

CONSULTANT'S BRIEF

Tourism Strategy for Eastbourne 2026–2036

Commissioned by: [Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board](#) (ENB)

Tender Issue Date: 24 January 2026

Submission Deadline: 5pm, 12 February 2026

Project Duration: 3 months

Budget: £20,000 - £25,000 (excluding VAT)

1. Introduction and Purpose

Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board (ENB) invites proposals from suitably experienced consultants to develop a Tourism Strategy for Eastbourne Borough covering the period 2026–2036.

Eastbourne is one of the South Coast's most distinctive destinations, known for its coastline, culture and Victorian heritage. Once celebrated as a refined seaside resort, in recent years it has struggled to adapt to new tourism trends and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new strategy should provide a clear, evidence-based and deliverable framework for the future development of Eastbourne's visitor economy, supporting our ambition to reclaim its position as **'East Sussex's premier location for leisure, culture and entertainment'**.

This is a strategic destination management commission, not a marketing campaign. The strategy must support sustainable economic growth within the visitor economy while delivering tangible benefits for local people and businesses.

Most importantly, it must re-position Eastbourne's tourism offer to meet changing consumer trends, differentiate the town from adjacent destinations and provide a clear prioritised roadmap for sustainable investment by the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board, partners and inward investors.

2. Strategic Context

Investment in Eastbourne is currently underway as a result of a successful bid to the previous Government's [Levelling Up Fund](#), including town centre public realm improvements and a culture/ education centre at Black Robin Farm on the South Downs above the town. Last year, Eastbourne was allocated a further £20m funding over ten years from central Government under its new 'Pride in Place Programme'.

Since then, the [Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board](#) (ENB) has been established, and a new 'Pride In Place Regeneration Plan' has been written. In 2025, the ENB commissioned a new [Eastbourne Economic Strategy](#). This looked at the local economy, including the importance of tourism to the borough and determined that a new borough-wide tourism strategy is required.

2.1 Why a New Tourism Strategy Is Required

Eastbourne has a long-established identity as a leisure and entertainment destination supported by a high-quality seafront, strong cultural venues and major events. It is also a gateway to the South Downs National Park and is home to northern Europe's largest composite marina complex.

However, the town's tourism sector faces a number of structural challenges including:

- High seasonality and limited reasons to stay overnight
- Few family attractions and aging leisure infrastructure (eg. Sovereign Centre)
- Over-reliance on low-value coach tourism
- Over-supply of often poor-quality hotel, guesthouse and B&B accommodation
- The town is often bypassed by those visiting Beachy Head (as individuals and in groups)
- A relatively underdeveloped evening/night-time economy
- Unclear positioning within the Sussex and Southeast tourism market
- Fragmented destination management arrangements

Eastbourne's new Economic Strategy has shown much of the existing tourism employment base is low-wage and seasonal with high levels of part-time work. This limits income growth and household resilience. The Accommodation and Food Service sector, while a high contributor to local jobs, produces a small proportion of local GVA. Data also shows the sector has barely recovered to pre-pandemic levels seen in 2019.

To strengthen economic sustainability, Eastbourne needs a new strategy to develop year-round tourism employment opportunities, improve hospitality skills and career opportunities for local people, support small tourism businesses in modernising their offer/marketing; and encourage/support the adoption of digital and AI technologies across the sector.

We also want to understand how a thriving visitor economy can better support local wider supply chains to improve economic prosperity and support inclusive community wellbeing.

2.2 Community-First Commissioning

This strategy is commissioned by Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board, whose mission is to place local people at the heart of regeneration. A key part of delivering sustainable and inclusive economic growth for the town is generating and retaining wealth locally by scaling up the social economy.

This includes supporting social enterprises and the voluntary sector; encouraging community ownership of local tourism/heritage assets where appropriate in light of local government reorganisation; developing a co-ordinated approach to local procurement and strengthening local supply chains. The strategy must therefore consider how the visitor economy:

- Supports business growth, quality year-round employment and skills development
- Enhances community wellbeing and pride in place
- Is inclusive, accessible and environmentally responsible
- Balances visitor growth with residents' quality of life

2.3 Guiding Principles

The strategy must also establish a concise set of guiding principles aligned with Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board's (ENB) values. It should be:

Community aligned, accessible and inclusive	Aspirational but deliverable	Focused on local opportunity = local supply chains + skills + biz growth
Year-round Outcomes	Distinctive from other locations	Authentic and real = Pride in Place
Environmentally sustainable	Resonant with Local Visitor Economy Partnership priority segments & Eastbourne Seafront Strategy	A multi-dimensional yet cohesive narrative
Quality over volume	Collaborative	Longer term Resilience

2.4 Regional Framework – Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)

The strategy must align with the East Sussex, Brighton & Hove and West Sussex Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) framework, including its [Visitor Economy Strategy 2024–2034](#),

2.5 Local Framework

The strategy must also be developed in collaboration with relevant Eastbourne tourism, cultural and event stakeholders, including Eastbourne Borough Council (Tourism + Planning teams), Visit Eastbourne, the Eastbourne Hospitality Association, Towner Eastbourne, the Pier, Trafalgar Entertainment Group, South Downs National Park, Your Eastbourne BID and East Sussex College Group.

Significant work has also been undertaken by Eastbourne Borough Council to produce a new [Seafront Strategy](#), following extensive public consultation. This should be considered and incorporated.

3. Strategic Ambition and Vision

3.1 Strategic Aim 1: To develop a new and distinctive Eastbourne positioning

Eastbourne’s ambition is to reclaim and modernise its historic role as a leading leisure and entertainment destination. Our Proposed Vision Statement (to be tested) is:

“Eastbourne is East Sussex’s premier location for leisure, culture and entertainment.

A welcoming coastal destination where people come together to experience great events, culture and active lifestyles in an iconic natural environment.

This is a positioning that:

- Builds on Eastbourne’s authentic leisure heritage and 1960s-70s entertainment era
- Highlights our exceptional sports and wellness assets (seafront, South Downs, Marina)
- Showcases world-class cultural venues and live entertainment
- Leverages and builds on a strong existing events/festivals calendar
- Creates year-round appeal beyond the summer season for day visitors and short-breaks
- Differentiates Eastbourne from other Sussex coastal destinations

3.2 Strategic Aim 2: Articulate/Prove the 'Experience Eastbourne' Offer

At its core, this strategy needs to provide a roadmap to develop a modern, balanced and sustainable visitor economy that attracts and meets the needs of day visitors (volume) and short break visitors (value).

We need to understand what Eastbourne's distinctive offer is within the Sussex visitor economy. We need to understand the latest tourism and leisure trends and their implications for Eastbourne's visitor economy (including accommodation trends). Which visitor profiles and target audiences should be prioritised? What about overseas visitors?

The work covered by this brief should also look beyond traditional tourism segments to maximise Eastbourne's potential by articulating a year-round and multi-dimensional offer that packages Eastbourne's coast and country offer with heritage, culture, hospitality and event experiences plus new opportunities arising from an active leisure, wellness and sports narrative.

For example, how can Eastbourne uniquely combine, package and promote events, entertainment, sports, coaching, wellness, culture and accommodation in ways competitor locations don't? What opportunities exist to leverage active sea, lake, land leisure pursuits, sporting events and lifestyle/wellness experiences linked to our natural blue and green assets?

We would like the new tourism strategy to define 4–6 'Experience Pillars' that clearly articulate what Eastbourne offers visitors and how the destination can be promoted. These pillars should be authentic, distinctive and practical, and guide investment, development and storytelling to identified audiences in line with the latest tourism trends and consumer demand.

Perceived (but untested) considerations include:

- South Downs Gateway – closest major coastal resort - unique positioning.
- Link parks and gardens to town and to pan-Sussex walking and cycling networks (eg. The King Charles III England Coast Path in the South East, Cuckoo Trail and South Downs Way) as visitor draws with accommodation/culture packages.
- Events and festivals amplification strategy to build on our existing calendar to exploit overnight stays and gain broader local business benefit; and identifying new signature event opportunities to extend the season.
- Opportunities to leverage existing major sporting events into coaching, wellness packages to benefit local businesses and resident wellness; provide year-round job opportunities and bring together sports facilities offer.

- World-class cultural venues are underutilised for tourism and conferences.
- Sovereign Harbour Marina potential as wider water-sports destination.
- Pre-bookable multi-activity itineraries/accommodation packages linked to heritage storytelling potential and special interest tours.
- Integration with pan-Sussex LVEP 'Grand Projects' such as 'Off The Beaten Track (Camino Sussex)': 'Sussex Events' and 'Stay Sussex'.
- Exploitation of rail connections to London (under 90 minutes); Brighton and Kent & Sussex towns (domestic visitors) and Gatwick Airport (overseas visitors).

We also want it to encourage greater participation by residents in all the experiences on offer in the town, to rebuild local pride and improve physical and mental health outcomes for all ages and abilities. This might include careers, training and apprenticeships and volunteering.

3.3 Strategic Aim 3: Develop a vibrant Evening and Night-Time Economy

We also want to develop Eastbourne's evening and night-time economy (ENTE) to encourage overnight visitors while enhancing residents' quality of life and creating year-round economic sustainability. This builds directly on Eastbourne's 1960s-70s heritage as an entertainment destination renowned for theatres, live music, and vibrant nightlife.

The new strategy should consider what steps are required to develop a thriving evening and night-time economy for Eastbourne that:

- Gives visitors compelling reasons to stay overnight
- Considers how heritage sites eg. Redoubt, Pier, Bandstand could be re-purposed into sustainable venues for food halls, night markets, weather-resilient indoor entertainment spaces.
- Reviews the need for investment in modern indoor/outdoor sports and leisure entertainment venues suitable for all ages and abilities eg. rebuilding the Sovereign Centre and incorporating new experiences eg. gaming, live music, education, marine etc.
- Considers public realm placemaking - lighting, wayfinding, animation, safe spaces, seafront IT, digital signage etc.
- Ensures the offer is accessible for disabled people and the aging Sussex demographic.
- Showcases anchor cultural venues (Congress, Devonshire Park, Towner) with evening programming and dining/show packages to support local independent businesses.
- Includes new events to lengthen the season and add new fringe events linked to existing ones to widen participation or increase overnight stays.
- Extends major events into town centre evening programming - concerts, shows, dining experiences, post-sports events entertainment, dinners etc.

- Encourages more healthy dining establishments along the seafront and Sovereign Harbour using local Sussex food and beverages.
- Provides quality employment opportunities and supports local supply chains/creatives.
- Supports the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) offer through cultural enrichment opportunities.
- Works towards Purple Flag accreditation - the gold standard for evening and night-time economies.

4. Other Strategic Questions to Consider/Answer...

- a. How can local tourism supply chains be developed to support the local economy?
- b. What skills and employment opportunities can be developed for young people in tourism, hospitality, events, outdoor recreation careers?
- c. Digital first – what technology and digital infrastructure can support the sector?
- d. What destination management and delivery model is required – what stays local, what should be pan-Sussex?

5. Scope of Work

This commission needs to be delivered over a three-month period and must be proportionate to the budget and timeframe eg.

Evidence and Insight (Weeks 1-3)

- Review of existing data and strategies
- UK domestic tourism trends analysis
- Market segmentation and priority audiences
- Whole-borough tourism assets audit
- Initial evening and night-time economy assessment
- Focused Stakeholder Consultation with around ten targeted interviews

Vision and Positioning (Weeks 3-4)

- Vision testing and refinement
- Distinctive positioning within pan-Sussex Tourism Strategy
- Brand narrative and key messages
- Target market propositions

Strategy Development (Weeks 5-8)

A. Experience Eastbourne

- Day visitor market development strategy
- Short break market development strategy
- Strategic priorities/multi-dimensional pillars

- Whole-borough product development priorities
- Pan-Sussex 'Grand Projects' integration

B. Evening And Night-Time Economy

- ENTE strategy
- Integration with Experience Eastbourne approach
- Venue development priorities
- Safety and wellbeing partnerships

C. Implementation Framework

- Prioritised action plan: Short-term (Years 1-2): Quick wins and foundations/Medium-term (Years 3-5): Major development/Long-term (Years 6-10): Transformation
- Destination management/delivery partnerships and responsibilities
- Local supply chains
- Skills and training requirements
- Resource and investment requirements
- Performance framework and KPIs
- Governance and delivery structure
- Risk assessment

Finalisation (Weeks 9–12)

- Draft report, action plan and evidence base to ENB Steering team
- Draft strategy circulated to key stakeholders
- Refinement following feedback
- Final strategy and presentation to Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board

6. Deliverables

- Final Eastbourne Tourism Strategy document
- Experience pillars framework
- Action plan with immediate, medium and long-term priorities for investment
- Performance and success metrics
- Stakeholder consultation report

7. Consultant Requirements

Tenderers should demonstrate considerable experience in UK coastal destination strategies, destination management, events and culture, evening and night-time economy development, sustainable tourism and partnership working.

8. Budget and Payment

Total budget: £20,000 - £25,000 (excluding VAT). All costs, including travel and expenses, must be included. Payment will be staged against agreed milestones. Note the Accountable Body for the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board is Eastbourne Borough Council.

9. Tender Submission Requirements

Proposals should include:

1. Executive Summary – 2 pages max
2. Methodology and Approach – 4 pages max
3. Relevant Experience and 3 relevant Case Studies – 4 pages max
4. Proposed Team and Roles – 2 pages max
5. Fee Proposal and Value for Money Statement

Tender Submissions must be provided as a single PDF by 12 February 2026, 5pm GMT to: joanne.rogers@weareeastbourne.org.uk.

10. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be assessed against:

- Understanding of the brief and quality of approach (35%)
- Relevant experience and track record (30%)
- Quality and suitability of team (20%)
- Value for money (10%)
- Deliverability of programme (5%)

11. Timetable

Tender Issue	24 Jan 2026
Clarification Questions Deadline	28 Jan 2026
Responses to Clarifications	2 Feb 2026
Tender Submission Deadline	12 Feb 2026, 5pm
Evaluation Period	16-18 Feb 2026
Potential Shortlist Online Interviews	19 Feb 2026
Contract Award Notification	20 Feb 2026
Project Commencement	2 March 2026
Project Completion	22 May 2026

Questions relating to this brief should be directed to joanne.rogers@weareeastbourne.org.uk on behalf of the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board