



Visit **West Lothian**
www.visitwestlothian.co.uk

Visit West Lothian

2030

Strategic Action Plan

Visit West Lothian in association with West Lothian Council

Visit West Lothian 2030

Mission, Vision & Values

Our Vision is:

To grow a strong visitor economy that enhances West Lothian's places, supports local businesses, and enriches the lives of residents and visitors alike.

Our Mission is:

Together with partners, we will grow a sustainable environment in which businesses can thrive and offer visitors attractive places and authentic experiences.

Our values are:

Collaboration, Leadership, Quality, Integrity

To underpin this we have four priorities for 2030 which fit with 'Scotland Outlook 2030', the national tourism strategy, of making Scotland 'a destination of first choice for a high quality, value for money and memorable customer experience, delivered by skilled and passionate people'.

Visit West Lothian's **four** key priorities are:

- 1. Develop Sustainability**
- 2. Business Growth**
- 3. Collaborative Working**
- 4. Effective Communication**



What is Visit West Lothian?

What is VWL?

Visit West Lothian (VWL) is a destination marketing organisation which was established as a company limited by guarantee in 2008. It provides a partnership through which West Lothian Council and the local visitor trade can work together to promote West Lothian as a visitor destination. The voluntary VWL Board represent key sectors of the visitor economy such as attractions, accommodation and heritage, and national organisations including VisitScotland.

VWL is also a membership organisation, with over 40 businesses currently actively involved that benefit from a range of promotional activity and networking opportunities that VWL coordinates.

VisitScotland's involvement gives VWL access to a wealth of knowledge in relation to their national perspective of the tourism industry, marketing, PR and strategic skills and knowledge of visitor markets. They are also a key marketing channel for VWL via their regular communication. Historic Environment Scotland manage a number of properties in West Lothian including Linlithgow Palace and Cairnpapple. Their input is key to helping us maximise the potential of these venues and conserve them for future generations. WLC provides staff resource which enables the company to deliver as much as it does and it also makes available the skills and contribution from other members of the team. Combined, VWL has a strong team and with extensive knowledge with which to push forward and promote West Lothian's offer.

The company makes use of short-term working groups to deliver key activity, eg. developing the VWL strategy, marketing campaigns and growing the membership. VWL also utilises its links and contacts in the business community which allow us to informally consult and access the appropriate knowledge and skills.

New Direction

A 2015 review of VWL's processes and procedures followed the withdrawal of funding support that had been provided by WLC. An external review consulted with the sector and VWL membership to establish how best to go forward, taking into account the views of local tourism businesses and the funding and limited resource of the organisation, the work to transition to a sustainable model has continued since that review and is set to continue.

VWL is currently not in a position to fund events, PR campaigns or paid advertising but will continue to work to maximise the profile of the area through digital activity and partnership working. VWL aims to be more engaging, open and sustainable and will strive to demonstrate the value it can deliver so that it's best placed to attract external future investment.

The company needs to be smart about getting good value and seeking out investment and revenue generating opportunities. This will be achieved by following the example of other destination organisations by delivering the members services that members value, increasing membership fees, growing membership numbers and developing advertising revenue.

Coordinating more promotional activity and tapping into funding streams that meet the needs of the sector thereby encouraging their investment is also critical. This more focused approach is reflected in VWL's updated strategy which will contribute to the wider West Lothian Tourism Plan and overall Local Development Plan, while aligning with the objectives of the National Development Plan.



Visit West Lothian 2030

What is Visit West Lothian?

Now adopting an even greater focus on promotion, VWL will develop a clear communication & marketing strategy which sets out targeted communication to consumer and stakeholders, maximising income where appropriate. Aligning with national campaigns and utilising our key assets eg. Family Friendly Attractions, Country parks, Union Canal, Retail and Heritage to their best potential.

Visitor Levy

The development of the visitor levy legislation in Scotland has progressed steadily over several years, led by the Scottish Government in response to growing pressures on local infrastructure from tourism.

The idea first gained traction in the late 2010s, following calls from local authorities—especially in popular tourist destinations like Edinburgh and the Highlands—for the power to raise funds to manage tourism-related costs. After a public consultation in 2019, which showed mixed views but some support, the Scottish Government committed to introducing legislation to allow councils to implement a levy if they chose.

The Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament in 2023. It proposes that local authorities be given the power to charge a levy on overnight stays in commercial accommodation, such as hotels, B&Bs, and hostels. The revenue raised would have to be reinvested in services and infrastructure that support tourism.

The Bill underwent public and parliamentary scrutiny, with discussions focused on the rate, exemptions, and how the funds should be spent. Granting councils the power to implement a visitor levy if they deem it appropriate for their area has generally been welcomed, though concerns remain around implementation and its potential impact on visitor numbers.

In 2024, the Bill passed through Parliament and became an Act, giving local authorities the legal power to introduce a visitor levy. The 2024 Act was amended in 2026, now allowing councils to choose between a percentage based scheme or a fixed amount(s) scheme. City of Edinburgh Council will be the first to go live with a visitor levy in July 2026.

Visit West Lothian will play a vital role in engaging with local accommodation providers and relevant stakeholders, and supporting West Lothian Council through the process of consultation around the introduction of a visitor levy in West Lothian.

Visit West Lothian – Strategic Alignment and Policy Context

VWL operates within a well-defined local, regional and national policy landscape and plays a clear role in supporting the delivery of shared strategic objectives. The visitor economy provides a powerful mechanism through which economic, social, cultural and reputational outcomes can be achieved, contributing directly to priorities relating to people, place, sustainability and inclusive growth.

This section outlines how VWL aligns with, and contributes to, key strategic frameworks at national, regional and local levels.



What is Visit West Lothian?

National Context

Scotland Outlook 2030

Scotland Outlook 2030 sets out a vision for a sustainable, responsible and inclusive tourism sector that delivers long-term benefits for communities and places. VWL contributes to this agenda by supporting sustainable destination development in West Lothian, encouraging responsible visitor behaviour, strengthening local supply chains and ensuring that the benefits of tourism are shared across communities. Through place promotion and partnership working, VWL helps position West Lothian as part of Scotland's wider visitor offer while retaining a strong sense of local identity.

Scotland: The Perfect Stage (National Events Strategy)

The national events strategy recognises the role of events in driving economic impact, enhancing cultural life and building the reputation of places. VWL has a key role in supporting the attraction, development and promotion of events in West Lothian, helping to increase visitor numbers, extend seasonality, animate town centres and raise the area's profile at a national and regional level.

Regional Context

Regional Prosperity Framework

The Regional Prosperity Framework identifies the Visitor Economy and Culture as a priority area for investment and growth. VWL plays a critical role in ensuring that regional investment and focus in this area delivers tangible benefits for West Lothian. By aligning local visitor economy activity with regional priorities, VWL helps position West Lothian within a broader regional offer, supports collaboration across local authority boundaries, and maximises opportunities for businesses, communities and cultural assets to benefit from regional growth.

Local Context

West Lothian Investment Plan

The West Lothian Investment Plan sets out a future strategic aim focused on *People and Place*, with an emphasis on contributing meaningfully to the social, cultural, reputational and economic growth of West Lothian. VWL directly supports this aim through the promotion of place, the attraction of visitors and spend, the celebration of local culture and heritage, and the enhancement of West Lothian's reputation as a place to visit, live and invest.

VWL also contributes to the Investment Plan's strategic aims around Sustainability and Reach and Engage, by promoting sustainable tourism practices, encouraging year-round visitation, and engaging a wide range of audiences including residents, businesses, communities and visitors.



Visit West Lothian 2030

The Visit West Lothian Context

Local Development Plan

The Local Development Plan emphasises placemaking, economic development, and the vitality of town centres and local communities. VWL supports these objectives by driving footfall, supporting local businesses, encouraging the use of cultural and heritage assets, and helping to maximise the economic and social return from existing and future infrastructure.

Across national, regional and local policy frameworks, VWL acts as a key delivery partner for the visitor economy, translating strategic ambition into practical outcomes on the ground. By aligning closely with these strategies, VWL ensures that its activity contributes not only to tourism growth, but to wider objectives around economic resilience, community wellbeing, sustainability and the long-term success of West Lothian as a place.

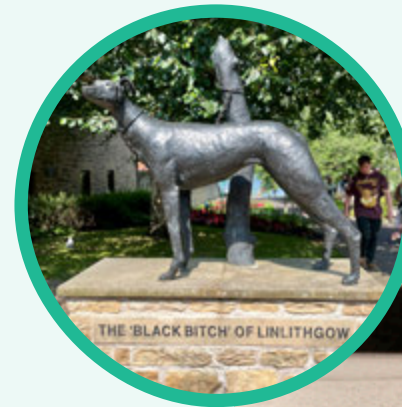
VWL will contribute to addressing these Targets:

- Increase visitor numbers to our key attractions by 10% by 2030. (Baseline - 523,445 visitors, 2024)
- Increase economic impact of the West Lothian visitor economy by 10% by 2030 (Baseline - £258m, 2024)
- Grow the visitor numbers staying overnight in West Lothian by 10% by 2030 (Baseline - 361,000 overnight visitors, 2015)
- Grow visitor days by 10% by 2030 (Baseline - 776,000 visitor days, 2015)
- Increase the numbers of West Lothian businesses who are Green Tourism certified by 100% by 2030 (baseline - 6, 2025)

These targets have been set to be aspirational and achievable and compare with the national tourism strategy aspiration of increasing visitor spend by at least £1bn (over 20%) by 2030. The VWL targets will be reviewed as part of the development of the

Tourism Action Plan for West Lothian and will use the annual figures from the STEAM report. As part of VWL's own communication strategy we will set out a number of measurable targets relating to our promotion and its performance.

VWL will provide promotional support and market intelligence to deliver this strategy, but it will only be successful through strong collaborative and partnership working. Three of VWL's Key Priorities (page 2) are aligned to the National Strategy: Tourism Scotland 2030. The priorities are interlinked and will utilise the national agenda as set out by VisitScotland. Ensuring that we utilise technology is essential for VWL and provides a good value mechanism for the organisation to communicate and promote activity.



Visit West Lothian 2030

Our Visitors

Our Target Markets

Up to date visitor data for West Lothian indicates that the visitor profile is; 70% from elsewhere in Scotland, 7% from elsewhere in the UK and 24% from outside the UK. From those from elsewhere in Scotland, most are from the closest surrounding local authority areas. The USA was the most common source of overseas visitors. A broad age and gender profile was apparent and 55% of visitors fell into the ABC1 social classification; broadly in line with the social class profile of the UK population. The majority of visits were day trips and a significant proportion of overnight stays were with friends and family. The average party size was 2.99 and the most common party type was a couple with children, followed by couples.

In addition to this, a key part of VisitScotland's role is to bring international visitors into Scotland, at which point it is up to VWL to encourage these visitors to include West Lothian as part of their stay. VWL recognises the value of its local market and will be prioritising this visitor group as the organisations main focus. Latest figures suggest that the Visiting Friends and Relatives market (VFR) account for 37% of the economic impact of all overnight stays in West Lothian. This gives VWL an opportunity to target local residents, informing them of West Lothian's visitor assets so that they can enjoy them and also be inspired to adopt an ambassadorial role for their guests.

The family market is a priority sector for West Lothian. Our visitor offer, which includes a good range of affordable, family friendly attractions and places to visit, is a good fit with our young and growing population. Our area offers a varied range of indoor and outdoor venues which can cater for all year round activities. Engaging with schools and local residents to communicate these assets will therefore be a key target for the organisation.

VisitScotland has updated their research identifying five new visitor segments coming to Scotland which they believe provide a good return on investment. By using this information and cross checking it against the data collected in West Lothian's visitor survey, this allows VWL to get to know the visitor types most likely to visit West Lothian. The VisitScotland categories below hold the most relevance for West Lothian:

Engaged Sightseers

"A love of holidays drives engaged sightseers to plan many breaks in a year. They enjoy general sightseeing and touring, taking in historical places as well as scenery and nature. They relish engaging with friendly locals and seeking out authentic experiences. They are typically down to earth individuals who may be quite "traditional" in their outlook and fairly settled in their lifestyles." Mid affluence, typically over 45 years, most would choose Scotland for a short break, the majority live across England (79%) key areas being the North (26), Midlands (13%) and London (16%) whilst 13% reside in Scotland (VisitScotland 2023).

Coach tours and sightseeing appeal to this category, making them a good fit for West Lothian with the area's heritage and retail offer.

Food Loving Culturalists

"Food-loving culturalists will seek out a relaxing holiday experience where they can enjoy engaging in cultural experiences accompanied by great food and drink. They enjoy short breaks in the UK and will recommend quality experiences when their host has gone the "extra mile". They like to be seen to be influential amongst their friends and are typically professional, career minded, and discerning individuals. Highest spenders, predominantly 25-54 years, most would choose Scotland for a short break, the majority live across England (81%), key areas include: London (25%) and the South (9%), the North (21%) and the Midlands (14%), whilst 15% reside in Scotland (VisitScotland 2023).

West Lothian offers authentic history and heritage, some quality accommodation and examples of great food and drink.

Natural Advocates

"Natural advocates are passionate about Scotland as it offers everything they want from a holiday; breath-taking scenery, a connection with nature, the chance to get away from it all. A holiday in Scotland will help them to unwind, recharge and enjoy quiet time. Natural advocates are typically more introverted individuals who value peace and quiet confident in themselves and what they want out of life, natural advocates do not follow the crowds." (VisitScotland 2023). Predominantly 35-54 years, almost half would choose Scotland for their main holiday of the year while one in five would choose Scotland for a short break. 35% are based in Scotland which breaks down as 21% in Central Scotland and 11% in Northern Scotland. Almost 60% live across England with 29% living in the north. This group are repeat visitors to Scotland. They love the scenery and nature and sense of getting away from it all, all of which West Lothian offers.

Strengths & Opportunities for West Lothian as a destination

Strengths

- VWL has strong links with the sector who are engaged and keen to be involved in joint promotion
- Central location and proximity to Edinburgh, Airport and Glasgow
- Strong transport links to the central belt and beyond
- Strength of product: heritage and history, outdoors, retail
- Diversity of product & contrasting to a city visit
- Space for relaxation, attractive landscape, open spaces
- High quality smaller accommodation
- Edinburgh has the fastest growing airport in Europe, with significant route development to key international markets
- Regional working across Edinburgh & South East Scotland as part of the Visitor Economy & Culture priority of the Regional Economic Strategy
- Strong demand for filming locations
- New investment in visitor experiences on West Lothian's doorstep, e.g. Lost Shore, Kelpies and the future Edinburgh Arena

Opportunities

- More effective development and promotion of Linlithgow, Bathgate, Livingston as destination towns.
- Coordinating promotion of our business/wedding tourism venues
- Closer working with Falkirk / Union Canal - tapping into landmark assets eg. Kelpies & increased visitor numbers
- Establishing regional funded projects in partnership with key tourism businesses
- Further developing & promoting our outdoor pursuits (John Muir Way, walking, cycling, fishing, golf, canal etc)
- Growing local population with a demographic that fits our target market and offer – young families.
- Exploiting proximity of Edinburgh, Airport & Glasgow
- The introduction of a Visitor Levy in Edinburgh
- Capitalising on the capacity challenges in Edinburgh, and the price competitiveness advantage of West Lothian versus Edinburgh, particularly in the summer months



Our Priorities

PRIORITY 1 – To promote West Lothian as a visitor destination (National Tourism Strategy Priority - Marketing) We will utilise all platforms available/affordable to us to promote the destination, with a particular focus on online marketing.

1.0 – Maximise awareness and profile of West Lothian visitor assets with a focus on online activity

Actions	By when	By whom	Measure of Success
1.1 Increase traffic and continue to develop engagement via website and social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Tripadvisor, LinkedIn, TikTok)	Ongoing	VWL	Google analytics.
1.2 Deliver targeted online seasonal promotions utilising VWL's consumer database, increase database to build further awareness	Ongoing	VWL/VWL members	Increase consumer database to 3,000 by end of 2030
1.3 Work with WLC to promote VWL activity through WLC website and social media.	Ongoing - Seasonal	VWL/VWL members	Google & mailchimp analytics.
1.4 Work with businesses and community groups to develop up to date content on the VWL website.	Ongoing	VWL	Google analytics.
1.5 Deliver new content to the VWL website in the form of Blogs, News articles etc.	Ongoing	VWL	Google analytics.
1.6 Deliver the 'My West Lothian' photography competition.	Annually	VWL	Number of entrants, google analytics.
1.7 Promote tourism businesses activities using the "What's On" and "Resident Rewards" sections of the website.	Ongoing	VWL	Google analytics.

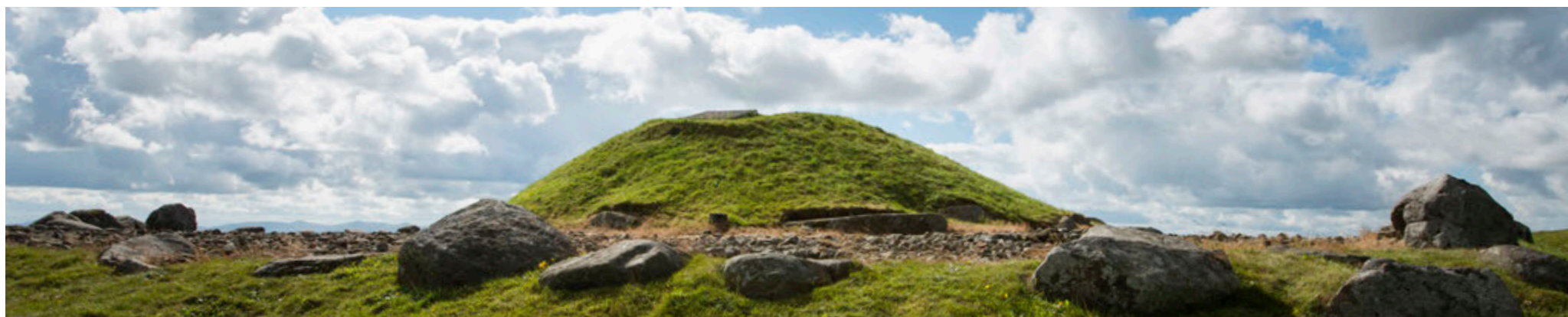
2.0 – Work with the sector to encourage local knowledge sharing

Actions	By when	By whom	Measure of Success
2.1 Continue to raise the profile of West Lothian as a destination for coach tourism.	Ongoing	VWL	No. of coach trips at key venues.
2.2 Continue to support key project groups which promote key assets /activities in West Lothian - John Muir Trail, Union Canal	Ongoing	VWL, WLC, regional & national partners	No. of users on JM Trail.
2.3 Target existing and new tourism businesses to join as members / connect them into sector via networking events/ VWL free & paid for marketing opportunities / local info sharing and free familiarisation visits	Ongoing - Seasonal	VWL	Membership numbers, FAM trips

3.0 – Build and maintain a brand which represents West Lothian’s unique identity

Actions	By when	By whom	Measure of Success
3.1 Develop new sub-brands to reflect and build on the strengths of the area eg. Shop West Lothian, Industrial Heritage, Film on Forth	Ongoing	VWL	Google analytics.

Total for Promotion – 55%



PRIORITY 2 – To lead on networking and collaborative working within the sector (National Tourism Strategy Priority – Leadership & Collaboration) We will strive to facilitate cross-selling as part of our promotion and will host networking events in order to assist the sharing of knowledge and best practice.

4.0 Ensure regular communication to stakeholders

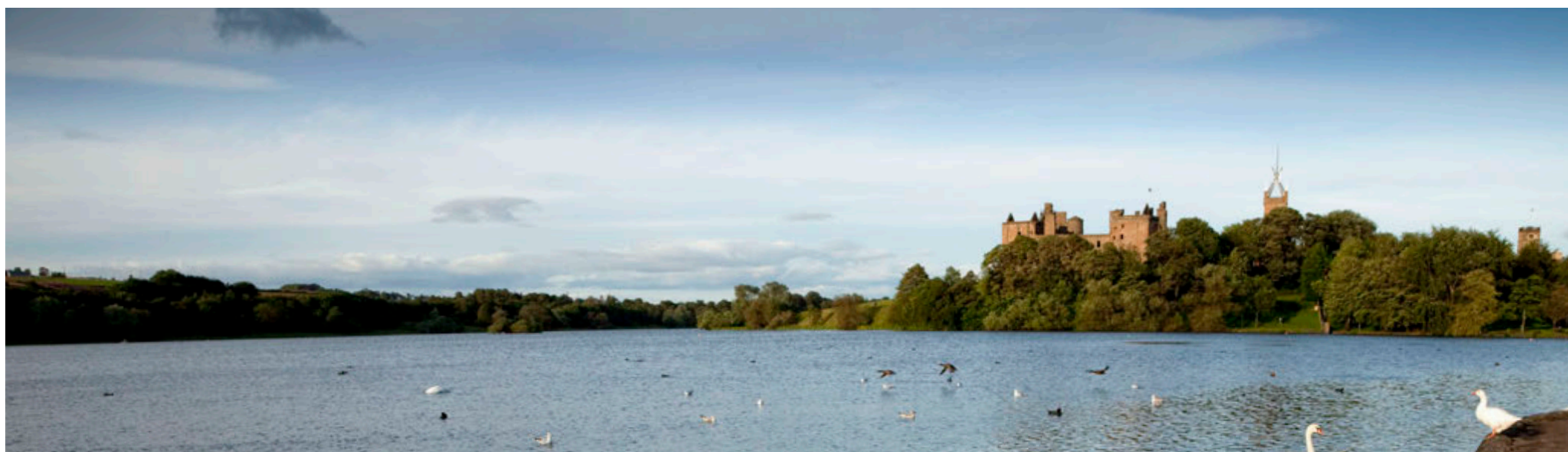
Actions	By when	By whom	Measure of Success
4.1 Produce quarterly e-newsletter to members and via website. Include data on business support and local industry performance measuring & reporting eg. visitor numbers, hotel occupancy & stakeholder information	Quarterly	VWL VWL/partner venues	Mailchimp analytics
4.2 Host four networking meetings a year to share success, best practice and skill sharing	Ongoing	VWL	Increase attendee / member numbers, improve relevance to members.
4.3 Launch annual membership renewal, improve suite of benefits for VWL membership and enhance / improve all stakeholder collateral	Ongoing	VWL	Increase membership numbers.

5.0 Support collaboration between attractions and providers

Actions	By when	By whom	Measure of Success
5.1 Host networking event four times a year – use as platform for introducing businesses, sharing / best practice and learnings.	Ongoing	VWL	Feedback, increased attendance numbers & VWL
5.2 Create and encourage initiatives and events which encourage collaboration with our flagship venues and align with national funding support.	Ongoing	VWL	Number of responses
5.3 Annual feedback survey from membership to inform successful collaborations / information sharing	Ongoing	VWL	Number of responses

6.0 Work with travel partners and promote VWL through them

Actions	By when	By whom	Measure of Success
6.1 Utilise working relations with travel partners to improve information on routes into and around West Lothian. Provide an input into initiatives that improve the travel experience	Ongoing	VWL, WLC, Abellio, Firstbus	Formalise partnerships internally with WLC
6.2 Work with Chamber of Commerce to assess travel to and from WL and benefits for tourism and business	Ongoing	VWL, COC	Create a travel sub group
6.3 Work with national partners, local partners and WLC, to achieve “Coach Friendly” accreditation	Ongoing	VWL, BID, WLC	Increased number of coach visits
6.4 Work with national partners on development of projects around sustainable tourism options e.g. development of Access Guides, Climate Action Plans and Climate Accelerator Programme	Ongoing	VWL, WLC	Formalise partnerships internally with WLC



7.0 Actively participate in national initiatives and consultations for the benefit of West Lothian

Actions	By when	By whom	Measure of Success
7.1 Attend networking meetings, conferences and national initiatives when appropriate. Communicate to membership.	Ongoing	VWL	VWL representation at key events,

8.0 Identify and promote skills based programmes and share with membership and wider sector

Actions	By when	By whom	Measure of Success
8.1 Work in collaboration with Business Gateway, Chamber of Commerce & WL College to ensure ongoing communication of training/funding support for members	Ongoing	VWL	Positive monitoring forms after each event.

Total for Collaboration – 30%

PRIORITY 3 – To encourage quality and authentic experiences (National Tourism Strategy Priority – Quality & Skills)

We will monitor and report what is happening in the sector and communicate it with the aim of learning and making improvements.

9.0 Identify and promote skills based programmes and share with membership and wider sector

Actions	By when	By whom	Measure of Success
9.1 Review and improve online presence for West Lothian on key sites eg. on google, TripAdvisor. Work with partners to ensure businesses are aware and take advantage of digital support available to them.	Ongoing	VWL, CoC, BG, VS	Improved WL presence online, better WL business rankings.
9.2 Showcase best practice examples from in and out with WL at networking events and through VWL member communication	Quarterly	VWL	Attendee numbers

10.0 Establish benchmark targets, monitor and report to relevant stakeholders

Actions	By when	By whom	Measure of Success
10.1 Use national information, visitor attraction performance and hotel occupancy report to track visitor numbers	Annual	VS, Attractions, Hotels, WLC	Increase the number of visitors to West Lothian by 10% by 2030 (baseline – 1.25m 2024)

11.0 Build better customer knowledge

Actions	By when	By whom	Measure of Success
11.1 Work with partners to collect data to inform good practice models.	Annual	VWL	

12.0 Monitoring & disseminating information on planned tourism investment up to 2030

Actions	By when	By whom	Measure of Success
12.1 Maintain knowledge of planned tourism investment in West Lothian over next five years from road, airport, public, green transport providers plus all visitor related businesses and public agencies.	Ongoing	WLC/VS/SE	Support 5 business initiatives by 2030.
12.2 Promote current and new investment projects via our media, ensuring we target WL development areas such as Heartlands, Whitburn, East Calder and bordering housing developments.	Ongoing	WLC/Housing Developers	

Total for Quality – 15%