

Briefing Paper for Destination Plymouth Board:

DMO Review and development of Local Visitor Economy Partnership
for Devon

Date: October 6th 2023

Author: Amanda Lumley

1) The purpose of this briefing paper is to:

- Update the Board on progress of the implementation of the DMO review and development of a Local Visitor Economy Partnership for Devon and Somerset (LVEP).
- Consider the evolving options for Destination Plymouth as part of the solution going forwards.
- Set some parameters that the executive can work within as part of the process.
- Consider implications for the DP structure and team within the new proposed county structure.

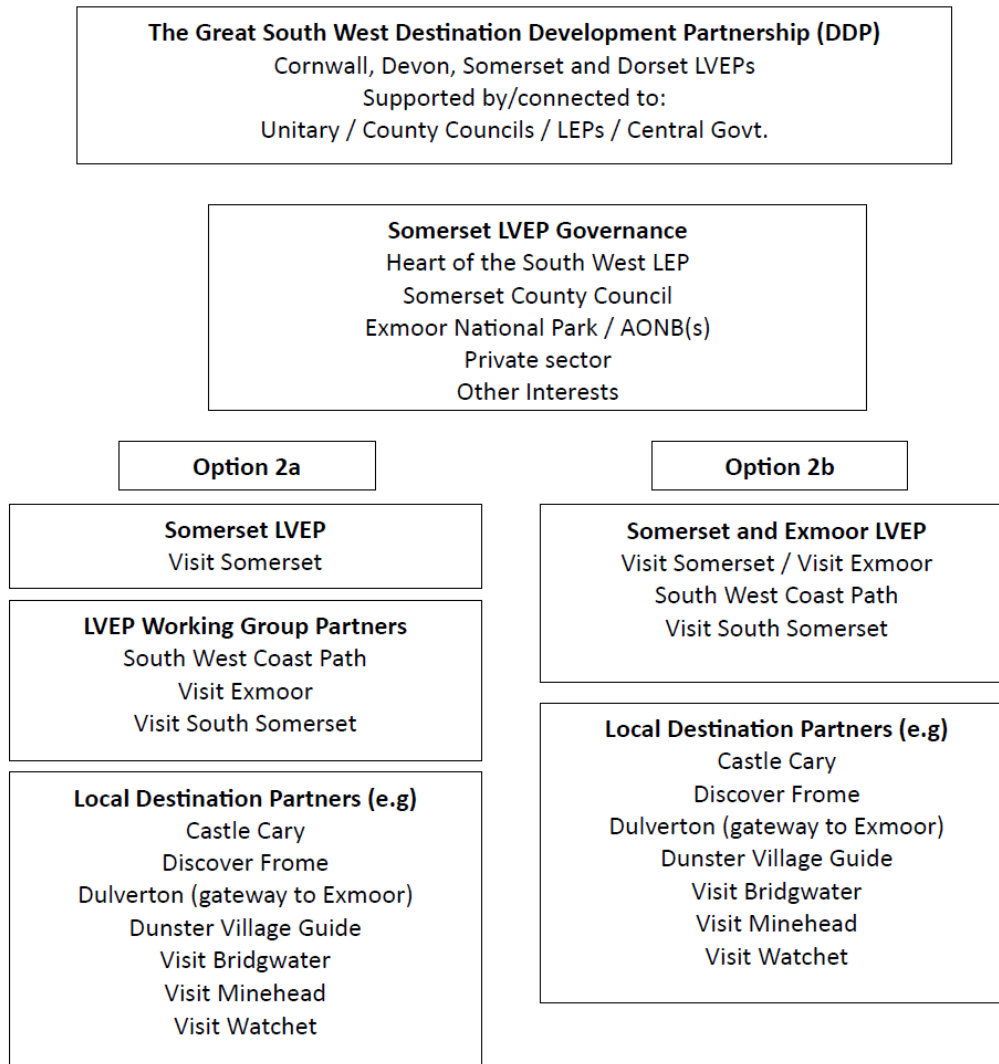
2) Introduction:

This paper follows on from the update provided to the Board at March's Board meeting (see separate attachment). In March the HOSWLEP provided funding for a county wide consultation across Devon and Somerset to determine what a future LVEP could look like for both counties. A Consultancy (Tomorrow's Tourism) has been commissioned to undertake this work which is currently underway. Initial input from stakeholders has been pulled into a draft report (see separate paper) and it is planned to have workshops w/c October 1st to further refine thinking and shape the potential for a future structure.

3) Initial findings from consultation:

The first stage of consultation and initial report has made the following observations and recommendations. These are taken directly from the report.

- i. The message from the Discovery Stage consultations was loud and clear – the visitor economy in both Devon and Somerset is currently under-served and significant change is required. The consultants agree and recommend a possible Somerset structure with a Devon one mirroring the example proposal below.



If agreed, the next challenge is to look at the pathway to achieving what is a significant restructure.

- ii. This does not have to be achieved overnight; indeed, it does not have to be done before an LVEP application can be submitted. VisitEngland is likely to support an agreed direction of travel (as they have done for other LVEPs) as long as the right level of commitment can be demonstrated.
- iii. It is likely that a longer timescale might be required in Devon than in Somerset, to develop an LVEP and a more detailed roadmap will need to be developed for each. However, as an indication:
 - December 2023 LVEP applications submitted with proposed new structures and working partnerships.
 - April 2024 Informal collaboration across identified teams and organisations with shared governance implemented.
 - April 2025 Formal merger of identified organisations with single, combined business plan, staffing structure etc.
 - April 2026 Fully functioning LVEP ready to join forces as part of a Destination Development Partnership (DDP).

- iv. In order to support the transition, a three-year seed funding commitment (April 2024 through to March 2027) from relevant County-level authorities would be necessary. Equally the District authorities in Devon would need to agree on the principles and direction. Both of these are key to progress this work.

4) Considerations in relation to Destination Plymouth:

It has been made clear by Visit England that the preference is for Devon as a county to be potentially a 'Tier 2' LVEP, however, there is not currently a structure in place which readily lends itself to taking this forward. The current Visit Devon structure does not meet criteria for an LVEP, has very little local authority support, is a marketing only organisation and not well funded. Plymouth by comparison has a 10-year strategy, meets all the criteria for an LVEP except geography and is well supported by partners and the local authority. English Riviera also has good funding and a management plan in place with resources to implement it. Devon County Council has no central resource nor funding to support a new structure and neither do most of the District authorities.

If Devon is to support a structure similar to that proposed in Somerset there would need to be agreement about how the initial governance will work and then where funding would flow from as well as ultimately where resources could be focused.

5) Options for Destination Plymouth:

Given the current situation outlined above ideally Plymouth would have a key decision-making role within the new structure without causing challenges to resourcing which is already stretched. There are a number of options from a governance perspective:

Option	Outcome	Impacts/benefits
a)	Plymouth sits outside the current process and remains as 'Tier 3' for the time being.	No funding, no recognition from Visit England or other government departments i.e. DCMS, DLHUC, ACE, NHLF etc.
b)	A new 'Devon coalition' light touch structure is formed with Devon, Plymouth, Torbay agreeing to work together within this as lead authorities. Plymouth could act as an 'accountable body' in this space with any funding drawn down for projects into a project governance structure.	All partners get shared recognition as 'Tier 2' and therefore opportunities longer term for funding and support. Resources to manage the secretariat requirements would need to be considered
c)	A new Devon incorporated structure is agreed with contractual commitments via SLA's to resourcing and responsibilities.	All partners get shared recognition as 'Tier 2' and therefore opportunities for funding and support.

		Resources may be insufficient to be able to support this model in the medium term until funding is available. Partners may be wary of doing 'heavy lifting' for others where there are not obvious cash or resource commitments. Limited appetite for a new organisation.
--	--	---

6) Current position, recommendations, and next steps:

Consultation continues with a workshop for Devon which was held October 4th. This was positive with general alignment in relation to the role and purpose of an LVEP within the region. Subsequent conversations are leading towards a 'light touch' approach similar to the one adopted by Cotswolds Plus. (See separate presentation with case studies on it). This relies on one nominated 'accountable body' rather than setting up a new entity. Only a limited number of organisations are capable of being an accountable body with Plymouth being one of them. Further conversations will take place over the coming week or so to develop this thinking and refine recommendations to the LEP.

A draft report and recommendations will be made to the LEP for implementation by early November.

During this time Visit England have also set out more clearly what they will require of formally accredited LVEPS and this includes:

- One formal governance structure
- One destination strategy for the LVEP
- One organisation chart showing what funding and resources will be allocated where
- One accountable body (See separate document with 'accountable body' guidance).

It is recommended that Plymouth continues to put some resource into 'supporting' county wide discussions on what a 'light touch' structure can look like. The aim here would be if possible, to gain support to create an appropriate governance structure within existing resource constraints and to ensure that Plymouth is a key stakeholder or possibly the accountable body in whatever governance structure is set up.

Next steps:

The steps below are all rather hypothetical at this stage as the moving parts are too numerous for conclusive actions, however, they provide an indicative timeline and process.

- Consultation finishes end October 23
- Final report and recommendations due early November
- Report back to HoSWLEP Nov 23
- Application to Visit England December 23 or January 24