

**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>Since the last update provided in March 2017, Visit County Durham has continued to focus on partnership marketing to capitalise on key events and developments, and to extend the reach of its own activity.</p> <p><u>Partner Destinations</u>            Work with partner destinations has focussed on product development in order to capitalise on the Discover England Fund to help secure the county's future as a leading destination. The fund is a three-year £40million programme announced by Government in 2015, the aim of which is to deliver world-class tourism products, respond to consumer needs and market opportunities, and drive growth in international tourism which in turn will benefit the domestic market. The outcome will be new products that can be used in marketing activity to attract visitors.</p> <p>Visit County Durham is a partner destination in 3 x large scale £1.5m projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• England's Historic Cities consortium</li> <li>• Manchester Gateway Project</li> <li>• East of England Tourism Route (A1)</li> </ul> <p><u>Strategic Partners and Destination Marketing</u>            The Strategic Partners group continues to work in partnership with Visit County Durham to collectively shape and match fund national marketing initiatives.</p> <p>Visit County Durham worked with the following Strategic</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>

Partners to deliver a national marketing campaign, the theme of which was heritage, during April and May 2017:

- Durham Cathedral
- Durham University
- Beamish Museum

These primary campaign partners were profiled in all media activity. Remaining appropriate Strategic Partners were featured on the campaign landing page on thisisdurham.com and via e-newsletter broadcasts.

Primary activity was a media partnership with the Guardian which included a Durham supplement and online content hub achieving over 41k views and over 2.6m impressions of paid for ads.

Autumn 2017 saw the delivery of a national marketing campaign which promoted Durham as the perfect destination for walking, cycling and stargazing along with other supporting outdoor activity, giving us the opportunity to showcase the county's stunning landscapes and outdoor experiences. One of the main elements of the campaign was a video commission 'Stiles, Steeds and Stars' presented by Countryfile's Anita Rani walking the Weardale Way, Teesdale Way, Durham heritage Coast Path, cycling at Hamsterley and Stargazing in the Durham Dales – the campaign is still live so final results will be reported at a later date.

Campaign activity also included a commission with the high profile blogger the Bald Hiker who delivered blog content and significant social media activity to over 780,000 followers, an e-newsletter to over 47,000 targeted consumers and media coverage with The Times, Cycling Weekly and Country Walking magazines.

VCD worked in partnership with the North Pennines AONB team to deliver the areas inaugural North Pennines Stargazing Festival, which took place over two weeks in

October – attendance was good, 18% of all visitors were from outside of the area and feedback was positive. Discussions are underway to develop the festival programme for 2018.

Working with a wide range of partners and tourism businesses to develop and promote the County's golf, weddings and group travel offer.

#### Transport/Travel Partners

Visit County Durham continues to work in partnership with travel organisations who represent key points of entry in to the county, including the Port of Tyne, Newcastle and Durham Tees Valley Airports, Virgin East Coast and TransPennine Express to identify opportunities to promote Durham through their activities, and to ensure VCD is aware of travel partner initiatives that would benefit our own work.

VCD arranged a meeting in June 2017 with Port of Tyne and strategic attraction partners from across the county

Andy Foster from the PoT confirmed the top 4 destinations for day visitors are as below, but was unable to provide actual numbers:

- Alnwick Castle
- Durham Cathedral
- North Pennines – mainly German on an organised trip
- Bowes Museum/Barnard Castle

A further meeting has been arranged for 12<sup>th</sup> February with the Port of Tyne and Strategic Partners to ensure Durham is featured appropriately in their promotional activity.

#### Key Events

As well as utilising Visit County Durham's marketing channels and activities to promote the county's key events, VCD's marketing strategy uses destination events (those with the

potential to draw visitors from outside of the region) as hooks to promote the county in order to encourage longer / overnight stays. VCD also works with event organisers to secure destination messaging within their own marketing activity. For example, VCD has provided considerable support for Lumiere Durham, Bishop Auckland Food Festival, BRASS, Durham Book Festival, Kynren and many more to develop 'Stay Longer' or 'About Durham' sections on the event websites.

#### Place Brand for Durham

The Place Brand Activation Strategy is complete, VCD and DCC Comms team are working in partnership on a 'Celebrating Durham' campaign, activity has included TV advertising, a national media partnership with The Times, in-region media partnerships and resident engagement campaigns.

#### Research and market intelligence

Research commissioned in this financial year includes the annual economic impact assessment reports (STEAM), visitor segmentation research, accommodation stock analysis study, pocket guide conversion research, Durham perceptions research (in support of the place brand).

We are awaiting results for segmentation and pocket guide.

#### **Economic Impact of tourism in Durham 2016 (STEAM)**

- 19.25 million visitors, up by 3% on the previous year
- £806 million economic value, up by 2% year on year
- 11,158 jobs employed (direct and indirect)
- 1.43 million overnight visitors - £320 million spend
- 17.81 million day visitors - £485 million spend
- 93% of all visits are day visits with these visitors accounting for 60% of all expenditure
- Average expenditure for overnight visitors is £169.14 per trip while the average day visitor spend is £20.18

Day visitors increased in 2016 by 1% despite our marketing efforts targeted to audiences external to the county. A number of factors are influencing the slight increase in day visitors, among them –

- lack of visitor accommodation in key tourism areas
- lack of visitor product, particularly targeted at the family market
- strong neighbouring destination brands (Yorkshire, Cumbria, Scotland)
- MTFP savings impacting on budget available to market the county as a visitor destination

A number of developments are underway which will help plug some of the gaps and improve the visitor offer, these include hotel, retail and leisure developments in Durham City. Developments in Bishop Auckland. Accommodation development enquiries in Seaham. Hotel developments in Stanley and Consett. Smaller scale glamping and self-catering developments in various locations across the county. Strong festivals and events programme.

The Durham Place of Light place brand will help create a positive image, reputation and identity for the county giving us a consistent and coherent platform to tell the story of Durham, which will help us to compete with stronger, more well-known established brands.

VCD's approach to reductions to our budget through MTFP savings was to adopt a more commercial approach to our operations and launch a paid for membership scheme, which will generate a small amount of income that will be reinvested back in to our marketing and business support activity. The membership scheme retains a 'free to all' element and we will continue to promote all tourism businesses in the county regardless of their ability to pay.

	<p>The past year (2017) saw a full restructure of the VCD staff team and a number of new people joined in January 2018, the skills and experience they bring will further strengthen the team and support our aim to ensure Durham is recognised as one of England's a lead destinations.</p> <p>Additionally we have redoubled our efforts to engage partners in joint marketing and promotion, encouraging participation and use of the place brand, broadening our destination appeal and targeting markets such as golf, weddings and group travel where an overnight stay is an integral part of the visit. Collaborative working and pooling resources for strategic destination marketing is critical for the future success of Durham as a visitor destination.</p>		
<b>Review Recommendation</b>	<b>Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Resib'ty</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<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 was relaunched in August 2016 following a full redesign which also saw the inclusion of a number of new technology functions.</p> <p>Following an annual review of the site with our web developers plans are underway to introduce new sections and functionality to increase dwell time and 'stickiness' of the site, which means visitors can access more features to make a booking decision. Developments include map based itineraries and online booking via online travel agents such as Booking.com, Sykes Cottages, etc.</p> <p>Web traffic is performing well with year to date unique visitors at 855,073, up 1% on 2016/17 – on par to match 1m unique visitors achieved in the previous year.</p>		Ongoing
<b>Review Recommendation</b>	<b>Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Resib'ty</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
	<u>National Marketing Campaign Opportunities</u>		Ongoing

<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 now changed, 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 Strategic Partners.</p> <p>After lobbying Visit England and Visit Britain featured destination pages have been created for Durham as part of a national and international marketing #lovegreatbritaincampaign The pages include creative content, transport and travel options, and itineraries. Marketing and PR staff in the VCD team have established strong relationships with their counterpart teams in VE and VB and send regular content to include in campaigns and across their work.</p>		
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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 has associated targets for all aspects 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> <li>- Reach and engagement with all consumer channels</li> </ul> <p>All campaigns are evaluated against their specific objectives, and activity reviewed in order to inform subsequent work.</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>
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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 activity and results including RED Comms and member updates, and carry out tailored communications as appropriate.</p> <p>VCD also utilises Durham County Council corporate communication channels including Buzz magazine and the Intranet, which form part of a monthly corporate communications plan.</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
<p><b>Review Recommendation</b></p>	<p><b>Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation</b></p>	<p><b>Resib'ty</b></p>	<p><b>Timescale</b></p>
<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><u>Use of Major Events and Developments</u> All major events and developments were fully utilised during 2017/18 in the promotion of the county.</p> <p>A dedicated marketing plan was delivered for Lumiere 2017, working in partnership with Artichoke, which also saw the relaunch of Visit County Durham's award-winning Virtual Lumiere app. Marketing plans were delivered for Kynren, with VCD working closely with Eleven Arches. Other destination events utilised in the promotion of the county included: Bishop Auckland Food Festival; Brass - Durham International Festival; Heritage Coast Reach for the Beach Festival; Durham Book Festival, North Pennines Stargazing Festival.</p> <p>Developments, including those at Beamish Museum, Durham City and Bishop Auckland were also utilised in Visit County Durham's marketing work.</p> <p><u>Northern Tourism Growth Fund</u> Visit County Durham was heavily involved in the £20m Northern Tourism Growth Fund programme, helping shape</p>		Ongoing

	<p>activity from the outset and becoming a lead destination delivering a key project for the programme. The fund became a main focus of VCD'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 activities.</p> <p>VCD 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><u>NECA</u></b>  As part of the North East 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. VCD Managing Director is a member of the Executive Committee of the Rural Growth Network – a regional network including the LEP responsible for shaping calls and providing visitor economy expertise for European funding programmes, with a particular focus on the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).</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>	Complete		June 2016