

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP REPORT - TOURISM MARKETING ACTIVITY UNDERTAKEN BY VISIT COUNTY DURHAM**  
**REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS CONSIDERED BY CABINET ON 21 OCTOBER, 2015.**

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
<p><b>1) In relation to the partnership approach to marketing, VCD seeks to extend its work with partner destinations and the Durham Strategic Marketing Partnership using major events to attract out of region visitors to raise the profile of the county as a visitor destination.</b></p>	<p>2015 saw Visit County Durham focus its marketing campaign activity overseas in order to take full advantage of the £20m Northern Tourism Growth Fund programme, which enabled Visit County Durham to raise the county's profile in targeted overseas markets on a scale never seen before. The target markets were the US, China, Australia/New Zealand, Germany and the Netherlands. The programme ended in March 2016, with Visit County Durham now discussing plans to continue marketing overseas by working in partnership with Durham Strategic Partners and other northern destinations.</p> <p><u>Partner destinations</u>                  2015 and the first quarter of 2016 saw Visit County Durham, through its membership of the England's Heritage Cities consortium, take part in a campaign which secured funding from the Great UK Challenge Fund to run a consumer marketing campaign targeting the French market. As well as working alongside the 10 other member cities, the campaign also included a partnership with London &amp; Partners, which was managed by Visit County Durham.</p> <p>Newcastle Gateshead Initiative led on a regional consumer marketing campaign which targeted Scandinavia. Visit County Durham supported the campaign.</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>

	<p>The Northern Tourism Growth Fund saw destinations from across the North of England, including Visit County Durham, work in partnership alongside VisitEngland and VisitBritain to deliver the £20m programme. Visit County Durham was a lead destination, delivering a project for the programme, and was also a member of two working groups. Discussions are taking place with other Northern destinations to see how this collaborative working can be continued.</p> <p><u>Strategic Partners</u> A number of new partners have joined the group, bringing the total to 20. The Northern Tourism Growth Fund saw Visit County Durham work closely with the Strategic Partners to decide which markets and activities to take forward, with several partners joining Visit County Durham in activities.</p> <p>Seven partners participated in the Spring heritage campaign, run by Visit County Durham in Spring 2016. Partners contributed significant cash match, enabling the campaign, which featured an 8-page supplement in The Times, to go ahead.</p> <p>Visit County Durham will also be working with members of the Strategic Partners group on the Autumn outdoors campaign.</p> <p><u>Key events</u> As well as using its channels to promote key events, Visit County Durham's marketing strategy uses destination events as hooks to promote the county, whilst also aiming to access event promotional activity to grow the reach of its own work. For example, Visit County Durham would work with event organisers to carry content about the destination, often as a 'stay</p>		
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	<p>longer' message, on their website, e-newsletters and social media activity, as well as featuring the 'this is Durham' logo.</p> <p>Recent events we have worked closely with include: Lumiere 2015, Cricket Internationals, Brass Festival, YSL at The Bowes Museum.</p> <p>Dedicated marketing plans are currently in place for Kynren and Open Treasure, on which we have been working closely with the teams at Eleven Arches and Durham Cathedral for several months.</p>		
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<p><b>2). That VCD continues to develop and redesign the 'thisisdurham.com' website and ensure that it remains responsive to the increasing and changing information demands resulting from developments in social media applications.</b></p>	<p>thisisdurham.com continues to perform well, with research showing that the site converts 66% of web traffic from a possible visit in to a definite</p> <p>2015-16 saw 904,498 unique users visit the site, exceeding the target</p> <p>The site is currently undergoing a full redesign to refresh the current design and ensure all of the latest features and functionality are included. The new site will also feature additional social media integration including social media panels, Instagram and blog posts</p> <p>Visit County Durham was ranked number one in the North East in the English Tourism Social Media Index, an annual league table which grades tourism bodies in England according to social media performance by their official channels. Visit County Durham came top of the North East list and sixth out of 129 English tourism bodies in the national rankings, leaping up from 57th position nationally and third regionally in 2015.</p>		Ongoing

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<p><b>3) That VCD continues to research and identify national marketing campaign opportunities which benefit partners within the DSMP and promote County Durham as a tourism destination.</b></p>	<p>Although the national landscape has changed in the last year, with VisitEngland no longer running domestic marketing campaigns that destinations can participate in, Visit County Durham has continued to identify national marketing opportunities which benefit the destination and its Strategic Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2015 focus on maximising the impact of the £20m Northern Tourism Growth Fund programme</li> <li>- National marketing campaign in Spring 2016 in partnership with Beamish, Durham Cathedral, Eleven Arches, Durham University and Culture &amp; Sport, Durham County Council. The campaign theme was heritage, utilising the strong developments and events taking place in the county to encourage short breaks. Media activity included an 8-page supplement in The Times on May 7<sup>th</sup></li> <li>- National marketing campaign promoting Durham's outdoors scheduled for Autumn 2016, with media activity including an online film with Ben Fogle as part of the Great British Adventure series</li> </ul>		Ongoing

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<p><b>4) VCD ensures that robust performance targets and monitoring procedures for all online and offline marketing activity are in place.</b></p>	<p>Visit County Durham sets targets which cover all areas of its marketing work, which are reviewed quarterly and reported annually:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The value of media coverage achieved</li> <li>- Number of media visits to the county secured</li> <li>- Unique visits to the website</li> <li>- Performance of e-newsletters</li> <li>- Volume of consumers added to the database</li> <li>- Volume of social media followers</li> </ul> <p>All campaigns are evaluated against their specific objectives, and activity reviewed in order to inform subsequent work.</p>		Ongoing

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<p><b>5) That the performance evaluation of the effectiveness of marketing activity undertaken in relation to the national marketing campaign is promoted and reported to the County Council as part of its performance management process.</b></p>	<p>Visit County Durham utilises a number of channels to communicate results, including RED Comms and member updates, and carry out tailored communications as appropriate (The Times supplement from the Spring heritage campaign was posted to council members and officers).</p> <p>Visit County Durham also utilises Durham County Council corporate communication channels including Buzz magazine and the Intranet.</p> <p>Visit County Durham report on a quarterly basis against a number of RED Performance Indicators and Head of Service Plan Indicators.</p>		Ongoing

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<p><b>6) That VCD maximises all identified future marketing opportunities for 2015/16 including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>The use of major events and developments at attractions in County Durham.</b></li> <li>○ <b>The Northern Futures Fund, a new source of funding which promotes northern destinations to overseas markets.</b></li> <li>○ <b>Championing as a future priority with the NECA the importance of the tourism related economy.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Use of major events and developments</u></b>  All major events and developments are being fully utilised in the promotion of the county.</p> <p>A dedicated marketing plan was delivered for Lumiere 2015, working in partnership with Artichoke, which also saw the relaunch of Visit County Durham's award-winning Virtual Lumiere app. Marketing plans are also in place for Kynren and Open Treasure, with Visit County Durham working closely with Eleven Arches and Durham Cathedral. Other destination events utilised in the promotion of the county include: Bishop Auckland Food Festival; Investec Test Match; Brass: Durham International Festival; Heritage Coast Festival; Durham Remembers; Shoes Pleasure &amp; Pain at The Bowes Museum; Durham Book Festival.</p> <p>Developments, including those at Killhope and Beamish Museum, have also been utilised in Visit County Durham's marketing work.</p> <p><b><u>Northern Tourism Growth Fund</u></b>  Visit County Durham was heavily involved in the £20m Northern Tourism Growth Fund programme, helping shape activity from the outset and becoming a lead destination which delivered a key project for the programme. The fund became a main focus of Visit County Durham's marketing work during 2015/16 to ensure that the county achieved maximum benefit.</p> <p>Visit County Durham's role in activity was three fold: take part in all appropriate activities; encourage as many Durham businesses to take part as possible; ensure Durham was profiled in remaining appropriate</p>		Ongoing



	<p>activities.</p> <p>Visit County Durham took part in over 30 different activities including media visits, travel trade visits, travel trade events, campaign websites, itineraries and press receptions - raising the county's profile in the target overseas markets on a scale never seen before.</p> <p><b>NECA</b> As part of the Northern Tourism Alliance Visit County Durham works closely with colleagues to highlight the importance of the visitor economy in Durham and the wider region with NECA and the NELEP.</p>		
<b>Review Recommendation</b>	<b>Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Resib'ty</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<b>7).That a review of this report and progress against recommendations will be undertaken six months after the report is considered by Cabinet.</b>	Review underway.		June 2016