

market town welcome

Market Town Welcome

Destination Plan for Bishop Auckland

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“Bishop Auckland: the market town with a fascinating 2,000 year heritage brought to life through events”

Report to County Durham Tourism Partnership and Wear Valley District Council

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1. Introduction

This Destination Plan for Bishop Auckland sets out agreed common priorities for developing and promoting Bishop Auckland as a destination. It is designed to be a working document that can be added to as the town and its partners identify new opportunities for development and is intended to steer a way forward over the next 5-10 years.

The purpose of the plan is to:

- Develop the tourism potential of Bishop Auckland and strengthen its identity for visitors
- Provide a framework and rationale for investment and development planning in the tourism sector within the town
- Identify priority actions
- Clarify how partners and agencies can work together to deliver the destination plan

1.1 Background and rationale

Objectives of Market Town Welcome

The Market Town Welcome Programme involves developing destination plans for four market towns in County Durham in the period Jan-March 2009. The Programme aims to complement other local and regional regeneration strategies and initiatives and to take a tourism perspective to each of the market towns – viewing them through a visitor’s eyes as a destination. The four towns are: Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Seaham and Stanhope.

The Objectives of the Programme are:

- Developing the tourism potential of each town
- Inputting to investment/development planning
- Harnessing private sector potential
- Using the destination plan to support funding bids
- Encouraging collaboration and cross fertilisation of ideas
- Strengthening the identity of each town for visitors
- Boosting the visitor economy in each town

Background to Market Town Welcome

Market Town Welcome originated in 2008 when One North East commissioned Miller Research and Alison Caffyn to develop a methodology to generate destination plans, initially for six market towns in Northumberland: Berwick, Alnwick, Seahouses, Wooler, Haltwhistle and Amble. Since then Guisborough, Cleveland; Hexham and Morpeth, Northumberland; and now the four County Durham towns have been going through the same process.

The Market Town Welcome process was developed to incorporate the principles of the ‘VICE model’ for local destination management. This model was developed by the national tourism agencies and Tourism Management Institute to encourage the sustainable development of tourism. It aims to ensure positive outcomes for Visitors, the tourism Industry, local Communities and the built and natural Environment. So the destination plans aim to develop tourism which:

- Welcomes, involves and satisfies **Visitors**
- Achieves a prosperous and profitable **Industry**

- Engages and benefits host Communities
- Protects and enhances the local Environment

Why welcome visitors?

The visitor economy is particularly significant in rural areas where there are few alternatives and traditional industries such as agriculture or mining have declined. Tourism has increasingly been seen as a vital element in the regeneration of an area. Not only does the visitor economy support businesses, jobs and the suppliers to those businesses, but visitors' spending also helps support local heritage, culture (eg festivals and events) and community services (buses, shops, pubs, post offices). Tourism is also a reason to conserve special buildings, historic buildings, beautiful landscapes and important wildlife sites.

Figures for County Durham in 2007 reveal that there were:

- 16.5 million day visitors spending nearly £350 million
- 1.5 million staying visitors staying 4.5 million nights and spending £307 million
- Total revenue generated £656 million
- Supporting 10,390 jobs directly in the visitor economy and another 2,700 jobs in other sectors indirectly

1.2 Strategic context - regional, county and town

The strategic context for this work is the Regional Economic Strategy which aims to foster the renaissance of key rural settlements as drivers of regional growth. The North East England Tourism Strategy (2005-10) identifies regional objectives including increasing the number of UK and overseas visitors year round and increasing visitor spend. The strategy aims to deliver increased employment, productivity and investment in tourism whilst increasing visitor satisfaction and conserving the region's natural, heritage and cultural assets. It identifies market towns as key elements in the attraction of the North East for visitors and proposes that towns should develop plans to make improvements in facilities to meet the needs of increased visitors. It highlights the potential for making more of regional food, improved shopping and public art as well as basics such as visitor information and signing. Studies have also been recently completed into developing cruise tourism along the North East coastline and into the potential for making more of events and festivals.

Other key documents are studies on maximising the potential of heritage tourism in the North East, led by ONE, English Heritage and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and the Framework for North East England's Coastal Visitor Economy produced in 2006.

At a County level the key document is the County Durham Area Tourism Management Plan (ATMaP). It identifies priorities for a successful visitor economy in County Durham as:

- Business Performance
- Information Services
- Marketing
- Product Development
- Visitor Experience
- Workforce Development

The development and implementation of Market Town Destination Plans is listed as a priority within the ATMaP, with CDTP's role being to take a strategic overview and ensure connectivity between the plans.

Several studies have been undertaken locally in Bishop Auckland over the last few years. These include:

- Bishop Auckland Urban Renaissance Master Plan 2006
- Wear Valley Tourism Impact Study 2009

The Masterplan provides a pro-active design based plan for the northern part of the town centre – where most of the visitor focus is as well. It has identified key development opportunities and areas for environmental improvement. Several projects are likely to go ahead soon. Others are likely to be taken forward by the private sector when the time is right. The Bishops Park and Visitor Centre is identified as a key project in the masterplan and there is a section on tourism and identity.

1.3 Process and partnership

Each town in County Durham followed the Market Town Welcome template or process which has been developed to be as inclusive as possible, working with a local leadership group in each town which includes tourism businesses, local groups and organisations as well as the local authorities and County Durham Tourism Partnership. The template (see Annex 7.1 for the full model) works through the following stages, which also help structure this destination plan:

1. Understanding the rationale - why welcome visitors, what are the benefits for a town?
2. Identifying current and future visitors to the town
3. Identifying what the town can offer visitors
4. Considering how well the town meets the needs of its visitors now and in the future
5. Understanding how tourism is resourced, promoted and managed in the town
6. Understanding the town's strengths and weaknesses
7. Creating a vision of where the town wants to be in 5 – 10 years from a visitor perspective
8. Identifying priorities and actions in order to achieve that vision

Each town also undertook:

- An audit of the tourism resources in and around the town
- A survey of local tourism related businesses
- A review of other relevant research including visitor segmentation studies undertaken for One North East and County Durham Tourism Partnership in 2007 and the recent 2008 County Durham Visitor Survey, unfortunately there is no recent visitor survey for Bishop Auckland itself.
- A review of all local strategies and plans which the Destination Plan needs to link into and complement (outlined under 1.2 above).

Three workshops were held in February-March 2009 attended by a wide range of local businesses and partners involved in tourism. The attendees discussed the key elements of this plan, the target markets, the vision for Bishop Auckland as a destination and identified the action points.

2. Vision and objectives

2.1 Vision statement for Bishop Auckland

By 2020 Bishop Auckland will be renowned as the market town with a fascinating two thousand year heritage brought to life through events. The landscaped parkland, Medieval Bishop's Palace and the market square overlooked by the imposing Town Hall are all unique spaces used for a calendar of events which promote the town's unique heritage; from the Roman cavalry stationed at Binchester Fort through to the town's more recent heritage of railway development and amateur football triumphs.

This could convert to a possible strapline as "Bishop Auckland: the market town with a fascinating 2,000 year heritage brought to life through events"

2.2 Overall objectives of the destination plan

The objectives of this destination plan are:

1. To strengthen Bishop Auckland's identity and profile as a town whose heritage is its main attraction and its 2000 year history is brought to life through events.
2. To attract more day and staying visitors to Bishop Auckland all year round to explore its attractions and spend money in local shops and eating places.
3. To encourage more local and repeat visitors by promoting festivals and events particularly those linked to local heritage themes.
4. To invest in environmental and infrastructural improvements to enhance the town's streetscape, events infrastructure and better manage traffic and parking.
5. To link Bishop Auckland's tourism products into well recognised regional attractions – linking the Castle with Durham City, the Roman heritage with Hadrian's Wall and Wear Valley food and railway links with the Durham Dales to capitalise on county and regional promotion.
6. To widen the range and improve the quality of the accommodation and food and drink offers in the town, strengthen its evening economy and offer excellent service and value for money.
7. To strengthen the retail offer by encouraging more specialist shops, comparative goods shops, a quality market and locally sourced food and drink.
8. To encourage more visitors to walk and cycle from the town centre to nearby attractions and villages and to explore the wider Durham Dales.
9. To encourage existing businesses to continue to invest in their properties and services and to encourage new business investment.
10. To encourage and support collaboration between local organisations and businesses to enable joint delivery of the destination plan actions.

3. Visitors to Bishop Auckland

The visitor is central to the Market Town Welcome approach. It is important to consider the town from the visitor's perspective not that of a local person. Key questions to consider include:

- What types of people visit our town currently?
- Where from and for how long?
- Why? – what motivates them?
- What do they like and not like about our town?
- What will visitors be looking for in the future, are trends changing?
- Which visitors should we focus on attracting and catering for?
- How can we meet or exceed their expectations?

3.1 Survey results

Recent visitor surveys can help answer these questions. The overall profile of visitors to County Durham from the 2007 North East visitor segmentation survey is as follows:

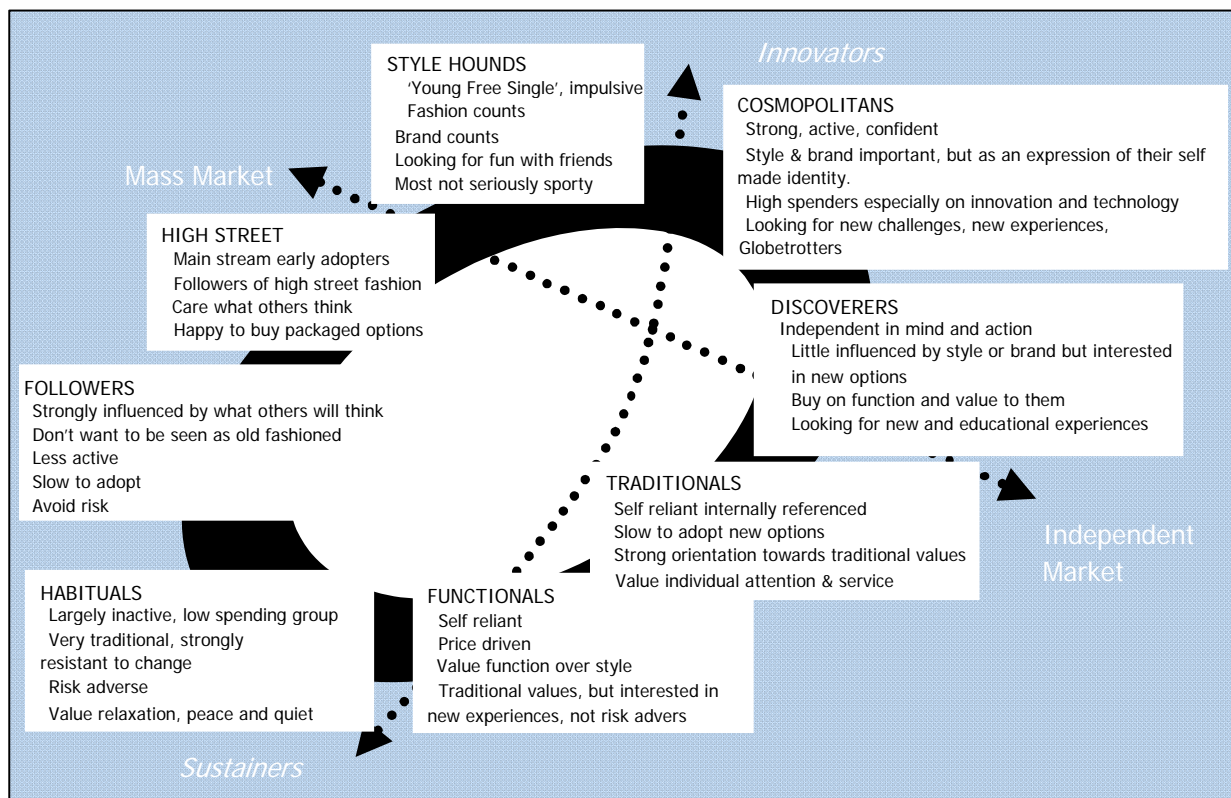
- Slightly higher proportion of holiday makers than people driven by events/ activities
- Oldest holiday makers of the 4 sub-regions - 30% over 55
- From NW and Yorkshire origins
- Mainly couples
- Staying 3 nights or less (shorter than average)
- Hotels are most popular - plus an even split of guest house/ self catering/ camping/ caravanning which combined account for just under half of accommodation used

Unfortunately the business survey undertaken for Market Town Welcome did not have enough respondents to identify useful patterns in visitor characteristics and there is no recent visitor survey for Bishop Auckland – a gap that could be addressed as one of the actions in the plan.

3.2 Current visitor profiles and segmentation

Tourism bodies across the region and much of the UK are using the ArkLeisure visitor segmentation model to help understand who current and potential visitors are and to assist in making decisions about which types of visitor to focus upon. The model divides the UK population up into eight segments based on people's values and outlook on life.

The model can help predict people's aspirations and how they spend their discretionary time and money. Those people at the top of the model are more likely to be influenced by innovation, fashion and change. Those on the left hand side are more influenced by media, friends and peer groups, those on the right hand side are more independently minded and self-referenced.



Detailed research in County Durham during 2007/8 revealed that the four segments which currently visit the county are:

Functionals (40% of County Durham's visitors currently)

- Lower spending & thrifty value for money seekers. Like heritage, nostalgia, culture, gardening, rural holidays, enjoy attractions, self catering, traditional values.

Traditionals (12%)

- Mainstream, with traditional tastes. Enjoy attractions, scenery, heritage, culture, gardens, peace, Dining and service is important. Older on average. Likely to return for repeat visits.

Discoverers (12%)

- Independent. Like exploring and investigating new things and places, history and culture, educational or fun things to do, relaxation, good service, wide interests, not bothered about fashion/style. Look for value for money but also drawn to luxury breaks

Cosmopolitans (16%)

- Individual, active, confident, adventurous. Like city breaks, events, outdoor activities, heritage, culture, nature, new experiences, good food and service and challenges. High spenders take lots of trips. Younger on average.

Bishop Auckland is currently attracting visitors in the Functional and Traditional groups who will largely enjoy the town but may not see it as a town aiming to attract and satisfy visitors. They may be frustrated by the relatively limited range of eating options, independent shops and choice of comparative goods. They may also be disappointed with the limited information at arrival points such as car parks. Visitors during the winter will be disappointed by the lack of attractions open. Most of them will be unable to find quality accommodation within walking distance of the town centre and will tend to head elsewhere to stay. Functionals are an important group as many of them are current visitors however they are one of the lower spending groups.

3.3 *Visitor of the Future*

The challenge for any destination is to keep Functionals coming but also find ways to encourage them to spend more money or stay longer to generate more benefits for the local economy. So having quality but good value food and drink options and perhaps offering special deals will appeal to this group.

In terms of new tourism product development and marketing however it is likely to be more beneficial to focus on Traditionals and potentially Discoverers in the longer term. Traditionals love market towns, heritage and culture, they will spend if there's good value for money and quality and they are quite loyal – returning to favourite locations. There is scope for Bishop Auckland to boost the number of visitors from this group. Discoverers can be more demanding, they like some occasional luxury and love exploring new areas. They will respond to new and educational experiences.

This destination plan recommends a **strategy of targeting Traditional and Discoverer visitors** over the next five-ten years – ensuring access to heritage attractions, staging events to keep people returning, improving quality across the board, promoting learning experiences and using marketing messages that will appeal to these groups.

Day visitors are also important and may fall into any of the segments. They will obviously usually be from County Durham or neighbouring towns and cities. Bishop Auckland will continue to have quite a strong appeal for two specific types – **family groups** (including grandparent/grandchildren groups) and people with **special interests in heritage, railways, art and nostalgia**. These groups can also be added to Bishop Auckland's target markets.

As Bishop Auckland is so close to Durham and has the heritage ties between the Cathedral and Auckland Castle, it should also be in a good position to attract visitors on holiday who are visiting Durham. It is worth noting that 23% of visitors to the North East of England visit Durham City.

4. The Tourism Offer

4.1 What does our town offer visitors?

The recent business survey and workshops identified the things visitors like and dislike about Bishop Auckland.

Visitors' Likes	Visitors' Dislikes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Castle and parkland • The range of high street and independent shops • The sense of open space • The character of the buildings • The town hall – information, art and events • The strong heritage stories • Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of car parking • Limited long stay car parking • The market has declined • Not enough for families to do • Closed attractions in the winter • Poor signage • Not really a tourism town

Bishop Auckland's USPs

Bishop Auckland's Unique Selling Points were identified. These are:

- Auckland Castle – Bishop's Palace – Zurburan paintings
- Parkland - medieval history, inc deer house
- Railway heritage – first passenger train, plus Weardale Railway and Locomotion
- Binchester – best preserved and one of largest Roman forts (cavalry), hypocaust
- Escomb Saxon Church
- Football heritage – Amateur cup, West Auckland story
- Stan Laurel connections
- Wurlitzer Organ
- Dixon of US Mason-Dixon Line (and possibly other inventors)

The **Town Tourism Audit** undertaken as part of Market Town Welcome identified many of the same points. The audit acts as an objective and thorough assessment of the town's strengths and weaknesses from a visitor perspective. It helps identify gaps in the offer, issues and opportunities. The full version of the audit is contained in Annex 7.3. Some of the main gaps and issues identified include:

- Although there are 1 hotel, 5 inns, 1 guest house and 2 self-catering businesses in town or within a few miles none is quality inspected.
- Accommodation provision is particularly problematic within the town centre – the tourist information centre staff have to send people out of town to find places to stay.
- It is also difficult to accommodate groups due to the small number of providers and the lack of provision from a single site.

- There is a good range of attractions –the main problem is seasonal opening and some uncertainty over when the Castle is open.
- The range of events has been strengthened over recent years, mainly targeting a local audience but bringing in more visitors each year.
- There is quite a strong range of shops which would interest visitors eg antiques, books, arts, gifts, speciality food, outdoor/leisure, garden centres, farm shops but a lack of craft/pottery, and scope for more speciality food and clothing shops
- The traditional market on Thursday and Saturday is felt to need strengthening with more stalls and scope for farmers/speciality markets
- There are currently 16 vacant shops
- Only a few shops open Sundays and about half of shops observe half day closing – Wednesday
- There is a somewhat limited range of restaurants, pubs and cafes which visitors would enjoy but there is a limited choice on a Sunday and pubs are the only option between 5 and 7pm
- A good range of activities and leisure facilities are available in or close to Bishop Auckland the main gap being the lack of a multi-screen cinema, bowling or go-karting for a town of its size.
- The parking provision at the Town Hall end of the town where visitors will want to park is mainly short stay and capacity is often reached at busy times.
- The railway station has no visitor information and is not very welcoming. It is also at the opposite end of the town to the visitor hub.
- The bus station needs more information and environmental improvements
- There are only 2 sets of public toilets
- There is currently no visitor map that the Tourist Information Centre staff can hand out to visitors
- About 5 map based 'you are here' info points mainly with events info
- There are a range of town trail panels with interpretation of history and townscape in good condition. However the 'you are here' information points are in less good condition and hold mainly events information.
- Signing at the Castle is variable in quality and can confuse visitors about Castle opening times and where they can go.
- There are good town welcome signs and some brown and white signs but several gaps at key points
- Pedestrian fingerposts are largely good but need repainting

The audit was used to develop the SWOT in the next section, supplemented with previous issues identified from other studies and strategies and from direct observation.

4.2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Auckland Castle and Park – Bishop of Durham Town Hall – landmark, Theatre, Gallery, TIC Attractive market town Two markets a week Good shopping offer – with modern precinct and traditional high street Binchester Roman Fort (and potential) Strong football history Stan Laurel link Railway station Railway attraction – Locomotion Weardale railway planned link Events – Proms, Food Festival Town Centre Manager Some good restaurants Most things visitors want focused in historic core at north of town Specialist shops Active locals Escomb church Hamsterley Forest Golf courses/range Attractive street furniture, trails, statue, lampposts and banner posts Walks from town and in nearby countryside Views into and out of north of town Strong investment interest from the private sector Growth area for housing</p>	<p>Lack of long stay parking Castle not open in winter (nor Binchester) Some parts of town are shabby Some national retailers missing Lack of comparative good shops Promotion of town weak – “Durham’s best kept secret” Toilets Signage for tourism and parking Twilight time quiet 5-7pm Early closing Wed for some shops Few open on Sunday Public transport Unattractive bus station Unwelcoming railway station Lack of bedspaces in town – especially quality graded hotels/B&Bs Market square Evening drinking and disorder some weekends Many poor shop frontages Limited offer for families</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Attractive quality map for town – leaflet and on website Proposed visitor centre at Castle Extending visitor opening at attractions Develop and promote Castle Parkland Binchester archeological excavations to extend the site Extend long stay parking and encourage visitors to stay longer Promoting to special interests – eg Christian heritage, trains, Strengthen links to Durham and Cathedral Weardale Railway linking up with mainline Telling the story of the local amateur football heritage Improve management of the markets Binchester Hall Catering for visitors with disabilities Provide more for families – Parkland, Binchester, events Improve links with Locomotion Quality accommodation visitors esp weddings, business visitors Make more of the character buildings – several available for restoration and redevelopment Floodlighting more key buildings</p>	<p>Continuing disorder in evenings/weekends – or the perception of problems putting people off Deteriorating shop frontages Increasing numbers of empty shops Economic recession Other market towns raising their game Events organisers standing down and lack of capacity to sustain events into the future</p>

4.3 Meeting future visitor expectations

Linking back to the visitor segments identified in section 3 it is important to consider how the current town offer matches up to their expectations and how it will match up in five or ten years time as trends change and expectations continue to increase.

We anticipate that Functionals, Traditionals and Discovers will be looking for more in future. This may include:

- More accommodation in town centre
- Better map and signage
- More facilities esp clean safe toilets
- Improved rail station
- Family friendly eating places
- Well maintained urban environment and historic buildings
- Vibrant and busy inc markets
- More independent food and drink and locally sourced produce
- Binchester as a larger visitor attraction
- More of a café culture
- More open out of season

4.4 New developments currently planned

There are a range of new developments proposed for Bishop Auckland which need to be taken into account in this destination plan. The Castle visitor centre and parkland restoration is a key project for this plan and the results of an HLF bid should be known very soon. It is not known what stage most of the private sector proposals are at and they may be affected by the current economic downturn with implementation delayed. If they all go ahead there will be considerably more hotel accommodation and leisure facilities available which is very encouraging. Each project will help boost overall confidence and should help strengthen the case for further investment.

- **Castle visitor centre and Parkland restoration**

The plans include developing a new visitor centre in the building beside the main gateway, with café, interpretation and visitor facilities, extensive landscaping restoration of the parkland, new trails and interpretation and play facilities. Should the HLF bid be unsuccessful there may be ways of taking forward elements of the project through different funding mechanisms over a longer period.

- **Market place environmental improvements**

The plans to upgrade the market place are awaiting a final decision on funding and are likely to go ahead in the later this year.

- **Binchester excavations**

New excavations at Binchester will start this year which will be interesting for visitors to watch and extend the remains on view. There may be opportunities for visitors to volunteer with the work and the dig will generate more PR and group visits.

- **Weardale railway connection**

The new owners of the railway are moving ahead with plans to reconnect the mainline which currently stops at Bishop Auckland with the rest of the Weardale Railway which leads up to Stanhope and potentially the proposed Eastgate Village development. Issues such as rail alignment and platforms need to be addressed but the connection may be achieved fully within a year.

- **North Bondgate development**

The Helios development at North Bondgate for mixed residential and some leisure use has been approved. It is possible these plans may be amended to include hotel use and the parking on North Bondgate will be incorporated in a new underground facility on the development.

- **Other new hotel development**

There is at least one other site currently zoned for hotel development but no known current interest.

- **Bus station redevelopment**

Discussions about the redevelopment of the bus station as part of a redevelopment of Newgate are in their early stages.

5. Destination Management and Promotion

5.1 The Strategy

Section 2 outlined the plan's vision and objectives; section 3 identified which visitor markets Bishop Auckland should focus on - Traditionals and Discoverers, plus family groups and special interest heritage visitors; and section 4 has identified the town's strengths and weaknesses and opportunities to address these to better meet visitor expectations. Here we pull these elements together to identify what sort of destination Bishop Auckland will be in ten years time, what experiences it will offer visitors and what the priorities should therefore be for management and promotion of the town and surrounding area as a destination.

In order to deliver the plan's objectives Bishop Auckland needs to invest in its heritage attractions and use the valuable public spaces to stage enjoyable events bringing the heritage to life for visitors and the local community. This in turn will mean investing in the volunteers who make the events happen, ensuring ongoing capacity and support. To support this central theme other areas of the town's tourism product need improving or extending such as the accommodation stock, infrastructure and environmental improvements.

In order to make the Bishop Auckland work better as a destination, visitors need to find parking easily, then find their way around with a good map and signage, feeling safe and enjoying an attractive streetscape with well maintained frontages. Bishop Auckland has particular opportunities to link in with some of the region's highest profile destinations – Durham, Hadrian's Wall and the Durham Dales - and attract more visitors through collaboration with these. One of the main challenges will be to sell the town to its own business and resident community – many of whom do not currently rate it as a visitor destination. By encouraging local buy-in, ownership and pride, the whole town may be able to gear up better as a destination and businesses may identify a range of opportunities themselves.

5.2 The future visitor experience

The overall vision for Bishop Auckland as a visitor destination is given in section 2.1. The points below expand that vision and give a more detailed description of what visitors will experience when they come to Bishop Auckland in future:

- Bishop Auckland will be a vibrant town with a calendar of regular and special events celebrating the town's heritage and culture past and present. Its heritage is celebrated through themed festivals, re-enactments and anniversary events. Today's culture is showcased through music, art, drama and food, including the regular markets and the popular Wear Valley Food Festival.
- Bishop Auckland was the favourite country residence of the powerful Prince Bishops rulers of the independent principality of Durham since Norman times and today still home to the Bishop of Durham. Visitors will be able to view the Palace, its amazing Zurburan paintings and Chapel, explore the extensive riverside Parkland with unique features such as a deer house and find out more at the fascinating visitor centre. Visitors will travel out of Durham to Bishop Auckland as Bishops have over centuries and use it as a base to explore the magnificent Durham Dales.
- Nearby Binchester Fort will be recognised as a key site in the North East's renowned Roman heritage with extensive excavations and fascinating displays and activities. Escomb Saxon Church is a gem set in a tranquil village.

- The stories of the town's railway heritage are told at Locomotion and the station from where regular steam trains head up Weardale. This living heritage continues into the twentieth century with the stories of Bishop Auckland's many amateur football trophies, Stan Laurel memorabilia and even a functioning Wurlitzer organ for those wanting to take a nostalgia trip. With two millennia of history to explore visitors will have plenty of choice.
- The town still exudes a unique character with its many striking buildings and lively town hall and market place. The Town Hall is an excellent first stop for visitors to pick up information, see exhibitions or attend an event. In the spacious square outside are regular markets featuring interesting goods and local food and drink. The town has the widest retail offer in the County and visitors will enjoy exploring specialist shops and seeking out welcoming cafes and traditional and family friendly pubs.
- Whether visitors arrive by rail, bus or car they find attractive gateways, clean facilities and good signage – speaking of a proud town, investing in its fabric and keen to welcome all. There is a range of accommodation to choose from including B&Bs, small hotels and coaching inns. Considerable investment has taken place with sympathetic restoration of old buildings and high quality new development complementing each other. A range of walks and cycle routes link interesting sites and local golf courses welcome visitors.

5.3 Destination priorities

The priority themes which have emerged for Bishop Auckland are: (in no particular order)

1. Heritage attractions and interpretation
2. Product development
3. Visitor management, information and signage
4. Events
5. Environmental improvements
6. Marketing and promotions
7. Business support and opportunities
8. Leadership and business engagement

A number of actions have been identified under these headings which are detailed in the next section.

6. Action Plan

6.1 Introduction

This section builds on previous sections by putting the strategy into practice and developing an action plan to achieve the vision and objectives. It lists all the ideas and proposals suggested during the process or identified by the consultant, under the priority headings. The table summarises a wide range of potential actions and begins to identify which are most important and which can be delivered sooner or need to be worked on for longer. The columns begin to identify who needs to be involved and where any funding required may come from. With all the actions the crucial factor is what organisation is willing to take the lead and drive things forward. There are also actions which the private sector can lead on either collectively or within their own business, plus some investment opportunities identified.

This plan will become a working document to guide the implementation and delivery of the destination plan. It will need to be added to and amended as more information and detail becomes available. It will need to be reviewed at least annually to tick off actions completed and review the progress towards others. New actions and ideas can be added as they arise.

The tabular plan is followed by more detailed descriptions of the top priority actions.

Key to Action Plan

Priority/ importance	Timescale	Lead/Delivery
Very High	Quick Win 6-12 months	1. We can deliver locally
High	Short Term 1-2 years	2. We can deliver with partners
Medium	Medium Term 2-5 years	3. Business investment opportunity
Low	Long Term over 5 years	4. Needs outside lead

6.2 Bishop Auckland Destination Plan – Action Plan

Actions shaded in blue are key projects and are described in more detail in section 6.3 below.

	Destination Plan projects	Priority	Timescale	Lead	Partners	Funding
no.		VH/H/M/L	QW/S/M/L	1/2/3/4		
1. Heritage attractions and interpretation						
1.1	Auckland Castle - Bishop's Palace as core attraction for town - uncertainty over future -try to influence as appropriate	VH	unknown	4	CDTP	
1.2	Parkland restoration, new visitor centre, interpretation, play facilities	VH	M-L	2	CDTP	
1.3	extend opening times at attractions, eg tie in with events, half terms etc	H	S	2		
1.4	Binchester new excavations and expansion	H	underway			
1.5	Weardale Railway connection and promotions	H	S-M	4		
1.6	Binchester - further development of visitor offer	M	M	2		
1.7	interpret football heritage – monitor opportunities for new facility	M-L	M-L			
1.8	more heritage interpretation eg consider high tech options	L	M	2		
2. Product development						
2.1	encourage all accommodation to be inspected and upgrade eg through tourist officer visits and support	VH	S	2	CDTP	
2.2	encourage new accommodation - town centre hotel, B&Bs eg through advice/event	H	S	2		
2.3	upgrade/promote walking and cycling routes from town	M	M	1+2		
2.4	redevelopment of Binchester Hall	M	M	4		
3. Visitor management, information and signage						
3.1	signage improvements esp on arrival and parking	VH	S	2		
3.2	new town visitor map	VH	QW	CDTP	1	To be sourced

	Destination Plan projects	Priority	Timescale	Lead	Partners	Funding
3.3	traffic management and parking strategy to address parking gaps eg long stay visitor parking	H	M-L	4		
3.4	upgrade rail station environment	H	S	1		
3.5	upgrade bus station facilities	H	M	4		
3.6	visitor welcome info at rail station – map info panel and for sale at café	M	QW	1 + 3	CDTP	
3.7	town gateway improvements - identify which need action and proposals	L	S	2		
4. Events						
4.1	continue to organise and promote strong events programme - capacity building, support and succession planning	VH	QW	1	CDTP	
4.2	develop/expand heritage themed events eg roman sports, medieval fayre, Victorian market	H	S	1 + 2		
4.3	link to Durham City of Culture proposals (2013)	H	S	CDTP	1+2	
5. Environmental improvements						
5.1	improvements to market square, stalls, events infrastructure	VH	S	2	BA masterplan	
5.2	improvements of facades and shop frontages	H	S	1	BA masterplan	
5.3	improved maintenance - litter, graffiti, streetscape, etc	H	ongoing	1	Town centre manager	
5.4	flower displays, participate in Britain in Bloom	H	S	1	Town council	
5.5	floodlight more key buildings	H	underway	1	BA masterplan	
5.6	CPO/redevelop key buildings	H-M	L	2+3		
6. Marketing and promotions						
6.1	attract visitors from Durham City via events, marketing, building networks, website links	VH	M	2	CDTP	

	Destination Plan projects	Priority	Timescale	Lead	Partners	Funding
6.2	review literature on town and update/reprint town guide	VH	QW	2	CDTP	
6.3	new/revamped visitor website for Bishop Auckland	H	QW	1 CDTP		
6.4	monitor visitor trends with periodic visitor survey at TIC/attractions	H	QW	1	CDTP	
6.5	target special interest heritage visitors eg develop heritage breaks as opportunities arrive	M	M	2+3	Discover Durham	
7. Business support and opportunities						
7.1	visitor welcome/customer care training	H	S	2 CDTP		
7.2	encourage more shops, cafes to open Wed and Sundays	H	S/ongoing	1	Town Centre Manager	
7.3	business support for key/new businesses eg accommodation through specialist business advice	H	M	2	CDTP	
7.4	investment portfolio to promote opportunities at key sites	H	S	2		
7.5	encourage more local food and drink sourcing	M	L	2	Taste Durham/ Food Festival	
8. Leadership and business engagement						
8.1	promote tourism to local community/businesses to encourage ownership	VH	QW	1	Town Centre Manager	
8.2	Town Centre Forum - leading action and implementation	H	QW	1		

6.3 Key projects

The projects highlighted in blue above are those which will make most difference and which are top priority for this destination plan. They include (in the order they appear in the plan above):

1. Auckland Castle and Parkland
2. Binchester new excavations and expansion
3. Investment in accommodation
4. Signage improvements
5. New town visitor map
6. Events capacity and development
7. Improvements to market square, stalls, events infrastructure
8. New/revamped visitor website for Bishop Auckland
9. Business support for key/new businesses and investment portfolio
10. Leadership and business engagement

Each is described in more detail below.

1.	Auckland Castle and Parkland
Project no.	1.1 and 1.2
Priority action	Auckland Castle and Parkland are together the biggest attraction in Bishop Auckland. It is vital for the destination plan that the Castle remains an attraction that visitors can visit through as much of the year as possible. Its offer should be enhanced by building the new visitor centre which will better tell the stories of the Prince Bishops. The Parkland is also a huge asset – a peaceful and beautiful landscape to explore, with interesting buildings and monuments and a fantastic space for outdoor events.
Cost	
Lead Delivery Organisation	
Other Partners	CDTP
Key Issues	<p>The Bishop's Palace is the core attraction for the town. However there is considerable uncertainty over its future as its owners the Church Commissioners plan to review its usage after the retirement of the current Bishop of Durham. It is even possible the property could be sold. Partners in Bishop Auckland should try to influence to situation as it progresses in an appropriate way.</p> <p>The bid to the HLF for the parkland restoration, new visitor centre, interpretation and play facilities aims to make the most of this asset for the town. The project will enable more people to enjoy and appreciate the parkland and raise visitor satisfaction levels.</p> <p>By investing in new facilities and boosting promotion of the Castle and Bishop Auckland as a whole it is likely that it will become more viable to open the Castle itself throughout the year. As a heritage town the tourism profile is much less seasonal than coastal or countryside locations. That will give the town a huge tourism boost as visitors will stay longer and leave happy rather than being frustrated that they have not been able to visit the</p>

	<p>Castle.</p> <p>There is scope to link the parkland with Binchester Fort more proactively with signage and perhaps a trail. As both sites are developed and enhanced they can work more collaboratively as most visitors will be interested in seeing both sites.</p>
Timetable	HLF bid decision imminent.
Next steps	

2.	Binchester new excavations and expansion
Project no.	1.4
Priority action	New archaeological digs to extend the excavated area, enabling visitors to watch the dig in progress and more remains to view. Improvements in visitor signage, interpretation and facilities.
Cost	
Lead Delivery Organisation	Durham Council
Other Partners	CDTP
Key Issues	<p>Binchester is an important Roman site. Built prior to Hadrian's Wall the Roman cavalry were stationed in a large fort. Some describe it as a large market town even in those days. The bath house is one of the most extensive and best preserved in the country. To be a successful visitor attraction there has to be plenty for visitors to see and learn. So this current phase of development will improve the offer significantly. Regular events and re-enactments are held which bring the site to life. There is scope to extend these and increase linkages with the town itself to raise the profile of Binchester and encourage more people to visit.</p> <p>There are also longer term plans for further investment at the site in a new visitor centre with catering and retail and more extensive displays. There may also be potential for visitor accommodation to be developed.</p> <p>The gradual approach currently underway to build the visitor numbers over several years by extending excavations, associated PR and events is likely to create more confidence to invest in larger scale facilities in due course. It will also enable the educational market to be developed.</p> <p>Lessons can undoubtedly be learned from some of the sites along Hadrian's Wall. Linkages to the Wall and the company which co-ordinates promotion of Hadrian's Wall could also be beneficial. Binchester needs to identify how its story links into the Hadrians' Wall story and yet is distinct enough to encourage both general and more special interest and educational visitors.</p>
Timetable	
Next steps	New excavations starting 2009

3.	Investment in accommodation
Project no.	2.1 and 2.2
Priority action	Encourage the development of new visitor accommodation in or near to the town centre and encourage existing accommodation to upgrade and

	become inspected.
Cost	Officer time
Lead Delivery Organisation	
Other Partners	CDTP
Key Issues	<p>There are just two or three establishments offering accommodation in the town centre. They are non-inspected and are thought to mainly cater for workmen rather than the visitor market. Staff at the tourist information centre have to direct visitors out of town to find accommodation which loses the town valuable income and evening time spend. The handful of establishments could be targeted to promote the benefits of upgrading and inspection and offer support through the process.</p> <p>It is possible that a hotel may be included in one of the large new developments at the north end of the town –although the timescale for this is not known and may have been impacted by the economic downturn.</p> <p>There may be scope for individuals to set up one or two B&Bs in appropriate properties close to the town centre. This could be supported through holding an advisory event, advertised in the local papers at which business advisors and council staff can help potential entrants explore the feasibility. There may also be opportunities to convert historic properties, currently unused into a small hotel. Such properties could be included in the proposed investment portfolio.</p> <p>This destination plan aims to boost the confidence of existing and new operators that if they invest in their properties the target markets will find Bishop Auckland an attractive proposition and will visit.</p>
Timetable	
Next steps	

4.	Signage improvements
Project no.	3.1
Priority action	Improve signage for visitors along arrival routes and especially for long stay parking.
Cost	
Lead Delivery Organisation	
Other Partners	
Key Issues	Bishop Auckland is quite a difficult town to navigate around for visitors who have not been before. They need clear signage, relevant to their needs as they arrive – particularly as to which part of town they will want to aim for and where to park. A survey of signs has already been undertaken. Whilst much of the signing is good there are some key gaps and certain signs which need upgrading or re-wording. An action plan to target these improvements should be implemented over the next 2 years linked to the overall traffic and parking strategy.
Timetable	
Next steps	.

5. New town visitor map	
Project no.	3.2
Priority action	Design and print (and pdf) an attractive and easy to use map based leaflet
Cost	
Lead Delivery Organisation	CDTP
Other Partners	
Key Issues	<p>There is currently no good map or map based leaflet for Bishop Auckland. The town guide is rather dated in design and quite a large booklet. The heritage trail pack is attractive but doesn't cover all aspects of the town. There is scope for producing a simple map based leaflet for Bishop Auckland with an attractive, up to date map which showcases the main attractions and clearly indicates the walking routes around the town. This should also be made available to download from the website in advance of a visit.</p> <p>The map artwork can also be used for information points such as that proposed at the railway station.</p>
Timetable	
Next steps	

6. Events capacity and development	
Project no.	4.1 and 4.2
Priority action	To ensure the sustainability of existing events and develop plans for new or expanded events which will appeal to the target visitor markets.
Cost	
Lead Delivery Organisation	
Other Partners	CDTP
Key Issues	<p>Current events organisers carry a heavy burden of co-ordinating events. Discussions should be held to identify how best to support the current situation and to plan for the future so that events can be sustained long term. This will involve recruiting additional volunteers and succession planning. There is some urgency as some current event organisers may not be able to continue beyond 2009.</p> <p>There are aspirations to extend some of the most successful events such as the Food Festival. The jump from a one day event to two days is very challenging but using mechanisms such as a fringe event or special performances, additional features over several years can help draw more people and make a two day event viable and an attractive proposition for stall holders. There are examples of good practice around the country.</p> <p>One of the main aspirations of this destination plan is to use the vibrant events culture in Bishop Auckland to make more of its heritage and thus raise its profile as a town to visit. Discussions should be held with current partners about the potential for heritage themed events or showcasing</p>

	<p>elements of the town's heritage within existing or new events. Resources such as the re-enactment group based at Binchester or the current amateur football teams need to be involved. Ideas might include: a medieval marquee within the food festival or demonstrations of Roman recipes; a restaging of a famous football match with teams in old style kit; restaging the Prince Bishop's lunch party at the deer house or a unit of Roman cavalry parading through the town...</p> <p>There is an opportunity to link into Durham's City of Culture bid for 2013 to promote heritage and cultural linkages through events.</p>
Timetable	
Next steps	.

7.	Improvements to market square, stalls, events infrastructure
Project no.	5.1
Priority action	Environmental improvements to the market square to make the most of this valuable space as a focal point for the town, for staging the regular markets and for events.
Cost	
Lead Delivery Organisation	
Other Partners	
Key Issues	<p>Bishop Auckland has a very large market square overlooked by the magnificent structure of the Town Hall. However its paving and layout need improving to make the best use and appearance of the space. Designs have already been drawn up for a redevelopment of the space to make the most of sight lines towards the Castle, optimise traffic and parking arrangements and facilitate an attractive market. Investing in infrastructure for staging events in the square will help events organisers, reduce their costs and increase the range of events possible.</p> <p>Poor building frontages are additional problems on two sides of the square and every encouragement needs to be given to property owners to upgrade their frontages and signage to complement the investment in the market square.</p>
Timetable	
Next steps	.

8.	New/revamped visitor website for Bishop Auckland
Project no.	6.3
Priority action	A review and redesign for the Bishop Auckland website
Cost	
Lead Delivery Organisation	CDTP
Other Partners	
Key Issues	The website is better than that for many towns but needs a review of how it works from a visitor point of view. A search for Bishop Auckland on Google

	<p>brings up a rival site above the official town website, which needs better optimisation. The key themes and messages from this destination plan could be used to prioritise the messages and items featured. Suggestions include:</p> <p>Restructuring to create pages on heritage, events, walking/cycling and the main motivators for visitors</p> <p>featuring the main upcoming events which will be most of interest to visitors – not regular local events.</p> <p>Including information about hotel grading (or lack of).</p> <p>A where to eat section organised into relevant sections.</p> <p>A simple news story with photo each week such as about the excavations at Binchester or the latest event.</p> <p>Ideally the website could be de-coupled from the town website and whilst still retaining some links across at key points should appear to the viewer as purely a 'Visit Bishop Auckland' site. Good examples of how this has been successfully achieved elsewhere should be sought.</p>
Timetable	
Next steps	.

9. Business support for key/new businesses and investment portfolio	
Project no.	7.3 and 7.4
Priority action	Support new or existing businesses in taking advantage of opportunities identified through this plan, plus promoting specific development opportunities through an investment portfolio.
Cost	
Lead Delivery Organisation	CDTP
Other Partners	Business Link/Enterprise Agency
Key Issues	<p>A number of new business opportunities could emerge from the actions in this destination plan. Local partners could highlight these with existing operators or potential new entrants and support them in working up viable business plans.</p> <p>The specific development opportunities should be collated and could be promoted through a portfolio either web-based or in some simple printed format. The portfolio could be a county-wide initiative and could be promoted through Business Link, other business and regeneration organisations and possibly other routes such as estate agents or banks.</p>
Timetable	
Next steps	.

10. Leadership and business engagement	
Project no.	8.1 and 8.2
Priority action	Bishop Auckland needs to market itself as a destination for visitors to its own community and businesses to boost confidence and pride in the town and motivate action to implement this plan. The Town Centre Forum is a

	key group which can lead many of the action points and could co-ordinate monitoring the implementation of the action plan by partners.
Cost	
Lead Delivery Organisation	
Other Partners	promote tourism to local community/businesses to encourage ownership
Key Issues	The Town Centre Forum plays a vital role and there is probably potential for tourism partners and businesses to link into the Forum more proactively. The Forum needs to discuss how it could act as the co-ordinating body for the implementation of the destination plan in partnership with the reorganised local authorities. The plan itself could be promoted locally via a launch or a series of newspaper/website articles. This would help convince people and businesses in Bishop Auckland that the town can become a destination and that visitors could become an increasingly important part of the local economy.
Timetable	
Next steps	Immediate discussions about implementation of the destination plan.

6.4 Common themes to develop with other towns

Several themes and actions have arisen in more than one of the four Market Town Welcome towns in Durham.

- **Events development and support**

Events have been identified as an important action in all the towns and particularly so in Bishop Auckland. The volunteer experience and capacity in each town can be stretched – sometimes just one or two people are the main organisers. There is scope for a cross county approach to provide support and encouragement to the town’s events organisers. This could include a network, shared resources and expertise, training, even a small events development grant scheme if additional funding could be secured. There is some urgency with the situation in Bishop Auckland in particular.

- **New town maps/leaflets**

Key project 5 above is the production of a simple but good quality map based leaflet for Bishop Auckland. There is scope for producing a family of leaflets for Durham’s market towns which while promoting the special character of each presents them as a group. This could help spread design and print costs. They could be racked together in TICs as an attractive proposition for visitor segments that enjoy sightseeing in market towns.

- **Website development**

As with the leaflet above there is scope for an improved Bishop Auckland visitor website – see key project 8 above. It could sit alongside the town website but should have a modern and fresh appeal for visitors. It could be relatively simple with just six or eight pages linking to the Visit Durham and town websites for more information. It needs to be optimised so that people searching for Bishop Auckland will find it immediately.

Some of the same design and mapping used in the map leaflet above could be applied to the towns’ websites to ensure each has a fresh and coherent image.

- **Transport – linking things up**

Linking up attractions which are spread around different locations arose as an issue in some of the towns – especially Seaham and Barnard Castle. Options for addressing this could include better signage for cars and pedestrians and good visitor maps. However in some locations a visitor transport option such as a shuttle bus might be feasible. It may also be an issue in future for Bishop Auckland as visitor numbers to attractions rise. There could be potential for example for a shuttle bus from the market square linking Binchester, Escomb and Locomotion. However it is unlikely that this will be viable for several years, except perhaps during specific events. Towns could check what others have considered and look for successful models amongst other market towns in the region or further afield.

- **Investment portfolio**

The destination plans have identified specific investment opportunities in each town. These could be collated and promoted collectively to potential private sector investors in the region as a printed or web-based portfolio. See key project 9 above.

- **Encouraging private sector buy-in**

Collaborative working is very important in the visitor economy which is by its nature very fragmented and made up of many small businesses. In Bishop Auckland the Town Centre Forum plays a vital role and there is probably potential for tourism operations to link in more proactively or have an occasional meeting focusing on tourism issues. Again this is a common issue and support could be provided to tourism related businesses across the towns in the form of facilitation, access to advice and training and networking events.

- **Ensuring leadership to co-ordinate and drive implementation of the plan**

Key project 10 in this plan involves ensuring local tourism related businesses are able to participate in discussion and implementation of this plan and feel some ownership. Each town will face the issue of how to drive forward the implementation of the priority projects in the plan. While the solution may be different in each town there will be benefits from sharing experience, networking between the towns and being able to source advice and support from county bodies.

- **Visitor survey**

Both Bishop Auckland and Seaham were not included in previous market town visitor surveys (last undertaken in 2004). They have much less data on their visitors – who is coming currently, where they stay and how much they spend. It would be very valuable to undertake a standard visitor survey – ideally in 2009 or, if not, in 2010 in order to collect data which can then be collected again a few years later to monitor trends. In fact the same survey could be undertaken in all four of Durham's market towns to enable benchmarking – it can be very valuable to be able to measure each town's performance against each other to identify specific issues and problems for future action.

County Durham Tourism Partnership will be able to take the lead as the delivery partner for many of these actions and they are identified as such in the Action Plan.

6.5 Taking the Plan Forward

In order to implement this plan it is essential that there is a local leadership group in place in each town. They will be able to champion the plan, ensure that the plan is understood amongst all partners and sectors and will be able to contribute to the plan themselves. Their role will be to co-

ordinate implementation by partners and monitor progress. They may also be directly involved in implementing some of the actions not being taken forward by others. They should also co-ordinate communication about the Plan and celebrate the successes as actions are completed.

The role of the leadership group may be able to be taken on by an existing group in the town, or a specific sub-group. This may require the strengthening of existing groups for example by recruiting more representatives from tourism businesses or organisations and widening communications eg to include owners of key attractions. Where a group does not currently exist, towns will need to establish one.

It is important to keep the focus on the town as a destination and the visitor throughout.

7. Annexes

7.1 Market Town Welcome Template

market town welcome

The questions we have to answer

How we work out the answers

Town role

Step 1 Why welcome visitors?
(what are the benefits?)

Step 2 Who are our town's visitors?
(now and in the future)

Step 3 What does our town offer visitors?
(why do they/will they come?)

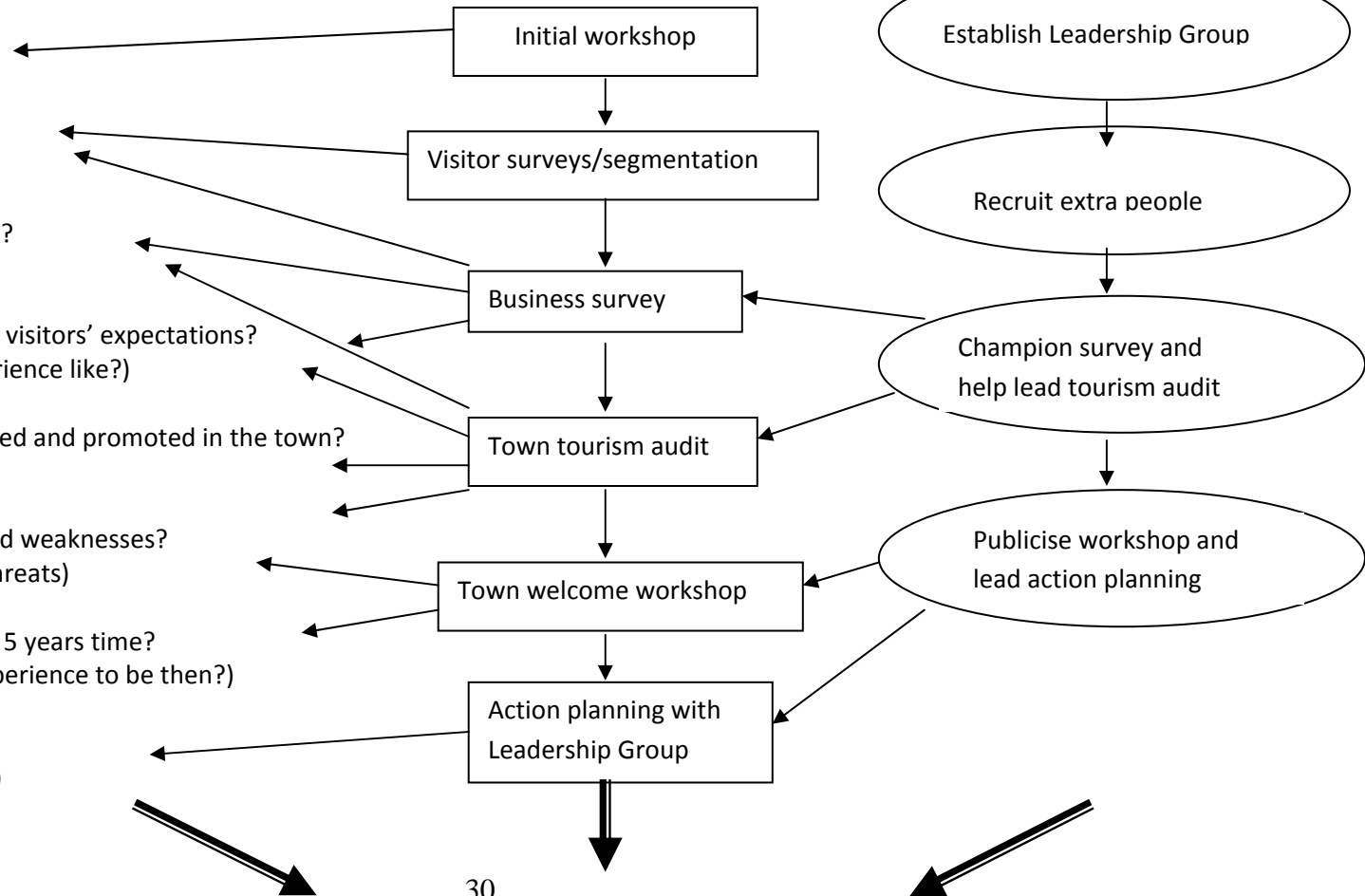
Step 4 How well does the offer meet the visitors' expectations?
(what is the current visitor experience like?)

Step 5 How is tourism resourced, managed and promoted in the town?
(who is involved?)

Step 6 What are our town's strengths and weaknesses?
(plus future opportunities and threats)

Step 7 What is the vision for our town in 5 years time?
(what do we want the visitor experience to be then?)

Step 8 How do we get there?
(and who needs to be involved?)



Market Town Destination Plan for our town

7.2 Market Town Welcome in Bishop Auckland - Participants

Individuals who have contributed to the development of this plan

Alan Anderson	Bishop Auckland Town Council
Ann Collins	Groundwork in Durham
Claire Daly	County Durham Economic Partnership
Catherine Dawson	Bishop Auckland Town Hall
Peter Dunn	Wear Valley District Council
Louise Elliott	CDTP
Abi Harrison	The Enterprise Agency
Neil Harrison	Wear Valley District Council
Tamsin Harrison	Urban and Rural Renaissance Initiative
Barbara Laurie	BATCF
Carolyn Liddell	Bishop Auckland Civic Society
Alex MacKee	County Durham Tourism Partnership
David Mason	Durham County Council
Steve McCormick	BATCM
David McKnight	CDTP
Mike Richardson	Wear Valley District Council
Sandra Robertson	Wear Valley District Council
Melanie Sensicle	CDTP
Alan Weston	Wear Valley District Council
Michelle White	Urban Rural and Renaissance

7.3 Tourism Audit

Market town area is defined within an approximate radius of 5 miles from the town edge, which includes the hamlets/settlements of Coundon / West Auckland / Escomb / Etherley / Toft Hill / Toronto / Binchester

Quality assessment

For some of the information you collect we would like you to assess how well the facility meets the needs of visitors to the town - see boxes shaded grey. Some businesses or facilities (e.g. pubs) may not be targeting visitors, so it is useful to add a qualitative element to the factual data.

Using a scoring system of 1 to 5 give each of the elements a score where

5 = very good, exceeds visitors' expectations, is a draw for visitors in itself

4 = good, meets visitors' expectations and an asset to the area

3 = moderately good, meets most visitors' needs

2 = adequate but room for improvement

1 = not suitable for visitors - you would not advise visitors to use/visit.

This scoring should be done collectively, i.e. is not just one person's opinion. It is not intended as criticism of particular sites but an objective assessment to identify gaps.

1. Accommodation

Please collect numbers of each type of accommodation. For smaller towns you may want to list all accommodation businesses individually.

	Number	No. of bedspaces, units or pitches	Number officially quality inspected
Hotels	1		0
Guesthouses/B&Bs	1		0
Inns or pubs with accommodation	5		0
Self-Catering businesses	2		0
Caravan & Camping sites	1		0
Youth or other hostels	0		0
Other group accommodation	0		0

Are there any particular gaps in the type or quality of accommodation for the size of your town?

No inspected accommodation (some is up to the standard required but costs put off providers as they know they'll get business without the outlay of being inspected / advertising). Reduced provision over years due to closures / retirements, etc.

Small number of providers and consequently lack of bed-spaces, including the lack of provision from a single site making it difficult to accommodate large groups. Very limited provision within town centre. Majority of provision in surrounding areas.

2. Attractions

Please include all sites which would be of interest to visitors, adding additional rows as necessary.

	Names	Opening days/months	Your quality score*
Historic houses, castles	• Auckland Castle	2 days a week Apr – Sept	4
	• Witton Castle		
	• Whitworth Hall		
Museums, heritage centres	• Binchester Roman Fort	Easter & Apr - Sept	3
	• Discovery Centre	Varies – run by volunteers	2
	• Locomotion & Timothy Hackworth	All year	5
Churches of interest to visitors	• Escomb Church	All Year by arrangement	4
	• St Andrews, South Church	All year by arrangement	3
	• St Helen Auckland		
	• Four Clocks		
	• Bishop's Chapel, Auckland Castle	As castle above	5
Animal/wildlife attractions inc. nature reserves	• Low Barnes Nature Reserve	All year, closes 16:00	3
	• Paradise, Witton Park		
Farm attractions	• Broomhill Farm Shop		
Gardens	• Auckland Castle Park Walled Garden		
Railway, transport	• Weardale Railway		

attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locomotion (see above) 		
Country parks, woodlands, special countryside sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auckland Castle Park 	All year	3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamsterley Forest 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whitworth 		
Craft centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 		
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bishop Auckland Town Hall 	All year	3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Mills Picnic Area 		

* Also mark any which have an official quality grading from the Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme

2b Festivals and Events

List regular or annual festivals and events which will be of interest to visitors, in calendar order, using extra lines if necessary.

Date	Event	Details
April	Food Festival	Free event run by volunteers from Town Centre Forum, held in grounds of Auckland Castle. Attracted c20,000 last 2 years.
April 2009	Arts Festival	One-off temporary 2 week arts festival called Artland organised to coincide with food festival (week before and after)
June	Bishop Auckland College Music	Free event first event held in 2008, this was predominantly a 'local' event but is aiming to grow and expand to attract new audiences.
July	Proms in the Park	Predominantly a WVDC Civic Event, this is also a public event with tickets on general sale. Uncertainty as to future given LGR.
August	1940s Event	
	New Car Show	
	Teddy Bears Picnic	
	Bishop Beach	
	Indulgence	

	Vintage Car Display	
September	Stan Laurel	One-off event held in 2008 to celebrate the installation of the Stan Laurel Statue commemorating his links with the town. May have potential to provide an annual event.
November	Firework Display	Free event, held on the grounds of the Rugby club close to the town centre. There are problems with parking and access.
December	Christmas Event	Annual free event that has evolved over the years. 2008 was the first Dickensian Market

Are there any gaps, for example at particular times of the year

Does the range of events match the types of interests that visitors have?

Most events, with the exception of the food festival, are of 'local' interest with limited increases in the number of 'tourists'.

Proms in the Park may encourage visitors to the town to the event but given the time and day there is limited opportunities to do other things prior to the event and has limited impact on overnight stays, however the format of the event in 2009 is changing.

3. Retail

Those towns which took part in the Retail Distinctiveness Programme will be able to use that information to complete this sheet. Note only those shops which will be of particular interest to visitors. In smaller towns that is likely to include food shops, but in larger towns focus on speciality shopping rather than the whole retail sector.

Shops

Retail type	No. of shops	Names (omit if too many to list)	No. of which in each quality category				
			5	4	3	2	1
Speciality Food	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chittocks Deli Broomhill Farm Shop 		1	1		
Antiques	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eden Antiques (W. Auckland) Something different 			2		
Books	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bondgate Books Christian Book Shop 			2		
Arts / Crafts	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bondgate Gallery 		1			

Gift	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cameo Fine Arts • I believe in Angels • Town Hall 		1	2		
Outdoor/Leisure	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Army Surplus • Millets • Windrow Sports • Halfords • Red Ape Cycles 			3	2	
Clothing	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berties • Chic-Argo • Pinc 		1	2		
Garden centres/ nurseries	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castle Gardens • Beech Tree Nurseries 			2		
Farm Shops	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broomhill • Lowfields Willington • Bradley Burn 			3		
Other Speciality or 'destination' shops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 					

Markets

Market type	name	regularity	day(s) of week	5	4	3	2	1
Outdoor	Traditional	Weekly	Thursday /Saturday					
Indoor								
Speciality	Dickensian Christmas (see events)							

Eating out

	No.	Names (omit if too many to list)	5	4	3	2	1
Restaurants	6	e.g. Café 29 Bishop Bistro		3	3		
Take-aways	20						
Cafes/tea shops	20	e.g. Zairs Café Castlegate Café Four Clocks Kelly Ann's Broomhill Farm Town Hall Esquires Ice Cream Parlour		5	12	3	
Pubs serving food	25	Stanley Jefferson Pollards Toronto Lodge Queens Postchaise Top House, Coundon Parkhead, Bar Mondo		5	18	2	
Other							

Vacant shops	
How many vacant shops are there in the town currently?	16
Sunday opening	
How many shops are open on Sundays?	6
How many eating places are open on Sundays?	All pubs (25) and 2 cafes
Early evenings	
How many shops are open in the early evening 5pm-7pm?	0
How many eating places are open in the early evening?	All pubs (25)
Half day closing	
How many shops observe a half day closing?	Approximately half

Which day of the week?

Weds

Are there any particular gaps in the retail and catering offer of your town for a town of its size?

Need:

quality gift shops

larger market with more stalls, specialist markets (e.g. farmers market)

an 'old fashioned' department store (like Barkers in Northallerton)

Lack of:

craft and pottery

special food

quality comparative goods – particularly clothing

large floorspace for large multiples

gaps in High Street names

4. Sports, outdoor activity and entertainment facilities

Please note all facilities which are available for visitors (i.e. not private clubs etc). Add extra rows as necessary.

Facility	Name	Brief details	Quality grading				
			5	4	3	2	1
Leisure centre/ gym	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodhouse Close 	Offers gym, swimming pool, sauna, exercise classes			X		
Swimming pool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodhouse Close 	As above			X		
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eleven Arches / Castle View 						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bishop Auckland Golf Course 						
Long distance footpaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weardale Way 						
Other named walks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Railway Walks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bishop Auckland – Spennymoor Brandon – Bishop Auckland 					
Bicycle hire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wooden Wheels 	Hamsterley Forest					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dale Bike Hire 	Delivery service					
Cycle routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> W2W 						

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National cycle route 20 						
Riding/pony trekking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Escomb 						
Special riding routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 						
Fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> River Wear 						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Witton Lakes 						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Witton Castle 						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tunstall Reservoir 						
Sailing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tunstall Reservoir 						
Canoeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 						
Other outdoor activities, sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 						
Theatre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Hall 						
Cinema*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Hall 						
Other entertainment facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Howden Wurlitzer 						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bingo 						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snooker / Pool 						

* include regular film showing arrangements if appropriate

Are there any particular gaps or weaknesses for a town of its size?

Lack of:
multi-screen cinema
bowling alley
associated additional leisure / retail / food
go-carting

First three potentially addressed by recent planning application approval but still awaiting outcome of 'call-in' procedure and therefore proposed start on site.

5. Support facilities and infrastructure

Car parking

	Free	Short stay	Long stay
No. of car parks	0	4	4
No. of spaces in total	0	536 plus 30 disabled	139 plus 2 disabled
	Free	Metered	
On street parking places (approx)	18 plus 48 disabled	0	

Coach Parking

	Location	capacity
Location(s) for dropping off passengers	Market Place	2
Location(s) for coach parking	Bus Station Layover	2
	Location	capacity
Location(s) for dropping off passengers	Bus Station	???
Location(s) for coach parking	Bus Station Layover	2
Estimated no. of coaches visiting the town each week?	Unknown but very limited	

Any related issues?

Lack of:

- signage from car parks
- signage from drop off points
- long stay visitor car parking

Other transport facilities

No.s and locations of bicycle racks/storage	Bus Station x 3 Rail Station x 4 Theatre Corner x 1 (to be installed)
Location of central bus station/shelter	Bus Station adjacent to ('back of') Newgate Centre
Facilities available at bus station/shelter	Public toilets Public phones Lack of: Signage / interpretation Information kiosk Not appealing first impression – faces onto back of Newgate Centre
No. of daily buses linking to other towns	More than 10
Distance from town centre to nearest railway station	Within town centre on southern edge but ½ mile from bus station and Market Place.

Public toilets

Toilet location	Bus Station	Newgate Centre	
Opening hours	7am-7pm	???	
free/paid	Free	Free	
disabled access yes/no	yes	???	
baby changing yes/no	???	???	

Are there any particular weaknesses or gaps for a town of its size?

Not enough public toilet provision. 10:00 – 16:00 Monday – Friday visitors directed from TIC to Town Hall even though these are NOT 'public toilets' but are available when the café is open. Enquiries at other times are directed to private provision (Weatherspoons / MacDonalds). Adverse comments about public toilets in bus station.

Lack of coach parking provision and spaces available not well signposted for those who don't know the area.

Lack of car parks, especially visitor long stay spaces, and lack of signage / interpretation from these.

6. Visitor Information Centre

Visitor / Tourist Information Centres (VICs/TICs) are the public face of tourism. They provide a vital role both in the planning of visits to the destination and influencing activity once the visitor has arrived, thus encouraging longer stays and increased spend. They also play an important role in providing an information service to residents and hence support the key Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market.

Does your town have a VIC/ TIC?	Yes	If not, where is your nearest centre?	
Location	Bishop Auckland Town Hall	Contact Name	Catherine Dawson
Telephone Number	01388 602610	Email Address	bishopauckland.touristinformation@durham.gov.uk

For those towns with a VIC/TIC, please compile the most recent figures available

Enquiry type:	Total Number of Enquiries		
	2005	2006	2007
Counter	7,500	9,980	10,000
Postal	161	140	100
Telephone	18,000	16,612	15,600
Email	200	200	180
Accommodation bookings	13	7	0

Please estimate proportions of enquiries from each of:

	%
Local residents	60
UK visitors	35
Overseas visitors	5

Visitor Information Needs

What are the most frequent information requests that you receive from visitors and potential visitors?	
1	Attractions
2	Accommodation

3	Travel directions
4	Places to eat
5	Travel timetables

Are there gaps in the current information available to meet these requests? If so, what further types of information would be useful?

Lack of information about accommodation as lack of inspected accommodation

Lack of information / interpretation for Auckland Castle Park

Lack of map for town

How well does the town meet the needs and expectations of visitors and what improvements are needed to better meet their requirements?

Main visitor attractions (Binchester / Auckland Castle) not available October – April and then when open days of opening are limited, leaving many visitors disappointed.

7. Tourist Information Points (TIPs)

TIPs are the notice or information boards which provide useful information for visitors such as a map of where they are and things to see and do. They are often located in car parks, town centres or key sites. Please survey and include details of those in your town, using additional columns if necessary.

Number in town:

5

Locations	North Bondgate	Newgate Centre	Castle Chare Car Park	Four Clocks	Escomb Church
Content of each e.g. maps, adverts, events	Events / Adverts	Events / Adverts	Events / Adverts	Events / Adverts	Events / Adverts
Is it well maintained?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Who is responsible for maintenance?	WVDC	WVDC	WVDC		WVDC
Is the content appropriate and up to date?	Usually	Usually	Usually	Usually	Usually

Are there any additional locations where a TIP is needed?

Possible locations:

- Bus station
- Railway station

- Auckland Castle Park entrance
- Morrison's Car Park
- Theatre Corner (Stan Laurel statue)
- Market Place

8. Interpretation

Interpretative materials play a key role in providing visitors with in depth information about a town or destination – beyond basic directions and information, they tell the story of a destination, informing visitors about its history and points of interest. Interpretative materials can vary tremendously - we suggest you focus on interpretative boards/panels, wall plaques, tours/signed trails, and guided tours.

Is there any interpretation around the town?	Details
Boards or panels at key sites or on key buildings of interest	Yes – various locations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fore Bondgate • Castle Chare • Newgate Centre • Theatre Corner
Plaques on specific buildings	Theatre Corner
Signed tours or trails around the town	Yes
Regular guided tours around the town	No
Other interpretation materials	Finger posts

Who is responsible for maintenance of panels, plaques and signs?

WVDC

Are there any gaps where further / new interpretative materials could be provided?

Significant need with Auckland Castle Park to be addressed as part of the proposed restoration plan

9. Visitor Pedestrian Signposting

Pedestrian signposting, usually in the form of finger posts, plays an important role in ensuring that visitors to a town centre are able to orientate themselves effectively and find their way about. Looking at every individual finger post in larger towns is potentially a complicated and time-consuming task - for the audit in this case we suggest the following approach;

- Choose a maximum of four locations (and the subsequent walking route to the town centre) which are key entry points/points of arrival for visitors – i.e. the main visitor car parks, bus/railway station/ dropping off point - and assess the following points
- In smaller towns where there are fewer than four fingerposts simply assess each in turn.

	Location 1	Location 2	Location 3	Location 4
Location or start point	Railway Station	Bus Station / Newgate Centre	Tenters Street Car Park	Market Place
Is there a TIP showing where you are in relation to the town centre?	No	No	No	Yes
Signs to the Tourist / Visitor Information Centre?	No	No	No	Yes
Signs to public toilets?	No	No	No	No
Signs to main visitor attraction(s)	No	No	No	Yes
Is there good continuity of signposts/fingerposts along the route?	No	No	No	No
Quality of Signing				
Are routes clear?	No	No	No	No
Are fingerposts obscured or pointing the wrong way?	No	N/A	N/A	Yes
Are fingerposts well maintained?	No	N/A	N/A	Yes
Are there any obvious gaps in terms of facilities which are not currently signed?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

10. Road signposting for visitors

Feedback from visitors suggests that visitor signposting is consistently identified as something destinations could improve. More often than not, when a first time visitor travels to a destination, advance signposting will be their first experience of the destination – so it is important to make a good first impression. Visitors particularly value brown and white visitor signing which is easy to recognise and is designed specifically for their purposes.

Perhaps more so than the previous areas of the information audit, assessing road signposting to a destination is a complex area to consider – encompassing a range of logistical, technical and road safety and highway management issues. In practical terms, the most important areas to consider are the main road routes into the market towns

- Choose a maximum of four main road routes into the market towns (if there are fewer than 4 main routes, only assess those that are appropriate), starting from the nearest strategic road or junction.
- In larger towns these routes will be assessed by travelling along the route in a car, two people are required to carry out this aspect of the audit. Drive along the route from your chosen starting point, noting details on the issues set out in the template. **Safety warning - only carry out this survey at a quiet time and in good weather. Plan your route and stops in advance. Drive carefully and be aware of traffic behind you. If any routes are hazardous for this type of survey do not undertake it yourselves but discuss signage with your highways authority.**
- In smaller towns it may be possible to complete this survey on foot - **Safety warning - again consider safety issues carefully before surveying along busy roads on foot, particularly if there is no pavement. Be especially careful if taking photographs.**

	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3	Route 4	Route 5
starting point	Viaduct	Durham Rd / A688	South Church Rd / A688	Cockton Hill Rd	Etherley Lane
finishing point					
Are there any signs on the route indicating that this is a market town of interest to visitors? <i>(this could include white on brown tourist signs, welcome signing etc)</i>	No	No	No	No	No
Are there any white on brown tourist signs?	yes	???	???	???	???
<i>- Record any details / location</i>					
Signposting to the Tourist Information Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	No ???	No???
<i>- Record any details / location</i>					
Signposting for main attractions?	yes	No???	No???	No???	No???
<i>- Record any details / location</i>					
Signposting for visitor car parks?	No	No	No	No	No

- Record any details / location					
Signposting for public toilets?	No	No	No	No	No
- Record any details / location					
Is there an out-of-town Tourist Information Point on the main road before entering/ turning off to the town?	No	No	No	No	No
- Record any details / location					
Continuity of signposting					
Where facilities are signposted, does this remain consistent along the routes?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quality of signing.					
Are the signs appropriately maintained	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Visually- are they clear/obscured	Clear	Clear	Clear	Clear	Clear
Are there any out of date signs which need to be removed or rationalised	???	???	???	???	???
Note details for reporting to Highway authority					

7.4 Visitor market segments

More detailed descriptions of the four ArkLeisure market segments used in County Durham.

1. Functionals

Outlook

- Functionals are very resistant to spending and appear pretty self reliant.
- They are very price driven and value functionality strongly over style.
- They are very traditional in their values, and are not prepared to pay for fashion, style or “individuality”.
- Service is something that they expect as opposed to something they will pay extra for.
- Whilst they are not early adopters they are interested in new experiences, and are happy to try new things.
- They also enjoy intellectual challenges, arts and culture.

Interests and Activities

- **Personal interests** – DIY, gardening, arts & culture.
- **Days out and attractions** – Interested in heritage attractions. Seeking a nostalgic and somewhat educational experience.
- **Shopping** – Higher propensity to use the lower cost supermarkets e.g. co-op. Budget clothes shops are used and a low amount spent on clothes purchases.
- **Eating & drinking** – Lower propensity to eat and drink out compared to other segments. Price & functionality is important. Social clubs or Weatherspoons pubs are favoured drinking establishments (price sensitive).
- **Nights out** – Most likely to be a trip to the cinema or a trip to the theatre.
- **Media** – Mail & Telegraph are the most popular newspapers. Lowest proportion of all segments owning satellite/ cable TV. Into news, films and comedy.
- **Holidays** – Most likely to choose a specialist operator or an independent holiday company. Unlikely to use a dedicated internet holiday company but quite likely to book accommodation online & arrange travel themselves. Low frequency of holiday taking and most likely to do a short break in the UK and a longer holiday overseas.

2. Traditionals.

Outlook

- Traditionals are a main stream market. Their members are relatively self reliant and internally referenced with possible tendencies towards being sustainers.
- Brand is not a key purchase driver for this segment but it does not mean that they are brand averse.
- They are more likely to hold traditional values.
- Functionality is far more important than style and they are not swayed by products with style and individuality, although they will still go for something out of the ordinary.
- They value good service, and this is something that they will pay for, especially in terms of individual attention.
- They are unlikely to justify spending on expensive alternatives.
- They live life at a relaxed pace and enjoy intellectual challenges, arts and culture.

Interests and Activities

- **Days out and attractions** - those that are geared towards heritage and investigation will appeal to the Traditionals. This includes National Trust attractions, churches and cathedrals and botanical gardens.
- They are looking for days out and attractions that are peaceful & relaxing, nostalgic and educational.
- **Personal interests** - include gardening and arts and culture.
- **Eating & Drinking** - For Traditionals, the traditional pub is the type of eating and drinking establishment that holds the greatest appeal.
- **A good night out** - for this segment would be going for a drink or a meal out.
- **Holidays** – Being an older segment, they are most likely to use Saga but also domestic niche operators (e.g. English Country Cottages). They are also most likely to use the telephone for booking.
- A good short break for Traditionals would give them the chance to escape, slow down and do their own thing.
- **Media** – Enjoy news, history and nature programmes on TV.

3. Discoverers

Outlook

- Discoverers as the name suggests are independent of Mind.
- They are the group least likely to be worried about what others might think.
- They are little influenced by style or brand unless it represents values they are seeking.
- Function far out rates style as a purchase driver.
- Quite high spenders, and value new products and services as well as new experiences.
- They will judge their value for themselves. If the product suits their needs and is right then they will spend their money.
- They value good service.
- They live a relatively relaxed pace of life.
- They enjoy intellectual challenges but arts and culture are not really an important part of who they are.

Interests and Activities

- **Personal interests** - Include attending sporting events, computer games and DIY.
- **Days out and attractions** - Discoverers are drawn towards attractions that are geared towards investigation and amusement. This could include attractions such as zoos, science museums or living history attractions. They want to be fascinated and absorbed by their days out and go for something out of the ordinary.
- **A good night out** - would involve live music.
- **Shopping** - a discoverer is looking for something that is different from the norm and is more likely to be attracted towards markets.
- **Eating and drinking** - the types of eating and drinking establishments that appeal to a Discoverer are modern, functional but service orientated (e.g. Ha Ha Bar & Canteen, Bar Med). This segment eats out frequently.
- **Media** – Have a wide variety of interests when it comes to TV viewing including films, sport, nature comedy and science programmes.
- **Holidays** – Independent travel companies (e.g. Trailfinders) appeal to this segment. They are a group likely to holiday off the beaten track or try to learn something new on their holiday. One of the least likely segments to book a package holiday.
- A good short break for a Discoverer allows them time to themselves, a chance to escape and the opportunity to expand their knowledge and experiences.

4. Cosmopolitans

Outlook

- Strong, active and confident.
- Do what they want rather than follow any particular fashion.
- Stylish people but it is individuality rather than fashion that is important to them.
- Comfortable trying new things that are out of the ordinary.
- Happy to adopt traditional values when appropriate.
- Early adopters but this is generally based on their personal interest in new products and opportunities rather than on fashion trends. A result of this is that they are early to try out new products, especially in the field of new technology.
- Value and seek functionality in their purchases.
- High-spending market and find it easy to justify buying expensive alternatives.
- To be given individual attention is very important for Cosmopolitans and they are willing to pay for it.
- Are risk takers and this is reflected in their purchases and their desire for things that are new and different. They like new challenges, both physical and intellectual.
- Have an appreciation of art and culture.
- Life for this group is full and active, yet peace and relaxation is still valued in the right circumstances.

Interests and Activities

- **Personal interests** - Cosmopolitans like shopping, cooking and arts and culture.
- **Days out and attractions** - Cosmopolitans have a slight bias towards heritage and arts or cultural attractions. Their active nature is also reflected in the fact that they have a strong appeal towards days out in the “great outdoors” – this could be visits to a National Park, a walk in the country side or a day at the beach. The atmosphere that they are looking for in a day out is something that is educational and something that is mentally challenging.
- **Shopping** - Cosmopolitans spend a lot of money on clothes and up market fashion chains (e.g. GAP) are where they are likely to be found. They also like places to shop that have a strong independent sector (e.g. antique shops or specialist shops).
- **Eating & drinking** - Cosmopolitans are the segment to eat out most often and are drawn to new, self found, or non-chain restaurants. Wine bars are popular for drinking.
- **Nights out** - Cosmopolitans have a range of nights out that appeal and these include comedy, cabaret, theatre and ballet.
- **Media** – Into films, news and comedy. Less time spent viewing TV than the majority of other segments.
- **Holidays** – Most likely segment to use the long haul and more independent operators (e.g. Kuoni, Expedia, Trailfinders or cruise operators).
- A good short break for a Cosmopolitan allows them to escape, do their own thing and expand their knowledge or experience.

There are four further segments in the ArkLeisure segmentation model which were not used in this study. Style Hounds, High Streets, Habituals and Followers were thought to be the least relevant segments for Durham market towns.