

## EXECUTIVE 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Destination Nene Valley – Board representation</b>
<b>Report Authors</b>	George Candler, Executive Director for Place and Economy
<b>Executive Member</b>	Cllr Helen Howell, Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism

<b>Key Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Are there public sector equality duty implications?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Applicable paragraph number for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1974</b>	

### List of Appendices

#### **Appendix A – Destination Nene Valley Strategic Board: Terms of Reference**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1 The Executive is invited to agree representation from North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) on the Destination Nene Valley (DNV) Board. The report also outlines the importance of the visitor sector in the local economy, and details some of the current initiatives being delivered either by NNC, or via DNV, to support the sector.

##### **2. Executive Summary**

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- 2.1 Destination Nene Valley (DNV) is an important partnership-based initiative aimed at increasing the profile and offer of the Nene Valley to enhance its economic potential and increase the cultural, social and environmental offer of the area.
- 2.2 Following on from local government re-organisation, the creation of North Northamptonshire Council (NNC), and the local government elections that took place in May this year, there is a need to agree revised Board membership to take account of these changes.

- 2.3 The report proposes new representation from NNC on the DNV Strategic Board to reflect new Executive roles and the need for senior level officer involvement to lead the secretariat function.

### **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1 It is recommended that the Executive:
- a) Agree an amended membership to the Strategic Board as set out in section 4.17
  - b) Note the activities being undertaken to support the visitor economy
- 3.2 Reason for Recommendations:
- To ensure appropriate representation on the Destination Nene Valley Board following the creation of North Northamptonshire Council and new Executive roles

### **4. Report Background**

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- 4.1 Based on figures prior to Covid-19, the tourism and hospitality sector was worth £1 billion<sup>1</sup> to the Northamptonshire economy and supported almost 14,000 jobs. Whilst the pandemic has had a major impact, it remains a key sector of the local economy.
- 4.2 The impact of the pandemic has meant more than 750 businesses in North Northamptonshire in the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sector had to close temporarily during the lockdowns and more than 50% of people employed in that sector were furloughed<sup>2</sup>.
- 4.3 There are a range of initiatives being delivered in North Northamptonshire to provide support to this important sector both in the short-term to help the economic recovery, and longer term to enable the visitor economy to grow and local businesses to flourish. Destination Nene Valley<sup>3</sup> (DNV) is an important part of this work, along with activities being delivered through Love Corby<sup>4</sup> and This is Kettering<sup>5</sup>.

#### Destination Nene Valley

- 4.4 The Destination Nene Valley (DNV) project was established in 2011 and has a range of active partners, including the local authorities, the Environment Agency, Rockingham Forest Trust, River Nene Regional Park, the Wildlife Trust, and private sector representatives. The DNV project extends beyond North Northamptonshire and includes parts of Peterborough and West

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<sup>1</sup> Northamptonshire Surprise

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics Covid19 Business Survey

<sup>3</sup> [Welcome - Nene Valley](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Love Corby - Your One Stop Shop for all that is happening in and around Corby](#)

<sup>5</sup> [This is Kettering | The official visitor site for Kettering & surrounding area.](#)

Northamptonshire. Work is overseen by a Strategic Board (see **Appendix A** for the Terms of Reference).



4.5 The Nene Valley Strategy<sup>6</sup> contains the vision that the Nene Valley will be recognised as a destination of choice for world class wildlife, it has a connected green corridor for walking and cycling and a flourishing tourism economy that creates opportunities for visitors and residents to enjoy outdoor recreational activities whilst protecting the environment and wildlife. It contains a number of priority strands:

- Create an enterprising approach to the rural economy;
- Improve access to the Nene Valley by identifying and developing solutions to existing barriers;
- Attract visitors and spend from local, national and international markets; and
- Encourage local communities to lead healthier outdoor lifestyles and promote green transport



4.6 The strategy also identifies a number of opportunities. Projects highlighted in the strategy include Chester House and the Greenway.

<sup>6</sup> <https://nenevalley.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Nene-Valley-Final-low-res-web-version-030513.pdf#:~:text=Destination%20Nene%20Valley%20%28DNV%29%20is%20a%20new%20pathfinding,a%20mixture%20of%20local%2C%20national%20and%20international%20audiences>

- 4.7 The Greenway aims to provide a network of safe and accessible routes for walking and cycling. The plan is to link open spaces, visitor attractions and the larger towns. Although the initial focus of the Greenway initiative has been the former East Northamptonshire area and Wellingborough, there is tremendous scope to extend the Greenway to link with Kettering and Corby, then through to Oundle, thereby providing an orbital route and wider network connecting much of North Northamptonshire.
- 4.8 This wider aspiration for the Greenway is the focus of the 'Greenway and River Ise: Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study' bid, for which NNC is seeking £120,000 via the UK Government Community Renewal Fund (UK CRF). If supported, this will deliver two feasibility studies identifying Green Infrastructure connections linking Wellingborough to Rushden and Corby (via Kettering) and will facilitate the development of green corridors, and a wider network, for active travel, enhanced travel to work choices and educational opportunities, and increase tourism and leisure trips. The bid was submitted in June and an announcement is expected in the Autumn.
- 4.9 The partnership has also produced a Destination Management Plan 2019-2025. This makes the case for establishing a Destination Management Organisation for the area.
- 4.10 The DNV initiative is supported by a comprehensive website, promoting local events and attractions, and an active social media presence.
- 4.11 During the Summer, a social media focussed campaign was run by NNC on its Twitter and Facebook pages linking to [www.northnorthants.gov.uk/tourism](http://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/tourism) which connects to the three main tourism offers in North Northamptonshire i.e. DNV, Love Corby and This is Kettering. **#NNStay** was used on any posts that related to promoting tourism offers during the summer school holidays.

Statistics for the social media elements of the #NNStay campaign

Number of Tweets using #NNStay - 45

Number of Facebook posts using #NNStay - 55

Total impressions Twitter - 66,143

Total reach Facebook - 98,577

Total clicks on links to website - 1,859 (Twitter 169, Facebook 1,690)

Total retweets/shares - 323 (Twitter 133, Facebook 190)

Top 3 posts for Twitter

- 1 July (7am) - No plans for the summer? Well North Northants has lots to offer. With rich heritage, diverse culture and the finest food and drink, staying at home is the new going away #NNStay
- 22 August (7.30am) - Northamptonshire has witnessed the birth of Richard III, the death of Mary Queen of Scots, the Battle of Naseby and the hatching of the Gunpowder Plot full of landmarks and historic sites

for family days out <https://t.co/PU4mWW3Tap> #RediscoverSummer #NNStay

- 20 August (7.30am) - From Kirby Hall to Rockingham Castle, North Northants is home to amazing buildings and unique heritage. #RediscoverSummer this weekend and take a step back in time. #NNStay

### Nene Valley Festival 2021

- 4.12 A key flagship activity delivered by DNV is an annual festival. After a break in 2020 due to the pandemic, the Nene Valley Festival returned in September. Some 102 events were held, including the festival launch at Stanwick Lakes and a family fun day at Rushden Lakes. This was a high profile opportunity for the local sector to showcase their offer and attract visitors and spend to the area. DNV awarded 20 funding grants to local businesses and organisations to deliver some of these events.



- 4.13 NNC is also seeking £215k via the UK CRF for DNV the 'Here for Tourism – A Partnership approach to kick-starting the visitor economy in North Northamptonshire' bid. If this receives funding, it will help to deliver a wide programme of projects, including toolkit, way-markers, film, marketing and a green credentials grant scheme.

### DNV Strategic Board

- 4.14 The DNV Strategic Board aims to provide strategic direction for tourism initiatives that promote economic development and enhance the quality of life in the Nene Valley, drive success through working in partnership with all relevant sectors, provide direction to the project boards to ensure that communication, fundraising and partnership activity are co-ordinated appropriately and monitor performance of the project boards against an agreed DNV business plan. Members of the Strategic Board act to champion DNV at all opportunities. The Board also has an important role in taking advantage of new funding opportunities, building on the Community Renewal Fund bids and looking ahead to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other possibilities to secure investment in the area.

4.15 The current DNV Board membership includes a senior representative from:

- Private sector business
- East Northamptonshire Council
- Northampton Borough Council
- Northamptonshire County Council
- Borough Council of Wellingborough
- Peterborough City Council
- Environment Agency
- Rockingham Forest Trust
- Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire
- River Nene Regional Park
- Nenescape Landscape Partnership

4.16 The Board has a private sector chair. The chair is elected every two years. The secretariat of the Board is provided by NNC (and formerly East Northamptonshire Council).

4.17 The next meeting of the DNV Board will take place later in the year. The Board will need to consider and agree revised terms of reference following local government re-organisation in Northamptonshire and the creation of the two new unitary councils'. It is proposed that the representatives from the former East Northamptonshire, Northamptonshire County Council and the Borough Council of Wellingborough are replaced by the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism from North Northamptonshire Council and the Assistant Director for Growth and Regeneration. The latter proposal is to reflect the accountable body and secretariat role which has been adopted by the Council following the re-organisation.

#### Widening the reach of Destination Nene Valley

4.18 DNV is also working closely with other bodies including the River Nene Regional Park, the River Ise Partnership and the Rockingham Forest Group to develop a coordinated approach with a particular focus on improving access, tackling climate change, protecting important natural habitats and reducing carbon emissions. A project example includes the work currently being done by partners to promote the Special Protection Area of the Nene Wetlands area, which has international recognition for the birds that come and stay with us over the winter. There is great potential to cause harm through development and visitor disturbance, so partners are delivering a range of activities to mitigate this risk, including producing leaflets for new households coming to the area, visitor interpretation at key gateways and a marketing campaign to educate residents. Through this close collective working there is real potential to support the wider visitor economy, improve the environment and promote community participation.

#### Helping the Visitor Economy

4.19 NNC is continuing to provide direct support to the visitor economy sector through the recently launched Discretionary Hospitality and Tourism (HoTi) Grant. This is part of the £2,987,165 Additional Restrictions Grant 'top-up' recently awarded to the Council and reported to the Executive in August 2021. The HoTi Grant



offers a one-off payment aimed at businesses (with and without rated business premises) who continue to be most impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, including those whose recovery is limited due to the seasonal nature of their business.<sup>7</sup> The HoTi scheme is inviting applications from eligible businesses before 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and offers up to £12,000. To date 98<sup>8</sup> local businesses have received further funding through the HoTi scheme.

4.20 NNC is also supporting the sector through the Welcome Back Fund and is working with town councils to deliver activities and support to businesses in the town centres. This includes devolving £185,000 to the town councils to support local events and initiatives.

## Countywide activity – Northamptonshire Surprise

4.21 Other activity relevant to the visitor economy and DNV includes NNC and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) jointly commissioning Northamptonshire Surprise to develop a countywide visitor strategy and update the Northamptonshire Destination Plan. This work will be complete by March 2022 and will help to inform future activity by NNC and how it works with others. It is essential that this is an inclusive process which is co-designed with the local sector and other key stakeholders, including DNV and its Board.

4.22 NNC and WNC have also commissioned Northamptonshire Surprise to lead on a high-profile marketing campaign, Go Northamptonshire!<sup>9</sup>, which is targeting neighbouring counties, to raise the profile of ‘things to do on your doorstep’, targeting a much more local audience. It aims to create the desire for day and overnight visits from a target audience of families with younger children and supports local businesses and attractions. A particular focus is promoting the half-term break. To date, it has resulted in an increase of 50% in the number of web views and an article in the Sunday Mirror (see below) promoting two key attractions in the area, Wicksteed Park and West Lodge Farm near Desborough.



<sup>7</sup> [Apply for a discretionary hospitality and tourism grant - NNC - Introduction - Online form \(achieveservice.com\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> Business supported at 29 October 2021

<sup>9</sup> [Go Northamptonshire! campaign launched to showcase county as major tourism destination | North Northamptonshire Council \(northnorthants.gov.uk\)](#)

## De Bois Review

- 4.23 The work undertaken by Northamptonshire Surprise countywide review will also consider the findings of the recent de Bois Review<sup>10</sup>. This was commissioned by the UK Government to look at Destination Management Organisations in England. The report and the Government's response will also have implications for DNV moving forward. There are a series of recommendations contained within the report. These include a proposal to split the national portfolio of Destination Management Offices into two tiers – a top tier of accredited Tourist Boards acting as 'Destination Development Partnerships' or as leaders of them, ('hubs') and a second tier of accredited Tourist Boards acting as members of these Partnerships ('spokes'). The review recommends that the Government should then provide core funding to each Destination Development Partnership for them to focus on activities that ensure their destination remains sustainable, competitive and responsive to high level strategic challenges identified by the Government such as those around sustainability, skills, inclusive tourism and levelling up. It indicates that the Destination Development Partnership would be expected to pass down a degree of funding to accredited Tourist Boards amongst its coalition and work collaboratively with them to deliver a shared vision.
- 4.24 A further report will be brought to Executive once the Government has considered the Review and next steps and following the work by Northamptonshire Surprise on a Visitor Economy Strategy.

## **5. Issues and Choices**

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- 5.1 It is an important time for the sector as it recovers from the pandemic and works with public health colleagues to minimise risk of further outbreaks. It is also essential that the sector is supported to take full advantage of the economic recovery, especially with exciting projects such as Chester House and the Gallery Library and Museum (GLAM) project in Kettering adding to the offer already available in the area.
- 5.2 The main focus of this report is to agree NNC representation on the DNV Strategic Board. As noted above, the terms of reference were agreed by the DNV Board when it was established, but following the creation of NNC, it is proposed that these are reviewed by the Board to ensure that they reflect the new Council and the Executive roles.
- 5.3 Looking further ahead, important decisions and choices will be necessary on the future of the DNV project, Northamptonshire Surprise, and other partnerships. These decisions will be wider than just NNC, they will also involve WNC and other partner organisations, including funders, and be influenced by the Government's response to the de Bois Review.
- 5.4 The work which is outlined on this report on a visitor economy strategy and Destination Management Plan will help to inform these decisions. It will enable NNC to consider the added value of any strategic initiatives, respective roles and responsibilities, and how best it can support the visitor economy moving

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<sup>10</sup> [The de Bois Review: an independent review of Destination Management The de Bois Review \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/84444/de-bois-review.pdf)



forward including through initiatives such as DNV. Potential funding sources will also be an important consideration to ensure that future arrangements are based on a sustainable business model.

## 6. Implications (including financial implications)

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### 6.1 Resources and Financial

6.1.1 DNV is a partnership initiative which has successfully attracted funding from a range of its partners. The former East Northamptonshire Council supported the Strategic Board with both officer time and investment in a number of specific projects, such as the Greenway. Other partners have also contributed financially to specific projects depending on their priorities at the time. This included the former County Council funding and progressing the Chester House project. NNC currently provides officer support to DNV, but there is no direct, or ongoing, financial commitment to the running of DNV.

### 6.2 Legal

6.2.1 It is not considered that there are any direct legal implications arising from the proposals.

### 6.3 Risk

Risk	Impact / Mitigation	RAG
The Council is not adequately represented on the Board of DNV	(I)-Not able to influence the work of the partnership and maximise the advantages for the sector and local community (M)-Strong representation by the Executive member on the Board will help to ensure that the benefits are realised	
Lack of public support for the visitor economy	(I)-An already struggling sector will not be supported to recover from Covid-19 and will not take advantage of the opportunities to flourish (M)-Direct Covid-19 funding support to help the sector in the short-term. Work with key stakeholders to develop a strategy and activities to support the sector based on a sustainable funding model	

### 6.4 Consultation

6.4.1 The DNV Strategic Board has representation from a range of organisations operating nationally and locally. The work on the Visitor Economy strategy will be shaped by the sector, including the DNV partners. There will be a wider consultation on a draft strategy to ensure that it is an inclusive process and benefits from broader engagement.

## 6.5 Consideration by Scrutiny

- 6.5.1 This report has not been considered by Scrutiny but the wider input into the Visitor Economy could be an area scrutiny may wish to consider in the future.

## 6.6 Climate Impact

- 6.6.1 Several of the strands in the DNV strategy support positive initiatives to support net-zero carbon ambitions, including support of the Greenway and active travel, and support for wildlife. The Environment Agency and Wildlife Trust are two key strategic partners. The work of DNV, allied with the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy aims, creates synergy with the concept of a 'Green Arc' between Cambridge and Oxford and a key unique-selling-point for our future positioning as a council keen to develop the green environment.

- 6.6.2 The Council's Climate Change, Environment and Growth Advisory Panel discussed a similar report at its meeting on 20 October 2021. The Panel welcomed the report. It agreed that the Visitor Economy was a key sector for the area and should be supported. Comments highlighted the importance of protecting and enhancing the area's open spaces and rivers, and supported measures to improve access such as through developing a network of 'greenways' providing connectivity between the towns linking with urban cycle ways and paths. Also supported was the need for a strong planning framework which ensures that there are measures in place to mitigate any harmful impacts on climate change and the natural environment associated with new development.

## 6.7 Community Impact

- 6.7.1 Destination Nene Valley supports the tourism and hospitality sector which has been particularly badly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. It employs a large number of people and benefits many local communities, both urban and rural. The support offered through DNV contributes to outcomes which add social, community and economic value, including education, heritage, volunteering, employment or health and wellbeing opportunities.

## 7. Background Papers

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Destination Nene Valley Strategy: <https://nenevalley.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Nene-Valley-Final-low-res-web-version-030513.pdf#:~:text=Destination%20Nene%20Valley%20%28DNV%29%20is%20a%20new%20pathfinding,a%20mixture%20of%20local%2C%20national%20and%20international%20audiences>

Nene Valley Destination Management Plan 2019-2025: <https://nenevalley.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Destination-Management-Plan.pdf>



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## Destination Nene Valley Strategic Board Terms of Reference

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### 1 Name

- 1.1 The name of the Board is **Destination Nene Valley Strategic Board (DNV)**.

### 2 Purpose

- 2.1 The Board will:
- provide strategic direction for tourism initiatives that promote economic development and enhance the quality of life in the Nene Valley
  - drive success through working in partnership with all relevant sectors
  - provide direction to the project boards to ensure that communication, fundraising and partnership activity are co-ordinated appropriately
  - monitor performance of the project boards against the agreed DNV business plan
  - champion DNV at all opportunities

### 3 Membership

- 3.1 The Board will include senior representation from the following organisations:
- Private sector business
  - East Northamptonshire Council
  - Northampton Borough Council
  - Northamptonshire County Council
  - Borough Council of Wellingborough
  - Peterborough City Council
  - Environment Agency
  - Rockingham Forest Trust

- Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire
- River Nene Regional Park
- Nenescape Landscape Partnership

3.2 The Board will be administered by an East Northamptonshire Council admin support officer.

3.3 The Board will invite individuals or representatives of other organisations to attend a particular meeting when an item of relevance to them is to be discussed or where particular specialist input is needed.

3.4 The Chairmanship of the Board will be appointed by election at the Annual General Meeting and both the Chair / Vice Chair will serve a minimum of 2 years.

#### **4 Meetings**

4.1 Board meetings will take place every 3 months. The business of the meeting shall be set out in an agenda and notified to members of the Board five days in advance of the date of the meeting. A quorum of 5 members will need to be present for a meeting to take place. The Board will be chaired by the Chair or Vice Chair.

4.2 Items suggested for inclusion in the agenda may be submitted to the Chair by any member of the Board at least 10 days prior to the date of the meeting.

4.3 The minutes of the previous meeting shall be submitted for agreement at the start of every meeting.

4.4 The Chair / Vice Chair of each Project Board will be responsible for reporting on the delivery of their projects to the Destination Nene Valley Strategic Board

#### **5 Members' Responsibilities**

5.1 Members must declare at the start of any meeting an interest in any matter for discussion in which they have a personal / prejudicial interest or involvement

5.2 Members will take every opportunity to advocate DNV activity at local and national levels in order to generate support, financial and resource, so that the project can continue to grow.

#### **6 Voting**

6.1 The Board will work towards securing mutual agreement on all aspects of the project, but should a vote be necessary each member will have a single vote and decisions will be made on the show of hands. In the event of a tie in the number of votes, the Chair or whoever deputies for them has a second vote or casting vote.

6.2 Individuals or group representatives invited to the meeting for particular items will not have voting rights.

## **7 Variation of the Terms of Reference**

7.1 These Terms of Reference may be altered by a majority vote of the Board.