

Joint Suffolk-Norfolk DMO activity – chiming with the strategic vision

UNEXPLORED ENGLAND 2021-22

Who we are

The joint Suffolk-Norfolk destination coalition is chaired by Visit East of England and comprises Visit Norwich, All About Ipswich, Visit Great Yarmouth, The Suffolk Coast, Visit the Broads, Discover Newmarket, Visit North Norfolk, Bury St Edmunds and Beyond, Visit West Norfolk and Visits Suffolk and Norfolk.

The coalition came together in Spring 2020 after the pandemic struck and agreed to work together to market the region as ‘Unexplored England’, suggesting we had lots of space on our coast, in the countryside and in urban landscapes to enjoy outdoor activities safely.

The destination coalition is supported by every local authority in Suffolk and Norfolk.

Visit East of England is the visitor economy sector group for New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership.

A wider Visitor Economy Group is developing a Destination Management Plan to complement the recently-published [DCMS Tourism Recovery Plan](#). This will provide a shared regional vision for the sector.

Local authorities and destination organisations will continue their own ambitions through funding such as Future High Street, Help to Grow, Towns Fund etc, as well as individual destination promotion, but will also contribute to the regional vision.

Working together is vital in terms of our relationship with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and VisitBritain/VisitEngland, not least for upcoming funding opportunities.

This potential approach is deliberately different from the activities of local destinations and authorities, so as to be complementary, not competitive.

Overview

- ‘Unexplored England’ launched in August 2020 using funds from the Cabinet Office and was subtitled ‘[Enjoy Summer Safely](#)’. This involved full page adverts in national newspaper, digital activity (including Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) and posters in London and Midlands shopping malls. Target markets were: Free and Easy Mini-Breakers; Aspirational Family Fun; Country-Loving Traditionalists; Visiting Friends and Relatives.
- On Boxing Day 2020, stage 2 was launched, Discover Unexplored England, aimed at building demand and encouraging bookings. This ran until the end of April, using as calls to action competitions to win a [holiday in Gt Yarmouth](#) and [short break in Suffolk countryside](#), and digital activity on Facebook and Google.
- Stage 3, [Unexplored England – Escape The Everyday](#), is running from May-July 2021, using funds from VisitEngland. The channels are Facebook and Google and are promoting bookable experiences in the region through the VisitEngland-backed Travel Exchange Great Britain (TXGB).

The work of the group so far has been in response to Covid, to help build back the visitor economy. Going forward, a more strategic vision is required to sit alongside the Destination Management Plan.

Challenges and opportunities

Our collaborative work so far has been successful in establishing the opportunities of working together, but our collective panhandling, including consumer research, has established 'elephants in the room':

- Potential customers will go abroad again when given the opportunity.
- In our activity, we talk to the 'same people', invariably those who know us and do not need converting.
- We do not know what our regional proposition is, so why would a potential customer?
- For people looking for something different, why are we the solution?
- There is a lack of awareness of what is here that might be different from other destinations.
- If any at all, what is the domestic perception of this area? 'Windy, flat, cold, wet, boring', 'Nothing to do', 'Difficult to get to'? (Visit Norfolk SWOT Research). And yet we have the best overall climate in the UK. We have superb built and natural capital. Our road and rail infrastructure is good.
- We are competing with historically better-funded and better-organised destination brands who are adept at opening Government doors eg the South West, Yorkshire, Lake District, Derbyshire Peaks, Kent, Scotland, Wales.
- Outside Cambridge, we do not attract considerable numbers of inbound visitors. How can we take advantage of Hook of Holland-Harwich, Norwich International Airport and London Stansted Airport? Our historical narrative should be able to attract North American and European visitors?

Local destinations will continue to market their strengths, but for the wider activity we need to develop a long-term brand/solution that will chime with the strategic activity, not least sustainability and overcoming the main barrier to productivity – not having a constant level of demand year-round.

New Zealand have used 100% Pure for as number of years because it has proved successful. [Here is the rationale](#), [here is why its successful](#), [here is why the Tourism Board stays with 100% Pure](#) and [here is an independent review of the brand](#).

Visit Netherlands developed a 'change perception' campaign using [Holland The Original Cool](#). [Here is Cool explained](#) and [here is how it can be experienced](#). [Here are details of its success](#) over a prolonged period.

Two different treatments but aimed at audiences looking for experiential travel that is out of the ordinary.

A placemaking approach

Placemaking management needs creative solutions to capitalise on our local assets, uniqueness, and potential, with the intention of promoting destinations where visitors can experience happiness, well-being, and enjoyment.

To succeed, the placemaking initiative needs a vision that is the aggregate conception of all the stakeholders.

We have a disparate but symbiotic destination landscape. It is a stronger proposition for being the sum of parts, but therein lies a fundamental issue – what is the collective offering? What is the brand?

Just because this hasn't been done before, it doesn't mean it can't be done. It might just mean it's not been tried...

Objectives – short-term

- Extend the traditional season through to Winter.
- Encourage visitors safely back into the High Street/retail/night-time economy.
- Build demand and bookings for 2022.

Objectives – mid-term

- Using social and influencer, attract new audiences, particularly younger people for whom we're not a consideration.
- Use brand alignments to help define the East of England.
- Develop brand sponsorship partnerships.
- Raise the overall tide of tourism towards the high-water mark of Summer.

Objectives – long-term

- Build a proposition to attract overseas visitors.
- Develop trade marketing opportunities, particularly with bookable product. This will support efforts to develop business conference events.

Objectives

- Encourage overnight stays and increased spend.
- Spread consumer demand geographically and seasonally.
- Grow the consumer database with new demographics.

Channels

- We don't believe traditional media will fulfil the criteria of our wider objectives.
- We are interested to use social and influencer to change audience and demographics.
- We like digital channels for inescapable KPIs, but we would like better understanding of audiences reached and conversions.

Measurement and evaluation

Activations including film views, digital campaign impressions and clicks, consumer database sign-ups, page views, social media reach and engagement eg comments, shares, website traffic, clicks to destination websites.