

Flintshire Destination Management Plan 2024-2026

Setting the scene

Tourism is an important economic driver for the County and the wider region. It is currently worth an estimated £325 million to the economy, generated from 3.7 million visitors. (STEAM data 2022).

Visitors, more than ever, want to explore an area, learn about it and come away with a sense of having experienced somewhere different, somewhere unique.

The county has two exceptional natural assets. The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is recognised for its nationally important landscape which runs down the west of the county. The Dee Estuary is one of the most important wildlife sites in Europe. Although both areas are widely used for recreation and tourism more can be done to increase access and interpretation, whilst protecting their valuable but sensitive environment.

Visitors, more than ever, want to explore an area, learn about it and come away with a sense of having experienced somewhere different, somewhere unique.

The plan will support our communities and tourism businesses across Flintshire to improve, grow sector value, whilst benefiting our visitors and residents. It will allow us to play a role in ensuring that Flintshire has a sustainable and buoyant visitor economy, which seeks to gain national and international recognition for our sense of place and for everything we offer our communities and visitors.

Our Vision for Flintshire's Visitor Economy 2023-26

We want Flintshire's tourism industry to be one which will make use of the superb natural environment, along with the richness of its Welsh heritage, culture, language, and products, to invite people to explore, understand and enjoy the County. The diverse offer will be complemented by a commitment to quality; easy access to information; and by striving to ensure that every facet of the visitors' experience meets their expectations.

What is a Destination Management Plan?

Destination Management is concerned with managing the destination in its widest form for the benefit of all.

- It covers all the aspects of a destination that contribute to a visitor's experience, taking account of the needs of visitors, residents, businesses, and the environment.

Flintshire is remarkably rich in historical remains, simply because it's been frontier country for centuries. Strategically placed Iron Age hillforts, such as Penycloddiau and Moel y Gaer, dominate the skyline of the Clwydian Range and Halkyn Mountain.

The county is dotted with castles built during the ongoing power struggle between the Welsh princes and Anglo-Norman kings. Ewloe and Caergwrle were built by Welsh hands, but Flint was the first in the mighty chain of 13th-century fortresses built by Edward I all along the North Wales coast as far as Harlech.

Flintshire was important spiritually too. St Winefride's Well was one of the most revered places of Christian pilgrimage in Europe and the now ruined Basingwerk Abbey was wealthy and influential. Our picturesque village churches and chapels bear testament to the key role religion played in everyday life.

The 18th and 19th centuries brought new prosperity to Flintshire, changing the face of the countryside and transforming our towns and villages. Greenfield Valley was one of the cradles of the Industrial Revolution in Wales and Halkyn Mountain was pitted and scarred by a lead mining and quarrying boom.

- It focuses on the elements that attract visitors, as well as the infrastructure and services that support their visit. The term ‘visitor’ applies to those spending their holidays in an area as tourist, but it also includes local people visiting an area for a day or less.
- Destination Management recognises the wider impact of people including those who live relatively nearby and who use services, infrastructure and enjoy local assets. It extends to all aspects of the economy and requires collaboration to run effectively and sustainably.
- Destination Management ideally involves the physical, financial, and operational management of a destination, but also its planning, development, and marketing.

The Destination Flintshire Partnership brings together the key partners responsible for managing Flintshire as a destination. Representatives from tourism businesses, Flintshire Tourism Association, Clwydian Range Tourism Group, local food and drink groups sit alongside Coleg Cambria, Aura, Theatr Clwyd, North East Wales Heritage Forum, Town Centre partners and a range of Flintshire County Council functions: Regeneration, Countryside Services, Planning, Streetscene and Place-Making.

The role of the group is to develop, implement and monitor an effective action plan to improve the management of Flintshire as a destination.

Communication will be vitally important to the group and will include:

- The members of the Partnership are expected to communicate with their wider memberships or stakeholders so that the work of the Partnership is based on a broad information base.
- An annual event with the wider community is held to provide an update on progress and to refresh the priorities for the future.
- An e-bulletin will be distributed to businesses and other stakeholders to keep them abreast of events, new initiatives and wider developments.
- The Partnership will report progress regularly to the ‘Economic Recovery’ and ‘Place Making’ groups to ensure a complementary approach is taken.

There are many factors driving the need for Flintshire’s Destination Management Plan to make it ready to work with the challenges and opportunities of 2023 and beyond.

This plan will have to respond to the following Destination Management and Flintshire corporate priorities: -

- The changing visitor profile i.e., converting day visitors into overnight visitors.
- Growth in unlicensed short-term lets (Airbnb properties).
- An increase through digital presence of existing online platforms to reach a wider audience, how we respond and engage to raise awareness of tourism products and the visitor offer.
- Skills and employment gaps in the sector.
- The physical risk of climate change, along with the increasing pressure of visitor numbers on the environment.
- Protection and promotion of the Welsh language.
- Second home policies and taxes.
- Proposals for an introduction of a visitor levy in Wales on visitors staying overnight in visitor accommodation.
- Supporting local businesses in their efforts to reduce their carbon footprint and become more resource efficient.

- Building upon the success of partnership working develop it further by looking towards greater integration with regeneration activity in the county, as well as developing stronger partnerships with organisations in North West England.

Strategic context

The Destination Management Plan aims to consider and support the wider strategic objectives identified in local, regional and national policies.

Welsh Government Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Act has seven well-being goals. Together they provide a shared vision for the public bodies listed in the Act to work towards. They are a set of goals; the Act makes it clear the listed public bodies must work to achieve all of the goals, not just one or two. The 2023-26 Destination Management Action Plan aims to support Flintshire County Council in achieving these goals.

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

Welcome to Wales: priorities for the visitor economy 2020 to 2025 (National)

The ambition is to: 'Grow tourism for the good of Wales', and the approach is: High quality, year-round experiences, and 'Inherently Welsh' but with a global outlook (Bro & Byd) The core offer is outstanding natural landscapes, creative culture, and epic adventure. There are four priorities for actions: -

- Great products and places
- Quality visitor experiences
- Innovative brand
- An Engaged and vibrant sector.

The National Events Strategy for Wales 2022 – 2030

There are three strands:

- Align the industry – a long term 'build' approach supporting the capacity to grow, sustainably.
- Authenticity – Welshness and alignment with the Wales brand
- All of Wales – ensuring geographical spread, inclusive and community connections.

AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy (Regional – emerging)

Emerging themes are around sustainable destination and businesses, positioning and marketing and business engagement.

Flintshire Council Plan 2017-30 (Local)

Flintshire County Council's Plan has six themes:

1. Poverty
2. Affordable and Accessible Housing
3. Green Society and Environment

4. Economy
5. Personal and Community Well-being
6. Education and Skills

The most relevant theme to this Plan is Economy i.e., regenerate & reinvent our town centres, enable business continuity and encourage appropriate investment, develop and promote effective transport connectivity and work with partners to support individuals to gain employment.

Flintshire Coast Park Study (Local)

Building foundations for an accessible Coast Park in Flintshire which celebrates the natural environment and heritage of our Welsh coast by:

- Delivering a 5-year development plan with a costed business case
- Producing and implementing a marketing and branding plan
- Establishing the working arrangements for the future administration of the coast park
- Delivering a series of pilot initiatives to enhance green infrastructure, including tree, hedge planting and access projects.
- Strengthening the connection of the coast with the local community and businesses through volunteering opportunities, stakeholder engagement and events.
- Creating spatial plans and feasibility studies for the coast park hubs

Flintshire Placemaking Plans (Local – emerging)

In Flintshire, the Council has committed to developing and implementing Place Making Plans for the towns of: Buckley, Connah’s Quay, Flint, Holywell, Mold, Shotton and Queensferry to increase the appeal of the town centres to the local population and day visitors.

Our Aims

The plan will aim to:

- Develop a stronger sense of place for Flintshire and raise the quality of the location as a visitor destination.
- Increase the value of business and activity tourism in Flintshire.
- Improve the awareness of our visitor offer and provide ease of access to information for residents and visitors.
- Further improve the quality of accommodation and attractions
- Support the development of new infrastructure and attract and invest in high calibre staff.
- Monitor the impact of tourism and the effectiveness of interventions.
- Support industry partners with decarbonisation.

Headline Priorities 2023-26

Actions within the plan are grouped under four headline priorities: -

Priority	Challenges	Opportunities
People, Skills and Employment	Poor perceptions of working in the tourism industry Skills and employment gaps in the sector	School involvement and education to increase engagement of children learning about their place, environment and looking after it sustainably.

		<p>Flintshire Tourism Ambassador Course – learning & improving knowledge about unique qualities of the area.</p> <p>Educate and develop skills among local people – create a career.</p>
<p>Marketing & Communication</p>	<p>Developing a clearer brand for the area</p> <p>Changing visitor profiles</p> <p>Seasonality – do more to grow off-peak tourism.</p> <p>Spread – ‘honey pot’ sites are very busy.</p>	<p>The visitor economy can bring multiple benefits to the local community, but there is an opportunity for these to be developed and better communicated.</p> <p>Our culture, heritage, uniqueness is undersold. Opportunity to improve awareness of places through signage and celebrating local identity and brand.</p> <p>Becoming a more sustainable destination – embracing sustainability is an opportunity for Flintshire to further develop its brand.</p>
<p>Great Products and Places</p>	<p>Public Transport Access – less served by public transport, especially rail.</p> <p>** New rules for Second Homes and holiday lets may have a disproportionate impact on businesses where tourism is not as a high. **</p> <p>Growth / current lack of quality assurance in short term Air BnB lets. Need to understand and build relationship with this market.</p> <p>The physical risk of climate change, along with the increasing pressure of visitor numbers on the environment.</p>	<p>Developing foundations for an accessible Flintshire Coast Park celebrating the natural environment and heritage of the coast.</p> <p>Place Making Programme</p> <p>Wales Coast Path – investment in infrastructure, marketing, and development of the coastal path.</p> <p>Potential for new National Park status in North East Wales.</p> <p>Shared Prosperity Fund programme.</p> <p>Making our products more visible to communities and visitors e.g., heritage sites</p>

	<p>Seasonality – extending the season. Do more to grow off-peak tourism.</p> <p>Spend – encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more.</p>	<p>Programme of investment in tourism products.</p>
<p>Partnership & Engagement</p>	<p>Funding and resources</p>	<p>Continue to strengthen the cross-border partnerships, particularly the North-East Wales Partnership. It provides a vehicle to promote the wider area, attract funding and achieve economies of scale.</p> <p>Continued development of partnerships e.g., Destination Flintshire Partnership and Local Tourism / Food & Drink Groups.</p>

** Increase to the maximum level of council tax premiums for second homes, as well as new local tax rules for holiday lets. The change increased thresholds to being available to let for at least 252 days and actually letting for at least 182 days in any 12-month period.

Delivery

It is expected, in delivering this plan, that Flintshire County Council will continue to play a vital role in leading and co-ordinating the various activities of the partners and in supporting their work. The Local Authority will continue to use its own resources, in partnership with the Destination Management group, to make targeted investments in tourism to enhance the offer, increase visitor numbers and continue to develop activities that will improve visitor experiences and the value of the tourism economy to make use of the opportunities that external funding can present.

An action plan has been produced for the initial period 2023-26. It is expected to be an organic document, which will adapt to funding, marketing and environment changes and respond to new opportunities and issues. In balance to this, it also provides an outline monitoring framework for the plan against which to review progress.

Monitoring the Action Plan

The action plan will be monitored to ensure that it makes progress towards the outcomes anticipated, offers good value for the investments made and realises wider benefits from tourism to the county.

Progress towards delivering this plan will be reported to:

- Flintshire Destination Management Partnership
- Flintshire County Council and the reporting structures within the organisation
- Relevant partner organisations or funding bodies

Monitoring the strategy will include several tiers:

- Many of the activities within the action plan will themselves have their own targets developed to ensure that they are effective, offer good value for money and meet the needs of its funding partners.
- The collective actions within the plan will deliver a range of outcomes, summarised in the table below. Progress towards achieving these will be monitored over the lifetime of the action plan and actions will be adjusted to reflect progress.
- The plan seeks to maximise the benefit of tourism in Flintshire, especially in terms of visitor expenditure and increasing the number of staying visitors.

The broad aims of the Destination Management Plan are to: -

Outcome	Baseline 2022	Broad aim 2027
Increase in number of staying visitors and high-yield visitors to the region	860,000 (STEAM 2022)	Increase by 10%
Increase in the number of FTE jobs supported by tourism spend	3,342 (STEAM 2022)	Increase by 5%
Increase in the economic impact of tourism (£)	£325 million (STEAM 2022)	Increase by 10%
Increase in the number of Flintshire Tourism Ambassadors (online course)	25	500

Flintshire Destination Management Action Plan 2023-26

Headline Priority 1: People, Skills and Employment

Ref	Action	Delivery Partners	Priority		
			2024	2025	2026
1.1	Work closely with and support local FE Colleges with linking businesses into employability schemes and providers	FCC, CC, FTA, CRTG, CRFDG, NEW	✓	✓	✓
1.2	Engage with schools, colleges, and Local Authority Education Services to encourage careers in the tourism and hospitality industry.	FCC, FTA, CRTG, CC	✓	✓	✓
1.3	Work with industry partners to develop methods for monitoring and gathering data on skills related issues in the sector e.g., the challenges of recruitment and retention. Utilise this data to develop promotional and engagement campaigns that will support in raising awareness of career opportunities for future generations.	FTA, CRTG, CC, VW	✓		
1.4	Flintshire Tourism Ambassador Course – continue the development of this accredited online knowledge and learning platform, including the introduction of new modules to increase awareness of local and regional destinations and share knowledge that has been learned with visitors.	FCC, NEW, FTA, CRTG, CRFDG	✓	✓	✓

Flintshire Destination Management Action Plan 2023-26

Headline Priority 2: Marketing and Communication

Ref	Action	Delivery Partners	Priority		
			2024	2025	2026
2.1	Work with industry partners to strengthen the Come to Wales brand and marketing activity to promote our visitor offer	FTA, FCC	✓	✓	✓
2.2	Maximise number of PR opportunities through press releases and blogs on the Come to Wales and North East Wales platforms	FCC, NEW	✓		
2.3	Develop and run promotional campaigns that will encourage visitors to consider a broader range of sites across the county to relieve pressure on 'honeypot' destinations	DFP, FCC	✓	✓	✓
2.4	Develop clear and consistent imagery and messages based on Flintshire's strengths and encourage their use across other industry sectors and organisations.	FCC, FTA, CRTG, NEW	✓	✓	✓
2.5	Encourage industry partners to work together to form clusters and develop marketing packages – identify opportunity areas, provide the vehicle for networking and discussions, identify, and promote good practice.	FCC, DFP	✓	✓	✓
2.6	Develop and co-ordinate an appropriate and effective distribution service to ensure current marketing material is available to the public, developing new outlets as appropriate.	FCC	✓		
2.7	Review and develop the tourist information point network to enhance the impact of the local distribution of information.	FCC, FTA, CRTG	✓	✓	
2.8	Collaborate with partners to develop and run group travel promotion campaigns that will increase the number of coach tour operators visiting destinations in Flintshire.	FCC, DFP	✓	✓	

Flintshire Destination Management Action Plan 2023-26

Headline Priority 3: Great Products and Places

Ref	Action	Delivery Partners	Priority		
			2024	2025	2026
3.1	Work with local heritage sites and industry partners to raise the profile of the heritage offer with visitors and raise awareness of other places of interest across the County.	DFP, NEWHF, FCC	✓		
3.2	Contribute to the development of the coast park, advocating on behalf of the visitor sector and helping to ensure that the needs of the sector are reflected in the emerging strategies, policies and governance.	DFP, FCC	✓	✓	✓
3.3	Improve Flintshire's profile as a high-quality food and drink destination through promotion of local food and drink producers with industry partners	CRFDG, FCC, DFP	✓	✓	✓
3.4	Identify strategic alignment between the Place Making Plans and the Destination Management Plan and ensuring the actions emerging from each are mutually supportive and beneficial for industry partners and visitors.	FCC, DFP	✓	✓	✓
3.5	Work with industry partners to deliver the provision for a new visitor centre building at Flint Castle and Foreshore.	FCC, DFP	✓	✓	✓
3.6	Conduct and maintain an audit of all tourism sites and visitor attractions which are available across Flintshire to provide a current baseline of information to raise awareness and increase footfall, celebrate and promote the offer we have. Encourage the providers to cross refer and collaborate. i.e., Bailey Hill, Greenfield Valley Heritage Park, Park in the Past.	DFP, FCC	✓		
3.7	Collaborate with visitor accommodation providers to establish better links with the construction industry to accommodate construction workers within the county, to contribute to the local visitor economy and supply chain e.g., construction projects such as new build residential homes and schools.	FCC, DFP, FTA, CRTG, VW	✓	✓	✓
3.8	Engage with industry partners to: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ build an evidence base on what the visitor sector needs in terms of transport to influence national and regional transport planning. 	FCC	✓	✓	✓

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide a clear view on what facilities the sector needs to improve its visitor experience in key destinations e.g., public conveniences, EV charging, car parking, accessible rights of way. Use this evidence base to influence regional and local plans and service delivery. 				
3.9	Improving the visibility of our assets through implementing a programme of new & upgraded tourist and boundary sign packages for sites of cultural, heritage & natural significance and to develop use of open spaces along the Dee Coastline.	FCC	✓		
3.10	Ensure the Destination Management Partnership is kept informed on the Council's future work programme to review rural issues and encourage the sector to participate in the any consultations to better understand the needs of rural areas in the county.	FCC	✓	✓	✓

Flintshire Destination Management Action Plan 2023-26

Headline Priority 4: Partnership & Engagement

Ref	Action	Delivery Partners	Priority		
			2024	2025	2026
4.1	Continue to implement and develop an effective two-way communication with the trade, other organisations, and public sector organisations. Collaborate with the Flintshire Tourism Association to encourage tourism industry use of the Business 2 Business opportunities on the Come to Wales digital platform.	DFP, FTA, FCC	✓	✓	✓
4.2	Support development of local tourism groups and building capacity (FTA, CRTG, CRFD) to enhance their status as the collective voice of the tourism industry in Flintshire.	DFP, FCC	✓	✓	✓
4.3	Support the development of community involvement in tourism. Consider the most effective approach of how we reach out to communities to develop and improve relationships for the good of tourism e.g., using the Flintshire Tourism Ambassador Course as a tool for engagement.	DFP, FCC	✓		
4.4	Encourage the industry to engage with financial and business support which is available for the sector to develop and implement decarbonisation / net zero projects.	FCC	✓	✓	✓
4.5	Continue to strengthen the North East Wales brand and marketing activity to promote our regional offer e.g. capitalise on Visit Wales' "Year of" and Wales Way campaigns to drive traffic and engagement – in partnership with Denbighshire and Wrexham Councils.	NEW, FCC, VW	✓	✓	✓

Legend:

- AONB - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management
- CC - Coleg Cambria
- CRFDG - Clwydian Range Food and Drink Group
- CRTG - Clwydian Range Tourism Group
- DFP - Destination Flintshire Partnership
- FCC - Flintshire County Council
- FTA - Flintshire Tourism Association
- NEWHF - North East Wales Heritage Forum
- NEW - North East Wales Marketing Area Partnership
- VW - Visit Wales

DRAFT