REPORT TO:	CABINET MEMBER REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
DATE:	16 December 2009
SUBJECT:	Draft Visitor Economy Strategy
WARDS AFFECTED:	Southport Wards
REPORT OF:	Tony Corfield Head of Tourism
CONTACT OFFICER:	Tony Corfield, Head of Tourism Peter Sandman, Visitor Economy Manager
EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL:	No

PURPOSE/SUMMARY: To seek Member feedback on the draft Visitor Economy Strategy for Southport as part of a wider consultative process.
REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED: N/A
RECOMMENDATION(S): 1) Members provide feedback on the attached draft Visitor Economy Strategy.

KEY DECISION: No

FORWARD PLAN: No

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: When Council and its partners agree the final version of the strategy. The draft version attached to the report is for consultation.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS: It is unrealistic and inefficient to attempt to manage the delivery of a visitor economy supporting service without the benefit of an underpinning strategy and action plan for delivery. The options are limited to either developing this through a consultative process as recommended or imposing a strategy on partners, which is not considered a viable alternative.

IMPLICATIONS:

Budget/Policy Framework:
Within existing budgets and policies

Financial:

<u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u>	**2009/ 20010 £**	**2010/ 2011 £**	**2011/ 2012 £**	**2012/ 2013 £**
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N		When?		
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

Legal: N/A

Risk Assessment: N/A

Asset Management: N/A

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS;
Extensive work planning, creating and consulting on a sequence of earlier strategies and actions plans has naturally led to the development Southport as England's Classic Resort. This particular work sets out a draft proposal for the next 5 years of service delivery on behalf of the Council & its partners. It follows the Southport Investment Strategy and the recent Southport Brand Evaluation and Product Development study, both of which have been widely consulted before being adopted by the Council and a variety of public and private partners.

CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:

Corporate Objective		Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact
1	Creating a Learning Community	√		
2	Creating Safe Communities	√		
3	Jobs and Prosperity	√		
4	Improving Health and Well-Being	√		
5	Environmental Sustainability	√		
6	Creating Inclusive Communities	√		
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	√		
8	Children and Young People	√		

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT
Southport Investment Strategy
Southport Brand Evaluation and Development

BACKGROUND:
The Council has been leading the regeneration of Southport since 1997. The principle of establishing Southport as England's Classic Resort has been in place since 2003. It represents a Vision for the town's future as a sustainable visitor destination underpinned by a strong and successful visitor economy.

The Council resolved to adopt the Southport Investment Strategy as the third chapter of this regeneration process in 2008. One of the main cross cutting themes within the seven that make up the SIS is the Visitor Economy Theme.

As a precursor to developing the draft Visitor Economy Strategy to deliver on this theme, the Southport Brand Evaluation and Product Development study was developed and adopted earlier this year. That work fully informed the development of the draft Visitor Economy Strategy that is the subject of this report.

The draft VE strategy effectively proposes how the Council and its partners should deliver the next 5-year visitor economy element of progressing the town's vision of becoming England's Classic Resort. It is a key step on the journey to achieving that vision.

Once comments from appropriate stakeholders have been received, collated and where appropriate incorporated into the strategy, a final version will be brought back to committee for approval.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1) Members provide feedback on the attached draft Visitor Economy Strategy

Southpoint Brand Partnership

Visitor Economy Strategy 2009 - 2014
DRAFT Version 3

October 2009

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Importance of the Visitor Economy to Southport

As the second destination brand within the Liverpool City Region, Southport has established itself as a core part of the Northwest's visitor economy providing a rich and diverse range of leisure, recreational and business tourism experiences for those who visit. The resort attracts over 11.5 million visitors to Merseyside per annum generating in the region of £250 million in day, short break and conference business. Southport's visitor economy also supports over 4000 full time equivalent jobs and creates demand for new and additional services that lead to the creation and growth of business. In short, the visitor economy is recognised as being critical to Southport's long term economic and social prosperity.

Over the last ten years, in excess of £200 million has been invested into the infrastructure of Southport's visitor economy to sustain the attractiveness of the resort in the face of increasing competition from domestic and overseas destinations. The resulting improvements to quality of product now lie at the heart of Southport's ambition to become England's Classic Resort and have exposed new market opportunities within the short break, golf and business tourism markets. In progressing these opportunities further, the visitor economy now acts as a key strategic driver within the Southport Investment Strategy and will be used to anchor regenerative activity over the next 10 – 15 years.

At a sub regional level, the tourism industry in the Liverpool City Region is estimated to be worth £1.3 billion in visitor spend with Southport and Liverpool accounting for approximately 60% of this share. Southport provides a diverse alternative to Liverpool's growing reputation as an international cultural destination and is well placed to capitalise on the increasing numbers of domestic and overseas visitors that are attracted to the city offer. In conference terms, the redevelopment of the Southport Theatre & Convention Centre coupled with increased 3 & 4star hotels has enabled new national market segments to be accessed through closer working with The Mersey Partnership. Similarly the increased awareness of the resort's golf product thanks to the Open at Royal Birkdale in 2008 has reaffirmed the importance of Southport to the region's golf offer and enhanced the national & international reputation of England's Golf Coast.

1.2 England's Classic Resort

The importance of the 'Classic Resort' vision to Southport cannot be understated. Since 2004 it has been responsible for generating significant investment in the town's visitor infrastructure as highlighted above, and has been effective in galvanising stakeholder support for the ongoing development of Southport's visitor economy.

In both product & perceptual terms, 'Classic Resort' means a return to Southport's heritage of being a stylish & sophisticated place that is seen to be 'a cut above' its competitors, capable of meeting the discerning expectations of today's visitors. The values underpinning 'England's Classic Resort' will therefore be evidenced in Southport's unique heritage & culture, in the pristine built and natural environment; the distinctiveness & quality of shopping; the restaurant and accommodation offer; and in the town's vibrant and sophisticated programme of cultural activity.

Clearly, there is still much work to be done in realising this vision. New experiences must be created so that they reflect the aspirations of today's visitors and stakeholders must recognise the levels of service and quality customers will associate with England's Classic Resort brand. This will mean greater attention being paid to improving the perceptions around the quality of Southport's retail offer (both in the short & long term), investing in public realm, improving town centre management and sorting out access & traffic issues that currently, are preventing the resort from capitalising on its unique character and sense of place.

In moving this agenda forward, a brand strategy for Southport recently completed by Locum Destination Consulting provides detailed guidance around how policy for developing and marketing Southport's product offer should be formulated. Whilst the recommendations of the brand strategy cut across a range of different policy areas, this strategy aims to build on Locum's recommendations by providing stakeholders with a 5 year action plan to prioritise activity and focus project delivery. In so doing, the strategy will endeavour to sustain the momentum that has been created to date in supporting Southport's transition into England's Classic Resort and will maximise the destination's wider contribution to the North West's economy as a whole.

1.3 Visitor Markets

Visitors to Southport can essentially be placed into three broad categories, those on business, those staying for a leisure break and day visitors. Whilst the business and golf markets in Southport are benefiting from improved facilities and quality accommodation, those staying in resort for leisure comprise older audiences (65+) occupying the lower socio economic grades (typically C2 D/E). These audiences will remain crucial to the balance of the resort's visitor economy in the short term, however the fragility and limited spending power of these markets means their size and value will reduce significantly over the next 10 years. Whilst this trend is obviously a cause for concern, repositioning Southport as England's Classic Resort will play a fundamental role in appealing to aspirations of the young, family and middle aged markets that possess the levels of disposable income capable of reversing this trend.

Day visitors to Southport are more mixed and account for circa 83% of all visits and generate approximately £350 million plus in expenditure per annum. Although there are still many traditional seaside visitors who are coming for an inexpensive day out, the breadth of Southport's existing product, particularly the retail and leisure attractions offer are attracting younger and more cosmopolitan audiences with particular appeal to those populations in and around Liverpool, Preston & Wigan.

The importance of the regional day visitor market in providing year round support for the vitality of businesses operating in Southport's visitor economy must not be overlooked. On average, day visitor spend in Southport is higher than other comparable destinations and to increase these levels further, Southport must continue to diversify its product offer to create year round demand from North West markets. Along with the resort's specialist retail offer, the new cultural centre and development of the seafront will help achieve this by adding critical mass to weight of the resort's leisure attractions which in turn will generate longer stays and higher per capita expenditures. Similarly, the diversity and credibility these investments will bring to the resort's product offer will also help strengthen links with Liverpool's cultural and heritage offer and the market opportunities this relationship will create.

1.4 Purpose & Aims

This strategy seeks to provide a clear set of actions and priorities to everyone who will be responsible for delivering the Classic Resort Vision over the next 5 years and will be firmly based on implementing the detailed strategic guidance that has been received to date. Importantly, this will require all stakeholders to understand the breadth of the visitor economy so that a holistic and co ordinate approach to achieving the Classic Resort vision can be adopted. This will not only include Sefton Council's Tourism Team, but also planners, business support services, hoteliers, retailers, hospitality businesses, visitor attractions, cultural organisations and the many other stakeholders that have an interest in the future of the town.

The strategy will also seek to influence decision making and structure the work of stakeholders through priority setting and by developing robust mechanisms for monitoring performance. In so doing, it is anticipated that Southport and its stakeholders will be much better placed to capitalise on investment opportunities that in turn will enhance investor confidence and increase market share. The adoption of this strategy will also help Sefton achieve its wider social, environmental and economic goals.

To that end, the strategy has the following aims:-

1. Begin the process of developing the detail or 'fine grain' of the resort's retail, cultural and recreational product offer to enable Southport's positioning as England's Classic Resort to be implicit among key target audiences.

2. Reposition the resort's culture & leisure product to increase market share among day trip & staying visitor audiences by enhancing Southport's reputation as a "cosmopolitan" destination by 2012.

3. Develop new and existing events that will complement the brand values of a Classic Resort and support Southport's reputation for delivering activity that has a high cultural value by 2012.

4. Raise tourism infrastructure and service standards within the resort to fulfil customer expectations and exceed the benchmark Classic Resort standard.

5. Maximise the potential of Southport's new conference product offer and stock of quality accommodation to increase market share and establish the resort as a credible alternative to rival destinations such as Bournemouth and Harrogate.

2.0 WHERE ARE WE NOW?

2.1 The Tourism Market

Within the tourism industry there has seldom been greater choice for consumers than at present. The expansion of regional airports and budget airlines have made overseas travel easy and inexpensive, UK towns and cities are quickly developing burgeoning leisure, heritage and retail offers, and the information age has allowed access to tourism products 24/7 at the touch of a button. In short, the tourism industry today is unrecognisable compared to that of just 20 years ago.

Domestically, the UK tourism industry is worth some £86billion, employs 1.4 million people with direct tourism spending accounting for 2.7% of UK Gross Value Added. The impacts of the credit crunch, a weakened dollar and a variety of other factors including the expense of visiting the UK are expected to reduce revenues from certain key areas of inbound tourism considerably. Conversely, the relative strength of the Euro may make the UK a more attractive destination for visitors from Europe.

In the short term at least, the world-wide recession is expected to bring increased trips within the UK, particularly within the short breaks market. Visit Britain's Easter 2009 trip tracker with UK residents found an 8% drop in tendency to take an overseas break and a 6% rise in tendency to take a domestic break.

In relation to Business Tourism there has been a 53% growth in all business trips over the last ten years, with over 7 million visits being made to the UK per annum. Similarly international business visitors have contributed a massive £3.5 billion to the British economy. In total, business tourism (domestic and overseas) is estimated to generate revenue in the Northwest region of £1.7bn.

2.2 Market Trends

- Day Visits - Day visits are growing and form the majority of tourism trips within the UK amounting to £45.4 billion in spend. Whilst spend per capita are smaller than those of staying visitors, the sheer volume of UK day visitor market is making it an increasing important source of revenue for many UK tourism destinations. In the Northwest the figure has been calculated as being £6.3bn.

- Inbound Tourism - Inbound tourism into the UK accounted for 31.9 million overseas visitors during 2008 spending £16.4 billion. These figures represent a 2.6% decline in volume and 2.5% (nominal) increase in value compared with 2007 - this was the first decline in visitor numbers since 2001 and driven by unfavorable exchange rates, declining air traffic into the UK and the economic down turn. For the Northwest Inbound tourism accounted for 2.5m overseas visitors in 2008, spending £853m, although this likewise was a drop on 2007.

- Business Tourism – Business tourism, both corporate and MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) sectors continue to increase and accounted for 18.2 overnight business trips spending £4.5 billion in 2008. It is notoriously difficult to predict how big the business tourism market is given that research samples are often too small to provide macro information and based primarily on measuring staying visitors numbers – it is important to note that two thirds of business events within the UK are non-residential.

- Long Stay Domestic Holidays - Long stay (4 nights +) leisure breaks are on the decline, however staying visits by UK residents still equate to 52 million holidays with expenditure reaching £11.4 billion in 2008 (Visit Britain). Given that domestic overnight trips are down 7% in the 12 months to February 2009 (although the current recession is see a trend toward increased domestic breaks – see above 'The Tourism Market'), there is an increasing need for destinations to think creatively about how they package experiences so they are better able to compete for business in the shot breaks market. Similarly, UK tourism destinations need to think strategically about how they can create tourism products and services that will appeal to day visitor markets given the increasing need to protect their local visitor economy and maintain market share.

- Short Breaks - Leisure short breaks are weekend-oriented and securing mid-week occupancy is the greater concern for many accommodation providers catering mainly to the leisure market (for those serving the business market, the problem is the reverse).

- Heritage - Heritage plays an important role in UK tourism, generating an estimated 62.5m visits during 2008, which is estimated to be worth in the region of £3 billion to the Northwest alone. Heritage is seen to be a key influence on consumer decision making with research showing that 69% of adults visit at least one historic site each year with almost one in five making a trip every month.

- Event Tourism – Events tourism generates a quarter of the total value of the UK's visitor economy. Britain receives less than 5% of the global events market so the growth potential is huge. The lure of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has sparked heightened efforts from virtually every part of the UK to attract new events. Although this relates primarily to overseas tourism, events also generate a huge number of domestic tourism visits; some 39% of UK residents attend a special event at least 3-4 times a year. Sport and tourism events combined are estimated to contribute £1.5bn to the economy.

  The prospects for growth in this area depend very much on the different genres offered. Recent years have seen significant growth in food festivals and in the run up to 2012 sporting events may increase in importance (it is estimated that the Loch Ness Marathon contributes £1m to the Highland area).

- Cultural Tourism – Cultural tourism has the ability to distinguish/individualize destinations that have strong heritage, community identity & are prepared to invest in the arts. Britain's tourist industry is mainly "cultural" and "heritage" based, with many tourists attracted to the country because of its rich and varied history. For day visitors, 23% indicated that "A bit of culture" was an important factor in a good day out. Meanwhile, for overseas visitors, 57% visited the built heritage (castles, churches, monuments, etc.) during their visit and 46% visited museums/art galleries.
- VFR - Visits to friends and relatives, especially by young people, are booming, accounting for some 44.1 million overnight stays/£4.8 billion expenditure in 2008 (Visit Britain).

- Outdoor Recreation - Tourism connected to outdoor activities, whether walking, cycling or other activities in the countryside are on the increase. 24% of all overseas visitors went walking in the countryside on their visit and 66% of UK residents go for a day out in the countryside at least 3-4 times a year. It is possible that this area will grow, under the impetus for 'low environmental impact' activities and activities that improve wellbeing. Regardless of this, in the eyes of the domestic staying visitor, unspoilt countryside, beaches & coastlines are the two most important factors in choice of destination.

- Retail - Forecasts are being reset to reflect the impact of worldwide recession, however predictions still indicate that UK retail market is set to increase in size over the next 5 years (UK Retail Futures 2011: Sector Summary, Datamonitor predicted sector growth of 15% over the next five years equating to just over £312bn). Whilst the growing popularity of on line shopping and 'out of town' retail centres has the potential to jeopardise retail visits to town centres, established tourism destinations must endeavour to use their wider leisure/business/cultural offer to diversify the retail experience and secure competitive advantage.

- Arts & Creative Industries - Data from the Betamodel suggests that nationally the creative industries sector accounts for 1m jobs in 68,000 organisations, with 91,000 employees in the Northwest in 6,500 firms. Typically, this sector tends to be particularly reflective of SMEs and 88% of Northwest creative firms had 20 employees or less. This is an area showing signs of growth particularly in the Northwest and from 1999 to 2008 the number of enterprises in the region had grown by 82% and the number of employees by 87%. In terms of the value of this sector this is harder to quantify, but estimates from DCMS (including publishing) place this sector at 7.3% of the UK's total GVA.

Accommodation

- There has been a big switch from serviced accommodation to self-catering for long breaks.
- Serviced accommodation is the favoured option for short breaks, but self-catering is also on the increase.
- There has also been a recent growth towards upmarket and serviced apartment types of self-catering establishments, including modern furnishings and high-tech equipment, and these establishments attract both leisure and business guests.
- There is strong demand for self-contained holiday villages, including holiday villages based on static caravans (especially in seaside locations).
- Business Tourism however, has shown the largest movement towards star rated and branded hotels as opposed to the traditional conference hotels.

Demographics

- The population is getting older and post-family couples are a growing market - the over 55's are responsible for about 20% of all leisure tourism trips and 40% of spend.
- The population is getting steadily more middle-class and as a result ABC1's now represent and will continue to represent the mass market.
- There will be more single person households and households without children.

Consumer Behaviour & Expectations

- Consumers will continue not to take long holidays in the UK, however demand for quality destinations for short breaks and day trips will continue. It is anticipated that the trend of visiting friends and relatives among young people will also continue to grow.

- Consumers will increasingly demand the guaranteed quality offered by branded products as well as the individuality of high quality independent products. There will be less tolerance for independent product that does not match the quality of equivalent branded products. Individuality will not be an acceptable excuse for poor quality.
- Consumers will expect product information to be of high quality and to be readily available online, through mobile devices and via blue tooth technology etc. They will also expect online and last minute bookings as standard; be able to produce & access user generated content and expect communication to come through a variety of sources including social networking sites.
- Research suggests that approximately 40% of business travellers will return with their families or colleagues as leisure visitors to destinations they have enjoyed visiting on business.
- Business visits are shorter than most other travellers, however they spend more than twice as much per day over a wide spectrum of tourism services, with conference delegates and visitors to trade shows and exhibitions spending even more.

Competition

- Consumers now have more choice than ever before. New and improved leisure offers abroad are aided by package holidays that are cheap and easily accessible. At home, many of our great towns and cities are developing their own tourism products (leisure and business) and providing significant investment to reinforce the attractiveness of the offer to fully exploit the growing day trip, short break and business tourism markets.

Other factors

- Whilst it is expected to be only a short term influence, the implications of 9/11, 7/7 and the continuing threat of terrorism in the Western World are still relevant and have implications for domestic tourism. Similarly the threat from a worldwide flu pandemic is just around the corner and has clear potential to destabilise the UK tourism economy.
- Climatic changes will also be a factor on the future demand within the tourism industry. Rising sea levels by 2050 (between 12cm – 67cm); rain fall during the summer months is now well above average; average temperatures will increase significantly by 2050.
- Macroeconomic factors that should also be considered are the strength of sterling again the Euro & the US Dollar and the potential implications for inbound tourism into the UK.
- Environmental issues must also be taken into consideration given the increasing importance consumers are paying to green issues in their decision making. Traffic congestion within the UK, waste minimisation, recycling, pedestrian friendly town centres and the increased access to other modes of transport will need to feature heavily in the make up of Southport's visitor economy. Sustainable tourism products and services are now expected as standard by consumers who are becoming increasingly aware of these issues in their decision making.

2.3 Implications for Southport & Key Markets

The temporary down turn in the world economy & the shrinking Eurozone economy, growing awareness among consumers about how their actions will affect the environment and the threat from a worldwide pandemic means that the tourism industry in general faces some challenging times ahead. Whilst there will be demand for tourism products and services at home and from abroad, Southport operates in a very competitive market where disposable incomes for consumers to spend on day visits & short breaks are reducing. Similarly as UK business reduce operating expenditures to counter the effects of the world wide recession, budgets for meetings & corporate events will be tightened and there is likely to be a reduction in demand and the size of MICE markets.

The challenge confronting Southport & its stakeholders over the next five years, relates to how prepared it is to work collectively, really understand its key visitor markets and be bold enough to recognise where product improvements need to be made so it remains a distinctive & attractive tourism proposition. To that end, stakeholders must recognise that consumers are becoming increasingly demanding, their experience must meet if not exceed expectations and they will be seeking out well packaged, unique and quality driven experiences. Similarly good customer service and well maintained destinations and facilities are a perquisite – they are a baseline, not a selling point.

Key Markets

Using the Arkenford Segmentation Model (industry recognised tourism market segmentation model - see appendix A) and the results of the 2007 North West Staying Visitor Survey, around 27% of staying visitors to Southport are either Habituals or Followers – the lowest value segments. By comparison Habituals & Followers make up 10% of Manchester's staying visitors and just 7% of Liverpool's. The higher value segments of Style Hounds and Cosmopolitans currently make up only 31% of staying visitors to Southport, compared to 47% and 43% in Manchester and Liverpool respectively. In terms of day visits, the Style Hound and Cosmopolitan segments spend significantly more than other segments (£45 & £38 respectively per trip) with Habituals spending around £15 per day.

Given that Southport will continue to attract day and short break visitors from within the North West, the table shown below demonstrates the size of each of these markets segments compared to other regions of the United Kingdom.

Ark Leisure Segmentation								
	Style Hounds	Cosmopolitans	High Street	Discoverers	Followers	Traditionals	Functionals	Habituals
North East	14%	20%	14%	12%	16%	9%	7%	8%
North West	14%	21%	16%	12%	10%	9%	9%	8%
Yorks & Humb.	10%	19%	17%	13%	12%	14%	7%	9%
East Midlands	11%	12%	19%	15%	15%	12%	9%	7%
West Midlands	11%	24%	20%	10%	8%	10%	9%	7%
Eastern	12%	17%	18%	8%	17%	12%	10%	5%
London	9%	22%	18%	9%	12%	13%	11%	6%
South East	8%	19%	21%	14%	12%	7%	9%	10%
South West	4%	15%	16%	16%	18%	10%	11%	10%
Wales	7%	18%	16%	16%	14%	12%	7%	9%
Scotland	11%	19%	20%	16%	10%	9%	8%	5%

The Southport Brand Strategy provides the framework from which the resort's existing and planned product offer must be developed and communicated if it is to meet the demands of the higher value Arkenford segments. In meeting these challenges however, recognition must be given to the fact that the experiences demanded by these audiences will be influenced by their age, their lifestyle and by the diversity of product making up the destination offer.

Consequently, it is likely to be the creation of an aspirational evening economy that will be most effective in attracting young trendy high spending visitors (style hounds) to Southport. Similarly developing the strength, quality and diversity of Southport's retail, leisure (including golf) and cultural offering will be most effective in encouraging visits from the older Style Hound and Cosmopolitan audiences.

In terms of the business tourism market, Southport must now work with its sub regional partners to exploit the national associations market. The resort's renewed sense of purpose following the significant improvements to conference infrastructure makes it a genuine and credible option for the sector of the business tourism sector.

2.4 Sub Regional Working

The proposed restructure of TMP and the implementation of the new Liverpool City Region Tourism Strategy will be a key factor in taking the recommendations of this strategy forward. Within that context, Southport and to a degree the product offering of Sefton's Natural Coast are recognised as key products that will complement the city break experience and enhance the diversity of Merseyside's tourism offer as a whole. It is anticipated that within the 'restructured' TMP, Sefton will have more ability to influence policy and decision making around tourism policy within the sub region as well as becoming involved in the operational and tactical delivery of marketing, business tourism, events and tourism development activities. Consequently, the opportunity to raise the profile of the initiatives highlighted and our ability to secure external funding support should be enhanced.

2.5 The Strategy in Context

The visitor economy is as much about supporting local communities, providing opportunities for inward investment and regeneration as it is about enticing visitors to any one destination. With this in mind, the strategy recognises that tourism in Southport cannot be developed in isolation and it must reflect the needs of local residents, the private sector and the third sector in providing a coherent policy that will enhance Southport's sense of place/cultural identity, civic pride, social and economic well being. As a result, the strategy will evolve and integrate fully with policy and strategic thinking at all levels.

The following sections highlight some of the key strategic drivers that provide the context for this strategy.

Context	Principal Policy Documents
National	❑ *DCMS (Central Government) - Tomorrow's Tourism 1999* ❑ *Visit England – English Tourism Strategy (awaiting publication June 2009).* ❑ *Visit Britain – British Tourism Framework Review 2009*
Regional/Merseyside	❑ *Regional Economic Strategy 2006 (NWDA)* ❑ *A Strategy for Tourism in England's Northwest 2003-2010 (NWDA- Revised 2007)* ❑ *Action Plan for the City Region (TMP 2005)* ❑ *The Liverpool City Region – Winning Tourism for England's North West – A Vision and Strategy for Tourism to 2015 (TMP)* ❑ *Liverpool City Region Destination Management Plan 2008 - 2011 (TMP)* ❑ *Draft Liverpool City Region Tourism Strategy 2009 – L&R Consulting* ❑ *Sector Development & Partners for Tourism Growth ERDF*

	Business Plan.
Local	❑ *A Vision for Sefton - The Community Strategy 2006 – 2011 (Sefton Borough Partnership)* ❑ *Sefton MBC – Corporate Plan 2008/2009 (Sefton Council)* ❑ *Draft Southport Brand Evaluation & Development Strategy 2009 (Locum Destination Consulting)* ❑ *Southport Business Tourism Business Plan 2009 (Blue Sail Consulting)* ❑ *Southport Investment Strategy (Southport Partnership)* ❑ *A Tourism Vision for Sefton 2020 - (SMBC: Tourism Dept.)* ❑ *Sefton Council – Sefton Coast Tourism Development Plan - (SMBC: Tourism Dept.)* ❑ *Sefton Council - Sefton Cultural Strategy 2007 – 2010 (SMBC: Leisure Dept.)*

all strategies listed above are available from Sefton Council, Tourism Department.

Strategies that are considered to be of crucial importance to the development of Southport's tourism product are summarised below:-

NWDA - The Strategy for Tourism in England's Northwest 2007-2010

Updated in 2007, the Northwest Development Agency undertook a midterm review of the tourism strategy for England's Northwest first publish in 2003. The focus of the strategy is to ensure that within ten years, England's Northwest offers visitors real excellence and super experiences, wherever they go, and has a thriving visitor economy that is second to none. The strategy provides a clear map for the development of tourism and is closely linked to delivering the key outcomes within the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). As a result the strategy is based on delivering 6 key strategic aims that range from enhanced communication with the region's visitors, demanding higher levels of productivity from those businesses operating in the visitor economy to improved products and higher quality experiences, investment in skills, improved infrastructure and sustainable development.

The regional strategy continues to place great emphasis on 'sub regional partnership working' through the regional tourist boards located in each of the main sub regions (Cheshire/Warrington, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Blackpool/Lancashire and Cumbria). As the designated tourist board for Merseyside, the Mersey Partnership (TMP) will need to provide strategic direction for the sub region as a whole and ensure that product development and tourism marketing activity are aligned with regional tourism policy.

Draft Liverpool City Region Tourism Strategy 2009

This is a tourism strategy for the Liverpool City Region to 2020 and follows on from the previous 'Vision 2015' strategy, The Liverpool City Region: Winning Tourism for England's North West. It provides a framework to help achieve that vision. It will help all stakeholders with a responsibility or interest in tourism and the visitor economy to prioritise activity and as a result work together effectively to optimise the performance of tourism as a key economic sector for the City Region.

The Mersey Partnership (TMP) – Destination Management Plan 2008/11
The Destination Management Plan (DMP) is set by the national strategic framework Tomorrow's Tourism and Tomorrow's Tourism Today (DCMS). It is also crucially informed by the Regional Tourism Economic Strategy, the Strategy for Tourism in England's Northwest (2007) and the sub-regional tourism strategy 'The Liverpool City Region – a Winning Brand for Tourism in England's North West'. .

The DMP advocates a shared vision for Merseyside's tourism sector in 2015 that places the Liverpool City Region amongst the top 20 European City Region Destinations.

In achieving that vision, the DMP is split into five key strategic objectives:-

- To develop a class destination for conferences and business visits – so that the Liverpool City Region becomes a premier destination choice for association conferences of up to 1500 delegates.
- To promote the Liverpool City Region as a worldclass destination for leisure tourism – with a quality tourism offering and a top ten place in UK's most visited towns by international visitors.
- To develop the sub-region as a Major Events destination of international repute – with at least 3 major events per year that have an international visitor appeal.
- To deliver a warm Liverpool Welcome throughout the City Region – with consistently high customer satisfaction scores in destination benchmarking surveys.
- Destination leadership – to provide successful leadership, partner co-ordination and communication programme within the tourism sector.

Underpinning these objectives, the DMP identifies the following targets for the City Region to achieve by 2015:-

- One of the world's favourite cities - A Liverpool City Region that is amongst the top 20 European city region destinations for tourism. (29th in 2001)
- 25% growth in the number of 'bed nights' spent annually in the Liverpool City Region from 9.7 million in 2003 to 12 million.
- Annual visitor spending of £2 billion (up from £1billion in 2003).
- 30,000 tourism supported jobs.
- Attain a top 100 place in the ICCA* rankings for international conference business (up from 262nd in 2005).

As the second destination brand within the City Region, the development of Southport's Cultural Centre, phase three improvements to Lord Street & Marine Park are among the Southport Investment Strategy initiatives contained with the DMP as investment priorities. Similarly Southport's emerging status as a regional conference centre, the importance of positing Southport as England's Classic Resort that complements the Liverpool City break experience and the ongoing development of Southport's major events programme are also referenced as being of critical importance to the future well being of the City Region's tourism sector.

Sefton Borough Partnership - A Vision for Sefton: The Community Strategy 2006 – 2011

The Community Strategy aims to achieve realistic improvements in the economic, social and environmental well being of Sefton over the next 10-15 years. The strategy sets out a plan (comprising four strategic themes) to develop safer & stronger communities, improve services and facilities for all Sefton children and young people, reduce health inequalities between the borough's deprived areas & the rest of Sefton and to build partnerships capable of delivering sustainable economic development and enterprise.

Of particular relevance, the Community Strategy recognises that the visitor economy and Southport's transition into England's Classic Resort will be central to Sefton's future economic prosperity and in the creation of employment opportunities. The emphasis on improving workforce skills, improving opportunities for local residents to access job opportunities within the tourism industry, the promotion of sustainable consumption and the need to address environmental conservation issues are key policy drivers that will be used to support the 'fine grain' of the Classic Resort offer.

Draft Southport Brand Evaluation & Development Strategy 2009 (Locum Destination Consulting)

As the third chapter in a series of work Locum Destination Consulting have undertaken for Southport, the brand evaluation and product development strategy defines the 'fine grain' of the classic resort vision in product development and destination branding terms. Using the Arkenford segmentation model, it identifies a series of product clusters within the resort capable of reaching new consumer audiences as well as offering strategic guidance on branding and communications that will underpin future marketing activity.

The strategy reemphasises the need to utilise Southport's unique sense of place as being the key foundation from which to define the classic resort offer. Consequently, the development of Lord Street and to a lesser extent Kings Gardens/Marine Park will be key components in distinguishing Southport from its rivals. In conjunction with a revitalised seafront offer, the strategy advocates continued investment in these assets so they are able to anchor the leisure & business visitor experience. Importantly, the strategy places great emphasis on making Lord Street work harder for Southport in terms of enhancing the product offer and in attracting new, higher spending audiences. To that end it advocates the need for radical thinking around traffic calming, the evening economy, retail development, public realm works, cultural events and the organisational structures that will be required to oversee the development of Classic Resort brand.

Southport Investment Strategy

The Southport Investment Strategy essentially provides the next chapter of the Southport Seafront Action Plan. Developed in 2008 to guide the development of Southport into England's Classic Resort over the next 10 years, it focuses on taking a holistic approach to the development of the destination into a sustainable and cohesive community. Built around 7 key investment themes – Developing the Visitor economy, Town Centre Management, The Natural & Built Environment, Employment & Business, Housing, Transport and Sustainable & Cohesive Communities, the strategy will seek to guide the activity of stakeholders and provide the strategic rationale from which future investment will be gained.

The Visitor Economy theme will play a key role in driving the work of the other investment themes given the need to ensure products and services are market led and fit the brand attributes that define England's Classic Resort. Within the context of the Visitor Economy theme, the investment strategy sets out the following priority areas that will need to be implemented through this strategy in conjunction with the work currently being prepared by Locum and Blue Sail:-

- Focusing Southport's tourism offer toward a defined target audience.
- Maximising opportunities from the Southport Marine Park development.
- Retail Development.
- Developing the Resort's Cultural Offer.
- Defining the Classic Resort brand.
- Skills & training.
- Spreading the benefits of the Visitor Economy.
- Business Tourism.
- Increasing short break markets.
- Information Technology.

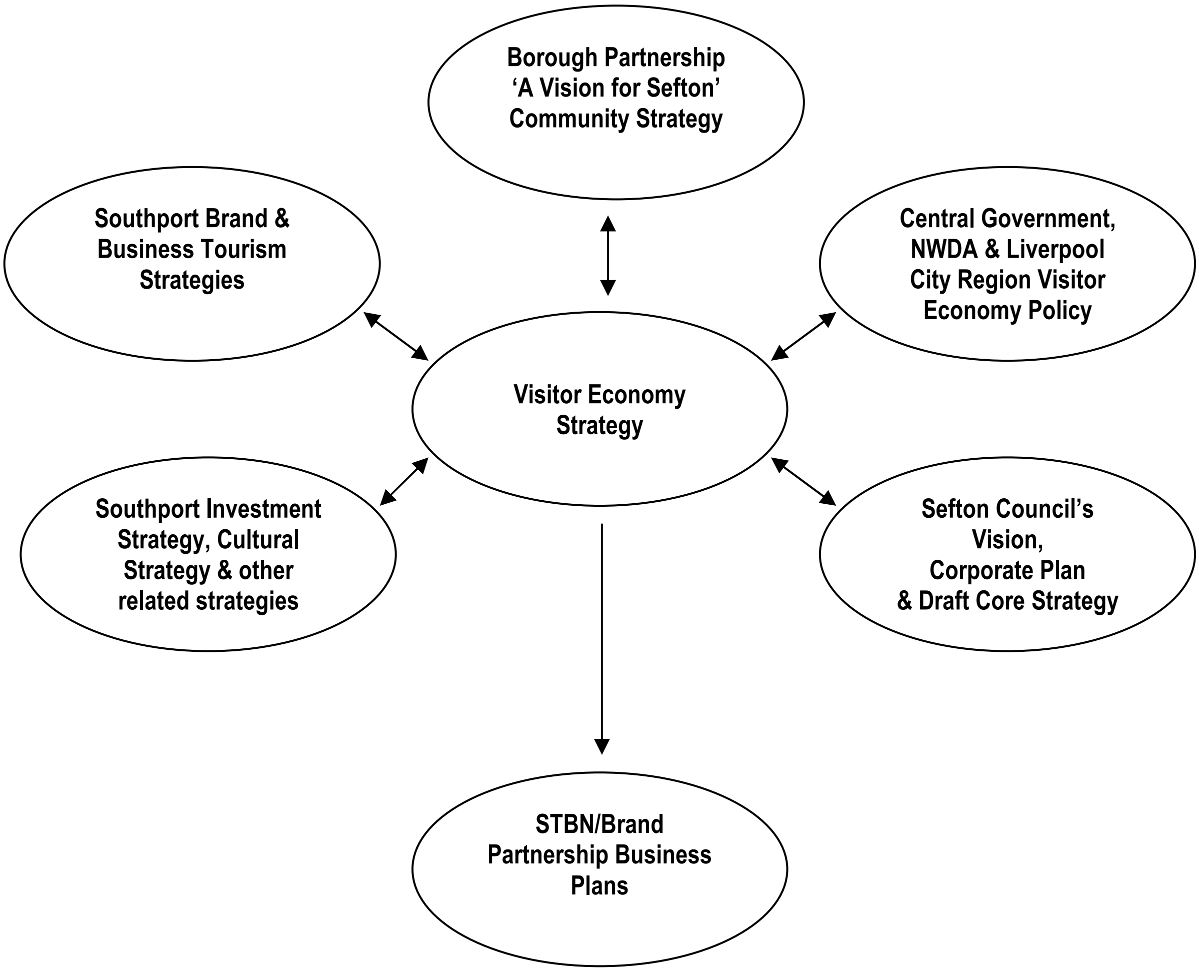
Sefton Coast Tourism Development Plan 2005 - 2008

Shortly to be updated, the tourism development plan recognises that the natural and leisure/recreational offers of Sefton's natural Coast will add significantly to Southport's tourism product in terms of adding to the diversity of the resort's core visitor product. To date the strategy has been successful in implementing the Sefton's Natural Coast brand and marketing strategies. Similarly it has provided the basis for access, interpretation and waymarking projects that have been essential in strengthening the appeal of the coast to day visitors and specialist tourism markets.

Other Strategies

Other strategies that need to be integrated into the Visitor Economy Strategy include Sefton Council's Corporate Plan, Sefton's Cultural Strategy, the Local Transport Plan, the emerging Retail Strategy and others. This will be an evolving process over time, particularly as new key strategic documents are published and existing ones revised.

Relationship to National, Regional & Local Strategies



3.0 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Comparatively wealthy community • Appeal to high spend customers • Lord Street & recent improvements to public realm • Kings Gardens & Seafront Infrastructure • Marine Lake • Reputation for specialist independent retail. • Substantial Conference Venue anchored by Southport Theatre & Convention Centre. • Recent investments in quality of accommodation stock. • Churchtown • Championship Golf Courses • The Flower Show • Strong Events Programme • Sefton's Natural Coast • Recognition as 2nd destination brand with the Liverpool City Region. • Birkdale Village • Breadth of Offer • Distinctiveness	• Pockets of severe deprivation • Declining shopping experience • Small size of Town Centre Retail units • Lack of Town Centre development sites • Shabbiness of Seafront • Stalled development schemes – Scarisbrick Ave THI Scheme etc. • Problems resulting from night economy • Lack of poor weather attractions • Poor access and egress • Poor rail access from north & east • Quality of visitor welcome? • LA boundary issues • Not within easy reach of main transport links.
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Defining England's Classic Resort & RES Priority • 3 year ERDF funding agreement. • New conference facilities & ability to exploit new markets. • Focus on higher value markets. • Southport Investment Strategy, new branding & business tourism strategies. • Southport Marine Park, Marine Lake/Kings Gardens HLF Initiative • Traffic calming & upgrades to Lord Street • England's Golf Coast • Outdoor activities like cycling, walking and sailing • Southport Cultural Centre • Southport Market & creative industries. • Enhancing branded & independent retail offer. • Developing high profile events.	• Short/medium term effects of world recession on visitor numbers, levels of spend and inward investment opportunities. • Further decline of retail offer, exacerbated by the edge of town development & traffic congestion on Lord Street. • Failure to match investment decisions with market need & Classic Resort brand values. • Failure to recognise the importance of investing in Southport's heritage & cultural assets to preserve sense of place and exploit key USP's • Competitor Activity - expanding retail offers of Liverpool One and Preston. • Organisational constraints. • Resource (funding & human) Constraints

4.0 WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE BY 2012?

4.1 Mission Statement

To continue the transition of Southport into the England's Classic Resort by building on the successes of partnership working to date, and by further establishing the resort's reputation as a premier destination for culture, leisure, business and outstanding customer service. In achieving that end, a shared policy for all stakeholders within Southport's visitor economy will be achieved to facilitate the creation of innovative and market facing products. This in turn will allow customer expectations to be surpassed and guarantee the longterm sustainability of the resort's visitor economy and its contribution to Sefton's economy and that of the wider Liverpool City Region.

4.2 Structure & Priorities

Given the breadth of Southport's visitor economy and the development work that needs to be undertaken, the action plan (detailed overleaf) splits activity over a 3 year period into the following development areas (DA):-

1. Advancing Southport's Visitor Economy
   - *Southport – Classic Conference Resort*
   - *Increasing quality and focus of Southport's Leisure Economy*
   - *Not Getting Complacent with Events*
   - *Visitor Welcome*

2. Destination Development.
   - *Priorities for Product Develop in the Visitor Economy*

3. Cross Cutting Themes
   - *A clear understanding of the customer and the market place*
   - *Investing in people skills and enterprise*
   - *Spreading the benefits of the Visitor Economy*
   - *Sustainable Southport – protecting the resort's future*

The priorities contained with DA1 relate to the delivery of sales & marketing activity that will be critical to sustaining and increasing visitor spend in Southport. Mirroring those priorities set out with the Liverpool City Region's Destination Management Plan (DMP) produced by TMP, this DA will guide business planning for Southport's conference, leisure, events and customer welcome products/services as a means of increasing day trips, short breaks and repeat visits. DA2 focuses on prioritising and implementing the recommendations for product development detailed with the Southport Brand Strategy and Visitor Economy Theme of the Southport Investment Strategy (see above). Finally, DA3 sets out 4 'cross cutting' priority areas that are designed to work alongside DA's 1 & 2 so that a holistic approach to the ongoing management and development of the visitor economy in Southport can be adopted.

4.3 Objective Setting

In addition to the strategic drivers that have been outlined so far, outputs associated with key funding providers such as ERDF, NWDA etc will be used to inform objective setting and dictate how our resources are best utilised. Whilst funding opportunities for the destination development and cross cutting theme sections (DA's 2&3) will be ongoing throughout the lifetime of this strategy, financial support from ERDF (Partners for Growth) and NWDA (Business Tourism Development) has been secured to advance those priorities contained within DA1 (Advancing Southport's Visitor Economy) over the next 3 years. The headline targets for securing this funding relate to increasing visitor volumes and expenditures within Southport and will consequently, provide the main quantifiable objectives for this strategy – see below.

4.4 Partners for Growth - ERDF

The Partners for Tourism Growth initiative (PFG) is a unique project based on a partnership between TMP, Liverpool City Council, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral district councils. Using funding from the European Regional Development Fund (Action Area 3.3), it aims to drive forward a sustainable visitor economy that will make a significant contribution to the regeneration and competitiveness of Merseyside by building a sustainable tourism legacy following the 2008 European Capital of Culture programme. The initiative aims to develop the tourism sector through a focus on the natural & built environment of the City region together with support for planned investment in tourism facilities. The strategic objectives of the project are

- To increase the number of overnight visitors to LCR and the value of the spend generated by those visitors by encouraging them to spend more & stay longer.
- To raise the profile and performance of the LCR as a destination for short breaks & international visitors.
- To attract more day visitors to the LCR and improve attendance at festivals & events.
- Improve the awareness of the LCR as a visitor destination.
- To provide strategic direction & leadership of the tourism sector by the Tourist Board through the delivery of a co ordinate programme of marketing & events support and centralised, common approach to monitoring and evaluation of marketing & events impacts.

The Visitor Economy Strategy will provide the framework from which Sefton's element of the PFG programme will be taken forward over the period 1st July 2009 to 30th June 2012. Working to a budget of £1.7 million, the STBN will match ERDF with a proportion of Sefton Council's tourism revenue budget and private sector investment to implement the aims of this strategy (see section 1.4 Purpose and Aims). The initiative will also support greater collaborative working between stakeholders operating in the resort's visitor economy and TMP to help Southport access domestic and overseas visitor markets where appropriate.

ERDF has been secured on the basis that it will be used to improve the economic and social wellbeing of the Liverpool City Region. In the context of the PFG initiative, the project as whole is required to increase day & overnight visitors to the city region by 771,645 and increase related expenditures by £74 million during its lifetime. Additionally, the programme is expected to safeguard over 7.5K jobs and create an additional 1.6K jobs within the visitor economy, whilst achieving a net increase in GVA for the region of £35 million.

4.5 Business Tourism Fund - NWDA

The business tourism fund has been developed by the NWDA to help Northwest conference destinations compete more effectively within national business tourism markets. To reflect its position within the LCR business tourism sector, Southport has been allocated £80K for the next 2 years to enhance tactical marketing and sales activity targeting the national associations market. Supplemented by the PFG funding, the initiative will be matched by existing budget heads to enhance tactical marketing/PR activity, sales and delegate welcome initiatives via Southport's conference bureau.

Outputs

The headline outputs associated with securing the business tourism fund will rely on demonstrating the economic impact of additional conference business secured in delegate volume and value terms and will contribute toward the quantifiable objectives contained within this strategy. The grant also stipulates targets for PR value generated and venue participation within National accreditation schemes that will be progressed as part of the priorities included within the resort's business tourism business plan (see section 5.1.1 Strategic Priority 1).

As beneficiaries of PFG funding, stakeholders operating within Southport's visitor economy are charged with achieving a proportion of the headline outputs (see above) commensurate with the level of ERDF that has been secured. Combining these targets with those associated with the Business Tourism Fund, the headline objectives to be achieved during the lifetime of this strategy are set out below. These objectives will be supplemented by general performance management indicators associated with the individual elements of the Southport product offer (see section 7.2).

Business Tourism Fund:-

1. To achieve £1 million economic impact of conference business in Southport in 2010/2011
2. To achieve £12,500 equivalent advertising cost media coverage in Southport each year for 2009/2010 and 2010/2011
3. To increase number of participants in national accreditation scheme (MIA) in Southport by 3 by March 2011.

Partners for Growth

1. To increase leisure staying visitors to Southport by ** by June 2012 above the current baseline.
2. To increase day visitors to Southport by ** by June 2012 above the current baseline.
3. To increase expenditure among day/staying visitors to Southport from within the Northwest by £** by June 2012 above the current baseline.
4. To increase visitor expenditures generated by Southport's events programme by £1,515,610 million by June 2012 from the current baseline.
5. To create ** jobs within Southport's visitor economy.

** Outputs associated with visitor spend and jobs safeguarded will be confirmed by The Mersey Partnership (TMP) shortly.

5.0 How Do We Get There? (Implementation)

Actions and Timeframes for Implementation

This strategy will build upon the successes of the existing STBN Alliance to provide a co-ordinated focus for activity within the visitor economy that will assist Southport's transition into England's Classic Resort. In so doing, it will use the strategic guidance detailed in the Southport Brand Strategy & Business Tourism Strategies (2009) to redefine and enhance Southport's tourism offer so as to appeal to new market segments.

Focussing on the development areas set out above, the following action plans prioritise activity for marketing, sales and investment activity with the aim of enhancing the competitiveness of Southport's visitor economy and adopting a market led approach to its continued regeneration.
The lifetime of the strategy will be five years, however given the time limitations of European funding, the strategy will be reviewed during year 3 (2011/12) to evaluate performance and reprioritise activity where appropriate for the remaining 2 years.

To focus the work of stakeholders and interest groups a 3-year action plan has been developed. An 'X' has been used and marked in the action plan to signify when specific work within the visitor economy will either be carried out or considered. Timeframes for delivering associated activity will be fully dependent upon appropriate resources being available, year on year.

5.1 Development Area 1:
Advancing Southport’s Visitor Economy

5.1.1 Strategic Priority 1 – Southport the Classic Conference Resort

(DMP Priority 1 – To develop a class destination for conferences and business visits – so that the Liverpool City Region becomes a premier destination choice for association conferences of up to 1500 delegates.)

Intention:

- **To strengthen Southport's position as a national conference centre that has strong appeal among conference buyers predominantly operating in the not-for-profit sector, regional associations and high value exhibitions markets.**

Rationale:-

Business and conference tourism have accounted for much of the recent growth in UK tourism and is responsible for some 29.6 million trips and £9,249 million spend in England. For Southport, business tourism brings valuable 'off peak' business in the form of conferences, meetings, exhibitions and dinners. Business visitors are typically higher spending than people on leisure trips generating approximately £73 million for the resort since 2005.

The importance of business tourism to Southport's Visitor Economy cannot be understated, the recent investments to refurbish & extend the Southport Theatre & Convention Centre coupled with the opening of three new 4-star hotels, have meant the opportunities to target new markets and secure more business has never been greater. In moving forward however, stakeholders have to be aware that the industry is hugely competitive, and whilst Southport has raised its game in facility and quality terms, so have others.

Given these changes and the need to keep pace with rival conference destinations, Blue Sail Consulting on behalf of the STBN have recently completed a new business plan for Southport's business tourism product. Aimed at improving Southport's reputation and visibility, the plan sets out a clear framework for developing tactical marketing and sales activities to maximise business from key sectors such as the associations market. The plan also advocates that generating repeat business opportunities will be essential for raising expenditures and that new opportunities to penetrate the exhibitions sector must be taken if adequate returns on the product investments that have been made to date are to be realised. Finally, the plan emphasises the need for a destination sales team that is better equipped to co ordinate sales, PR and marketing activity with both local conference providers and through The Mersey Partnership.

In maximising the resort's business tourism offer and the revenue it generates, stakeholders must recognise that this must not be done in isolation from the wider development of the destination's visitor economy. Southport's new brand & communications strategy, product development, skills, training and research initiatives will all play important roles in strengthening the profile of Southport's business tourism offer and enable it to appeal to higher-spending target markets. Similarly the importance and quality of the destination's leisure offer will add to the distinctiveness of the destination as a conference venue and there must be far greater collaboration at all levels to ensure a 'market focussed' approach is taken to securing future business.

Priorities	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
1. Continue to enhance and develop direct sales activity in conjunction with TMP to penetrate the associations market with primary targets including northern government, political, trade union, professional & charity association markets. Key actions to include:- • Monitor shortlist of competitor destinations & venues to identify potential clients. • Develop & deliver a new sub-national sales campaign through the use of PR, direct mail sales visits & fam trips etc targeting northern association buyers and PCO's. • Research, clean & prioritise the Southport destination database to facilitate more proactive approach for sales. This will include conducting ongoing desk research (web, trade press & use of other media etc), telephone research to check legitimacy of existing data & prioritising leads base on return on investment. • Develop new external sales & promotional events for buyers, including stand alone event for buyers in London, hosting networking events with industry members to increasing familiarisation visits to Southport. • Product Development – Establish voice within Southport Investment Strategy to ensure industry needs are heard and factored into the resort's ongoing regeneration programme.	X	X	X	X
2. Develop strategic approach to securing repeat business with a view to maximising number of 'high value' conferences/events taking place within the resorts annual conference calendar. Key actions to include:- • Agree protocols and shared resources with the report's industry stakeholders to ensure attention to detail is maintained. This will include implementing minimum quality standards for familiarisation visits and client care before, during and after events, organising net working events to show case quality of offer and educate customer facing businesses about the importance of customer care. • Undertake customer satisfaction research including client feedback questions (agreed by stakeholders/service providers), delegate satisfaction surveys and to develop effective mechanisms of tracking & analysing results. • Adopt the principle of a 'Subvention Matrix' to move events to favourable diary spots as a means of maximising conference yield. Key actions will include identifying key conference dates for high value clients whilst proactively managing expectations of lower value clients.		X	X	X
3. To expand Southport's business tourism market by targeting higher value events. Key actions to include:- • Develop initiatives to showcase new investment in resort offer within sales and marketing activity. This will include using new investment as lead message within sales & marketing activity. • Provision of marketing materials, copy images etc for stakeholder partners to use during destination sell, as well as developing networking & familiarisation events for all sales staff. • Empowering major hotels to lead on corporate sales for the destination – working with agents and developing niche 'products' for smaller		X	X	X

Priorities	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
corporate meetings in partnership with local suppliers including golf days and team building events etc..				
4. Align the Southport conference product with the NorthWest Development Agency's Business Tourism Strategy to ensure a coherent and practical approach to enhancing the Business Tourism product in the NorthWest.	X	X		
5. Continue to uphold the 'code of practice' for Business Tourism through the criteria set out by the British Association of Conference Destinations.				
6. Through Sefton's Information Technology Strategy, continue to support an integrated programme of ICT development at all major conference venues within the resort. Specifically this will help support the potential development of Blue tooth technology & digital signage that will further enhance Southport's ability to attract those Northern Association buyers.		X	X	
7. Conference Marketing – Create and deliver an integrated and sector specific relevant marketing plan for 2009 – 2012 that will improve Southport's reputation & visibility with key markets including the Northern Associations market. Key actions to include:- • Utilise new Southport brand development work to guide business tourism branding and creatives. Key focus to be placed on incorporating the defined brand attributes of England's Classic Resort into business tourism promotional activity in terms of destination messaging and images. • Develop & deliver joint Sefton/TMP Southport specific marketing plan targeting primary markets identified by Blue Sail, commissioning specialist PR to raise awareness and visibility within the market (focussing on new investments), attend UK B2B exhibitions (Confex etc), identify opportunities for entering awards to raise profile & ongoing development of digital marketing plan to include continuous improvements to web site, regular e-marketing & use of social media.	X			
8. Continue to implement a fully integrated delegate incentive scheme within the retail, restaurant and transport sectors to provide delegates with a positive 'Southport Welcome' (see strategic priority 4). The scheme will also provide incentives for delegates to return to Southport as leisure visitors at a later date, including the possible introduction of a dedicated conference 'smart card'.		X	X	X
9. To sustain the conference product post 2012.	X	X	X	X

5.1.2 Strategic Priority 2 – Increasing quality and focus of Southport's Leisure Economy

(DMP Priority 2 – To promote the Liverpool City Region as a world class destination for leisure tourism – with a quality tourism offering and a top ten place in UK's most visited towns by international visitors)

Intention:

- **Leisure Tourism programmes and initiatives to be highly market-focused, targeting and promoting Southport's existing variety of products at appropriate markets**

Rationale:-

Leisure tourism is a fundamental component of Southport's tourism economy generating somewhere in the region of £250 million in visitor spend per annum. Golf, events, retail, nature/recreational tourism, evening economy and food & beverage form the cornerstones of the resort's leisure product that when combined with Southport's unique heritage and emerging opportunities for arts & culture, provide a distinctive offer that will set the resort apart from others.

The definition of England's Classic Resort brand is highly reliant on these product attributes both in marketing and product terms. Through extensive brand development work recently completed by Locum Destination Consulting on behalf of the STBN, clear direction now exists about how the leisure offer should be communicated to, and developed for, key audiences so they will be encouraged to visit for either short breaks or day trips. Whilst not seeking abandon traditional audiences, it is clear that if Southport's visitor economy is to grow in the longer term, the resort's leisure offer must continue to evolve and focus on meeting modern day customer expectations and preferences.

In leisure terms, the definition of England's Classic Resort in recent years could have been construed as a 'catch all' brand that tries to mean all things to all people without actually saying anything at all! Our new approach to developing the England's Classic Resort brand and the leisure offer that falls within it, will mean looking at the experiences Southport has to offer and creatig new, innovative and exciting ways of conveying and matching these experiences to the various segments of our target audiences. As the second destination brand on Merseyside, this will mean capitalising on Liverpool's emerging status as a 'world' city for culture and heritage and using the England's Golf Coast brand framework to raise the profile of the Classic Resort brand among national & overseas visitors. It will also mean developing a series of strong neighbourhood brands to reflect the depth and diversity of the resort's product offer to key regional markets identified within the Ark Leisure segmentation model. Lord Street, the seafront, cultural tourism and the evening experience located along West Street, all possess, or have the potential to possess special experiences that will have resonance among audiences young and old.

This element of the strategy will seek to sustain marketing activity associated with Southport's core leisure tourism offer, whilst placing greater emphasis on using the individual components of the resort's tourism offer (for example high profile events, culture, retail/Lord Street & golf) to attract high value day & staying visitors, particularly from the short break and VFR market.

Priorities	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
1. Brand – Create new brand guidelines & brand architecture in line with recommendations detailed within Southport Brand Strategy 2009. Focus should relate to the development of England's Classic Resort brand to reflect broad product attributes including Lord Street, Seafront offer and night-time economy. At the next level down, devise neighbourhood brand and architecture to support regional marketing activity & differentiating experiences among identified target segments.	X	X		
2. Day Visitors – Implement Southport brand strategy proposals to capitalise on the vast potential within regional markets for attracting day trip, VFR and tourism day trip (people who live outside the region but are on holiday staying elsewhere) visitors. Communications themes/messages to concentrate on the attributes of – Lord Street (culture, shopping, food, retail), high profile events, seafront & wider recreational offer etc. Key target audiences to include Cosmopolitan/Style Hound & Traditional/High Street segments aged 45+, High Street/Family segments aged 25 to 45 years) living within 1.5 hour drive time catchment area of the resort including Merseyside, Greater Manchester, North Wales, Cheshire and Lancashire Regions.	X	X	X	X
3. Develop tactical marketing activity to encourage regional day visits & overnight stays among younger Style Hound segments aged 25 – 35 years. Communications themes/messages to concentrate on Southport/West Street brand following improvements to bar/cub offer and development of night time events programme.			X	X
4. Staying visitors – Develop tourism products/packages with trade and tactical marketing initiatives to generate regional overnight stays. Key focus to be placed on growing the short breaks market for Southport's general leisure offer (Lord Street/retail, food & beverage etc), accommodation offer, high profile events (Air Show, Summer Classics, Musical Fireworks etc) & golf product. Key target audiences to include Cosmopolitan/Style Hound & Traditional/High Street segments aged 45+.	X	X	X	X
5. National & Overseas Leisure Tourism Visitors – Continue to support & align thematic marketing initiatives with TMP/One Plan to promote the Liverpool City Region as a short break destination to national & overseas (European, US/Japan markets etc) visitors with Southport acting as a key destination brand. In reaching these audiences, local marketing strategy will need to recognise the importance of complementing the LCR lead theme of culture & heritage and the Liverpool attack brand principle. Suggested lead theme for Southport include new Cultural Centre, major events programme, golf & Grand National.	X	X	X	X

Priorities	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
6. Cultural Tourism – Working in conjunction with Sefton Council Arts & Cultural Services department, develop integrated approach to the promotion of Southport's new Cultural Centre within generic resort marketing activity. As detailed in Southport brand strategy, this will include support for regional day trip & short break marketing, adoption/use of new brand guidelines for Southport by Arts & Cultural Services where appropriate & support for integration with the food & beverage, accommodation and retail sectors to create packages that will support short break marketing.	X	X	X	X
7. In line with Southport brand strategy and priorities set out above, develop new 3 year marketing plan to target leisure marketing activity at cosmopolitan (45+) and style hound (25- 35) segments & is in line with product improvements. Key focus of the plan will include • Enhanced use of e-marketing activities defined with IT development plan – use of social net working sites, blue tooth technology, e-blasts, use of user generated content & SMS communications • Creation of customer loyalty schemes to support customer data stock, yield & management. • Development of resort web site to accommodate Enterprise Control Management System developed through New Mind. • Evaluation on effectiveness, and strategy for printed collateral & exhibitions programme in reaching specified target audiences. • Use of specialist PR (see below).		X	X	X
8. PR – Develop PR policy that will support the proactive & targeted use of specialist PR to secure and reach specified target audiences. This will include features in national woman's & men's magazines (Elle, Vogue, Tatler, FHM etc), media relationship building (editors, travel writers etc) & developing innovative stories about Southport & it's stakeholders that will help secure positive PR in regional & national press.	X	X	X	X
9. Golf – Increase exposure of Southport's golf product to regional, national and overseas markets by working with TMP and realigning marketing resources and activity with geographically streamlines England's Golf Coast (EGC) brand. Ensure that as part of the realignment process Southport is established as the 'hero' product within the EGC promotional activity and STBN Golf Sub Group has adequate representation with the EGC Partnership.	X	X	X	X
10. Recreational Coastal Tourism – Integrate tactical day visitor marketing activity (walking, cycling, bird watching etc) with the priorities contained within the **Sefton's Natural Coast Marketing Plan & HLF Landscape Partnership Initiative**. Particular emphasis to be placed on the adoption/integration of the Sefton's Natural Coast brand/message into generic resort marketing activity (holiday guide, pocket guide etc) as a means of adding further diversity to the Classic Resort product offer and attracting key regional target audiences within a 1.5/2 hour drive time to the resort/coast.		X	X	X
11. Group and Coach Travel Market – Continue to target coach and group travel markets within a 3 to 4 hour drive time catchment of Southport. In addition to existing promotional activity such as day visitor pocket guide, familiarisation visits, trade advertising and exhibitions etc, retain dedicated group sales function within the Tourism Department to support selected high profile events and new visitor attractions.	X	X	X	X

Priorities	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
12. Long Stay Visitors - Continue to recognise the long stay market place via co ordinated and integrated marketing campaigns.	X	X	X	X
13. To fully extend England's Classic Resort destination branding across all official (and non-official) leisure tourism communications & public realm works.		X	X	X
14. Develop a planned and regular programme of tourism research activity for Southport to 'fill the gaps' in terms of tourism market intelligence. Specifically, this will involve studies, benchmarking, campaign evaluation and visitor surveys – see priority 6.	X	X	X	X

5.1.3 Strategic Priority 3 – Not Getting Complacent with Events

(DMP Priority 3 – To develop the capacity of the City Region to host major events and to successfully bid for and stage major events that will profile the City Region and England's Northwest.)

Intention:

- **Continue to develop and promote a programme of events that establishes Southport as one of the Northwest's premier destinations for high profile events that in turn will support the image & profile of the Liverpool City Region.**

Rationale:-

Whilst Southport has a diverse tourism offer, it is arguably one of the leading event destinations in the Northwest. The Southport Flower Show, Jazz Festival, Airshow and Musical Firework Championships among others, provide an insight into how a diverse range of events can raise the profile of a destination and change visitor perception as well as making a significant economic impact. Attracting well over ½ million visitors per annum, the existing events programme must continue to evolve so that it does not lose touch with the needs & aspirations of the key market segments we are seeking to attract and crucially reflect the brand values associated with England's Classic Resort – both in terms of content & quality. Similarly, we need to think carefully about the role new events can play in further enhancing the profile of Southport as well as how they can be conceived to bring areas of the resort to life, encourage repeat visits and in sustaining visitor numbers off peak.

Southport is in a unique position when compared to other destinations in that it has invested a great deal of time and effort in developing events that are both commercially and environmentally sustainable. Consequently its reputation among professional events companies is growing in stature and must be capitalised upon to enhance the wide and diverse range of events taking place in the resort, as well as ensuring that key events spaces are utilised to their full potential. Stakeholders also need to think clearly and strategically about how events should be used to enhance the suite of products that make up Southport's leisure offer (retail, food & drink, golf etc) and to win business for our conference product, influence key opinion formers and to secure future investment.

Finally, events are 'relevant' on a number of levels. Whist the commercial benefits are clear for all to see, on other levels they are tremendously powerful in engaging local communities and encouraging civic pride. Through initiatives such as the tourism volunteer programme, encouraging local interest groups to participate in our events and encouraging local residents to simply attend events, we begin to build a sense of community that benefits the overall visitor experience as well as encouraging visits from their friends and relatives. Consequently, this element of the strategy will focus on enhancing existing, and introducing new events to reinforce these aspirations as well as attracting high spending visitors from key target audiences.

Priorities	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
1. Continue to deliver a diverse and quality driven events programme, backed by co ordinated marketing activity so that returns from day and staying visitors are increased year on year.	X	X	X	X
2. Continue to Introduce ‘commercial realism’ into the development of core activity (Southport Air Show, Musical Fireworks, Summer Classics, Southport Food & Drink Festival etc) so that a commercially sustainable events programme continues to exist following completion of the Partners for Growth programme (June 2012).	X	X	X	X
3. Continue to work with tourism stakeholders in Southport to develop existing events as a mechanism for raising visitor expectations and perceptions of Southport as a vibrant, exciting and cultural destination. Specifically this will include investments in:-				
• **Southport International Jazz Festival:** 1. Encourage higher profile artists to enhance programme credibility in conjunction with Arts & Cultural Services. 2. Replicate Cork international Jazz Festival model for development of ‘festival club’ element in conjunction with accommodation sector. 3. Continue to expand town centre business participation. 4. Utilise other public spaces in Lord Street for daytime performances – Lord Street gardens, band stand, Kings Gardens etc. 5. Reintroduce community/jazz jam programme. 6. Work with Southport Melodic Jazz to develop clear rationale for the structure and promotion of the International Jazz festival and the SMJ Winter Festival.		X	X	X
• **Southport Air Show:** 1. Continue development of quality driven ‘landside’ village component & participation of related major brands – BMW, Liverpool John Lennon Airport, KLM, Manchester Science & Industry Museum etc. 2. Investigate increased usage of Victoria Park to provide parking provision and incorporate elements of Air show ground experience. 3. Continued investment in diversity of flying programme - including static aircraft displays and use of beach landing strip. 4. Strengthening partnership arrangements with Liverpool John Lennon Airport/major carriers. 5. Working with RAF to increase their reliance on the Air Show for recruitment in the North West. 6. Continue to exploit corporate hospitality markets.	X	X	X	X
• **Southport Flower Show** – Support the Southport Flower Show Company Limited to position the event as the leading independent & friendliest flower show in the UK with an appeal to a broad cross section of the public by 2013.	X	X	X	X
• **Southport Food & Drink Festival** 1. Expand footprint of festival & improve links across the town centre. 2. Build on success of the tour of Britain Cycle Race and investigate the feasibility of utilising carriageway space on Lord Street.		X	X	X

Priorities	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
3. Develop 3 year partnership agreement with Taste of the Northwest Ltd, local restaurateurs & Sefton Council aimed ensuring the long term sustainability of the event post 2012.				
• **Summer Classics:** 1. Continue to develop relations with private sector to secure high profile performances on Friday/Sunday evenings of the concert series. 2. Investigate potential of joint venture agreement with the Southport Flower Show limited with regards to long term development/sustainability of the event. 3. Confirm ongoing support of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for the Summer Classic concert series and begin assembling option for long term development of the classic element of the event.		X	X	X
• **Southport Comedy Week:** 1. Retain current format of festival.	X	X	X	X
• **British Musical Firework Championships:** 1. Consider alternative site options within resort to consolidate and ensure long term sustainability of the championships as well as sustaining economic impact – subject to logistical and cost constraints, options include seafront/pier & Victoria Park. 2. Develop business case for pyrotechnic conference before and during championships. 3. Continue to develop corporate hospitality options		X	X	X
4. Facilitate the development of new events that add diversity and appeal to the resorts events offer as well as supporting the wider brand attributes associated with Classic Resort. Specifically, this will include:- • Summer programme of cultural events activity located within key public open space on Lord Street. • Development of major golf festival with in Victoria Park linked to England's Golf Coats and developed in conjunction with the Southport Flower Show Ltd. • Development of major 3 week Christmas retail event focussing on Lord Street to supplement promotional activities and help Southport compete with other retail centre within the NW during this important period. • Support for major cultural activity with resort's creative quarter and within main Southport Cultural Centre programme. • Sport - Develop strategy for the bring regionally significant sporting events to key spaces in Southport – Lord Street, Victoria Park, Marine Lake and beach.		X	X	X
5. Continue to enhance customer services allied to the events programme by continuing to develop new media initiatives (online/e-ticketing, sms ticketing, advance online & computerised booking facilities in conjunction with Arts & Cultural Services), group booking packages and improved scheduling of forth-coming events activity.	X	X	X	X
6. Work strategically with TMP, Liverpool City Council and associated partners to develop regional and national events led marketing initiatives that	X	X	X	X

Priorities	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
include selected high profile Southport events (Southport Flower Show, Southport Air Show etc) & the Grand National as a mechanism of increasing hotel occupancy levels and spend within the resort. In addition work with Liverpool City Council to grow district events based on the legacy of Capital of Culture and associated promotional activity that is 'pan Mersey' focussed e.g. the Mersey River Festival & Matthew Street Festival.				
7. Develop funding opportunities to support the ongoing development of the event Volunteer Programme in conjunction with Sefton CVS.	X	X	X	X
8. In conjunction with the Conference & Corporate Sales Section, Economic Regeneration & TMP, use high profile events as strategic mechanism for engaging opinion formers, travel writers, potential investors and media editors within the Northwest and beyond to support ongoing regeneration efforts in Southport and growing credibility of the report's corporate offer.	X	X	X	X

5.1.4 Priority 4 - Visitor Welcome

(DMP Priority 1- To continue to develop a public realm that is an asset to the visitor experience and sets new standards of maintenance. DMP Priority 2 - To provide a quality offering to all visitors to the City Region, capitalising on the natural friendliness of local residents to offer outstanding customer service).

Intention:

- **Customer Service - To provide the visitor with an integrated 'tourist information' network, providing the customer with sparkling customer service standards and high quality information.**
- **New technology - Southport to be recognised as a leader in technologies, recognising and anticipating new opportunities in the tourism market place, resulting in improved communications with customers and stakeholders.**
- **A resort destination for all visitors – Developing Southport's reputation for welcoming all visitors.**

Rationale:-

Essentially England's Classic Resort brand is made up three main components comprising the visible brand/logo that will be used persuade people to come the resort, the quality of product offer (golf, retail, food & beverage, natural & build environment) that visitors will experience when they get here and the quality of welcome they receive during their stay. The visitor welcome ranges from the friendliness of local residents and the quality of service received from the breath of people working on the 'front line' (taxi drivers, hotel receptionists, waiters etc) to the accessibility of new technology that will make their visit convenient, memorable and most importantly enjoyable. Importantly, the quality of welcome should be extended to all visitors irrespective of their social grated, age, ethnic origin or sexual orientation.

These particular attributes are critical parts of the Classic Resort brand and require investment, time and effort dedicating to them so that customer expectations created through our promotional literature and PR can genuinely be realised. Since Southport's last tourism strategy was agreed in 2005, there have been huge advances in progressing the resort's visitor welcome including the development of our dedicated volunteer programme, the creation of Sefton Tourism Skills business plan and more recently Sefon's Visitor Economy Information Technology Plan. Whilst many of the projects contained with these documents are still in their infancy, they provide a clear, and informed direction for the destination to follow (in policy & development terms) in creating a benchmark that is consistent with a classic resort and in maximising visitor expenditures. In the context of this work and the Liverpool City Region's priorities for developing customer service in general, this section of the strategy sets out our key priorities for action over the life time of this plan.

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
❑ **Customer Service**				
1. Develop proposals & secure funding to move and refit TIC within Southport Cultural Centre by 2012.				X
2. Continue to evolve accommodation booking service through MERVIN (Merseyside Visitor Information Network) and increase participation of Southport's accommodation sector.				
3. Classic service – make quality of service a central feature in Southport's Classic resort positioning across all sectors – Support programmes aimed at sustaining the quality agenda – in particular VAQAS (Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme), MIA (Meetings Industry Association) Hospitality Assured Programme etc. Provide information and advise to improve awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and support/connect to 'Liverpool City Region Welcome' programmes etc.				
4. Based on Sefton volunteer training scheme & the family of 'Welcome To Excellence', customer care schemes, develop training sessions twice yearly targeting new & existing front line staff. Targeting taxi drivers, hotel staff, traffic wardens, gardeners, street cleaning staff, volunteers, retail staff on Lord Street etc, the sessions will be structured to familiarise staff with the product/Classic Resort offer, service standards and their ambassadorial role within the resort.		X	X	X
5. Support branding of Southport as a Classic Resort by working with TMP to improve world class service, behaviour, motivation and knowledge of people working in Southport's tourism industry (see also Priority 7 – Investing in People, Skills and Enterprise). .		X	X	X
6. Continue to provide a comprehensive distribution system to ensure all official tourism literature is available at key welcome points around the resort (train/bus stations, theatres, hotels etc), electronically and is effectively disseminated at regional, national and international levels – as appropriate to the target market.	X	X	X	X
7. Work in partnership with Tourist Board/TMP and STBN members to encourage Southport's accommodation sector to attain the new Common Standards for Assessment being introduced by the AA & Visit Britain (Quality in Tourism). In helping achieve that end, the 'inspected-only' policy will continue to be implemented before accommodation is included in official tourism media/visitor information services (holiday guide, accommodation booking service, web etc) so as to ensure minimum standards for accommodation are met.	X	X	X	X
8. Work with the resorts hoteliers, restaurateurs and publicans to raise standards and increase inclusion in independent tourism guidebooks such as the Blue Guide, Good Hotel Guide, Good Food Guide and Good Pub Guide.	X	X	X	X
9. Regularly liaise with the local Tourist Guides Association to ensure that guides receive up to date information on Southport and regularly feedback on tourist views of the town.	X	X	X	X

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
10. Ensure appropriate official Southport Tourism literature is widely available at key outlets in the town, to cross sell the visitor offer and to manage visitors effectively around the town, retaining them for longer periods.	X	X	X	X
11. Continue to support Coach Host & Tourism Volunteer programmes.	X	X	X	X
12. In conjunction with TMP & NWDA, lobby Visit England to complete licensing agreement with Trip Advisor and seek out alternative methods of linking visitsouthport.com to user generate destination reviews.	X	X	X	X
❑ **New Technology**				
1. Implement recommendations of Southport Information Technology Strategy, including:-				
• **Web Management & Quality Assurance** - Development of resort web site to accommodate Enterprise Control Management System developed through New Mind; creation of 'web editor function coupled with appropriate back office support, creation of 3-year editing and optimisation plan for visitsouthport.com & developing relations with Avarto & New Mind to enhance web performance.		X		
• **Web Enhancement** – In conjunction with Avarto & New Mind develop detailed proposals for enhancing functionality of visitsouport.com including provision of weather & tide information, increasing use of DMS rich media content, online product packaging & use of electronic venue planning software to improve usability of main conference web site.		X	X	
• **Improving Customer Information** – Work in conjunction with Arts & Cultural Service & Southport Flower Show to advance Arts About Manchester/NWDA proposals to develop an interoperable ticketing/customer data solution for Southport events programme. Desired outcomes will include the creation of a mobile/online/face to face ticket sales system, reserved/unreserved ticket facilities, customer data storage/segmentation functionality and capability to support e-marketing initiatives – e-blast, SMS texting etc.		X	X	
• **Creation of Online shop at visitsouthport.com**		X		
• **New Technology –** Including implementation of blue tooth messaging devices at key locations including Southport Theatre & Convention Centre, Esplanade Park & Ride, Splash World, TIC/Cultural centre etc; developing MP3/pod casts to enhance thematic/online marketing, conference sales, walks & cycling tours of Southport & Sefton's Natural Coast (in conjunction with Southport Cycle Town initiative).		X	X	
• **Digital Signage –** Assess the potential for internal & external plasma/digital signage device(s) within STCC, TIC and other key locations to enhance conference delegate information and support familiarisation trips; continue to establish feasibility and cost of road side digital signage to replace existing gateway signage at Kew and Plough roundabouts.			X	

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
❑ **A resort destination for all visitors**				
1. Develop partnerships with specialist providers to raise issues of accessibility with the local tourism industry. In particular, work in partnership with the 'Tourism for All' initiative to provide advice on legislation concerning the Disability Discrimination Act.	X	X	X	X
2. Undertake planned, regular, access audits of local public tourism provider facilities and premises, in partnership with the Regional Tourist Board/TMP, the voluntary sector and Sefton Council Equal Opportunities officers.	X	X	X	X
3. Ensure that official Southport tourism literature incorporates up to date access information each year, including information on local bus operators offering low-floor accessible entrances and the Shopmobility scheme.	X	X	X	X
4. Enhance co-ordination and customisation of information tailored to meet the needs of all, including people with particular requirements in accessing information (braille, large print, loop system), and public tourism venues.	X	X	X	X

5.2 Development Area 2: Destination Development

5.2.1 Priority 5 – Priorities for Product Development in the Visitor Economy.

Intention:

- **Position Southport as the England's Classic Resort by strengthening and introducing a more competitive, quality driver product 'offer', for both existing and emerging markets.**

Rationale:-

In 2004 Southport embarked on its ambitious journey to become the Northwest's and then England's Classic Resort. Since that time over £200 million worth of investment has been made to upgrade the resort's tourism infrastructure that included the expansion of the Southport's conference centre & theatre, the building of new four star hotels, refurbished pier and public realm improvements along Lord Street to name a few. Despite all this success, reduced sums of public funding combined with dented private sector confidence (due to the global economic down turn) means that clear focus on adopting 'market facing' solutions to lever in future investment in the resort's product offer and consolidate its current position must take priority. In so doing, the definition of the Classic Resort brand must be further defined to make local residents, stakeholders, visitors and future investors alike understand our vision and realise the huge potential the destination's visitor economy has, the kinds of audiences it must seek to attract and those areas where improvements are still needed.

In meeting this challenge, the Southport Brand Strategy (Locum Destination Consulting) was completed in June 2009 and forms the focus for the implementation plan of the Southport Investment Strategy Visitor Economy theme. Building on the investment strategy's concept of creating distinctive neighbourhoods in Southport, the brand strategy provides detailed guidance about developing the 'fine grain' of these business clusters and provides all stakeholders with responsibility for making it happen – Council Planners, Tourism Teams and the private sector partners. Central to this is the acceptance that creating customer-facing products will provide the foundations on which a successful destination brand can be created and should take precedence in guiding the resort's ongoing regeneration. To that end, enhancing existing and creating new visitor experiences within Southport will be undertaken on a 'block by block' basis so that decision making can be informed, regeneration activity can be prioritised and crucially stakeholders have the ability to input into this process.

In strategic terms, it is crucial that we recognise the importance of Lord Street in providing a unique and distinctive heritage offer that differentiates the resort from rival destinations. However if we are to progress the visitor economy both commercially and environmentally, then new thinking around how we make the most of this unique space must be considered for the sake of the resort's future prosperity. Consequently our ability to attract the right mix of branded & independent retail into the area will be central as will improving the ambience of Lord Street and making it work harder to connect the town centre with its seafront. Perhaps most importantly, the collective responsibility on us all to conserve and maintain a pristine built environment within this area of the town provides us with a real opportunity to create a distinctive sense of place in which residents and visitors alike feel special.

The opportunities to harness the potential of the arts & creative industries through the Southport Cultural Centre initiative are also crucial and provide the catalyst from which the development of the resort's cultural offer can be developed, providing renewed focus for independent retail along Market Street & King Street. Similarly, reinvigorating Southport's night-time economy is a priority given the need to encourage younger visitors (21 – 35 yrs) to the resort and the high per capita expenditures they bring. The current offer falls below par, both in the diversity of quality product offer and the perceived fear of crime that is sadly blighting the sector's ability to meet the brand values associated with England's Classic Resort and to capitalise on the stylish, aspirational offer for which the town has a growing reputation.

Finally, Southport's seafront has the potential to unlock further opportunities for the resort if future development is innovative and bold enough to meet the aspirations of modern day mass market visitors, whilst providing year round facilities that will generate additional spend from which the local economy can grow. Investments in the Ramada Plaza Hotel, the Southport Theatre & Convention Centre, the Marine Way Bridge set the benchmark for which the redevelopment of the rest of the seafront must seek to emulate. However, this must be done sensitively and aim to rejuvenate the distinctive heritage features of the resort's seafront, particularly Kings Gardens as well as ensuring there is investment in those streets that link the seafront to Lord Street.

The values set out in the brand strategy will underpin much of this work and will be used to focus regenerative activity on creating high quality experiences capable of matching the brand attributes of England's Classic Resort whilst appealing to the most lucrative market segments.

Given uncertainly of time scales and other factors associated with intensive capital regeneration, the breadth of these projects clearly goes far beyond the scope of this strategy and will be reliant on the implementation of planning & transport policy coupled with external support from organisations such as the NWDA & Heritage Lottery Fund. However such is the scale and importance of the visitor economy to the Southport's economic & social wellbeing, the brand strategy will be used to influence and prioritise a number of key themes/projects/initiatives contained within the SIS. As a result, the visitor economy initiatives contained within this strategy will be developed in conjunction with the thematic groups comprising the SIS and seek to deliver the following outcomes over the next three years.

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
1. **Local Development Framework** - Incorporate key recommendations & general development principles of the Southport brand strategy within Southport Town Centre Supplementary Development Plan (SPD) in order to create a supportive planning policy framework that will; a) rationalise the delivery of key elements/themes within the Southport Investment Strategy; b) provide an effective mechanism for stimulating investment in the development of the town centre's visitor offer. This will include:- • **Buildings, Streetscape & Public Realm** – 1. Develop a local design code that reflects England's Classic Resort brand guidelines (developed under strategic priority 2) for signage, street furniture etc. 2. Set out clear parameters & priorities to conserve Southport's unique heritage character and developing the resort's distinctive sense of place. Key areas for consideration must include preservation & maintenance of built architecture of Lord Street (including canopies & shop fronts), parks & gardens (Kings Gardens, Victoria Park) & seafront/town centre connecting routes including Scarisbrick Avenue & Neville Street. 3. Priorities for the creation & design of spaces within the public realm that will support increased town centre events, designer retail experience and improvements to the resort's night-time economy offer. • **Character Areas & Quarters** – Support development of eight neighbourhood quarters (as set out within the brand strategy) to align regeneration policies of Sefton Council and private sector developers with the needs/aspirations of identified target audiences. This will include developing policy to implement the 'block by block' approach (in conjunction with landlords & tenants) to build on the identified character areas making up Lord Street, as well as the smaller area offers within the town centre which include the proposed market zone, night zone & Scarisbrick Village etc. • **Retail** - Focussing on the zoned/neighbourhood brand offers contained within the brand strategy, planning policy must encourage retail development that integrates with the resort's existing urban fabric as per the 'experience retail' principle - combining retail with leisure, entertainment & culture to create a visitor experience that is wider & richer than just the retail offer alone. More specifically, the policy should emphasise the need to encourage infill retail development within the 'fine grain' of individual buildings, streets & grouping of streets together with site assembly opportunities (vacant units, floor space options, development land) to attract national mid-upper range multiple shops in the immediate vicinity of Lord Street (potential sites could include vacant Woolworth's building, areas around Wayfarers Arcade & Cultural Centre). • **Accommodation** – Establish a flexible policy toward the change of use of the resort's existing stock of small hotels & guest houses for high quality commercial or residential accommodation.	X	X	X	X
2. **Priorities for Retail Development –** Upgrade quality of the resort's retail offer in line with the brand strategy to enhance the diversity of the overall product offer to attract high value audience segments. Key priorities during the lifetime of this strategy will include:- • **Experience Retail/Major Retail Development** – In conjunction with key partners, undertake major feasibility study to identify sites within the immediate environs of Lord Street that will:-		X	X	X

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
1. Provide required floor space to attract major 'on brand' retail – including amalgamation of vacant units and use of upper floor space. 2. Strengthen the mix of retail, leisure & entertainment uses to support the concept of 'experience retail' development in Southport. 3. Consider development options that reflect the 'block by block' approach to the development of the resort's predefined character areas. • **Large Retail Brands: Central Lord Street & Chapel Street–** 1. In conjunction with SIS Town Centre Management Thematic Group, map empty retail units and identify those sites that have the potential to increase footfall to support independent retail offer– particularly focus for attention includes key sites on Lord Street and Chapel Street. 2. Based on guidance offered in brand strategy & in conjunction with SIS communications strategy, increase number & range of 'on-brand' national multiple shops operating in the mid-upper range of the market by targeting desirable operators/commercial agents & developing proactive relations with property landlords. 3. In conjunction with Sefton Council's Planning & Economic Regeneration Department investigate the feasibility of developing tenancy incentives packages & other support from Sefton to incentivise relocation opportunities – e.g. staff training, development & recruitment offered through Sefton@Work, specialist grants, resort's retail performance & clear message about vision/'experience retail principle' etc. • **Specialist/Independent Retail: Market Street, Scarisbrick Avenue & Central Lord Street –** 1. In conjunction with SIS Town Centre Management Thematic Group establish empty retail units and encourage clusters of 'character' independent retailers on Market Street, King Street & Scarisbrick Avenue. 2. Encourage greater breadth of on-brand specialist retail on Lord Street/Wayfarers Arcade such as designer bag or shoe stores. 3. Develop strategies that are conducive to relocation of existing tenants into appropriate business cluster area to encourage critical mass through 'block by block' development approach. 4. In conjunction with Sefton Economic Regeneration Team/SIS Business Support Thematic Group, align existing grants incentive schemes and target new business grant opportunities to support the development of specialist/independent retail. 5. Develop relationships with landlords/commercial letting agents to develop a strategy for 'pop up' retail within vacant shop units. • **Experience Retail** – Consider the potential for the creation of an Experience Retail Development Group, comprising champions/representatives composed of land owners and retails, to guide and develop 'block by block' proposals for the introduction of a greater mix of retail, leisure & entertainment used. • **Business Improvement Districts (BIDS)** – Work in conjunction with Southport Business Enterprise to develop case for and kick start BIDs for Chapel Street & Lord Street given the renewed impetus provided by the Southport Investment Strategy and the				

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Southport Brand Strategy.				
3. Night-time Economy – Revise existing Evening Economy Strategy (2004) to capitalise on the exclusivity of Southport's existing night time economy and develop initiatives for attracting new operators, improving night time environment and tackling issues around anti social behaviour. Key priorities will include:- • Defining development area/zone for principle night time offer as Coronation Walk, Waverly Street & West Street. • Develop strategies for improving mix of tenant/operators that will help establish a 'cultured' & 'chilled' environment able to enhance the attractiveness of the destination to high value younger markets. • Develop relations with existing operators to conceive and progress the development of the night time economy with a view to advising over public realm, lighting and support for targeting 'on brand' operators. • Work in partnership with existing operators & Southport's Community Safety Area Partnership (CSAPS) to develop initiatives around tackling the actual and perceived issues that relate anti social behaviour (rowdy/threatening behaviour) in the resort's evening economy. • Develop strategy with Planning & Economic Regeneration Department to consider range of permissible uses for vacant sites/premises within Night Time Zone as a means of supporting proactive searches for new operators. • Build on existing licensing policy that encourages operators not to tolerate or encourage undesirable behaviour among its customers, developing events & to encourage appropriate behaviour among customers. • Develop potential of creating Business Improvement District within night time zone as a means of improving cleansing, strategic development of the area, greater stakeholder representation & promotional activity • Develop be spoke public realm & lighting strategy for the night time zone that will enhance the areas identity/sense of place and improve safety.		X	X	X
4. Arts & Creative Industries – In conjunction with the development of the new Cultural Centre and development of Southport's market operation, develop strategy with key stakeholders to guide the development of creative industries around the environs of Market Street & King Street (proposed cultural quarter). Key priorities include:- • Develop relations with landlords & commercial letting agents to ascertain potential development sites within the cultural quarter – including buildings & land plots that can be combined/converted to provide workspace, studio space & exhibition space for the broad range of businesses that comprise the creative sector - craft, design, photography, visual arts etc. • Establish Cultural Quarter Group including local arts practitioners, Southport Cultural Centre, Southport Market, landlords & business support services to guide the strategic development & management of the cultural quarter. • Develop strategy to attract anchor tenants for the cultural quarter and opportunities for easy in/out rental agreements to new entrants (graduates local community arts groups etc) into the industry. • Build relations with local arts colleges. • In conjunction with Economic Regeneration & Business Link, develop financial support & advise packages design to help creative		X	X	X

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
industries set up/relocate to the defined cultural quarter. • Support development of social enterprise initiatives and associated opportunities for employment, education & skills development within the sector.				
5. Transport Policy – In conjunction with SIS Transport theme, develop the following proposals:- • To enhance the visitor experience and capitalising on the potential of Lord Street to significantly enhance the quality of Southport's economy, undertake feasibility studies to investigate the options for creating an environment that is pedestrian friendly. • Develop integrated public transport systems get visitor to, and move them around Southport effectively –pedestrian and cycle route improvements (Southport Cycle Town Initiative). • Work with West Lancs Council to improve easterly access to Southport through the implementation of improved traffic management systems in Ormskirk. • Expansion/upgrading of park and ride facilities & lobby to upgrading quality and speed of the easterly bus/train service to Southport.		X	X	X
6. **Seafront Development -** Support long-term objectives aimed at improving the quality of resort's seafront offer & improving the linkage between Southport Town centre with its seafront. Key priorities for development during the lifetime of this strategy will include:- • Progressing design competition and development of Southport Marine Park to reflect Southport Brand Strategy and expectations of key target audiences. • Develop stage 2 submission for Kings Gardens HLF programme. • Work with Southport Flower Show Limited to realise the potential of Victoria Park.	X	X	X	X
7. **Communication Strategy -** Based on the aforementioned priorities, devise communication plan that will raise the profile of, and promote understanding about the Southport Investment Strategy to key audiences – local residents, local business, stakeholders & potential investors. The core objectives for the communications strategy will be aimed at:- • Galvanising public, private & voluntary sector support for SIS though clear understanding of vision and desired outcomes. • Conveying an innovative & holistic approach to social & economic regeneration. • Promoting confidence in Southport & develop the climate for inward investment at all levels. • Developing an 'inclusive' approach to Southport's ongoing regeneration capable of maximising economic and social returns.		X		

5.3 Development Area 3: Cross Cutting Themes

5.3.1 Priority 6 – Intelligence Led: A clear understanding of the customer and the market place

Intentions:

- **To ensure that data collection systems are in place to capture key visitor information and enhance customer relationship and destination management capabilities.**
- **To have a planned, regular, funded programme of tourism market research for Southport, focussed on 'filling the gaps' in tourism knowledge that existing data collection programmes cannot fill. Be one-step ahead, anticipating new and future market developments and trends.**

Rationale:-

A clear understanding of the customer and the marketplace will be essential if informed decisions about the promotion and development of Southport's tourism sector are to be made and gaps in visitor knowledge filled. Through the implementation of Southport tourism data management plan in 2006, there have been significant improvements in the collection and dissemination of performance data relating the resort's visitor economy including that collected through MERVIN (Merseyside Visitor Information Network), attraction's, accommodation providers, TIC enquiries and via the internet. This in turn has helped to improve the accuracy of the volume and value data provided by STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) and the quality of local information available to evaluate the year on year performance of Southport's visitor economy.

From a qualitative perspective the use of destination benchmarking and events surveys are also crucial in showing how effective promotional activity has been in attracting target audiences, recording satisfaction levels and in assessing whether the quality of our offer matches expectations. Importantly, this type of research also shows how Southport's visitor offer compares to that of competing destinations and where improvement is required to reach the Classic Resort standard.

Despite these successes, it is essential that we do not become complacent and constantly strive to improve our visitor knowledge base so as to keep pace with changing customer expectations and preferences. At present, large gaps exist in the provision of visitor information that will constrain our ability to gauge the performance of some sectors of the resort's visitor economy. As an example, the ability to forecast hotel occupancy levels and identify the times where excess capacity exists in the accommodation sector is being restricted through the lack of accurate & up to date information. Similarly, our failure to measure visitor footfall within the town's retail centre is having severe implications for gauging performance against other comparable retail destinations and is limiting efforts to speak with confidence to new retail operators. From a market evaluation perspective we must also find new ways of evidencing the volume and value of visitors to the resort by market segment as a means of evidencing the returns on investment made in promotional and product development activity. Robust research techniques to evaluate the environmental impact of activity within the Southport's visitor economy must also be developed.

Finally, such is the size and importance of the visitor economy to Southport, it is important that information is provided to evidence the contribution of the public purse in sustaining this vital element of Sefton's economy. From an environmental, social & financial point of view, the ongoing development of Southport's visitor economy will be of direct relevance to the quality of life of those living within its environs, therefore structuring appropriate research activity to measure the impact of these benefits on our local communities is now of crucial importance.

As a result of these issues, priorities for research activity will be structured as follows:-

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
1. **Data Management** – Continue to operate Tourism Data Management Plan/centralised visitor information database for Southport and Merseyside tourism information providers –via MERVIN (unique user web enquiries, accommodation bookings, brochure requests, event ticket sales etc), local visitor attractions (TIC etc), registered coach statistics etc. Fill gaps in existing data provision as follows:- • Occupancy Data – Develop monthly accommodation survey with TMP to provide occupancy information with participation from 6 hotels – key focus will be to evidence economic impact, room vacancy rates and associated residents expenditure patterns. • Town Centre Footfall Data – Commission Spring Board UK to install counting devices on Chapel Street & Lord Street to estimate town centre footfall numbers & benchmark against comparable UK destinations. • Coastal Data - Implement data collection programme with Sefton Coast & Countryside Service, National Trust & RSPB for 6 vehicle counting points located along Sefton's Natural Coast (Marshside, Ainsdale, Formby (2) & Crosby (2)). • Parking Data - Secure monthly data seats from key park & ride sites with Southport including the Esplanade Park & Ride & Fairways Park & Ride. • Events Data - Develop appropriate model for estimating/recording attendance levels at free events taking place in Southport. • Conference Data – Conduct regular conference research to establish volume and value of business being won by the conference bureau.		X	X	X
2. **Volume & Value** - In conjunction with key partners including TMP, provide annual volume and value estimates of performance in Southport's visitor economy:- • STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) – In conjunction with TMP undertake annual programme of volume & value research activity for Sefton to show tourists staying in serviced accommodation/non serviced accommodation/with friends & relatives and on day trips together with associated impacts (economic, employment support, tourist days etc). Develop appropriate weighting to gauge headline performance for Southport's visitor economy. • Volume & Value by market sector – Investigate the potential of developing volume & value research using the Arkleisure		X	X	X

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
segmentation model for Southport based on a) target market segment (Cosmopolitans, Traditional etc) & b) product segment - Events, Conference and Leisure Tourism (including coast & retail).				
3. **Qualitative Research** - In conjunction with key partners including TMP, the Southport Flower Show & Sefton MBC Arts & Cultural Services, Sefton MBC undertake regular programme of sector specific primary research will include:- • Coastal Research – In conjunction with Sefton Coast Partnership/Landscape Partnership Project & TMP conduct coast wide qualitative programme of research to gain user opinions, profile and expenditure. • Events Research – Commission Northwest Research Services (via TMP) to undertake site surveys at two events per year to support events development and evidence outputs connected with the ERDF Partners for Growth initiative. • Leisure Research – Commission destination benchmarking activity or similar to maintain focus and competitiveness of the resort's tourism offer & gauge profile of current visitors, expenditure & satisfaction levels. • Group Travel – Attitudinal survey work undertaken by coach hosts. • Cultural Tourism – Integrate research activity as appropriate with Arts & Cultural Services to ascertain the impact of Southport's emerging cultural product offer (cultural centre, creative sector etc) so that marketing and programming activity (exhibitions programme, performing arts programme) can be developed accordingly. • Online research – Develop existing e-database to structure ongoing programme of online research to increase frequency of consumer research as a means of informing future communications policy, aiding perception analysis and product development activity (e.g. developing evening economy, heritage offer etc). Key areas for development in this regard will include the resort's events programme, cultural and conference product offers. • Visitor profiling research – In conjunction with Arkenford, develop segmentation analysis of current visitor audiences allied to key publications including the resort holiday & pocket guide. • Conversion Research - to identify the percentage of people requesting & receiving a Short Breaks & Holiday Guide who then have visited / will visit.		X	X	X
4. **Community Research** – Utilise existing community based research and develop closer working relations with Sefton's Community Cohesion Service to commission new qualitative research aimed at assessing local perceptions of the visitor economy and the barriers (perceived & actual) preventing participation - fear of crime, youth disorder, rowdiness etc.		X	X	X
5. **Support National, regional and sub regional research initiatives** including annual Destination Performance UK baseline survey (coastal strand), Merseyside Tourism Survey, Tourism Business Performance Survey, Partners for Growth/ERDF Key Performance Indicator reports and Merseyside Visitor Surveys.	X	X	X	X
6. Secure funding for new developmental areas of primary research as appropriate – brand awareness, product development, the evening economy, heritage and other niche markets.		X	X	X

5.3.2 Priority 7 – Investing in people skills and enterprise

Intention:

- **Work with partners including TMP, Sefton@Work and the Sector Skills Council (SSC) to reduce the number of 'hard to fill' tourism vacancies in the resort, to tackle career development issues, and work force skill base shortages during the period 2009 – 2013.**

Rationale:-

As Southport continues its transition into England's Classic Resort throughout the next 5/10 years, there will be huge focus on establishing the resort's emerging leisure, cultural, accommodation and retail offers so they are fit for purpose and are able to attract new high spending visitors. In reaching that point, investments made to date must be matched by equal consideration being given to training and skills development that will enable a level of customer service to fulfil, if not exceed customer expectations.

In recognition of this fact, Sefton Council's Tourism Skills Business Plan has been developed to address the challenge of recruiting, training and retraining a workforce competent to deliver the high standards of service associated with a benchmark Classic Resort. In this regard the plan focuses on capitalising on the potential for increased employment opportunities offered through the concept of classic resort by developing initiatives to ensure local residents/communities are equipped with the skills and knowledge of the tourism industry demanded by businesses operating within the sector. The appointment of a dedicated Employment Liaison Officer (ELO) to champion the tourism skills agenda at local level and facilitate communication between skills providers/stakeholders and the industry has done much to progress these issues.

However, issues still remain. Recent research work that surveyed 30 Southport businesses operating in the tourism sector show that skill levels among Sefton residents and those in the hinterland are at a lower level than is seen nationally; in addition, it would appear that the area's workforce receives lower levels of training (this prevalent overall – rather than specifically within the tourism sector). From a perceptual point of view, poor pay and working conditions within the industry are still affecting good quality recruitment and retention of staff. As a result, the sector is still seen by many as a 'job' rather than a credible career option. This fact, coupled with a general lack of awareness among employers as to the variety of existing and bespoke training courses available to them and their staff, compounds the problem further.

This issue is of crucial importance to the prosperity and sustainability of Southport's visitor economy. Our ability to provide the standards of service consistent with the Classic Resort brand will be one of the core measures new and existing visitors will use to judge the quality of their experience. In meeting this challenge the resort's tourism industry must now recognise the importance of skills and training not only in terms of the quality of service delivery, but also in terms of how it will improve the profitability of their business. In taking greater responsibility for its actions, the potential exists to overcome the negative perceptions of the industry that are restricting the calibre of people choosing Southport as a place to work.

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
In developing the key recommendations of the Tourism Skills Development over the lifetime of this strategy, the following key actions are proposed:-				
1. Overcoming perceptions of the industry. • Improve the profile & scope of tourism careers in Southport by raising awareness of the destination's 'Classic Resort' ambition among schools, colleges & recruitment agencies. Interventions may include appointing industry champions, providing careers trips to key attractions/hotels/events/entertainment venues & increased presence at careers fairs etc. • Develop communications strategy (within SIS communications plan) to maximise publicity around industry success stories including new entrants/operators to Southport, business performance and employee development initiatives etc. • In conjunction with Sefton Education Business Partnership, assess promotion of tourism careers in Southport schools & colleges & develop new initiatives with TMP that can be used in the longer term to address poor perceptions of the industry at an early age. • In conjunction with partners support initiatives to develop work experience placements aimed at encouraging young people into the industry. • Raise the profile of Southport and the tourism career opportunities it offers via inclusion in Springboard initiatives (web site etc) - Springboard UK is a young dynamic organisation which promotes careers in hospitality, leisure, tourism and travel to a range of potential recruits and influencers	X	X	X	X
2. Encouraging skills & training. • In conjunction with Sefton@Work & Southport Employment Liaison Officer (ELO) continue 121 dialogue with, and enhance communications to, tourism businesses in Southport aimed at raising awareness of the Learning & Skills Council funded Routeway Initiative, identifying ongoing training needs and signposting to external courses provided by TMP and external training agencies. • Work in conjunction with TMP, external training providers & Sefton@Work/ELO 'package' training & skills offered to employers as a means of providing continuity between training initiatives, facilitate medium term staff career development and to increase the level of transferable skills. • In conjunction with TMP and other skill providers, develop flexible training scheme initiatives to overcome issues around	X	X	X	X

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
releasing staff for training during business hours. This will include considering the potential of providing web interface/online training initiatives. • Establish performance monitoring systems for external training undertaken by business operating within Southport's visitor economy.				
3. Business Leadership. • Develop structured programme of seminars and information portals for businesses operating in the visitor economy to share best practice information that relates to staff retention, personal development & work place environment. • In conjunction with Sefton@Work, encourage business champions capable of advocating the benefits of the ELO service to others, understand the importance of employee career progression and are willing to act in an ambassadorial capacity for the ongoing development of the skills agenda in Southport. • Establish the potential of creating a Skills Development Sub Group that reports to the STBN/Brand Partnership. • In conjunction with Sefton@work/ELO target smaller businesses and assess the need for guidance in HR areas such as setting up personal development plans etc.	X	X	X	X
4. Continue to organise the **Southport Ambassador Awards** scheme on an annual basis, rewarding employee excellence, recognising and disseminating good employment practice amongst the local tourism industry, and promoting the importance of tourism as a career.	X	X	X	X

5.3.3 Priority 8 – Spreading the benefits of the visitor economy

Intention:

- **To develop community ownership, responsibility for and participation within Southport's Visitor Economy**

Rationale:-

In supporting Southport's transition into England's Classic Resort, the resort's heritage, retail, conference and leisure offers will play a huge part in attracting the diverse range of visitors required to sustain the visitor economy and stimulate investment opportunities. Whilst these products will define what Southport is and what visitors perceive Southport to be, those who live and work in the resort will play an equally important role in bringing the destination to life and developing its distinctive sense of place. As a result, the visitor economy must be developed so that it is relevant to and reflects the needs of its community and encourages their participation within it.

Recent survey work indicates that perceptions among our local communities of anti social behaviour, crime and safety in Southport are having a negative impact on people's wellbeing and constraining their ability to enjoy the variety of experiences the town has to offer. In redressing this imbalance, tourism policy must continue to integrate with other social regeneration initiatives and remove these barriers (actual & perceived) so that communities take pride in Southport and contribute toward its development as a vibrant, dynamic and exciting destination. In achieving this balance, the potential exists to truly distinguish the destination from its competitors by creating an environment where sustainable and cohesive communities are an integral part of the product offer rather than simply co existing with it.

Through out 2007 & 2008, the Tourism Department has been proactive in using the opportunities associated with the visitor economy to improve the lives of our communities and consequently the quality of visitor experienced offered. The recruitment of 150 volunteers to work on the events programme for example now supports the Southport visitor welcome programme as well as helping volunteers enhance their career and social skills. Similarly, the Tourism Routeway programme run in conjunction with Sefton@work is creating employment and training opportunities for local people to work in the visitor economy, and the emergence of the resort's cultural offer is enabling interaction with the Southport's artistic & creative communities. From January to June 2009, 24 people have been recruited through the Tourism Routeway programme, including businesses like Prego Restaurant and the Weatherspoon. In addition to this 16 businesses have been assisted with recruitment of staff with more than 60 people being recruited.

Given these successes, and the clear relationship between a successful destination and the extent to which people want to live and work within it, this strategy will seek to develop the foundations from which this model can be extended to embrace a much broader cross section of Southport's visitor economy. This will involve closer working with the voluntary & community sectors including Sefton CVS and the Southport Community Safety Area Partnership to help overcome problems relating to antisocial behaviour, crime and wide ranging environmental issues. It will also involve targeting communications to encourage greater community participation in leisure & recreational tourism as well as supporting opportunities for social and local business enterprise.

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
1. **Tourism Routeway Programme** – In conjunction Sefton@work, continue to employ Employment Liaison Officer and work with Job Centre Plus, Southport College et.al. as a means of creating training and employment opportunities for local residents in the tourism & hospitality industry.	X	X	X	X
2. **Encouraging Participation within the Visitor Economy** • **Volunteer Programme** – In conjunction with Sefton CVS expand the exiting tourism volunteer programme to enhance community volunteer opportunities in the hospitality, leisure and cultural sectors. Key aims will include structuring volunteer activity to support those outputs associated with the Child Poverty Pilot Programme, providing opportunities for young people and developing bespoke volunteer initiatives as part of the Phase 2 Kings Gardens HLF programme (pending programme approval). • **Developing Cultural opportunities** ➢ Reconstitute monthly community 'jazz jam' sessions in conjunction with the Southport International Jazz Festival. ➢ Develop community engagement programmes for all ages as part of the Southport Comedy Week (in conjunction with Comedy Trust). ➢ Encourage community participation within Southport main events programme – Air Show, Musical Fireworks etc ➢ Encourage and provide support for community led events & activity within Southport's public open spaces. ➢ Support community based activities associated with Southport Cycle Town initiative.		X	X	X
3. **Encouraging Enterprise within the Visitor Economy –** Through integrated working with Sefton Council's Regeneration Department and those priorities set out in section 6, align grants support and advise packages through Sefton Integrated Business Service (SIBS) to create incentives for local and social enterprise within Southport's tourism sector.		X	X	X
4. **Community Safety & the Environment** – Based on priorities set out above and those of the Southport Community Safety Area Partnership, develop action plans with Sefton Council's Community Safety Unit to develop safer and stronger communities within Southport. Key issues to be covered during the lifetime of this strategy are as follows:- ➢ Where practical, align tourism marketing activity with Sefton community segmentation analysis (conducted by ACORN) to increase numbers of local residents benefiting from the Visitor Economy - major events programme, cultural activity, retail offer etc.		X	X	X

Strategic Emphasis	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
➢ Develop structured framework for the targeted use of the Community Payback Programme to tackle gaps in existing service provision including cleansing, graffiti & maintaining the resort's tourism infrastructure etc. ➢ Develop detailed action plan for Phase 2 Kings Gardens HLF scheme (pending approval) to tackle existing and perceived problems relating to young people, anti social behaviour, under age drinking and crime. ➢ In conjunction with the existing night time economy group, develop initiatives for enhancing Southport's evening economy as set out in section 6.				
5. **Communications** - In conjunction with partners, establish communication plans for the Southport Cycle Town Project, Sefton's Natural Coast Landscape Partnership Programme & Southport Investment Strategy to increase community input, understanding and participation within each of these initiatives.		X	X	X

6.0 Resource Allocation: People and Partnerships

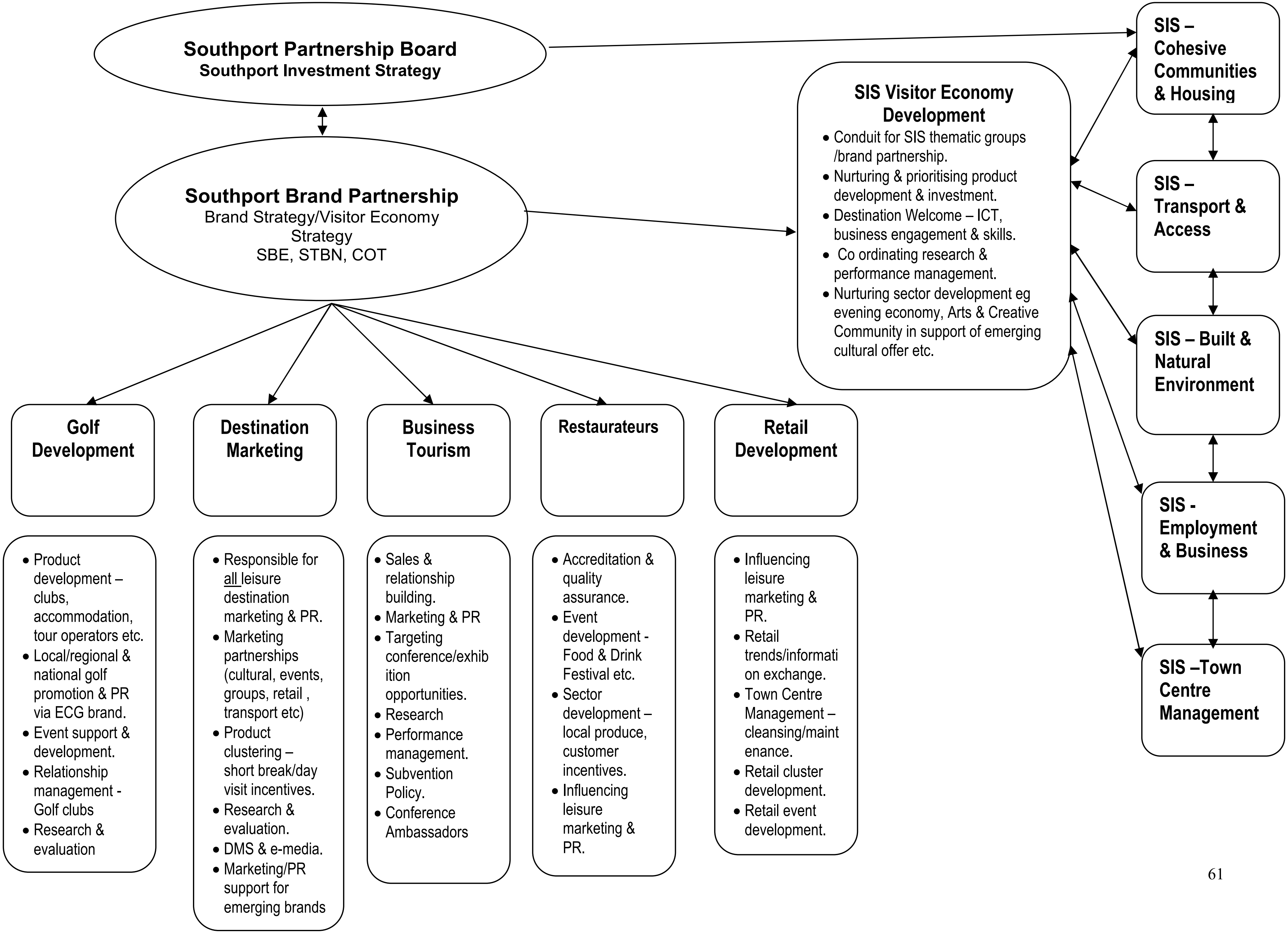
6.1 Creating a Brand Partnership

The recommendations of the Southport Brand Strategy and the Business Tourism Business Plan provide clear guidance around how Southport's visitor economy must evolve to appeal to the kinds of people that will sustain the resort's visitor economy in the long term. In establishing the England's Classic Resort brand, all stakeholders must understand that this journey will relate as much to developing the right marketing & PR strategy as it will to providing good customer service and creating market led products. Whilst combining these elements efficiently will allow Southport to genuinely deliver outstanding tourism experiences, without the appropriate structures in place to provide all stakeholders with the opportunity to understand and influence this transition, success will be limited.

The existing STBN model has moved huge progress in overseeing the marketing of Southport's visitor economy over the last 10 years, however, the time is now right for it to have greater influence over the collection of functions associated with developing the Classic Resort brand. In achieving this, the STBN must become the lead organisation for the visitor economy in Southport and become effective in engaging the wide range of stakeholders that are responsible for the destination's promotion and development at all levels – strategic planners, transport operators, town centre management, attractions operators etc. Engaging these interests through the creation of an overarching Destination Brand Partnership that is linked to the implementation of the resort's new brand strategy seems the most appropriate and functional option to pursue.

The principle of creating a brand partnership is centred on developing a structure that is representative of all the resort's key stakeholders and is capable of delivering the wide ranging priorities detailed within this strategy. This approach is intended to make the partnership relevant to the commercial objectives of those operating within Southport's visitor economy so that it is better placed to reflect their needs, and can respond quickly and effectively to market change. In operational terms, the partnership will underpin the management of the visitor economy in Southport by ensuring the delivery of England's Classic Resort brand is focused and true to the principles contained within the brand strategy, it will support initiatives to attract investment for development of new product, and provide effective mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the strategy. In short, this will mean rationalising & streamlining the array of groups that currently influence the marketing, sales and product development within the resort's visitor economy, into a balanced & integrated partnership that shares a common vision, goals and objectives.

Given the detailed strategic guidance we now have in place and the priorities for development contained within this strategy, the following structure sets out how Southport's Brand Partnership will operate.


Southport Partnership Board
Southport Investment Strategy
Southport Brand Partnership
Brand Strategy/Visitor Economy Strategy
SBE, STBN, COT
SIS Visitor Economy Development
• Conduit for SIS thematic groups /brand partnership.
• Nurturing & prioritising product development & investment.
• Destination Welcome – ICT, business engagement & skills.
• Co ordinating research & performance management.
• Nurturing sector development eg evening economy, Arts & Creative Community in support of emerging cultural offer etc.
SIS – Cohesive Communities & Housing
SIS – Transport & Access
SIS – Built & Natural Environment
SIS - Employment & Business
SIS –Town Centre Management
Golf Development
Destination Marketing
Business Tourism
Restaurateurs
Retail Development
• Product development – clubs, accommodation, tour operators etc.
• Local/regional & national golf promotion & PR via ECG brand.
• Event support & development.
• Relationship management - Golf clubs
• Research & evaluation
• Responsible for all leisure destination marketing & PR.
• Marketing partnerships (cultural, events, groups, retail , transport etc)
• Product clustering – short break/day visit incentives.
• Research & evaluation.
• DMS & e-media.
• Marketing/PR support for emerging brands
• Sales & relationship building.
• Marketing & PR
• Targeting conference/exhibition opportunities.
• Research
• Performance management.
• Subvention Policy.
• Conference Ambassadors
• Accreditation & quality assurance.
• Event development - Food & Drink Festival etc.
• Sector development – local produce, customer incentives.
• Influencing leisure marketing & PR.
• Influencing leisure marketing & PR.
• Retail trends/information exchange.
• Town Centre Management – cleansing/maintenance.
• Retail cluster development.
• Retail event development.

The proposed structure effectively streamlines activity associated with implementing each development area into focussed delivery groups that will avoid duplicating the efforts of the partnership and ensure available resources are targeted appropriately and allocated efficiently.

In contrast to the existing STBN 'sub group' approach, this proposal allocates responsibility for all leisure destination marketing activity under one function. Consuming the work of the existing group travel sub group, the work of the destination marketing function will include responsibility for looking across the other delivery groups and targeting marketing campaigns on their behalf as and when required. It will also focus on developing marketing partnerships with key product sectors comprising the resort's visitor economy particularly the accommodation offer, emerging cultural offer and in supporting the retail offer. Furthermore, the group will also support the tactical marketing of the resort's events programme, define research priorities, supporting emerging brands such as the night time economy and work with stakeholders/operators to 'package' the leisure opportunities in support of short break and day visitor marketing campaigns.

Rationalising leisure destination marketing activity in this way will allow the remaining delivery groups to focus specifically on the strategic development of their individual product areas in line with the standards associated with the Classic Resort brand. This will include addressing quality and service standards, encouraging greater representation/co operation from other private sector stakeholders and developing new initiatives that will help diversify the product offer and attract new visitors – developing thematic events for example.

In terms of business tourism, the delivery group will focus on implementing the key actions contained within Blue Sail's business plan aimed at reaching new markets whilst protecting existing business. Core functions of the group will include addressing quality issues with accommodation providers, developing a collective responsibility for targeting and selling to key conference buyers and working in conjunction with Liverpool's conference bureau to structure sales, PR and marketing activity. Importantly, the group will also need to consider the improvements required of the resort's leisure product in order to enhance the attractiveness of the conference offer to key buyers – public realm, retail, evening economy etc.

The biggest challenge facing the brand partnership, and indeed the development of Southport's visitor economy as a whole will be its ability to link the sales & marketing activity with the co-ordinated and prioritised development of Southport physical offer and infrastructure. In addressing this issue, the new Visitor Economy Group will provide the conduit between the Southport Investment Strategy's thematic groups delivering regeneration activity and the brand partnership. Focussing specifically on investment and nurturing new product to enhance Southport's visitor offer (see DA2), the group will focus on guiding the work of the SIS thematic groups so that regeneration activity and initiatives reflect the needs of the visitor economy. This approach will allow the 'know-how' and commercial expertise of stakeholders to be factored into product development decisions as well as ensuring the mechanisms are in place for them to engage and influence this process. The visitor economy group will also take on responsibility for destination welcome, research and skills initiatives to a significantly higher level of detail than has been experienced before.

The brand partnership itself will essentially replace the STBN Alliance and through its extended remit, work to encourage new stakeholders to become members and champions of the partnership. Meeting on a quarterly basis, the partnership will be responsible for monitoring the performance of the delivery groups, addressing performance issues and developing strategy based on the priorities contained within the Visitor Economy Strategy. Importantly, the partnership will be committed to implementing the Classic Resort brand as has been detailed within the brand strategy. Its members will act an ambassadorial role to encourage support for the Southport's chosen direction and in recruiting new playing into the partnership.

The proposed structure also formalises the links between the brand partnership and existing Southport Partnership Board to raise the profile and importance of the visitor economy in the wider regeneration agenda associated with the Southport Investment Strategy. The approach will also provide access to key decision makers and other partnerships such as Sefton's Chamber of Commerce.

6.2 Next Steps

1. Develop detailed proposal for governance of the brand partnership & consult with STBN.
2. Target a cross section of public, private & community stakeholders to form the brand partnership.
3. Recruit a brand champion capable of chairing the partnership meetings, recruiting partners from key stakeholders, leading initiatives & helping secure investment.
4. Develop brand partnership constitution & agree priorities with Southport's Brand Strategy.
5. Develop communications strategy targeting stakeholders and wider communities to raise the profile of England's Classic Resort and its relevance to the economic and social wellbeing of those living, working & investing in the report.

6.3 Key Funding Streams

NWDA, ERDF/Partners for growth funding and private sector contributions, will be synthesised with Sefton Council's annual budget setting process to provide a robust cost framework for the years ahead. Expenditure and activity plans will be detailed within core business plans that will/have been developed to implement priority areas 1-4 & 6 outlined above. The remaining action areas will be funded through budgets falling outside the direct control of the Southport Brand Partnership/SMBC Tourism Department and through securing additional external funding that will be developed during the lifetime of this strategy.

Supporting Merseyside's reclassification into an Objective 2 area, transitional funding has been awarded to the Liverpool City Region via the Northwest Operational Programme (EU Action Area 3.3) for the period July 09 to June 2012. This funding has been allocated to help sustain investments made through the preceding Objective 1 programme as a means of sustaining economic growth and creating jobs. Given the size and increasing importance of the Visitor Economy to the long term prosperity of the Liverpool City Region, Southport has secured ERDF resources under the Partners for Growth initiative (see section 4.4) amounting to £870,714 allocated over three years commencing 1st July 2009 to 30th June 2012. It has also been awarded £80K from the NWDA's Business Tourism Development fund for the period August 2009 to July 2011.

These funding allocations will be matched by Sefton Council's core tourism budget and contributions from the STBN. The table below set out how will be allocated between priority areas 1-4 & 6 during the lifetime of this strategy.

Partners for Growth Activity Themes	Year 1 (£) **July 09 – Dec 09**			Year 2 (£) **Jan 10 – Dec 10**			Year 3 (£) **Jan 11 – Dec 11**			Year 4 (£) **Jan 12 – June 12**		
	ERDF	SMBC	STBN	ERDF	SMBC	STBN	ERDF	SMBC	STBN	ERDF	SMBC	STBN
Destination Marketing *Visitor Economy Strategy Priority Areas 1 & 2*	87474	62474	25000	174570	124569	50000	174759	124759	50000	87473	62473	25000
Event Development *Visitor Economy Strategy Priority Area 3*	0	0	0	80000	80000	0	50000	50000	0	20000	20000	0
Event Marketing *Visitor Economy Strategy Priority Areas 2 & 3*	20604	20604	0	30000	30000	0	30000	30000	0	10000	10000	0
***Research** *Visitor Economy Strategy Priority Area 6*	0	0	0	16149	16149	0	21954	21954	0	0	0	0
Destination Development *Visitor Economy Strategy Priority Area 4 (ICT Element)*	0	0	0	16149	16149	0	16149	19149	0	0	0	0

** Supplemented with additional destination research co-ordinated through TMP project monitoring & evaluation programme.*

7.0 HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE ARRIVED?

7.1 Performance Management

The collation of performance management information will be undertaken by the Tourism Department (see Priority 6). Through the creation of an agreed set of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) data sets will be used to monitor and evaluate the performance of those sectors comprising Southport's visitor economy (see below). KPI information will be published on a monthly basis (where feasible) and made available to all members of the Southport Brand Partnership, Sefton Council and other partner organisations such as TMP and Sefton's Chamber of Commerce.

As per the department's existing data management plan, performance management data gathered by the Tourism Department will also be used to inform annual local, regional and national research & performance management initiatives including:-

- TMP – Visitor Economy volume & value estimates for Liverpool City Region
- TMP – Partners for Growth monitoring & performance management.
- Destination Performance UK – Coastal Destination Benchmarking Analysis.
- Sefton Council – SPRINT & contribution to local/regional/national performance indicators.
- Locally agreed business performance targets – including environmental & employment measures?
- National Quality Measures
- Others?

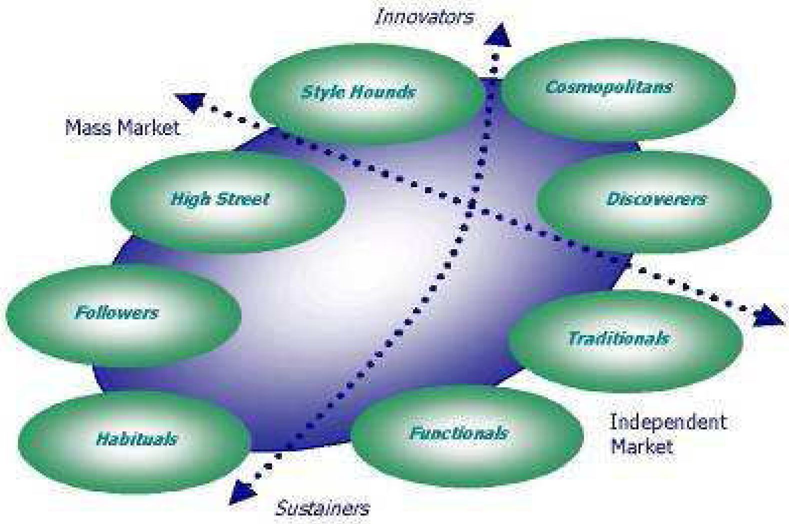
7.2 Visitor Economy - Key Performance Indicators

KPI	Indicator Data Source	Monthly / Annually
Satisfaction Indicators		
➢ % Visitors rating overall experience good/excellent.	Destination Benchmarking/Events Research Surveys.	Annual
➢ % of customers considering TIC experience good/excellent.	Destination Benchmarking Surveys	Annual
➢ % of users who consider destination web site good or excellent	Online Surveys	Annual
Economic Indicators		
➢ Number of day visitors/trips (+ % increase/decrease).	Attractions, Hotel Occupancy, Town Centre Footfall &	Annual
➢ Number of overnight stays/trips (+% increase/decrease).	Resort Parking data used to inform	Annual
➢ Value of day visitor spend (+% increase/decrease).	STEAM/Arkenford Volume & Value Estimates	Annual
➢ Value of staying visitor spend (+% increase/decrease).		Annual
➢ Value of day visitor spend per head (+% increase/decrease).		Annual
➢ Value of staying visitor spend per head (+% increase/decrease).		Annual
➢ Net Local Authority spend on tourism per head of population.		Annual
➢ Number of accommodation bookings made through MERVIN	MERVIN	Month
➢ Value of accommodation bookings made through MERVIN	MERVIN	Month
➢ Return on investment for marketing campaigns (as a ratio)	Event/Marketing Spend as a ratio of total annual visitor expenditure	Annual
➢ Annual average bed space & bedroom occupancy of accommodation.	Monthly hotel occupancy surveys	Month
➢ Number of FTE tourism related jobs	STEAM Estimates	Annual
➢ Number of placements on Tourism Routeway Programme	Sefton@work KPI's	Annual

KPI	Indicator Data Source	Monthly / Annually
Sustainability Indicators ➢ % of residents indicating they are satisfied with the local impact of tourism. ➢ Ratio of annual visitors per head of population. ➢ % of visitors arriving by train, coach or bus for major events programme. ➢ % of visitor economy enterprises (accommodation, attractions, activities) with a recognised environmental certification. ➢ % of visitor economy enterprises (accommodation, attractions, activities) participating in green tourism accreditation schemes ➢ % of visitor economy enterprises (accommodation, attractions, activities) participating in quality accreditation schemes. ➢ FTE visitor economy related jobs as a percentage of total FTE jobs	 SMBC/Southport ACORN Analysis. STEAM/ACORN Analysis Merseytravel/Coach Operators. TMP/SMBC TMP Green Tourism Business Scheme TMP advocated schemes TMP Green Tourism Business Scheme TMP advocated schemes SMBC/Southport Brand Partnership Quality in Tourism (VB)/ The AA STEAM/SMBC Planning & Economic Regeneration	 Annual Annual Month Annual Annual Annual Annual
Organisational Indicators ➢ Number of new/ existing Brand Partnership/STBN members, year on year	 Tourism Marketing	 Month
Marketing Communications Indicators. ➢ Number of unique users to www.visitsouthport.com ➢ Response rates/conversions to direct marketing campaigns (event ticket sales, golf tee times booked etc). ➢ Response rates/conversions to e-marketing marketing campaigns (event ticket sales, golf tee times booked etc). ➢ Trade package offers/opportunities created through brand partnership ➢ E-marketing activity undertaken as a ratio of printed marketing activity. ➢ Amount of air time/ column square inches of media coverage.	 All data to be provided by SMBC Tourism Department.	 Month Month Month Month Month Month

KPI	Indicator Data Source	Monthly / Annually
Business Tourism Indicators ➢ Conference bookings confirmed through Southport Conference Bureau ➢ Conference bookings confirmed through TMP Conference Bureau ➢ Number of unique users to www.southportconferences.com ➢ Number of familiarisation visits undertaken ➢ Number of live enquiries.	All data to be provided by SMBC Tourism Department.	Month Month Month Month
Headline Product Development Indicators (creating baseline in year 1) ➢ Capital Investment Funding Secured ➢ Volume of vacant retail floor space ➢ Visitor economy enterprise supported through business grants & advice. ➢ Cultural Enterprise supported through business grants & advice. ➢ Retail footfall benchmarked against comparable destinations ➢ Retail development enquiries made ➢ Retail development enquiries converted	All data to be provided through Southport Partnership/Southport Investment Strategy Implementation Group.	Quarter Quarter Quarter Quarter Month Month Month

Appendix A: *The Ark Leisure Model*



MAIN SEGMENTS IN THE ARKLEISURE SYSTEM			
STYLE HOUNDS	**HIGH STREET**	**FOLLOWERS**	**HABITUALS**
'Young Free Single', impulsive Fashion counts Brand counts Looking for fun with friends Most not seriously sporty	Main stream early adopters Followers of high street fashion Care what others think Happy to buy packaged options	Strongly influenced by what others will think Don't want to be seen as old fashioned Less active Slow to adopt Avoid risk	Largely inactive, low spending group Very traditional, strongly resistant to change Risk adverse Value relaxation, peace and quiet
COSMOPOLITANS	**DISCOVERERS**	**TRADITIONALS**	**FUNCTIONALS**
Strong, active, confident Style & brand important, but as an expression of their self made identity. High spenders especially on innovation and technology Looking for new challenges, new experiences, Globetrotters	Independent in mind and action Little influenced by style or brand but interested in new options Buy on function and value to them Looking for new and educational experiences	Self reliant internally referenced Slow to adopt new options Strong orientation towards traditional values Value individual attention & service	Self reliant Price driven Value function over style Traditional values, but interested in new experiences, not risk adverse

Source: Arkenford Research