North East England Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework

Contents

Forewords

Kim McGuinness
Mayor of the North East

We have ambitions to double the size our visitor economy by 2034... we must ensure this works for both our planet and our people

I love the North East. When I stood to be Mayor, I did so on a promise to promote our region on the national and international stage, so the world could share in what we all know: how great our region is, to live, work and visit.

I pledged to support our visitor economy, so it creates more opportunity for local people and businesses. The visitor economy in the North East is worth £6.1bn and currently supports more than 63,000 jobs. It makes a huge contribution to our regional economy, directly and through our local supply chain. Beyond its economic contributions, tourism captures who we are as a region: proud, warm and welcoming, and strengthens our appeal as a place to live, invest, study, and visit.

Despite this, our region still receives the lowest number of domestic and international visitors, and the lowest amount of visitor spend, of any region in England. The untapped potential is significant and together as a region we have ambitions to double the size our visitor economy by 2034 – however, we must ensure this works for both our planet and our people.

Our vision and ambition for the North East's visitor economy is bold and transformative and we must continue to work together to create a thriving and inclusive visitor economy where tourism and events are a catalyst for economic, social and environmental regeneration. Tourism and events can unlock opportunity and tackle inequalities by creating jobs, fostering economic growth and promoting social inclusion – helping to make the North East the home of real opportunity.

This framework sets out a shared understanding for regenerative tourism in North East England. It will empower the public sector, Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) and other organisations engaged in destination management and tourism, to develop strategies and plans that drive economic growth, address poverty challenges, generate social benefits and drive purposeful growth.

It champions the full potential of our region, co-created with industry and local authorities to create a fairer, greener and successful North East. We can create high-quality experiences, support businesses to be more resilient, grow our visitor economy, attract sustainable investment, restore eco-systems, and create new jobs and exciting career development opportunities.

Together we can use this framework to harness the potential of tourism and events, to not only grow our visitor economy but preserve our unique identity and to enhance the wellbeing of our residents.

I would like to thank the Regenerative Visitor Economy Taskforce and everyone who contributed to the creation of this Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework, in particular Destination North East England and Net Zero North East England. Your dedication and hard work have resulted in a piece of work that will pave the way for a sustainable and resilient future for tourism and events in our region – and help contribute to a goal we all share: promoting the North East and taking our rightful place as a leading visitor destination.

Mayor Kim McGuinness
North East Combined Authority

Cllr Amanda Hopgood
Leader of Durham County Council and Portfolio Holder for Creative, Culture, Tourism and Sport, North East Combined Authority

Every single commitment, action and pledge will support us to be a force for good in our communities

I am incredibly proud to lead one of the North East Combined Authority's most exciting, dynamic and vibrant portfolios, representing a visitor economy that is ambitious about the future and passionate about sharing our home with the world.

When the North East was awarded the opportunity to form England's first Destination Development Partnership, we set ourselves ambitious goals to double the value of our visitor economy over the coming decade. We knew from the start that in order to look after our unique place in the world and achieve this ambition, we had to do so in a way that placed regenerative thinking at the heart of everything we do.

We are renowned for the warm, welcoming, 'canny' embrace we provide to visitors and now, with the creation of this world-leading regenerative framework, we can work together to embrace our environmental, cultural and historical assets, champion and support our communities and ensure visitors and locals alike leave a positive impact on our people, place and planet.

I am especially proud to say this framework is one of the most ambitious tourism projects delivered globally, providing us with the most complete set of regenerative tourism guidelines and principles that exist today.

We are truly leading the way, going beyond traditional sustainability thinking, to produce a thorough, wide-reaching set of tools and clear pathways to transform the way we look at growing our visitor economy - in a manner that not only protects, but regenerates, renews and ensures we achieve the much-needed growth in the visitor economy as responsibly as possible.

Destination North East England, the North East Combined Authority, Net Zero North East England and over 200 stakeholders drawn from across the industry and government have been involved in the co-design of this framework, a huge collaborative effort that epitomises the spirit of joined-up thinking to create a world-class regenerative visitor destination. None of this would have been possible without the tireless work of Destination North East England, its delivery partners and the taskforce and steering group who have been the backbone of this work.

This is a tool that will empower our Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs), local authority tourism teams, and other organisations engaged in destination management, to create development strategies that drive economic growth, address North East England's challenges, generate social and economic benefits, and improve the environment for future generations.

From our vibrant towns and cities, to our tranquil countryside and dramatic coastlines – the North East is a truly special place, already on a transformative journey to become the place to visit in England. Now, with this innovative piece of work, every single commitment, action and pledge will support us to be a force for good in our communities, driving value for local people and places and for visitors from across the globe.

Thank you for your commitment to our region's regenerative future.

Cllr Amanda Hopgood
Durham County Council

Introduction

In recent years, the role of destination management organisations has expanded beyond attracting visitors to drive economic growth, towards being a steward and catalyst for social and environmental development. Those managing destinations for tourism now must consider their role in broader aspects of place development including promoting sustainability, engaging with local communities, contributing to the knowledge economy, and practicing environmental stewardship

This transformation is particularly significant in North East England, a region celebrated for its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and vibrant communities. As the North East grows in prominence as a visitor destination, it has become essential to develop a framework that not only promotes the visitor economy but also ensures its long-term viability and benefits for communities, businesses and the environment.

This framework has been developed and delivered by the Global Destination Sustainability Movement (GDS-Movement) on behalf of Destination North East England. It has been co-created with industry for Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs), local authority tourism teams, and other organisations engaged in destination management, to inform and guide development strategies that will support our sector on its regenerative journey.

GDS-Movement is a pioneering, international change agency that acts to catalyse socio-economic and environmental transformation in cities and regions. The team of change-makers envision thriving places and communities activated by regenerative tourism and events.

Background

Destination North East England is a regional collaboration which is focused on unlocking untapped tourism potential, by developing the regional eco-system and working together to create jobs, develop skills, drive quality, create new experiences, work with travel trade, support innovation, attract major events and improve the accessibility and sustainability of the sector.

NewcastleGateshead Initiative leads this collaboration, on behalf of the region, working with delivery partners Visit Northumberland and Visit County Durham and in partnership with all seven local authorities of North East England.

North East England was chosen to deliver the first Destination Development Partnership pilot in England, receiving £2.25m from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) over three years. This pilot has been the catalyst for the development of an ambitious ten-year plan that will double the size of our regional visitor economy by 2034 and create a positive impact for our residents and those who call North East England home.

Destination North East England recognises the necessity of fostering policies and business practices for the visitor economy that protect and regenerate the unique sense of place, communities, and natural and cultural assets of the region.

As such, we have brought together industry and the public sector to create an innovative framework for regenerative destination development and management. The region's shared goal is to amplify the positive influence of the visitor economy throughout North East England, creating a vibrant and sustainable tourism landscape for all.

Our ambitions for the visitor economy

Greater awareness and profile
Increase the region's visibility and reputation as a globally welcoming, fully inclusive and world-class regenerative visitor destination.

Regenerative and high-quality experiences
Develop distinctive and innovative high-quality, community-focused tourism products and services which maximise their positive impact.

Market-focused, decarbonised and resilient businesses
Support the development of profitable, adaptable, and net-zero tourism businesses resilient to climate change and other non-planned events.

Quality jobs, skills and career opportunities
Create more secure, diverse and high-quality employment opportunities within the sector, ensuring inclusive access to opportunities for skills development, career advancement and personal growth.

Increase visitor spend
Boost total visitor spend to grow the size of the visitor economy and increase visitor contributions to the local economy over the decade.

Enhance nature, culture and heritage
Promote sustainable practices to celebrate and look after our cultural heritage, traditions and history and enhance the region's landscapes, enriching and restoring ecosystems.

Increase sustainable investment
Guide and attract investment in the region to support positive impact through data-driven planning policies.

10 year vision of success

Destination North East England stakeholders – including public sector, industry representatives and other experts – have collectively created a vision of the future for the North East England visitor economy.

Our vision is a thriving North East England where tourism and events are a catalyst for transformation, seamlessly integrating economic growth and innovation with social and environmental regeneration. Our region's inclusive visitor economy contributes to the wellbeing of local communities and the revitalisation of our stunning natural landscapes and cultural heritage.

To realise this vision and maximise the region's potential, we aim to double the size of the visitor economy by 2034, growing its economic impact to over £10bn.

Strengths, challenges and opportunities

North East England's visitor economy is distinguished by several significant strengths. The region boasts diverse landscapes and wildlife, rich history and cultural heritage, vibrant cities, resilient and adaptable communities, strong educational institutions and an innovative business ecosystem.

However, the region faces challenges such as low brand awareness, insufficient infrastructure investment, seasonal tourism fluctuations, limited sustainable practices, restricted accessibility, transport and connectivity issues, and uneven tourism benefits. Additionally, there are pronounced inequalities in wealth and health, including high levels of child poverty and food insecurity.

Despite these issues, there are many opportunities to seize. Enhancing collaboration, leveraging the new combined authority, raising the region's profile, reducing seasonality, improving accessibility and inclusion, developing regional events, and localising supply chains are all viable strategies. The sector must also address threats like rising living costs, staff shortages and skills gaps, under-investment, climate change impacts, and political and social changes.

A regenerative visitor economy focused on thoughtful development and growth can tackle these challenges and opportunities. By creating quality jobs, supporting community initiatives, promoting active lifestyles, backing affordable housing, preserving local culture, and enhancing access to culture, nature and essential services, a regenerative visitor economy has the potential to greatly enhance the social landscape and overall wellbeing in North East England.

The impact of a regenerative visitor economy

- Businesses prosper, innovate and generate wealth for the community
- Businesses restore and operate in harmony with nature
- Skills are developed, jobs are created and inclusive of a diverse mix of people and cultures
- Tourism catalyses development of net zero infrastructure and services supporting the wellbeing of the community
- Local cultures thrive, communities are resilient and welcome the world
- Visitors are transformed by a plethora of authentic and regenerative experiences

Attributes identified by the stakeholders in the framework development process

What is the purpose of the framework?

The framework sets out a shared understanding and vision for regenerative tourism in North East England. It serves as a tool primarily for Destination North East England, Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs), local authorities and the North East Combined Authority.

Its purpose is to:

Guide and align strategy development
Ensure cohesive destination strategy development and activities across the region, maximising positive impacts and minimising negative effects on local communities, the environment, businesses and individuals.

Support regenerative destination management
Provide guidelines for actionable steps to foster regenerative tourism development. These steps are designed to be integrated into visitor economy strategies, plans and funding streams across North East England and beyond. As such it serves to position Destination North East England as thought leaders in regenerative tourism.

Promote collaboration
Facilitate robust collaboration among key partners, including LVEPs, destination management teams, local authorities, public sector bodies, conservation organisations, educational institutions, community organisations and the business community. By leveraging existing initiatives and pooling resources, stakeholders can work together more efficiently, reducing duplication of effort and aligning towards common goals.

Catalyse regenerative tourism and events
Inspire organisations and businesses across the region to step up, speed up and scale up the development and implementation of sustainability and regenerative strategies and actions.

What the framework is not...

The framework is not a fixed strategy, or specific action plan, but rather a guide for Destination North East England, LVEPs and supporting authorities and partners to use in developing their own strategies and detailed action plans.

It is also not a binding commitment by any of the supporting authorities to implement the framework's action areas immediately.

Instead, its success hinges on a collaborative approach, where building a common and aligned vision, and sharing resources and expertise, inspires stakeholders and drives the implementation and adaptation of the framework across tourism and events institutions, businesses and academia – in North East England and beyond.

Creation process

The focus for the development process of the North East England Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework was on co-creation, with a wide range of input from over 200 interested parties from the visitor economy and other relevant partners. This was achieved through an extensive engagement process, including six meetings with the purposely created Regenerative Visitor Economy Taskforce, a regional stakeholder forum, an online survey, and interviews with experts and key opinion leaders in economic, social and environmental development both in and outside of tourism.

For a detailed description of the process and the organisations and individuals involved, see **Appendix 1**.

Ongoing review process

As a result of this project, the Destination North East England partners will retain the Regenerative Visitor Economy Taskforce to ensure ongoing dialogue, inclusive debate and effective support for the implementation of the framework. To stay aligned with the combined authority's goals and the visitor economy's objectives, the framework will be reviewed at least every two years. This periodic review will address challenges and new opportunities, and integrate new insights, keeping the framework relevant and effective.

Integration with broader strategies

Significant effort was made in the co-creation process of developing the framework to align and support the region's 10-year visitor economy strategy, the policies of the local authorities and the devolution deal, which aims to decentralise powers and enhance regional autonomy. This broader context underpins the framework's goals, ensuring that tourism development contributes to the overall economic and social objectives of North East England.

What is Regenerative Destination Management?

Foundational concepts of regenerative tourism

Regenerative tourism expands on traditional sustainable tourism practices by aiming to actively improve the environmental, social, and economic structures of a destination. This progressive approach strives to do more than just maintain; it seeks to rejuvenate and restore the vitality of ecosystems, communities and cultural heritage. By doing so, it promotes positive transformation and leaves a beneficial footprint through tourism activities.

Regenerative destination management

Regenerative destination management is a transformative approach that aims to revitalise the environment and local communities within the tourism sector, engaging parties to collectively develop practices that bolster local culture, economy and natural habitats. It shifts from traditional, linear models to more resilient and inclusive systems, aiming to address and solve key environmental, social and economic challenges.

How is this different to sustainability?

While sustainability focuses on balancing today's needs without compromising the future, regenerative tourism goes further by creating benefits and shared value for local communities, businesses, the environment and visitors. Sustainability is the essential first step, but regenerative tourism challenges us to ensure this sector not only sustains but thrives.

Benefits and opportunities of this approach?

Regenerative tourism offers new avenues for enhancing destinations, leading to increased visitor satisfaction and more enriching experiences that appeal to conscientious travellers. This approach not only makes destinations more attractive and ecologically healthy but can also contribute to local benefits such as job creation, conservation of cultural heritage and enhanced quality of life. Moreover, it provides a framework for managing growth sustainably, ensuring that tourism development aligns with the long-term interests of both the community and the environment. The results foster a sense of pride and active engagement among local communities in the development of tourism.

Doing harm

Business as normal

Extractive

Competitive

Uncontrolled

Doing less bad

Sustainable

Reductionist

Collaborative

Siloed

Restore & rejuvinate

Regenerative

Inclusive

Reciprocal

Holistic

Framework Overview

The aim of the Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework for North East England is to transform the region's visitor economy into a catalyst for environmental and social regeneration.

It focuses on five key pathways:

- Decarbonise the industry and adapt to climate challenges.
- Foster thriving local businesses through innovation and sustainable supply chains.
- Invest in people, creating inclusive employment opportunities and developing skills.
- Connect people and communities with improved, inclusive infrastructure for enhanced and active mobility, and comprehensive digital access.
- Restore nature, landscapes, culture and heritage by investing in recovery and revitalisation projects, reducing pollution and managing access, as well as creating accessible, innovative products and experiences.

The pathways are supported by five cross-cutting enablers, which are outlined in more detail on p.36-37.

- Good governance and collaboration
- Diversified sustainable funding
- Insights and data-led decision making
- Inclusive training and development
- Dynamic engagement

This comprehensive approach not only aligns with North East England's net-zero emissions targets but also aims to rejuvenate the local economy, contribute towards reducing poverty, create quality jobs, and ensure a more equal and prosperous future for all by making the region a model for regenerative tourism.

North East Stewardship Principle

When considering North East England's vision for a regenerative visitor economy and the ambition for its growth, it was felt that an overall stewardship principle was required to guide decision making and support resolution of potential conflicts.

Building on the **Sandford Principle** used in management of protected landscapes in the United Kingdom, the new North East Stewardship Principle was developed.

This is defined as:

In cases of irreconcilable conflicts in the development of the visitor economy, the wellbeing of the community and environment should take precedence over purely economic considerations.
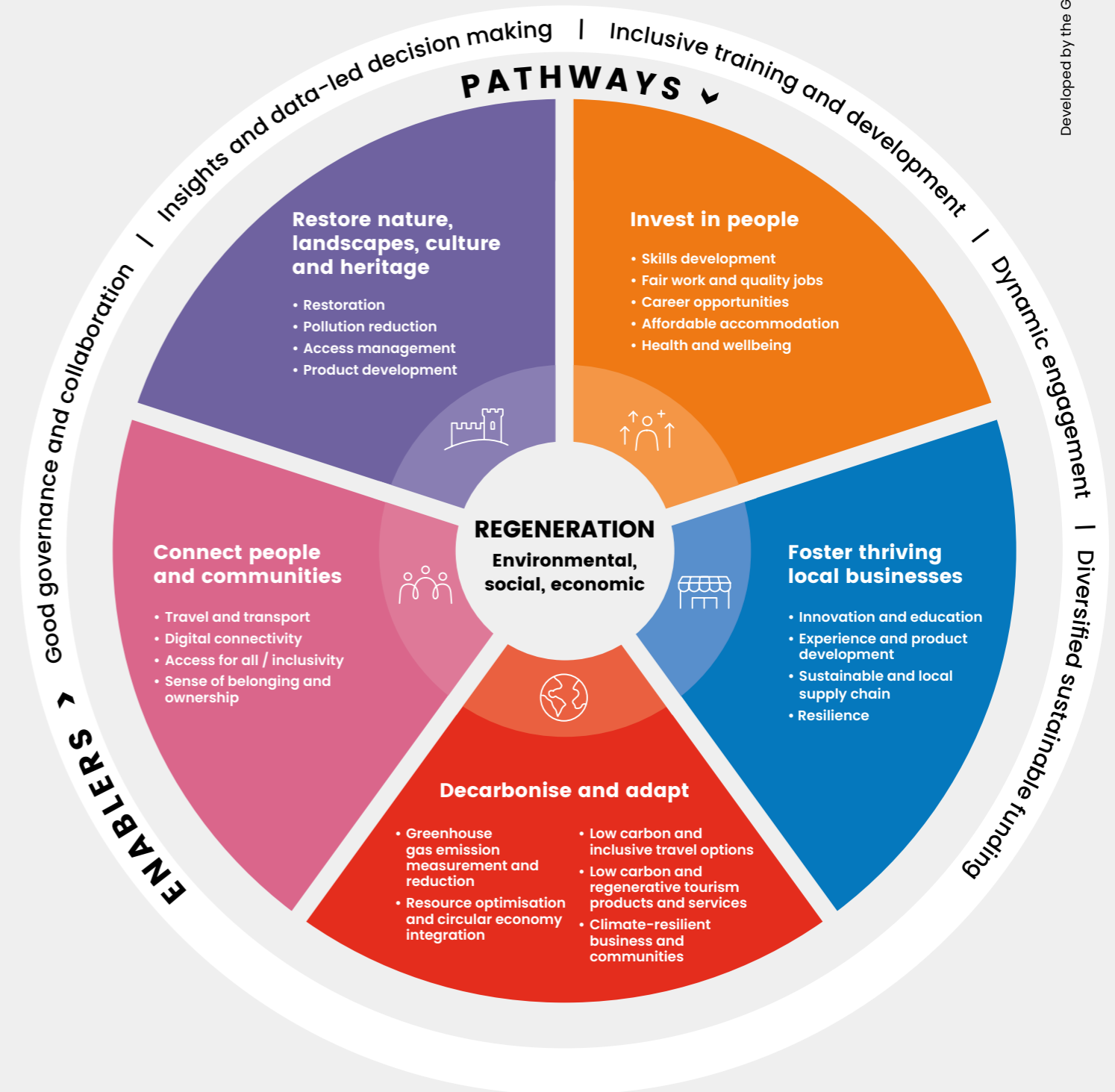
Decarbonise and Adapt

GOAL
Decarbonise the North East visitor economy to create a greener, fairer and more sustainable region; achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 (with an interim target of 50% reduction by 2030).

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Measurement and Reduction

Assess carbon footprint
Measure the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) footprint from tourism and events-related activities at the destination level. Analyse and model the growth expectations of the visitor economy against carbon emissions impact and net-zero goals.

Develop decarbonisation strategies
Identify the decarbonisation pathways for the visitor economy to achieve net-zero emissions and incorporate a roadmap into destination management plans.

Decouple growth from emissions
Use footprint data to develop an optimum market mix of visitors that targets "high-yield, low emissions" segments. Adjust marketing campaigns and resources to focus on these optimum segments.

Define thresholds for visitor numbers
Model carrying capacity and set limits for visitor growth in line with science-based targets and decarbonisation strategies. Monitor growth and develop scenarios and policy to manage excessive visitor numbers.

Supply chain measurement and monitoring
Provide businesses with comprehensive guidance, training and tools to measure, monitor and report their carbon footprint.

Support supply chain reduction strategies
Support businesses in implementing strategies to reduce emissions through programmes such as energy and water efficiency, renewable energy adoption and investment in regional biodiversity projects. Provide them with guidelines, calculators, policy templates and other tools.

Climate-Resilient Businesses and Communities

Model climate impact
Review and model potential climate change impacts on tourism and events and develop adaptation strategies to mitigate extreme weather effects, especially considering disadvantaged areas are often most impacted.

Deliver resilience training
Provide training and resources to help businesses and the wider visitor economy build resilience to climate change impacts, such as flooding and heatwaves.

Enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing
Foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among stakeholders to develop and implement best practices for climate adaptation for businesses and communities.

Facilitate access to funding
Facilitate access to funding and incentives for climate-resilient infrastructure (maintenance and development) and technology upgrades.

Support a just transition
Ensure that opportunities are equally accessible across the region and mitigate negative impacts on residents caused by sustainability actions.

Low Carbon and Regenerative Tourism Products and Services

Develop and promote regenerative experiences
Work with businesses to develop and promote tourism experiences that benefit the environment and local communities.

Promote sustainable and local food
Catalyse, promote and support the sourcing and use of local, seasonal, organic and sustainable food and beverages to enhance culinary authenticity, support local regenerative farming and minimise environmental impact.

Boost certification and labelling
Support certification of low-carbon and regenerative tourism products and experiences to inform consumer choices and drive improvements in business performance. Provide guidance on relevant accredited third-party sustainability certifications available to visitor economy businesses.

Increase visitor awareness
Use marketing channels to educate visitors about their carbon footprint and the consequences of their choices and promote methods to reduce the impact of their journeys and 'nudge' low-carbon, sustainable purchasing decisions.

Resource Optimisation and Circular Economy Integration

Promote circular economy
Encourage adoption of circular economy principles to minimise resource consumption and waste, design waste out of tourism and events, and support inclusion (e.g. reducing food waste, eliminating single-use plastics, supporting reuse of resources for people in need).

Encourage use of more sustainable materials and technologies
Accelerate the use of recycled materials, renewable resources and sustainable products in tourism and events operations and construction.

Build local partnerships
Establish partnerships with local businesses and communities to facilitate resource sharing and promote supply chain circularity.

Low Carbon and Inclusive Travel Options[1]

Advance low carbon transport
Promote and advance the integration of low-carbon transport infrastructure, such as electric vehicle (EV) and e-bike charging stations, bicycle-sharing programmes, development of mini -transport mobility hubs, integrated transport (e.g. bikes on buses / trains) and hydrogen-based transport options.

Improve public transport provision
Collaborate with the combined authority, local authorities and transportation providers to advocate for and enhance public transportation; ensuring it is convenient, accessible, affordable and interconnected.

Facilitate modal shift
Develop and implement inclusive behaviour change campaigns and promotion of relevant and accurate information aimed at encouraging the choice of more sustainable travel options (e.g. a modal shift from car to public transport, walking / cycling over public transport). Support businesses in integrating these messages and information into their own communications. This will enable visitors and workers to adopt active travel (e.g. walking, cycling) and low-carbon transport options.

Decarbonise and Adapt

UN Sustainable Development Goals Alignment

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

1 Please note there are further action areas around travel and transport in the 'Connect people and communities' pathway.

Fab Bakery, Fenham

Foster Thriving Local Businesses

GOAL
Cultivate a vibrant visitor economy by supporting resilient local businesses to develop innovative, inclusive and impactful products and experiences, underpinned by sustainable and local supply chains.
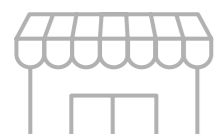
Innovation and Education

Establish visitor economy innovation hubs
Set up hubs to foster entrepreneurship and the development and promotion of new products and experiences within the local communities. These hubs would act as incubators for ideas, innovations and job creation in tourism. Ensure hubs and training programmes encourage and support businesses to employ a diverse workforce.

Provide learning and development programmes
Organise regular training sessions, workshops and mentorship opportunities to educate local tourism businesses about emerging trends, technologies and best practices. This will help businesses stay ahead of the curve, continually improve their offerings and use regenerative principles as a competitive advantage.

Encourage collaboration with educational institutions
Facilitate networking and partnerships between academia, industry experts and businesses to drive innovation in product development, marketing strategies and customer experiences. Collaborative efforts can lead to groundbreaking ideas and successful implementations.

Experience and Product Development[2]

Conduct market research
Perform extensive market research and gather feedback from visitors to identify emerging trends, preferences and opportunities for both niche and mass market regenerative / sustainable travel experiences. Understanding the needs and desires of visitors and residents is crucial for developing appealing, inclusive and impactful offerings.

Catalyse and enable experience development and promotion
Support the creation and promotion of unique, authentic regenerative experiences that showcase local culture, heritage and natural attractions, designed to maximise positive impacts for the people, communities and environment. Use targeted marketing campaigns and digital platforms to promote the experiences, emphasising their sustainable, wellbeing and regenerative aspects.

Facilitate partnerships between business and the creative sector
Collaborate with local artisans, historians and naturalists to develop immersive, engaging experiences that highlight the region's assets

Design for inclusion
Ensure inclusivity is integral to the experience and product design process. By consulting with a diverse range of potential customers, create experiences that are inclusive and accessible, attracting the widest possible audience and enhancing business opportunities, resilience and community benefits.

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2   Please note that further action areas relating to product development are also included in the 'Decarbonise and Adapt' and 'Restore Nature, Landscapes, Culture and Heritage' pathways.

Sustainable and Local Supply Chains

Apply a 'local first' principle
Promote the use of locally sourced products and services within the visitor economy to reduce carbon footprints, support local economies and enhance resilience. Initiatives may include encouraging the use of local food and drink through pledges for events and businesses.

Tell your food story
Develop a strong, coherent food narrative within destinations and across the region, celebrating local food and drink producers and the region's culinary history. Use clear messaging and engaging promotion to captivate visitors and foster pride within local communities. Support businesses to do the same

Connect businesses and local producers
Facilitate connections and collaboration between tourism businesses and local producers, farmers and artisans to establish sustainable supply chains. Utilise the innovation hubs to help identify and address gaps in the local supply chains.

Engage with non-tourism businesses
Encourage non-tourism businesses to explore opportunities for developing tourism and events-focused products and services, thereby broadening the scope of local supply chain (e.g. collaborate with local farming cooperatives to create farm tours and hands-on experiences that celebrate local culture and practices).

Preserve and enhance city centre authenticity
Address 'monoculturalisation' in city centres by promoting good practices, supporting relevant regulations and policies, and providing incentives to maintain retail diversity, support traditional crafts and trades, and foster a vibrant, inclusive local economy.

Promote sustainable supply chain practices
Encourage businesses to engage their supply chains in adopting sustainable practices and pursuing third-party certifications for their operations both directly and throughout their supply chain.

Resilience

Diversify offerings
Develop and promote diverse and inclusive tourism and event offerings to attract visitors year-round, reducing dependency on peak seasons, balance tourist flows geographically, and cater to different visitor profiles. This could include seasonal events, indoor attractions and winter activities.

Support adaptation to market conditions
Provide training and resources to help businesses adapt to seasonality. This includes implementing flexible pricing strategies and exploring alternative revenue streams to maintain stability throughout the year.

Resilience to future shocks
Build the tourism sector's capacity to understand the risks and increase capabilities to withstand external shocks (e.g. economic shocks, pandemics).

Market inclusively
Develop inclusive promotional strategies, ensuring that marketing efforts reach a wide and diverse audience to attract them to the region, for example, providing content that appeals to ethnically diverse markets, the growing market of older people, people with accessibility requirements, the LGBTQIA+ community and others.

Quayside, Newcastle

UN Sustainable Development Goals Alignment

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Foster Thriving Local Businesses

Brinkburn St Brewery, Ouseburn

Invest in People

GOAL
Foster inclusive and prosperous employment opportunities in the North East visitor economy.

Career Opportunities and Skills Development

Engage with schools
Position the tourism and events industry as an aspirational and fulfilling career choice by engaging with schools. Tourism professionals can share their experiences and successes through "day in the life" style videos and presentations of tourism / hospitality professionals.

Partner to increase apprenticeships and internships
Work with educational institutions, industry associations, government agencies and local businesses to offer apprenticeships, internships and on-the-job training opportunities for individuals of diverse backgrounds and all ages, seeking to enter or advance their career within the tourism sector.

Develop career pathways
Create and promote clear career pathways and advancement opportunities within the visitor economy, including promotion prospects, skills development and leadership training.

Support entrepreneurship
Catalyse and support entrepreneurship and small business development by providing access to resources, mentorship and financing for aspiring entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds (link to the innovation hubs).

Promote careers and role models
Launch an inclusive awareness campaign to highlight career opportunities in the tourism and hospitality industry in the North East. Research, document and share success stories of individuals from diverse backgrounds, including young professionals, career changers, and older adults. Showcase career advancement possibilities and the vibrant, diverse work environment, to attract individuals from all backgrounds to the industry.

Support training programmes
Establish and strengthen existing training programmes and vocational courses tailored to the needs of the visitor economy. Focus areas include hospitality, tourism management, cultural heritage, new digital technologies, inclusion training and sustainable tourism practices.

Prioritise lifelong learning
Emphasise and support continuous upskilling and reskilling initiatives to ensure workers of all ages remain competitive and adaptable

Fair Work and Quality Jobs

Advocate for fair labour practices
Promote fair labour practices, including living wages, equal pay and safe working conditions across all sectors of the visitor economy.

Promote inclusive hiring practices
Encourage tourism businesses to adopt inclusive hiring and working practices that eliminate barriers to employment for marginalised groups, promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Recruit talent from outside the region
Develop programmes with partners to attract talent from outside the region to live and work in the North East. Facilitate knowledge transfer to learn from new talent and exemplars outside the region.

Promote certification programmes and recognition schemes
Implement certification programmes and recognition schemes (such as **The Good Work Pledge**, **Accredited Living Wage Employers**) to highlight tourism businesses committed to providing quality jobs and fostering a positive work environment for their employees.

Affordable Accommodation

Advocate for affordable accommodation for workers
Support access to affordable housing options for visitor economy employees, helping to attract and retain a diverse and stable workforce. Work with local authorities, housing providers and the industry to develop and promote affordable accommodation solutions.

Health and Wellbeing

Promote workplace wellness programmes
Implement preventative wellness programmes that prioritise the physical, mental and emotional health of employees within the visitor economy.

Provide access to mental health support
Ensure access to counselling services and mental health support for workers in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Foster work-life balance
Promote a culture of work-life balance by advocating for flexible work arrangements, paid time off and family-friendly policies to support the overall wellbeing of employees and their families.

Integrate social prescribing with regenerative tourism
Collaborate with local health providers to prescribe inclusive and accessible tourism activities, such as leisure, arts, culture and nature experiences. This approach has been proven to support the physical and mental health of local communities, lower healthcare costs and foster a welcoming environment for all.

Tackle food poverty
Implement programmes to redistribute unused food from tourism and events businesses to local communities in need. This will help address food poverty, reduce waste, and support the health and wellbeing of vulnerable populations.

UN Sustainable Development Goals Alignment

Invest in People

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

5 GENDER EQUALITY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

St James' and St Basil's Church, Fenham

Connect People and Communities

GOAL
Foster integrated infrastructure and services in the North East visitor economy to enhance mobility and community wellbeing, supporting inclusive experiences and community connection.

Travel and Transport[3]

Advocate for transport infrastructure investment
Lobby for the development and improvement of transport infrastructure, including active travel routes (e.g. footpaths and cycle paths), public transport systems and roads. This will enhance connectivity within and between destinations and local communities across the North East region, enhancing the visitor experience and improving workforce access routes to benefit businesses and communities.

Implement accessibility standards
Advocate for multilingual accessibility standards and inclusive design principles in transportation services to accommodate all travellers, including those with limited mobility and other accessibility requirements. This fosters a welcoming and inclusive travel environment.

Expand and enhance travel options
Collaborate with transport providers to expand and enhance travel options such as shuttle services, bike-sharing programmes, bikes on transit and electric vehicle charging stations. This will facilitate convenient and sustainable mobility for workforce, visitors and residents.

Develop interconnected active travel routes
Maintain, develop and promote a network of new and existing interconnected, safe and direct active travel routes for walking, wheeling and cycling throughout the North East region. This includes improved cycle parking and e-bike charging points. These routes will support low-carbon transport and active travel options while enhancing the tourism product (e.g. disused railway lines), reducing inequalities and improving health.

Streamline ticketing processes
Provide incentives and streamlined ticketing processes (e.g. multi-modal tickets, multi-day travel passes and region-wide tickets) to facilitate the transition to sustainable modes of transport. This will encourage exploration of diverse destinations within the region and incentivise public transit usage among both visitors and locals.

Digital Connectivity

Improve digital accessibility
Advocate for improved access to high-speed internet and digital technologies in rural and underserved areas. Ensure digital platforms are accessible to as many people as possible, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunity. This will help to bridge the digital divide and help ensure equal opportunities for all businesses, community members and visitors to participate in and benefit from the digital economy.

Provide digital literacy training and support
Provide training and support for digital literacy skills to empower businesses to leverage digital tools and resources for communication, marketing and economic development.

Foster partnership with technology companies
Foster partnerships with technology companies and telecommunications providers to invest in infrastructure upgrades and deploy innovative solutions that improve digital connectivity and inclusive access across the region.

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3   Please note there are further travel and transport related action areas in the 'Decarbonise and Adapt' pathway.

Eldon Square, Newcastle

Access for All / Inclusivity

Design and promote accessible infrastructure and visitor experiences
Ensure that infrastructure, services and experiences are designed with accessibility in mind or adapted to accommodate the needs of people with health conditions or impairments. Use co-design principles to ensure services are designed and adapted 'with' and not 'for' users. Provide accurate and reliable information on accessibility features for visitors.

Provide inclusivity, accessibility and diversity training
Offer training and awareness programmes for tourism businesses and staff to promote understanding and sensitivity towards customers with diverse needs, for example due to faith or cultural background, physical and mental health conditions and socio-economic status.

Promote diversity and accessibility in tourism
Promote diversity, accessibility and inclusion in tourism offerings and marketing campaigns to attract a broad range of visitors and talent. Encourage and support businesses in welcoming everyone, including, for example, international visitors, disabled people, people of various faith groups, the LGBTQIA+ community, families living in poverty and neurodivergent individuals. Excellent customer service needs to meet diverse visitor needs and access requirements, creating memorable experiences that encourage recommendations and repeat visits by demonstrating that all visitors are valued and understood.

Sense of Belonging and Ownership

Foster community engagement
Engage residents in tourism planning and development through participatory forums, public consultations and community-led initiatives.

Create engagement opportunities
Provide opportunities for residents to become stakeholders in tourism businesses and projects, such as community-owned attractions or eco-tourism ventures. This fosters a sense of ownership and investment in the local visitor economy.

Establish ongoing dialogue
Establish mechanisms for ongoing dialogue and feedback with residents (e.g. resident sentiment survey for the region), businesses and government agencies. This ensures that tourism development initiatives align with community priorities and values.

UN Sustainable Development Goals Alignment

Restore Nature, Landscapes, Culture and Heritage

GOAL
Promote sustainable practices to restore nature, and enhance landscapes, culture and heritage, while fostering resilient communities and creating accessible, innovative products.

Restoration

Collaborate with conservation organisations
Partner with local and national conservation organisations and community groups to identify priority areas for restoration efforts. Focus on habitats, species, landscapes and cultural heritage sites that have been, or are, at risk of being degraded or lost. The UK government goal is to protect at least 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030, in support of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Support tourism investment in restoration projects
Develop and implement mechanisms for tourism businesses and visitors to support and invest in restoration projects. Utilise local knowledge, traditional skills and sustainable practices to rehabilitate ecosystems, regenerate natural habitats and preserve cultural heritage sites.

Engage residents, businesses and visitors in restoration activities
Involve local stakeholders and visitors in restoration activities such as tree planting, beach clean-ups and heritage conservation workshops. This fosters a sense of stewardship and connection to the environment and local culture.

Pollution Reduction

Implement pollution reduction measures
Reduce pollution related to tourism through encouraging active travel instead of driving and establishing waste management systems, recycling programmes and restrictions on single-use plastics and harmful chemicals. Address noise and light pollution where relevant.

Advocate for surge provision
Lobby for increased public waste management services during peak hours and periods to manage higher levels of waste generated by increased tourist activity.

Educate on pollution impact
Educate visitors and tourism businesses about the impacts of pollution on nature, landscapes and cultural heritage. Promote responsible behaviour and sustainable practices.

Enforce pollution regulations
Collaborate with local authorities and industry stakeholders to enforce regulations and standards for pollution control. Monitor the environmental impact of tourism activities to ensure compliance and effectiveness.

Access Management

Develop sustainable access management plans
Create plans for natural and cultural sites that balance visitor use with conservation objectives. Minimise ecological and cultural impacts while ensuring positive, accessible and inclusive visitor experiences.

Create visitor education programmes
Implement visitor education and interpretation programmes to inform tourists about the importance of responsible behaviour and respect for access restrictions in sensitive areas.

Establish and monitor carrying capacities
Work with local communities to establish and monitor sustainable limits, thresholds and carrying capacities (environmental and social) for popular destinations. Balance economic benefits with the need for environmental and cultural protection and community wellbeing. Ensure clear communication with destination management organisations and other promoters to incorporate restrictions and limits into strategic marketing plans.

Advocate for public rights of way (PROW) maintenance
Lobby for increased resources for Access Authorities to maintain and improve the PROW network, ensuring they are safe and accessible for all users.

Product Development[4]

Catalyse tourism product development
Encourage and advocate for the development of innovative tourism products and experiences that engage and connect visitors with the natural beauty, cultural richness and heritage authenticity of the destination.

Support local entrepreneurs
Assist local entrepreneurs and businesses in creating sustainable and culturally immersive tourism offerings such as eco-tours, heritage walks and farm-to-table experiences. Ensure these products respect environmental and community sensitivities.

Promote collaborative innovation
Foster collaboration between tourism operators, artisans and cultural practitioners to co-create unique products and experiences. Celebrate local traditions, crafts and cuisine while contributing to nature recovery and cultural enhancement

UN Sustainable Development Goals Alignment

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW WATER
15 LIFE ON LAND	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	

Restore Nature, Landscapes, Culture and Heritage

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4   Please note that further action areas relating to product development are also included in the 'Decarbonise and Adapt' and 'Foster Thriving Local Businesses' pathways.

Enablers

Achieving the goals and related activities outlined in the Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework requires a robust set of enablers to ensure effective implementation, collaboration and sustainability. These enablers are foundational elements that support the framework's success and longevity.

Good Governance and Collaboration

→ Establish a formal partnership framework and governance structure to facilitate collaboration, innovation and decision making among the tourism sector, local communities, non-profit organisations, academia and other key stakeholders.

→ Promote regular engagement through forums, workshops and advisory boards to ensure all voices are heard and integrated into the decision-making process.

→ Create governance processes to oversee tourism developments, ensuring they align with regenerative principles and mitigate any harmful impacts on communities and natural environments.

→ Implement oversight mechanisms to review and assess the sustainability of tourism projects continuously.

Diversified Sustainable Funding

→ Obtain funding from various sources, including government grants, private-sector partnerships and international funding bodies, to ensure the continuity and implementation of the regenerative visitor economy framework.

→ Develop investment incentives for private sector involvement in sustainable tourism initiatives.

→ Attract impact investors focused on both financial returns and positive social and environmental impacts.

→ Develop sustainable, long-term funding strategies to provide continuous financial support, including multi-year grants and ongoing revenue-generating activities.

Insights and Data-Led Decision Making

→ Conduct a comprehensive baseline assessment to understand the current state of tourism, environmental conditions and community wellbeing in the region.

→ Use this assessment as a benchmark to measure progress and identify priority areas needing improvement.

→ Develop a centralised data platform with measurable performance indicators to monitor the implementation and impact of the framework.

→ Ensure the platform is accessible to all stakeholders to promote transparency and informed decision making.

→ Collaborate with technology partners to leverage big data analytics for improved decision making.

→ Use data insights to forecast trends, manage resources efficiently and tailor marketing strategies to target audiences.

Inclusive Training and Development

→ Implement comprehensive capacity-building programmes focusing on regenerative tourism principles and sustainable practices.

→ Partner with businesses educational institutions and community groups to design and deliver training and development opportunities for tourism professionals and community members.

→ Promote lifelong learning and continuous professional development to ensure the tourism workforce remains adaptable and skilled in emerging sustainable practices.
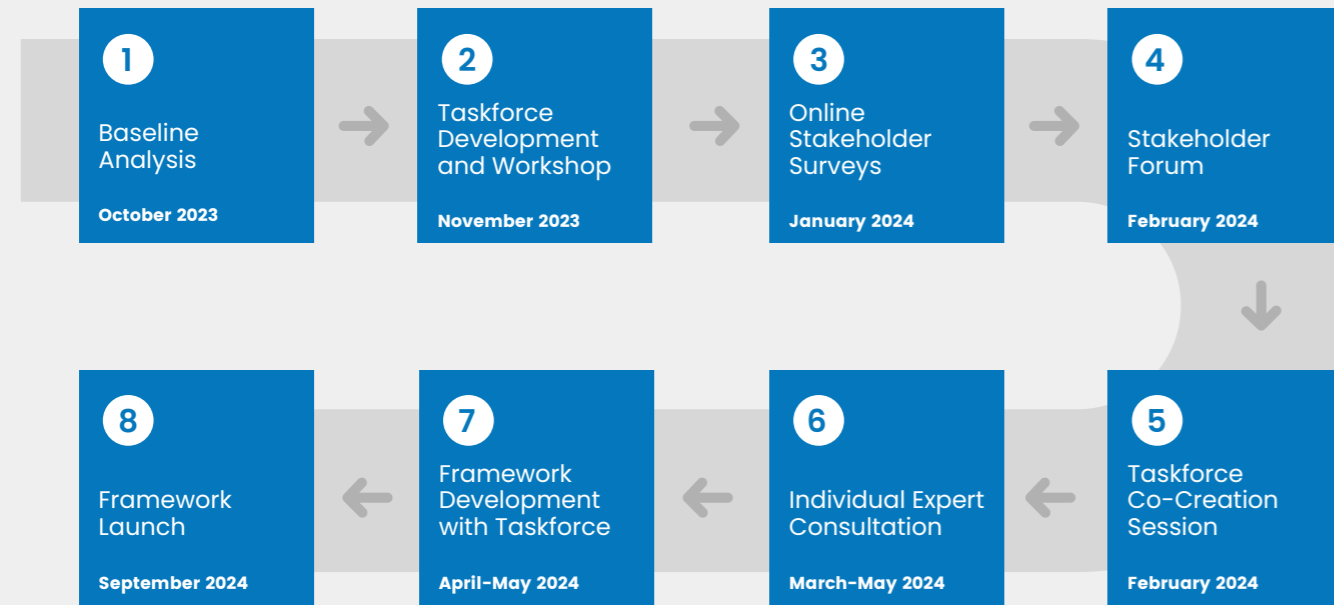
Dynamic Engagement

→ Develop and implement a strategic communication plan to convey the principles, benefits and success stories of regenerative tourism to stakeholders, residents and visitors across the region.

→ Use diverse and inclusive communication channels, including social media, local influencers and community events, to reach a broad audience.

→ Ensure communication is tailored to resonate with different audiences, fostering a shared understanding and commitment to regenerative tourism.

→ Utilise the collective power of stakeholders to disseminate messages and stories effectively.

Appendix 1:

Development of the North East England Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework

Overview of the co-creation process

1 Baseline Analysis **October 2023**	**2** Taskforce Development and Workshop **November 2023**	**3** Online Stakeholder Surveys **January 2024**	**4** Stakeholder Forum **February 2024**
8 Framework Launch **September 2024**	**7** Framework Development with Taskforce **April-May 2024**	**6** Individual Expert Consultation **March-May 2024**	**5** Taskforce Co-Creation Session **February 2024**

Interested parties involved in the advisory groups

Destination North East England Sustainability Steering Group

The Destination North East England Sustainability Steering Group includes representatives from the three LVEPs (NewcastleGateshead Initiative, Visit County Durham and Visit Northumberland) plus four local authorities (Gateshead, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland).

Steering Group participants were:

- **Ian Thomas**
  NewcastleGateshead Initiative

- **Shelley Johnson**
  NewcastleGateshead Initiative, Steering Group Chair

- **Jade Galloway**
  NewcastleGateshead Initiative, Steering Group Admin Support

- **Lucy Wearne**
  Visit County Durham

- **Neil Carney**
  Visit Northumberland

- **Andrew Tate**
  Gateshead Council

- **Pete Warne**
  North Tyneside Council

- **Susannah Aynsley**
  Sunderland City Council

- **Gemma Davison**
  South Tyneside Council

Regenerative Visitor Economy Taskforce

Purpose of the taskforce
The advisory taskforce provides input and guidance to the Destination North East England partners and stakeholders in support of the Destination Development Partnership's objectives including the development of a Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework and associated initiatives.

Composition of the taskforce
The taskforce comprises of 34 members, including tourism professionals, community representatives, public sector officials, academic institutions, and environmental and social non-governmental organisations. Members are selected based on their expertise, commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, and willingness to challenge mindsets and consider diverse perspectives from various geographic areas, sectors and networks.

Taskforce Volunteers

1. **Alnwick Garden**
   Craig Ellis

2. **ASM Global**
   Steve Daun

3. **Beaconhouse Events**
   Sarah Thackray

4. **Bidfood**
   Susan Justice

5. **Big River Bakery**
   Andy Haddon

6. **Durham Castle and Cathedral UNESCO World Heritage Site**
   Anne Allen

7. **Durham University**
   Andrea Cairns

8. **National Innovation Centre for Ageing**
   Claire Robinson

9. **Net Zero North East England**
   Jess Cook

10. **Newcastle International Airport**
    Kate Hall

11. **NEXUS Tyne and Wear Transport**
    Tomas Allum

12. **NewcastleGateshead Initiative**
    Jonny Chambers

13. **North East Combined Authority**
    Lesley Strickland

14. **North East Cultural Partnership**
    Matthew Jarratt

15. **North East England DDP accessibility consultants**
    Chris Veitch

16. **North East England DDP accessibility consultants**
    Jane Cooper

17. **North East Hotels Association**
    Anna Wadcock

18. **North Pennines National Landscape**
    Shane Harris

19. **Northern Latitude**
    Simon Laing

20. **Northumberland Coast National Landscape**
    Iain Robson

21. **Northumberland County Council**
    Tony Brown

22. **Northumberland National Park Authority / Northumberland DMP Sustainability Advisory Group**
    Duncan Wise

23. **Northumbria University (tourism department)**
    Tom Mordue

24. **Northumbrian Water**
    Debbie Mitchell

25. **Port of Tyne**
    Suzanne Hayes

26. **Port of Tyne**
    Tracey Younger

27. **Reach**
    Helen Dalby

28. **Sunderland City Council**
    Louise Marrin

29. **Sunderland City Council**
    Jane Simmons

30. **Sunderland University (tourism department)**
    Serkan Uzunogullari

31. **Sustrans North East**
    Jonah Morris

32. **The Heart of Hadrian's Wall Tourism Association**
    Nigel Jarvis

33. **Transport North East**
    Simon Jobe

34. **VisitEngland**
    Paul Szomoru

Expert Interviews

Additional interviews were undertaken to gather further input, validation and support for the Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework:

- **DCMS**
  Duncan Parish

- **Fork - Food in Place**
  Jemma Hynes (Northumberland Food Strategy)

- **National Trust**
  Sarah Pemberton

- **Net Zero North East England**
  Jess Cook

- **NewcastleGateshead Initiative**
  Ian Thomas

- **NewcastleGateshead Initiative**
  Elaine Griffiths

- **North East Combined Authority**
  Mark Adamson

- **North East England DDP Working Group**

- **North Tyneside Council**
  Paul Nelson

- **North Tyneside Council**
  Pete Warne

- **Northumberland DMP Board**

- **Northumberland County Council**
  Maria Antoniou

- **Sunderland City Council**
  Louise Marrin and Susannah Aynsley

- **Transport North East**
  Simon Jobe

- **Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums**
  Keith Merrin

- **Visit County Durham**
  Michelle Gorman

- **VisitEngland**
  Ross Calladine

- **VisitEngland**
  Rachel McCaffrey

What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make

Jane Goodall, DBE

Call to action

Join us in transforming North East England into a model of regenerative tourism and events. Together, we can create a thriving visitor economy that fosters environmental stewardship, social equity and sustainable growth. Let's act now to ensure a vibrant and resilient future for our communities, businesses and natural heritage.

Your commitment, collaboration and action are essential to make this vision a reality.

For latest updates on North East England regenerative tourism campaigns and activities, and to access latest resources, visit destinationnortheastengland.co.uk

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