



# Position Statement: Enjoying nature

Final version

September 2020

*Achieving more for nature*



**GLNP**  
GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE  
NATURE PARTNERSHIP



## **Introduction**

The Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) received official status as a Local Nature Partnership on 17 July 2012 and was formally launched on 8 November 2012. This followed an extensive consultation period and application process that resulted from the publication of 'The Natural Choice' White Paper in June 2011. The GLNP is building on the success of its predecessor organisation the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Partnership.

In 2016 the GLNP published a report highlighting the importance of nature for Greater Lincolnshire's visitor economy. Since then tourism has become one of the core work areas of the Partnership.

The agreed vision for the Enjoying nature workstream is: *For the value of nature to be recognised and embedded within the wider tourism sector.* See the Business Plan for more detail on planned actions under this workstream.

This position statement has been written to enable a balance between maximising the contribution of nature to the tourism economy and ensuring investment in the natural environment to maintain the quality and quantity of the resource into the future.

### **1. Work together**

In 2017 the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership reported visitor numbers of 34.3m resulting in a £2.24bn contribution to the local economy from tourism. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of nature to the visitor economy which is raising the profile of Greater Lincolnshire's natural environment as can be seen with the launch of the Natural Coast campaign. However, the added value provided creates the risk that nature may be perceived as a commodity to be traded, which is something that must be avoided. Yet, there is an opportunity for the tourism and environmental sectors to work together to achieve positive outcomes for both the visitor economy and nature. For this it is important that both sectors understand how the other works and what their role is within this partnership.

Effective joint working will foster greater understanding of what Greater Lincolnshire can offer visitors beyond current honeypot sites such as Donna Nook or Whisby Nature Park, diversifying the destination offer, reducing the impact on the natural environment and improving the visitor experience. This approach has the potential to embed the need to enhance the natural environment and engender an appreciation of nature within the strategy for growing the visitor economy.

Communication will be fundamental in understanding the opportunities, ensuring appropriate use of the natural environment and the creation of benefits for both sectors. Central to this is that both sectors understand the perspective of the other and consider it in decision making.

## **2. Recognise the natural environment's essential role in Greater Lincolnshire's tourism offer and the responsibilities that implies**

It is increasingly recognised that the natural environment does not just offer opportunities for the nature tourism sub sector, but is an underlying component of the wider tourism industry, providing the backdrop for many visitor experiences. For example, the traditional beach offer, the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the setting for stately homes.

Visitors (and residents alike) should be able to enjoy quality experiences of nature when in Greater Lincolnshire. A poor nature experience, either through the quality of natural space or unrealistic visitor expectations, will reflect negatively on the area and risks dis-engaging people from the natural environment. Improved awareness of the opportunities will help stakeholders to ensure that visitor expectations are met or managed.

As the natural environment becomes a more widely marketed feature amongst tourism stakeholders, it becomes more important that perceptions of the natural environment as a 'free' asset change. While the natural environment is cost effective, adds value to the destination offer and is potentially free for visitors to use, it does require maintenance at significant cost. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders, both in the tourism and environmental sectors, to ensure the appropriate use and management of the natural environment.

## **3. Adopt policies and practices which promote a high quality natural environment**

For Greater Lincolnshire to realise its full potential as a tourist destination it must include a high quality natural environment. Policy and practices within the tourism sector should seek to highlight the importance of a high quality natural environment as part of a sustainable visitor economy. This should include policies for developing nature tourism within the Local Industrial Strategy and Visitor Economy Plans. Similarly, the environment sector should realise the opportunities as well as the risks associated with a growing tourism sector.

Policies within each sector should set the tone for future joint working and investment. A clear strategic direction is particularly needed due to the wide ranging stakeholder base.

## **4. Invest more in the natural environment to grow the tourism sector**

As demand for Greater Lincolnshire's high quality natural environment increases it is important that the supply expands accordingly. Growth in the tourism sector or nature tourism sub sector could require new natural sites to be created or existing ones to be managed differently, as with any infrastructure. This investment could be viewed in isolation by each sector; however, a joint venture between sectors will strengthen the tourism product by recognising the mutual benefit of, and shared responsibility for, the natural environment.



In practice, if the natural environment offer is used to facilitate growth within the visitor economy then both sectors must be willing to invest in the maintenance and enhancement of these assets.

#### **5. Invest in education and research**

Collaboration between tourism and environmental sectors must continue for the long term for it to be effective. Looking to the future, training providers are key to ensuring joint working between the sectors is the norm rather than the exception. In Greater Lincolnshire the GLNP is working closely with a number of tourism bodies; while there is still work to be done, what has been achieved so far can serve as an example to others. It is important that relevant educational institutions explain how both sectors fit in the context of the other and highlight the overlap between the two to effectively prepare students for work.

There is also a need for further primary research to understand the motivations for engaging with the natural environment and the perceptions of the current product offer. Securing such information should enable a more robust calculation of the economic impact to be made and assist the promotion and ongoing monitoring of nature tourism and its importance to Greater Lincolnshire's visitor economy as well as allowing stakeholders to meet the needs of visitors.

#### **6. Develop nature tourism**

The nature tourism sub sector<sup>1</sup> holds potential to be a substantial part of the visitor economy, as shown in the GLNP-commissioned report 'Developing Nature Tourism in Greater Lincolnshire'.

Recognition of nature tourism creates potential for a more diverse destination, a much longer tourist season and an expansion of the visitor economy. To fulfil this, potential stakeholders should work to develop the sub sector to the benefit of both the natural environment and long term profitability for the visitor economy.

Growth of nature tourism will encourage an increase in visitors to biodiversity rich, more sensitive sites. All visitors have a physical impact and there is a risk that this will have a negative effect on the biodiversity value of the site. To ensure it remains of high quality, impacts must be managed.

In some cases this may mean sites are closed to visitors at certain times or have a threshold number of visitors and not all sites recognised for their nature or wildlife value will be suitable as nature tourism opportunities. By working together, the tourism and natural

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<sup>1</sup> Those activities that are dependent on nature and where the natural resource provides the focus for the activity, such as wildlife viewing, ornithology or even hiking (Newsome et al, 2005). Also referred to as nature-based tourism

environment sectors can improve understanding of the sensitivity of sites and encourage visitors to the most appropriate areas.

### **7. Visitor responsibility should be encouraged**

It is important that tourism does not result in the degradation of the natural environment that it benefits from. The responsibility of the visitor themselves should not be overlooked. Everyone that benefits from the natural environment should be encouraged to actively work to conserve it. Information should be made available to enable informed decisions and encourage respect for the places that people visit. It is important that stakeholders who benefit from those visiting nature play a role in distributing this information. Where possible a sense of ownership in the visitor should be nurtured to encourage a greater respect for the natural environment and promote a more meaningful experience.

#### **Further information**

- **Nature Tourism Report**
- **Greater Lincolnshire Enterprise Partnership (2020) Visitor Economy.**  
<https://www.greaterlincolnshirelep.co.uk/priorities-and-plans/sectors/visitor-economy/>
- **Lincolnshire County Council (2020) Lincolnshire's Natural Coast**  
<https://www.lincsnaturalcoast.com/>









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September 2020

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