attractions	2.0		Events / festivals	4.0
Services (overall = 21.5 / 35 = 61%)				
Eateries (dining out)	1.5		TICs	3.5
Specialist retail	2.5		Access local food / drink	4.0
			Customer care	3.5
			General retail	3.0
			Tour leaders	3.5

[10] The '*Destination Scorecard*'© has been developed by the Stevens View Partnership specifically to assist those involved in destination development to assess the current status and provision of core elements of infrastructure, services and attractors within a destination. The Scorecard has been successfully used in over 50 destinations in Europe and the USA.

Infrastructure (overall = 33.5 / 60 = 56%)				
Public transport within	2.0		Access to destination	3.5
Public amenities	2.0		Access to countryside	3.5
Tourist signposting	2.0		Aesthetics local area	4.0
Viewpoints / lay-bys	2.0		Cleanliness	3.5
Wet weather perception	2.5		Road signs	4.0
Coach parking	1.0		Car parking	3.5

(Source: Stevens View Partnership, 2010)

A Summary Diagnosis of the Current Situation

(A) Day Visitors

1. Herefordshire's visitor numbers are over represented by low spending day visitors.

2. The low levels of spend per head by day visitors are a result of a number of factors, including:
   - Low prices charged for admission to attractions;
   - The relatively large number of 'free' or subsidized attractions;
   - The absence of high value specialist retail;
   - The absence of dining out facilities;
   - The absence of added value in terms of local food and drink.

(B) Staying Tourists

1. Herefordshire performs well with its non-serviced accommodation sector that provides long stay leisure breaks and achieves high yields suggesting a quality product.

2. There is a shortage of quality serviced accommodation for both the leisure (especially year round short breaks) and the corporate markets.

3. The spend per person per day using serviced accommodation is low reflecting the suppressed room / rack rates and low occupancy primarily due to the poor quality of provision.

4. The SFR market in Herefordshire is strong (with 276,000 visitors staying for over 650,000 nights in 2008) considering the resident population is only 174,000 people. These markets are low spending (just £46.64 per person per day).

(C) General Comments

1. The market for serviced accommodation is dominated by non-discretionary tourism (notably business tourism); the SFR market is also non-discretionary. This means that for over 60% of those staying overnight Herefordshire is not their destination of choice.

2. The County receives a high number of transit tourists who travel through the area en route to another destination. This will partly explain the high numbers recorded as day visitors and the short length of stay in serviced accommodation.

3. Tourism is heavily seasonal as a result of the current way the area is promoted, packaged and sold.

Chapter
3

Moving Forward

The Vision

… to firmly establish Herefordshire as a ***must visit*** *rural destination for leisure and business tourism in England for both high value international and domestic tourists based upon creating a unique range of year round Herefordshire creatively presented visitor experiences. These will feature the area's 1,300 years of history, its 'terroir' and artisan produce (food, drinks, crafts and art and rural activities set in characterful locations that will allow visitors to enjoy traditional wholesome and uncomplicated English rural life at its very best.*

3.01 The Vision aims to establish Herefordshire as a leading, high quality, rural tourism destination based upon the County's distinctive landscape, environment, heritage and cultural assets to provide unique opportunities for relaxing, stimulating, year round, short break holidays for couples and activity focused family groups. At the same time Herefordshire will take full advantage of its ability to cater for those business tourism markets which are searching for a different destination for their activities.

3.02 The vision requires a strategic business model which is based upon restructuring, refocusing, rebranding and repositioning Herefordshire emphasising:

- qualitative growth in the serviced accommodation sector;
- added value orientation in product development;
- the creation of a reputation for specialised Herefordian experiences and hospitality;
- a targeted marketing strategy;
- reduced seasonality and shift to year-round tourism.

Market Trends

(A) Leisure Visitors

3.03 There are a number of important trends that are influencing the decision making of all market segments with an interest in a leisure trip to a rural destination in the UK. The trends in growth are summarised as:

- The continued demand of short breaks that can take place any days of the week and any month of the year;
- The importance of characterful accommodation that is designed and operated to meet the particular needs of the market;
- The search for unique, often personalised, experiences that reflect the story, history, heritage, culture of the destination;

- Increasing desire to participate in activities in order to learn a new skill, craft, sport or subject;

- The need to reflect lifestyle with leisure experiences especially in terms of wellness and well-being involving activities for the mind, body and soul;

- The specific interest in outdoor activities notably walking and cycling;

- The importance of quality design, architecture, public spaces, landscape and arts / crafts;

- The ability to and importance of access to local food and drink as a decision-making factor.

3.04 Research[11] by the 'home' tourist boards in the UK examined the specific decision-making factors amongst UK residents with a high propensity to take short break leisure trips in rural Britain.

3.05 The key messages and priorities from this research are clear and important for Herefordshire:

- The need to provide and promote accommodation choice;
- The prime importance of quality local produce;
- The critical role of good customer service.

3.06 The greatest potential for market growth comes from short breaks by older and younger couples who are relatively up-market, well travelled, with high disposable incomes. There is also scope for young and extended families who wish to connect with the values of rural life. The key geographic targets will be:

- London and South East;
- Bristol / Glos / Bath;
- West Midlands conurbation;
- Cardiff / Swansea / Newport;
- Merseyside.

3.07 The international markets will be primarily those resident in the UK or on extended stays in the UK (for study, work, health) and located in the main centres of population (as above) or international markets who have already made a previous visit to the UK and who now wish to "get to know" more about rural England. These markets are likely to be European (especially Netherlands, Scandinavia, France, Germany, Italy and Spain).

3.08 There is a need to target a higher spending day visitor market from within a 90-minute drive time. These should include older couples and families with pre-teen / early teen children.

[11] In '*The Countryside Experience*' A^+ Research, September 2005.

(B) Corporate Markets

3.09 The corporate markets are increasingly influenced by similar considerations and motivations as the leisure staying markets. Although value and cost are important considerations the search for venues and locations that are accessible but highly differentiated with high quality service standards remain in demand.

3.10 The size of groups involved in business tourism activities is reducing with less frequency of holding events. Nonetheless the MICE and team building markets continue to invest in places and products that can ad value to their main requirements. The core geographic markets for Herefordshire will be:

- West Midlands conurbation;
- Merseyside.

3.11 At present these are relatively under exploited tourism markets despite the opportunities presented by some market leaders in this area such as the Leadership Trust, the Land Rover Experience, Warner Leisure and PGL.

The Strategy

3.12 The Business Model for Herefordshire's Tourism Strategy 2010 – 2015 is based upon:

- Confident branding;
- Focused product development based on:
  - Heritage and culture;
  - Serviced accommodation;
  - A new approach to events and festivals;
  - Business tourism product (linked to authentic venues and experiences);
  - Enhanced leisure and entertainment experience;
  - Customer Care – "The Herefordian Welcome";
  - Developing specialist retail;
- A well structured Destination Development Organisation with effective communication;
- Brand winners;
- Public sector support;
- Action Plan (see Appendix 6).

(i) Branding and Positioning Herefordshire

3.13 All the research shows that currently Herefordshire suffers from a lack of public appreciation of its location and geography whilst the perceptual associations are primarily focused upon their knowledge of the Hereford Bull and the City's cup exploits in the FA Cup. Despite the presence of internationally strong food / drink brands such as Bulmers, Westons, Cargills and Tyrells there are few linkages with place promotion.

3.14 As a result, an extensive period of consultation and discussion has taken place through 2010 with a wide range of stakeholders in Herefordshire to establish the County's brand essence, core values, future positioning and tourism proposition.

3.15 This exercise is described in full in a separate report that identifies the main aspects of the County's brand essence including its icons / symbols, core values, personality and concludes with a brand proposition:

"*Escape the pressures of modern living, visit Herefordshire - English rural living – where tradition and values are just as they used to be*".

3.16 The brand strategy is fundamentally important and will be used to drive the marketing plan, the product development strategy and shape the organisational structure (see Appendix 7).

(ii) The Strategy - Principles

3.17 The Strategy has **eight** key elements:

(i) **Working and full integration with** leading Herefordshire brands to collectively market the County enhancing the quality and;

(ii) **Enriching the rural tourism experience;**

(iii) **Integrating the rural tourism offer with the redevelopment of Hereford City** including the Cathedral, Bishops Palace, New Cattle Market and City Centre redesign;

(iv) Fostering **new forms of rural tourism enterprise** across the County with supportive planning policies, business support and market information;

(v) Improving the **management of the destination** as a whole with an emphasis upon local areas;

(vi) Develop **local skills, talent** and **creativity** for the benefit of tourism;

(vii) Commit to a programme of **market research** to fully understand market trends and the business of tourism in Herefordshire;

(viii) Creating a sustainable business model and organisation for tourism.

(iii) Marketing Strategy

3.18 The full Marketing Strategy and Branding Strategy are to be found at Appendix 7.

(iv) Product Development Priorities and Actions

3.19 The product development priorities are determined by three strategic requirements:

(i) To **reinforce the brand and positioning** bringing fulfilment to the 'proposition' and 'promise' that is presented in the marketing activity;

(ii) To grow the **value of tourism** by increasing the length of stay; increasing the quality and range of serviced accommodation and creating added value and premium value visitor experiences;

(iii) To develop the **corporate tourism** markets focusing upon small groups of high value companies who are seeking highly differentiated destinations and products.

(v) Product Development – Creating Herefordian Experiences

3.20 This Strategy requires effort to be focused upon the County's core assets that are best equipped (organisation, accessibility, capacity) to represent Herefordshire and to act as a '*showcase*' for the brand around which authentic, real and genuine '*experiences to delight*' the visitor can be created:

- Using villages and market towns as '*hubs*' of a set of experiences such as:
  - Walking, cycling, horse riding routes starting / finishing from the village pub / post office / churches;
  - Creating an extensive network of Tourist Information Points in village shops / churches alongside TICs in some market towns to complement a small network of strategic Tourist Information Centres (at local locations such as Labels at Ross-on-Wye);
  - Harnessing village events, festivals and seasonal celebrations (such as Harvest Festivals) to create a year-round events calendar;
  - Arranging visits to and activities around village life (such as learn belling in local church; make cakes with the WI; work on a local farm);
  - Encouraging local people to tell their story.
- Developing the themed trails, treasure hunts and specialist tours supported by a team of especially trained and accredited guides / leaders that is already successful for cider and Black and White Houses to embrace:
  - Religious sites / sites of faith working with the Herefordshire Churches Tourism Group;
  - Parks and gardens and arboreta;
  - Literary and art connections
  - Food and drink producers;
  - 'Open door' approach for craft studios and art galleries;
  - Heritage features and properties;
  - Wildlife and natural history sites.
- Encouraging each provider of the attractions on these tours to develop unique guest activities to engage visitors in the story, craftsmanship and essence of the place they are visiting and to form 'packages' that can be 'sold' to accommodation providers and others.

(vi) Product Developments – Critical Commercial Opportunities

3.21 There is an urgent and fundamental requirement to enhance the quality and range of **serviced accommodation** provision across the County. In addition to targeting upgrades and creating more 4-star product delivered with innovation and a strong '*sense of place*' there is scope to encourage new rural boutique-style provision. This could be achieved by:

- Incentivising breweries and public house owners / tenants to develop bedrooms using existing but dormant room stock;

- Encouraging craft centres, food / drink producers and major land owners to consider **hotel provision** associated with their existing activities;
- Work with farmers and estate owners to develop a new concept of a **Herefordshire Farm Hotel**.

3.22 There is also a need to encourage the **development of restaurants and other types of dining out facilities** across the County, especially those specialising in local produce and recipes.

(vii) A New Approach to Events and Festivals

3.23 A selection of Herefordshire's major events and festivals should be strategically used to develop a new concept of themed events that will be available all year round, can be delivered in towns and villages across the County and will be entirely in line with the local focus of this Strategy.

3.24 This approach would see, **for example**:

(a) The flavours of Herefordshire Food Festival would be the pinnacle of a year-round programme consisting of:

- Farmers' markets / WI markets;
- Dine arounds;
- Tours of producers;
- Farm open days;
- Harvest festival celebrations;
- Tasting sessions;
- Seasonal celebrations;
- Themed days.

(b) The Three Choirs Festival would be the high point of a programme consisting of:

- Local choral competitions;
- Visiting churches to hear their choirs sing;
- The Cathedral providing organ music and choral sessions;
- Lectures and talks about Elgar and other composers featured in the Three Choirs;
- Opportunities to join a choir for a week – learn to sing.

(c) The Big Apple Festival would be the link to a series of year-round activities:

- Apple blossom trails;
- Apple blossom festival;
- Revival of Wassailing and other customers;
- Cooking with apples events;
- Press your own cider.

[N.B. 2011 is the 200th anniversary of the publication '*Pomona Herefordiensis*', written by Thomas Andrew Knight about the 30 varieties of apples and pears in the County].

(viii) Opportunities for New Types of Product Innovation

3.25 A number of specific opportunities have been identified for new types of products that would be innovative in a UK context. These include:

- The re-creation of the traditional **'*Cider House*'** – a public house specialising in local ciders, perries and wines with restaurant and a small number of quality bedrooms (N.B. Hereford has two traditional and listed 'parlour'pubs);

- The development of the **Herefordshire Orchard or Farm Restaurant** for potential operators who do not want to have on-site accommodation;

- The establishment of a **showcase of Herefordshire produce** incorporating a **Herefordshire Cookery School**;

- The development of a unique **cider spa** that utilises the raw materials from the production of cider and perry to create a unique range of spa and beauty treatments that can be experienced in a unique **farm or orchard spa** (preferably associated with a rural boutique style hotel);

- Establishing a new approach to training and developing local people as guides and interpreters through specialist training creating the concept of the **'*rural concierge*'** (organiser, fixer, coordinator, planner and animateur);

- Creating a **conference and corporate visitors' bureaux** within the DMP to organise and manage the needs of this market and, in particular, to promote Herefordshire's different types of venues;

- Establishing a network of great viewpoints in the landscape with especially architecturally designed **lookout towers and observation platforms** to enjoy the prospect of Herefordshire – this initiative could employ world class architects to enhance the 'value' of the investments;

- Testing the opportunity (feasibility) of re-establishing the traditional **'*Wye Boats*'** and the 19th Century scenic tours on the River Wye.

(ix) Maximising Current Investments

3.26 There are three major investment projects currently taking place in the City of Hereford: (i) the Heritage Lottery funded restoration work around the Cathedral and Bishop's Palace; (ii) the redesign and development of the town centre; and (iii) the relocation and development of a new Cattle Market.

3.27 These have to be regarded as catalytic projects for transforming Herefordshire tourism with every effort being made to ensure these projects reflect the new brand and positioning of Herefordshire (in their design, their content, their interpretation) <u>and</u> that they make a substantial contribution to the tourism product.

3.28 For example, the new Cattle Market should be the location for a celebration of the Hereford Bull … a sculpture, a visitor centre, a genealogy centre for the breed, a centre for Hereford Cattle Societies around the world, a farmers' market, a showcase of Hereford beef and a beef restaurant. A new kind of global meeting point for a diaspora.

3.29 The new city centre development has the potential to provide retail and workshop space for artists / crafts people and local food / drink emporia that effectively becomes the showcase for '*the best of Hereford*'.

3.30 The Cathedral already has exciting plans for enhancing the management of visitors post-completion of the regeneration in 2011 / 2012. A major opportunity exists to celebrate the traditional craftsmanship (masonry, carpentry and sculpting) that have been used in the restoration process.

(x) Celebrating Rural Life – Involving National Brands: An idea for discussion

3.31 This whole Strategy is founded upon getting visitors into the community, connecting with real Herefordians and authentic rural life (contemporary and traditional). As a result, the concept is that the whole of Hereford becomes '*the experience*'. Heritage and culture are not 'boxed' in museums or institutions. It is accessible rather like the '*eco-museum*' concept that originated in France[12] but is now omnipresent in Europe. It is now defined as:

> "*a dynamic way in which communities conserve, preserve, interpret and manage their heritage and culture for sustainable development*".
>
> Declaration of Intent of the Long Net Workshop Trentino (Italy) 2004

3.32 This Strategy establishes the platform that would accommodate a new, innovative and contemporary twist on the 'écomusée' concept. In order to take this opportunity forward in a way that would be a national celebration of English rural life using Herefordshire as its '*arena*', it would be stimulating to bring together the three **leading national brands** that committed to conserving rural life: English Natural Heritage, National Trust and the Duchy of Cornwall, together with the English Rural Life at Reading University, to creatively brainstorm a totally new 'museum' concept / idea of the National Museum of English Rural Life.

3.33 This initiative would bring an established University to Herefordshire and the opportunity to develop research, a centre of academic excellence, the development of a corporate / conference business, as well as the scope to develop merchandising. This project would substantially underscore the overall brand and positioning, as well as supporting existing businesses and events in the area.

The Organisational Structure

3.34 The Transition Group established following the March 2010 '*Review of Visit Herefordshire*' is finalising the detail of the new structure to lead tourism development in Herefordshire. The detail will put flesh on a structure that has the following key components and will be fully in place by March 2011:

(A) Herefordshire Destination Development Ltd
[Company Limited by Guarantee with Board of Directors representing strategically minded individuals with an appropriate skill set from public and private sectors:

- Independent Chair;
- Full-time Executive Office comprising CEO and support staff]

[12] Developed in 1971 by George Henri Riviere and Hugues de Varine as the '*écomusée*', an holistic interpretation of a community's cultural heritage.

(B) A Strategic Advisory Group
[comprising representatives of leading brands, ambassadors of Herefordshire, etc]

(C) A network of Special Interest Groups
[representing the main 'drivers' of tourism in Herefordshire]

(D) **A Federation of locally-centred tourism associations** as part of a membership organisation for private sector operators across Herefordshire.

3.35 There will be a need for various public sector business support and skills development agencies to realign their activities to match the strategic priorities set by the Destination Development Organisation.

3.36 Alongside these developments, and at a time of reduced public sector funding, it will be important to identify new ways of funding both marketing activities and product development capital investment. The revenue requirement for marketing Herefordshire should increasingly look to new partnerships, collaboration with leading brands and finding sponsors.

3.37 The capital investment requirements will require the identification of different potential sources of funding from public sector resources. It will also require the creation of a new type of rural investment fund. There is a clear role for the Destination Development Organisation to take the lead working with the main banks, the public agencies, the CLA / NFU, the Environment Agency and the private sector to create such a fund to support the type of product development set out in this Strategy.

Potential Returns

3.38 The bold branding and positioning of Herefordshire is fundamentally important to increasing the power of tourism to help make Herefordshire a better place to live, work and visit. International benchmarking consistently shows that successful visitor destinations have a high quality of living and use the benefits from visitors to support community development and viability.

3.39 Having a clear identity for the destination backed up by a bold vision and mission statement increases the likelihood of attracting inward investment, it helps secure community buy-in and develop civic pride and it attracts visitors.

3.40 The Strategy is primarily geared to growing the value of the visitor economy on a sustained year-on-year basis. As a minimum the benchmark should be to:

(i) grow the spend per person per day using serviced accommodation by achieving an additional length of stay of 0.5 days per person (e.g. +£50 ppp day).

This would immediately produce £13.9m of addition spend per annum;

(ii) grow the spend per day of day visitors to a level at least comparable to that in neighbouring destinations (e.g. +£120 ppp day).

This would immediately produce £79.2m of additional spend per annum.

(iii) grow the number of overnight stays by 5% in a year to produce an additional £14.7m per annum

= This would secure an uplift of £107.8m (or 25.6%) for the local economy

3.41 Additional and further benefits will also accrue including:

1. Increased levels of **collaboration and partnership** working with brand winners.

2. An **integrated approach to branding and marketing** Herefordshire resulting in increased levels of consumer awareness.

3. Enhanced **quality** of the visitor experience and the creation of **unique, enriched** visitor experiences.

4. **Added value** for tourism and non-tourism businesses and products.

5. **Increased levels of dispersal** of visitors across the County.

6. Increased opportunities for creating **local jobs, generating local spending by visitors and establishing local tourism enterprises**.

7. **Reduced levels of economic leakage** from the rural economy by creating tighter systems and networks of local businesses.

8. Establishing a **central role for Hereford City and the market towns** in shaping the visitor experience.

9. Stimulating **innovation and creativity** by bringing together different creative skills and talent to develop new ideas for marketing and product development.

Appendix 1

The Benefits of Tourism and a Visitor Economy for Herefordshire

21st June 2010

1. The benefits of tourism impact on all of us. It is good for our economy, it sustains jobs and it helps maintain the quality of life for those who live, work and study in Herefordshire. Tourism also directly affects the way people perceive the County which, in turn, influences decision making about inward investment, the choice of a place to live, as well as a place to study.

2. **Tourism helps boost the economy**. Tourism works like an export industry, attracting new money into the local economy. In 2008 this injection of spending from all visitors came to almost £411m. This generated income for local residents and benefited a wide range of businesses, not simply those directly involved in tourism.

3. **Tourism generates employment**. The spending by visitors to Herefordshire supports and creates jobs. At present there are almost 8,500 jobs either directly or indirectly sustained by tourism.

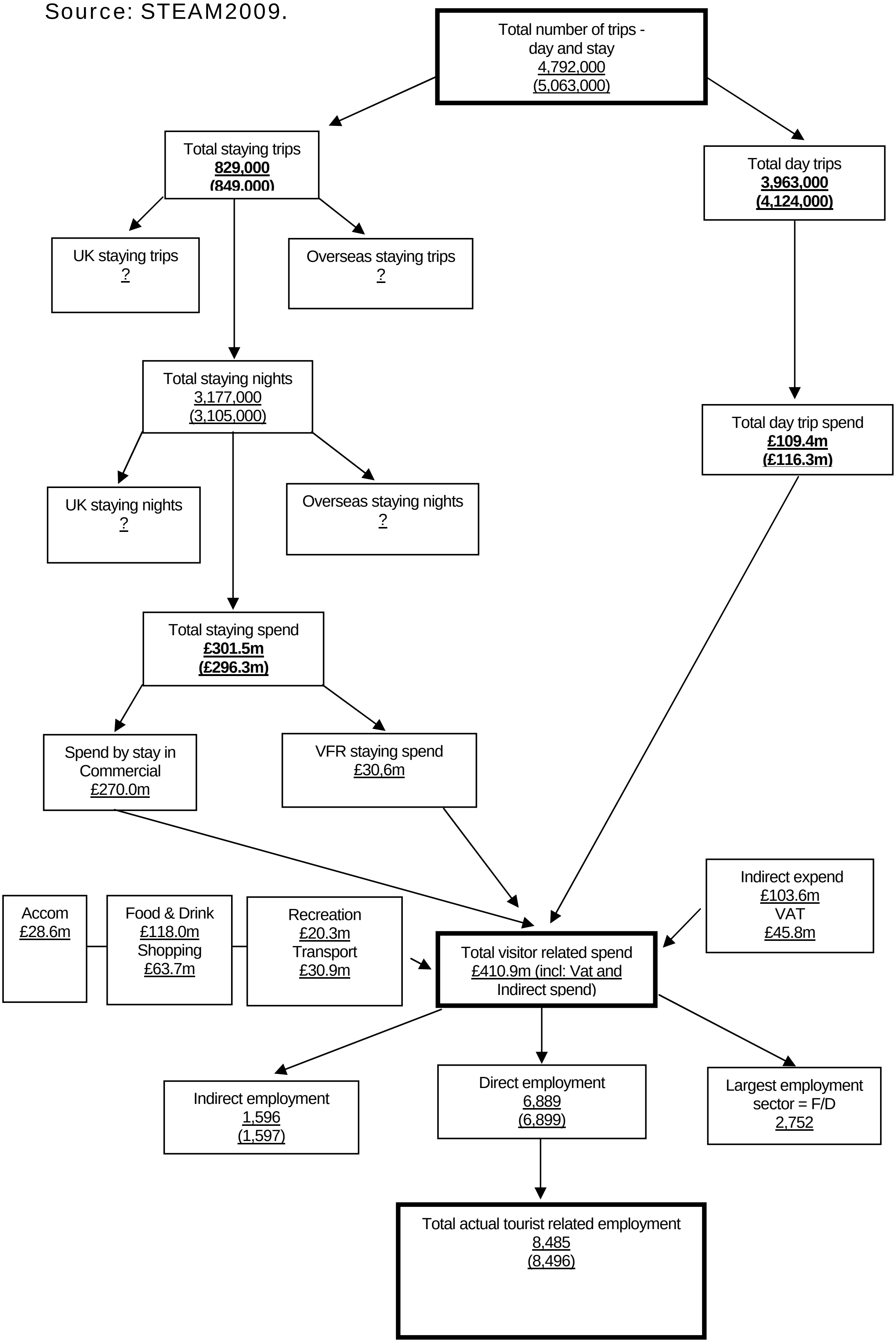
4. **Tourists sustain local facilities**. Visitors to the County use facilities and services that local people use. This results in a wider range of things to do, a higher quality of provision and additional income to help keep facilities open. This applies to theatres, cinemas, leisure centres, museums, shops, restaurants, pubs, galleries and public transport. A thriving tourism industry and visitor economy, therefore, helps to improve the quality of life for local people.

5. **Tourism creates positive images and makes a major contribution to positioning and place-making**. Tourism marketing and promotion helps raise awareness of Herefordshire. Visitors who have enjoyed their stay will enthuse about the County to friends and business colleagues. This creates interest in Herefordshire, helps stimulate inward investment and encourages civic pride. A place that people want to visit for either leisure or business is a good place to live, work and study.

6. **Tourism supports a better environment**. Tourism thrives in attractive environments. Tourism needs places to be clean, safe and well managed. Tourists demand a sense of place to make destinations distinctive. Visitor-related activities can provide new life for historic buildings. It can be the catalyst for regeneration of derelict sites and the stimulus for imaginative use of the city, the market towns and villages and, of course, and countryside.

7. **Tourism pays its way**. In addition to the economic rewards and community benefits described above, tourism represents a good return on investment. It involves relatively low levels of capital to create a new job in tourism and, for every pound spent on tourism marketing, there is a significant additional tourist spend throughout the community.

Figure 1: Tourism Facts at a Glance: HEREFORDSHIRE 2008 (2007 figures)
Source: STEAM2009.



EXPLANATORY NOTES

In terms of GVA, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) is unable to disaggregate the GVA specifically for tourism in Herefordshire from within ‘Services’. Figures from the ONS show that since 1995 the GVA from agriculture has declined from 13% of total GVA for the County to 7%. At the same time GVA for Industry has also declined from 35% to 26% whilst GVA resulting from the Service sector has increased from 52% to 69%. Tourism is clearly a strong component of the service industries.

In 2007 the total GVA of Herefordshire was 2,708 with services producing 1,815 of that total. By comparison, Somerset’s total GVA in 2007 was 8,700 of which services produced 6,097 (71%) and agriculture 183 (2%) of GVA.

The STEAM figures above (Figure 1) indicate that tourism-related employment accounts for almost 8,500 jobs (direct and indirect in Herefordshire). The Council’s estimate of 6,100 employed in tourism is, according to the Council’s Research Unit, approximately 8% of all employment (76,800) and this is down slightly from 9% in 2007.

This compares to 20% in wholesale and retail, 15% in manufacturing and 11% in real estate, renting and business activities. There is likely to be overlap with wholesale and retail, so not strictly comparable. The source of this data is the Annual Business Inquiry. The definition for tourism is that used by the Scottish tourist board and includes the codes listed beneath.

Manufacturing 11,500 15%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods 15,000 20%
Real estate, renting and business activities 8,300 11%
"tourism" 6,100 8%
"Total" 76,800

- 551 : Hotels
- 552 : Camping sites and other provision of short-stay accommodation
- 553 : Restaurants
- 554 : Bars
- 633 : Activities of travel agencies and tour operators; tourist assistance activities not elsewhere classified
- 925 : Library, archives, museums and other cultural activities
- 926 : Sporting activities
- 927 : Other recreational activities

Appendix 2

Competitor Destination Benchmarking

	Glos	Wilts	Som	Mendip	Sedg	S Som	Hereford
1. Trips Stay	1.543	1.635	2.447	366	622	333	829
2. Nights	6.093	4.972	9.702	1,490	3.084	1,169	3,177
3. Average Stay	3.94	3.04	3.96	4.07	4.68	3.6	3.8
4. Day Trips	11.576	10,893	13,903	2,537	2,097	2,261	3,963
5. Spend Stay (£m)	283.87	263.78	409.32	65.24	114.93	50.10	30.15
6. Spend Day (£m)	506.50	474.11	623.04	116.87	91.91	104.76	109.40
7. Total Spend (£)	790.37	737.89	1,080,839	182.82	207.57	165.11	411.00
Spend per Day - Stay (5 ÷ 2)	£46.58	£53.09	£42.18	£43.78	£37.27	£42.85	£93.27
Spend per Day – Day (6 ÷ 4)	£43.75	£43.52	£44.80	£46.00	£43.82	£46.33	£27.60
Total Days (000's)	17,669	15,865	23,605	4,027	5,181	3,430	7,140
Spend per Visitor per Day (1 + 4) ÷ 7	£44.73	£46.50	£45.78	£29.02	£40.06	£48.14	£57.56
Ratio Stay Days : Day Trips	1 : 1.9	1 : 2.2	1 : 1.4	1 : 1.7	1 : 0.6	1 : 1.9	1 : 4.8
Ratio Tourist : Day Trips	1 : 7.5	1 : 6.6	1 : 5.7	1 : 6.9	1 : 3.2	1 : 6.8	1 : 1.3

Appendix 3

Tourism in Herefordshire – a SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Countryside and landscape – natural features, agriculture
- Market towns and villages
- Wye Valley and its AONB
- Malvern Hills and its AONB
- Food and Drink Brands – including: Cider (Bulmers, Weston's, Olivers); Chase Vodka; Wye Valley Brewery; Hereford Cattle; Tyrrells
- Existing tourist routes: Black and White Trail, The Cider Route
- Heritage – including Hereford Cathedral – with Mappa Mundi and Magna Carter, village churches, gardens, intimate historic sites and Mortimer Country
- Creative industries
- Festivals and events – including UGO, Big Chill, Flavours, Three Choirs, Photography
- Base of 1,650 – 1,700 tourism businesses
- Funding and support from the public sector – Council and AWM
- Strong base for developing the DMP

Weaknesses

- Low profile of Herefordshire as a visitor destination
- Ageing visitor markets, especially overnight stays
- Absence of a strategy and vision with a prioritised product development plan
- Lack of creativity and innovation in product development and marketing
- Lack of involvement/integration with key brands, especially in food and drink sectors
- Over reliance on events to drive tourism and profile
- Absence of strong brands in the tourism sector
- Weak serviced accommodation sector
- Membership is limited to minority of actual tourism businesses with sporadic involvement of other businesses

Opportunities

- Create destination development plan with integration of other main drivers of the rural economy to develop a year round visitor economy and grow the value of tourism for the County
- Harness the investments now taking place in the City Centre of Hereford and at the Cathedral to help generate awareness, stimulate new short-break markets and create a strong sense of place for the City
- Use the destination development plan and marketing strategy to clearly articulate the vision and objectives of the DMP
- Create a strong positioning and marketing strategy for Herefordshire with due consideration to the strength of other, stronger, 'destinations' such as the Wye Valley and The Malvern Hills based upon a comprehensive review of the brand strategy and market opportunities
- Develop the short break leisure markets and a highly differentiated business tourism proposition
- Extend and develop the partnership approach with adjacent areas including: Forest of Dean, Monmouthshire, Hay-on-Wye, etc
- Secure the support of the large brands and investors to develop Herefordshire's tourism product in line with its brand and values
- Restructure the organisation of the DMP to take full advantage of the opportunities to develop Herefordshire as a destination including the Membership body
- Develop the opportunity to involve and engage with a wider range of and a greater number of businesses benefiting from tourism

Threats

- Emergence of strong rural destinations across the UK and beyond with strategy, confident positioning and innovative product development
- Reducing public sector financial support by both the Council and AWM
- Potential risk of disease affecting key crops and product base of the County and the return of FMD
- The increase of the key UK markets wanting low value holidays at home to counter the on-going economic challenges

Appendix 4

The Attraction Base 2010

		Ownership	2004	2008	Admission Charge / Free
Gardens and Parks					
1.	Berrington Hall	NT	44,596	48,202	C
2.	Hampton Court	P	30,000	22,187	C
3.	Hergest Croft	P	10,700	10,461	C
4.	Abbey Dore Court	EH	-	-	C
5.	Brobury House	P	-	-	C
6.	Bannut	P	-	-	C
7.	Water Mill Gardens	P	-	-	C
8.	Kenchester Water	P	-	-	C
9.	Lawton Herbs	P	-	-	F
10.	Amazing Hedge Maze	P	-	-	C
11.	Shipley Gardens	P	-	-	C
12.	Lasketts	P	-	-	C
Country Parks					
1.	Queenswood	LA	45,000	50,000	F
2.	Brockhampton Estate & House	NT	-	-	C
Heritage					
1.	Croft Castle	NT	40,358	57,000	C
2.	Eastnor Castle	P	42,309	31,641	C
3.	Goodrich Castle	EH	38,236	46,132	C
4.	The Weir	NT	14,037	14,700	C
5.	The Masters House	LA	-	-	F
6.	Butchers House Row	P	-	-	F
7.	The Old House	LA	-	-	F
8.	Hellens	P	-	-	C
9.	Abbey Dore	P	-	-	F
10.	The Painted Room	C	-	-	F
11.	Ross Market House	C	-	-	F
12.	Wigmore Castle	EH	-	-	C
13.	Longtown Castle	EH	-	-	C
Other					
1.	The Time Machine	P	-	-	C
2.	Wye Valley Butterflies	P	-	-	C
3.	The Small Breeds Centre	P	-	-	C
4.	Hop Pocket Crafts	P	-	155,000	F
5.	Court Farm	P	-	-	F

6.	Oakchurch Farm	P	-	-	F
Religious					
1.	Hereford Cathedral	P	-	220,000	F
2.	Belmont Abbey	P	-	-	F
Museums					
1.	Hereford Museum	LA	-	-	F
2.	Violette Szabo Museum	P	-	-	C
3.	Water Wales Museum	P	-	-	C
4.	Cider Museum	P	-	-	C
5.	Bromyard Local Museum	C	-	-	F
6.	Hereford Light Infantry	P	-	-	C
7.	Leominster Museum	C	3,382	2,629	F
8.	Kington Museum	C	-	-	F
9.	Coningsby Museum	C	-	-	C

Key:

C	=	Community	=	6 attractions:	5 Free	1 Charge
LA	=	Local Authority	=	4 attractions:	4 Free	0 Charge
P	=	Private or Trust	=	26 attractions:	7 Free	19 Charge
NT	=	National Trust	=	4 attractions:	0 Free	4 Charge
EH	=	English Heritage	=	4 attractions:	0 Free	4 Charge

Appendix 5

Herefordshire Destination Scorecard

NAME OF DESTINATION: HEREFORDSHIRE **DATE OF COMPLETION: DECEMBER 2009 / JANUARY 2010**

Destination Positioning 1.5

Overall Environment 3.5

Destination Icons
- Cattle
- Cathedral
- B/W Houses
- Cider Apples

Attractors		Services		Infrastructure	
Outdoor Activities	3.0	Eateries	1.5	Access to the Destination	3.5
Serviced Accommodation	2.0	Tourist Information Centres	3.5	Public Transport within Destination	2.0
Caravan / Camping	3.5	Access to Local Food / Drink	4.0	Access to Countryside	3.5
Self Serviced	4.0	Customer Care	3.5	Public Amenities	2.0
Heritage / Cultural Attractions	3.0	Specialist Retail	2.5	Aesthetics of Towns / Villages	4.0
Leisure Attractions	1.0	General Retail	3.0	Tourist Signposting	2.0
Sports Facilities	2.0	Guides / Tour Leaders	3.5	Viewpoints / Lay-bys	2.0
Entertainment	1.5	Other	-	Cleanliness / Litter	3.5
Interpretation	0.5			Wet weather provision	2.5
Art / Craft	4.0			Road signs	4.0
Well-Being	2.0			Car parking	3.5
Natural Features	4.0			Other – coach parking	1.0
Wildlife Attractions / Tours	2.0				
Events	4.0				

Appendix 6

Prioritised Action Plan

1. Adopt strategy / brand proposition and marketing plan.

2. Implement a focussed communications strategy prioritised as follows:

    - Preparation of creative presentation of the brand proposition leading to full brand guidelines and market testing prior to implementation;

    - Specific communication / sharing / discussing resource requirements, buy in and support of leading brands and other DMP funders / supporters, understanding their needs in return e.g. position / interaction on / with the Board;

    - Sharing the strategy with local community associations, securing their buy in and support / proposing board representation;

    - Creating intranet presence for sharing information;

    - Engaging with the press.

3. New DMP board and structure in place reviewing resource requirements against existing resources to implement the marketing strategy.

4. Immediately commence work on web redevelopment securing ‘quick win’ for the ‘new look’ DMP.

5. Prepare a folder presentation of ‘investment opportunities in Herefordshire’ which may be supported by the public sector or through private sector sponsorship.

6. Plan a learning journey to a successful comparable destination.

7. Establish a prioritised list of achievable targets for year 1, meeting and where possible exceeding industry / community expectations.

8. Hold tourism industry / wider community conference to ‘share’ the tourism / brand strategy.

9. Create marketing sub groups as outlined in the brand strategy - Attractions, Outdoor Activities, Events and Business Tourism.

10. Outline and implement a structured market research campaign of sufficient size and scale to ensure monies are being spent well on marketing in the future.

Appendix 7

Herefordshire Brand Strategy

Background

This brand strategy has been prepared as a result of a consultation process with brand winners, tourism businesses, the public sector and the wider community in Herefordshire. It aims to achieve the vision as set out within the tourism strategy;

…to firmly establish Herefordshire as a **must visit** rural destination for leisure and business tourism fin England for both high value international and domestic tourists based upon creating a unique range of year round Herefordshire creatively presented visitor experiences. These will feature the area's 1300 years of history, its terroir, its artisan produce (food, drinks, crafts and art) and rural activities set in characterful locations that will allow visitors to enjoy traditional, wholesome and uncomplicated English rural life at its very best…

Situation Analysis

Current awareness of Herefordshire is limited, with few people actually able to say where it is and its primary association is through 'the bull' and the City's exploits in the FA Cup. This is despite the presence of strong international brands who at present find it difficult to tell the story of Herefordshire in any meaningful way due to lack of identification as to 'what the story actually is'.

The opportunity identified through research completed by Ashdown in 2009 and by SVP in preparation of this report, is to 'find the difference for Hereford, creating stand out in a competitive market place' **and** an attractive proposition for future markets. This is primarily because;

- 40% of future business needs to come from completely new business;
- Brand winners / leaders in the destination want to 'use the Herefordshire story' in their marketing campaigns and this represents a significant opportunity;
- There is a significant opportunity for the County to make and present its product as a more appealing, year round, short breaks destination;
- There is a need to be more efficient and more business focussed in the use of funds to enable access to wider private sector monies and manage the situation with regards to reducing levels of public sector funds.

The Market

Market information is fairly limited to a small sample of **short break visitors** completed by the DMP. However, through discussions with the wider tourism industry, this appears to be reflective of the wider views of the industry. This information highlights; the highest proportion of visitors, at 48%, are over the age of 45, with only 11% of visitors under 44; key target markets geographically include London & the South East, Bristol / Glos / Bath, West Midlands Conurbation, Cardiff / Swansea and Newport and Merseyside. It is anticipated that this will continue to be the geographical markets to target with International markets likely to be European, especially Netherlands, Scandinavia, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. Of particular interest may be study trips, sustainable living, history and terroir.

Existing Market Segments include:

24% Group A – Middle Aged, successful, rewarding careers, high incomes, high net worth, choicest housing, good diet, drink alcohol daily, concern for the environment
25% Group C – Married Couples, self reliant, plan for retirement, white collar workers, hard working, comfortable homes, environmental charities, good place to live, older children
12% Group J – Pensioners, Own their own homes, index linked pensions, significant capital, relocated on retirement, prefer face-to-face service, active, good health diet
11% Group K – Older people, neighbourly, cars important, distinct rural life, farming, agro-tourism, good diet and lifestyle, work long hours, small communities
8% Group B – young couples, corporate careers, low unemployment, good prospects, care for environment, modern homes, internet, enjoy exercise, good education

Activities they plan to do…

50-60%
- Eating Out
- Heritage Attractions
- Walking / Hiking
- Touring the Countryside

40-50%
- Visiting a garden
- Visiting another tourist attraction
- Outdoor Activities

Other information:

- The majority of visitors were staying in Hereford for 4-7nights
- 90% of visitors were travelling by car
- 69% of respondents had visited Herefordshire before (this is very similar to the results in previous years)

In addition

(1) Herefordshire has a large day visitor market for which there is currently no combined market information available. It is important to give consideration to the requirement to know and better understand this market for Herefordshire. It is, overall, a declining business, but that is not to say the appeal of Herefordshire could not be enhanced by this proposed brand strategy and there may be the ability to increase market share against this declining backdrop. The existing value of this business is significant, regardless of the potential to grow market share.

(2) There is also a lack of information relating to a significant business tourism market. This market is led by national and internationally renowned brands including Bulmers, Westons and Land Rover therefore this market opportunity is vital to integrate within the future marketing strategy and has significant potential to convert to repeat short break visitors and recommendations.

(3) There is a significant opportunity to use this new framework for tourism to attract inward investment to the area. This brand strategy and marketing plan aims to ensure this is capitalised upon.

Market Trends in relation to the Herefordshire product are highlighting the following:

- Working parents revisiting traditional values
- Ageing population / extended families taking holidays together
- Learning whilst on holiday
- Healthy living / eating / lifestyle / activities
- Conserving the environment / respect for the environment and sustainable living
- Emotional connection
- Declining coach business

Conclusions and the Way Forward

Growing and developing the value of the tourism business as outlined in the tourism strategy will rely on the destination at large having a strong focus on target markets and market led investment. In particular, focussing on the market led product development outlined in the first instance will provide the potential to continue to grow all segments. Group B (young couples with corporate careers) are a particularly important growth market opportunity for year round short breaks and there is also the potential to grow and develop the business tourism market and encourage repeat visits and recommendations.

Competing Destinations

Herefordshire is competing with a number of other destinations for market share. Amongst them are some very strong brands including Cornwall (45% share), Devon (28% share), Destinations in Wales (32% total share) and the Lakes (27% share).

These destinations have strong brands and strong products and Herefordshire needs to pull all its resources and work together to compete successfully in this market place.

Herefordshire – The brand and future positioning

As a result of a series of focus groups with brand leaders and with tourism and the wider community representatives, the following information has been distilled and is to be used to inform consistent positioning and all future marketing activity in the destination;

The Story

Facts & Symbols

- Bulmers
- Orchards / Apples
- The Bull
- Cider
- Westons
- Tyrells
- Wine / Vineyards
- Malvern Hills
- Wye Valley
- River Wye
- Ross on Wye
- Cathedral
- Black & white Villages
- Music and Arts
- Mappa Mundi
- Magna Carta
- The Duchy of Cornwall
- Simmonds Yat

Describe the Product

- 1300 years of history (Marcher Lords, Castles, Monastic, pilgrimage, Churches, Crusades, Medieval History, Battles, Ancestry, Romanesque School of Sculpture)
- Heritage Attractions
- Diversity of unspoilt natural beauty
- Countryside – orchards, pastures, arable land
- Market towns and villages
- Gardens
- Events & festivals / Fairs and Agricultural shows
- Local food & drink / heritage (impact on the landscape and agriculture)
- Flora and Fauna
- Green Attributes
- Outdoor Activities
- Timeless
- Artisan
- Escapism

How the Brand makes me Feel

- Closer to a better and more natural quality of life
- Sense of Place
- Part of a rural community
- Close to nature
- Relaxed
- Safe
- Nostalgic
- Among friends
- Enriched
- Liberated
- Surprised

How the Brand makes me Look

- Respectful
- Cultured
- Wholesome
- Fortunate
- Individual
- Affluent

What the product does for me

- Welcomes
- Stimulates senses
- Rewards
- Connects to nature / wholesome activity
- Fascinates
- Rejuvenates
- Reminds of traditional values
- Emotional connection
- Peace and tranquillity
- Exceeds expectations
- Educates

Values

- Authentic
- Traditional
- Intimate
- Embracing
- Caring
- Genuine

Personality

- Natural
- Endearing
- Characterful
- Different
- Artisan
- Hospitable
- Unpretentious
- Creative
- Appreciative

Essence

- Wholesome
- Uncomplicated
- Enduring

The Proposition

The proposition aims to build on Herefordshire's unique properties and use its values and personality together with interesting product development to creatively present the new proposition, boldly, confidently, and giving Herefordshire stand out and making it more appealing as a year round short breaks destination.

Escape the pressures of modern living, visit Herefordshire –
English Rural Living – with traditions and values just as they used to be

Brand Strategy / Marketing Plan

This brand strategy aims to capitalise on a spirit of working together to achieve the ambition as set out within the tourism strategy;

1. Work with leading brands, especially those highlighted under 'Herefordshire facts and symbols' and other leading destination brands to present the Herefordshire story
2. Boldly and confidently present the brand, uniquely differentiating Herefordshire as a visitor destination, but importantly also maximising this opportunity for inward investment – i.e. creating a single brand presentation that may be multi faceted in its approach to developing Herefordshire. This will require good investment and buy in from the whole community and is a fundamental element of this marketing campaign to reposition Herefordshire
3. The County's uniqueness is based upon a very rich cultural heritage. Commitment to preservation, conservation and supporting and interacting with heritage groups is necessary to continue to capitalise on this unique element of Herefordshire in the future
4. Implement an 'internal marketing campaign in the destination' engaging the community at large (including schools and community groups in the new positioning of Herefordshire)
5. Develop a programme of emotional engagement activities for visitors such as a voluntary payback initiative, where visitors are contributing to conservation / preservation of the area or participating in initiatives or schemes within the County during their stay, engaging visitors within the 'caring' destination Herefordshire is
6. Develop the wider range of destination experiences ensuring marketing and promotions meet and exceed customers expectations
7. Maximise the potential of destination marketing through the development of marketing groups for:
   - Attractions
   - Outdoor Activities
   - Events
   - Business Tourism
8. Invest in structured market research enabling effective and efficient use of marketing budgets in the future
9. Implement a targeted marketing strategy including strategic and prioritised investment in:
   - Creative presentation presenting Herefordshire's uniqueness
   - Web Redevelopment – this requires to be done as a matter of priority and could be a 'quick win' for the newly shaped DMP
   - Implement a targeted internet marketing campaign
   - Prepare a professional presentation of new product development / investment opportunities in Herefordshire
   - Implement a PR campaign focussed on Herefordshire's unique positioning and backed up by creative imagery where possible to create competitive stand out
   - Database building and marketing; utilise the creation of new marketing groups (see above) to maximise this marketing opportunity and to build upon existing visitor databases / marketing activity
   - Provision of destination information, presenting the cultural landscape and opportunities to engage with and enjoy it in keeping with the brand proposition and using key emerging themes of events and outdoor activities and using leisure time for learning and doing

Summary

This is an exciting opportunity for Herefordshire, however, the requirement for bold, confident branding and creative presentation and continued investment in this is the basis for the campaign and the only way in which Herefordshire will achieve its objective to stand out in the marketplace. An appropriate amount of resource should be allocated to this and it should be done in conjunction with brand leaders to maximise the future potential of this brand strategy.