
TOURISM REVIEW GROUP – FINAL REPORT

Purpose of Report

1. To report the findings and recommendations of the Tourism Review Group established by this Scrutiny Committee to investigate how the tourism strategy could be improved in the light of regeneration with a view to making recommendations to Cabinet thereon.

Information and Analysis

2. At the meeting of Environment Scrutiny held on 1st July, 2004 it was agreed that Tourism be the subject of this Committee's main Review with a final report to Cabinet being submitted during May 2005.

Final Report

3. The final report of the Review Group is attached as **Appendix 1**.

Legal Implications

4. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

5. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Recommendations

6. The recommendations of the Review Group are detailed below and this Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider their recommendations as appropriate :-
 - (a) That the Final Report of the Review Group be referred to Cabinet for consideration.
 - (b) That Cabinet approve implementation of the Action Plan.

Paul Wildsmith,
Director of Corporate Services

Background Papers

There were no background papers in the preparation of this report.

Karen Graves Extension 2291
KLG

**DARLINGTON – HISTORIC MARKET
TOWN**

BETWEEN

DALE AND VALLEY

**ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
APRIL 2005**

FINAL REPORT OF THE TOURISM REVIEW GROUP

Introduction

This is the final report of the Tourism Review Group, established by Environment Scrutiny Committee to investigate Tourism within the Borough of Darlington.

Background Information

At the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 1st July, 2004 all Members of the Committee were nominated to serve on the Tourism Review Group to investigate how the tourism strategy could be improved in the light of regeneration. The Terms of Reference (**Appendix 1**) for the Review were agreed at its first meeting held on 11th November, 2004. At that meeting the Review Group made the decision to establish two Task and Finish Review Groups each having responsibility to investigate allocated Items of the Terms of Reference with any remaining items to be considered by the Full Group.

Methods of Investigation

The Review Group, and Task and Finish Review Groups, have met formally on eight occasions and a detailed record of the discussion thereat is attached at **Appendix 2**. The Group have also undertaken site visits to both Chesterfield Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and more locally, Richmond, Bishop Auckland, Barnard Castle and Thirsk (TICs) in order to investigate how they were operated. A detailed record of the findings of the Site Visits is attached at **Appendix 3**.

Acknowledgements

Claire Boston-Smithson, Tourism and Heritage Manager, Development and Environment Department;
Glenis Dodds, Information Darlington Supervisor, Development and Environment Department;
Gwenda-Lyn Jones, Economic Regeneration and Tourism Manager, Development and Environment Department,
Richard Horniman, Principal Economic Regeneration Officer, Development and Environment Department
Karen Graves, Democratic Support Officer, Department of Corporate Services.
Staff of Chesterfield, Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Richmond and Thirsk Tourist Information Centres.

What does tourism mean to Darlington?

In global terms, tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries accounting for 11% of Global Gross Domestic Product and is clearly, in the words of the World Tourism Organisation, one of the world's economic and social phenomena of the past century.

The Economic Intelligence Unit forecasts indicate that the current top tourist destinations will continue to dominate world tourism through to the year 2005, although rankings are expected to change due to external factors. Within this ranking the UK is currently sixth, however as stated this could all change as tourism can be adversely affected by a number of issues such as foot and mouth and terrorism.

Tourism is one of the largest industries within the UK, worth approximately £74 billion in 2001 and accounts for 4.7% of gross Domestic Product. The British Tourist Authority estimates that there are 1.75 million jobs in tourism, some 7% of total employment and contributing some £60.3 billion to the economy.

The same can be said for the impact of tourism on the economy, jobs and percentage of employment of Darlington. The Tourism Team at Darlington Borough Council recently commissioned a report on the economic impact of tourism in Darlington, this examines the annual volume and value of tourism to Darlington. This was carried out for 2002 using the Cambridge Economic Impact Local Area Tourism Model and Northumbria Tourist Board conducted the research.

The results of this model highlighted the following:

- Tourism expenditure by staying and day visitors is estimated to be worth around £71.7 million per annum in Darlington;
- Of this approximately £19.6 million (27%) was generated by staying visitors to Darlington and approximately £52.1 million (73%) was generated by day visitors to Darlington;
- Approximately 1.675 million day trips and 131,000 staying trips are made to Darlington;
- Of these visitors staying overnight in Darlington the most significant accommodation type was serviced accommodation. Approximately 48% of visitors staying in Darlington resided in the home of a friend or relative;
- Just under two thirds (62%) of tourism expenditure is estimated to be within the retail sector and catering sector;
- Tourism spending supported an estimated 1,691 full time job equivalents in Darlington. Of these -
 - 26% were estimated to be in the catering sector, 9% in the retail sector and 46% in the accommodation sector. The remaining jobs were in the attractions/entertainment sectors (8%); and
 - 67% were supported by direct expenditure, 20% by linkage or indirect expenditure and the remainder by multiplier expenditure.
- When part time and seasonal workers are considered, tourism expenditure in Darlington supports a total of approximately 2,063 actual jobs;

If we compare these figures to the previous Economic Impact Model carried out in 2000 they show;

- Tourism expenditure per annum by staying and day visitors in Darlington has increased by £17.7 million (32%) from £54 million to £71.7 million;

- Tourism expenditure within the catering and retail sector has increased by 8% to 62% of the total expenditure from 54%; and
- Full time equivalent jobs supported by tourism spending in Darlington has risen by 20% from 1,400 to 1,691 jobs.

So what does all this mean? Tourism in Darlington is increasing year on year, linked to the planned investments for the town and working with our partners within the Tees Valley and the North East there is no reason why this should not continue. Darlington's strategic location on historic trading routes, its range of existing infrastructure and its differentiated environment sees it emerge as the quintessential English market town. The main recommendations to ensure this growth continues is to continue improving and confirming the quality of the existing provision to enhance its appeal and improve its economic contribution.

Summary of Findings

- (a) Darlington has a great deal to offer as an attractive historic market town but has been too modest in its efforts in the past to establish its image. A wider range of assets could be highlighted both in a bid to enhance the general offer and to exploit niche markets.
- (b) The attraction of the town centre and shopping is well established and Darlington currently has an extensive events programme albeit fragmented in its approach. Through a more co-ordinated and collaborative approach to the events held within Darlington there would be an enhancement to the enjoyment of the general offer that would increase the dwell time and spend per head within Darlington by residents and visitors alike. Tourism initiatives would benefit from continued and enhanced liaison and information exchange with all Council departments and relevant interests in the private sector.
- (c) Sources of funding from ONE are likely to be favourable to this approach of combining cultural and tourism initiatives as a means of encouraging visitors to the region. Areas that would benefit from a more collaborative approach would be the Arts, Town Centre, Sports and Leisure and Tourism.
- (d) Tourism as a driver of economic regeneration and cultural identity should be recognized as a corporate aim. Therefore proposals, which could affect the overall experience, image and perception of Darlington such as Local Transport Plans, Licensing Laws, and developments to the infrastructure in and around Darlington, should take into consideration the tourism element and therefore involvement of the tourism team in discussions would be prudent.
- (e) We must continue to maximize opportunities for the appreciation of Darlington's assets and features of interest both singly and in co-operation with the sub region and the North East by working in partnership and cross boundary wherever possible.
- (f) The concept of local tourism is applauded and should be further explored through relevant initiatives aimed at residents, education establishments and businesses alike.

Conclusions

The following are the conclusions of the Review Group :-

- (a) To ensure that the impact on the economy that tourism currently has continues it is imperative that tourism becomes a central concern of the Corporate Management Team in co-operation with the private sector.
- (b) Communication between the relevant Departments would ensure the further development of the tourism product.
- (c) The contribution to the economy that tourism can make is hard to over-estimate. Further investment by the Council would be justified, since tourism already contributes more than £70 million to the local economy.

Recommendations

It is recommended that :-

- (a) The findings and conclusions of the Review Group be noted
- (b) That Environment Scrutiny Committee :-
 - (i) Refer the report to Cabinet; and
 - (ii) Request that the Action be implemented.

Tourism Review Group Members

APPENDIX 1

TOURISM REVIEW GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- (1) To see whether Tourism can contribute more to Darlington's economy.
- (2) To suggest ways to enhance Tourism within the Council structure.
- (3) To undertake a fact finding exercise with regard to sources of funding e.g. grants, trusts etc., and to play a pro-active role in the development of the Regional Tourism framework.
- (4) To undertake a benchmarking exercise of other Tourist Information Centres.
- (5) To identify and make recommendations on gaps in public awareness of Darlington's cultural and historical assets and increase a sense of pride in Darlington.
- (6) To seek new and imaginative ways of raising the profile of Darlington in order to attract visitors.
- (7) To enhance what Darlington has to offer through a comprehensive approach to tourism.
- (8) To compile an Improvement Action Plan upon completion of the Review.

Updated December 2004

APPENDIX 2

TOURISM REVIEW GROUP TASK AND FINISH GROUP 1 NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16TH NOVEMBER, 2004

PRESENT – Councillors Armstrong, Lewis, Long and Ruck.

Officers – Claire Boston-Smithson, Tourism and Heritage Officer and Christine Bates, Democratic Services Officer.

Remit of Task and Finish Group 1 - Items 1 and 4 of the Review Groups Terms of Reference below:

- “1. To see whether Tourism can contribute more to Darlington’s economy.
4. To undertake a fact finding exercise with regard to sources of funding e.g. grants, trust etc., and to play a pro-active role in the development of the regional Tourism framework.”

It was decided at this inaugural meeting of this Task and Finish Group that discussion concentrate on Item 1 of the Terms of Reference and the following points were discussed/considered.

- The following documents were provided for Members information and it was agreed that they be distributed to the Group with a circulation list:
 - (a) Economic Impact of Tourism in Darlington Using the Cambridge Local Area Tourism Model – Published by the Northumbria Tourist Board - February 2004 - .
 - (b) Economic Impact of Tourism in the Borough of Darlington Using the Cambridge Local Area Tourism Model (Based on 1997-99 Three-year Average Expenditure Data) – Published by Northumbria Tourist Board - May 2001.
 - (c) An Analysis of Visitors to Darlington in 2001 – Published by the Northumbrian Tourist Board – March 2002.
 - (d) Darlington Visitor Survey – Benchmarking Report – Published by Northumbrian Tourist Board – February 2002.
- It was reported that the latest Benchmarking Survey would not be available until March 2005. Claire Boston-Smithson agreed to send Members of the Group a summary of the findings to date.
- Consideration was given to what was special to Darlington and Councillor Ruck highlighted the following:
 - Saks Hairdressing (the first shop of this national business was established in Darlington)
 - Wedding Dress Shops
 - Arts Centre – events such as the Beer Festival
 - College of Technology – famous for its food.
 - Its strategic position – for example its Rail Links.
 - Gallerina – Art outlet.

- The need to look for strengths and weaknesses of tourism in Darlington.
- The need to consider the money which tourism brings into Darlington compared with what it costs both the private sector and the Council. It was acknowledged that the cost of tourism would be difficult to assess.
- The overarching purpose of this Task and Finish should be make recommendations, which would ‘make a difference’ and take tourism forward.
- The need for the Group to consider ways of ‘enhancing visitor experience’, which would hopefully increase ‘dwell’ times, increase the spend per head and ultimately increase levels of employment. Different lengths of stay to be promoted in an attempt to increase the tourism numbers. Areas which could be promoted could be pubs, restaurants and night-clubs, retail outlets, theatre, financial services, accommodation, leisure facilities and catering.
- The possibility of tapping into the Tour Travel Trade.
- The identification of specialist groups who come into Darlington such as the Indoor Bowls Easter Tournament, North of England Brass Band Concert etc., both to promote tourism and also encourage those participating in the events to extend their stay.
- Comparison of what is on offer with other Towns of a similar size. Ripon, Richmond, Stockton, Hexham, Alnwick and Hartlepool were highlighted as suitable possible comparisons.
- The use of thematic breaks, such as Railway breaks, which could include visits to Darlington/Shildon Railway Museums, the Bridge on the Five Pound note etc., and breaks highlighting the Town’s engineering heritage including Cleveland Bridge Engineering, Darlington Forge etc.; literary themes to include Sockburn Farm where Wordsworth’s wife lived and he and Coleridge stayed; and walks and cycling breaks and Darlington’s Quaker Heritage. ‘Visit Britain’ was currently promoting thematic breaks as a way forward for tourism.
- The use of Darlington’s location as a marketing tool for tourism, highlighting areas within say a 50 mile radius – i.e. from Newcastle to York, Yorkshire Dales etc.
- The need for the Group to know how the Tourist Information Office works.
- It was reported that NEMLAC were looking for venues for a Curiosity Shop. It was suggested that the Shop on the Corner of Feethams/Horsemarket might be a suitable location.
- The availability of tourism leaflets at the Darlington Railway Station and other strategic places.
- Progress made with the Lottery Bid for the Railway Museum.

- It was agreed that Claire Boston-Smithson would distribute a list of topics, which the Task and Finish Group could consider.
- The need to concentrate not only on the history of the Town but also the present and future in any tourism packages and not to make theme breaks not too specific.
- It was acknowledged that the retail centre of a Town was one of the greatest ‘pullers’ of visitors for example a good Marks and Spencer in a town would generate visitors. It was considered that the retail experience in Darlington was good but not good enough.
- The possibility of promoting Darlington as a ‘18 Hour Town’.
- The need Task and Finish Group to highlight areas for improvement and also praise what is good.
- The need to consider what the Regional Tourism Framework is.
- The need to consider funding issues.
- The benefits of tourism to regeneration.

IT WAS AGREED: - (a) That the next meeting be held on 30th November, 2004 commencing at 9.30 a.m.

(b) That Richard Horniman be invited to attend the next meeting to discuss external funding issues.

(c) Item 4 of the Terms of Reference be considered at the next meeting and at the following meeting both 1 and 4 be considered together.

**TOURISM REVIEW GROUP
TASK AND FINISH GROUP 1
NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30TH NOVEMBER, 2004**

PRESENT – Councillors Armstrong, Lewis, Long and Ruck.

Officers – Claire Boston-Smithson, Tourism and Heritage Officer, Allison Carling, Democratic Support Officer and Richard Horniman, Regeneration Officer.

Remit of Task and Finish Group 1 – Items 1 and 4 of the Review Group Terms of Reference below:

“(1) To see whether Tourism can contribute more to Darlington’s economy.

(4) To undertake a fact finding exercise with regard to sources of funding e.g. grants, trust etc., and to play a pro-active

Discussion ensued with the above Terms of Reference in mind and points raised/discussed were as follows with particular reference being made to the funding implications, questions and concepts and how to go about accessing funding :-

- As a Council, securing external funding for existing revenue based service is particularly difficult. Funding for capital projects is easier, but Councils are still restricted in who they can apply to.
- Reference to the Railway Museum and the competition for funding from York National Railway Museum and the Shildon Railway Museum.
- Question on whether Ancient Monument Status would provide a source of funding and reference to the Water Pumping Station at Broken Scar.
- The Railway Museum is a Grade II star listed building and generally the higher the grading of the building the easier it is to access funding however the stipulations on what you can and cannot do to the fabric/use of the building increase as the grading increases.
- Funding opportunities for revenue based tourism activities are most likely to come through Government sources. The best way for Local Authorities to access monies is through influencing the work of the proposed Destination Management Organisation which will be a sub-regional tourism agency ran in conjunction with tourist offices in the Tees Valley.
- Funding from One NorthEast is currently being reviewed with the details being announced as part of the Corporate Plan to be distributed early 2005. It is envisaged that One North East will be looking to propose identified projects which they are willing to commission taking into account their strategic vision for the region. Therefore, Darlington and the sub-regional Destination Management Partnership would be best placed to identify what the commissions are likely to be and hopefully link any projects to these subjects to secure funding.

- With regard to the best way forward for achieving funding, it was advised to look at local projects and to help local charitable trusts i.e. Friends of North Lodge Park to access non-government funding with the help of Council officers.
- One North East have recognised the importance of Culture, which includes sport, events and festivals as well as heritage and culture, as an integral part of tourism and economic drivers. This will result in opportunities for funding for culture projects i.e. ‘Culture 10’ and therefore it will be a key for Darlington to look to align projects to the vision of One North East to obtain funding. Link in with Lyndsey Tuck, Head of Arts at the Arts Centre.
- A question was asked as to who decides what events take place and what budgets were available. Presently, there is a fragmented approach and although links are in place with the Arts Team, Jeff Dawson, Dolphin Centre, it was felt that there was a need for a more mainstreamed approach which the Group could drive forward.
- Some discussion around the development and the ‘Yards’ and funding opportunities but it was agreed that it would be difficult to access any more funding, until the commercial benefits of the Pedestrian Heart are forthcoming.
- Reference was made to the Northern Way Strategy and the work with Regional Development Agencies to develop a Growth Strategy for the North East to develop an action plan for 20 years worth of development plans with a focus on building on current development opportunities of Lingfield Point, Faverdale East, West Park and Central Park and to develop cultural activities.
- A question was raised with regard to a Tourism Package available to visitors to Darlington and Claire advised that the Economic Regeneration Team were presently working on a CD Room to promote a ‘lifestyle perception’ of living and working in Darlington which can be used as a marketing tool for both tourism and business.

IT WAS AGREED – That the next meeting of this Group be agreed at the next meeting of the full Group to be held on 16th December, 2004 at 9.30 a.m. in Committee Room No. 1.

**TOURISM REVIEW GROUP
TASK AND FINISH GROUP 2
NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23RD NOVEMBER, 2004**

PRESENT – Councillors Mrs. Hart, Hartley, S. Jones and S. Robson.

Officers – Allison Carling, Democratic Support Officer.

Remit of Task and Finish Group 2 - Items 7 and 7 of the Review Groups Terms of Reference below:

“(7) To seek new and imaginative ways of raising the profile of Darlington in order to attract visitors.

(8) To enhance what Darlington has to offer through a comprehensive approach to tourism.”

Discussion ensued with the above Terms of Reference in mind and points raised/discussed were as follows :-

- Tourism should be a developed policy corporately, binding together the different elements of tourist attractions in the form of ‘tourist packages’.
- Package Example 1 – Railway package – North Road Museum/North Yorkshire Moors/Locomotive Shildon/York National Railway Museum/Weardale and Wensleydale Railways (summer months).
- Package Example 2 – Film Society – Performance at the Civic Theatre/Meal (Fri eve)/Historic trail (sat)/Shopping/Film Society (mon)
- Linking Civic events, festivals, exhibitions, entertainment shows, Civic Theatre/Arts Centre, Railway Museum.
- Package Example 3 – Darlington in Bloom – South Park/Tour of Roundabouts/Flowers and Parks/Council’s Nursery. This could also link in with the Countryside Events.
- Reference to Yorks’ Edwardian Weekend.
- Extending the stay of visitors who visit Darlington for the Dog Show, the Heritage Weekend, Rhythm and Blues Festival, Fireworks Festival as these events attract many visitors to the Town.
- Reference to the Music/Piano Society leaflet which is circulated in August.
- Utilising the College Restaurant to offer Pre-lecture meals.
- Not just to centre Tourism around Darlington but to offer nearby attractions within marketing information i.e. Bowes Museum/North Yorkshire Moors/Swaledale/Teasdale/Shildon Railway Musuem/Durham Cathedral – all within easy access to Darlington.

- To make more use of the Council's website to promote tourism and surrounding attractions.
- Accommodation – discussion on accommodation in Darlington for visitors and the Group felt that it would be useful if a report could be brought to the next meeting on how many 'beds' there are available in Darlington for tourists and the star ratings of each Bed/Breakfast/Hotel. Members would also like to view any accommodation guide that exists.
- Reference was made to the French Markets which are regularly held in the Town but no reference to the German Twin Town of Mulheim. Possibility of a German Market and the need to feature Amiens/Mulheim and tie in with any visits from them to Darlington.
- The Group would like to have more information supplied to them for the next meeting on the officer responsible for Town Twinning and how much time is devoted to Town Twinning by this officer. Also, what information is available to foreign visitors in their own language.
- Discussion around areas to include in a future site visit i.e. Hartlepool/Northallerton and Richmond Tourist Information Centres.

IT WAS AGREED: - (a) That the next meeting be held on 7th December, 2004 (time to be arranged).

(b) Invite Claire Boston-Smith and an officer from the Tourist Information Centre to attend the meeting to discuss the Town's accommodation guide and publicity material (these documents to be circulated to Members prior to the meeting) and also to report on the accommodation available in Darlington for visitors.

(c) That information be supplied on the publicity material that is shown at Trade Fairs.

(d) That information on Town Twinning be supplied at the next meeting.

**TOURISM REVIEW GROUP
TASK AND FINISH GROUP 2
NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7TH DECEMBER, 2004**

PRESENT – Councillors Mrs. Hart, S. Jones and S. Roson.

APOLOGIES – Councillor Hartley.

Officers – Claire Boston-Smithson, Tourism and Heritage Officer, Allison Carling, Democratic Support Officer, Glenis Dodds, Tourist Information Officer.

With regard to the recommendations made at the last meeting held on 23rd November, the Group met to discuss the Town's accommodation guide and publicity material and Town Twinning.

Points raised/discussed included :-

- Claire advised that the Group of the 'Visit Darlington' Website (www.visitdarlington.com) which was more specifically for residents/tourists and is separate from the main Council's website. The Group were not aware of this website and discussion ensued on the promotion of this site.
- Claire made reference to the fact that the proposed packages were very useful and would be beneficial to extend dwell time of visitors however more 'lifestyle' packages were required in terms of external promotional activity to encourage visitors. Discussion on linkages internally with other departments and how this can be achieved to enhance the quality of the offer.
- The Group looked at the 'Visit Darlington Guide 2005' due to be published soon and offered their comments thereon, which included that the guide was in a good format, large print headings and good colours and the fact that the guide is to be produced in portable size rather than the previous glossy brochure format was welcomed. This guide will also be widely circulated. It was, however, highlighted that contained within the guide under the 'restaurants' section, there were no Indian restaurants referred to.
- Reference was made to the fact that historically, Northumbria Tourist Board information did include Darlington.
- Reference was made to the Tees Valley Guide and Claire offered to circulate this to the Group.
- Discussion on suggestions for the site visits which included a visit to Northallerton, Richmond and Barnard Castle Tourist Information Centres. Glenis offered to accompany the Group on these visits. Glenis also suggested that a good time to make these visits would be towards the end of February, 2005. A possible separate trip to Hartlepool Tourist Information Centre was also suggested.
- With reference to previous mention by the Group of different packages to offer visitors, and in particular with regard to the rail package, Claire advised that Group that there was currently under development 'Train Trail' which would focus on all associated railway

attractions in and around the region to include Stockton, Sedgefield, Hartlepool as well as Darlington and is hopefully to be officially launched in March, 2005. She also advised that Darlington was leading on this initiative, which was greatly welcomed by the Group and once the initiative is officially launched there will be leaflets and education packs produced for circulation. 'Train Trail' also currently has its own website and there is a link in to this site from the Council's website which was not generally known by the Group.

- In keeping with the 'package' theme, reference was made to different themes i.e. walking/nature trails/Christian heritage and Claire advised the Group that One North East Tourism Team were hoping to develop similar initiatives around the north east as a region.
- Claire made reference to work being undertaken to target the Group Travel Market (Coach Operators) and develop packages and following discussion thereon it was agreed that the tourism department were developing packages which the Group felt were appropriate and beneficial to Darlington. However, it was agreed that there was a need to ensure that if this work was to be successful then the infrastructure and the offer across all areas within the Council needs to be developed at the same time to support these packages.
- The Group examined the Accommodation Listing provided which included all inspected accommodation within an 8 mile radius of Darlington and also were supplied with a list of the non-inspected properties also. With regard to the non-inspected accommodation, Claire advised that she and Glenis were going to visit these hotels/bed and breakfast to try and encourage them to be inspected and the possibility of some form of financial assistance was being investigated by way of grants wherever possible. Reference was also made to a survey to look at 'bed-space' available and the feasibility of a Hotel/Conference Centre at the new to be developed Central Park.
- With regard to Town Twinning, the Group were informed that the Council now only act as a 'sign post' since budget cuts in 2002/03. The Town Twinning Association remain active in organising twinning events, along with the schools.

IT WAS AGREED – That the next meeting of Task and Finish Group 2 be a joint meeting with the Task and Finish Group 1 on Thursday, 16th December, 2005.

TOURISM REVIEW GROUP
NOTES OF PRELIMINARY MEETING
21st October, 2004

PRESENT – Councillors S. Robson and Ruck.

Officers – Elizabeth Creighton, Gwenda Lyn Jones, Claire Boston-Smithson and Karen Graves.

Councillor Robson called the meeting to discuss what angles the Review Group (once established) could research tourism.

The following points were discussed/considered :-

- Tourism was part of the Community Strategy and a review would need to establish if there could be a better driver of economy.
- Darlington has a lot to offer and its assets had not been exploited – there was a need to be assertive and to make more of what Darlington has to offer.
- The Community Strategy did little for tourism and it was difficult to find the link.
- Visitors needed to be attracted to Darlington and residents made aware of our cultural and historical assets.
- Birmingham City currently has a scheme entitled ‘Be a Local Tourist’ - an annual campaign which ensued that local people saw the importance of tourism to the City which, in turn, improved quality within the destination through the Quality in Birmingham Initiative; further assets of Birmingham are its Jewellery Quarter and the Balti Triangle which have proved to be very popular visitor attractions and the subject of successful weekend breaks attracting visitors from overseas.
- The City of Leeds has been very well developed since the 1950’s and 1960’s – investment has been well worth it.
- There was a need to communicate with other departments of the Town Hall, i.e. Planning, Licensing, etc. to ensure that, where possible, tourism was considered and included in any literature/publications.
- As with the Conservation Review Group, it may well be that a higher profile was needed corporately to oversee and promote tourism; the purpose of the Review Group is to enhance tourism within the Council’s structure.
- A suggestion was made that parts of Darlington that had been ‘forgotten about’ could be highlighted in order to promote ‘interest sectors’ which would encourage growth of interest within those areas.

- Further areas of interest highlighted were Darlington's Railway Heritage, in which it was suggested that more should be made of the Heritage and there should be a possible link into Shildon – 'The Yards' and their urban history were another example of high interest in Darlington – Darlington has a great Quaker heritage which is important to Darlington's development with the Quaker House being an excellent building for which the Quakers were currently looking for a suitable usage.
- It was stated that the Tourism Team were currently working on leaflets for the Quakers and the Railway Heritage and that the Team wanted to enhance the product that we already had and possibly have 'a trail' to include all elements including railway, Quakers, the yards etc.
- Darlington had a lot of little 'quirky' shops and new projects i.e. Town Centre Pedestrian Heart Scheme, were wonderful – this may be a way of exploiting street cafes to further enhance tourism within Darlington.
- Another suggestion was the use of commemorative slabs in the pavement of the Town Centre Pedestrian Heart as was done in Warsaw – the slabs could contain the names of artists, politicians, famous local people etc., together with details and directions of where to find places of interest relating to that person and learn more about them.
- There was an urgency in Darlington to look at areas where the best growth could be gained i.e. accommodation, retail, catering, leisure and reference was made to Lichfield, which had a comprehensive visitor guide detailing all tourism aspects of the Town – Officers stated that they would contact Lichfield and gain a copy of the guide.
- The Town Centre Business Plan would enhance what tourism wanted to do and would make more of specialist shops and a café culture environment within the town, which could lead to an increase in the need for accommodation within Darlington. The Town Centre Board were soon to receive a presentation on tourism to identify the important role that the retailers and town centre businesses play within tourism. It is hoped to present the Board with the results of a recently commissioned benchmarking survey, which has considered visitors' perceptions of Darlington and has included issues such as toilet areas, catering establishments, entertainment venues, etc.
- In order to complete the review by March and produce a final report to Cabinet in April, the suggestion was made that the Committee split into groups, each looking at a different area of tourism, i.e. local history, railway heritage, retail within Darlington, etc.
- Officers made reference to product development and again made reference to Birmingham City which had recently introduced a quality standard as a whole which looked at retail, restaurants, accommodation, leisure and all aspects of tourism and the suggestion of Darlington having a local award was well received.
- Councillor Ruck made reference to the usefulness of visiting other authorities as the Conservation Review Group had done during their review, from which the Review Group had gained a lot of useful information through meeting local authority officers, attending presentations and site visits of the areas.

- Further reference was made to the quality scheme being enhanced and persuading retailers to sign up to 'Quality Comes to Life'.
- Darlington people had a reputation for being friendly and helpful towards their customers and it was hoped that if a quality service was all over the Town, people would return; there was a need to find a way of crediting retailers, possibly by encouraging them to aim for a service award which would be free, help their business and link into civic pride.
- There was an opportunity to encourage tourism in Darlington during Spring 2006 when the South Park is scheduled to be opened following its refurbishment. The need for a more corporate approach with a longer lead-in time to the events programme and the use of a possible central budget to produce literature and advertise forthcoming events were discussed.
- The Tourism Information Centre had outgrown its building and needed more space as the service was expanding, however, its current location was within a Council building and there were very few alternatives available within the Town for the TIC to relocate to.
- A benchmarking exercise had recently been undertaken and it was hoped that there should be some results to report in November.
- Corbridge had recently grown and become a major tourist attraction with its Roman Fort and excellent retail opportunities, however, it was stated that Corbridge was in an affluent area and that although many ideas were forthcoming from this meeting, tourism needed a better place within the corporate profile and some areas needed to be developed which would inevitably incur staffing and financial implications.
- Reference was made to the need to look at how to communicate with the public regarding tourism which was highlighted in a publication entitled 'Visit Britain' which looked at the lifestyle and advise what could be done i.e. leisurely strolls, aromatic coffees etc.
- As Northumbria Tourist Board had recently been abolished One NorthEast now had responsibility for Tourism but there was still no definitive strategy and the first year's action plan would be imposed on Darlington Borough Council and other authorities.
- This Council's views have been sought on One NorthEast's tourism strategy which needed to link into the Image Strategy which had been forthcoming for approximately six months. The second draft is not yet forthcoming – during this time of uncertainty about the way forward regionally, the Tees Valley Tourism Officers had agreed to proceed with next year's Tees Valley visitor guide.
- There was a need for this review in order to raise Darlington's profile as there was a general feeling that One NorthEast was reducing funding and the Council would have to 'fight' for any funding – it was hoped that the Tees Valley Tourism Strategy would aid Darlington on the national platform.
- Officers agreed to produce a diagram for Members showing where Darlington actually fitted in to the Regional Tourism Framework in time for its first meeting in November.

- Discussion ensued upon Darlington's industrial history with particular reference being made to Darlington Forge Steel Foundry which was a world leader and several pictures were on display in North Road Museum. Officers referred to the Tees Valley Cultural Strategy which had contained nine themes 18 months/two years ago and advised that they had influenced the inclusion of a tenth theme around 'Engineers of the Imagination' however, it had recently emerged that the theme of engineering had been dropped from the Strategy, with no explanation forthcoming as to why – Officers suggested that One NorthEast's Tourism Strategy and access to funding via the Corporate Plan could be a different route to promote Darlington's engineering heritage.

Following the above discussion, it was agreed that the aim of the Review Group was to examine tourism under Environment Scrutiny Committee's remit and discover if it could be an enhanced driver under economic regeneration.

TOURISM REVIEW GROUP
NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11TH NOVEMBER, 2004

PRESENT – Councillor S. Robson (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Mrs. Hart, Hartley, S.Jones, Long, Lewis, Ruck and J. C. Vasey.

Officers – Elizabeth Creighton, Gwenda Lyn Jones, Claire Boston-Smithson and Christine Bates.

Councillor S. Robson stated that the purpose of the meeting was to hold a brainstorming session in order to scope the Tourism Review.

A draft Terms of Reference had been distributed to all Members and this was discussed and amended. The revised Terms of Reference are appended to these notes.

In relation to the Review the following points were discussed/considered.

- The need to integrate with the new regional approach to tourism.
- Possible liaison with the Cabinet Member with the Portfolio for Regeneration and Planning Portfolio during the course of the Review. It in relation to this the need for independence of Scrutiny was stressed. It was, however, agreed that Councillor S. Robson, ask Councillor, D. Lyonette, Cabinet Member with the Portfolio for Regeneration, if he would like to sit in on Review Group meetings.
- The availability of research into tourism as an economic driver i.e. the Cambridge and Steam models (the Council uses the Cambridge Model) which looks at tourists, how much they bring in/spend in the Town, and Benchmarking Research which gives information about visitor perceptions. By using this information it should be possible to identify where improvements are required.
- The assessment of how many people are involved in tourism in Darlington the quality of provision and training needs.
- Alnwick Council has a quality mark displayed in shops etc.
- The External Funding Team, within the Economic Regeneration and Tourism Section, within the Development and Environment Department, which looked at the availability of various Grants which the Council could apply for.
- In relation to a benchmarking exercise with other Tourist Information Centres it was highlighted that the National Best Value Survey could be used as basis for this information. It was agreed that a copy of the Survey be distributed to all Members of the Committee.
- The possibility of producing a small visitors pack giving information on 'What's On' that week/month and including a map of the Town Centre, Bus timetables etc.

- Ways of encouraging tourists to extend their stay. For example at Strafford on Avon a theatre ticket can be booked with dinner afterwards at the 'Black Swan', and informal arrangements such as the Sicilian Restaurant next to the Civic Theatre.
- The possibility of promoting Darlington as a tourist venue with Tour Operators.
- The need for longer term planning, say 18 months ahead, although it was acknowledged the as budgets were not known that far in advance this could present problems. It was reported that the Marketing Team, within Community Services Department, undertook planning for the Civic Theatre, Arts Centre, Dolphin Centre etc.
- Promotion of what is on offer in neighbouring areas for example Tyneside/North Yorks/Shildon Railway Museum. The possibility for example, of having joint marketing plans between Shildon and Darlington Railway Museums.

Consideration was then given to how divide the Terms of Reference up into small Task and Finish Reviews and the following was agreed.

Initially the following Task and Finish Review Groups be established.

Task and Finish Group 1

Membership: Councillors Heaney, Long, Lewis, Armstrong, Ruck (Convenor).

To consider items 1 and 4 of the Terms of Reference i.e.

“(1) To see whether Tourism can contribute more to Darlington’s economy.

(4) To undertake a fact finding exercise with regard to sources of funding e.g. grants, trusts etc., and to play a pro-active role in the development of the Regional Tourism framework.”

Task and Finish Group 2

Membership: Councillors S. Jones, Mrs. Hart (Conveyor) , Hartley and S. Robson.

To consider items 7 and 8 of the Terms of Reference i.e.

“(7) To seek new and imaginative ways of raising the profile of Darlington in order to attract visitors.

(8) To enhance what Darlington has to offer through a comprehensive approach to tourism.”

Due to Councillor J. C. Vasey’s work commitment he be part of the whole Review Group sessions only.

In relation to the remainder of the Terms of Reference they be considered as follows in the second stage of the Review and allocation of topics to members be considered at that time.

Items 3 and i.e.

“(3) To investigate the introduction of a Darlington quality Standard in relation to Tourism covering the areas of retail, leisure, entertainment, accommodation etc.

(5) To undertake a benchmarking exercise of other Tourist Information Centres.”

Item 6 i.e.

“(6) To identify and make recommendations on gaps in public awareness of Darlington’s cultural and historical assets and increase a sense of pride in Darlington.”

Items 2 and 9 “(2) To suggest ways to enhance Tourism within the Council Structure.

(9) To compile an Improvement Action Plan upon completion of the Review.

The next full meeting of the Review Group would be held on 16th December, 2004 commencing at 9.30 a.m. in Committee Room No. 1.

NOTES OF MEETING TOURISM REVIEW GROUP

16th December, 2004

PRESENT – Councillor S. Robson (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Hartley, Mrs. Hart, Lewis, Long and Ruck.

APOLOGIES – Councillors S.J. Jones, Mrs. Scott and J.C. Vasey.

Councillor Robson stated that the meeting was unstructured and that Members should have received copies of Notes of Meetings of Review Groups 1 and 2. It was hoped that ideas could 'be pooled', findings checked and understood and ideas for the final report should now be forthcoming.

The following points were discussed/considered :-

- Review Group 1 had covered the issues raised in Terms of Reference Numbers 1 and 4 – Good ideas has been forthcoming but the Group wanted to know how quickly they could be implemented as they wanted to achieve something quickly. As the Final Report was required for March their findings needed to be prioritised.
- Some of the ideas suggested by the Groups were already in existence within the Tourism Section and it was pleasing to note the energy and willingness of the Section. It was suggested that an Action Plan be formulated which would approve the steps already taken and enhance and make suggestions for future years.
- The current fragmented approach needs to be resolved and a degree of Officer support was required in to develop corporate thinking.
- The Group found that there was a strong need for Tourism Packages based on themes i.e. Walking, Railways, Historic Environment. It was reported that the Tourism Section were currently involved in a Single Program Funded Project called Train Trail, this project includes the development of itineraries for both consumers and travel trade based around the theme of railways and incorporates Darlington Railway Centre and Museum. Reference was also made to an existing Tees Valley Package which covered Rail and Shopping by Coach. A Quaker Trail leaflet is being produced as well as a Rail Heritage leaflet, it is hoped that they will be available for the beginning of the season in Easter. There are plans to research, develop and identify possible funding for a 'town heritage' trail using plaques either set into buildings or footpaths, which would include people and places of significance, would soon be available.
- The Group found that there was a strong need for Tourism Packages based on themes i.e. Walking, Railways, Historic Environment. It was reported that the Tourism Section were currently working on a Train Trail that could be placed into several themed packages. Reference was made to an existing Tees Valley Package which covered Rail and Shopping by Coach and it was hoped that a Quaker Trail using plaques either set into buildings or footpaths, which would include people and places of significance, would

soon be available.

- It was suggested that commemorative paving slabs be incorporated into the Pedestrian Heart Scheme and that a list of local personalities be drawn up to be included within those slabs. George Flynn, Local Historian, has already been consulted on this work and had expressed an interest in being further involved. Various suggestions by Members included W.G. Stead and Harold Evans of the Northern Echo, Waterhouse the local bookseller and George Dent, Publisher.
- If the paving slab idea were pursued it was suggested that they be 'plotted' and that large slabs be used in order to get the message across. A variation on the theme of slabs was the use of stickers on the floors of department stores where the best economic generation in Darlington could be effected. The stickers could be placed in Summer months and lifted during Winter.
- Another idea put forward by a Member was that of a Person Sun Dial which is built into the pavement. There is one in San Francisco which shows latitude, longitude, sea depth etc. and one closer to home in Gainford which had two lateral rings, one for Summer and another for Winter. Both dials were very accurate with only a slight variance of up to 30 minutes.
- The importance of raising the profile of Darlington was again raised and it was hoped that a suitable campaign could be launched to encourage spending and economic growth similar to the Winter Wonderland Campaign within the Town Centre prior to Christmas.
- Claire Boston-Smithson reported that she was to give a presentation to the Town Centre Board on 20th January that would highlight how tourism and traders could inter-link through the Business Plan and that copies of the presentation would be made available to the Review Group. She also reported that Darlington to broaden its targets in relation to advertising of events with particular reference being made to the Winter Wonderland not being advertised in Hartlepool, Durham or Middlesbrough but that there was often literature available in Darlington on events being held in other North East towns.
- A Member reported that she often found literature on tourism in Hotel Reception areas and asked if this could be explored as a possibility. The Tourism Section stated that the hotels were usually stocked by Northern Print Distribution who make a small charge for re-stocking the racks in hotels and that this was currently being considered as an option.
- It was suggested that there was a need to look at resources and marketing and that this would be highlighted within the Action Plan.
- The Group referred to Terms of Reference Number 6 and stated that there was an excellent opportunity to educate children at KS3 on local history with the production of a pack – If children could be interested then parents may follow.
- The Group then gave consideration to the site visits they wished to undertake as part of their fact-finding exercises on Tourism.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That arrangements be made for further meeting of this Group to be held on Thursday, 13th January, 2005.

(b) That, in view of Regional Developments, Terms of Reference Number 3 relating to the production of a Darlington Quality Standard in relation to Tourism, be not pursued but that the Regional Development Standards be acknowledged within the Action Plan

(c) That arrangements be made for the Review Group to undertake the following site visits :-

- (i) 23rd February, 2005 – Mini bus tour of Bishop Auckland, Northallerton, Richmond and Barnard Castle in order to visit Tourist Information Centres and meet Tourism Officers; and
- (ii) 28th February, 2005 – Visit to Chesterfield to include a visit to the Tourist Information Centre at 1.00 p.m. – Councillor Hartley to investigate train times and prices and advise the Group accordingly.

NOTES OF MEETING TOURISM REVIEW GROUP

13th January, 2005

PRESENT – Councillor S. Robson (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Hartley, Mrs. Hart, S.J. Jones, Lewis, Long, Ruck and Vasey.

Officers in Attendance – Claire Boston-Smithson and Karen Graves.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Heaney and Mrs. Scott.

Councillor Robson opened the meeting by stating that Councillors Long, Ruck and herself and met to begin formulating the recommendations for the Final Report (copies circulated) and requested Members' input thereon.

The following points were discussed/considered :-

- The inclusion of 'linking events' in recommendation (b) to ensure that tourism is fully networked and the Tourism Section is fully aware of forthcoming events. Stand-alone events could not be marketed and the general offer was the most important aspect. 'Linking' was not developed or understood by all Council Departments and Partners and it was suggested that (b) needed 'beefing up'.
- Following the suggestion that (b) and (c) were linked Claire advised that (b) focused on people and (c) focused on the economic driver. She also stated that One North East recommended that events were linked to themes and packages.
- There was a need to back-up efforts being made as Darlington was not very good at 'blowing its own trumpet' – retrospective and/or past efforts needed to be added.
- People in Darlington did not appreciate what they had and it was suggested that an educational pack should be produced and that more should be done to get people into Darlington with emphasis being on the sub and wider regions. Claire advised that regional tourism was absorbed within the North East and that North East England was the identifier and that a key area to focus on over the next 2/3 years was to encourage local people to explore Darlington and actually see what Darlington has to offer. Although guided walks are good it was thought that they were not frequently undertaken.
- Claire highlighted an initiative used in London whereby during low-tourist times the attractions were opened up for local people to encourage usage and hopefully inform family and friends of London's attractions. The initiative was also undertaken at York where local people had free access to all attractions that tourists would pay for.
- A Member suggested that there was a need to gain the interest of the children to get them on board and thereby encouraging parents to attend events. The private sector also need encouragement to make available its assets i.e. The Pumping Station. Claire stated that The Pumping Station had restrictions in that there was a lot of time and effort involved in

actually getting the Station up and running, however, negotiations were taking place to possibly have a pre-booking system for the Station and hopefully link that visit with a Museum education tour to encourage it to stay open for children.

- Concerns were raised that various media publications advertised local events but that there was no consistency, there was different events in all publications and there was a need for a dedicated publication or supplement to cover all events in Darlington to include walks, car boot sales, musical festivals, etc. A Member advised that a Newcastle agency collected the information for the Northern Echo and Darlington Stockton Times but that if space was limited it would not always be published.
- It was felt that there was a lack of communication and networking with the community and Claire suggested that the Tourism Section needed to work with the Town Crier and request all events to go to them so that an events programme could be compiled.
- General discussion ensued on the layout of the Final Report.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That Claire expand on draft findings (b) and (c).

(b) That Claire explores the possibilities of the production of a dedicated Events Programme publication.

(c) That the publication of an Events Programme be one of the Action Plans within the Final Report.

(d) That, as there was a definitive message in all the findings they be at the beginning of the Final Report.

(e) That there was a need within the Final Report to highlight private sector attractions i.e. The Pumping Station.

(f) That the layout of the report be as follows :-

(i) Introduction;

(ii) Summary of Findings;

(iii) Bulk of report;

(iv) Findings;

(v) Recommendations;

(vi) Action Plan

(g) That coaches be booked for both the local and Chesterfield site visits.

(g) That Glenis prepare a set of questions for Members to ask during their TIC visits.

NOTES OF MEETING TOURISM REVIEW GROUP

9th March, 2005

PRESENT – Councillor S. Robson (in the Chair); Councillors Hartley, Long and Ruck,

Officers in Attendance – Karen Graves.

Councillor Robson opened the meeting by stating that Claire Boston-Smithson (CBS) had expressed an interest in visiting Chesterfield herself to possibly get some Officers to do some comparison work. CBS also advised Councillor Robson that it was still not clear how the new arrangements would work under the Regional Development Agency and there was a need to ensure that Darlington linked into the Tees Valley.

The following points were discussed/considered :-

Outline of Action Plan for Tourism

- Ensure that Darlington links into the Tees Valley through its work with the Regional Development Agency (RDA).
- Need to affirm tourism in the mainstream of thinking.
- Sale of local crafts at the Darlington TIC – art. Foods, etc.
- Better and larger location for Darlington TIC.
- Make use of Pedestrian Heart to ensure prominent position for TIC.
- Display area of publications in the Dolphin Centre Reception area.
- Sale of bus/coach tickets to be further promoted both for National and International trips.
- Task Force of Officers to ensure integration of all Departments for full maximum advertising of all events within the Borough.
- Better promotion of The Arts.
- Promotion of all Markets – See Chesterfield notes
- Cross-cutting events to be well publicised.
- Use of the Web.
- Use of the Town Crier

- Better liaison with Town Centre Management on future events.
- Local tourism needs to be publicised.
- Production of Tourism Packs for various outlets i.e. – Education, Local Business.
- Develop and promote Town Trails.
- The Yards.
- Continued use of the Web.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the above form the basis of the Action Plan.

(b) That the Tourism Review Group meet tomorrow to further discuss the Action Plan.

**NOTES OF MEETING
TOURISM REVIEW GROUP**

10th March, 2005

PRESENT – Councillor S. Robson (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Long, Mrs. Hart, Ruck and Vasey.

Officers in Attendance – Claire Boston-Smithson and Karen Graves.

Councillor Robson opened the meeting by stating that she felt assured that the points the Group were making were currently being actioned or were on the Action Plan and that the Final Report of the Group reinforced the energy of the Tourism Team to the project.

The Group thereupon considered the drafted Action Plan and make the following comments/observations :-

- Appropriate staffing should be highlighted if new premises were obtained and the possibility of employing a graduate should be investigated.
- Were there any financial implications to the Pack cost?
- The administrative effect of purchases of National Express Bus Tickets on Tourism Information Centre Staff.
- The involvement of Markets within the Tourism Strategy.
- The need for a developed approach to an Events Strategy.
- Publication of an Events Guild possibly six-monthly to inform all residents of forthcoming events.

IT WAS AGREED – That the points made be noted and incorporated into the Action Plan.

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
VISIT OF 29TH MARCH TO BISHOP AUCKLAND, BARNARD CASTLE,
RICHMOND AND THIRSK T.I.C.

PRESENT - Councillors Armstrong, Hartley, Long, Lewis, F.S. Robson, S. Robson and Ruck.

1. **First Visit - Bishop Auckland T.I.C.**

Situated in main Town Hall; impressive location, well segmented area of information advertised in well defined section.

Places of interest

Local transport

Cycling information - maps - route

Local History

Historical publications

Item of other interest- bus time-table.

Area of Activity

- (i) Accommodation booking.
- (ii) Sale of Jewellery

Excellent Location

As on site of Town Hall other services available i.e. Library, Art Gallery, Town Hall public services.

2. **Second Visit - Barnard Castle**

Situated in most pleasant ground, a front part being utilised of an attractive large house.

Most attractive feature include :-

- (a) Recently built two tier desk and work top for staff giving easy and pleasant access.
- (b) Plasma screen video of dale on continuous replay.

- (c) Coffee shop format in one part of the room giving visitors time to browse literature - well used. The café is also an internet cafe
- (d) Display board illustrating walk, directions and local information.
- (e) Extremely well stocked with tourism goodies.

Very impressive Tourist Department

Note - Large attractive premises would appear to give excellent services and contribute strongly to operational revenue

3. **Third Visit - Richmond**

Well placed in Friarage Gardens - fairly large operational areas, sections and panel display information

- (a) Where to go from here.
- (b) Where to stay locally.
- (c) What to do in Dales.
- (d) What's o in Dale.
- (e) What to see in Richmond.
- (f) Where to go.
- (g) Transport Activity

Area of Sole Activity

- (i) Strong requirement for accommodation booking 10% commission on each placing.
- (ii) Sales of National Express ticket - good income
- (iii) Open 7 days a week from Easter to October.

4. **Fourth Visit - Thirsk, North Yorkshire**

Well located in market centre but badly sign posted when driving in.

Large shelf displaying most information as seen at other T.I.C.

A weather board with the next 2/3 days forecast was in a prominent position in the TIC and welcomed by visitors to the area.

Drive times to places of interest were also displayed within the TIC.

Very friendly staff no reason to assume this team were better or not as compared to the other T.I.C.

Will members of the Visiting Team please add their comments as they assessed each of these visits and return to Karen Graves – Democratic Services for the final presentation.

The following comments were added by Members at the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 28th April, 2005 :-

That while our Tourist Information Centre fulfils a very useful function, some improvements might be made in a re-arrangement of the space available as follows :-

- (a) Placing the gifts for sale on shelves at eye level round the room, thus freeing the window for information items on imminent local events;
- (b) Storing distant holiday resort brochures in cupboards, accessed when asked for;
- (c) Highlighting Darlington's great advantage as a jumping-off point for visiting the many attractions in the region by prominent display (i.e. large print boards) of modes of travel available and mileage/journey times.

NOTES ON CHESTERFIELD TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

Brief History:

- Chesterfield Tourist Information Centre re-located and opened in it's current format during 2002
- The new design round building houses 5 staff offices, 4 storage rooms, small lift, toilets, kitchen, rest room, administration office, computer room, small meeting/conference room and a large public area
- Funded mainly by SRB, ERDF money
- A forecourt and seating are provided for use by customers
- Pay and display car parking within 2 minuets walk
- Finger posting to the Tourist Information Centre increased and included in the overall re-furbishment of the town centre

Out Of Hours Information:

The above was provided by a very modern touch screen system. The screen was very user friendly (only 5 buttons to choose from), positioned for easy access by all, and gave detailed information without overloading the visitor with facts that weren't relevant. Services included:

- Accommodation Information
- Maps
- Eating Establishment
- Public Transport Information
- Link to Tourism Website

If the customer needed more detailed information there was the opportunity to use the system to link to other sites.

Staffing:

All tourism staff for Chesterfield are housed in this one location, they include:

- 1 - Tourism Officer
- 2 - Marketing Officer (paid by Council)
- 1 - Marketing Officer (paid by County)
- 1 - Tourist Information Centre Manager
- 1 - Assistant Information Centre Manager
- 7 - Part Time Tourist Information Centre Assistants

The Marketing Officer employed by County also assists in the production of the Derbyshire Guide and collates all visitor statistics for the County. The marketing team jointly organise all Town Centre Events for Chesterfield.

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL –
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, TOURIST INFORMATION
CENTRE VISITS 23RD AND 28TH FEBRUARY 2005.**

1. Information Darlington offers the following services to the public:

Free local, regional and national information on events, museums,
accommodation and places to visit.

Public Transport timetables

Holiday Information Service

Participate in the booking of accommodation via the Book-a-Bed ahead
scheme

Sale of gifts and souvenirs

Sale of YHA membership

Theatre Bookings

Day Tour and Mini breaks organised by local bus companies

Local Events Bookings

Ticket master Bookings

National Express Coach Bookings

Can you identify any additional services that you offer either free of charge or
commissionable that Darlington could offer to their customers?

How successful have these services been, what prompted their introduction and when.

2. Do you have public Internet access or a wi-fi network (wireless networking device)
within your TIC?

What prompted you to make this addition to your service? Was it customer demand or do
you think that customers expect TIC's to automatically provide IT services.

How many customers use the facility on a regular basis and how do you charge for the
service?

3. What are your opening hours? Do you have seasonal variations?

4. Do you stock any merchandise that is locally produced and carries your own
branding/logo? If so do you find these items are more popular with your customers than
the general gifts/souvenirs offered in many TIC's.

5. In addition to booking accommodation via the Book-a-Bed ahead service do you take
bookings direct for your local accommodation providers? If so do you charge a
commission to either the customer or the accommodation establishment and how are the
monies due paid to you?