



Sunderland 2035:

Our City of Surprises

Tourism Strategy 2025–2035

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WELCOME TO SUNDERLAND:

Our City of Surprises

Welcome to Sunderland's Tourism Strategy 2025–2035, a vision for the next decade that positions Sunderland as an exciting, welcoming destination for visitors from across the UK and beyond. Our city is undergoing a remarkable transformation, blending its rich heritage with cutting-edge innovation to offer an unparalleled experience for residents and visitors alike.

Tourism plays a pivotal role in our city's economy, culture, and identity. It is a driver of local pride, a creator of jobs, and a foundation for sustainable growth. Sunderland's natural beauty, thriving cultural scene, and state-of-the-art developments such as Culture House reflect our ambition to become a destination of choice.

This strategy is a product of the collective effort of stakeholders and partners from across the city who share our vision, and I give thanks to them for their contribution. It sets out a clear path to enhance Sunderland's reputation and appeal, from growing our cultural scene and improving accessibility to promoting our unique visitor offer.

Together, we will deliver a strategy that benefits not just visitors but also the people who live, work, and invest in our city.

As we look to the future, I am confident that this strategy will unlock Sunderland's full potential as a destination, creating lasting economic and social impact.

Thank you for being part of this exciting journey.



Cllr Beth Jones

Cabinet Member for Communities,
Tourism and Culture
Sunderland City Council



Washington Old Hall

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vision, mission, targets, priorities

Sunderland's two-year tourism recovery plan reached its conclusion in 2023. Introduced to begin to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on tourism, it has set a firm foundation for the next phase of delivery.

Our overall aspiration is to develop the visitor economy with people at its heart, those who live, work, visit and study in Sunderland.

Working in partnership with businesses and stakeholders, and with regional and national leaders in tourism to create a sustainable visitor economy within a culturally rich, engaging, vibrant and modern smart city.

Vision:

“ To create an environment in Sunderland where tourism and the visitor economy can develop and prosper through a coordinated approach that plays to Sunderland's many strengths, creating the best possible visitor experience. ”

The key principles of our ten-year tourism strategy:

RECOVER the visitor economy to pre-pandemic levels.

ADAPT based on stakeholder, data and evidence insights and resident and visitors' expectations and needs.

PROMOTE our visitor offer and local businesses using our partner-led city brand. Building on our work to date with carefully curated campaigns.

INFLUENCE to improve perceptions, raise civic pride and encourage sustainable tourism practices.

UNITE by leveraging the shared commitment of city stakeholders, businesses and visitor attractions to ensure all outputs from the Tourism Strategy have the greatest possible impact for the city, its residents, businesses and visitors.

The Strategy has been developed in partnership to create a framework for activity which aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Refined destination experience
- Maximum possible external funding to support our priorities
- Strong marketing impact through carefully curated campaigns
- Improved destination perception and increased profile
- Increased visitor spend
- Sustainable tourism that actively improves the environment, economy, and community

The ten-year plan sets a strategic direction for the ambition for tourism in Sunderland through a series of priorities and actions which build on recent successes, identifies new opportunities and connects to the wider city strategic objectives set out in the City Plan.

Actions flowing from this strategy will focus on the following key themes:

- Experience Sunderland
- Future Sunderland
- Regenerative Sunderland
- Marketing and Collaboration

The strategy will be monitored quarterly, reviewed annually and be flexible, developing in response to the city's rapidly evolving business and cultural sector.



Bonner's Raff, Sunderland



PART ONE:

Current position

Strategic importance and value of tourism

The national position

Tourism is a powerful engine for economic growth and job creation throughout every nation and region of the UK, contributing economically, creating pride in local communities, and building the UK's global reputation.

The Government introduced the Tourism Recovery Plan in 2021, the aim was to recover levels of inbound visitors and spend by the end of 2024.

The Government's Tourism Recovery Plan¹ focussed on recovering inbound and domestic overnight values, encouraging visitors to stay longer, investing in destination and transport infrastructure, focused product development, and maximising technology and innovation to increase resilience and improve the visitor experience.

In addition, the Tourism Recovery Plan placed importance on the UK being a leading European nation for hosting business events; the need for more year-round quality jobs; the need for the visitor offer to minimise the negative impact of tourism; and that the visitor offer remains inclusive and accessible.

Although the Tourism Recovery Plan is nearing its conclusion, data has not yet been published. Data will be included in this section once it becomes available.

2019: Tourism contribution to the UK economy



c. £74bn



1.7m jobs



over 230,000 SMEs in the sector

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/tourism-recovery-plan

The regional position

The visitor economy in North East England demonstrated strong growth in 2023, contributing significantly to the region's economic recovery and development. This progress underscores the sector's vital role in the region's economic and social landscape, creating jobs, fostering investment, and enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. But the region remains the least visited in the UK.

Collectively the region boasts a diverse and rich array of attractions, natural landscapes, historic landmarks and cultural experiences. To maximise the region's appeal as a visitor destination, partnership working is key. Through shared marketing campaigns, coordinated events, and aligned strategic planning, partnership working has the potential to amplify the region's visibility, attract more visitors, and support economic growth across all communities.

Key insights include:

Visitor Numbers and Economic Impact

The region welcomed over 69m visitors, marking a 5% increase from 2022. This resulted in an economic contribution of £6.1bn, an increase of £35m year-on-year.

Continued investment in attractions, accommodation, and visitor experiences has enhanced the sector's resilience.

Overnight Stays

Overnight stays reached 7.6m, surpassing pre-pandemic levels for the first time. Sunderland, Newcastle, and Gateshead saw notable increases, supported by major events including concerts by global stars and high-profile regional festivals.

Employment and Investment

Tourism remains the fourth largest economic sector in the region and is the country's third largest employer, supporting over 63,000 jobs in the region.

Regional Trends and Opportunities

While rural areas initially led in recovery post-pandemic, urban destinations gained prominence in 2023, narrowing the rural-urban gap. However, the region still trails other UK areas in international and domestic visitor spend.

Destination North East England

Destination North East England is a destination development partnership (DDP) working across all of the North East Combined Authority/LA7 areas.

It aims to double the visitor economy by 2030, leveraging strategic investments and promoting its unique cultural and natural assets to attract more visitors. Strengthened collaboration across stakeholders will be essential to achieving these ambitious goals.

North East Visitor Economy 2023



worth £6.1bn



58,000 jobs



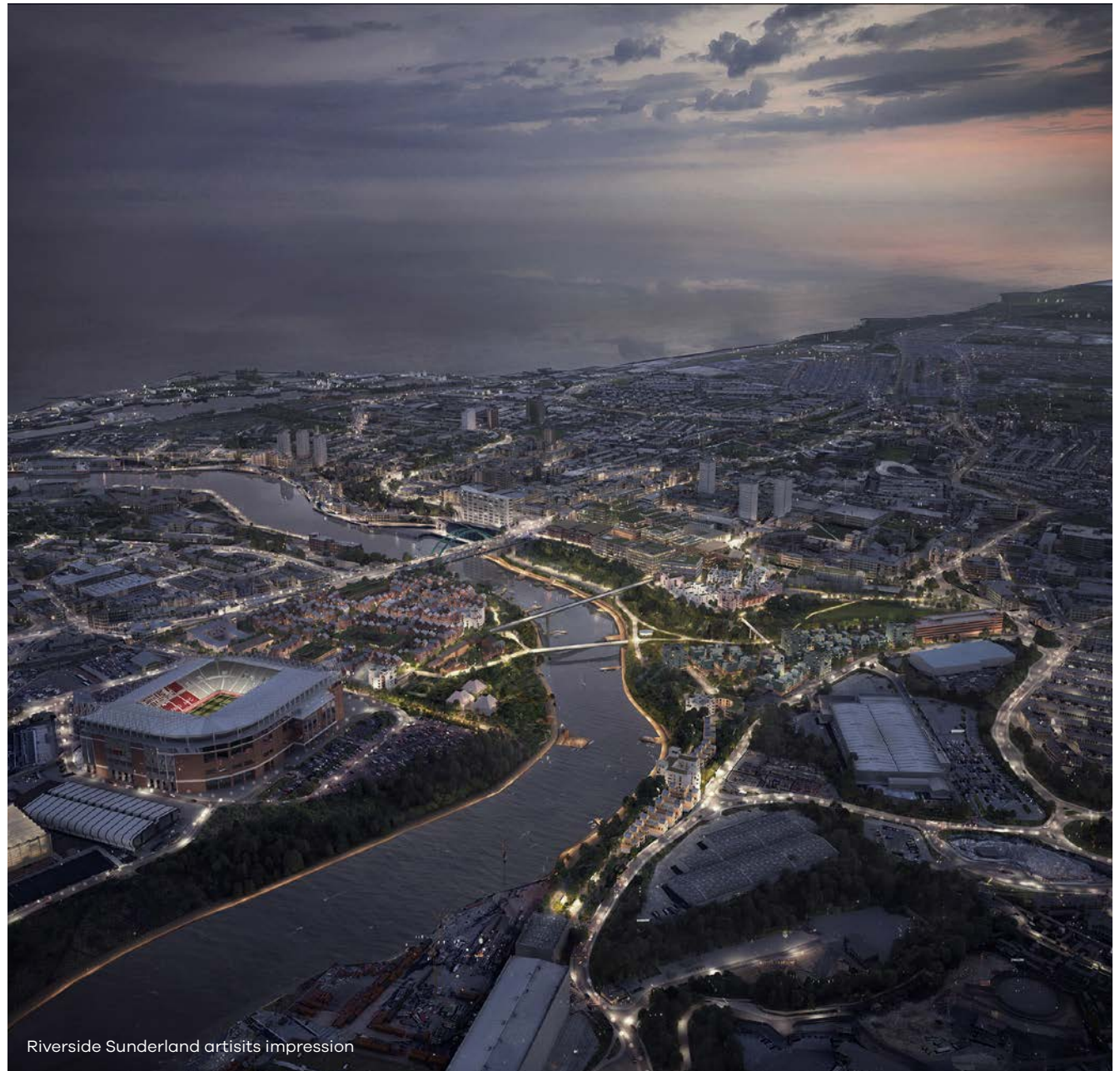
69m visitors

The Sunderland position

Sunderland is undergoing huge change to become a modern and prosperous 21st century smart city. Through ambition and drive Sunderland has an exciting vision of how the city will look in future years.

The City Plan provides the blueprint for all partners and communities to work together to achieve Sunderland's shared economic and social ambitions to collectively guide the city's continued transformation. The City Plan vision is **to create a connected, international city with opportunities for all**; the ambitions of the City Plan will be instrumental in the development of the visitor economy, similarly the aspirations and outcomes of this strategy will positively contribute towards its goals, including:

- Sunderland being a place recognised for its natural assets, with the city having an accessible, strong and growing offer for residents and visitors - it will be easy to find something that captures the imagination in Sunderland
- Residents and communities will thrive and feel pride, people will live healthier, longer lives and everyone's talent will be nurtured



Riverside Sunderland artists impression



Culture House, opening late 2025

- Inward investment, job creation and high performing businesses and employers will create opportunities for all residents, with Sunderland making a significant contribution to the UK's economic growth; and
- Sunderland will play its role in tackling the global challenge of climate change

Riverside Sunderland Masterplan sets out the strategy to create 1,000 homes for a community of 2,500 people, and 1 million square feet of offices, including workspace for 8,000–10,000 quality jobs. Beautiful parks and public spaces will create a memorable landscape setting for Riverside Sunderland. The masterplan will revitalise and reinvent Sunderland city centre by creating an exciting and beautiful new urban quarter.

In addition, it will regenerate, restore and repurpose a large tract of degraded former industrial land on the north side of the city centre; act as the catalyst for renewal in the wider city centre including Sunnyside, Holmeside and the Crowtree site; strengthen the inner urban area, including connections between the university campuses, and links to the coast.

To learn more about the wider city regeneration plans and how they form a part of the strategy, see Appendix D

Sunderland Visitor Economy

Sunderland's Tourism Recovery Plan

The two-year **tourism destination recovery plan** focused on supporting the sector in Sunderland in the two years following the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic by strategically guiding the city into and through the recovery period. The aims and objectives in the plan were achieved through a mix of short-term campaigns and longer-term measures.

The recovery plan also recognised the vital role of other citywide strategies which supported its delivery and in turn have supported its outcomes, including the community wealth building strategy, smart city strategy and low carbon framework.

The initial **City of Surprises campaign** (which was part-funded by the ERDF Welcome Back Fund, following the outbreak of covid-19) was rolled out across the city throughout Summer and Autumn 2021. The campaign aligned with wider city brand objectives to deliver an exciting, fresh, and vibrant campaign that appealed to both residents and visitors, building on the moment of opportunity the summer of staycations offered.

The campaign was delivered via multiple advertising and marketing mediums including out of home (OOH), digital and social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok and LinkedIn); and in 2022 the campaign won the gold award in the prestigious Chartered Institute of Public Relations North East Pride Awards for 'Best Campaign of the Year'.

Visitors to Sunderland

Sunderland is a distinctive destination, a city with a rich heritage and welcoming residents who take pride in their history. The city boasts an established and expanding programme of events and festivals designed to appeal to diverse audiences, with a particular focus on families. Sunderland is celebrated for its independent spirit and is increasingly recognised for its ambitious, forward-looking vision.

A city in transformation, Sunderland offers the perfect balance between its stunning coastline and a variety of well-managed indoor and outdoor attractions. These attractions are accessible and feature a varied calendar of events and exhibitions throughout the year.

Visitors are drawn to Sunderland for a wide range of reasons. Football enthusiasts travel to the Stadium of Light, while business professionals attend meetings and events in the city. Academics and students are connected to the University of Sunderland, with parents frequently visiting their children studying there. Many come to reconnect with family and friends, attend concerts, cultural events, or theatre performances, or simply to enjoy a lively evening out.

The city's wider offering enhances its appeal to these diverse visitor groups, featuring an array of events, theatres, independent bars and restaurants, a selection of comfortable hotels, excellent transport links and ample parking. Sunderland is renowned for the warmth of its local people and their friendly welcome.

Key facts and figures

Tourism brings a host of significant benefits to Sunderland. Pre-pandemic, tourism generated an estimated £499.58m of direct expenditure into the economy and supported 5,820 jobs.

In 2021, 5.73m people visited Sunderland, visitors spent 6.339m days in Sunderland and expenditure reached £314.21m. There were 467,000 overnight visitors, spending £86.17m; and 5.263m day visitors, spending £228m.

Whilst this showed signs of improvement based on 2020, it was still down by 40% on 2019 figures. Additionally, the

people directly employed in tourism in Sunderland stood at 2,720; 40% less than 2019 figures. The Food and Drink sector accounted for 29% of all expenditure and 32% of all employment.

In 2022, 8.512m people visited Sunderland, this included 7.748m day visitors and 764,000 overnight visitors. Again, an increase on the previous year but still averaging 10% down compared to 2019.

The visitor economy continues to grow and build back, with a £510.43m economic impact, and with both direct and indirect employment growing by over 50% compared to 2021 to 4,147 full-time equivalent (FTE) and 5,279 FTE,



respectively. Food and drink continued to be the biggest contributor to direct economic impact (38.1%) and employment (40.3%).

2023 continued to see the visitor economy grow, with a value of £596.87m. Direct expenditure increased to £447.79m (up 3.1% on 2022). Staying visitors are above 2019 figures (1.911m days and 0.81m visitors.) Whilst day visitor numbers continue to improve (7.921m) they remain 9.2% down compared to 2019 figures.

In 2023 Sunderland saw the highest growth in overnight visits in the North East, this was partly due to the events programme and Stadium of Light concerts.



Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens

Positively, direct employment in tourism in 2023 was 4,596 FTE's tracking above (0.7%) on 2019, and similarly indirect employment (5,848 FTE's) at 0.5% above on 2019 figures.

Whilst many comparative figures remain below pre pandemic levels, it is encouraging to see Sunderland is bouncing back and the figures are consistently improving.

Accommodation is recovering quickly, although still slightly down (3.5%) in the distribution of employment while visitors staying in paid serviced accommodation has almost fully recovered to 2019 levels (just 1% below).

This is encouraging for the future of the visitor economy in Sunderland and speaks to the city's growing offer and provides a positive platform on which to build.

Discover our strengths

Our unique coast, culture, community and connectivity

Sunderland is a city by the sea, where a stunning coastline meets a rich industrial heritage, with a deep sense of community pride, cultural identity, and friendly faces. With excellent transport links, the city is well-equipped to enable visitors to discover everything it has to offer. As one of the UK's few true coastal cities, Sunderland offers a unique mix of seaside charm and vibrant urban energy, making it a compelling destination for visitors.

The Great Outdoors:



Sunderland's award-winning outdoor spaces range from Blue Flag beaches to acres of green space, Green Flag parks, and nature reserves, offering a great visitor experience for all.

Sunderland offers a varied choice of dedicated walking routes, taking in coast, countryside, and local scenery. One of the highlights is the Sculpture Trail, which is part of the famous Coast to Coast route that starts (or ends) at the seafront.

For those seeking adventure, the city is home to an array of outdoor sporting opportunities, from yachting and paddle boarding along the coast to skiing at the Silksworth Sports Complex. Visitors can also enjoy tennis, football, swimming, and go-karting, with world-class facilities that have helped Sunderland host numerous major sporting events.

Fabulous coastline:



Sunderland's enviable position as a city-by-the-sea, with twin beaches at Roker and Seaburn, is the perfect place to unwind, with miles of beautiful coastline.

It's no wonder locals refer to this area as the 'Roker Riviera'! The historic Roker Pier and Lighthouse and Roker Park are the crowning glories. Sunderland's seafront is a defining feature of the city, with exciting water sports, fantastic promenade walks, and outstanding seafood restaurants.

The city's strong maritime heritage continues to shape its identity, and visitors can immerse themselves in this coastal culture while enjoying the fresh sea air and panoramic views.

Seaburn recently made the top 30 best UK beaches according to TripAdvisor, the only North East location in the list. Reviewers left many five star reviews, praising the stunning coastline and the city's wider regeneration.

History and Heritage:



History and heritage play a crucial role in any destination, and Sunderland's rich and varied past has certainly helped to shape the city as it is today. Sunderland is a city of the future, but proud to celebrate its hard-working history.

Boasting historical visitor attractions such as Washington Old Hall, the ancestral home of the first president of the United States, the 14th-century-built Hylton Castle, and Penshaw Monument, which was built in 1844 as a replica of the Temple of Hephaestus in Athens and St. Peter's Church, built in 674 AD, stands as one of the oldest in the UK.

For international visitors, especially those from the United States, the city's connection to George Washington provides a compelling reason to visit. Washington Old Hall serves as a direct

link between Sunderland and the USA, offering an enriching historical experience that tells the story of this transatlantic connection.

Arts & Culture:



Sunderland's arts and cultural attractions are a major part of what makes the city a hub of creativity. A globally recognised Music City with its thriving music scene to the Empire Theatre, which brings Broadway and West-End shows, there are so many exciting cultural things to do in Sunderland. Opening in 2025, Culture House Sunderland will be a state-of-the-art cultural venue offering an immersive, digitally powered visitor experience that will inspire and entertain people of all ages.

Foodie heaven:



Sunderland has a fabulous food offer and an enviable reputation for its growing number of restaurants. Rated as Best UK City for Independent Restaurants by comparison platform Bionic, there's something to cater to everyone's tastes.

Foodie destinations are on the rise across the city, with Stack Seaburn, Sheepfolds Stables, and a growing number across the city centre. The food and drink offer is an increasingly important part of our visitor offer and a significant contribution to our visitor spend.

Sunderland's coastal location also brings fresh seafood into the mix, making it a must-visit for food lovers seeking unique culinary experiences.

A Smart City:



Recently declared the UK's smartest city in a feature in the Sunday Times, Sunderland is able to capitalise on its smart credentials in engaging visitors to the city.

The city offers a popular free, ultra-fast Wi-Fi service across the city centre and stretching along the coast, which allows seamless connectivity for wayfinding. In the summer of 2024, 'The Sunderland App' launched. The app puts Sunderland in the hands of its users every day and features local events and attractions, places to eat and drink, interactive maps, and exclusive offers and discounts.

A smart data platform has also been developed, which includes an advanced sensor network. The city is able to use the traffic and footfall intelligence to pinpoint key areas and build an understanding of how to encourage visitors to stay for longer.



Keel Square Pavilion installation

Emerging national and international trends

Holiday taking continues to be driven by technology and digital, low-cost airlines, and social media; as travel recovers its position following the pandemic it now faces new challenges. The Visit Britain Consumer Tracker currently reports that the top barrier to taking an overnight domestic trip is the rising cost of living (37%) followed by personal finances.

Sustainable travel choices

Travellers are making sustainable choices while on holiday, walking, biking, using public transport, buying local, and travelling outside of peak season. Sustainable practices, authentic experiences and the carbon impact of travel is becoming more important to travellers, with many seeking businesses who will support them in helping to reduce their impact and provide sustainable travel and authentic experiences.

Travellers are looking for genuine and culturally rich destinations where they can find 'live like a local' experiences. Importantly for Sunderland and the North East, regenerative travel is popular, with visitors ensuring spend goes back to the local community.

Working with Destination North East England, Sunderland will be taking the next steps to be a more regenerative destination, this forms part of a commitment to improve destination sustainability, performance, and improved collaboration. Sunderland joined the Global Destination Sustainability Index in 2024, the vision of this states that "To flourish and thrive we need to take a more integrated systems approach to tourism where value is created together with other people, other organizations, and the natural ecologies that sustain us all."

This means that Sunderland will be committed to working with industry to make tourism work for both people and the planet; that all regenerative tourism actions and interventions will support the industry to become more accessible, inclusive and sustainable; and that this will ensure that tourism will be sustainable, driving value for local people, places and visitors.

Seeking out an experience

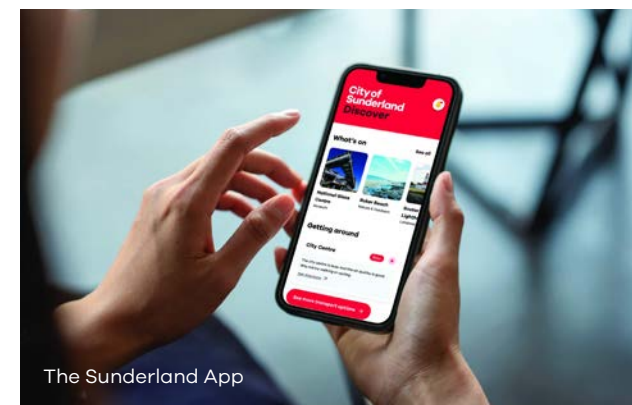
As food and drink experiences are a significant part of tourism, Sunderland's rich independent food and drink scene is important, as visitors are now looking for

local and authentic culinary experiences, exploring regional dishes and specialties.

Consumers are seeking multi-generational holidays and experiences for their families to enjoy. Interest in active outdoor, wellness and health tourism, volunteering and self-improvement breaks are increasing, as are those who prefer to spend their holidays off grid.

Tech meets tourism

Technology, including AI, AR and VR, social media influence and ease of booking is more important; mobile apps, augmented reality, and virtual reality, work to enhance the overall travel experience, providing interactive guides and immersive content.



Sunderland is embracing this innovative technology with the launch of the Sunderland App, which is a free resource delivering up to date information on events and activities for visitors and local people alike. The city also offers

free, ultra-fast Wi-Fi across both the city centre and stretching along the coast. This connects to Sunderland's mission to transform the city into a world-class smart destination.

Like many destinations, Sunderland has seen reduced footfall since the covid-19 pandemic. This is limiting the added value of commuter traffic on city centre venues and activities.

Sunderland also has the opportunity to showcase the local area and encourage those who are working from home to rediscover their surrounding area during lunch and break times. In addition, with its exceptional meeting venues, Sunderland can maximise the trend of business travellers adding leisure time to the end of business trips.



Crown Works Studios artist's impression

Maximising new opportunities

Sunderland has the potential to leverage the arrival of the Crown Works studios to attract more visitors, capitalising on the growing trend of set-jetting, where people travel to destinations featured in popular movies, TV shows, or books.

Shorter getaways and staycations

Shorter getaways and staycations remain popular, allowing people to explore nearby destinations without the need for extensive travel.

PART TWO:

Looking to the future

Sunderland is a city of many strengths though it recognises its challenge as a place where people currently visit for an event or activity rather than as a destination; but importantly, it is ready to grasp and develop all opportunities connected with the cruise market, its heritage assets, the riverside, green spaces and new major events.

Add to this Sunderland's Smart City journey of ambition and innovation, which is setting a new precedent when it comes to digital transformation.

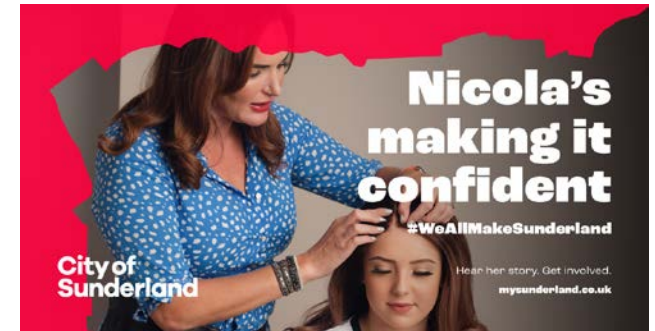
Sunderland City Council and Boldyn Networks are creating the UK's smartest city, leaving no one and nowhere behind through a range of pioneering initiatives bringing benefits to residents, businesses and visitors alike.

Civic Pride campaign

In Summer 2022 Sunderland City Council launched the Civic Pride Campaign, #WeAllMakeSunderland.

This dedicated campaign for our wider city community is one where we can really grow pride and positivity across all areas of the city by connecting with real people. By sharing their stories, residents can connect to the opportunities, development and wider ambition within Sunderland.

The campaign began with a series of focus groups, covering all demographics, in each of our five city areas, from which, alongside our resident's survey feedback, key themes and priorities were established.



This strong underpinning enabled us to create content that we knew would resonate with residents and build pride.

The community-led approach to the campaign was key to us connecting on a more personal level, inspiring residents and businesses in their local communities and shining a light on every part of the city.

Civic Pride is building

Following the Civic Pride campaign residents were asked "When you saw these adverts, what did you think they were trying to tell you?"

"Sunderland's the place to be, new places to go"

"Sunderland is a good place to live and work. It's open for business"

"That Sunderland has a lot to offer, from jobs, culture and learning, to housing and development"

"Sunderland is a great place to visit"

"I felt proud to be a part of the city of Sunderland"

"Sunderland is offering more activities and welcoming more people to visit"

"Sunderland is a beautiful place to thrive"

"Giving a positive image of Sunderland. Celebrating success. Giving a feel good factor"

"Sunderland is a lovely place to live and a place of fun and meeting people with different cultural diversification with good food and drinks"

"Sunderland is a place that's being re-invented"

"How small businesses are a big contributor to Sunderland life and available activities here"

"Sunderland is an exciting place to be"

Where do we go from here?

A series of facilitated consultation workshops with city tourism stakeholders identified key strengths, challenges and opportunities to take this Tourism Strategy forward. Stakeholders included representatives from across the city's transport and education sectors, visitor economy businesses, creative industries and the city council. The sessions were based on:

- Data
- Place
- Product
- Promotion

A mapping exercise of the workshop outcomes identified our emerging themes and our strengths, challenges and opportunities.

From the mapping exercise we were able to develop our short, medium and long term priorities, which are set out in our tourism timeline.

The next section will detail the key priorities across our identified emerging themes.



'Gan canny' sculpture in Keel Square

Priorities and actions





Priority One: Experience Sunderland

Visitor-centred experiences and storytelling

To unlock Sunderland’s full tourism potential, the city is placing the visitor experience at the heart of its strategy. Experience Sunderland is about understanding what makes the city special and curating tailored experiences that attract and engage key audiences. By focusing on the city’s unique assets, developing bookable products, and crafting itineraries that inspire exploration, this theme ensures Sunderland delivers memorable, high-quality visits.

From enhancing the ‘city welcome’ to promoting cultural and natural attractions, Sunderland will strengthen its reputation as a welcoming and authentic destination. Collaboration with local businesses and stakeholders is key, ensuring every visitor leaves with a story to tell - and a reason to return.

Key to delivering this theme will be:

-  Understanding our visitors and shaping our tourism offer
-  Shaping itineraries that appeal to our target audience and encourage longer visits
-  Increasing the number of bookable products and experiences
-  Developing a programme to support the ‘city welcome’



Priority Two: Future Sunderland

Highlighting innovation, regeneration, and talent development

As Sunderland looks to the future, this theme focuses on innovation, talent, and regeneration to prepare the city for a rapidly evolving tourism landscape. Future Sunderland capitalises on the city's smart credentials, embedding technology and innovation to enhance the visitor journey and create modern, efficient tourism experiences.

Equally, this theme highlights the importance of people. By analysing the local labour market and promoting tourism and hospitality as attractive career paths, Sunderland is investing in the next generation of industry leaders. Future Sunderland envisions a tourism sector that not only adapts to change but drives it, strengthening the city's position as a forward-thinking, inclusive, and prosperous destination.

Key to delivering this theme will be:

-  City regeneration that supports the visitor economy
-  Maximising the benefits of our smart city connectivity
-  Understanding the labour market
-  Supporting career pathways into the sector



Priority Three: Regenerative Sunderland

Focusing on sustainability and giving back

Sunderland is embarking on a vision for tourism that not only sustains but actively improves the city's environment, economy, and community. Regenerative Sunderland reflects this ethos, focusing on initiatives that prioritise sustainability, enhance infrastructure, improve connectivity, and empower local businesses to adopt greener practices.

This theme is rooted in the principle of giving back more than we take - whether through reducing environmental impact, fostering circular economies, or investing in infrastructure that serves both residents and visitors. Regenerative Sunderland is about building resilience into the visitor economy and creating a destination that thrives while leaving a positive legacy for future generations.

Key to delivering this theme will be:



Moving towards a more sustainable visitor economy



Enhancing our infrastructure and encourage more sustainable transport choices



Improving connectivity to benefit visitors



Supporting local businesses to adopt more sustainable approaches



Priority Four: Marketing and Collaboration

Evidence led campaigns to deliver our strategy





A strong and coordinated approach to marketing and partnerships is essential, our final, overarching theme, Marketing and Collaboration focuses on showcasing Sunderland's unique offer through compelling storytelling, targeted campaigns, and strategic collaborations that elevate the city's profile to key audiences.

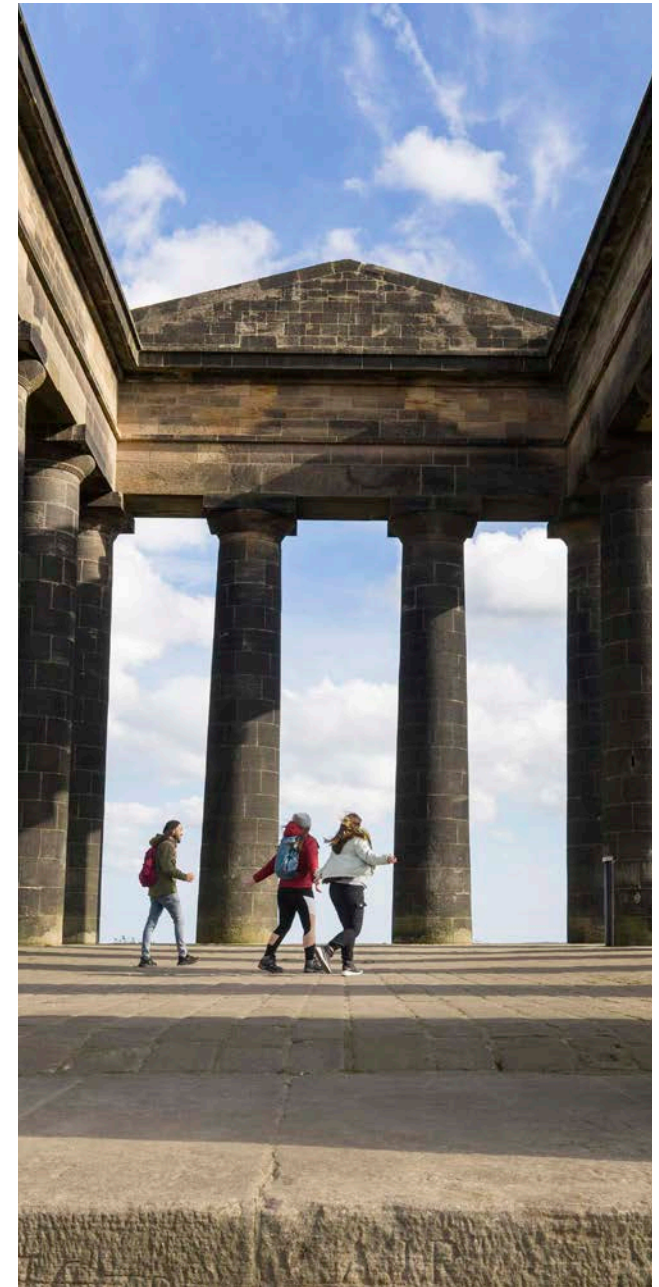
At the heart of this theme is the creation of a clear and distinctive Sunderland story, one that highlights the city's unique selling points (USPs) and positions it as a vibrant, must-visit destination. This will be achieved through an audit of existing assets, developing engaging campaigns, and crafting impactful messages, including an elevator pitch to promote Sunderland's strengths to visitors, investors, and stakeholders alike.

Collaboration is also central to delivering successful outcomes. By working with local businesses, influencers, and partners, Sunderland will amplify its reach, connect with new audiences, and drive meaningful engagement. This theme ensures the city speaks with one voice, celebrating its identity, assets, and aspirations while building a strong and

recognisable presence in the tourism marketplace.

Key to delivering this theme will be:

-  Creating the Sunderland story
-  Developing campaigns and assets
-  Promoting our USPs
-  Influencer engagement





PART THREE:

Measuring and sustaining progress

The stakeholders who worked together to develop the tourism strategy will be invited to become **Sunderland Tourism Alliance (STA) members**. The Sunderland Tourism Alliance will meet quarterly and the priorities of the Tourism Strategy will be our collective focus for action.

To deliver each of the identified priority areas, we will have a series of workstream groups, each of which will have an action plan, derived from the emerging priorities. Workstream groups will also meet quarterly.

The proposed workstreams are:

- Experience Sunderland
- Future Sunderland
- Regenerative Sunderland
- Marketing and Collaboration

Workstream membership

Getting the membership of the workstream groups right is key to the success of the strategy. STA membership will comprise of one senior member representative from each of our partner organisations. Each workstream group will have a workstream lead to drive forward the priorities. The workstream leads will be asked to update quarterly at the Sunderland Tourism Alliance.

Measuring progress and keeping it going

Monitoring and management will be key to the success of the strategy.

The Tourism Strategy objectives will be monitored quarterly against KPIs detailing the outputs, impacts and outcomes throughout the delivery phase. Reports will be shared back with the Sunderland Tourism Alliance and key senior stakeholders across the city.

The strategy document will be reviewed and updated annually in alignment with Sunderland City Council's standard Corporate Performance processes.



Acknowledgements

The development of the Sunderland Tourism Strategy has been collaborative, reflecting the collective vision, dedication, and expertise of numerous individuals and organisations across the city and beyond.

This strategy is the culmination of insightful contributions from local stakeholders who share a deep passion for Sunderland's heritage, culture, and future. Their invaluable input has shaped a roadmap that not only honours the city's unique identity but also positions it for the future.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who have played a part so far, and look forward to working together with you all, and many more, in the years to come:

- The National Trust
- Sunderland BID
- Sunderland College
- University of Sunderland
- Nexus
- Culture House Sunderland
- Sunderland Heritage Partnership

- Holiday Inn Sunderland
- Hilton Garden Inn Sunderland

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Roker Beach and Pier

