
VisitLincolnshire
BUSINESS
GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE
Destination
Plan

GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE
Destination Plan



VisitLincolnshire
BUSINESS

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Current Position

This is the Destination Plan (DP) for Greater Lincolnshire. It was produced following an extensive consultation exercise with the tourism sector in 2022/23.

A Destination Plan is a strategy for managing a destination effectively. It outlines how to focus on the needs of visitors, local communities and businesses. Through coordinating effort it aims to enhance the visitor experience, while ensuring sustainable development and economic benefits.

This DP gives our aspiration for the visitor economy in Greater Lincolnshire for the next five years, in the short, medium and long term. All local authorities have agreed a partnership approach and to move forward under the over-arching banner of Visit Lincolnshire. Its attract and disperse model complimenting existing local brands.



In consultation with Visit England, Greater Lincolnshire intends reapplying for LVEP status. The following criteria will apply to our thinking:

- We concentrate on 'business as usual', ensuring that as a priority we are supporting the visitor economy at all times

- Re-use existing data and consultation, there is no need to re-do work that we were all involved in

- **VisitLincolnshire.com** was entirely rebuilt during the covid lockdown and is going from strength to strength. In 2025/26 it delivered an impressive 21.9% conversion rate to a booking

- The Lincolnshire themes form the core of marketing initiatives and are developed working hand in hand

- Any proposed tourism model must be entirely appropriate for Greater Lincolnshire. Experience tells us that a subscription model, when the county is dominated by micro-businesses doesn't work

There is a strong commitment across the sector to ensure a thriving and resilient tourist industry and that Lincolnshire will be a destination of choice that offers a great visitor experience.

Throughout this Destination Plan Greater Lincolnshire refers to Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, East Lindsey, West Lindsey, City of Lincoln, North Kesteven, South Kesteven, Boston and South Holland. When the STEAM figures are quoted these are the figures for Greater Lincolnshire. **VisitLincolnshire.com** covers the whole of Greater Lincolnshire.



Greater Lincolnshire

What is it Like?

A big, very rural county with a long coastline and a beautiful cathedral city at its heart. From the Humber to The Wash, it is around 100 miles north to south and 50 miles from west to east.





COUNTRYSIDE

The rolling Wolds AONB, the mysterious Fens, waterways and the long spine of the Lincoln Edge. This changing landscape with its fertile soils is farming country – the nation's food basket in fact.





NATURE TOURISM

Walking, cycling, nature reserves, seal and birdwatching. The 124 mile King Charles III England Coast Path has recently completed in Lincolnshire and the Viking Way is our other popular long-distance walk.





HOLIDAY COAST

Busy and fun resorts like Skegness, Cleethorpes and Mablethorpe with quieter holiday villages like Sutton on Sea and Chapel St Leonards dotted in between.





WILD COAST

The majority of Lincolnshire's long coastline of huge sandy beaches and nature reserves is deserted but internationally recognised for its biodiversity. On the East Atlantic Migration Flyway making this one of the UK's premier bird watching counties.





HERITAGE & CULTURE

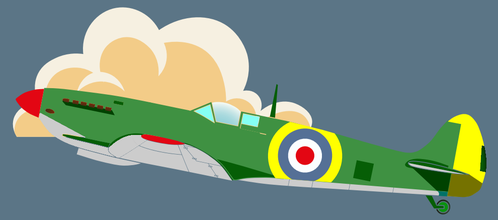
Roman remains, medieval castles and grand country houses that are proving popular with today's TV and Film Directors. Maritime heritage and famous Lincolnshire heroes include the Mayflower Pilgrims, the Australian explorers, Tennyson and John Wesley. Museums, art galleries and archives complete the mix and ancestral tourism is a growing area.





MILITARY HERITAGE

Lincolnshire's military heritage stretches back to World War I and the building of the first tank and the founding of the RAF. During World War II Lincolnshire became known as Bomber County and its aviation heritage is a continuing draw.





CITY OF LINCOLN

Ancient Lincoln with its cathedral and castle begun by William the Conqueror, perched on high overlooking the city. The aptly named Steep Hill connects the uphill area to the Brayford Pool and River Witham that flows through Lincoln.



VILLAGES AND MARKET TOWNS

Pretty villages dominated by their medieval churches and charming historic towns like Stamford and Louth with weekly markets and independent shops.





FUN TIMES

Plenty of attractions both inside and out to keep everybody entertained. Heritage, thrills and spills, adventure activities or just that fun day on the beach.





FOOD AND DRINKS

This rural county is all about producing food. Lincolnshire sausages of course, but also PGI status traditional smoked fish from Grimsby, plum bread and Poacher cheese. Breweries include Batemans run by 4th and 5th generations and there are gin distilleries offering popular tours.





EVENTS

Lincoln's night-time economy, Steam Punk Festival, Butlin's Big Weekenders and Music Festivals at venues like Lincoln Castle, Lost Village and Meridian Showground attract big spending audiences. Annual events like Classic Cars, Antique Fairs, Open Air Theatre and Garden Open Days and plenty of sport from football to horse trials, to racing motor bikes and horses.





WEDDINGS

The wedding market is important business for Lincolnshire. There are wonderful venues from historic country houses and barns to quirky buildings like water mills and castles.



SWOT Analysis

This SWOT was largely compiled from workshops carried out by NGI for the original DP.



S W O T

STRENGTHS

- **Visitor Economy** is well established and worth just over £3bn to the local economy.
- City, Coast and Countryside is a **strong visitor offer –** simple and direct.
- **Commitment and enthusiasm** for the visitor economy amongst local authorities and other organisations.
- **Heritage, aviation, nature tourism, walking, cycling, food and drink** are strong visitor themes as are events like the Lincoln Castle concerts and Steam Punk Festival
- Research says that Lincolnshire is overwhelmingly **Friendly, Historic and Peaceful.**
- **Award winning visitor** economy businesses.
- Recent **investment in the digital offer**, particularly visitlincolnshire and visitlincoln.
- **Strong international heritage** links particularly with United States (Captain John Smith, Mayflower Pilgrims, Boston, Mass.) and Australia (Matthew Flinders, Sir Joseph Banks, Sir John Franklin, George Bass).
- **Levelling Up funding** 2019-2026.
- **Good track record of delivering major tourism projects** such as Lincoln Castle and Cathedral, International Bomber Command Centre, King Charles III England Coast Path.
- **Resilience of the visitor economy.**
- **High visitor loyalty and repeat visits** (both a strength and a weakness).



WEAKNESSES



- **Seasonality, influenced** by coastal holiday resorts
- **Attracting day visitors**, rather than longer stays
- **Lack of awareness**, no perception of Lincolnshire (either good or bad), Lincolnshire is not on people's list to visit. People want what Lincolnshire has, they're just oblivious that we've got it
- People think Lincolnshire is **flat and boring**
- **Not enough accommodation**; not any 5* accommodation and lack of hero/national brands
- **Perception** that our offer for families is not good enough
- Food offer sometimes **not very sophisticated**
- No perception of where the county is or **how to get to it**
- **Low numbers of international visitors** despite heritage links
- **Lack of conference facilities impacts** on Business tourism offer
- **Need for more data** to enable effective decision making
- **Lack of public transport** and dependency on cars
- **High volume of day** trippers with a low visitor spend
- **Strong on repeat visits**, but need to attract more 'new' visitors
- **Need for more digital training** and online bookability
- High volume of **micro businesses**
- Planning **restrictions** that restrict development



OPPORTUNITIES



- **Headroom for growth** and potential to reach new markets
- **Attract new international visitors**, particularly American and Australian Markets
- **Attract new Groups & Travel Trade**
- Out of season, year-round, **product development and experiences**
- Promote Lincolnshire as a **wedding destination**
- A coordinated visitor **offer/experience** (digital, print, itineraries, incentives)
- **Arts and Culture visitor offer**, working with new Arts Council England NPOs
- **Film and TV tourism** further development (Set Jetting)
- **Accessibility**
- **Nature tourism**
- **Ageing population** (larger volume of country loving traditionalist. visitor segment)
- **Lincolnshire is very different things** to different people, so need different marketing messages for these audiences (Segmentation)
- **England Coast Path completion** in Lincolnshire
- **Recognition of visitor economy** in the Greater Lincolnshire devolution deal
- **Development of the skills** offer to support careers and jobs via University, Colleges, and Councils

S W O T

THREATS



- **Strong repeat visitor** numbers means low growth
- **Not attracting younger visitors** with certain expectations (Aspirational Family Fun visitor segment)
- **Workforce recruitment** and retention of skilled staff
- **Cost of living crisis** on leisure spend and business resilience (post covid) and including increased operating costs
- **Digital skills** and confidence of businesses
- **Business instability** and reduced investment opportunities
- **Increased competition** for leisure spend
- **Need for more data** to help make 'data led decisions'
- **Lack of focus –** trying to do everything at once

Vision

By 2034, Greater Lincolnshire will be a leading destination for UK visitors, with a growing international reputation. Our thriving visitor economy will be a major provider of employment and career opportunities, contributing to the strong growth of our wide-ranging businesses and boosting the prosperity of local people.



By the end of

2026

- We will have a way forward with **Visit England on a LVEP** for Greater Lincolnshire, this will involve a strategic partnership and not a new costly organisation
- **VisitLincolnshire.com** is the county-wide destination visitor website. All stakeholders will be using it as the over-arching umbrella brand that **'attracts and disperses'**
- Stakeholders will **contribute to a marketing and PR campaign** encouraging more leisure visitors to Greater Lincolnshire
- **Better articulation** of Lincolnshire's distinctiveness and therefore awareness of our visitor offer
- **An increase in social media reach**
- A monthly well-read **consumer newsletter** sent to those signed up through **VisitLincolnshire.com**
- A monthly newsletter to businesses will **ensure good communication** and prevent confusion in who does what
- **VisitLincolnshire.com** achieves **1m views** during the year, click through rate to bookings remains between **12% and 16%**, and that the website maintains its position 1 or 2 in search engine rankings. Content is regularly updated to ensure our events are timely and drive traffic; regular blogs
- A way forward agreed on **Cycle Lincolnshire and Taste Lincolnshire**
- That businesses are able to find and take advantage of **all available business support**

By the end of

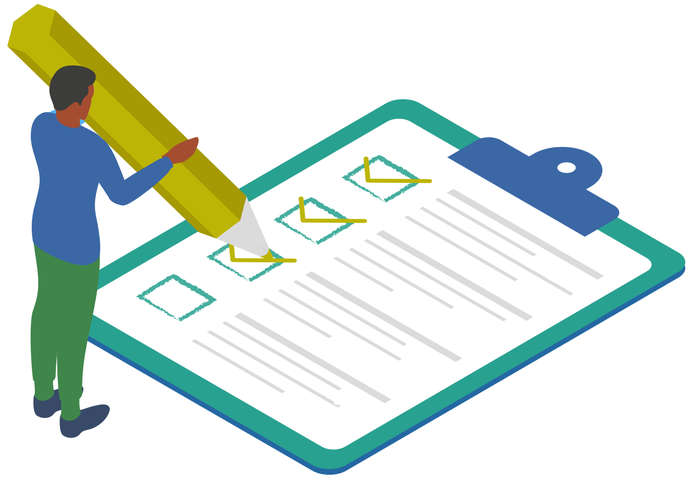
2027

- **LVEP status** will be achieved for Greater Lincolnshire
- www.visitlincolnshire.com will have achieved **1.15m views**, its analytics providing a strong understanding of our potential visitors and their interests
- All stakeholders will **contribute to a marketing and PR campaign** to promote Greater Lincolnshire for the season of 2027
- **Improved awareness and perception** of Lincolnshire attracting new audiences to the county
- **Develop 'Experiences'** which will encourage visitors to spend more and stay longer
- Success will be measured through the **STEAM data**, the analytics of visitlincolnshire, social media reach and a business sentiment survey
- **Use the 2027 Tourism Conference** to make the connection between our data and the activity planned
- **A partnership approach** will be taken towards Boston 400 – the offer put to the American market should include all our heritage links
- **Skills training offered on digital**, customer excellence, travel trade and on becoming a wedding venue

By the end of

2030

- **A strong partnership** with good communications will ensure that everyone understands their contribution to the visitor economy
- **Lincolnshire's offer** will be clearly understood and communicated
- **VisitLincolnshire.com** will have achieved **1.75m views**
- **Online bookability** across the visitor economy is the norm
- Lincolnshire becomes **less seasonal**, with its nature tourism contributing to a thriving spring, autumn and winter offer
- **Business tourism**, wedding tourism and group travel become important markets



Further Development of Opportunities



International Tourism

Lincolnshire has strong heritage links with both the USA and Australia. Word of mouth from businesses over the last 30 years have indicated the importance of these two markets and this is confirmed by the Google analytics for visitlincolnshire.com which consistently has USA and Australia as first and second for overseas viewers of the website.

US connections are largely Captain John Smith (Pocahontas); Mayflower Pilgrims; Exodus from Boston Lincolnshire to Boston Mass (400th anniversary 2030); Anne Hutchinson from Alford (puritan and part of the Boston Mass. community); John Wesley and Methodism; various WWII connections (Grantham, Eagle Squadrons, planning for Operations Market Garden and Overlord).

Australian connections are largely through the explorers Matthew Flinders, Sir Joseph Banks, Sir John Franklin and George Bass. Flinders is particularly well known to Australians.

The US connection offers the most immediate opportunity with the 2030 anniversary. Although it is most relevant to Boston, it makes sense to offer to any visitor from the States a 'full package' of all our American connections, making the offer irresistible. With four years to go there is time to put the appropriate planning in place. Many American journalists were achieved for Lincoln Castle/Magna Carta with this sort of timing. Lincolnshire/Australian connections will be given greater prominence.



Seasonality

As in many parts of England the tourist offer is still too seasonal in Lincolnshire. There are quality products that Lincolnshire has that can be used out of season as an attractor.

Traditionally the tourist industry, particularly on the coast, has used the winter period to 'rest and repair', but there is increasing evidence that as visitors change their patterns of behaviour, so businesses would like to see more consistent trading.

The autumn period can be strong for short breaks for those without children; events like Halloween have grown hugely; Christmas has become a much longer festival with markets and lighting events from November onwards and performing very strongly according to **VisitLincolnshire.com** Google analytics.

VisitLincolnshire.com will continue to develop the above events, but it is felt that the best opportunities for growth are through nature tourism. Lincolnshire has seen the completion of the 124 miles of the King Charles III England Coast Path (KCIIIECP) and interest in its new web pages has been strong. The KCIIIECP is likely to become the 'must do' walk for the bucket list. In Lincolnshire this walk exactly correlates with its coastal birdwatching offer, which can be termed as good as anywhere in the UK.



From Alkborough Flats and Far Ings in the north to RSPB Frampton Marsh in the south the Lincolnshire Coast can offer a top-quality birdwatching experience which is at its strongest in the spring, autumn and winter.

Rarities like bitterns, bearded tits, cranes, glossy ibis and black winged stilts; spectacles of thousands of wetland birds such as knot taking to the air or starling murmurations; and where there are birds of this variety and number, birds of prey aren't far behind. The Big Five is an achievable daily target, but going for ten raptor species in a day is within range. Lincolnshire has an accessible coastline, a great new path and some of the best birdwatching about – plenty to shout about.

The seals at Donna Nook are also an out of season treasure (late Oct-early Jan) but needs careful handling with the area not coping with large number of visitors well. Cycle Lincolnshire will be supported by a coordinated plan and cycling routes and trails will be brought together.



Segmentation



Lincolnshire's main markets are 50+ couples (no children) on short breaks and families with young children. There are other markets where we have potential to do better. Through Visitlincolnshire.com we have been experimenting with presenting content to different segments of the market. Things to do with small children on a rainy day, Things to do for History Buffs etc and these can be expanded ad infinitum.

Group & Travel Trade



Engaging with the travel trade (ie buyers for group travel, agents and tour operators) is a valuable route to market for tourism suppliers and providers of product. This is in addition to direct to consumer / visitor activity.

Trade buyers require different approaches and pricing structures to 'direct to consumer' activity. Lincolnshire visitor economy businesses would benefit from guidance and upskilling to develop product suitable for the travel trade. Business Lincolnshire are able to fund some workshops and a toolkit.

Wedding Destination

The wedding market has changed since covid and smaller DIY weddings have become more popular. For many Lincolnshire businesses the wedding market is important and many have adjusted their offer to reflect changes in the market.

Discussions are ongoing with the Registry Service, who see the potential of growth of Lincolnshire as a wedding destination – the county already offers historic houses and quirky venues like barns and water mills. They would also like to see more businesses registered as wedding venues. In engagement with tourism businesses, many have expressed interest in being involved.

Tourism Officers Group saw the opportunity as in two stages. Firstly to hold workshops in conjunction with the Registry Service so that businesses understand the positives and negatives of being a wedding venue. Secondly to present Lincolnshire as a wedding destination and how we adjust our content to make the process of holding a wedding here easier.





Priority Themes

**The previous DP identified the following development priorities.
It had Inclusivity and Sustainability as cross cutting themes.**



Strategy, Place, Investment



Engagement, Partnership and Business Support



Skills and Careers



Data and Intelligence



Profile and Identity



Product and Experience Development

Governance Model & Engagement with Businesses

Visitor Economy Governance Model

A Group convened by the GLCCA to lead a Greater Lincolnshire tourism partnership

GLCCA
Data and Priority Themes

VISIT ENGLAND
Data and Priority Themes

ALL LOCAL AUTHORITIES
Place based strategies & development

Private Sector Input
Various formalised channels, co-ordinated by each LA

Public Sector
GL Tourism Strategic leads including GLCCA: 'Strategic Tourism Group'**STG**

DP creation, oversight, and direction
Potential future ambition to secure LVEP status

Public Sector
GL Tourism Officer Delivery, all councils partnered with sector delivery where applicable **TOG**

DP delivery

DP Theme: Business Engagement & Support

DP Theme: Product Development

DP Theme: Place Profile & Strategy

Visit Lincolnshire Brand & Website / Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub

WLDC	ELDC	NKDC	SKDC	SHDC	BBC	COLC	NELC	NLC	LCC
Love Lincs Wolds & place based strategy	Lincs Coast & Wolds brand & place based strategy	Heart of Lincs brand & place based strategy	Discover SK & place-based strategy	Brand & place based strategy	Discover Boston brand & place based strategy	Visit Lincoln brand & place based strategy	Discover NEL brand & place based strategy	Visit North Lincs brand & place based strategy	GL wide brand & place based strategy

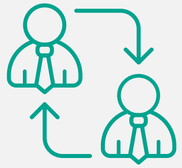
THE VISITOR

Engagement with Businesses

Engagement with businesses happens by a variety of means, experience suggests that different vehicles work better for different sized businesses:



Visitor Economy Specialist Adviser – supporting the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub with 121 business advice



Support from a business's local Tourism Officer



District Partnership events – some annual, others more regular



Visit Lincolnshire Conference



Workshops run by local authorities e.g. England Coast Path, Experiences



Quarterly B2B Newsletter is now monthly



Creation of a private sector sounding board to advise on strategy – made up of cross section of visitor economy businesses



Business Sentiment Survey to become a regular feature

Tourism businesses are incredibly varied: micro-businesses run by a family to national chains.

Experience with the LEP Visitor Economy Board and the Tourism Commission suggests that we need a variety of ways of engaging with tourism businesses; the former was rather passive and the latter was often dominated by the larger businesses.

Businesses do want to know what is going on, but tend to be less interested in meetings in a local government format discussing things like governance.

It is felt that a model which has a whole series of touchpoints is most appropriate to capture everyone's views. All the above will feed into an engagement model which reflects the variety, size and geography of Greater Lincolnshire's Visitor Economy community. It is important that all engagement is documented.



Greater Lincolnshire in Numbers



£3.3bn

Record tourism economic impact

Tourism continues its strong post-pandemic growth.



15%

of visits, over half of spending

Staying visitors remain the highest-value market.



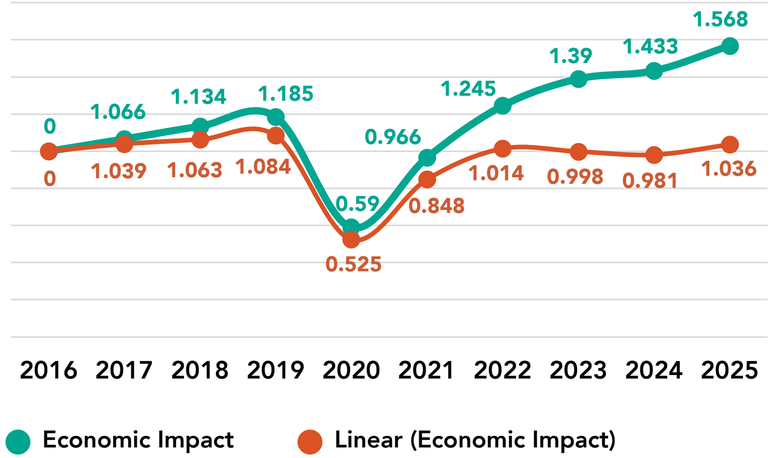
More places to stay, a stronger visitor economy

Growth in non-serviced accommodation is expanding bed capacity and supporting long-term resilience.



STEAM Headlines 2025 Report Greater Lincolnshire

Tourism Economic Impact Trends, Greater Lincolnshire (2016=1)

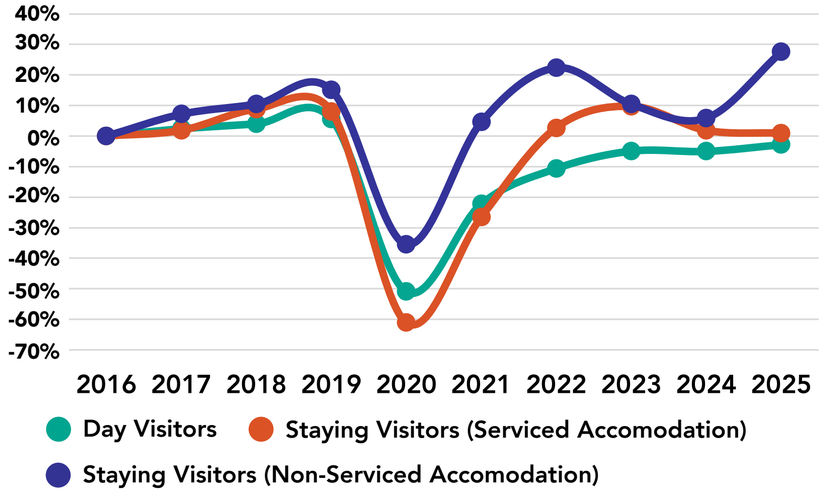


The tourism sector was worth **£3.3bn** in 2025, **growing by £280m** (+9.4%) from 2024.

In real terms the sector **grew by £175m** (+5.6%).

Inflation eased to around **3.4%** in 2025, supporting a more favourable environment for sector growth.

Visitor Numbers (Million)



Visitor numbers **increased by 1.02m** (+3.2%) in 2025, reaching **33.19m visits.**

Overall visitor numbers remain 6.3% below their 2019 peak.

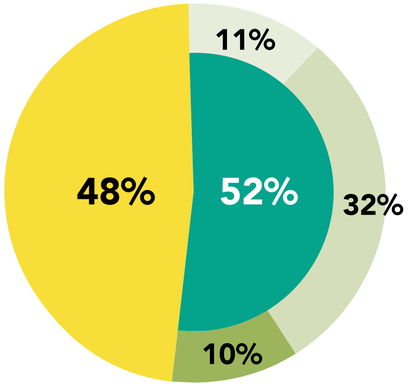
Day visitor numbers have recovered significantly from their pandemic low but remain around 3–5% below 2016 levels.

Non-serviced accommodation recorded the strongest recovery, with visitor numbers **28% above 2016 levels.**

Economic Impact Historic Prices (£M)

TOTAL
£3,300.47m

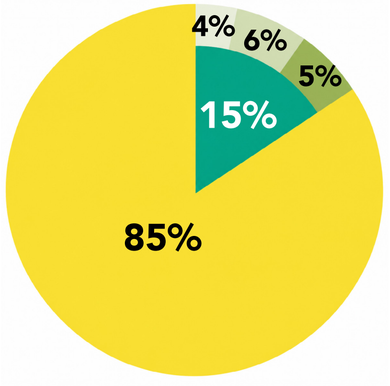
Serviced	361.57
Non-Serviced	1,046.93
SFR	320.54
Staying Visitor	1,729.04
Day Visitor	1,571.43
Total	3,300.47



Visitor Numbers 2025 (Millions)

TOTAL
33.19m

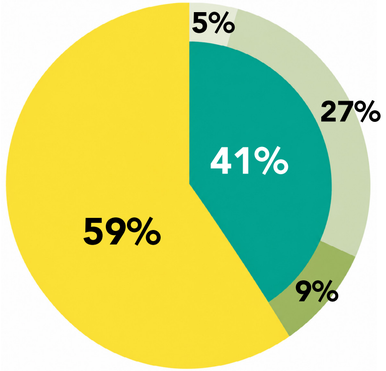
Serviced	1.14
Non-Serviced	1.94
SFR	1.78
Staying Visitor	4.86
Day Visitor	28.32
Total	33.19



Visitor Days 2025 (Millions)

TOTAL
48.08m

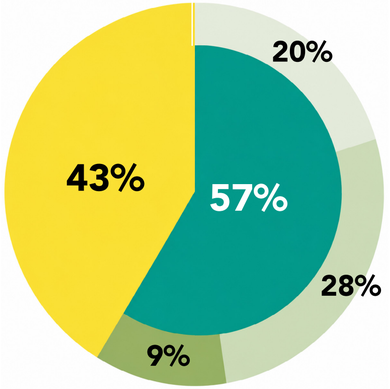
Serviced	2.30
Non-Serviced	13.05
SFR	4.40
Staying Visitor	19.75
Day Visitor	28.32
Total	48.08



Direct Employment Supported 2025 (FTEs)

TOTAL
22,704 Direct FTEs
29,376 Total FTEs

Serviced	4,451
Non-Serviced	6,375
SFR	2,062
Staying Visitor	12,887
Day Visitor	9,816
Total	22,248



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4.9m staying visitors generated **£1.73bn** of visitor spending.

28.3m day visits generated **£1.57bn** of spending.

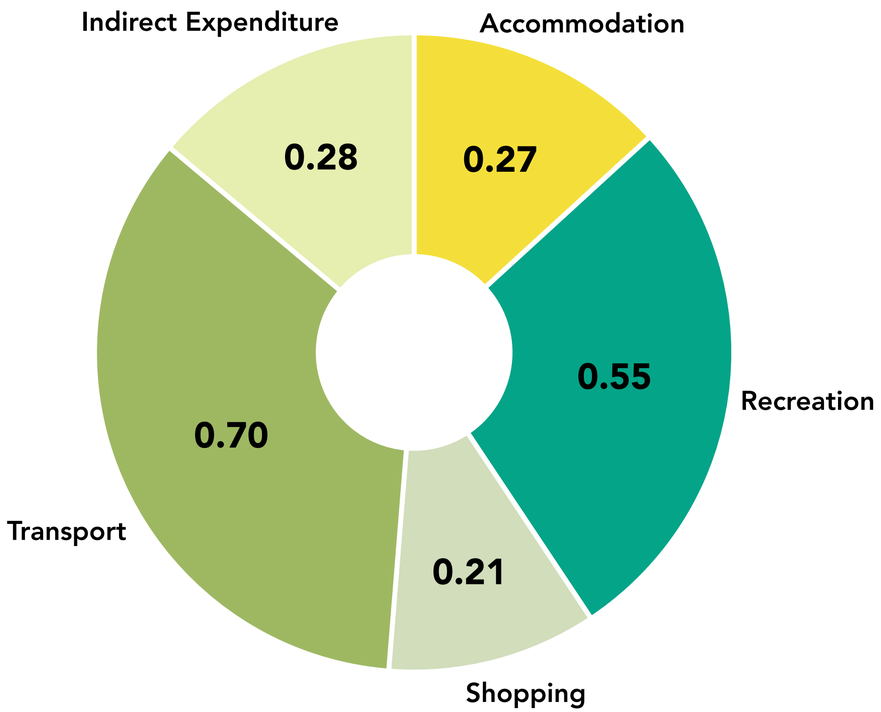
15% of visitors generated **52%** of tourism expenditure.

Staying visitors spent **£356** per trip, compared with **£55** for day visitors.

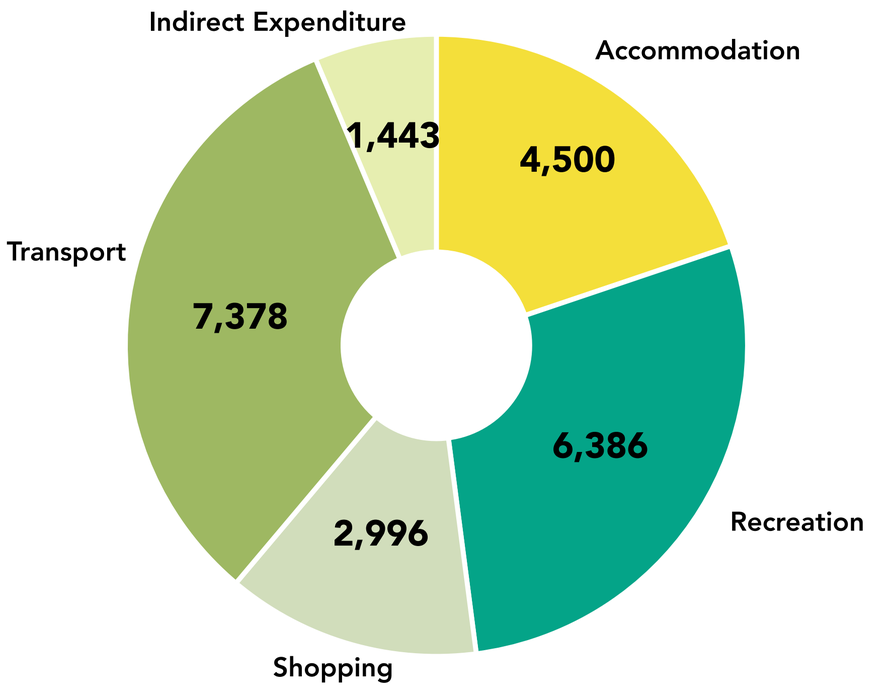


£2.0bn in Visitor Spend Supports 22,700 FTE Jobs

Visitor Spend £bn



Employment



VisitLincolnshire BUSINESS

£2.01bn of direct visitor spending supported **22,704** tourism jobs in 2025.

Shopping and Food & Drink accounted for **62%** of visitor spending and **60%** of tourism employment.

Accommodation supported **20%** of tourism jobs despite accounting for just **13%** of visitor spend.



VisitLincolnshire BUSINESS

Bed Stock Reaches Highest Level Since 2016

Serviced Accomodation 2025	2025		Change on 2024		Change on 2016	
	Est.	Beds	Est.	Beds	Est.	Beds
Services Accomodation Total	598	15,214	-38	-466	-226	-1,220
+50 Room	27	4,902	-1	-142	+4	+921
11-50 Room	127	5,733	-4	-37	-20	-459
<10 Room	444	4,579	-33	-287	-210	-1,682

Serviced Accomodation 2025	2025		Change on 2024		Change on 2016	
	Est.	Beds	Est.	Beds	Est.	Beds
Non-Serviced Accomodation Total	856	80,049	+40	+1,978	+44	+4,647
Self Catering	514	17,083	+44	+420	-2	+522
Static Caravans/Chalets	0	33,650	0	+1,114	0	+2,025
Touring Caravans/Camping	342	29,316	-4	+444	+47	+2,100
Youth Hostels	2	30	0	0	0	-11

Distribution By Type of Accomodation 2025	2025		Change on 2024		Change on 2016	
	Est.	Beds	Est.	Beds	Est.	Beds
All Paid Accomodation Total	1,454	95,263	+2	+1,512	-181	+3,427

Accommodation capacity increased by 1,512 beds in 2025, reaching 95,263 beds.

Growth was driven by non-serviced accommodation, which added 1,978 beds.

Static caravans and chalets recorded the largest increase (+1,114 beds).

Serviced accommodation declined by 466 beds, with losses concentrated among smaller providers.

