

Cabinet

30 May 2012

**Visit County Durham Business and
Operational Plan 1 April 2011 – 31 March
2014**



Report of Corporate Management Team

**Ian Thompson, Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic
Development**

**Councillor Neil Foster, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Regeneration
and Economic Development**

Introduction

- 1 The purpose of this report is to present the updated Visit County Durham Business and Operational Plan 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2014.

Background

- 2 Visit County Durham (VCD) is the tourism management agency for County Durham working on behalf of businesses and public agencies. It came into being on 1 April 2006 and was the subject of a report to Cabinet in 2010 regarding changes to structural arrangements following the removal of funding from One North East for tourism activity.
- 3 The structural arrangements involved Durham County Council transferring the staff from Visit County Durham to its employment to retain their expertise in developing the tourist economy. The Council also aligned budget to this team. The company, Visit County Durham, provides essential links with the private sector and through the Board, sets the strategic direction for the visitor economy.
- 4 With strategic responsibility for tourism, Visit County Durham performs the functions of destination management and marketing in the county to grow the visitor economy using the eight priorities/objectives contained in the Durham Tourism Management Plan (DTMaP). These objectives are:
 - a. Manage and maintain the public realm for visitors;
 - b. Optimise the potential of Durham City making it a viable 48 hour stay;
 - c. Increase spend by implementing a step change in the quality of the visitor experience;
 - d. Develop local distinctiveness in line with the destination brand;

- e. Tackle seasonality by focusing on events and business tourism;
 - f. Grow the profile of the county regionally and nationally;
 - g. Extend length of stay by optimising the potential for the county's market towns and town centres;
 - h. Increase the contribution of Durham's rural areas to the overall value of the county's visitor economy.
- 5 Underpinning all the objectives are the principles of sustainable tourism, particularly in a rural county where the natural landscapes and an historic city are central to our visitor offer. Sustainable tourism, now rechristened 'wise growth', uses a framework known as VERB, which ensures that development is balanced between the needs of the **V**isitor, the **E**nvironment, **R**esidents and **B**usinesses and delivers benefits for all.
- 6 The strategic framework in which Visit County Durham operates is set at the national level by the Government's Tourism Policy, issued in March 2011 and is complemented by Visit England's strategy for England published in 2010 that sets out four objectives to guide activity at the national, regional and sub-regional levels:
- a. To increase England's share of global visitor markets;
 - b. To offer compelling destinations of distinction;
 - c. To champion a successful, thriving tourism industry; and
 - d. To facilitate greater engagement between the visitor and the experience.
- 7 Although the national strategy has yet to be translated into priorities for the North East of England by the new Local Enterprise Partnership for the purposes of the Visit County Durham Business plan it is assumed that regional priorities for the visitor economy established by One North East will be adopted by the new LEP, which identifies two regional objectives:
- a. To improve visitor yield; and
 - b. To reduce seasonal and spatial disparities in visitor arrivals and receipts.
- 8 The Visit County Durham business plan was presented to the VCD Board on 10th April 2012 and formally agreed.

Recommendations and Reasons

- 8 It is recommended that Cabinet endorse Visit County Durham's Business and Operational Plan for the period 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2014.

Contact: Melanie Sensicle Tel: 03000 261219

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance –

As part of its commitment to developing the tourist economy, Durham County Council has employed and retains staff originally employed by the company, Visit County Durham. It has aligned a budget to this team for the development of the visitor economy. Some limited funds are grant funded to the company under the terms of a grant agreement to cover its independent functions. The terms of this grant involve compliance with a number of objectives which are closely monitored by Durham County Council.

Staffing –

There are no staffing implications from this report

Risk –

Any identified risk to be included in a Risk Register with the impact and mitigation noted.

Equality and Diversity –

N/A

Accommodation –

N/A

Crime and Disorder –

N/A

Human Rights –

N/A

Consultation –

Consultations will be undertaken as and when required through the appropriate channels.

Procurement –

Key projects as identified and subject to DCC protocols.

Disability Issues –

N/A

Legal Implications –

This report outlines the legal relationship between the company, Visit County Durham and the County Council.