

COASTAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH CAREERS AND BUSINESS SKILLS IN GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE

EVALUATION REPORT

PREPARED BY THE
NATIONAL COASTAL TOURISM ACADEMY
SPRING 2023





VISION: A THRIVING LINCOLNSHIRE COASTLINE WITH A DEVELOPING VISITOR ECONOMY FOUNDED ON BUSINESS GROWTH AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

RATIONALE

Visitor economy and its growth is critical to the Greater Lincolnshire Economy

Coastal economy is acutely seasonal

Mainstream Skills Funding is often not aligned to seasonal economies

Low aspiration, skills gaps and shortages cause a skills barrier to growth

DATA

Visitor Economy is worth over £1.9bn pa to Greater Lincolnshire Economy

1/3 of all nights of holiday accommodation in the EU are sold in July / August

26-37 principal seaside towns in England have an overall level of deprivation greater than UK average. In Skegness 40% have no formal qualifications

OUTPUTS

500 + enrolments

150 + qualifications achieved

60 + courses

50 + businesses engaged

10 local Coastal Champions

2 influential research reports

COASTAL EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS PARTNERSHIP: COLLABORATE, INNOVATE & VISITOR ECONOMY FOCUSED

COASTAL CAREERS

Raising aspirations

Older resident careers

Promoting career opportunities

Skills Transfer / Escalator

Access to FE / HE

SKILLS INNOVATION

Crucial Skills

Seasonal schedules

Fills skills system gaps

Connect with existing opportunities

Apprenticeship development

COASTAL EVIDENCE BASE

Articulate and quantify skills gaps and shortages

Seasonal labour market trends - supply / demand

Pathfinder evaluation

Learn from / compare with other seaside economies

OUTCOMES: THE FOLLOWING OUTCOMES WERE OBTAINED

Greater local recognition and understanding of local visitor economy

Local skills pilot programme - training / jobs for locals to support business growth

Evidence-base of seasonal seaside skills gaps / shortages to compare with data nationally

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, in partnership with Lincolnshire County Council, secured £370K from the Coastal Communities Fund for a Visitor Economy Coastal Careers, Employment and Skills programme on the Greater Lincolnshire Coast.

The primary focus of the bid was to fill skills gaps in the coastal community around seasonal needs, improve the quality of life for residents on the coast and provide a year-round visitor economy, which allows local businesses to grow and become sustainable with a local supply of skilled staff. It was agreed that the project would focus primarily upon the visitor economy sector.

The project sought to provide the resources and support, at the right times, to communities to enable Visitor Economy Businesses and Residents to access employment and develop careers on the Lincolnshire Coast, working with businesses to retain staff through extending the season, improving skills, and raising aspirations.

This was set against a context of a highly seasonal economy, with the aim of:

- Supporting coastal visitor economy businesses to survive and thrive.
- Supporting coastal communities to access employment and develop their careers through raising aspirations and upskilling.
- Providing support in the long term for both employed and unemployed individuals.

The project was initially scheduled to run between July 1st, 2019, and March 31st, 2022. It is founded upon local ownership through engagement with coastal employers, learning providers and wider stakeholders such as DWP, Coastal Developers' Forum, Visit Lincolnshire Coast DBID, GLLEP Employment and Skills Advisory Panel.

There were three key areas of activity that piloted a local response to the unique employment and skills challenges of this seaside coastal strip:

A. Coastal Careers: seeking to raise local aspirations through:

- profiling the career opportunities available on the Lincolnshire Coast
- investigating and piloting greater skills transferability and progression
- considering whether a stronger coastal careers identity or brand would add value.

B. Skills Innovation: seeking to work in partnership with local visitor economy employers to:

- identify, articulate and respond to local skills gaps in the existing workforce and skills shortages in respect of the future workforce
- provide an off-season training programme in Spring 2020 and Autumn/ Spring 2021/ 2022
- foster employability and apprenticeship developments through 'gateway' and other employability support initiatives.

C. Coastal Evidence Base: seeking to make a major contribution to the national evidence base in respect of the challenges faced and potential responses through:

- articulating and quantifying skills gaps and shortages
- understanding seasonal labour market trends
- structured action learning from the project delivery experience and other similar seaside locations.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the project actually ran from July 1st, 2019 to March 31st 2023.

This report provides an overview of the programme, achievements and lessons learnt.



THE PROGRAMME AND KEY LEARNING

To find out more about any aspect of this project, read the case studies or full research reports visit coastalcommunities.co.uk/coastal-communities-fund

COASTAL SKILLS INNOVATION

The project was seeking to work in partnership with local visitor economy employers to:

- identify, articulate and respond to local skills gaps in the existing workforce, and skills shortages in respect of the future workforce
- provide an off-season training programme in Spring 2020 and Autumn/ Spring 2021/ 2022
- foster employability and apprenticeship developments through 'gateway' and other employability support initiatives.

The project also sought to deliver a programme that focused on locally led provision using a breadth and depth of skills providers.

WHAT HAPPENED?

The project had a focus on using local skills providers as well as trialling a mix of traditional and contemporary approaches to skills delivery and training, offering courses in person, online and in hybrid format.

"The employability programme has been a massive source of confidence for me. Starting out I was unsure of how I'd fit in with a work environment such as this, however after a couple of weeks I became part of a team that was all working together to help us all achieve our goals, it's taught me skills that are transferable in any work environment and has prepped me for work later in life"

- Darcy Malpas





WHAT DID WE LEARN?

The project found that there is definitely scope for creativity, innovation and optimism! While some aspects of the Coastal Communities Fund project had to be radically rethought to cope with COVID-19, the results have proven to be important both for innovation and for proof-of-concept.

Whilst training ‘need’ does not easily translate to ‘demand’ and participation, there are a greater number of influences impacting on the decision and availability of individuals and businesses to participate in skills programmes.

Seasonality significantly affects Apprenticeship take-up and limits local career pathways.

Due to the highly seasonal nature of the visitor economy on the Lincolnshire coast with training participation concentrating on the quieter off-season period – there is a super-narrow window of opportunity for training and upskilling.

The highest demand was for newer ‘contemporary’ skillsets – especially bite-size options, with businesses responding better to short, focused training programmes.

Small employers struggle to understand the ROI of skills investment, especially with the impact of seasonal employment.

Flexibility to allow businesses to sign up for one module or masterclass and then add the others on once they’d experienced one of the modules and had a better understanding of the commitment and delivery, proved useful in building engagement with a business.

Where a skills provider worked 1-2-1 with a business to establish an understanding of their needs and build a relationship, engagement was much higher.

The innovative small-scale bespoke employability pilot has proved to be highly effective at supporting employability and personal wellbeing; and it is hoped that in the longer term (post project), even more of these participants will gain local employment and Apprenticeships.

Whilst it is yet to be seen how online training compares to face-to-face training in terms of long-term effectiveness, feedback and engagement would suggest that online delivery could be the answer to increasing participation among coastal businesses.

A structured approach to the overall provision with a reasonable lead-in time, bringing skills providers together, and thus making it easy for any business or resident to know what training and skills programmes are available and when, are key to boosting engagement.

CDI ALLIANCE MASTERCLASSES:

- 100% of attendees found the interactive masterclass useful**
- 64% found the training very helpful (36% found it helpful)**
- 86% thought the training would be immediately useful in their work**
- 98% thought the training would be useful sometime in the future**
- 92% would recommend the training to a friend or colleague**
- 82% liked this type of interactive training delivery**

COASTAL EVIDENCE BASE



Identifying a lack of evidence on seaside economies both nationally and locally, the project sought to build an evidence base to understand:

- Seasonality impacts on business and resident skills and aspirations
- local resident and business community views
- what best practice can be learnt from other areas

In addition, the project makes a significant contribution to the national evidence base in respect to the challenges faced and potential responses by articulating and quantifying specific skills gaps and shortages and understanding seasonal labour market trends.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Two significant research reports were commissioned to:

- Establish a local economy, community and labour market evidence base
- Understand the impact of seasonality, resident and business aspirations and the barriers to participation from individuals and businesses.

The research programme focused on incorporating feedback from across our local coastal community and beyond to understand 'What Works' in coastal regeneration and skills projects. The project benefited from excellent community engagement levels with 63 businesses and 512 residents participating in the research project.



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

The research programme provided a clear picture of the labour market across the Lincolnshire Coast and the impact of Covid-19, refreshing data on local economic activity and employment rates.

It also identified that the aspiration levels for residents on the Lincolnshire Coast were higher than the comparator coastal locations and 61% of under 35s living on the Lincolnshire Coast stated that they are keen to develop and learn new skills.

The most significant barriers to engagement by businesses in skills programmes and training focused on the challenges of “finding out what is available” and “what they are eligible for”. Residents expressed similar challenges in finding out what skills and training opportunities were available to them, but their biggest barriers to engagement focused on the flexibility and timing of existing schemes and the commitment required – these concerns are not unique to coastal communities.

The programme found that there are significant opportunities to increase engagement in skills and training initiatives by targeting support on the willing and making it easier for businesses and residents to understand what is available and by providing clear benefits to engagement.

Making it easier for like-minded businesses to collaborate and share best practice and to identify their next steps to professional development along the learning journey will also help to drive change.

Crucially, the research identified the full impact of seasonality. The Lincolnshire Coast is the most seasonal in England, and the seasonality of the destination is impacting on business development and limiting the opportunities to create a step-change in skills.

COASTAL CHAMPIONS

Ten Coastal Career Champions were used to showcase the range of career opportunities available on the Lincolnshire Coast, provide role models for young people and highlight under-profiled career options.

The aim of the Champions was also to address the negative perception of coastal business innovation through showcasing businesses doing great things to improve skills, sustainability and digital innovation.

WHAT HAPPENED?

- Ten individual Coastal Career Champions' profiles were created and made available for careers, schools and local young people
- The Champions helped profile career opportunities available locally
- Local business Champions were also created in areas such as sustainability, digital innovation and skills investment.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

The suite of Champions' profiles provided excellent examples of diversity in traditional and non-traditional career progression available using fantastic local role models

- Career development is achieved through resilience and personal determination rather than traditional occupational pathways as showcased in a number of the Champions' interviews
- Green career opportunities are emerging on the Lincolnshire Coast, but they are still difficult to recruit to
- There are several beacons of cutting-edge coastal business practice and hidden gems in the business community who are making great progress and happy to share best practice.

The Coastal Champions videos are available on the [Knowledge Hub](#)

GREEN TOURISM TOOLKIT

Following the launch of Lincolnshire's Green Tourism Toolkit, a Green Tourism Ambassador Programme pilot ran from June to December 2022 to further support businesses with the implementation and uptake of 'green' initiatives.

As part of the programme, the Ambassadors undertook a sustainability review of their business, measured their businesses' resource consumption, and attended six interactive training workshops.

The businesses were then supported to implement sustainable practices following the knowledge gained during workshops. Participants have been used as case studies and were awarded a Green Tourism Ambassador Certificate.

Key learnings from the programme:

- Organise the workshops regularly to boost engagement and keep momentum between sessions
- Use the programme to build a network of like-minded businesses who can share best practice
- Review progress and performance annually to illustrate long-term progress and results
- Host workshops at the businesses' locations to add relevance to the themes covered
- Provide potential participants with detailed information on commitment to fully understand the Programme before participating
- When the programme ends, ensure that the Ambassadors are empowered and encouraged to keep driving change in their businesses and in the community by continuing to support their network and revisit the case studies to show continued progress and development



CASE STUDIES

A suite of case studies showcasing businesses that are making great progress in improving their staff skills, training, retention and development was commissioned. The businesses included some on the Lincolnshire Coast that had truly embraced this programme and other businesses from other coastal areas in England. The case studies focused on sharing best practice and top tips to help other businesses replicate success.

Key themes that run across the suite of case studies include:

- Staff training and development is more successful when it is tailored to the individual
- It's important to be flexible and adaptable within the programme delivery
- Listening to the team and customers is key, as well as being transparent and understanding the barriers for all involved
- Focus on quality not quantity
- Seek support and work in partnership with external agencies and partners including local colleges and universities
- Recognise and reward success within the team and the company
- Be clear on the business needs and benefits to the individual
- Businesses that have a “family feel” get much higher engagement
- The importance of engaging and supporting the wider community

To read the case studies visit [here](#).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The success of the project is due to the contributions of individual stakeholders as well as the willingness of all players to collaborate, adapt to challenges and overcome adversity.

The economic impact of the pandemic and the national recruitment challenges faced especially by the hospitality sector have severely affected the fragility of visitor economy businesses on the Lincolnshire Coast and impacted on the ability to deliver the project as originally planned.

Key underlying factors for these challenges include:

- the overall lack of confidence to invest in the local visitor economy
- evidence that local people are now (perhaps unsurprisingly) not prioritising the visitor economy as a career option, considering the extensive sector 'close-down' and furloughing experienced throughout the pandemic; whilst other employment sectors such as healthcare and logistics have grown locally

Despite these challenges, the project has significantly 'overachieved' on outputs such as 'Jobs Safeguarded' (by 200% Non-Vocational Trainee starts (by 300%); Trainees gaining Qualifications (by 100%); and Vocational Trainees (by 10%).

These results, as well as internal Steering Group targets such as 57 businesses supported, 10 Coastal Champions and two highly influential research reports, have made a real difference to the local coastal community and provided excellent funding value for a project that was initially commissioned for 21 months and which, by March 2023, will have been delivered for a period of twice that duration.

The Magna Vitae **Skills Builder Employability programme** has proved to be a great success in terms of employment outcomes for young people and adults previously unable to secure employment due to a range of barriers. Learning from this project has the potential to help coastal communities across the country.

The project's dedicated Knowledge Hub hosts detailed information on this project's workstreams in the public domain to share the considerable learning (on a 'what works' basis) gained from the project.

[To access the Knowledge Hub click here.](#)

Recommendations emerging from the project include, but are not limited to:

- Make it easy for businesses and residents to understand what skills programmes and training are available in their area. Bring together skills providers to build awareness of the overall provision and support cross-promotion of activity
- Undertake ongoing research with businesses and residents to better understand their changing needs and priorities and ensure all interventions are data-driven and evidence-based
- Build a strong steering group and working groups to support the project and build engagement
- Continue to Increase innovation and flexibility in skills programming and delivery to build engagement and trust
- Focus on addressing seasonality to unlock further engagement and growth; this measure will deliver a step-change for the economies in coastal communities

Coastal Communities Fund project performance:

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	FINAL OUTPUT
Non-vocational trainee enrolments	382
Vocational trainee enrolments	206
Accredited qualifications achieved	161
Non accredited achievements	307
Apprenticeships created	3
Trainees into employment	7
Total Achievements	518
Unique non-vocational trainees	189
Unique Vocational Trainees	161
Unique Total Trainees (Non+Voc)	351
Unique count of all trainees	297
Total enrolment	588
Number of cross-provision trainees	52
Businesses Engaged	57
Jobs Safeguarded	244

DEHENNA DAVISON MP, PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE (LEVELLING UP)

“THE GROWTH SPURRING, JOB CREATING CCF PROJECTS THAT YOU’VE RUN IN LINCOLNSHIRE HAVE EXCEEDED ALL EXPECTATIONS... LEARNING THE LESSONS FROM YOUR EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS PROGRAMME WILL BE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO THIS [LEVELLING UP] MISSION’S SUCCESS”

SEE THE FULL VIDEO RECORDED FOR THE COASTAL COMMUNITIES FUND EVENT ON 30TH NOVEMBER 2022.



To find out more about any aspect of this project, read the case studies or full research reports visit coastalcommunities.co.uk/coastal-communities-fund