

Meeting: Thriving Sub-Committee

Date: 28 January 2025

Title: Leisure / Visitor Destination Opportunities

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Service: Tourism and Events

Wards affected: All

1. Introduction

The Our North Tyneside Plan sets out the following objective for the visitor economy

- We will continue to be the destination of choice for visitors through the promotion of North Tyneside's award-winning parks, beaches, festivals and seasonal activities.

To realise this objective, the Council works closely with regional partners and key stakeholders to raise the profile of the region as a visitor destination as well as develop initiatives and projects to attract both day and overnight visitors from the UK and internationally.

The report provides an overview of the:

- current data relating to North Tyneside's visitor economy,
- key visitor attractions and events
- regional priorities, marketing and promotion

Further information will be provided via a presentation to the Thriving Sub Committee.

2. Visitor Economy Statistics

Below is key data that shows the economic value of the visitor economy to North Tyneside.

- North Tyneside's visitor economy was valued at £408.86m for 2023.
- The borough retains a strong day visitor offer with 5.8m that year.
- Overseas visitors are here as a result of a city visit, cruise ships including the daily DFDS Amsterdam service and our events programme.
- Direct employment was 3,169, increasing to 4,032 when the supply chain was taken into consideration.
- The borough's biggest sector by economic impact was food and drink, accounting for 1300 full time equivalent jobs. (source: STEAM, 2023)
- North Tyneside currently has around 4300 bed spaces and an annual occupancy rate of 78% (last reliable data 2022).
- Visitors are here for a range of reasons including a great range of family attractions, events and award-winning beaches.

3. Events, Attractions and Activities

In addition to our beaches and country parks, North Tyneside's other visitor attractions include:

- St Mary's Lighthouse
- Segedunum UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Tynemouth Priory
- Tynemouth Aquarium
- Stephenson Railway Museum
- Spanish City, next door to this Stack will be opening later this year.
- Playhouse Whitley Bay
- North Shields Fish Quay

Key events and activities that also attract visitors include:

- Mouth of Tyne Festival
- North Sea Weekender
- 10k road race

- North Shields Christmas Market
- Tynemouth Market

4. Marketing and Promotion

Our signposting website for visitors, www.visitnorthtyneside.com, received over 127,000 visitors in 2024.

As you'd expect, the majority of traffic was from the UK and Ireland but there was strong interest in the area from US, Canada, Germany and The Netherlands.

UK traffic was centred around London, The Midlands and Yorkshire. This has been the case for many years.

Referrals to the site came mostly from Google but, in line with our regional partnership strategy, traffic also came from www.newcastlegateshead.com.

We also have an Instagram account for the borough that has 3863 followers.

Much of our promotional activity is done through our various high-profile events including Mouth of the Tyne Festival, Tynemouth Food Festival, 10k Road Race, North Sea Weekender and Christmas Market.

Mouth of the Tyne Festival has nearly 20,000 followers on social media.

There is a huge opportunity to reach new and repeat visitors this year through North Shields 800.

Further opportunities lie in partnership working, notably that of the new strategic regional approach to the visitor economy.

5. Regional Activity

While the borough stands as a visitor destination in its own right, we have been part of the regional Destination Development Partnership since 2023.

The North East secured the first government funded regional partnership programme to support the development of the visitor economy. The £2.25m support from DCMS recognised the NE's ambition to double the size of the visitor economy in the next ten years.

The Thriving Sub-Committee will receive an update on that including the following topics:

- Hotel Study and occupancy levels
- Domestic and International marketing
- The impact of 'Set Jetting' and influencer campaigns.
- Product development
- Travel Trade
- Skills
- Relevant future developments