

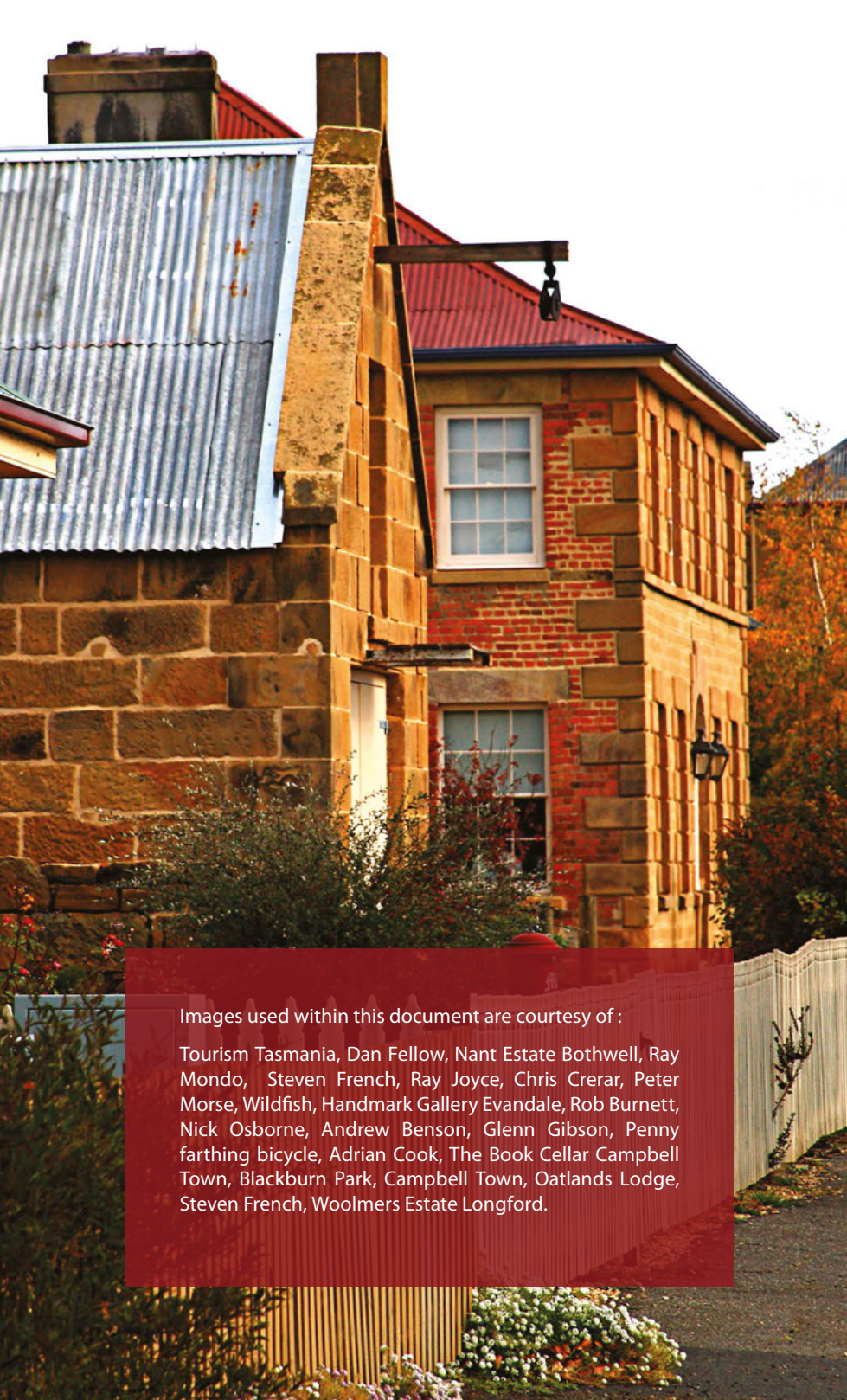


HERITAGE HIGHWAY

Destination Action Plan 2017-2019

April 2017





Acknowledgments

The development of the Heritage Highway Destination Plan has been facilitated by Tourism Northern Tasmania and Destination Southern Tasmania with the support of the Department of State Growth.

The process brought together representatives from all stakeholder groups that benefit from the visitor economy; local government, state government agencies, industry and the community, to develop a plan. This Plan seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities facing the Heritage Highway and to establish achievable affordable priorities that if delivered would increase the destination's competitiveness.

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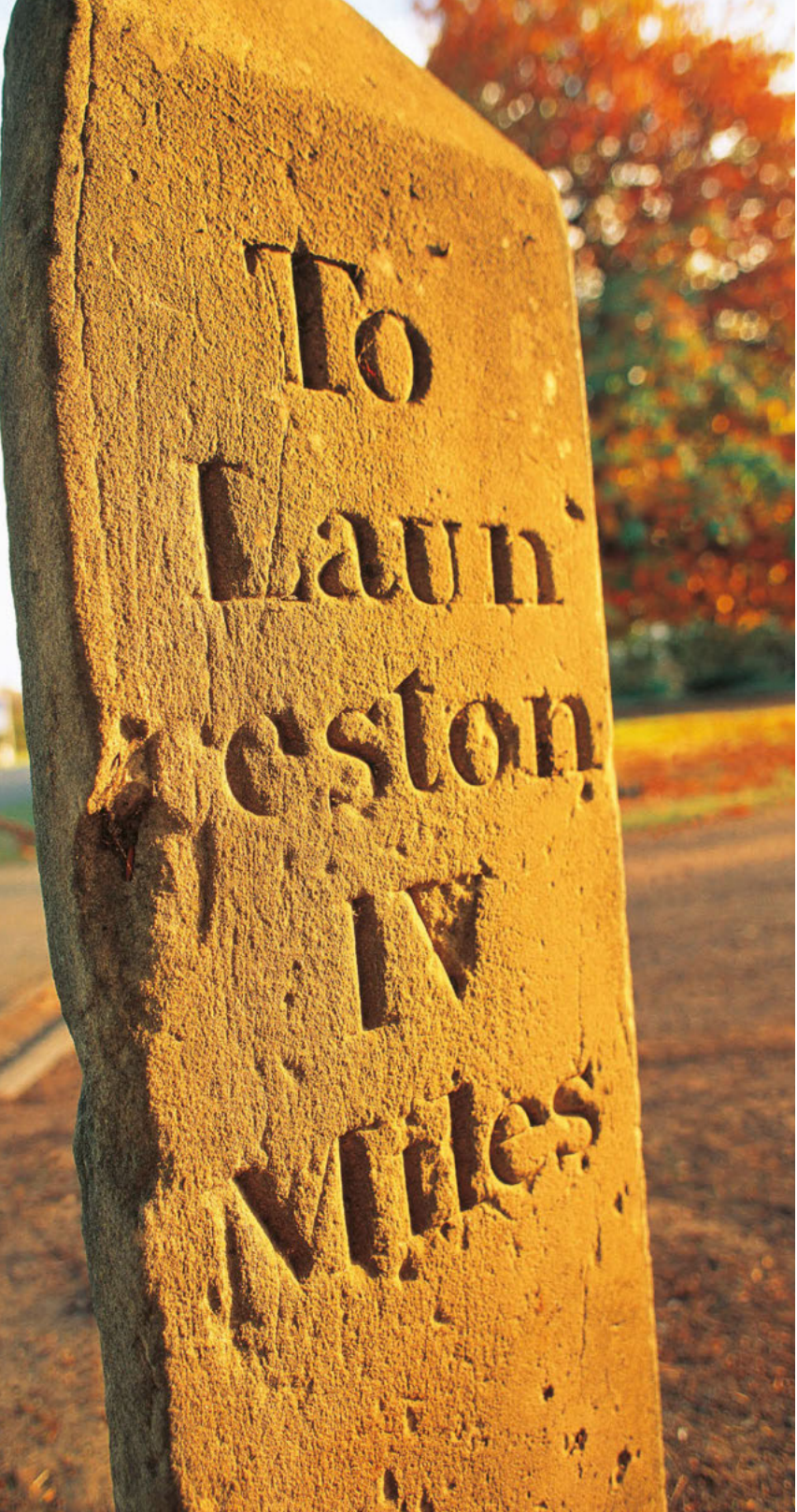
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Introduction

Tourism Northern Tasmania (TNT) and Destination Southern Tasmania (DST) are supporting the Destination Action Plan for the Heritage Highway in recognition of the potential of the region, and to build on the key pillars of the *Northern Tasmanian Destination Management Plan* and the *Destination Southern Tasmania Management Plan*.

The Destination Action Plans are an implementation initiative of the *Tasmanian Visitor Economy Strategy 2015-2020 (T21): Priority #4: Building capability, capacity and community*.

A core strategy is to recognise that visitors to the region are primarily attracted to destinations and experiences. Therefore the development, marketing and management of the region's destinations are pivotal to the success of the whole region.

The Destination Action Plan for the Heritage Highway identifies priority strategies and actions which if implemented over three years will enhance competitiveness of the Heritage Highway as a primary visitor destination of the region. These strategies will also facilitate regional collaboration and cooperation.

The Plan has been prepared by a facilitated workshop process involving business and community representatives who considered and reached consensus on tourism development, marketing and management opportunities and challenges. The group then identified and agreed on the key priorities and actions that would make a positive difference to the growth and sustainability of the Heritage Highway visitor economy and experience.

General description of the Heritage Highway

The Heritage Highway traces much of the original route between Launceston and Hobart, built by convict road gangs in the early 1800s. Known to locals as the Midlands Highway, the Heritage Highway takes in towns and districts, rolling farmlands, charming Georgian villages, Ben Lomond and a rich and colourful history of the place and its people. Access to the Heritage Highway can be from Hobart or Launceston, from the East Coast via Campbell Town or Fingal, or from Port Arthur via Richmond. The main townships along the routes are Oatlands, Ross and Campbell Town.

The visitor economy

Traditionally considered a route more than a destination, a large proportion of Heritage Highway visitors are transitory. Visitors include leisure tourists (intrastate, interstate and international), visitors to friends and relatives, business visitors, students and day trippers. Their expenditure is 'new money' contributed to the local economy which supports jobs, real estate value and the provision of services, facilities and activities in the community.

Interstate and International visitors

In the year ending September 2016, the Heritage Highway welcomed 247,685 visitors from interstate and overseas (a 6.7% increase on the previous year). Of these visitors, 89% were leisure visitors (68% holiday, 21% visiting friends and relatives) and 6% were travelling for business or employment reasons. 18% of interstate and international visitors stayed overnight. Direct expenditure from visitors to the Heritage Highway region is estimated at \$407,194,140 during their stay in Tasmania (this is based on average expenditure per visitor).

For a further breakdown of visitor activity by townships, see below table 1. It should be noted that Campbell Town is the only town that the Highway passes directly through.

Intrastate visitors

Over 73,000 Tasmanians visited the Heritage Highway region during year ending September 2016. Most visitors to the region were day trip visitors rather than overnight. Intrastate data is taken from the National Visitor Survey and must be treated with care due to small sample sizes.

Table 1: Visitor activity by township

Town	Passed through	Stopped & looked around	Stayed overnight/ average no. of nights	Total visitors
Campbell Town	62,525	66,253	4,760/ 1.7	133,538
Ross	30,060	66,597	10,266/ 1.7	106,923
Oatlands	37,167	37,746	10,335/ 1.6	85,249
Longford	24,075	25,717	14,417/ 2.8	64,209
Evandale	29,704	40,436	8,928/ 3.5	79,068

Source: Tasmanian Visitor Survey year ending September 2016, International Visitor Survey year ending September 2016, National Visitor Survey year ending September 2016.

Objectives

The common objectives for tourism are:

1. To increase visitor satisfaction
2. To increase visitor dispersal (geographically and seasonally)
3. To increase visitor expenditure
4. To increase visitor numbers
5. To increase visitor length of stay.





Our challenges

- Lack of vision
- Tas Rail – resisting approval for steam train
- Overcoming negativity and apathy
- Volunteer staff recruitment and support
- State government support regarding the quality and functionality of the highway
- Dangerous speed limit
- Access – highway barriers
- Roadsides – ugly highway
- Lack of support for businesses
- Resourcing increased visitor services to meet expectations
- Poor dispersal ex-Hobart and Launceston
- Roadworks on the highway planned to continue until the mid-2020s
- Lack of promotion/incentive to invest in:
 - Events, accommodation, attractions
 - Maintenance/development of public assets
- Review branding of Highway as part of Tasmanian Visitor Engagement Strategy
- Limited funding available for product development including heritage sites
- Create environment to attract and retain business (e.g. large scale accommodation)
- Accessibility of small/medium businesses to visitors (need to address opening times and retention)
- Transport access – e.g. bus timetables and frequency
- Access to non-township based attractions (need to work with State Growth to create safe and functional road access)
- Better communication and collaboration
- Long term government policy support e.g. Tasmanian Visitor Engagement Strategy
- The MONA factor: shorter stays have increased, affecting dispersal
- Lack of ‘anchor’ attractions and itineraries/packages
- Facilitate business networks
- Tourism Tasmania staff awareness and knowledge of Heritage Highway is low
- Creating demand for Heritage Highway experiences
- Climate change impact
- Limited quality experiences and support for existing ones.



Our opportunities

- Seasonal visitation promotion
- Integration of visitor economy into agricultural sector
- Celebration of the rural landscape
- Overseas exchange rates: US and Europe have increased their market share
- Improve visitor information, engagement and access
- Support and reinvigorate smaller tourism/business groups
- Walking, riding, track experiences
- Heritage crafts/artisan events
- Convict and coaching heritage
- Agricultural shows/rural life
- One highway, one brand, one signage protocols
- Promote the convenience of the Highway – no traffic lights, easy travel times
- Promote access – in or out of Hobart or Launceston
- Build backroad itineraries/experiences
- Heritage education in schools
- Co-operative incentives/packages/ experiences
- Technology – Visitor Information Centre touchscreen; App/GPS enabled
- Whisky and produce touring route
- Water resources – facilities and amenities for water activities such as fishing, bird watching, etc. (e.g. Lake Dulverton)
- Business travel – meetings, pre and post conference programs
- Steam train service
- Film festival and other events
- Facilitation of large scale accommodation developments
- Aboriginal heritage
- Wool heritage.

Success factors

Industry research has established that the following factors are present in successful destinations. The workshop participants considered and rated these factors for the Heritage Highway region. A focus on continuous improvement of all these factors will contribute to how the destination achieves the objectives and implements the priority actions of the Destination Action Plan. This is a guide only and will be a useful benchmark for future assessment of progress.

DIAGNOSTIC RATING

Experience has demonstrated that consistently high performing destinations usually score above 7 on most self-assessed measures.

Characteristics	Rating	Comments
1. Supportive communities which understand the value of tourism	5	Leadership issue. Refer to Priority Action #5
2. Strong local organisations focused on their core role of visitor servicing	5	Refer to Priority Action #5
3. Strong regional organisations focused on their core role of regional marketing and development	6.3	Ensure ongoing collaboration with RTOs
4. Local government support	6.7	Important to continue to build partnerships
5. Strong, consistent and effective leadership by individuals or organisations	7.2	Maintain and support. Refer to Priority Action #5
6. Strategic planning for the region with economic, social, environmental and cultural objectives supported by local destination plans	5	In progress
7. Consistent visitor service excellence	5	Refer to Priority Action #4
8. Research driven cooperative marketing	6.1	Collaborate with RTOs. Refer to Priority Action #1
9. A breadth and depth of tourism infrastructure, experiences and events matched to market demand	5.6	Refer to Priority Actions #2 & #3
10. Risk management plans in place	6.7	Refer to Priority Action #5



Action Plan implementation

The following Action Plan outlines priorities and actions as a guide for stakeholders to collaboratively and cooperatively implement the Plan. To facilitate this, an Implementation Leadership Group (ILG) of representatives will be formed. While the Plan identifies primary organisational responsibilities and in many cases joint responsibility, it is reasonable to expect that the ILG will consider and review this progressively. One key consideration will be the availability and securing of resources to progress the implementation of the Plan in a timely manner. It may also be appropriate and necessary to involve other organisations and to seek funding for specific projects.

The Plan does not commit any organisation to the actions proposed but is a guide to pursuing priorities and actions which will make a positive difference to the achievement of the tourism objectives noted above.

The priority actions have been assigned a KPI priority rating as a guide. These ratings are:

- HIGH** within the first year
- MEDIUM** within one to two years
- LOW** within three years

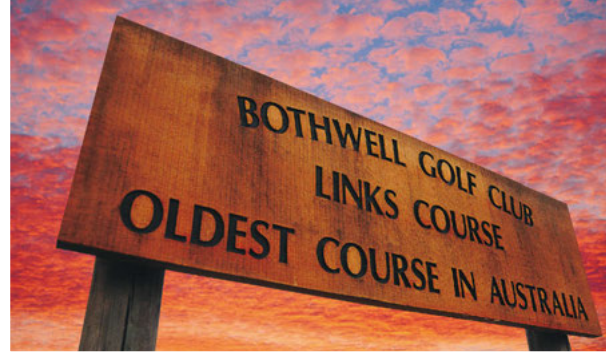
Progress of implementation of the Plan will be undertaken annually by DST in consultation with the ILG. This may result in a revision and updating of the Plan. Regardless, a new plan will be prepared in three years.



Action Plan implementation cont.

The following organisations have been identified to have an important interest in the Heritage Highway and will be encouraged to progressively work together to implement the priority actions.

- DAP leadership group
- Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania
- Ten Days on the Island
- Tasmanian Wool Centre
- Heritage Highway Association
- National Trust of Tasmania
- Chambers of Commerce
- UTAS School of Architecture (Ross)
- Northern Midlands Council
- Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association
- Business Groups
- Tasmanian Superfine Merino Group
- Southern Midlands Council
- Fruitgrowers Association (Farm Guide)
- Longford Business & Tourism Association
- Schools
- Brighton Council
- Woodsdale Museum
- Northern Midlands Business Association
- Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery
- Tourism Northern Tasmania
- Regional Arts Groups
- Town-based Tourism Associations
- University of Tasmania (history)
- Destination Southern Tasmania
- Arts Tasmania
- Rural Youth



PRIORITY 1 Destination marketing

Actions

1. In consultation with community and stakeholders undertake a Brand Health and Positioning study of the midlands, Heritage Highway and individual town identities.
2. Develop and encourage collective use of a brand style guide by business and community organisations for all market communications.
3. Continue to review and build on existing digital assets and content of Tasmania's Midlands and both RTO:
 - Maintain consistency with the brand and positioning
 - Ensure content is locally authored and maintained to reflect the heritage and living culture, on and off the highway
 - Tell the unique stories linked to attractions, events sites and journeys
 - Champion the use of shared hashtags by all partners to encourage content sharing.
4. Support and advocate for a contemporary best practice wayfinding, visitor precinct and location interpretive system along the highway and the adjoining towns using a combination of technology applications and road signage. Specifically support the Beacon technology trial being proposed for southern midlands towns.
5. Engage with and participate in cooperative marketing programs and activities of Destination Southern Tasmania and Tourism Northern Tasmania.

Responsibilities

Priorities

HH, TNT, DST

High

TNT, DST, HH, Councils

Low

HH, TNT, DST

On-going

Councils, TNT, DST

Medium

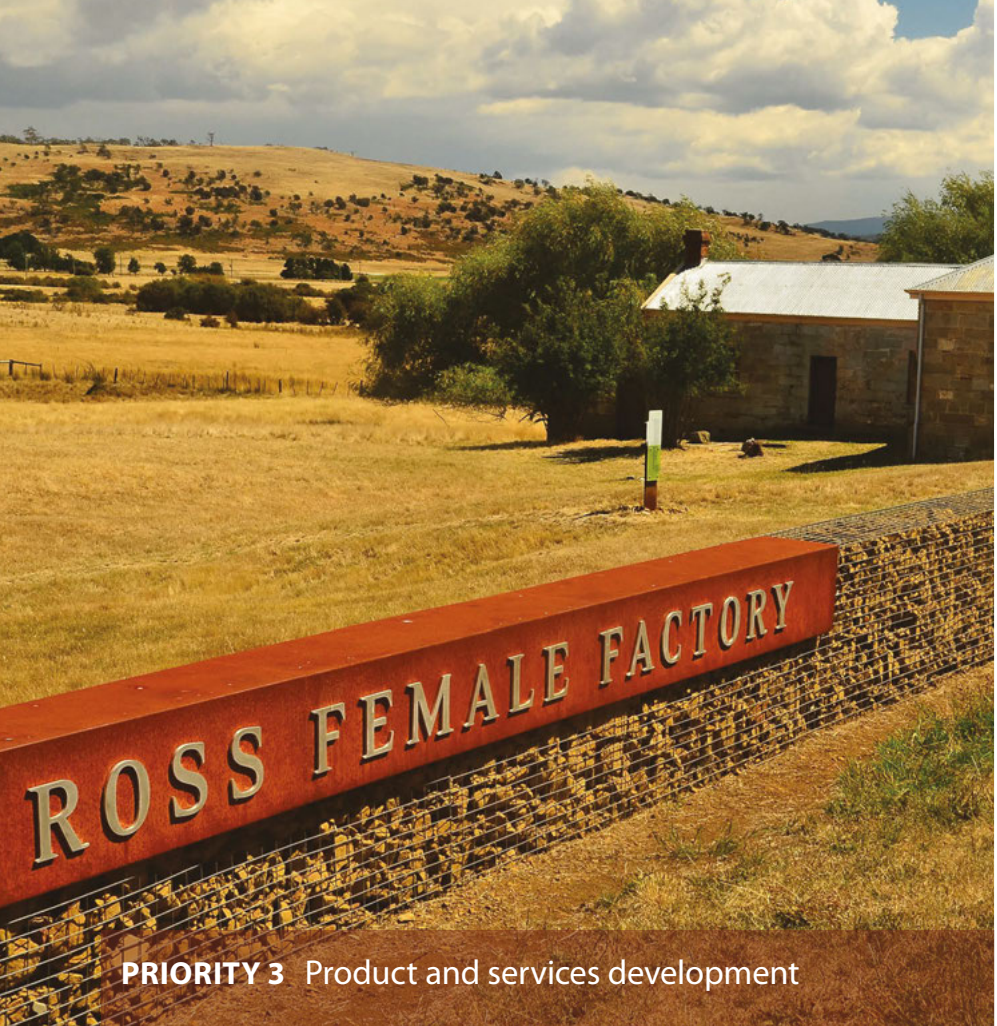
HH, TNT, DST

On-going



PRIORITY 2 Infrastructure development and investment attraction

Actions	Responsibilities	Priorities
1. Consult with state government in developing the highway and roadside environment conducive to enhancing the visitor experience and safety.	DAP Leadership Group	On-going
2. Review & prioritise infrastructure and experience development beyond the Highway to encourage visitors to explore. Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inland fisheries development ▪ Forestry access roads ▪ Buckland Road ▪ Heritage sites ▪ 'Old Highway route' and 'Coach Inn/Homestead' sites interpretation ▪ Visitor amenities and rest points ▪ Walking and cycling trails. 	Councils	Low to Medium
3. Support and consult with Councils in attracting new investment and the structured planning for villages in the Midlands.	Councils Department of State Growth	Low to Medium
4. Develop unique and contemporary enhancement of and linkages between existing outdoor interpretive art installations throughout the Midlands, such as topiary, silhouettes and chainsaw sculptures.	Arts Community Groups	High



PRIORITY 3 Product and services development

Actions	Responsibilities	Priorities
1. Support opportunities for continuous development of existing heritage sites to provide active and immersive differentiated and unique experiences, events and activities.	DAP Leadership Group, working with National Trust and LTA	On-going
2. Support opportunities in the central district that create significant signature experiences to attract visitors.	DAP Leadership Group	On-going
3. Support new and existing events that add value to the visitor experience and attract visitors, particularly during quieter periods, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vintage car rallies ▪ Visual Arts ▪ Agriculture/rural life ▪ Heritage crafts and artisans ▪ Steam train experience 	DAP Leadership Group	On-going



PRIORITY 4 Visitor engagement and services

Actions	Responsibilities	Priorities
1. Consider the Tasmanian Visitor Engagement Strategy implementation opportunities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gateway Visitor Experience Hubs at Hobart and Launceston airports ▪ Road signing and wayfinding ▪ Local Visitor Information Centres and services development ▪ Digital technology, content creation, moving imagery. 	Department of State Growth	High
2. Develop and implement a visitor service development program to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular famils for operators, community and business organisations and Visitor Information volunteers ▪ Seamless whole of region seamless information and ‘cross promotion’ processes and practice ▪ Visitor service training, education and mentoring featuring case studies, guest speakers, webinars and business networking functions ▪ Recognition and awards ▪ Consider Tasmanian Hospitality Association, Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania and Skills Tasmania programs. 	Business Groups by town/ DAP Leadership Group	High
3. Undertake an audit and develop an ongoing program to access online review sites (e.g. TripAdvisor, ReviewPro) and social media to determine what visitors say about the destination and its accommodation, attractions and services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage operators to engage with these sites ▪ Publish results regularly via a ‘Visitor Service Dashboard’ ▪ Educate operators on how to use and respond to online and social media reviews ▪ Benchmark and set targets for continuous improvement. 	HH, DST, TNT	High



PRIORITY 5 Leadership

Actions

1. Consider an appropriate launch of the DAP to engage industry and community.
2. Consider establishing a leadership development program to encourage active leadership among current operators but also to engage the next generation of industry/community/visitor economy leaders. Seek to involve schools in the DAP implementation and leadership development program.
3. Establish a coordinated communication program to raise awareness and understanding in the community of the value of the visitor economy.
4. Encourage local governments to include consideration of the visitor economy in emergency and risk management strategies and programs, including mitigation and recovery strategies.
5. Establish, or participate in a regional or state-initiated annual or biannual program of operator and industry/community leader visits to other destinations (both in Tasmania and on the mainland) to identify ideas and opportunities for product development, especially heritage attractions.

Responsibilities

Priorities

DAP Leadership Group	High
DAP Leadership Group	High
DAP Leadership Group	High
Department of State Growth	High
DST, TNT	Medium