

NORTHUMBERLAND
AN INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

Northumberland
TOURISM

Northumberland Tourism Business Strategy 2016 - 2020



Tourism is critical to Northumberland's economic future. It is the county's second largest employer with jobs growing at a rate of 18% over the last 5 years and last year contributed £765 million to our economy.

Northumberland's Destination Management Plan contains our collective vision for how tourism can provide quality jobs, raise the profile of our county, help make it an attractive place to invest, live and work and also help protect our landscapes, culture and way of life.

Northumberland's tourism offer must be championed locally, regionally, nationally and internationally and supported by all for us to compete as a destination and realise the potential benefits. Northumberland Tourism exists to rally our partners to this cause, representing the interests of our industry and taking every opportunity to inspire visitors and encourage them to spend more with Northumberland's businesses.

This business plan examines the environment in which Northumberland Tourism operates and outlines the company's objectives and the strategies it will employ to achieve these. It should be read in conjunction with Northumberland's Destination Management Plan and Northumberland Tourism's Marketing Strategy.

David Hall
Chair of Northumberland Tourism



Business Strategy 2016-2020

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2016-17 Business Plan

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The Context

Who is Northumberland Tourism?

Northumberland Tourism has the best interest of Northumberland's Tourism Industry at heart. We are dedicated to enhancing the county's economy by coordinating activity to improve our tourism product, enhance our visitor experience and increase the number of high value visitors we attract.

As a non-membership, not for profit, Destination Management Organisation Northumberland Tourism offers marketing services to partners at prices that we believe offer unbeatable value for money and results. The premise is that we attract visitors to Northumberland and provide opportunities for local businesses to convert these visitors into customers. All revenues are reinvested into tourism development and promotion.

We work closely with Northumberland County Council who, via Active Northumberland, contract with us to supply services which benefit the tourism industry in the county and contribute to the tourism objectives set out in Northumberland's Core Strategy and Economic Plan.

Operating Environment

Regional

Northumberland tourism cooperates with regional tourism partners via the Northern Tourism Alliance (NTA) which meets monthly to coordinate lobbying and share knowledge and opportunities.

In 2014 the North East Local Enterprise Partnership published a Strategic Economic Plan for the North East 'More and Better Jobs'. Tourism is noted as a 'major growth sector and opportunity' especially for the coast and rural areas. The NELEP, supported by ARCH are also administering the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) which includes capital development funding aimed at tourism businesses and a tourism strand to encourage partnership projects that grow tourism assets. Northumberland Tourism has been working with ARCH to recommend EAFRD funding allocations and criteria. Other capital funding for tourism projects is available via the Rural Growth Network and Northumberland Tourism has a place on the RGN Board.

Also impacting on regional tourism is the North East Combined Authority, a new legal body bringing together the seven councils in the NELEP area. NECA will be the entity receiving devolved governmental powers and has committed to 'coordinate the promotion of the area' under its Economic Development and Regeneration strand.

**Amble Seafood
Village**

**Kielder
Observatory**

**Kielder Lodges
at Leaplish**

Product Development

Key strategic tourism developments in coming years

Blyth

Waterfront Hotel

The Sill

National Landscape Discovery Centre

**Hadrian's Wall
Cavalry Exhibition**

Key Events

Significant events currently planned

**Tour of Britain
Cycle Race Stage 2017**

**Tall Ships
at Blyth
2016**

Operating Environment

National

The government is currently reviewing its support for tourism and in particular the remits of VisitBritain and VisitEngland. While its triennial review of VisitEngland's operations was positive and a £40m 'Challenge Fund' has been approved to assist product development in England, there is still a question mark over whether domestic tourism in England will be supported and whether VisitEngland will remain as a separate entity outside of VisitBritain. If this is not the case England's domestic markets will be at a disadvantage against the marketing resource levied by Visit Scotland and Visit Wales.

The great majority of international visitors to England visit London (55%) with the other 45% spread across all other English destinations. International visitors to the North East and Northumberland are even lower at 1.5% and 0.2% respectively. The £10m Northern Tourism Growth Fund aims to address this imbalance and Northumberland is participating in the marketing and product development activities of the fund enthusiastically. The fund is however only available for one financial year although hopefully will provide a positive legacy beyond April 2016. Newcastle International Airport continues to develop and new routes such as the United Airways summer service to New York provide opportunities. Traffic into the Port of Newcastle also continues to grow and work is ongoing to re-instate a ferry service to and from Norway.

Economic & Competitive Analysis

As the UK seems to be emerging from the financial crisis, the North East is lagging behind with economic output and job creation lower than in the rest of the country. The recent growth in the UK economy is expected to continue at a 'reasonable' pace in 2016 with employment continuing to rise and oil prices low impacting positively on the disposable incomes of prospective visitors. The relatively strong consumer spending figures are also predicted to continue and leisure spend is forecast to rise 'relatively fast' over the rest of the decade.¹

VisitBritain are forecasting an increase in international visits to the UK in 2016 of 3.8% with a 4.2% increase in visitor spend.

In common with most rural areas funding for tourism activities in Northumberland remains scarce. The government's focus on deficit reduction continues to impact severely on local government budgets and Northumberland lacks the private sector resources to fully mitigate this. The imbalance of resources is a major challenge for rural destinations who must compete with relatively well funded cities aggressively competing for the domestic tourism pound. Northumberland and our North East partners are surrounded by well-established tourism destinations including Scotland, Cumbria/The Lake District and Yorkshire. All have significantly greater resources to promote and support product development, although Visit Cumbria are facing significant reductions in their local authority funding.

¹PWC UK Economic Outlook November 2015

Tourism in Northumberland by Numbers

1,012
jobs created
by NT activity in 2014

345,000
copies printed of
NT publications

**International
visitors
2.7%**

31
Dark Sky
Discovery Sites

1.7m
overnight
visitors
anually

7.6m day
visitors
anually

18% increase
in tourism jobs
in 5 years

75%
of visitors
go walking

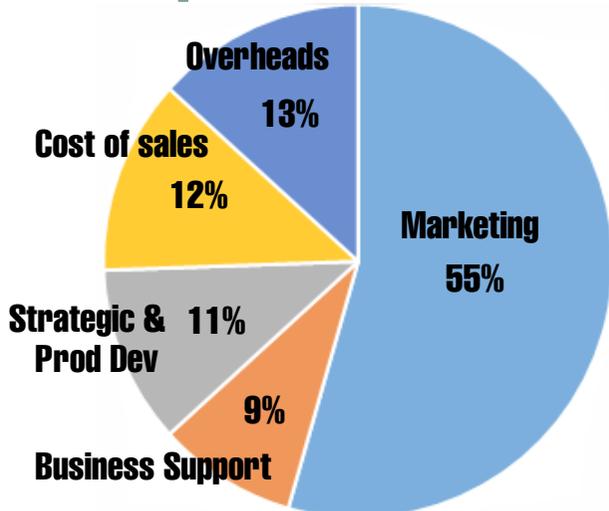
Economic impact of
Tour of Britain 2015
£2.13m

1,101,763
Unique visitors
to visitnorthumberland.com
in 2015

Tales
from
Northumberland
viewers

9% booked
66% plan to visit

NT Expenditure 2015-16



£115m ROI
from NT
marketing activity
in 2014

**Jobs
in tourism
13,384**

**Visitors
from outside the
North East
83.3%**

Mission

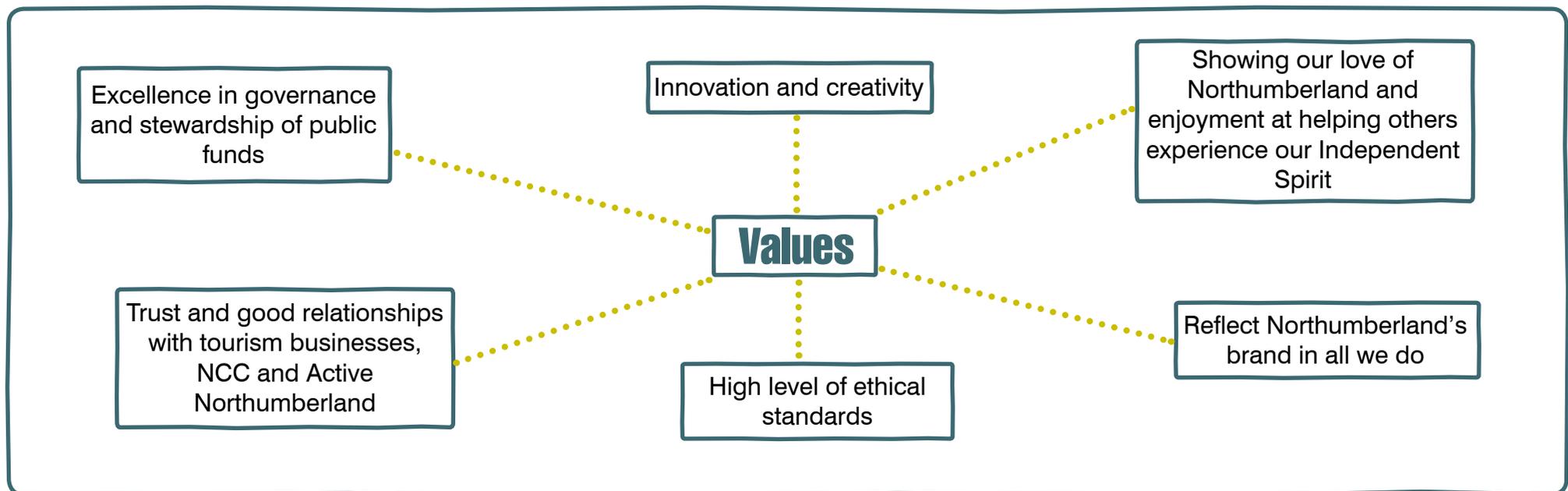
To enhance the economic benefit tourism provides to the county by coordinating the tourism industry's development, improving the visitor experience and promoting Northumberland as a year round destination whilst protecting its special features

Vision

"To be THE destination where Independent Spirit comes to life"

Our Purpose

"For Tourism to flourish contributing to Northumberland's prosperity"



Our Programmes & Services

Destination Management



Northumberland's Voice

Represent and advocate for our tourism industry at a regional and national level, including post of Head of Marketing on the executive board of TMI

Destination Management Plan

- Developed with consultation
- Create action plan
- Co-ordinate partner contributions



VisitEngland & VisitBritain



- Support to deliver government tourism strategies
- Advocate Northumberland as a key player

Planning

- Contribute to NCC & partner planning strategies
- Ensure tourism has a voice



Research

- Visitors
- Businesses
- Economic Impact
- Return on Investment



Brand Building

Our Industry

Advice, Guidance & Updates for Businesses



- northumberlandtourism.org.uk
- Conference & Fora
- ViewpoiNT e-newsletter
- Attend partner meetings

Northern Tourism Alliance

Partnership & co-ordination with regional tourism bodies



Maintain Tourism Business Database

Group Travel Partnership

Co-ordinate a county-wide strategy to attract more groups



Supporting our Tourism Associations

Active Involvement

- Secretariat for Northumberland Attractions Association
- Chair of Leisure & Tourism Cycle Advisory Group
- On the Board of Directors at Northumberland College & Kirkley Hall Ltd
- On the Board of the Allen Valleys Landscape Partnership



Promotion



Publications

- Holiday Guide
- Bedroom Browser
- Days Out Leaflet

visitnorthumberland.com

- Business marketing
- Content, imagery & stories
- Searchable event listings



PR



- Press trips
- TravMedia opportunities
- Press releases

CRM

- Database development
- Email marketing
- Segmentation



Social Media



Marketing Campaigns

It's in our nature



VisitEngland & VisitBritain

- Supply content & images
- Send PR stories
- Take part in wider campaigns



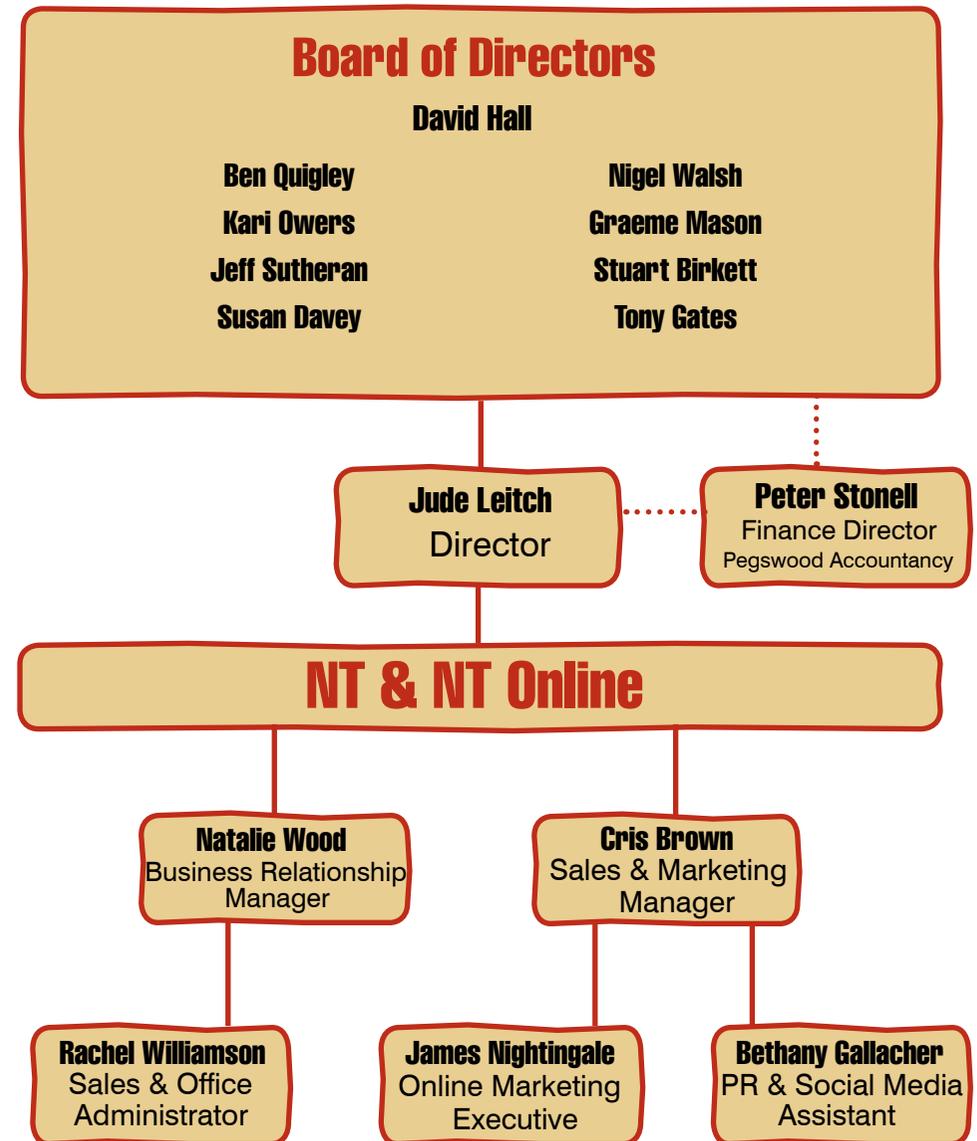
Free to Use Image Library

Company Structure

Northumberland Tourism's Board and staff take great pride in the organisation's efficiency and ability to deliver significant returns for the county.

Northumberland Tourism is a company limited by guarantee. The company has 6 FTE staff and is overseen by a small board consisting of one investment partner, Northumberland County Council, and seven other members recruited to provide specific skills. To reflect the role of Active Northumberland in coordinating Northumberland County Council's culture support activities, they also have a seat on the board.

Formal board meetings are held 6 times a year, and 4 times a year a wider 'Key Partner Forum' is consulted to draw in support for the key roles and functions of the company.



Our Marketing Model

Virtually everything we do is designed to raise the profile of Northumberland and ultimately drive traffic to visitnorthumberland.com where the inspirational content influences decisions to visit. Our marketing model is founded on a strategy of reaching potential visitors through a mix of marketing, sales and PR then directing them to vn.com where they are connected to our tourism partners.

In common with VisitEngland we operate by 'Attract and Disperse' principles where international and national marketing messages feature our 'attract brands' likely to inspire visits and visitors are then 'dispersed' across our county-wide offer using tools such as visitnorthumberland.com and the Days Out and Attractions leaflet.

Marketing campaign activity offers opportunities for our businesses to get involved directly in our promotions and to contribute to the resources available.

Please refer to our Marketing Strategy for analysis of Northumberland's tourism offer and details of our objectives and strategies.

Sales

Our sales operation is managed by NT Online Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Northumberland Tourism Ltd. NT Online sells a suite of marketing products to our businesses with the operating surplus transferred to Northumberland Tourism Ltd for use in marketing activities.

**Northumberland Holiday & Short Breaks Guide
and Bedroom Browser**

visitnorthumberland.com
Basic & Enhanced Product Listings
Pay per Click Box Adverts

Email newsletters
Stories & Bespoke Mailings

**Northumberland Days Out
& Attractions Leaflet**

**Campaign
Partnership**

**Group Travel
Partnership**

A small amount of revenue is generated by commissions earned from booking agencies when visitors book direct from visitnorthumberland.com. We also sell listings Visit Kielder for a seller's fee.

Sales activity is enhanced by our proprietary 'NT Ads' online sales system which allows customers to purchase and manage their products in their own time.

Company SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Recognised website with good content and satisfactory functionality, SEO and mobile capability (although needing improvement in medium term).
- Websites built in open source coding allowing flexibility of supply
- Skilled staff
- Broad range of board skills to support operations
- Good industry relations and relationship with NCC and Active Northumberland
- Have demonstrated significant return on investment for activities
- Efficient sales systems
- Gratis office accommodation until 2018 supplied by ARCH
- Good relationships with regional tourism bodies and VisitEngland. Also ARCH and NELEP with regard to tourism funding streams.

Weaknesses

- Low level of funding available for operations and marketing activities
- Limited scope to generate further income from Northumberland Businesses
- Small staff team with limited capacity for additional activity
- Limited training budget
- Website requiring functionality upgrades
- Server capacity reaching limits
- Unable to engage in product development, can only influence.
- Misconceptions about our remit amongst businesses and a perception that everything we do for businesses must be purchased.

Opportunities

- Secure greater sponsorship from organisations aligned to the Nland brand.
- Develop digital strategy for county to maintain competitiveness
- Ensure wider recognition of ROI and value of activities to Northumberland's economy.
- Ensure greater perception of 'value for money' aligned to objectives in return for funding from AN
- Partner with businesses to boost marketing campaign funds
- Partner with other tourism bodies in NE to access EAFRD tourism funding in 2017.
- Be prepared for new funding opportunities
- Engage 'champions' to spread messages

Threats

- Reduced funding would make operations unviable
- Other providers of marketing services available for businesses including OTAs
- Reducing website performance reducing value for businesses in advertising products and threatening sales performance
- Low marketing campaign budgets reducing return on investment achieved
- National tourism structures review may threaten benefit currently derived from our close relationship with VE. Government funding for domestic tourism marketing also in question.

Measuring Success - Our KPIs

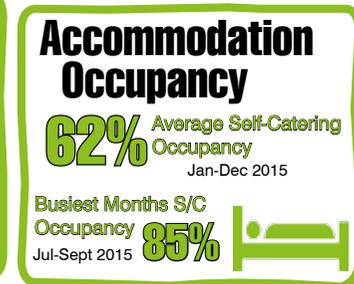
NORTHUMBERLAND
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Key Performance Indicators 2015 - 16

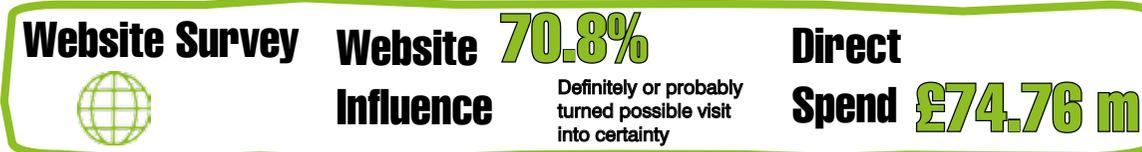
Northumberland
TOURISM

Progress at 31 Dec 2015

County KPIs



Northumberland Tourism KPIs



¹ TRI* M SCORE = VisitEngland's Visitor Experience Index measuring visitor satisfaction. The average in England is 94.2

² KLOUT SCORE = Number between 1 & 100 representing your influence. The more influential you are the higher your Klout Score. Users with a score of 63 are in the top 5% of all users.

Objectives & Strategies

Objectives

- To continue to demonstrate significant return on investment for monies invested in marketing
- Focus on activities to attract new visitors and increase visitor spend, especially shoulder season.
- Coordinate partner activities contributing to the achievement of NDMP vision and objectives
- Support the tourism objectives in the NCC Core and Economic Strategies ensuring that the value of tourism to Northumberland's economy is fully understood.
- Increase sales revenue by improving business relationships and targeting new customers.

Strategies

Funding Tourism

Maximise funds available to develop and promote Northumberland's tourism offer taking into account possible new funding streams and other opportunities.

Industry Leadership

Allocating time and resources to representing NT and Northumberland's Tourism Industry on a regional and national level ensuring that the value of tourism is recognised and Northumberland is represented in important conversations on the future of tourism support.

Product Development

Lead on Destination Management Plan encouraging partners to contribute actions. Work with ARCH and NELEP to identify strategic tourism projects and support businesses to access suitable funding streams.

Research

Investing in high quality research will allow NT to be data driven, recognising opportunities and threats in the changing tourism environment.

Destination Brand Marketing

Sharing the Northumberland experience with key target markets with an increasing focus on opportunities presented by digital marketing responding to changes in visitor information gathering and booking habits. A strong focus on story telling using creative content and owned and UG video.

Focus on Partner Relationships

Continue to build trust with clear communications and partner involvement. Work closely with partners to increase resources available for marketing.

Financial Management and Good Governance

NT is focused on achieving excellence in financial management and value for money in the use of funds. This is an ongoing key focus for NT's board and staff.

2016-17 Business Plan

- 2015 Year in Review
- 2016-17 Action Plan
- 2016-17 Budget

**It's in
our
strategy**

2015 Year in Review

Marketing Campaigns

Quality January

Feb - Aug **Wild Spirit**



Sept 15 **Access for All**

Dark Skies Sept 15 - Jan 16

Events

Poppies at Woodhorn

Tour of Britain

1,101,763

Unique Visitors

↑ **8.6%**



visitnorthumberland.com

46.8% of users visit



Quality Visits

2 mins 42 secs
2.75 pages



Most viewed content

1. Holy Island
2. Berwick-Upon-Tweed
3. Coast
4. Seahouses
5. Caravan & Campsites
6. Cottages
7. Late Availability
8. Tour of Britain 2015
9. Amble
10. Castles

Northern Tourism Growth Fund



Visitor Numbers TICs **+0.1%** Statistics

+6.9% Average Self-Catering Occupancy **62%**

Busiest Months **August, July, Sept = 85%** Occupancy

PR



£1.44m AVE

26 Press trips organised

Outdoor Writers & Photographers Guild

AGM Weekend



Social Media

Followers



↑ **46%**

Followers

↑ **35%**



New Account

69 (+1)

Klout Score

Award Winning



BEST UK HOLIDAY COUNTY/DESTINATION



7 Gold
5 Silver
5 Bronze



Over **70,000** contacts



Email Newsletters

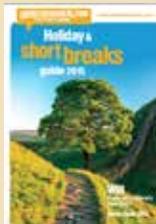
24.4% open rate

6.2% click-through rate

Publications



250,000 distributed within a **3 hour** drive-time



80,000 distributed in TICs, on request & high footfall areas



20,000 delivered to **200** hotels and B&Bs plus Tourism Fairs

Content Online

Group Travel Partnership

NEW

E-newsletter database

Group Travel



40 Blog Posts

Blog

76% ↑ Unique Visits

2016-17 Action Plan

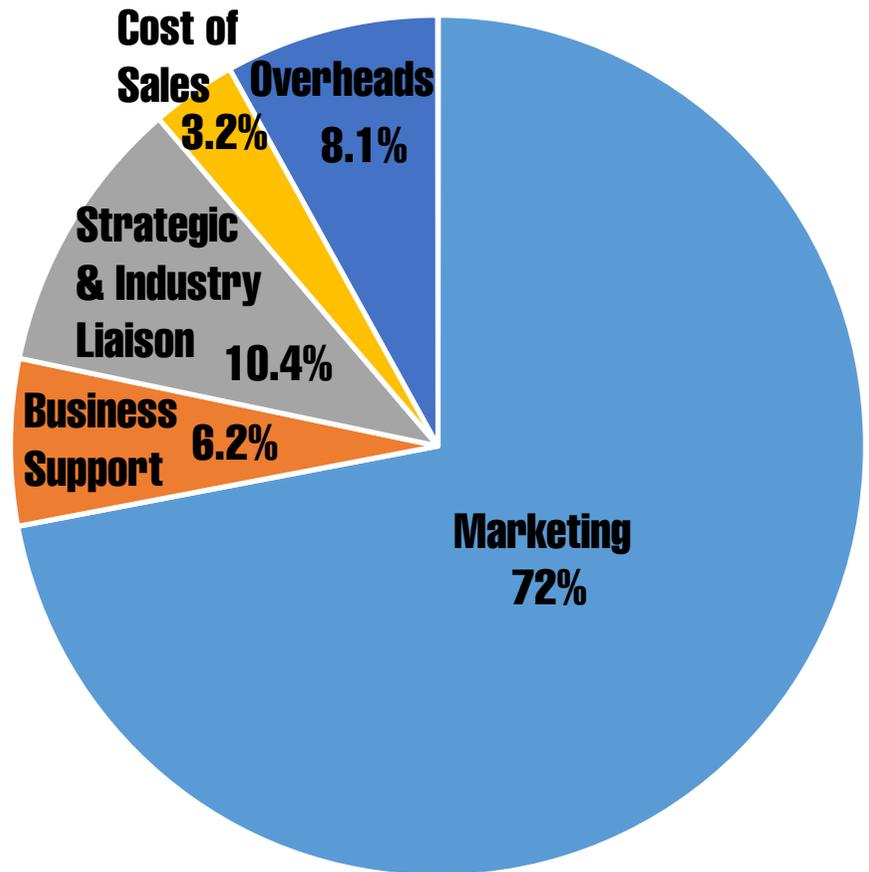
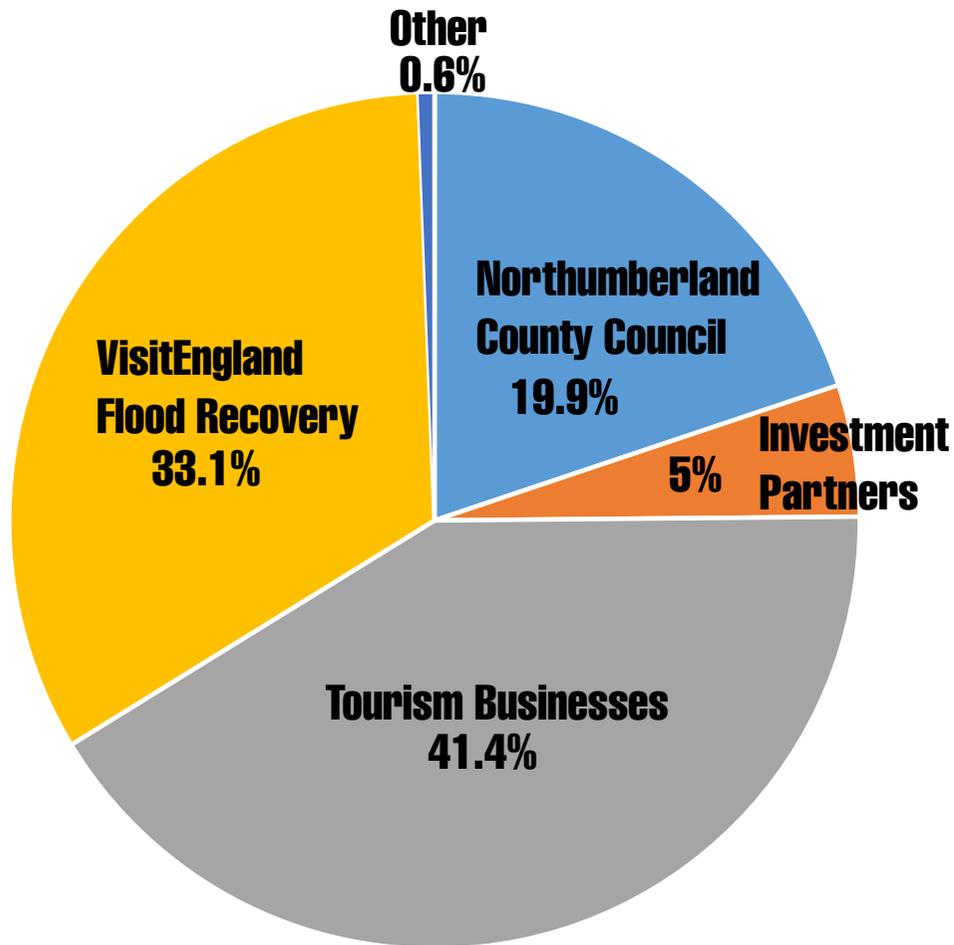
| Business Plan Strategy | Action | Details | Deadline | Measurement |
|----------------------------|---|--|----------------|---|
| Funding Tourism | Review sales to maximise income | New products? | 1st April 2016 | Sales targets reviewed and approved by NT Board |
| | Renegotiate AN SLA | | 1st April 2016 | SLA agreed |
| | Increase sales capacity | | 1st April 2016 | Plan agreed by NT Board |
| | Search for sponsors | Use board contacts | 31 March 2017 | 2 sponsorship agreements |
| Industry Leadership | Review relationship network and develop plan to enhance | | 1st April 2016 | Relationship plan developed and implemented |
| | Attend regional & national meetings and fora | Record attendance and review usefulness on an ongoing basis | Ongoing | Learnings & benefits from networking & lobbying activities reported on |
| Product Development | Encourage & manage partner participation in NDMP | Review NDMP action plan with partners | 1st April 2016 | Plan updated with partner actions for 2016-17 |
| | Work towards achieving NT actions contributing to NDMP | Review and update actions for 2016-17 | 1st April 2016 | Plan updated for 2016-17 and 2015-16 actions reviewed |
| | Work with ARCH & NELEP to encourage strategic tourism projects and help businesses access funding | JL to work with NELEP on EAFRD funding streams and contribute to RGN Board | Ongoing | EAFRD and RGN opportunities communicated to businesses and support provided to strategic projects |

2016-17 Action Plan

| Business Plan Strategy | Action | Details | Deadline | Measurement |
|---|--|---|--------------------------|--|
| Destination Brand Marketing | Develop county digital strategy | Plan to be developed and funding investigated | 1st April 2016 & ongoing | Plan developed and plan for approval within NCC/AN and NT Board agreed |
| | Implement web development plan | Funding to be identified for required upgrades to vn.com | 1st April 2016 & ongoing | Funding secured and development underway |
| | Develop and implement Marketing Strategy and related plans | Review 2015-16 activities and update plan for 2016-17 | 1st April 2016 & ongoing | Plans approved by NT Board |
| Partner Relationships | Re-develop nt.org.uk to increase value to businesses | Plan incremental improvements | 31st December 2016 | Development plan completed & implemented |
| | Maintain & strengthen relationship with NCC/AN ensuring services are valued and ROI recognised | Attend relevant NCC working groups/ area committees. Schedule regular catch-ups with AN tourism team. Invite councillors & relevant staff to Key Partner Fora | Ongoing | Groups & committees attended. Regular catch-ups held. Good NCC/AN attendance at Key Partner Fora |
| | Review communications to ensure partners understand our objectives and can engage | Develop & implement corporate communications plan | 1st April 2016 & ongoing | Plan agreed by NT Board and implemented |
| Research | Review research plan to ensure all required information captured | Identify key information required and ensure research plan captures | 1st April 2016 | Research analysed and plan agreed for coming year |
| | Investigate partner opportunities to enhance research programme | Explore possibilities in similar vein to cycle survey | Ongoing | Ambition communicated with partners and opportunities explored |
| Financial Management & Good Governance | Review company processes and procedures | Update if necessary | 1st April 2016 | Review completed |
| | Complete scenario planning to be ready to react | Understand reaction to different possibilities | 1st April 2016 | Scenario planning completed |

Planned Income 2016-17

Planned Expenditure 2016-17



If you have any questions about our Business Strategy and Plan, please get in touch with Jude Leitch

jude.leitch@northumberlandtourism.co.uk