

Visit County Durham

Business and Operational Plan 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2014

February 2012

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Chief Executive
February 2012

1. Context

The vision for County Durham as a visitor destination is:

By 2015 Durham will offer a visitor experience that matches or exceeds the best offered by England's premiere county destinations.

The county will fulfil its potential as one of North East England's lead destinations, attracting visitors to the region from across the UK and from target overseas markets.

By 2020 the county's visitor economy will comprise 17% of the county's economy making a significant contribution to improved economic performance.

Achieving this vision at a time of reducing investment and significant change will be challenging. However County Durham has been bucking regional and national trends in recent years and in 2010 was the fastest growing destination in the North East in terms of volume and value so there is room for optimism.

In order to achieve this vision, the county's visitor economy is developed using The Durham Tourism Management plan (DTMaP) that contains 8 priorities/objectives:

- 1 Optimise the potential of Durham City making it a viable 48-hour stay;
- 2 Increase spend by implementing a step change in quality of the visitor experience;
- 3 Develop local distinctiveness in line with the destination brand;
- 4 Tackle seasonality by focusing on events and business tourism;
- 5 Grow the profile of the county regionally and nationally;
- 6 Extend length of stay by optimising the potential the county's market towns and town centres;
- 7 Manage and maintain the public realm for visitors;
- 8 Increase the contribution of Durham's rural areas to the overall value of the county's visitor economy

Underpinning all the objectives are the principles of sustainable tourism, particularly in a rural county where the natural landscapes are a major asset and our heritage city is a national attractor. Both are central to our visitor offer. Sustainable tourism, or 'wise growth', uses a framework known as VERB, which ensures that development is balanced between the needs of the Visitor, the Environment, Residents and Businesses and delivers benefits for all.

The strategic framework in which Visit County Durham operates is detailed in Appendix 1.

From April 2012, Visit County Durham will become responsible for place marketing, promoting County Durham as a place in which to live, work, invest, study and to visit. A place marketing framework and associated action plan will be created through 2012

2. Purpose

Visit County Durham plays a central role in helping to achieve the vision for the county's visitor economy by contributing to the Durham Tourism Management Plan's eight objectives. Our purpose can be summed up as:

To create wealth by providing support and opportunity to everyone working in the county's visitor economy.

3. Role, approach and functions

Visit County Durham's role is to provide a focus for development of the county's visitor economy, supporting a very wide range of individuals and organisations to contribute to achieving the priorities in the Durham Tourism Management Plan. We carry out activity that can be broadly termed destination management.

Our approach is to be visitor-focused at all times. What the visitor to the county understands, needs and expects from a visit must be clearly understood and acted upon in order to attract people to visit and ensure we provide the best possible visitor experience. Our visitor focus has been translated into the mantra 'it's all about our visitors'.

We undertake seven core functions and for each act as either as a 'facilitator', bringing people and organisations together to make things happen; or as a 'deliverer', undertaking activity directly and running projects.

Our seven core functions are:

1. Strategic Direction - to provide effective leadership for the sector and manage the framework for visitor economy development
2. Research, market intelligence and performance evaluation – to take an objective, evidence-based and visitor-focused approach to the development of the visitor economy
3. Representation and communications – to represent the county regionally and nationally and in particular the interests of the tourism industry
4. Stakeholder relations and networks – to work in partnership with the full range of public and private organisations that impact on the visitor economy and facilitate joint working within and between the sectors that make up the visitor economy
5. Business engagement and support – to provide support, advice and networking opportunities for businesses to help them improve their performance
6. Destination marketing and visitor information management – to communicate the county's offer to potential visitors and ensure that visitor's information needs are met
7. Product development – to support and deliver initiatives that will improve the visitor experience

A summary of how we apply these functions to the Durham Tourism Management Plan objectives is provided below.

Objective 1: Optimise the potential of Durham City making it a viable 48-hour stay

Significant capital development is required to deliver on this priority from both the public and private sector. The visitor offer needs more breadth and depth in terms of both its leisure and business tourism product as well as an improved quality of existing product. Visit County Durham's contribution is to support, and where necessary initiate, visitor oriented regeneration projects including new visitor attractions, meetings facilities and major festivals and events as well as support partners who own and manage product to develop and improve the offer.

Objective 2: Increase spend by implementing a step change in quality of the visitor experience

Case studies show that improving quality, both physically and in terms of service, increases visitor spend and contributes to the profitability of tourism businesses. Visit County Durham's contribution to improving quality across the county is to lead on all tourism specific quality initiatives and support partners that are delivering quality improvement in visitor related sectors such as retail and food and drink. Provision of good quality information post arrival through a range of traditional channels and interactive technologies will make a major contribution to this priority - our contribution to improving service is to support partners to deliver visitor welcome activity.

Objective 3: Develop local distinctiveness in line with the destination brand

Visitor research shows that local distinctiveness plays a role in differentiating a destination from its competitors and makes a significant contribution to a positive visitor experience. Visit County Durham's contribution to this objective is brand development and management, creating and supporting brand champions throughout the county, developing the brand tool kit and promoting its use, growing the county's on-brand image bank and ensuring that we promote the brand through all our destination marketing work. The place brand and the four visitor-focused geographical areas (Dales, Vale, City and Coast) are central to achieving this objective.

Objective 4: Tackle seasonality by focusing on events and business tourism

As a principally rural destination, Durham faces the challenge of seasonality, particularly in the Dales where the influence of the university-driven VFR market is less apparent. Seasonality can prevent employers from investing in their staff and product which impacts negatively on the visitor experience. Solutions include planning the county's events calendar to stretch the tourist season into the shoulder and off seasons and supporting the growth of business tourism which fills the gaps that leisure tourism leaves. Visit County Durham's contribution is to play an active part in the planning and delivery of events, utilising festivals and events in the planning and delivery of destination marketing and supporting the county's venues to grow our share of the meetings market. We also aim to grow product for the meetings market.

Objective 5: Grow the profile of the county regionally and nationally

Durham is becoming better known in the UK and the city in particular is more often placed in the top ten UK heritage destinations than previously. However, there is still work to do to put Durham into the list of 'must visit' destinations for the majority of UK residents and our visitor profile remains dominated by a large percentage of repeat visitors from the local area. To increase the economic contribution of visitors in a sustainable way we must grow our national profile to attract more first time staying visitors. Visit County Durham's contribution is two-fold: to deliver destination pre-arrival marketing for the county including supporting Visit England in national marketing activity; and help develop new products, both events and infrastructure, that have national recognition and pulling power.

Objective 6: Extend length of stay by optimising the potential of the county's market towns and town centres

Visitor research shows that market towns hold significant appeal for visitors and can perform the dual role of attracting people out of urban centres and providing a service centre for people on rural holidays. Visit County Durham's contribution is to provide the visitor-focused content for town development plans, support towns, especially market towns that have visitor specific action plans and deliver those elements of the action plans where we are best placed to do so. We will also support wider place making developments to ensure that where appropriate they take the visitor into account. [this may change in line with changes to the Durham Tourism Management Plan]

Objective 7: Manage and maintain the public realm for visitors

This function is delivered principally by the county's unitary authority, Durham County Council and by landscape management partnerships. At a more local level public realm is a concern of town council's, parish council's, community groups and area action partnerships. Visit County Durham's contribution is to support the authority and other partners by providing market intelligence so that the needs of the visitor can influence public sector planning and investment and ensure that the needs of the visitor are clearly articulated and understood by members and officers and taken into consideration across the range of policies, strategies and functions that impact on the visitor economy.

Objective 8: Increase the contribution of Durham's rural areas to the overall value of the county visitor economy

Ninety percent of Durham is rural (as defined by DEFRA) and, in common with other rural areas of England, tourism plays a vital role in creating jobs and sustaining rural communities. Research shows that both the Durham Dales and the Durham Heritage Coast benefit less from tourism than the city or the vale (the county's central corridor). Yet both are major assets for the county and offer opportunities to people seeking rural short breaks, places to walk and cycle and locations for main holidays. Visit County Durham's contribution to this priority is to ensure that the evidence base for rural development is as robust as in urban areas (which often easier to quantify and analyse), to support the landscape management partnerships to develop visitor-friendly policies, strategies and action plan and to play an active part in a range of rural-focused groups that are seeking to sustain rural communities.

4. Activity

Visit County Durham's action plan describes more precisely what we will do in 2012-13 to contribute to the delivery of the Durham Tourism Management Plan. These are presented as a table, Appendix 2. Each action relates to one of our 7 core functions.

5. Company structure

Visit County Durham is a third sector organisation that operates as a partnership. The context in which we work is provided in Appendix 1.

Leadership

Visit County Durham's CEO provides leadership for the organisation's activities and directs people, partnerships and resources accordingly. She also leads within Durham County Council on the visitor economy, represents the interests of tourism in related county-focused partnerships and supports the Board.

The Visit County Durham Board complements the CEO by providing strategic direction, and, critically, ensuring the organisation is responding to the needs of our visitors and stakeholders. The Board brings with it a level of objectivity and independence.

Developing and managing the county's tourism management plan is a key role for Visit County Durham and one that is endorsed and valued by our partners and stakeholders. The Durham Tourism Management Plan is managed by the Durham Tourism Management Plan Committee which comprises private sector directors of the company, co-opted members with specialist skills and knowledge, senior officers from Durham County Council and the development staff of Visit County Durham. It is chaired by Visit County Durham's CEO.

Executive

The team is 21 strong and divided into five divisions (see Appendix 3 for staff structure).

The destination marketing function is embedded in the place marketing team.

Visit County Durham Board

Visit County Durham's board consists of 10 directors comprising a private sector chair, Visit County Durham's chief executive, 6 private sector non-executive directors (one of whom is vice chair) and 2 public sector non-executive directors. All private sector non-executive directors are selected according to Nolan principles based on their experience, expertise and skills relevant to the work of Visit County Durham. The two public sector non-executives are appointed as of right and are the County Council's cabinet portfolio holder for Economic Development and Regeneration and the Corporate Director for Regeneration.

The board meets 5 times each year with additional, extraordinary meetings as required. Directors are also members of the Board's Audit/Remuneration/Nominations/Durham Tourism Management Plan committees.

The company seeks to comply with the UK Combined Code of Corporate Governance as well as the principles set out by the Nolan Committee. All board members are expected to assist in such compliance.

6. The Partnership

Visit County Durham adopts a partnership approach to all of its functions. Since its inception in 2006 Visit County Durham has established or joined coalitions of organisations and individuals from the private and public sectors who agree to work together for a common aim or a set of compatible aims, and who share resources and responsibilities and agree to work in a co-operative and mutually supportive fashion. A complete list of all the groups, forums, organisations that Visit County Durham staff are members of is provided as Appendix 4.

SUB REGIONAL

County Durham Economic Partnership

Visit County Durham is a member of the County Durham Economic Partnership (CDEP) which comprises over 50 public, private and voluntary sector organisations involved in the economic development and regeneration of the County. Through membership of the partnership Visit County Durham seeks to influence economic strategy and policy, promoting the opportunity for economic success that the visitor economy presents and supporting partner organisations to contribute to the development of the county's tourism offer.

Visit County Durham staff are members of all but two of the Economic Partnership's working groups and focus our staff resources on three in particular: the Business and Enterprise Working Group and the Place Shaping Working Group and the Rural Working Group.

As a partnership itself, Visit County Durham performs the function of a 'Working Group' of the Economic Partnership. We endeavour to assist our partners to recognise the potential of tourism within their own context, and in turn stimulate collective leadership to maximise its future potential. (See Appendix 5 for Visit County Durham's position within the Economic Partnership structure.)

The County Durham Economic Partnership is one of five thematic partnerships that work towards achieving the objectives of the County Durham Partnership. Its remit is wealth creation.

Cultural Partnership

The CEO of Visit County Durham is a member of the county's Cultural Partnership Board. Two private sector directors are also members of this board in their capacity as leaders of their own organisations. The CEO also provides the link between the Cultural Partnership Board and the Economic Partnership Board.

The Cultural Partnership comprises a board of 10 led by an independent chair that in turn supports a wider forum of many of the county's cultural organisations. The county's cultural programme is an important component of the visitor offer.

Visit County Durham convenes, chairs and facilitates the county's events forum, circa 70 members, who are also members of the Cultural Partnership.

Durham County Council

Durham County Council, following central government cuts, employed the staff originally employed by Visit County Durham. The Council has aligned a budget to develop the County's visitor economy. The pool of specialist expertise ensures that staff with relevant knowledge, skills and expertise in developing the visitor economy, continues to exist.

The company provides essential links with the private sector and, through the Board, sets the strategic direction for the visitor economy. This arrangement ensures that the approach to the county's visitor economy is a true public/private partnership. The company's CEO is a member of the council's economic development management team. (See Appendix 6 which shows Visit County's Durham's position within Durham County Council's structure).

Senior county council officers are members of the Durham Tourism Management Plan Committee and both the Corporate Director for Regeneration and Economic Development and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development are company Board Members.

Support for elected members is provided by the Chief Executive principally through the Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee but also in a number of subject specific areas and ad hoc briefings and meetings.

Area Action Partnerships (AAPs)

Area Action Partnerships act as a conduit between local communities and Durham County Council in the delivery of services to enable local people to make decisions about their area and lead on local action through their associated locality budgets. There are 14 partnerships, each with a Board made up of elected members from organisations such as the county council, town and parish councils, health, police and fire brigade, community and voluntary groups, and the public. In addition, each AAP has a number of working groups that focus on tighter geographical areas or specific areas of interest. Visit County Durham works with the AAPs that have identified tourism as a local priority (three in total) attending meetings and providing support to the AAP in the form of information, advice and market intelligence.

Destination Management Partners

Five County Durham towns have, with the help of Visit County Durham, produced Destination Development Plans, to help realise their potential as visitor destinations. A sixth for Durham City will be published in spring 2012. The plans are implemented directly or provide visitor economy content for broader town plans. The county's Area Action Partnerships and development partnerships such as the Barnard Castle Vision, as well as dedicated tourism leadership groups coordinate, deliver and monitor the plans. Visit County Durham is a major

partner for each leadership group though we are not members. We participate in meetings and deliver activity where we are best placed to do so.

The development of the city's peninsula is under the remit of the World Heritage Site Management Committee and its two principal institutions, Durham Cathedral and Durham University. Visit County Durham's Chief Executive is a member of the committee and Visit County Durham leads on the strand of the WHS management plan concerned with audience development.

Rural and coastal development and conservation is handled through a range of organisations from the Durham Heritage Coast Partnership and the North Pennines AONB to the Leader+ partnership groups. Visit County Durham has close working relationships with the county's landscape management partnerships. We are members of each and attend their main meetings. We are a delivery partner for the Heritage Coast partnership on visitor economy development. We are also on the LAGs (Leader Action Groups) for both East and West Durham Leader + acting as advisors on the visitor economy and commenting on tourism projects that are submitted to the programme for funding. In many instances we act as a mentor to project proposers, helping to shape their projects where they are tourism related.

BUSINESS NETWORKS

The Durham Business Service and the business support network

Business Durham is a new service from Durham County Council that brings together a range of functions into a single unit that will lead on inward investment, business support to companies from start-up to high growth whilst complying with State Aid rules and managing business space owned by the authority. Visit County Durham supports the Durham business service through its place marketing function (see page 1). Visit County Durham, in particular development and industry services staff, team engages with the wider business support network, including the North East Chamber of Commerce and the Enterprise Agencies, principally through the Business and Enterprise Working Group (see page 7). Our purpose in working with the business support network is to ensure that the needs of tourism businesses are considered by the network and that tourism businesses know about and can access the support that business support organisations provide.

Industry Sector Groups

VCD encourages joint working in the tourism business community and has established five industry sector groups to work together on a range of business improvement initiatives as well as to take a collaborative approach to developing and marketing the county. The following networks have been established and are facilitated and chaired by Visit County Durham:

- Durham Attractions Group
- Durham Events forum
- Durham Marketing Group

The following networks are supported by Visit County Durham either as investing members or as advisors:

- Durham Hotels Association
- Discover Durham

THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

It is difficult to be precise about the size of the tourism industry in the county. It depends on which sectors are included in the tally. The core tourism business sector comprises the following:

- 650 accommodation providers
- 70 visitor attractions
- 20 activity providers

In addition there are approximately 250 visitor facing eating and drinking establishments, 47 transport providers, a significant number of evening economy businesses (bars, pubs, clubs, theatres) and a very wide range of event providers – from those staging nationally important festivals to community based carnivals. All Visit County Durham staff help to engage with the tourism industry and to manage our relationships with tourism businesses. Our industry services team takes the lead.

Tourism Associations

Durham has five established tourism associations:

- The Weardale Visitors Network is the only established visitor-focused network that comprises mainly tourism businesses. They meet monthly.
- The Upper Teesdale Tourism Association is a new network for 2011.
- Teesdale Marketing is a private sector association that has an interest in tourism and delivers tourism projects for the dale, though its membership is much broader than just tourism businesses.
- Middleton Plus is similar in composition and purpose to Teesdale Marketing.
- Destination Seaham is a new grouping of people and businesses dedicated to driving delivery of the town's destination development plan.

Visit County Durham provides information and support, attends meetings and helps to link existing and new projects together through the associations.

Visitor Information Network

In 2011-12 Visit County Durham established a new network in the county focused on delivering quality information to visitors so that people are encouraged to stay longer and spend more in our economy.

The network will launch in April 2012 and comprises 14 level 1 information partners and 14 level 2 partners plus the existing Visit County Durham contact centre. The 28 partners in the network range from private sector businesses such as Dalton Park and community facilities including the NeST in Barnard Castle to tourism associations such as Middleton Plus and university owned facilities such as the World Heritage Site Visitor Centre.

REGIONAL

Northern Tourism Alliance

This Alliance has emerged as a new grouping of destinations in the North East that are seeking to work collaboratively to the benefit of the North East visitor economy and of the individual organisations that comprise its membership.

The membership is currently: Visit County Durham, Newcastle Gateshead Initiative, Northumberland Tourism, Hadrian's Wall Heritage Ltd and the North East Hoteliers

Association. Representatives from Tees Valley and South Tyneside Council also attend regular meetings.

The Alliance has ambitions to work together on procurement and delivery of projects where economies of scale can be achieved, in particular research and marketing intelligence and to share information around ICT infrastructure and platforms. In addition the Alliance has identified that joint planning of marketing activity is desirable to ensure best use of resources and clarity of message about the region for the consumer.

The Alliance is liaising with the emerging Local Enterprise Partnership on its potential role as the tourism and hospitality sector board for the North East. The Alliance also meets with other northern destinations (Marketing Cheshire, York Tourism etc) twice a year to share information and to deliver coherent messages to Visit England about the needs of northern destinations.

Local Enterprise Partnership

To be completed when information is available

7. Outputs and performance measures

Monitoring and performance measurement at every level is an integral activity of the company that takes place day-to-day supplemented with quarterly and end of year evaluation of specific functions.

The company uses a performance management framework that sets targets and monitors progress towards them quarterly. Provisionally these targets are:

Income	£70,000
Leverage (private sector)	£120,000
Quality of product	tbc when national policy agreed
Value of media work	£3m
No's of visitors to thisisdurham.com and micro sites	500,000
Businesses supported	150
Number of business activity engaged	70% of core businesses
Satisfaction level	80% satisfied (of businesses activity engaged)

Progress against the framework is monitored throughout the year by the company's management team and is reported to the Chair quarterly and the full Board every six months.

Visit County Durham also reports on progress to the Economic Partnership four times a year through Board meetings and in any formal reporting to the County Durham Partnership.

Durham County Council requires that Visit County Durham reports quarterly progress against KPIs written into its Economic Development service plan which in turn feeds into the Regeneration and Economic Development service group plan and the council plan. A number of activities and measures that appear in this business plan have been identified as relevant to the County Council's service plans and are identified internally as the responsibility of the Head of Economic Development and Housing, but to be discharged by the Chief Executive of Visit County Durham:

- Number of businesses engaged in Visit County Durham's work
- Number of tourism businesses in line with national policy on quality

- Development and delivery of signature events
- Delivery of the Bishop Auckland Food Festival
- Establish a framework for marketing the county to key audiences
- Manage the Economic Impact study for tourism
- Consult on, update and communicate the Durham Tourism Management Plan.

The Economic Development Service Plan also asks for footfall in Durham City visitor attractions to be monitored and reported.

Additional responsibilities of the Head of Economic Development and Housing which relate to the work of Visit County Durham are activities aligned under the 5 objectives of the Regeneration Statement (Thriving Durham City, Vibrant and successful towns, Competitive and successful people, Sustainable neighbourhoods and rural communities and A top location for business). For example:

- Encouraging and supporting existing visitor attractions and new visitor attractions (particularly a family attraction)
- Delivery of the North Pennines Food project
- Refurbishment of the Durham Dales Centre
- Creation of a pedestrian suspension footbridge to create an iconic tourism attraction (Barnard Castle)

Visit County Durham’s financial performance is monitored by the audit committee and the company undergoes a full independent audit of its financial processes each year. The finance manager for Durham County Council’s Economic Development division also monitors financial performance on a monthly basis and by the Head of Economic Development and Housing quarterly.

The progress of the destination towards the priorities in the Durham Tourism Management Plan is monitored through the annual programme of evaluation that includes monthly occupancy returns and quarterly footfall counts at 14 visitor attractions. These two data sets are essential for the annual evaluation of the volume and value of tourism in the county. This assessment includes a report for the whole county, plus separate reports for the Dales, Vale, City and Coast. Additional measures include quality of product.

The Durham Tourism Management Plan committee monitors the destination’s progress towards the priorities of the Durham Tourism Management Plan approximately six times a year. This is then reported widely through an annual tourism forum usually held each autumn.

8. Risk register [to be completed by audit committee]

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
Durham County Council reduces budget aligned to the development of the visitor economy	Activity and staffing reduced	Work with Durham County Council on their medium term financial plan Identify areas where costs can be reduced Transfer activity to another organisation

9. Finance

Visit County Durham performs a public service within a collaborative structure. It is reliant on public sector grants to deliver the majority of its work.

The Visit County Durham team is employed by Durham County Council. A small amount of activity delivered by VCD Ltd is paid for through grant to cover relevant activity. This is done under the conditions of a grant agreement and in accordance with the County Council's contract procedure rules. This activity is match funded with contributions from tourism businesses which is also processed through the company.

The company generates income in two ways:

- Utilising our relationship with tourism businesses to generate financial support that contributes to the delivery of activity. This activity is principally marketing activity. Money is pooled and decisions on how to spend it are done in partnership with the tourism industry.
- Earning income through management fees and commissionable services.

In 2012-13 the income target from the private sector is £70,000. This represents private sector contributions towards the production of the post arrival Pocket Guide and tactical destination marketing activity and earned income from accommodation bookings and ticket sales. Earning income through hosting projects will continue to be a component of our income generation strategy.

In 2012-13 Visit County Durham will continue to reshape our functions and in particular the new visitor services functions. At the same time, we will be asked to find savings of £30,000 (tbc) from our core budget to help meet the requirements of the County Council's medium term financial plan. We will also continue to use an allocation of performance reward grant to meet our obligations as a member of the County Durham Cultural Partnership (cultural marketing, support for festivals and events and partnership communications) and plan how to spend £130,000 from the same source to deliver a place marketing framework and associated tools.

Visit County Durham seeks to use its resources to lever funding and in kind support from a range of partners. Between 2012 – 2015 we have the opportunity to lever into the county circa £450,000 of Regional Growth Fund money from Visit England's successful bid for £20m for domestic marketing in England. This will require us to identify and evidence £225,000 of match funding, cash and in-kind, from the private sector.

10. Budget for 2012/13

The core funding from Durham County Council for 2012-13 is £856,966

Appendix 1

The strategic framework in which Visit County Durham operates is set at the national level by the Government's Tourism Policy document issued in March 2011. The approach described to development and support for the visitor economy can be summed up as:

- Removal of red tape across government that holds tourism back
- Supporting the industry to embrace technology
- Improving access to the country from overseas by simplifying visas
- Using significant events such as the Olympics and Diamond Jubilee to profile the UK overseas
- Lengthening the season by moving bank holidays
- Defining destinations based on what the customer understands
- Spreading tourism out of the capital by creating alternative destinations
- Supporting skills development through apprenticeships and courses.

This policy 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, designed to improve England's competitive position domestically and internationally:

- 1 To increase England's share of global visitor markets** – this involves a national marketing strategy, optimising the opportunity of 2012, creating plans for major events and business growth.
- 2 To offer compelling destinations of distinction** – this involves benchmarking, identifying best practice, improving quality and customer satisfaction.
- 3 To champion a successful, thriving tourism industry** – this involves research and intelligence, action plans for seaside resorts and rural areas, a sustainable tourism action plan and implementing the national skill strategy as well as supporting industry effectiveness through engagement and communication.
- 4 To facilitate greater engagement between the visitor and the experience** – this involves modernising visitor information provision, developing e-tourism, developing action plans for transport and infrastructure and focusing on visitor welcome including accessibility.

Durham has been identified by Visit England as one of 15 priority destinations in England which means that where they are able to, Visit England will provide additional investment and support to the county. Durham is included in the priority destination grouping because of its potential to grow and make a significant contribution to the government's ambition, which is:

- for the value of domestic tourism in the UK to increase by 5%
- to rebalance the UK tourism trade deficit of £14 billion per annum.

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 this plan it is assumed that regional priorities for the visitor economy established by One North East will be adopted by the new LEP. The One North East Visitor Economy Strategy identifies two regional objectives:

- 1 To improve visitor yield:** to significantly improve the region's average earnings per visitor
- 2 To reduce seasonal and spatial disparities** in visitor arrivals and receipts.

County Durham prioritises the visitor economy in its Regeneration Statement (June 2010). The focus is on developing the city as an attractor for the whole county, taking a whole town approach to development, business growth in priority sectors, of which tourism is one, and development of the cultural programme which provides product for the visitor offer and platforms for promotion.

County Durham's visitor economy specific plan, designed to contribute to the national and sub national objectives is the Durham Tourism Management Plan (DTMaP) which contains 8 priorities/objectives:

1. Manage and maintain the public realm for visitors;
2. Optimise the potential of Durham City making it a viable 48-hour stay;
3. Increase spend by implementing a step change in quality of the visitor experience;
4. Develop local distinctiveness in line with the destination brand;
5. Tackle seasonality by focusing on events and business tourism;
6. Grow the profile of the county regionally and nationally; and
7. Extend length of stay by optimising the potential the county's market towns and town centres
8. Increase the contribution of Durham's rural areas to the overall value of the county's visitor economy

Underpinning all of these 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.

Progress towards achieving the county's 8 priorities/objectives using wise growth will ensure that the county achieves its vision for the visitor economy, which is:

By 2015 Durham will offer a visitor experience that matches or exceeds the best offered by England's premiere county destinations.

The county will fulfil its potential as one of North East England's lead destinations, attracting visitors to the region from across the UK and from target overseas markets.

By 2020 the county's visitor economy will comprise 17% of the county's economy making a significant contribution to improved economic performance.

Appendix 2 Actions

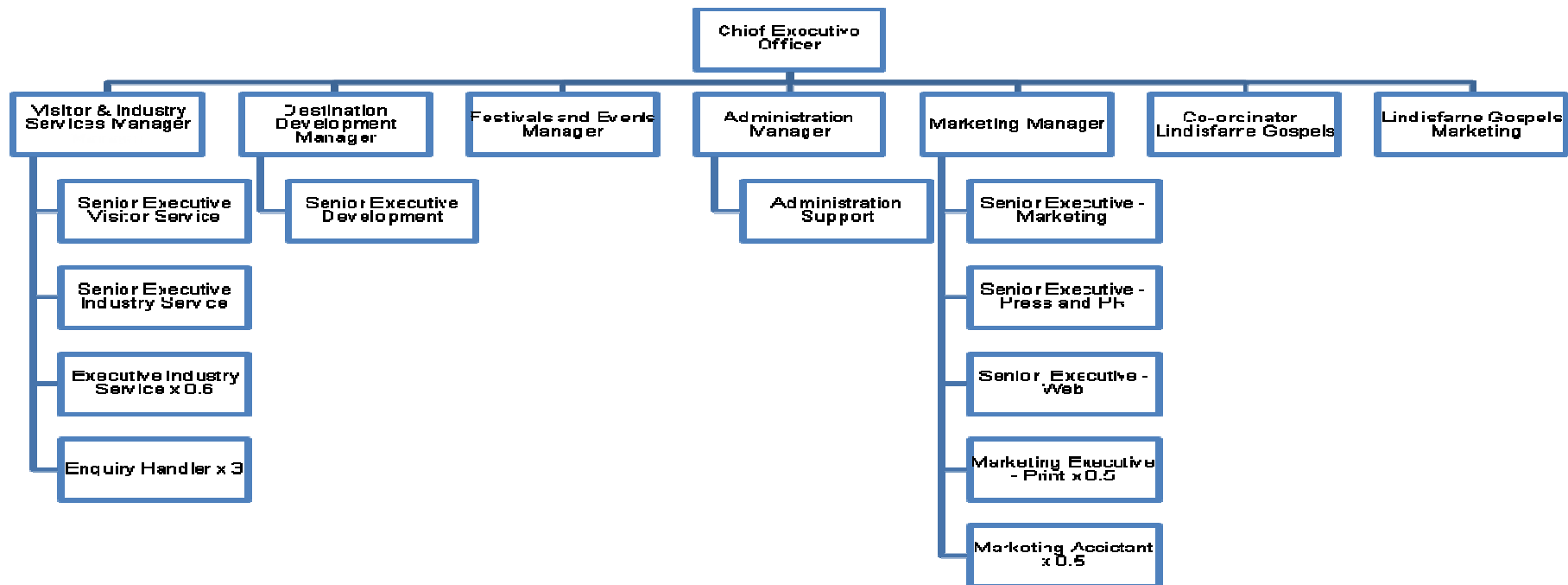
Action	Description	Core Function	Target Completion
Visit England domestic marketing	Deliver in partnership 2012/13 domestic marketing campaigns using regional growth fund money	Strategic Direction and Destination Marketing	March 13
Durham Tourism Management Plan (DTMaP)	New 2012-16 plan published and communicated	Strategic Direction	March 13
World Heritage Site Management Plan	Lead role on audience development for the WHS committee	Strategic Direction	On going
2011 Economic impact study	Management of EIA 2011 for the county's visitor economy and communication of results.	Research & Intelligence	May 2012
Occupancy survey	Implementation of new system for monitoring and measuring occupancy in all accommodation sectors	Research & Intelligence	Dec 2012
Attraction footfall monitoring	Monitor footfall in visitor attractions	Research & Intelligence	July, Oct 2012 Jan, Mar 2013
Segmentation	Follow up study to evaluate progress towards changing Durham's visitor profile	Strategic Direction, Research and Intelligence	Oct 2012
Brand building (moved to place marketing plan)			On going
Destination DMS	Implement new contract with New Mind	Crosscutting	Mar 13
Evaluation	Evaluation of performance against KPIs	Research & Intelligence	March 13 July 12
Printed communications for industry	Printed newsletter (x3)	Business Engagement & Support	Ongoing
On-line communications for industry	Weekly e-bulletin Update of corporate site with forward calendar of events and marketing opportunities for industry	Business Engagement & Support	Ongoing
Events forum	Quarterly meeting facilitated for events organisers	Business Engagement & Support	Ongoing
Durham Attractions Group	Chairing and facilitating visitor attractions group to work in partnership	Strategic Direction and Business Engagement & Support	Ongoing
Cross sectoral marketing group	Chair and facilitation of new group to act as advisors and partners to Visit	Strategic Direction and Business Engagement &	Ongoing

Action	Description	Core Function	Target Completion
	County Durham	Support	
Discover Durham	Participation in Discover Durham travel trade and groups consortium	Marketing & Information	Ongoing
Destination fact sheets	Fact sheets about tourism for public sector partners, journalists etc	Research & Intelligence	June 12
Engagement packs for tourism businesses	Information pack on a range of topics to support tourism businesses	Business Engagement & Support	May 12
Business engagement campaigns	Regular campaigns on main issues for destination aimed at tourism businesses	Business Engagement & Support	Ongoing
Industry conferences	Industry conferences on topics of importance to tourism businesses	Business Engagement & Support	Nov 12/Mar 13
Industry updates/planning sessions	Series of events to update tourism businesses and plan main activity	Business Engagement & Support	April/Oct 12, Jan 13
Networking events for tourism businesses	Smaller events for tourism cluster – social or networking oriented	Business Engagement & Support	Aug 12 and Dec 12
Business improvement initiative	Activity to help businesses improve an aspect of their operations eg on-line booking and ticketing	Business Engagement & Support and Product Development	Sept 12
Contact Centre booking and sales services	New services established and developed	Marketing & Information	March 13
Whatsonnortheast.com	New acquisition, regional database for promotion of arts and culture	Company activity	June 12
Visitor information network development	County-wide network of 28 information partners, 18 information boards and distribution service	Strategic Direction and Marketing & Information, Business Engagement & Support	March 13
Business reports	Individual reports to businesses detailing joint work between them and VCD	Business Engagement & Support	May 12
Post-arrival print	Pocket guide, maps, eating out guide and events guides	Marketing & Information	Jan 13 Sept 12 March 13 May/Sept 12/Jan13
Information management for Destine	Update of existing records and collection and inputting of new records onto regional DMS	Marketing & Information	To annual information and collection plan
National PR	London based PR capacity to	Marketing & Information	April 12/March 13

Action	Description	Core Function	Target Completion
	generate increased national coverage for Durham		
Press work	Hosting press trips to the destination and handling media relations for the destination	Marketing & Information	ongoing
On-line destination marketing	Activity to promote the destination to consumers nationally through development and optimisation of thisdurham.com and to meetings planner and buyers via meetindurham.com Social media networks	Marketing & Information	Sept 12 March 2013 Sept 12 Ongoing March 13
Cultural marketing support	Activity to promote Durham's cultural offer to visitors and residents (See also post arrival print)	Marketing & Information	May 12
CRM	Development of relationship management with individual consumers/visitors to Durham	Marketing & Information	March 13 Monthly
Campaigns	Destination campaigns aimed at raising awareness of destination strength and deliver business to industry	Marketing & Information	Sept-Nov 12
VIP pass	VIP pass to 25 + visitor attractions in Durham for journalists and travel trade	Marketing & Information	March 13
Taste Durham	Quality accreditation scheme for food and drink establishments	Product Development	November 12
Taste Durham	Celebration event and associated promotion of scheme	Product Development	Jan 13
Know Your Durham Coast	Skills and visitor welcome project with Durham Heritage Coast Partnership	Product Development	March 13
This is Durham welcome programme	Industry wide programme to improve customer service in partnership with Bishop Auckland College	Product Development	March 13
Conference facilities	Feasibility study on new/expanded conference facilities for Durham City	Product Development	On going
Bishop Auckland Food Festival 2012	Co delivery of large outdoor event	Product Development	April 12
Bishop Auckland Food Festival 2013	Development and planning of large outdoor event	Product Development	

Action	Description	Core Function	Target Completion
Streets of Durham	August bank holiday city centre event	Product Development	August 12
Lindisfarne Gospels	Destination Development work strand for 2013 event on World Heritage Site	Product Development	March 13 July 12
Income generation	Growth of income from activity and projects	Crosscutting	March 13
Team building	Plan of action to build capacity and cohesion of new team	n/a	June 12
ICT	Transfer of VCD ICT support from contacted company to DCC ICT department	n/a	1 April 2012
Audit	Account and funding audit for 2010-11 Single programme end of project close down	n/a	July 12

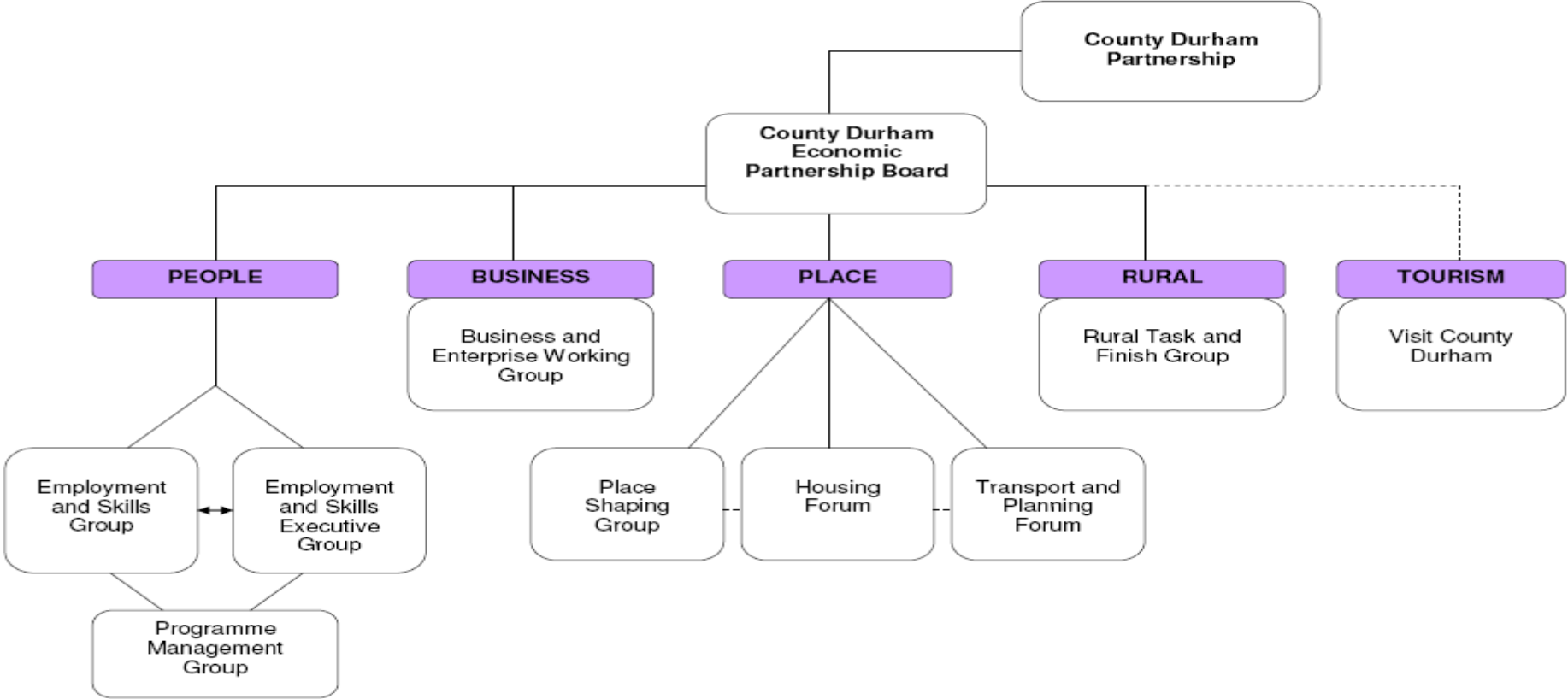
Staff Structure



VCD Representation

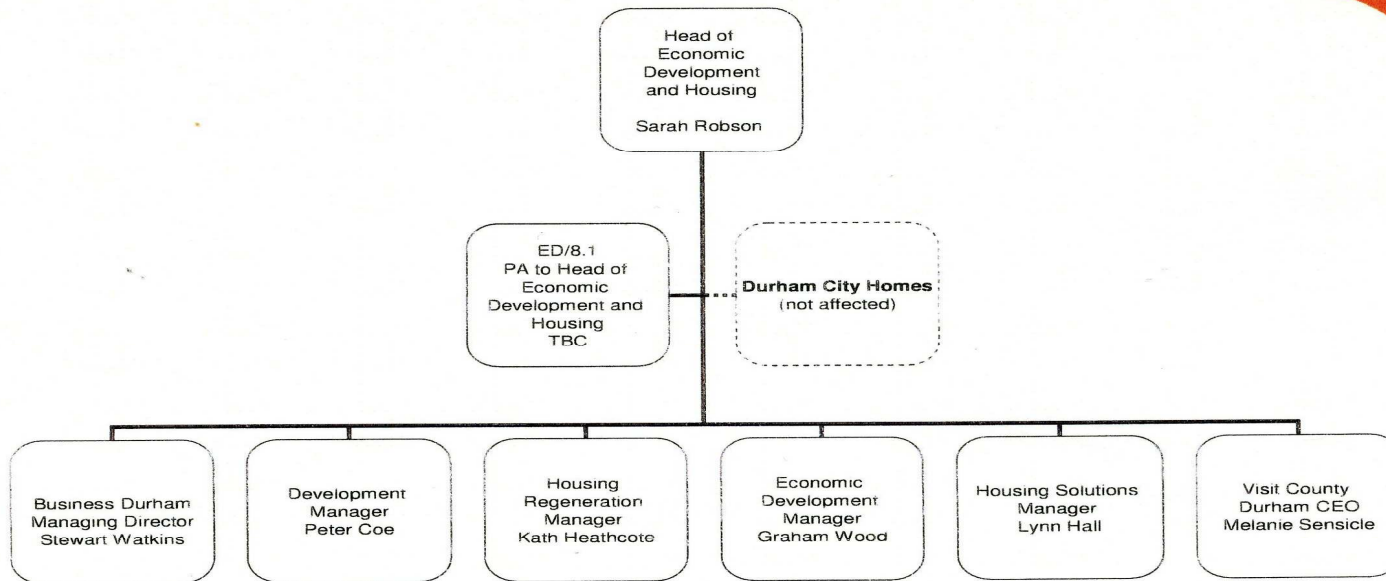
Business and Enterprise Working Group - CDEP	Middleton Plus
Chester le Street Destination Development Leadership Group	Millennium Place Strategy Planning Groups Attractions and Visitors Working Group Property and Operations Working Group Strategic Project Team
Churches, Heritage and the Visitor Experience	Natural Environment Strategy Group
County Durham Economic Partnership	North Pennines AONB Partnership
County Durham Cultural Partnership	Northern Destinations Forum
Destination Performance UK - City 2 Group	Northern Tourism Alliance
Destination Performance UK - Counties Group	Place Shaping Working Group - CDEP
Discover Durham	Rural Working Group - CDEP
Durham Attractions Group (chair)	Seaham Destination Development Leadership Group (Destination Seaham Group)
Durham City Area Action Partnership	Stanhope Destination Development Plan
Durham County Council Civic Pride Riverside Project	Stanhope Parish Council
Durham County Council Corporate Events Working Group	Sustainable Tourism Working Group
Durham Events Forum (chair)	Teesdale Area Action Partnership (tourism group)
Durham Hotels Association	TNNE Research
Durham Marketing Group (chair)	Upper Teesdale Tourism Network
Durham Tourism Management Plan Committee	Visit England Destinations Forum
LEADER - Local Action Group Members	Visitor Information Network (chair)
Lindisfarne Gospels Board	Weardale Area Action Partnership (tourism group) - Tourism Task Group
Lindisfarne Gospels Project Delivery Group	Weardale Visitor Network
Lindisfarne Gospels Destination Development Working Group (chair)	Working Group Chairs - CDEP
Love Food Working Partners Group	World Heritage Site Management Committee

County Durham Economic Partnership Structure



Business Plan Appendix 6

Economic Development



Altogether better

