
Title: Visit North East England FY2026/27
Report of: Phil Witcherley, Director of Economic Growth and Innovation
Portfolio: Home to a Vibrant and Growing Economy

Report Summary

This report sets out the proposed approach to growing the region's visitor economy, to deliver the ambitions set out in the North East Local Growth Plan and the Mayor's manifesto.

As agreed at March 2026 Cabinet, a newly branded organisation, evolved from Newcastle Gateshead Initiative Limited (NGI) but with new funding and objectives and called 'Experience North East England', has recently launched. Working collaboratively with our Local Visitor Economy Partnerships, Local Authorities and industry partners through a 'Visit North East England' Strategic Steering Group, it will deliver key activities and investment that contribute to the shared long-term goal of doubling the scale of the region's visitor economy, adding value to and complementing local delivery and business engagement.

Experience North East England delivers the regional strategic visitor economy function that is funded by the North East MSA Investment Fund and membership income from regional organisations; and secondly, a NewcastleGateshead (NG) function, funded by the Newcastle and Gateshead local authorities and partner income, delivering the Local Visitor Economy Partnership role for NewcastleGateshead, and inward investment services for Newcastle.

Cabinet agreed that investment for the first year of activity should be brought forward initially, followed by a more detailed process for the subsequent two years. This report sets out initial proposals for £2,331,619 of investment for the period to 31 March 2027, comprising new investment of £2,259,412 from the North East MSA Investment Fund, in addition to retaining £72,207 of investment from the FY25/26 financial settlement, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegations as set out in Part 2.7 of the Constitution. This approach will mean that Experience North East England moves into delivery, in parallel to the establishment and implementation of clear governance and delivery structures via the new Visit North East England Strategic Steering Group.

Alongside the development of a strong regional visitor identity and a clear and unified digital presence for the North East, supported by a new and innovative communications approach, and with new governance and operating model, we will ensure better coordination between local and regional delivery, and more effective use of public and private sector investment. This can only be achieved by working in genuine partnership, and we are fortunate to have a dedicated and expert base to work with through our Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) and Local Authorities. Their local knowledge, reach and support working in tandem with regional endeavours for mutual benefit and impact. This will complement wider investment and programmes as part of our North East Local Growth Plan, with the overall aim to support and grow a key sector across the region, encompassing our enviable rural and urban offer, assets and brands, "to make sure that we make the most of the outstanding visitor economy offer across the whole region, creating new jobs and opportunities for local people and helping businesses across the region grow".

The project has been subject to appraisal which provided a Green RAG rating for both the Strategic, Economic & Commercial case, and for the Financial & Management case.

Over the same period, and developed with and through the Steering Group, a further investment case will be brought forward for consideration for the period April 2027 to March 2029 that builds on this foundational year for the new regional approach to supporting the North East visitor economy.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive is recommended to:

- i. Approve the award of £2,259,412 of grant funding from the North East MSA Investment Fund to support the first-year visitor economy priorities and activities for Experience North East England Limited, as set out in this report, and authorise entry into any agreements required to give effect to the award and extend the term of the agreement.
- ii. Approve the carry forward of £72,207 of grant funding from financial year 2025/26 to financial year 2026/27.

A. Summary of Investment Proposal (Context)

This project supports the Year 1 activities of Experience North East England, supporting the region's ambitions to double the size of the visitor economy.

Over the one-year funding period (April 2026 to March 2027) total investment comprising £2,331,619 will come forward, with clear governance and delivery structures implemented and working with regional partners, that will support and deliver a strong regional visitor identity, a clear and unified digital presence for the North East, development of the region's tourism product offer, enabling greater awareness of and engagement with this offer, ensuring that over the longer term leisure and business visitors from both the UK and internationally stay longer and spend more. The North East MSA's Chief Executive, acting as Interim Chair for ENEE, will work with the interim Chief Executive of ENEE to establish the operations required in order to implement the outcomes agreed in this Cabinet paper and report.

The focus of activity in the current financial year will include support for targeted and coordinated international and national marketing campaigns, and product development that will drive greater awareness of and engagement with our regional visitor offer, ensuring that over the longer-term leisure and business visitors from both the UK and internationally stay longer and spend more.

The investment proposed here relates solely to the implementation and delivery of activities and the organisational development in FY2026/27 in order to deliver a strategic regional tourism function.

1. Background

Experience North East England (ENEE), has evolved from Newcastle Gateshead Initiative (NGI) in line with the agreement at the March 17th Cabinet. The organisation delivers a regional strategic visitor economy function that is funded by the North East MSA Investment Fund and membership income from regional organisations; and secondly, a NewcastleGateshead (NG) function, funded by the Newcastle and Gateshead local authorities and partner income, delivering the Local Visitor Economy Partnership role for NewcastleGateshead, and inward investment services for Newcastle.

Delivery of the regional visitor economy activities referenced in this paper will be overseen by a new Visit North East England Strategic Steering Group as part of Experience North East England, underpinning a partnership-based approach alongside the Northumberland and Durham Local Visitor Economy Partnerships [LVEPs] and Local Authority and private sector partners that will deliver a coordinated and complementary support offer for the visitor economy across the region. Local businesses will continue to maintain a direct relationship with their 'local' LVEP, recognising the critical role LVEPs play in destination management, product development, business engagement and local delivery. Experience North East England will add value at a regional level, particularly in relation to strategic positioning and global marketing, working with those organisations best placed to benefit from increased international reach. This approach will avoid duplication, align respective roles and ensure a seamless pathway for businesses.

The North East MSA Cabinet paper of 17th March 2026 demonstrates the demand and support for coordinated regional activity. It also set out the clear mandate for an additional one year to support the development of the key foundational assets for regional delivery including resources such as the new regional consumer

website and governance models including the evolution of the current Corporate Board and the establishment of the Visit North East England steering group.

Growing our regional visitor economy:

From a performance point of view challenges remain for the North East visitor economy. The North East's visitor economy continues to perform below the level of comparable regions. As it stands, the region attracts less than 5% of both domestic overnight visits and international visitors.

For international inbound visitors, the North East performance is particularly low comparative to its peers; in 2024 the North East welcomed 429,000 international visitors who collectively spent £252 million in the regional economy. This number has actually declined on 2023 and represents less than 5% of all international visits to the UK.

For domestic day visitors, the North East received approximately 29 million day visitors, the lowest number of all English regions by a significant margin, according to Visit Britain 2024 data. The next lowest was Yorkshire, which recorded 80 million day visitors, 51 million more than the North East. This pattern is also reflected in overnight stays with domestic day visits not converting to overnight trips at the same rate as comparable regions: the North East welcomed just 3.1 million overnight visitors in 2024, the lowest figure in England and 4.9 million fewer than the West Midlands, which had the second lowest number. Overnight visitors to the North East also tend to spend less than in other regions, with an average spend of £279.76 per night, which is £25.37 below the national average.

In the Economic Value of Tourism in the United Kingdom report published by Visit Britain in January 2026, there are a number of indicators which show the challenge for the North East. Considering the regional economic impact of tourism, it can be seen that the North East receives £3bn lower than the next lowest English region in terms of GDP and ten times lower than London

The report also forecasts that, on the basis of recent performance, the annual growth in the North East up to 2035 will only be 1.4%. This demonstrates the need for intervention to allow us to accelerate this growth in order to meet our ambitions to double the size of the visitor economy.

2. The Investment Proposal

This proposal is for year 1 funding (April 2026 to March 2027) of Experience North East England to deliver a core set of functions, following the recommendations from the independent review undertaken for the North East MSA by Newcastle International Airport. This will be delivered in partnership with the three Local Visitor Economy Partnerships of NewcastleGateshead, Visit Northumberland and Visit County Durham and Local Authorities and builds on the transitional activity delivered during 2025/26.

The core objectives and activities are consistent with the recent North East MSA Cabinet reports in December 2025 and March 2026 and have been developed with the support of regional stakeholders. The North East MSA will also support the evolution of the organisation as part of this process, including working with Experience North England on its revised governance model. Specific activity and work over the course of the next year will therefore be based around the following four core functions:

Inbound marketing: To become the North of England's top tourism destination, increasing UK and international visitor numbers. Year one activities to comprise:

- Representation at targeted Trade shows
- Regional familiarisation trips and sales missions
- Focussed Marketing Campaigns in identified and prioritised markets
- Development of a new regional visitor website and ongoing maintenance
- Campaign research and evaluation

Product Development: To inspire every visitor, from business travellers and students to tourists and those visiting loved ones, with the full experience of the North East - its opportunities, its character, and its hidden gems, making it easy to explore and impossible to forget. Year one activities to comprise:

- Region of Gastronomy development
- Development of Experience Corridors spanning the region, e.g. golf, film and TV, music, outdoor and active, sport, heritage, gardens, etc.

Event Strategic Management: To lead the UK in profitable event delivery for mid-sized conferences, attracting high-value events and showcasing our region so that visitors keep coming back. Year one activities to comprise:

- Business events pipeline development linked to priority sectors of the local growth plan
- Regional ambassador scheme development and toolkits
- Business events trade shows
- Major event bidding and support
- Targeted business events campaigns
- Development of new business events website including new video and imagery

Partnerships: Working in partnership across the region to deliver an outstanding service and offer to North East region visitor economy businesses.

ENEE will work closely with the LVEPs and Local Authorities to review the existing partnership models and identify how businesses best engage with the regional body via local partnership models. Local businesses will continue to maintain a direct relationship with their 'local' LVEP, with Experience North East England adding value at a regional level, particularly in relation to strategic positioning and global marketing. This approach, undertaken through the Strategic Steering Group, will avoid duplication, align respective roles and ensure a seamless pathway for businesses.

In year one, therefore, businesses will access regional opportunities through their established LVEP retaining their primary interface function, ensuring continuity of existing relationships, engagement and accountability. At a regional level, ENEE will seek strategic partnerships with key stakeholders such as transport providers that are truly regional to support the ambitions of doubling the size of the visitor economy. The new partnership model will be developed collaboratively with the Steering Group and will provide match funding for new campaigns without competing with existing structures.

Visit North East England Steering Group

The Steering Group will inform priorities and align and co-design delivery approaches from local to regional levels, helping to collectively shape the regional visitor economy strategy, and ensuring voices from across the region and sector are heard. It will bring together:

- Representatives from North East MSA, constituent Local Authorities and LVEPs
- Private sector organisations from across tourism, hospitality, events, transport, and cultural industries
- Relevant Arm's Length Bodies (e.g. VisitBritain, DCMS, Arts Council England, British Council, Heritage Fund)

This group will not have legal or corporate authority but will be the principal mechanism for strategically informing and agreeing:

- Destination and marketing strategy
- Partner engagement and accountability
- Product development priorities
- Monitoring of progress against KPIs
- Advocacy for the regional visitor economy
- Collective design and implementation of local to regional membership models

ENEE will also work with North East MSA to ensure Experience North East England “docks” into the wider corporate and political framework via:

- Formal reporting into the Economic Development Directorate and North East MSA Cabinet
- Participation by North East MSA officers and nominated members in the Corporate Board
- Strategic coordination through the Economy and Culture portfolios
- Engagement with the North East MSA Culture, Culture Industries and Sport Advisory Group which feeds into the Portfolio Board for the Home of a Growing and Vibrant Economy Portfolio

This will allow integration of the visitor economy across a number of areas of North East MSA work including, but not limited, to:

- Events strategy - welcome and destination planning being key to success, driving Visitor Economy investment and increasing visitor numbers.
- International strategy – ensuring the Visitor Economy reinforces priority markets
- Draft Culture, Creative Industries and Sport Strategic Framework – being key to visitor attractiveness and supporting the wider regional tourism product offer
- Regeneration and heritage assets including the vibrancy of our regional High Streets
- Rural economy and productivity – the visitor economy is a key sector for our rural economy
- Sustainability – ensuring that a regenerative tourism approach supports the regions ambitions across environmental sustainability and social inclusion
- Transport - connectivity drives visitor behaviour
- Investment - need significant private sector capital investment in hotels etc
- Business Support Framework – aligning with business support provision and offer for our regional SMEs, for example food and drink businesses.

Regional/Local coordination and delivery

To ensure effective collaboration between ENEE and individual local authorities and Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) there will be a set of principles and arrangements including:

- Clear distinction between regional and local activities to avoid duplication, conflict, or inefficiency.
- The Visit North East England Strategic Steering Group will be grown from the previous Destination Development Partnership (DDP) working group and include public and private sector representation to inform activity.

As referenced in the March 17th Cabinet paper, “the one-year plan for 2026/27 will be one of transition”. This enables ENEE to develop and implement its operational and staffing structures going forward. Via the Visit North East England Strategic Steering Group, ENEE will work with partners, Local Authorities and LVEPs from across the region to:

- ensure regional activity dovetails with local delivery and brands;
- deliver first year activities and priorities; and
- develop and agree a subsequent two-year delivery plan in order to secure investment for the period FY27–FY29.

As part of this transitional year, ENEE will also deliver a regional branding and communications approach and architecture that is clear and distinct across all relevant channels (including the planned AI-enabled website), aligns with the forthcoming strategic regional narrative approach, and draws on assets and collateral representing the breadth of the region, ensuring industry from across the region sees itself appropriately represented.

This new structure will address the fundamental market failure at the heart of the North East’s underperformance: the lack of strategic coordination and visibility across the region’s tourism offer. By developing a unified brand narrative, a clear front door for visitors and buyers, and the capacity to lead

national and international promotion, the body would overcome the fragmentation that currently prevents the region from converting its rich mix of assets into sustained visitor growth and economic impact.

Investment breakdown:

The proposed investment below relates only to the delivery of regional activities.

Expenditure heading	FY2026/27	Total
Salaries (please refer to the additional summary below)	£936,983	£936,983
Indirect costs (15% of total salaries)	£140,547	£140,547
Marketing and Promotion – comprising: - Trade shows: £65,000 - Marketing Campaigns: £370,000 - Regional Visitor website design and development including content creation: £425,000 - Campaign Research and evaluation: £80,000	£940,000	£940,000
Product Development – comprising: - Region of Gastronomy development: £20,000 - Tourism product development: £125,000 - Tourism Awards: £40,000	£185,000	£185,000
Other Activity – comprising: - Strategic event management (including minor residual costs for UKREiFF 2026 delivery): £320,000 - CRM – £30,000 - Refresh of 10 Year Strategy - £10,000 - Organisational development / transition costs - £32,208	£392,208	£392,208
Total	£2,594,738	£2,594,738

A summary of the Staff Costs split across functional roles is provided below:

	FY26/27				
Service Area	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Leadership / Corporate Services / Finance	£64,996	£49,537	£49,537	£49,538	£213,608
Marketing/Events/Comms/PR	£103,330	£109,818	£106,345	£106,345	£425,838
Visitor Economy Development / Sector Development / Research	£71,800	£75,512	£75,112	£75,113	£297,537
Total	£240,126	£234,867	£230,995	£230,995	£936,983

Who are the key beneficiaries?

Key beneficiaries include:

- Local authorities and Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) across the North East MSA region, who will benefit from additional regional amplification and be part of a hub and spoke model delivering benefit to the region's visitor economy
- Tourism, hospitality, culture, and events businesses, which will benefit from more coherent regional promotion, branding, and support, covering businesses across the rural and urban spectrum.

- Visitors and residents, through a clearer, more accessible offer and improved economic impact from tourism.
- North East MSA and government partners, through improved regional coordination and delivery capacity.

What benefits will be realised?

This proposal will:

- Support coordinated international and national marketing campaigns
- Support the development of the regional brand showing the region in its best possible light
- New governance models implemented
- Increase visitor numbers, longer stays, and stronger national and international positioning.
- Improved product offering benefiting both residents and visitors
- Support better coordination between local and regional delivery, and more effective use of public and private sector investment.
- Directly contribute to North East MSA's Local Growth Plan ambition to double the size of the regional visitor economy.

2.1 Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs	FY26/27	Total
Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	1,000	1,000
Number of unique enterprises receiving support	600	600

Description of Outcomes	Timeframe for achievement	Totals
Direct jobs created	June 2027	100
Indirect jobs created	June 2027	240
% increase in visitor expenditure	June 2027	3%

These have been calculated based on NGI's experience of programmes related to travel trade, business events and product development during the previous Destination Development Partnership. As examples of this:

- a 'Gateway' campaign with DFDS saw a year-on-year increase in bookings of 5%;
- over the three years of the Destination Development Partnership (DDP) c. 15,000 businesses have been supported with non-financial support via trade, marketing and product development giving the team confidence in high levels of engagement with programmes; and,
- hosting two major visitor economy events in Media Getaway and UK Inbound will provide exposure for a minimum of 100 visitor economy businesses in FY26/27.

The Delivery Plan confirms that, with a high proportion of this year 1 funding related to creating the foundations for future activity, outputs are therefore comparatively lower to what would be anticipated in future years, as a result of a lower level of direct business-facing activity. However, the project is anticipated to deliver low level increases in spend and visitor numbers over the period of this investment. This is further supported by a contribution to the Missions outlined in the new North East MSA Performance Management Framework, as follows:

Mayoral Mission	Outcome	Output	Visitor Economy Contribution
A North East we are proud to call home	Improving our places	Number of cultural/tourism events taking place	Driving minimum pipeline of 50 business events

A North East we are proud to call home	Improving our places	Number of cultural/tourism events taking place	Hosting Media Getaway and 150 International media in June 2026
A North East we are proud to call home	Improving our places	Number of cultural/tourism events taking place	Hosting 400 travel trade operators at UK Inbound in February 2027 creating 1600 bed-nights and driving business to travel trade ready businesses
Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all	Improve business productivity to support local growth	Productivity GFA	Minimum 1000 businesses provided with non-financial support 20 new products / itineraries created
A welcoming home to Global Trade	Increased Foreign Direct Investment	Investment showcases at national and international events	While not directly investment the project will enhance the region's reputation and awareness via attendance at trade shows including IMEX, IBTM, and World Travel Market.

2.2 Timetable for Implementation

Milestone	Forecast Date
Proposal start date	01/04/26
Launch of new brand identity for Experience North East England	1 June 26
Deliver inbound marketing campaigns alongside British Airways and Trip Advisor	April – June 26
1 st Interim board meeting and bi-monthly from this point	01/06/26
Visit North East England Steering Group formed to meet bi-monthly from this point	01/06/26
Attend Meeting Show (Strategic Event Management Pillar)	June 26
Launch 26/27 product development accelerator programmes based on demand evidence	August 26
Business Case FY27/28-FY28/29 completion – (indicative dates subject to confirmation)	20/10/26 (TOG) 10/11/26 (FIB)
Attend World Travel Market (Inbound Marketing Pillar)	November 26
Submit Final Region of Gastronomy Bid (Product Development Strand)	November 26
Launch new regional consumer website	December 26
Recruitment of permanent independent chair	January 27
Financial completion year 1	31/03/27
Project completion Year 1	30/06/27

2.3 Evaluation

Via the Visit North East England Steering Group, and as part of the initial first year activities, a longer-term formal evaluation approach will be co-developed to ensure that a clear framework is designed and implemented to evaluate the impact of support and investment over the longer term. This will draw on the cycle of quarterly monitoring reports covering operational and output, and financial requirements, programme delivery; an internal evaluation of first year activities with the Steering Group; and assessing and agreeing the need for and approach to a subsequent external evaluation to be commissioned in future years, aligning with the North East MSA's new Performance Management Framework.

2.4 Appraisal

An internal appraisal was undertaken reviewing the submission of the one-year delivery plan and associated financial expenditure and outputs and outcomes that are forecast to be delivered.

Overall description and summary statement:

The proposal funds the first year of Experience North East England, establishing the foundations for a new regional visitor economy body. It will create governance structures, develop a unified regional brand, launch a consumer tourism website, and deliver targeted marketing, trade show activity, and product development. Working with LVEPs and local authorities, the project aims to strengthen regional coordination, attract more domestic and international visitors, and enhance the overall visitor offer across all seven North East areas.

The Strategic, Economic and Commercial Case

The proposal presents a strong strategic rationale aligned with North East MSA's Local Growth Plan and highlights clear market failure in the North East visitor economy, evidenced by low visitor numbers, spend, and international performance. It outlines measurable year one outputs and long-term foundational benefits.

The Financial and Management Case

The proposal outlines a £2.61m funding request from the North East MSA, supported by £263,119 secured match funding from ENEE income generated. It includes full financial tables, justified costs, strong governance, and a highly experienced delivery team. A risk register exists and is overseen by the Corporate Board, though not included in the submission. Year one activities and milestones are clearly defined, with subsidy control compliance confirmed. Overall, funding, governance, and management arrangements are robust and satisfactory.

2.5 RAG Assessment

The assessment follows the **HM Treasury Five Case model**:

Overall RAG assessment		
Risk Rating	Strategic, Economic and Commercial case	Green
	Financial and Management case	Green
	Overall rating	Green

2.6 Recommended Conditions of Funding

The award of funding will be **subject to the following proposed funding conditions**:

No.	Pre-Contract Condition
1.	Provide a copy of the Risk Register for current delivery.
No.	Post-Contract Condition
1.	The Recipient shall maintain and demonstrate continuous improvement in destination marketing practice and shall ensure that all marketing, promotional and visitor-facing activity funded through this Grant is aligned with the Authority's strategic objectives, messaging and regional identity. In particular, the Recipient shall:
a.	undertake a review of destination marketing approaches adopted by at least three recognised leading destination marketing organisations, including at least one international comparator, and submit to the Authority by 30 th November 2026 a summary of lessons identified and proposed actions for adoption within its marketing programme;
b.	develop and implement a content and audience engagement plan which includes the use of influencers and/or independent content creators, where appropriate, to increase awareness of, engagement with, and visitation to the North East;

c.	ensure that all marketing, promotional and visitor-facing materials going forward comply with the principles, visual identity standards, narrative framework, messaging guidance and any subsequent updates issued by the Authority in relation to the Regional Identity Framework when this is launched;
d.	ensure that influencer and content creator activity targeted for relevant audiences and markets incorporates authentic local voices and reflects the Regional Identity Framework;
e.	have due regard to guidance issued by the Authority regarding tone, voice and priority messaging when developing external communications relating to the visitor economy;
f.	submit to the Authority, upon request and within reasonable timescales specified by the Authority, marketing plans, strategic campaigns and associated high-level materials, and other significant communications for review and comment prior to publication;
g.	engage with the Authority on strategic campaign planning, key events, trade missions and international promotional activity, and meet with representatives of the Authority at least quarterly to review partnership opportunities, campaign activity and future priorities; and,
h.	demonstrate within its annual business plan how it intends to leverage the profile, convening power and promotional opportunities associated with the Authority and the Mayor to increase awareness of the North East in domestic and international markets.

The above conditions will form the basis for an agreed communications protocol establishing the approval and sign-off processes for the overarching marketing and communication strategy, campaign plans and tactical content where applicable.

A. Potential Impact on North East Mayoral Strategic Authority Objectives

This proposal directly addresses the strategic priorities of the Mayoral Strategic Authority as outlined in the North East Local Growth Plan, the North East Deeper Devolution Deal, and the Mayoral Manifesto. Furthermore, it aligns with and supports the draft Culture, Creative Industries and Sport Strategic Framework, which will be subject to further wide sector consultation, having been presented at the North East MSA Cabinet meeting on 17th March 2026.

The Deeper Devolution Deal explicitly highlights the region's ambition to develop the cultural, creative, tourism, heritage and sport sectors on a regional basis. Establishing a Regional Strategic Tourism body would operationalise this commitment by providing a strategic, coordinated approach to sector development across the North East. It would strengthen the coherence of the regional offer, enhance national and international visibility, and improve the ability of the sector to attract visitors, investment, and talent, delivering on the aspirations set out in the Deal.

Building on this, the North East Local Growth Plan conceives of the visitor economy as central to the mission to develop 'a North East we are proud to call home' and directly contributes to the region being the 'Home of a Growing and Vibrant Economy'. This mission seeks to create an inclusive and thriving region by removing barriers to opportunity, enhance quality of life, and strengthening local pride. The establishment of 'Experience North East England' as the regional body – and through that the Visit North East England Steering Group - will support this mission by significantly increasing the volume of workforce and business support delivered in partnership with local partners, and by stimulating visitor demand through the cultivation of a compelling and cohesive brand narrative for the North East. In doing so, it will help realise the full potential of the visitor economy to change international perceptions of the region, strengthen sustainable and networked infrastructure and delivery, and reinforce the North East's reputation as a vibrant and welcoming place to live, work and visit.

B. Key risks

A summary of the high-level risks relating to the investment proposal are:

- **Financial:** Delay in finalising the one-year financial plan and subsequent business case. This risk is being mitigated through close collaboration between the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority and Experience North East England.
- **Operational:** Loss of staff expertise and/or failure to recruit to key positions and functions. This risk is being mitigated through close collaboration with the current Experience North East England Board and through the clear provision of a three-year indicative financial profile (as per the March 2026 Cabinet paper), of which this proposal represents the first year of investment.
- **Reputational:** Inadequate or poorly executed communications and advocacy impacting engagement and confidence – including membership fee contributions – from partners. This risk is being mitigated through the involvement of partners across the region and joint work between NGI and the Mayoral Strategic Authority's communications teams.

C. Financial and other resources implications

The financial profile for the project is included below:

Funding source	2026/27	Total
North East MSA Investment Fund	£2,259,412	£2,259,412
Existing North East MSA Investment Funding (FY25/26 carried forward)	£72,207	£72,207
Recipient Funds	£263,119	£263,119
Total (£)	£2,594,738	£2,594,738

Status of match funding:

Match funding is confirmed and will come from the Experience NE England (ENEE) income generated and relates to regional activity only. This comprises the following:

Contributions from existing partners for regional activity	£124,967
Convention Bureau commissions	£66,151
Meetings Show stand partners	£32,000
NE England Tourism Awards (NEETA) sponsorship and income	£40,001
Total	£263,119

Status of funding:

Funding of £2,259,412 from the North East MSA Investment Fund is requested for the period to 31st March 2027, which will be used in addition to retaining £72,207 of investment from the FY25/26 financial settlement.

D. Legal implications

The comments of the representative of the Monitoring Officer have been included in this report. Approval would lead to a deed of variation being issued to Experience North East England Limited increasing the existing funding package by £2,259,412, and to amend the outputs, outcomes, project description, and term to reflect the changes to the existing grant funding agreement. Total Investment Funding will therefore increase from £1,555,751 to £3,815,163 for the FY2025/26 to FY2026/27 period.

E. Equalities implications

The North East MSA complies with the Public Sector Equality duty and this report has due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010.

The project will build on the Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework, which sets out a shared understanding for regenerative tourism in North East England to drive sustainable and inclusive

economic growth, including generating social benefits and value for local people and places as well incoming visitors to the region.

F. Consultation and engagement

In developing the project and the proposals set out in this report, engagement has been undertaken with the following groups and organisations: LA7 Economic Directors; Newcastle Gateshead Initiative Ltd Board and Senior Leadership Team; Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) Chairs and visitor economy businesses in those areas, and visitor economy businesses and stakeholders in local authorities not currently covered by an LVEP.

G. Communications and Branding

All communications and materials will apply the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) logo and associated branding in full compliance with MSA guidelines. All delivery partners will work in alignment with a dedicated MSA communications team member to ensure consistency of messaging and brand application. A clear communications plan will be developed and agreed in advance with the MSA Assistant Director of Communications. Ongoing liaison with the MSA communications function will ensure communications remain aligned to MSA priorities and standards throughout delivery.

H. Appendices

North East MSA Cabinet paper: 17 March 2026 – '[North East Visitor Economy – update and next steps](#)'

North East MSA Cabinet paper: 9 December 2025 – '[North East Visitor Economy – update and next steps](#)'

I. Background papers

None

J. Contact officers

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K. Glossary

DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DDP	Destination Development Partnership
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
FIB	Finance and Investment Board
ENEE	Experience North East England
IBTM	Incentives, Business Travel & Meetings
IMEX	Worldwide Exhibition for Incentive Travel, Meetings, and Events
LVEP	Local Visitor Economy Partnership
MSA	Mayoral Strategic Authority
NEETA	North East England Tourism Awards
NE MSA	North East Mayoral Strategic Authority
NGI	NewcastleGateshead Initiative
TOG	Technical Officers Group

L. Consultee

Cabinet Member:	Director/Head of Service:	Director of Finance and Investment:	Monitoring Officer:
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes