

Tees Valley Area Tourism Management Plan 2009 – 12

1.0 Tourism Network North East

Tourism Network North East (TNNE) is responsible for the delivery of tourism in the North East. It consists of the regional development agency One North East (ONE) and four sub-regional Area Tourism Partnerships (ATPs) for Durham, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear and Tees Valley. visitTeesvalley (vTv) is the ATP for Tees Valley and is resourced by ONE, the five Tees Valley local authorities and the private sector.

1.1 What is an Area Tourism Management Plan?

An Area Tourism Management Plan (ATMaP) is an action plan for a range of organisations involved in the visitor economy. It identifies what needs to be done between 2009 – 2012 and by whom, to develop the visitor economy product, promote the area, improve the experience of visitors and help businesses to become more productive and profitable.

1.2 Why is it Important?

The ATMaP provides the context for all investment decisions made to support the visitor economy. It provides the basis for partnership working and seeks to build commitment to a common programme of intervention and activities that will increase the value and volume of the visitor economy in Tees Valley.

The ATMaP relates to the activities of all public and private sector organisations involved in developing the visitor economy, not just to the work of visitTeesvalley, and the proposals in it should be reflected in the business plans of all of these organisations. A separate document, the “visitTeesvalley Business Plan”, details the actions to be undertaken vTv.

Whilst not directly concerned with public sector funding, any project that does demonstrate a contribution to the ATMaP may be considered for Single Programme funding.

Tourism makes a significant contribution to the Tees Valley economy and is recognised as a key industry, worth £707m and employing nearly 11,000

people. The day visitor market is important with nearly 13m day visitors. Over the last 5 years (2003 – 2007) Tees Valley has shown the greatest growth of all sub-regions within TNNE with a 34% growth in overnight stays and 38% growth in overnight revenue.

1.3 Timeframe

The ATMaP is a short-to-medium term action plan for 2009 – 2012. It should be noted however that some projects need to be set in the context of a longer term strategic framework of 10 – 15 years. The ATMaP will be revised on an annual basis to ensure that the document reflects the progress and change occurring within Tees Valley.

2.0 Our Vision for the Tees Valley Visitor Economy

In 2015 Tees Valley will be known as a distinctive, easily accessible, quality destination, which offers 'urban playground' environments with a vibrant eating and nightlife scene, and a range of cultural, entertainment and sporting facilities, accommodation; rich and well interpreted industrial heritage and great outdoor experiences in coast and countryside – all delivered by a highly skilled workforce. These products will be reinforced and enlivened through a programme of special events and experiences. Tees Valley will be an environment that is highly attractive as a place for people to live, work, visit and play.

Achieving this vision will require substantial investment in creating and enhancing the Tees Valley visitor offer including: physical development, new or enhanced events, up-skilling the workforce and improving the image of the sub-region. Given the current financial climate, it may be difficult to achieve high levels of investment over the next two to three years. Thus there will need to be a clear focus on priorities that will add the most value.

2.1 Priorities for the Tees Valley

ONE have established key objectives in line with the NE Visitor Economy Strategy for the Atmap to meet. Tees Valley public and private sector partners have identified the following four priorities as critical to achieving the vision for the destination, enabling the visitor economy to grow and contribute significantly to the future prosperity of the Tees Valley and ensuring the visitor offer exceeds expectations.

- Improve the physical product to local, national and international visitors
- Develop and promote Tees Valley as an events destination of local, national and international significance

- Upskill the tourism and hospitality sector workforce.
- Contribute to improving the local, regional, national and international perceptions of the Tees Valley destination by raising the profile of the Tees Valley brand

3.0 Delivery of Tees Valley Priorities

Table 1: A strategic framework for action

visitTeesvalley together with its public and private sector partners will undertake the following actions to deliver the priorities.

Priority	Field of Action	Example projects
1. Improve the physical product to local, national and international visitors	Identify, attract, upgrade, redevelop accommodation provision, attractions, arenas, retail/high street offer and the transport infrastructure, within the Tees Valley, in order to encourage dwell time, increased spend and enhanced quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place-shaping and public realm improvements • Iconic Public Art - Temonus • 5 major regeneration schemes by TVR • Development of new 5star hotel – Rockliffe Hall • Development of Globe Theatre
2. Develop and promote Tees Valley as an events destination of local, national and international significance	<p>Manage and facilitate a process of winning and co-ordinating iconic events and festivals across the sub region, particularly those in keeping with existing programmes such as music, maritime activities and adventure sport.</p> <p>Focus upon attracting national and international events.</p> <p>Maximise the natural and cultural assets of the area as a focus for the development of new events.</p> <p>Develop the events infrastructure to provide a quality visitor experience at events and encourage physical product development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilising the Tees Barrage for a range of events including world canoeing championships in the run up to 2012; Establish proactive funding campaign to attract major sporting/cultural events • SIRF and Fringe, Take to the Tees • The Tall Ships Races 2010 • Hosting of a national mountain biking event encourages the development and upgrading of cycle routes and facilities e.g. toilets. • National Kite surfing championships -Kiteival

<p>3. Upskill the tourism and hospitality sector workforce</p>	<p>To ensure that tourism businesses are able to operate effectively and efficiently and are able to develop in ways that continually improve the standard of the offer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Welcome Tees Valley customer service programme • Sign up employer and employees to the UK Skills Passport • Tees Valley Cultural Volunteering Pilot (TVCVP) • 'Employability routeways' should be developed to support staff retention and progression • National Skills Academy, Darlington College • Establish Employer Gateway
<p>4. Contribute to improving the regional, national and international perceptions of the Tees Valley by raising the profile of the Tees Valley brand</p>	<p>Contribute to the activity of a range of organisations such as vTv, TVU, TVR, LA's by improving the visitor offer and contributing to the marketing and promotion of Tees Valley to visitors and residents.</p> <p>Improving the physical product, delivering events and upskilling the workforce (see above) will all play a key role in improving perceptions and raising the awareness and the profile of Tees Valley.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of TVU Tees Valley Communications Strategy • Encourage Tees Valley wide initiatives to raise the profile of the Tees Valley brand

3.1 Priority 1: Product Development Programmes

The strength of the Tees Valley offer to visitors is its diverse range of experiences. These reflect the combination of distinctive places within the Tees Valley, but also a heritage of industrial and technical design innovation which continues today. Our four key physical product elements are:

- The urban playground experience of Stockton and Middlesbrough
- The coastal stretch from Hartlepool to Redcar, Saltburn and onto Staithes.
- The countryside and historic towns including Guisborough, Yarm, and Darlington and the outdoor experiences to be enjoyed there
- Heritage and innovation – a celebration of industrial heritage into the 21st century.

This mix of experiences reflects the regeneration agenda in terms of the Stockton-Middlesbrough Initiative, Coastal Arc and Darlington Gateway as recognised by the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies and Tees Valley City Region Business Case.

3.2 Priority 2: Events Development

It is recognised that the Tees Valley does not possess the same “must see” natural, cultural and historic advantages of other more established and mature destinations such as Cornwall, Bath or Northumberland. In these circumstances, events become a major motivating factor to draw visitors to Tees Valley.

Events can generate substantial numbers of visitors from outside the region (often people who would not otherwise have come) and create significant revenue streams. Also they can change perceptions and the image of an area and raise a destination’s profile. The Tees Valley is already well-recognised for having a strong portfolio of events and festivals such as Middlesbrough Music Live, the Stockton International Riverside Festival (the largest open air street festival in the UK) and the Hartlepool Maritime festival. More recently Tees Valley has been host to the Seve Trophy, the European Dragon Boat Championships, the Tour of Britain and the BBC ‘Proms in the Park’ and Hartlepool has won the coveted final destination of The Tall Ships Races 2010.

A Festival and Event Development Plan has been prepared to ensure events over the next 3 – 5 years are: rooted-unique and distinct; exploiting international and national links; fewer bigger better events; thematically linked across Tees Valley and make a clear case for investment.

Festivals and events are seen as supporting and enabling community cohesion, providing opportunities to dovetail with regeneration initiatives, supporting the worklessness agenda, attracting visitors, supporting economic growth and changing perceptions of the area.

Three levels of events have been identified; lead event attracting national and international audiences (Tall Ships Races 2010), 2nd tier events attracting regional and international audiences (Kiteival) and community based events(Firework displays).

3.3 Priority 3: Upskilling the Tourism and Hospitality sector workforce

To attract visitors to the Tees Valley and generate repeat visits, it is important that all businesses working in the visitor economy have a skilled workforce. The aim will be to give both visitors and residents a quality experience that meets and surpasses their expectations.

In addition, the employment opportunities offered by the sector are tremendous in Tees Valley and actions to encourage recruitment and retention in the sector need to be encouraged.

Within the Tees Valley, a variety of organisations are involved in the delivery of training (BENE, LSC, JCP, University, Colleges, LAs, NEEC, and Chamber etc). To achieve a significant step change in the quality of the visitor experience, priorities have been identified by these organisations which will bring about a transformation of people as well as place

These priorities include:

- UK Skills Passport for both employers and employees
- Management and leadership including identifying business role models to promote the sector to potential new employees and other businesses
- Product knowledge Welcome Tees Valley ambassador course
- Clustering of SMEs to undertake joint diagnostics of skills needs
- Implementation of Cultural Volunteering across the Tees Valley. Identify volunteering opportunities in the cultural sector (e.g. events, visitor attractions) to enable individuals particularly from disadvantaged groups to acquire skills and knowledge and to provide a route to employment
- Establishment of an Employers' Gateway – a one-stop shop for employers in the tourism and hospitality sector as part of the implementation of the Regional Employability Framework.

3.4 Priority 4: Changing perceptions of the Tees Valley

The visitor economy of Tees Valley differs from the rest of the North East principally because of its industrial heritage closely juxtaposed to major conurbations and coast and countryside. Appendix 3 lists some of the major capital projects underway that will serve to change visitors' perceptions of the Tees Valley.

The significant recent “regeneration” investment has helped to reposition a “place” both in the minds of potential visitors and residents, but also in reality as new, attractive assets are created – new museum, new accommodation, new colleges and award-winning attractions. However Tees Valley is a much less mature visitor destination than the rest of the North East and requires a significant push to raise Tees Valley’s profile and change perceptions at a local, regional, national and international level.

As part of changing perceptions, there is an important role to play in ensuring the residents and workforce within Tees Valley have a good understanding and awareness of the Tees Valley offering, and, more importantly, how this offering will improve over the next few years. A strong communication strategy involving all key stakeholders will be implemented. vTv will play a key role in pursuing an aggressive bespoke event-led marketing campaign to both consumers and residents, thus contributing towards changing perceptions of Tees Valley.

3.5 Priority Projects: Spatial & Thematic

The development of all of the AtMap projects is linked to the development of the visitor economy and the broader regeneration/place agenda of Tees Valley therefore the ATMaP will identify 5 spatial product priorities or clusters of activity in each of the 5 Boroughs that represent the tourism offer – urban playground, coast, countryside and historic towns. Cutting across the product mix are two Tees Valley wide thematic programmes – heritage and innovation and outdoor activities