SHIRE OF DENMARK

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY

2021-2025

Shire of Denmark Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Disclaimer

Acknowledgement

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For many Western Australians, the Shire of Denmark is a well-loved, appealing coastal holiday destination. Tourism has contributed to economic growth, jobs creation, and an expanded array of lifestyle amenities for residents. It extends the scope and scale of built attractions and hospitality that would not normally be available if these services were solely reliant on local patronage. In effect, tourism makes the Shire of Denmark potentially more vibrant than would otherwise be the case; in other words, it makes the Shire an attractive place to live, work and visit.

While tourism brings many advantages, it also generates negative impacts such as peak period congestion, and additional load placed on waste management and essential services. Given the shire's unique natural environment and biodiversity, tourism can also lead to the potential overuse of sensitive landscapes and environments. For this reason, it is essential that tourism provides net benefits that are reflective of the values and needs of our community.

The purpose of this Sustainable Tourism Strategy is to guide the Shire of Denmark as an organisation to develop actions, policies and procedures that will enable and support the shire to become a sustainable tourism destination. The Council has a range of roles and responsibilities in relation to implementing this Strategy, including leadership, advocacy, developing partnerships, and service delivery.

In adopting this Strategy, the Shire is guided by *The Guide to Best Practice Destination Management* developed by the Australian Regional Tourism Network, plus criteria and principles established by Ecotourism Australia and the Green Destinations Standard for sustainable tourism.[1] This has enabled the development of a framework based on standard approaches to destination management planning, strengthened by inclusion of sustainability principles to reflect community aspirations.

This approach will assist the Shire to achieve an innovative, bold vision to become one of Australia's leading examples of a sustainable tourism destination.

For the purposes of this Strategy, the Shire adopts the following definition of sustainable tourism developed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO):

Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.[2]

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy recognises that:

- The shire's natural environment, biodiversity and ecosystems require respectful, sensitive use and protection to ensure a sustainable resource. Nature is both the backdrop and the drawcard for residents and visitors. It has the capacity to generate a powerful connection between people and place. It is also a core component of the State's tourism brand.

- Tourism is an essential part of the local economy, supporting businesses that provide employment for a significant proportion of residents.

- The shire's tourism assets contribute to the vibrancy and amenity of the region and are critical factors in the region's attractiveness as a destination to live and work.

- The socio-cultural heritage and values of our community are respected and promoted.

- Visitors cherish memories of their visit and are often motivated to return to the region for holidays and sometimes to live.

In other words, sustainable tourism delivers benefits to residents, businesses, and visitors. To realise these benefits, this Strategy adopts an integrated, holistic approach to tourism planning that is premised on the creation of a strong partnership between Council, the community, businesses, and visitors, who must also be part of the solution. Ultimately, sustainable tourism is everyone's responsibility.

Given the current uncertainties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, this Strategy focuses on the next four years only. Implementing the Strategy will ensure that the region's tourism industry is well placed to respond to these ongoing challenges.

BACKGROUND

How and why the Sustainable Tourism Strategy was developed

WHY HAVE A TOURISM STRATEGY?

Notwithstanding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on domestic and international visitation, tourism remains an important industry in Western Australia. In the year prior to March 2020, 11.7 million overnight (domestic and international) visitors came to or travelled within WA. Together these visitors spent $10.7 billion, of which 48% was spent in regional WA.[3]

Approximately 744,000 of these overnight visitors travelled to the Great Southern, accounting for a total output of $414.5 million.

Tourism in the Shire of Denmark

In 2019, 160,000 people made day trips to the Shire of Denmark and another 167,000 people made overnight visits, staying a total of 591,000 nights. Most visitor expenditure in the shire is generated by Australian citizens and residents (domestic visitors) who account for 91% of total visitors.[4]

Visitor numbers to the shire grew by 17.6% over the five years to June 2019. The four-year average annual visitor spend to 2019 was $76 million per annum.

Tourism has broader impacts that just the economic activity of visitors (often referred to as the 'visitor economy'). It is an integral part of the social and cultural life of the community and influences a range of other sectors, including hospitality, retail, arts and culture, sport and recreation, and agriculture and agribusiness.

The Shire of Denmark Council recognises that successful tourism requires careful and strategic planning to balance visitor expectations against the needs of the community.

Tourism that is well planned and managed generates widespread benefits – local businesses benefit financially; the community benefits from improved services, facilities, infrastructure, and lifestyle; and the environment benefits through greater investment in sustainable development.

Conversely, tourism that is poorly planned and managed can generate negative impacts on the environment, on the health and wellbeing of communities, and on economic outcomes.

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy (hereafter the Strategy) provides a vision and strategic direction for the future of tourism in the Shire of Denmark. It examines how the value of the tourism industry can be grown while at the same time enhancing and maintaining community and environmental values.

It serves to communicate with and provide direction to all those involved in managing tourism including the Shire of Denmark, local and regional tourism organisations, and state government agencies.

HOW WAS THE STRATEGY DEVELOPED?

The Strategy was developed in the first half of 2021. It involved extensive input from industry, community, and local government. It is supported by eight background reports that address the role of local government in tourism, the Shire of Denmark's visitor economy, the Shire's investment in tourism, an experience audit, and a local government benchmarking report.

Community consultation process

- **Consultation** with industry stakeholders through three industry workshops, twenty interviews and a business survey completed by 122 business owners or managers.
- **Consultation** with the community via three community workshops and an online survey completed by 304 community members.
- **Consultation** with Shire staff, including via two staff workshops.
- Additional **consultation** and **invited feedback** regarding draft priorities from political representatives, industry representatives and representatives from local government and Western Australian government departments.
- Community **feedback** on the draft Strategy.

What did businesses say?

90% of respondents to the business survey consider themselves to be working in, or supporting, the tourism sector.

The majority are small businesses with less than 10 employees. Two-thirds have been in business for more than 5 years, and almost half have been in business for more than 10 years.

Business owners/managers have a strong understanding of tourism's role in the local economy.

Business owners are supportive of strategic planning for sustainable tourism development.

Most businesses want to see visitor numbers maintained at current levels during the peak season but grow in the shoulder and off-peak periods.

What did the community say?

The consultation process revealed shared views around the importance of tourism and the need to protect core environmental and community values.

Community members are aware of the economic benefits of tourism, including its contribution to jobs and enhanced quality-of-life elements such as the range of cafes and restaurants, cellar doors, retail, events and outdoor recreation.

When asked about visitor numbers, 60% of survey respondents want to see visitor numbers maintained at current levels during the peak season (Summer, Easter); and 70% want to see visitor numbers grow in the off-peak period.

Resident quality of life is of great interest. When asked what factors are most important, residents say conservation of natural areas, clean air and water, and the maintenance of the Denmark townsite's village character.

When asked which aspects of tourism they would like to see lessened, the most significant responses are about traffic management at peak periods, and a reduction in the number of un-hosted Holiday Homes.

Residents aspire to balanced tourism planning that respects people (community) and place (environment). They want the Shire of Denmark to remain an attractive, vibrant, creative community; and they want tourism to be eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable.

The Shire of Denmark's community, including business owners, support the vision of sustainable tourism.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FRAMEWORK

Approach and Methodology

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

This Strategy is broadly based on the principles articulated in *The Guide to Best Practice Destination Management* (2012) developed by the Australian Regional Tourism Network (ARTN) in association with the Federal Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism.[1]

Best practice destination management integrates four key delivery areas: research and analysis, consultative planning, experience and product development, and marketing and promotion.

Destination management planning provides the tools to consider tourism in a holistic and integrated manner and as a significant contributor to the regional economy. This is not an occasional process but rather an ongoing cycle of planning, implementation, review, and assessment to ensure that a visitor destination remains competitive.

This approach is organised around three domains:

• **Destination Management** (strategies, policies and management practices);

• **Destination Development** (investment, infrastructure, products, services); and

• **Destination Marketing** (branding and promotion).

Each domain incorporates a range of priority areas. These vary given the scope, maturity, size, resources, capacity, and level of aspiration of a particular visitor destination.

This Strategy identifies eight priority areas, based on a detailed analysis of the Shire of Denmark's current tourism offering, planning environment, and industry and community feedback.

These priority areas are: Leadership & Management; Environmental Stewardship; Access & Dispersal; Product & Experience Development; Capacity & Capability Building; Visitor Servicing; Placemaking; and Marketing & Promotion.

In addition to the well documented components of destination management planning, this Strategy incorporates the principle of sustainable tourism, which acknowledges the social (community), economic, and environmental impacts of tourism, their respective relationships, and the way in which they can be successfully managed.

Sustainable tourism is:

Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.[2]

Sustainable tourism should:

• Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

• Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

• Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.[2]

Integrating the principles of sustainable tourism into destination management planning ensures that this Strategy reflects the aspirations of the community that tourism respects, celebrates, and enhances the shire's culture, history and natural environment.
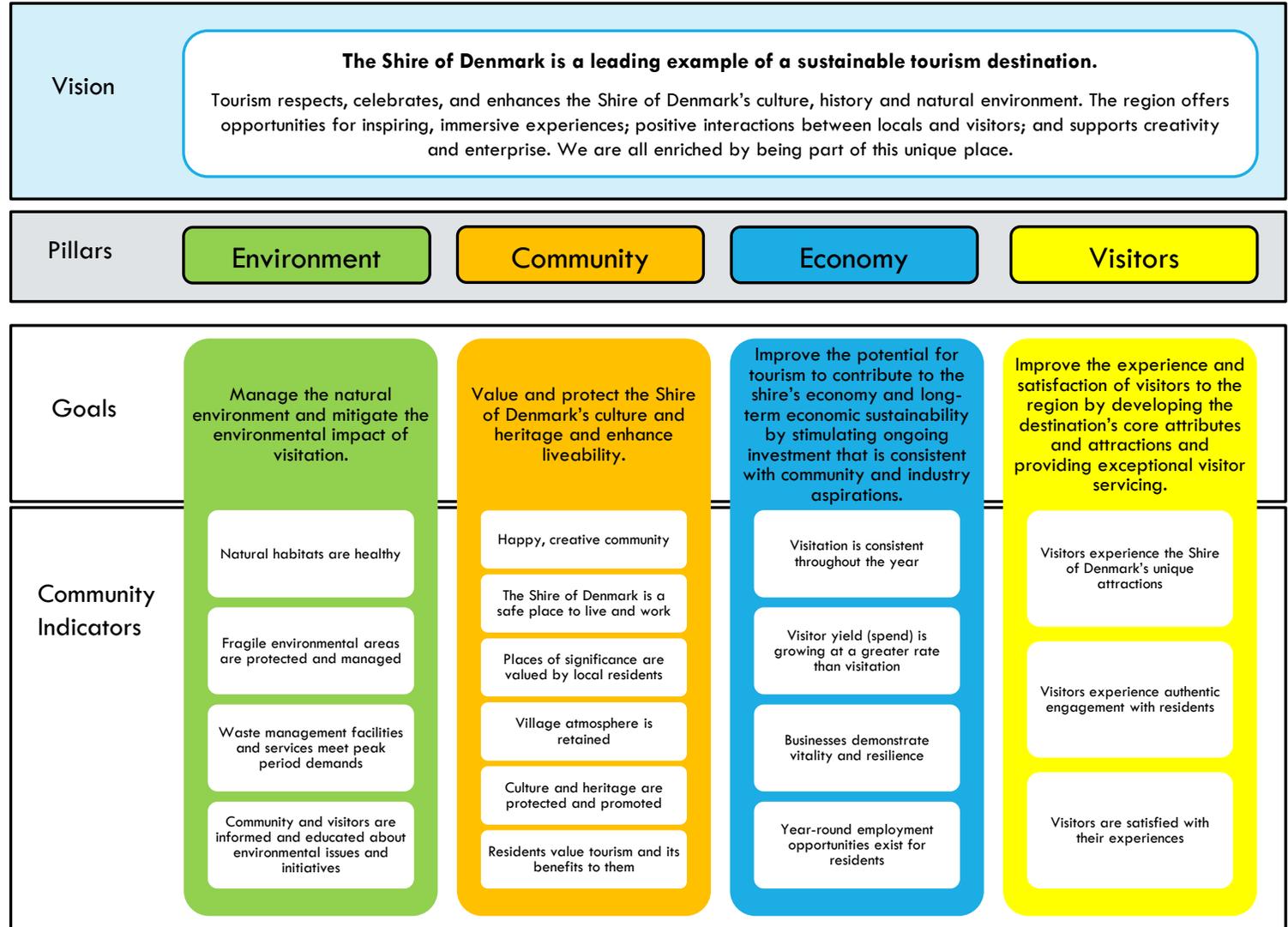
It also reflects that fact that the shire is not just a visitor destination, it is a place that many people call home. For this reason, the term 'destination' is generally avoided throughout this Strategy, unless specifically referring to the process of marketing and promotion.

STRATEGIC VISION

This diagram summarises the vision and goals of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy mapped against four sustainable tourism pillars – environment, community, economy and visitors.

Each of these pillars has an associated goal that reflects our community's aspirations and values (as stated in the consultation process and the Strategic Community Plan).

This Vision – which was informed by the community consultation process in discussion with Council – provides the basis on which the success of the Strategy will be measured.

Vision

The Shire of Denmark is a leading example of a sustainable tourism destination.

Tourism respects, celebrates, and enhances the Shire of Denmark's culture, history and natural environment. The region offers opportunities for inspiring, immersive experiences; positive interactions between locals and visitors; and supports creativity and enterprise. We are all enriched by being part of this unique place.

Pillars

Environment	Community	Economy	Visitors

Goals

Manage the natural environment and mitigate the environmental impact of visitation.	Value and protect the Shire of Denmark's culture and heritage and enhance liveability.	Improve the potential for tourism to contribute to the shire's economy and long-term economic sustainability by stimulating ongoing investment that is consistent with community and industry aspirations.	Improve the experience and satisfaction of visitors to the region by developing the destination's core attributes and attractions and providing exceptional visitor servicing.

Community Indicators

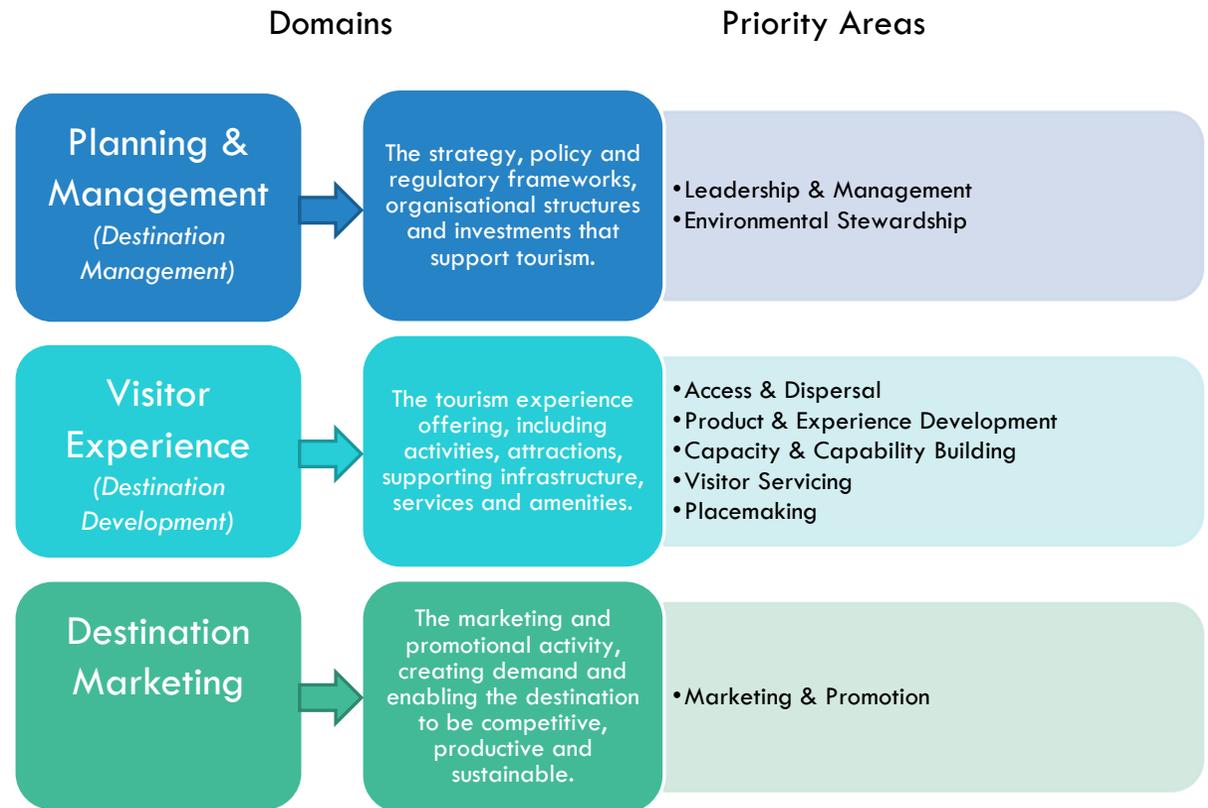| Environment	Community	Economy	Visitors
Natural habitats are healthy	Happy, creative community	Visitation is consistent throughout the year	Visitors experience the Shire of Denmark's unique attractions
Fragile environmental areas are protected and managed	The Shire of Denmark is a safe place to live and work	Visitor yield (spend) is growing at a greater rate than visitation	Visitors experience authentic engagement with residents
Waste management facilities and services meet peak period demands	Places of significance are valued by local residents	Businesses demonstrate vitality and resilience	Visitors are satisfied with their experiences
Community and visitors are informed and educated about environmental issues and initiatives	Village atmosphere is retained	Year-round employment opportunities exist for residents	
	Culture and heritage are protected and promoted		
	Residents value tourism and its benefits to them		

TOURISM FRAMEWORK

As outlined above, this Strategy is organised around three destination planning domains – management, development and marketing. The first two domains have been renamed to reflect the focus on balancing destination and community planning.

Each domain has at least one priority area. The next section of the Strategy describes the strategic priorities under each domain.

At the time of writing this Strategy, Australia's tourism industry is still being impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Domestic visitor behaviour has changed, with increasing numbers of Western Australians travelling to the shire in what have traditionally been shoulder and off-peak periods.

The long-term impact of the pandemic on visitor patterns is unknown. For this reason, the Strategy aligns with the Shire of Denmark's Corporate Business Plan and focuses on a short timeframe of four years (2021-2025). The strategic priorities identified in the following pages are those that require the most urgent attention if our community is to manage tourism sustainably into the next decade.

These priorities should be reviewed annually to ensure that the Strategy responds to the changing international tourism landscape.

Domains

Planning & Management
(Destination Management)

The strategy, policy and regulatory frameworks, organisational structures and investments that support tourism.

Visitor Experience
(Destination Development)

The tourism experience offering, including activities, attractions, supporting infrastructure, services and amenities.

Destination Marketing

The marketing and promotional activity, creating demand and enabling the destination to be competitive, productive and sustainable.

Priority Areas

- Leadership & Management
- Environmental Stewardship

- Access & Dispersal
- Product & Experience Development
- Capacity & Capability Building
- Visitor Servicing
- Placemaking

- Marketing & Promotion

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The following strategies provide the structure to manage and enhance the Shire of Denmark as both a visitor destination and a safe and healthy place to live. Their purpose is to ensure that the current visitor profile and experience delivers the outcomes sought by both industry and community.

Council's role in relation to each strategy varies. These roles include leadership, advocacy, partnerships, and service delivery.

Action Plans will need to be developed for each of the priority areas in order to determine priorities, timeframes, resourcing and measures of success.

Council's Roles

ADVOCATE		We support our community and promote local interests to help them flourish
LEAD		We lead projects in order to deliver strong outcomes and effectively use our networks with government, business and community, to deliver for the community
PARTNER		We seek out new partnerships in addition to strengthening our current relationships on behalf of our community, in order to support the interests of the Shire of Denmark community
DELIVER		We deliver and run an extensive range of services and programs to meet community needs, with a strong focus on supporting the local economy

Domain	Priority Areas	Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's role
Planning & Management	1. Leadership & Management	Industry and community aspirations inform tourism planning and decision-making.	1.1 Establish a governance model that enables Council, industry, stakeholders, visitors, and the community to work collaboratively to implement the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Lead
			1.2 Ensure alignment between the Shire's planning and policy framework and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Lead
			1.3 Establish a monitoring framework to assess the impacts of tourism.	Partner
			1.4 Implement the Shire of Denmark's Sustainability Strategy and ensure that it incorporates sustainable tourism initiatives.	Lead
	2. Environmental Stewardship	The Shire of Denmark's landscapes and natural environment are protected for current and future generations to enjoy.	2.1 Establish partnerships with community organisations to develop a public education program that encourages residents and visitors to manage local resources sustainably.	Partner
			2.2 Establish partnerships with community organisations to develop a public education program that encourages residents and visitors to appreciate and protect natural environments.	Partner
Visitor Experience	3. Access & Dispersal	Visitors have access to and are dispersed across the shire to spread the benefits of tourism and reduce the impacts of seasonality.	3.1 Investigate opportunities for seasonal transport to key tourism nodes.	Advocate
			3.2 Develop and implement a wayfinding and signage strategy.	Lead
			3.3 Improve paths and trails network.	Deliver

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Domain	Priority Areas	Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role
Visitor Experience	4. Product & Experience Development	Tourism experiences meet visitors' needs and expectations and are true to the brand promise.	4.1 Develop a tourism investment plan to address product and experience gaps. 4.2 Facilitate and support the delivery of events that attract visitors to the shire.	Partner Partner
	5. Capacity & Capability Building	Tourism operators are supported to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and embrace sustainability initiatives.	5.1 Assist tourism operators to develop and grow the region's product and experience offering. 5.2 Educate and engage businesses on sustainability initiatives.	Partner Advocate
	6. Visitor Servicing	Visitors receive accurate, quality, timely information at every stage of the visitor journey, and are made to feel welcome when they visit.	6.1 Ensure provision of face-to-face visitor servicing is cost-effective and returns benefit to visitors, tourism operators and the local community. 6.2 Engage industry and community in transitioning to a sustainable model of visitor servicing, using multiple channels to distribute visitor information across the shire.	Partner Partner
	7. Placemaking	Tourism and recreation infrastructure development is community-driven and reflects the culture, heritage, and biodiversity of the Shire of Denmark.	7.1 Develop and implement an interpretation strategy. 7.2 Develop a coastal open space precinct plan in partnership with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to guide future development and investment.	Partner Lead
Destination Marketing	8. Marketing & Promotion	Branding and marketing capture the essence of the Shire of Denmark and are supported by industry and community.	8.1 Refresh the destination brand. 8.2 Develop and resource a marketing strategy that positions the shire as a sustainable and responsible tourism destination.	Partner Partner

The rationale for these strategies is discussed in further detail in the next sections.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

The Strategic Priorities identified in the table above provide the framework for achieving the vision of the Shire of Denmark becoming one of Australia's leading examples of a sustainable tourism destination. To be effective, however, the Strategy must be guided by the following Principles.

Guiding Principles

- **Resources must be committed**, including financial and human resources. The resourcing of enabling activities, such networks and partnerships, and building the capacity and capability of Council, industry and community, are just as critical as the funding of capital works for infrastructure.

- **Not all initiatives identified in the Strategy will be the sole responsibility of the Council** to implement or fund. However, notwithstanding probity considerations, the Council may be able to facilitate or encourage an outcome through its policy framework, in-kind support or other enabling function.

- **There is a need for collaboration** between Council, communities, businesses and other key stakeholders across the region and beyond. Building and maintaining networks and ensuring ongoing communication with local communities and businesses is essential and requires a consistent and planned approach.

- **Council's planning policies and processes** are essential to facilitate economic development, including incentives to attract the right type of investment. In a competitive environment in which many regions are actively working to attract new investment, Council will need to communicate its vision, articulate its long-term direction and ensure it is reflected in the Council's planning policies, development application processes and decision-making. It is essential that the Strategy is viewed as a **whole-of-Council plan**, which fosters collaboration and cooperation between all the Shire's service areas.

- **Partners are critical to long-term success**. There will be a need to work closely with Australia's South West, Tourism WA, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), the Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC), and other public and private sector organisations.

Critical Enablers

The Strategy can only be achieved by all stakeholders working together with common purpose.

1. **Communication** - The Strategy will only be successful if sustainable tourism becomes an active and continuous approach to destination management. Sustainable tourism needs to become part of the community's vocabulary and be included and referred to in regular communications about the shire and the tourism industry.

2. **Implementation** - Action Plans need to be developed to accompany the Strategy; these will provide guidance on how the strategic initiatives can be pursued. Not all initiatives are easily implemented and will require a strong commitment from Council, and community and industry support.

3. **Monitoring** - The success of the Strategy should also be subject to measurement and review. Measurement should occur via a Destination Scorecard that considers the Key Indicators against the objectives of the Strategy.

4. **Review** – the Strategy must evolve to remain relevant. Annual progress reviews will ensure that the principles of sustainable tourism maintain relevance as the destination evolves.

PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

"Best practice Destination Management is a holistic process that ensures tourism adds value to the economy, social fabric and ecology of our communities. Tourism can be an economic driver, generating jobs and contributing vibrant lifestyle benefits to our communities. But equally tourism needs to be managed to ensure that it leaves a positive legacy for current and future generations. Importantly the tourism sector needs to ensure that it is considered in the broader context of regional development and that it is recognised for its overall contribution and economic value to the region." (ARTN)[1]

Image credit: David Bomba

1. LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Current situation

The Shire of Denmark is home to a dynamic, vibrant community that attracts new residents and visitors each year. The shire's history, heritage, culture, and environment are valued by the community who want to ensure that the area's unique characteristics are enhanced and preserved.

Tourism planning and management is currently fragmented and poorly resourced. There are several organisations with responsibility for different aspects of tourism planning and management, including the Council, local and regional tourism organisations, state government agencies, and community organisations. They perform a variety of functions, including marketing, visitor servicing, product and experience development, business development, and strategic planning.

Tourism is not an isolated industry; it also has significant overlays and interdependencies with other sectors, including food and agriculture, arts and culture, and recreation. However, there are few mechanisms to integrate the insights, innovations, and aspirations of these industry sectors with tourism planning and development. Some aspects of commercial servicing are within the remit of local government to assist (e.g. zoning, density, use permissibility, property ratings and business operating hours), and require consideration through policy review.

Agreed direction

Effective tourism planning and management requires an approach that balances economic growth with social, cultural, and environmental factors to achieve sustainability. To be effective, tourism planning and management must take an integrated and holistic approach that involves Council, industry, stakeholders, community, and visitors.

Local governments perform many roles and have a range of responsibilities in relation to tourism. In some circumstances, Council will act as a leader, while in others it may be a supporter or advocate to ensure that the tourism sector is sustainable and operates in harmony with the community's values.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role
Industry and community aspirations inform tourism planning and decision-making.	1.1 Establish a governance model that enables Council, industry, stakeholders, visitors, and the community to work collaboratively to implement the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Lead
	1.2 Ensure alignment between the Shire's planning and policy framework and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Lead
	1.3 Establish a monitoring framework to assess the impacts of tourism.	Partner
	1.4 Implement the Shire of Denmark's Sustainability Strategy and ensure that it incorporates sustainable tourism initiatives.	Lead

An Action Plan for this priority area has been produced for Council and will guide implementation of the Strategy.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Current situation

The Shire of Denmark's stunning natural landscapes and unique biodiversity and ecosystems are the primary reason why many people are drawn to visit – and in some cases settle down and reside – in the shire. Much land within the shire is classified as national parks and nature reserves, including the Walpole Wilderness area managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), and twelve A-class reserves vested with the Shire for the purposes of conservation and public recreation.

The shire's waterways include networks of rivers and inlets and approximately 84km of coastline. Some of these coastal areas – particularly William Bay National Park, Ocean Beach and Lights Beach - are under pressure from increasing visitor numbers at peak periods. While other coastal areas, particularly in the western part of the shire, receive fewer visitors; they too are facing negative environmental impacts due to a lack of planning and infrastructure.

Agriculture is an important industry and the second largest contributor to economic output behind construction. Agribusinesses, including wineries and breweries, contribute to tourism amenity. The shire's rural landscapes and vistas are also an important part of the destination's attractiveness to visitors, many of whom reside in urban settings and enjoy the opportunity to experience rural lifestyles.

Agreed direction

Council has recently adopted the Shire of Denmark *Sustainability Strategy 2021-2031*. The Sustainability Strategy is intended as a guide for sustainable management of internal Shire operations, as well as a broader guide for facilitating sustainable development initiatives within our community. While the Sustainability Strategy refers to the need for a community-centred Tourism Strategy, the accompanying action plan provides no other direct references to tourism. To achieve the vision outlined in this Sustainable Tourism Strategy, there must be closer alignment between the two strategies.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role
The Shire of Denmark's landscapes and natural environment are protected for current and future generations to enjoy.	2.1 Establish partnerships with community organisations to develop a public education program that encourages residents and visitors to manage local resources sustainably. This could include resources such as food, water, travel and transport, materials and products, energy efficiency and waste.	Partner
	2.2 Establish partnerships with community organisations to develop a public education program that encourages residents and visitors to appreciate and protect natural environments.	Partner

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

"The 'tourism product' is what the customer buys; the 'tourism experience' is what they remember."[5]

Image credit: Tourism WA

3. ACCESS & DISPERSAL

Current situation

The shire is primarily a self-drive destination with three main entry points – two on the South Coast Highway (Albany to the east and Walpole to the west) and the Denmark-Mount Barker Road. Although most major attractions are serviced by sealed roads, some tourism areas are still accessed by gravel roads. There is limited public transport to/from the shire, and inconsistent and limited commercial transport services.

While the paths and trails network in the Denmark townsite is well developed, there are some significant gaps or missing links that inhibit walking and cycling access between the town centre and tourism precincts in Weedon Hill, Ocean Beach, Lights Beach, Mt Shadforth and Scotsdale areas. There are few paths and trails in the villages of Peaceful Bay and Nornalup.

There is a lack of wayfinding and directional signage to major attractions and within the town centre, and gateway entry points lack tourism information.

Agreed direction

Improved signage, including the provision of information at key gateway locations and tourism precincts, will encourage visitor dispersal and longer stays, and will assist with congestion management at peak periods.

Improving the paths and trails network, particularly in key tourism precincts, will encourage visitors and residents to walk or ride, thereby reducing the use of vehicles in areas that receive large numbers of visitors. Investigating options to provide seasonal transport to key tourism nodes, will also assist in reducing congestion and improving visitor safety.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role
Visitors have access to and are dispersed across the shire to spread the benefits of tourism and reduce the impacts of seasonality.	3.1 Investigate opportunities for seasonal transport to key tourism nodes.	Advocate
	3.2 Develop and implement a wayfinding and signage strategy.	Lead
	3.3 Improve paths and trails network.	Deliver

4. PRODUCT & EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Current situation

Visitor experiences represent the unique selling points of the region. Together, the tourism products, attractions and experiences drive a visitor's decision to travel to and spend time in the destination. The Shire of Denmark's biggest tourism drawcard is its natural environment and biodiversity, including beaches and national parks and reserves. These natural attractions are supported by a range of food and beverage experiences, arts and cultural attractions, and rural landscapes and vistas.

There is no demand-driver attraction located close to Denmark township. For many travellers, there is therefore no compelling reason to stay overnight in Denmark; it is seen as a sightseeing stop for travellers heading east-west along the south coast. There is a lack of all-weather tourism product and experiences particularly for those times of inclement weather. There are few opportunities to provide visitors with insights into the region's history, culture and biodiversity; and the region's Noongar culture and heritage is poorly communicated to visitors.

The Shire of Denmark's accommodation offering is diverse. However, there is a lack of 4 star and above properties. A significant proportion of the accommodation supply is ageing and there has been little investment in refurbishment or new construction. There is a risk that the poor quality of some properties will negatively impact on destination reputation. There is only one nature-based campground, leaving few camping options outside of caravan parks. There is a high density of holiday homes in some areas/streets in Denmark, which impacts residential amenity and places pressure on housing affordability.

Agreed direction

Council has limited capacity to influence and attract private sector investment in tourism products, services and experiences; these are market-led decisions. However, the Council can encourage tourism investment that aligns with its tourism vision through business-friendly programs such as a concierge service, and via strategic tourism planning that enables development and reduces red tape.

Recognising that tourism depends on quality infrastructure to attract both visitors and investors, Council will continue to invest in recreational assets and infrastructure and community-based events to increase the attractiveness of the destination.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role
Tourism experiences meet visitors' needs and expectations and are true to the brand promise.	4.1 Develop a tourism investment plan* to address product and experience gaps.	Partner
	4.2 Facilitate and support the delivery of events that attract visitors to the shire.	Partner

*A tourism investment plan is a document that identifies opportunities for new tourism development that aligns with the Sustainable Tourism Strategy. It is intended to encourage and assist the tourism industry to accelerate its investment in tourism products, services and experiences that support the vision for sustainable tourism. It should identify essential infrastructure requirements, experience development opportunities (e.g. accommodation, tours, attractions), and destination marketing and promotion needs.

5. CAPACITY & CAPABILITY BUILDING

Current situation

The Shire of Denmark's tourism operators are passionate about their industry and their home. They are motivated by a desire to share the region's unique environment, history, culture and heritage with visitors. They also want to ensure that the Shire of Denmark's environment, history, heritage, and way of life are nurtured and protected.

Although a significant proportion of the shire's business owners are members of the Denmark Chamber of Commerce, a considerably smaller number are members of local or regional tourism organisations. Many feel let down or are disillusioned with the merger of Denmark Tourism Incorporated (DTI) with the Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated (ASCTi).

The low level of membership to either ASCTi or Australia's South West (ASW, the regional tourism organisation), means that many tourism businesses are disconnected from destination marketing campaigns, industry programs, and training and capacity building opportunities. ASW is currently developing a new free engagement level offering for all tourism businesses.

Although the shire has a diverse range of products and experiences, it lacks 'trade-ready' product (i.e. commissionable products that can be promoted and booked by retail and wholesale travel agents). This is one reason why the shire's share of interstate and international visitors is low compared to neighbouring areas.

Agreed direction

Council will continue to support the business development and advocacy programs of the Denmark Chamber of Commerce and other organisations in order to grow the capacity and capability of the region's business community.

Through the Sustainability Strategy, Council will work with community organisations to promote sustainability initiatives that encourage businesses and visitors to reduce their energy and water use, promote a circular economy, and minimise waste.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role
Tourism operators are supported to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and embrace sustainability initiatives.	5.1 Assist tourism operators to develop and grow the region's product and experience offering.	Partner
	5.2 Educate and engage businesses on sustainability initiatives.	Advocate

6. VISITOR SERVICING

Current situation

Visitor servicing refers to the sum of visitor interactions with the destination and its products and experiences across the trip cycle. It includes providing visitors with accurate, impartial, high quality, timely information when and where they need it in order to value add to their experience.

High-quality, impactful visitor servicing occurs in a variety of locations – online and face-to-face. It occurs at different stages of a visitor's journey, including the pre-arrival stage (dreaming, planning, booking, anticipating, en-route), during the visit, and after departure. It includes on the ground servicing in the destination to maximise stay and dispersal; assisting visitors online in their planning and bookings; and connecting with visitors post-experience to gain feedback and encourage them to share their experiences.

The shire's online destination visitor servicing presence (i.e. website, social channels) is limited. The lack of online visitor information is compounded by the closure of the visitor information centre in 2020. Nationally, the issue of the financial viability of the traditional visitor centre model has been the subject of multiple reports. There is general agreement that the model employed by most destinations is "if not broken, then in serious need of a major overhaul. Primarily because of the amount of money invested in VICs [visitor information centres] and Visitor Guides and the very limited return from this investment".[6]

The Denmark Visitor Centre was closed in 2020 by the Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated on the grounds that it was no longer financially viable. With funding support from the Shire, the Denmark Chamber of Commerce is providing a limited-hours, volunteer-based service as an interim measure until a more long-term solution is identified.

Agreed direction

Council commissioned a report into the future operations of the Denmark Visitor Centre. This report recommends that development of a multi-channel visitor servicing model that includes face-to-face services in the Denmark Visitor Centre.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role
Visitors receive accurate, quality, timely information at every stage of the visitor journey, and are made to feel welcome when they visit.	6.1 Ensure provision of face-to-face visitor servicing is cost-effective and returns benefit to visitors, tourism operators and the local community.	Partner
	6.2 Engage industry and community in transitioning to a sustainable model of visitor servicing, using multiple channels to distribute visitor information across the shire.	Partner

7. PLACEMAKING

Current situation

Placemaking refers to the process of planning, designing and managing public spaces to improve the environment and quality of life of communities.[7] It involves working with communities to create places that are attractive to live, work, and visit.

The objective of placemaking in destination management planning is to create places that encourage visitation and increase the likelihood of return visits. For example, investing in infrastructure such as trails, recreation facilities, parks and gardens, events, and arts and cultural precincts. From a sustainable tourism perspective, placemaking needs to be community-driven. In other words, infrastructure development should be based on community aspirations and reflect local culture and heritage.

The Shire of Denmark Strategic Community Plan informs infrastructure planning and development. However, tourism attractions in National Parks are not Council owned or managed, leading to inconsistencies in interpretation, signage, and infrastructure provision across multiple land tenures.

Agreed direction

Interpretation and infrastructure development across the shire should be coherent, consistent and aligned with community values.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role
Tourism and recreation infrastructure development is community-driven and reflects the culture, heritage, and biodiversity of the Shire of Denmark.	7.1 Develop and implement an interpretation strategy. 7.2 Develop a coastal open space precinct plan in partnership with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to guide future development and investment.	Partner Lead

DESTINATION MARKETING

"Marketing is no longer about the stuff you make, but the stories you tell." (Seth Godin)

Image credit: Tourism WA

8. MARKETING & PROMOTION

Current situation

Successful tourism destinations establish a clearly defined tourism brand and image to attract desired visitor markets. Tourism WA, the state government agency with responsibility for marketing and promoting Western Australia to interstate and international markets, recently adopted a new brand position statement for the state – *Spirit of Adventure*.

Australia's South West (ASW) is funded by Tourism WA to promote the entire South West region (incorporating areas within the boundaries of both the South West and Great Southern Development Commissions). ASW works in partnership with local governments and local tourism organisations to build industry capacity and capability and undertake collaborative marketing campaigns focused primarily on WA audiences. Destination marketing is also undertaken by tourism businesses, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), and the Denmark Chamber of Commerce.

Consultation undertaken during the development of this strategy revealed that the 'Discover Denmark' brand has been lost with the creation of the 'Amazing South Coast' (ASC). There was a strong view that the ASC brand is not widely used, nor the benefits or positioning behind it understood. The community do not identify with the ASC brand identity and many tourism businesses are dissatisfied with the way that the Shire of Denmark is currently marketed as a tourism destination.

There is concern that the promotion of the shire's iconic attractions – Greens Pool and Elephant Rocks – by destination marketing organisations and visitors (through social media channels), contributes to congestion, poor dispersal and may lead to environmental degradation and visitor dissatisfaction due to over-tourism.

Agreed direction

Council does not control the image or messaging associated with the way that the shire is marketed internationally or domestically. However, it would like to ensure that there is a coherent and consistent destination marketing presence, and that the messaging associated with marketing campaigns position the shire as a sustainable and environmentally responsible tourism destination of outstanding natural beauty. There is also significant opportunity for the shire to build its brand and position itself as a destination all year round, both in Summer and Winter.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role
Branding and marketing capture the essence of the shire and are supported by industry and community.	8.1 Refresh the destination brand. 8.2 Develop and resource a marketing strategy that positions the shire as a sustainable and responsible tourism destination.	Partner Partner

ENDNOTES

1.   Australian Regional Tourism Network (2012) *The Guide to Best Practice Destination Management*; and Ecotourism Australia "What is Ecotourism Destination Certification?" [online], available at: https://www.ecotourism.org.au/our-certification-programs/eco-destination-certification/

2.   United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) *Sustainable Development* [online], available at: https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development

3.   Tourism WA (2020) *Visitation to Western Australia: Overview year ending March 2020.* Release date: March 2020.

4.   Tourism WA (2020) *Shire of Denmark Overnight Visitor Factsheet 2017/18/19*. Release date: September 2020.

5.   Nancy Arsenault, Celes Davar and Todd Lucier (2011) cited in Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) *Experience Development: Delivering world-class experiences*.

6.   Destination Marketing Store (2019) "Eurobodalla Visitor Servicing Review: Final Report".

7.   Project for Public Places (nd) *What is Placemaking*? [online], available at: https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking

APPENDICES

Background reports that have informed the development of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Appendix	Content	Status
A	**Understanding the Role of Local Government in Tourism** Includes: types of roles performed by local government in tourism, tourism policy and planning, sustainable tourism, destination management, the WA context, role of tourism organisations, local government benchmarking.	Public
B	**Denmark's Visitor Economy** Includes: tourism output, visitor expenditure, local tourism business overview, impact of Covid-19 pandemic, visitor statistics and trends, seasonality, market research.	Public
C	**Shire of Denmark's Investment in Tourism** Includes: financial reports for the Denmark Visitor Centre, public amenities, Parry Beach Campground and the caravan park rental income.	Confidential
D	**Opportunities and Challenges** Includes: An experience audit and evaluation, tourism trends, strengths and opportunities, a competitor analysis, target markets (domestic and international).	Some content is confidential. Redacted version available
E	**Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated Sentiment Report** A sentiment report on the Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated drawn from the consultation process, including online surveys, industry workshops and stakeholder interviews.	Confidential
F	**LGA Benchmarking Report** A report that evaluates benchmarking interviews with 12 LGAs across Australia – discussion focused on strategic tourism planning, tourism organisations, destination marketing, visitor servicing, Council's role and investment in tourism, short-stay accommodation, seasonality and community attitudes to tourism.	Confidential
G	**Business Survey Report** Provides a summary of the results from the Business Operator survey conducted as part of the community consultation.	Public
H	**Community Survey Report** Provides a summary of the results from the community survey conducted as part of the community consultation.	Public