

STOCKTON ON TEES

TOURISM & VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY 2010 – 2015

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Foreword

To add (from Leader)

1) Introduction

Stockton is located in the heart of Tees Valley, situated between North Yorkshire and County Durham. With a total population of almost 190,000 Stockton is the largest Borough in the sub region, and incorporates Billingham, Norton, Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick and Yarm, as well as numerous villages and hamlets. Tees Valley is an area of contrast and diversity, with a proud heritage, breathtaking countryside and over 30 miles of spectacular Heritage Coastline which is at the heart of Captain Cook Country. The majority of Tees Valley is still emerging and developing as a destination. Core priorities are around changing perceptions, development of the physical product and increasing the length of stay. Developing a programme of national and international events is a priority, such as the Tall Ships in Hartlepool in 2010. The pivotal role of the visitor economy in supporting a higher quality of life and positive perceptions of the area will create increased business investment.

The roads are relatively un-congested compared to other regions in the Country and access is easy; fly into Durham Tees Valley Airport, sail into one of the ports or harbours on the East Coast or use the excellent rail links which travel to London in less than 2 ½ hours. Road links via the A19 and A66 are excellent with cities like York, Durham and Newcastle less than 1 hour away.

The industrial heritage of Stockton is enormously important. It is where the first steam hauled passenger railway (Stockton-Darlington) was built in 1825. Stockton owes much to the development of the River Tees, with the building of the Tees Barrage creating a deep, clean waterway making the river excellent for white-water rafting and other water sports, river wildlife and cruises.

In reality, what Stockton has to offer visitors is much wider than the perception. Stockton holds some of the most high profile events in the region and has three of the highest end hotel offers in the region. The excellent leisure, sports, culture and arts facilities already attract many visitors and with new attractions, such as the RSPB's wildlife and discovery park at Saltholme, Stockton is at the heart of an exciting tourism destination.

Why the need for a Visitor strategy?

Tourism is recognised nationally as a key sector for the economy and vital for regeneration, with £86 billion spent annually on UK tourism, including £17 billion by 33 million overseas visitors and £44 billion on day trips by UK residents. Within the Tees Valley the value of the tourism industry in 2007 was £544million and accounting for 10,852 jobs, with inward investment valued at over £164 million.

The visitor economy incorporates:

- Attractions (e.g. natural environment, heritage and culture, iconic buildings, retail, sport, leisure facilities, food and events)
- Infrastructure (e.g. signs, transport, parking, interpretation, public space and amenities)
- Services (e.g. hotels and bars, pubs and restaurants, galleries, every day events and day-to-day services)

These contribute to the vibrancy and sense of place, civic pride, regional and local distinctiveness.

In recent years the tourism industry has become much more focused, with changing attitudes to leisure and tourism focusing on visitors' needs and requirements, including visitors of black and ethnic minorities and those with a disability. Development of the overall product, together with the emerging new technology and practices and the need to raise the profile of Stockton locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, has highlighted the need for a Tourism & Visitor Economy Strategy for Stockton. The strategy will provide a framework for

strengthening tourism activity and promoting growth in the visitor economy, in and around Stockton on Tees.

This plan will be the linkage in the process of developing the Stockton Visitor offer within the regional and national context, with the key to success being our ability to develop and work in partnership with a wide range of agencies, businesses, residents, partners and colleagues, to a common agenda.

The main purpose of this strategy will be to increase the overall value of tourism to the local economy.

Stockton's Vision

This strategy directly supports the achievement of Stockton Council's overall vision which is that: -

- **We are passionate about creating a clean, green and vibrant place where people are safe, healthy and happy**
- **We are ambitious, open and fair**
- **We deliver great services for your money**

Our vision for tourism and the visitor economy in the Borough is that: -

By 2015 Stockton - on - Tees will deliver a high quality visitor experience, continually surprising and exciting our visitors with a vibrant, contemporary and diverse offer in a historically rich environment.

2) Strategic Context

2.1) The National Perspective

Tourism operates at all spatial scales, with key themes and products developed nationally, and applied to the regional, then local market. The last five years have witnessed considerable changes at both a national and regional level in the delivery of, and strategic approach to tourism.

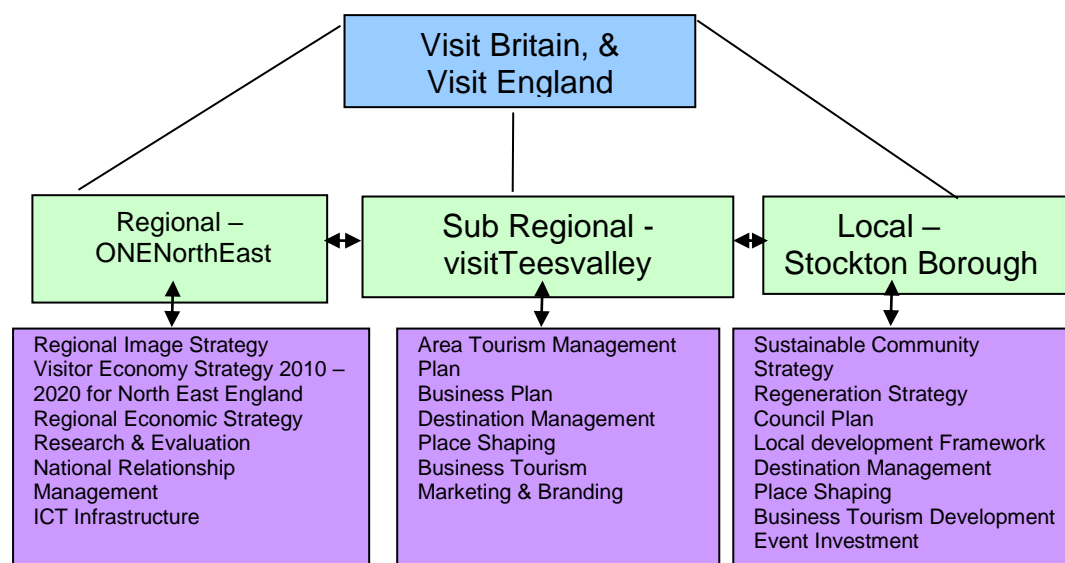
VisitBritain – This is the national agency, funded by DCMS, which is responsible for marketing Britain overseas and for promoting England to the domestic market. Its primary aims include:

- Developing great destinations and experiences
- Ensuring quality first
- Competitive marketing
- Easy access

VisitEngland is the strategic leadership body representing the public and private sector stakeholders of English Tourism. It works in partnership with VisitBritain, the Regional Development Agencies and local authorities, and the private sector, creating a national tourism strategy, optimising marketing investment, and developing the visitor experience across England.

Enjoy England - is the official tourist board for England and the domestic marketing arm of VisitBritain. Their vision is simply **to enjoy England – there is a lot to enjoy!**

Fig 1 Structure of Tourism in the UK



2.2) The Regional Perspective – ONE North East

In 2007, tourism was worth £3.915 billion to the regional economy, and exceeded the growth rates of other regions, which used the same method of measurement as the North East.

There are many strategy and policy influences on tourism that need to be taken into consideration. In summary these are;

Regional Economic Strategy (see App 1, ref 1) – has identified Tourism and Hospitality as one of nine key economic sectors that will drive improvement in the economic performance of the region.

Regional Visitor Economy Strategy (see App 1, ref 2) – has identified that the visitor economy is about business and regeneration and will aim for significant growth in the long term.

The draft Visitor Economy Strategy 2010 – 2020 for North East England has 2 main aims:

- 1) To improve visitor yield
- 2) To achieve sustainable tourism growth

These 2 aims have been translated into 7 objectives with baseline and targets established:

- To increase visitor spend
- To stimulate longer stays, repeat visits
- To reduce seasonality
- To grow volume of overnight stays
- To increase business profitability
- To increase number and quality of jobs
- To develop the region's brand

The strategy proposes to apply the principles of Attract; Disperse; Grow and Collaborate to the promotion and development of tourism in the region.

The 'Tourism Network North East' is made up of five independent organisations: One NorthEast and four Area Tourism Partnerships (ATPs). The four ATPs are:

- Northumberland Tourism
- Tourism Tyne and Wear
- Visit County Durham
- visitTeesvalley - vTv

The Network is recognised as the official tourism support process for North East England by government, VisitBritain, tourism businesses and the entire region's Local Authorities. The network will work in partnership to make it easier for tourism businesses to access research, training, business advice and marketing opportunities.

2.3) The Sub-Regional Perspective – visitTeesvalley

An Area Tourism Management Plan (ATMap) is an action plan for a range of organisations involved in the visitor economy – it identifies what needs to be done (between 2010-2012) and by whom, to develop the visitor economy product, promote the area, improve the experience of visitors and help businesses to become more productive and profitable.

It influences other key tourism related documents and provides the context for all investment decisions to support the visitor economy. It informs the activities of all public and private sector organisations involved in developing the visitor economy, and not just the work of vTv. The four priorities of the ATMap are:

- Product development
- Events
- Up skill the tourism-hospitality workforce and
- Change perceptions

2.4) Local Perspective – Stockton Borough

Stockton Borough's development priorities are linked to the Tees Valley Investment Plan (App 1, ref 3), and the Local Development Framework (LDF) Draft Core Strategy which will be delivered by the new Tees Valley Unlimited structure and SMI – the Stockton & Middlesbrough Initiative and the Area Tourism Management and Business Plans (App 1, ref 4) - being the most significant in terms of strategic positioning for the Borough.

The vision and objectives of the LDF Draft Core Strategy acknowledge the Borough's tourism assets and the need to protect and enhance them, for example, its rich heritage, the potential of the River Tees and its environs for sport, leisure and recreation, environmental assets, the cultural offer of the area and the role of Yarm as a historic town and niche shopping destination. The draft core strategy supports specific aspects of the Tourism Strategy, such as the regeneration of the Stockton town centre and encourages the development of new niche roles, as well as supporting the redevelopment of Thornaby and Billingham. It gives support to protect Yarm's niche shopping role and historic environment and recognises Norton High Street as a local centre. It also supports the promotion of a balanced, inclusive cultural sector and 24 hour economy, as well as the provision of additional leisure and event opportunities and the delivery of a full range of hotel and other tourist accommodation in suitable locations. The strategy supports increasing the number of tourists, including over night stays, day visitors and business tourism to the area. In particular the policy supports the growth in sustainable tourism, and makes specific reference to the River Tees, Preston Park, Saltholme Nature Reserve and the Borough's heritage in relation to early history, railway and engineering and its contribution to the Second World War. It also acknowledges the economic benefits that may derive from tourism development. Included are opportunities to widen the Borough's cultural, sport, recreation and leisure offer particularly in the river corridor, at Tees Barrage and Stockton's Riverside, and seeks to protect and enhance the quantity and quality of open space, sport and recreation facilities in the Borough. The strategy seeks to protect and enhance the Borough's natural environmental assets, particularly where this may contribute to the tourism offer (Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA and Ramsar site, Saltholme, River Tees Heritage Park and Tees Bridges cycle and walkways, as well as the strategic gaps and green wedges, which protect and maintain the openness and amenity value for these areas).

Local Authority departments are committed to working with the organisations and partners for the long term - each adding value to the others work and in partnership with the Regional

teams at One North East. Stockton's priorities for tourism are set out in Stockton Renaissance's Sustainable Community Strategy (App 1, ref 5) as part of the Economic Regeneration & Transport Partnership (ER&T) theme. Stockton's Regeneration Strategy (ref 6) recognises the significance of tourism across its many themes and projects, and the overall impact it plays on the economy.

2.5) Current Economic Climate

The economic downturn has affected both public and private sector investment which could have an impact on the delivery of the strategy – strengthening the need to work in partnership. UK holidays, potential visitors choosing to stay at home, and other trends such as later booking and more social networking will have an effect on the visitor economy. Developing partnerships with our universities is vital as students sit within the visiting friends & relatives (VFR) segment, which is hugely important to the region. Current performance indicators show that footfall is higher than previous years across the retail and tourism sectors with all the attractions reporting increased numbers and spend for the first quarter of 2009.

3) Visitor Offer

The main strengths and common threads that came through in discussions with colleagues and partners in the Borough are –

- River Tees – not only Stockton's, but one of the sub regions best assets. A grade A 2 star category river which will be the centre of events and water based activities in the future.
- Tees Barrage – having previously hosted a world championship, new major investment and refurbishment will bring this facility up to world class standards prior to 2012 Olympics.
- Yarm, voted the UK's best high street by BBC viewers, and the historic environment of Norton High Street and Green.
- Events and Festivals – with some of the UK's biggest free festivals such as Stockton International Riverside Festival, Take to the Tees and Fringe and Stockton Sparkles Christmas Market our aim is to build up our events calendar into an annual feast for festivals.
- Heritage – past, present and future – Stockton helped to change the face of the world with the first passenger railway in 1825, and has continued throughout history with pioneering inventions and inventors.
- Arc, Forum and Leisure facilities – With multi million pound investment across our leisure venues, Stockton has a wealth of first class venues for both visitors and residents. The prestigious Seve Trophy was held here at Wynyard Golf Club in 2005 and received worldwide TV coverage.
- Quality Accommodation – i.e. Crathorne Hall, Judges, Tall Trees and Wynyard Hall are currently in the top 200 UK hotels.
- Saltholme and the potential for nature based and outdoor activity tourism.
- Durham Tees Valley Airport.
- Durham University – Stockton Campus, Teesside University and Riverside College

The main areas we will focus on to improve are almost identical to the issues raised in the Tees Valley Area Tourism Management Plan (ATMAP) document and will be addressed in partnership with colleagues from visitTeesvalley -

- Urban playground - Stockton & Middlesbrough's entertainment, retail and leisure offer
- Up skill the tourism-hospitality workforce
- Identity and civic pride – Welcome All

- Development of the product
- TIC re location
- Improving, delivering and raising the quality of the overall events calendar

All of the suggestions raised through the process will be addressed in the following section, also as priorities listed in the action plan – (section 6). Partnerships here will be vital with training providers, Stockton Riverside College, the University, TVU and the private sector if we are to implement our strategic priorities.

This strategy will challenge and address not only our strengths, but more importantly our weaknesses and our threats by turning them into opportunities at a time of change and motivation in the region as a whole.

4) Strategic Priorities

There are 3 key areas of development throughout the Borough:

4.1 Market Development

We need to sell and promote our current product or visitor offer to new markets and potential new customers, also to support businesses in line with the 4 ATMAP priorities. This will then make it easier when setting objectives to link with those set in the ATMAP.

To do that we need to know which new customers we should aim to reach and how we should do that and ensure they make return visits once we attract them here.

We must raise the profile of our visitor offer by specific targeted marketing and promotion and to do that we need to better and more fully understand the local, regional and national market within which we need to operate.

Recent statistics carried out at regional level (App 1, ref 7) inform us that our main visitors (45.50%) are between 18–24 with 25-34 (40.30%) and 45-54 (25.70%) staying for 1-3 nights and mainly arriving from Yorkshire and Humberside. The top 4 current reasons for visiting are Exploring Towns & Cities 44.6%, Exploring the Countryside 41.6%, Events 32.2% and Shopping 30.9%.

i) Research

A better understanding of the value and volume of the tourism / visitor sector is needed.

Tourism is an extremely complex activity and there is little that is not affected by tourism's economic, social and environmental impact.

We will ensure all groups in the community are reached and services are made accessible for all including black and minority ethnic groups and those that have a disability.

We will set realistic targets which will be monitored against performance, contribute to the annual national benchmarking through City group 4 Destination Performance UK (DPUK), carry out customer surveys and customer satisfaction surveys at events, in publications and on the web sites and contribute to our quarterly targets in our Service Improvement Plans.

Therefore our priority is to:

Establish a robust and realistic process of collating and evaluating our data intelligence across known and new market segments in order to enable specific and accurate target marketing

ii) Market Segmentation

The NE Marketing Framework uses the Arkenford Model based on visitor's lifestyle preferences and for Tees Valley the primary focus is on "traditional" and family day trips. In the longer term short break audiences will be targeted.

Business visitors are a critical part of the region's visitor economy because they are high spending, less seasonal and can be influential in the future investment, hotel development or leisure travel decisions.

At the lower end of the business market is the contractor market with a usual spend of £25-£30 per night. This market is currently not considered in any data collection. This must be

addressed as it is an important sector to our overall economy through sheer volume, even though numbers have declined in this economic downturn, they are expected to rise significantly over the coming year.

Key markets ripe for development for our visitor offer are the Coach, Group and Youth Markets. The travel trade sector, especially the more lucrative luxury travel, will be targeted around new events and new themed product developments.

The Youth Market is split into 2 groups, one based around the University, which is a key source of visitors as well as providing dynamic, world-class and innovative learning opportunities to every learner, and the other group, aged,18-24, attending events and music festivals.

We are actively working with public and private sector partners to increase visitor numbers and visitor spend at all key festivals and events, therefore we must:

*Actively develop the in - bound coach / travel trade and youth markets alongside new and established events
and
Develop and establish regular contact with the non-assessed accommodation providers to collate and monitor useful visitor movement and spend*

iii) Sustainability and Productivity

In essence sustainable tourism is about managing more effectively the visitor impact on the local destination's economy, communities and environment to benefit all stakeholders both now and in the future.

There is a need to raise productivity and resilience of the existing businesses in the Borough to the impact of changes in the economy and climate change. There are large numbers of businesses that we can, and do engage with but there are many more where we must establish relationships.

Tourism in Stockton will be achieved by effective management and through partnerships at all levels through business engagement sessions, online business tool kits etc. As such the content of our Tourism strategy has been subject to consultation and dovetails with similar strategies being developed both regionally and nationwide. We also, in-line with current, regional, national and European Tourism policies, wish to take a more responsible and sustainable approach to tourism development in our area.

Many businesses and organisations, in addition to numerous council services and departments, play an active and supportive role in tourism promotions and developments. To do this we need to:

Raise standards, environmental awareness, quality and performance across the private and public sector providers to meet and exceed visitor expectations

4.2 Product Development

Is about promoting or selling new products and services in our current market. Providing what our customers need and ensuring that developments are sustainable

We must continue with our pioneering and innovative developments, ensure that the infrastructure is sustainable and of high standards, therefore improving the physical product for local, national and international visitors as a year round events led destination

i) Events

Events are widely recognised as being an integral part of the tourism economy which stimulate working partnerships and create opportunities for joint marketing whilst contributing to raise the civic pride and bring community groups together and raising the profile of our diverse town centres. With this in mind we need to ensure that Stockton's events are attractive and accessible for all, including those with disabilities. We will do this by making sure that the infrastructure is suitable when planning the event but also that we are providing the correct level of service during the event.

All events are currently promoted through the visitTeesvalley Events website and through www.visitstockton.co.uk with the specific aims and objectives to attract a wide target audience. As Tees Valley is an 'events led' destination new major events such as 'Take to the Tees' and Christmas Markets Festival are newly developed alongside established international festivals such as Stockton International Riverside Festival, Fringe Festival, Stockton Sparkles, Sporting Events and Billingham International Folklore Festival.

Further development and more targeted marketing is required to attract visitors from not only the Tees Valley region but further a-field, an approximate 2-3 hour drive time, with an aim of having a full events calendar throughout the year across the sub region. We therefore need to:

<i>Further develop the events calendar with new and improved festivals and events, and establish the Visitor Experience team alongside the events calendar</i>
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ii) Accommodation / bed stock

Quality is about meeting or exceeding the visitors needs of the market and has a key influence on productivity and visitor satisfaction. We need to raise the occupancy levels and length of stay by increasing quality rating levels across the accommodation sector but also by making sure that all audiences are being catered for. Such things include the availability of bed spaces that have been adapted to cater for those with a disability or that public areas have been made accessible.

visitTeesvalley's marketing policy is to promote inspected only accommodation in all our promotion and publications. All accommodation establishments will be encouraged to take part in occupancy survey work led by ONE as increased participation will impact on the regional and local STEAM figures.

The accommodation sector ranges from camping and caravanning to guesthouses, Inns and Hotels.

Quality and quantity of bed stock availability is an issue but developments in the pipeline should help boost this area. Stockton has some of the strongest high-end offers available in Wynyard Hall Hotel, Judges, and Tall Trees with Crathorne and Hardwick Hall on the periphery. The occupancy levels across the Borough are higher Monday to Thursday mainly due to the business traveller market.

Leisure travellers at weekends tend to be visiting friends and relatives, special occasions .i.e. weddings, and sporting groups, either as a spectator or competing, therefore generally the occupancy levels are lower at weekends.

A recent Hotel Study (App 1, ref 8) has been carried out across Tees Valley by Hotel Solutions, which has identified where the weaknesses exist and where potential new developments could be located. These will be addressed through future regeneration schemes.

At the other end of the market are the contractor's (business), where the majority of suitable accommodation may not be quality assessed due to capped market rate (£25 is maximum payable per night for many contractors due to the inability to claim anything higher back as a business expense). Current available bed spaces for assessed and non- assessed accommodation across the borough is around 3,973 including Self Catering but excluding caravan parks and University accommodation. There are also a large number of un-assessed properties available. This urgently needs to be addressed if we are looking to raise the quality of the overall product in the future. To do this we need to:

<i>Compile enough quality data from the accommodation providers on a quarterly basis to provide SBC with an accurate measure of the value and volume to the visitor economy also Assist with the quality assessed upgrades of our visitor accommodation stock.</i>
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iii) New products

a) Saltholme

Opened in March 2009 by Kate Humble, Saltholme is a fantastic new wildlife experience in Stockton. SBC, the RSPB and Teesside Environmental Trust have worked together to transform 1,000 acres of former industrial land into a world-class wildlife reserve and discovery park. Additional improvements include new footpaths, bus stops and the Tees Bridges Cycle Route. Saltholme has been identified as the hub for the hub and spoke approach to Nature Based Tourism.

The annual visitor target of 35,000 visitors had almost been reached after only 100 days with 32,000 visitors with 11% of these coming from outside the region.

We will work in partnership to develop and market packages around the River Tees, Heritage and countryside.

b) Future plans / regeneration developments

Stockton recognises the pivotal role of place shaping in regeneration. The urban and rural fabric of the Borough are its key asset in delivering a step change in opportunities for both residents and visitors. Northshore, long term proposals for major leisure, housing, retail and hotel accommodation will commence in 2010, with the regeneration prospect of the Globe Theatre as a new town centre music venue, well under way in 2010, breathing new life into the northern end of the town.

By focusing development primarily in the urban areas, plans are now in place to drive physical regeneration in the Borough. This is set against the backdrop of rural villages, Norton High Street and the town of Yarm, which provide a crucial, lifestyle element of the visitor offer.

c) Preston Hall Museum & Park

The important historic landmark of Preston Hall Museum is set to look forward to a safer and brighter future with a major refurbishment thanks to generous funding from both the Heritage Lottery Fund and Stockton Borough Council. Embarking upon our greatest period of development since the inception of the site as a museum and public park in 1953 over £7 million will be spent across the venue within the next three years, with improvements beginning in 2009 and continuing through to 2012.

A newly installed traffic control system at the entrance to the site will help to reduce congestion from arterial routes.

Overlooking the River Tees, Preston Hall was originally built in 1825 and is one of the main tourist attractions in the area with over 75,000 visitors a year.

d) River Tees

As future developments are focused around the River Tees this major resource will be marketed as the thread that all the products are based around. Major new attractions include, Infinity Bridge which opened in May 2009 and has become one of the regions top 10 'must see' attractions and won a national Supreme Award for Structural Engineering Excellence, the Tees White Water Course, with its successful £5 million upgrade started in 2010 to accommodate the 2012 pre-Olympics training camps, will place the attraction as one of the top 5 white water course in Europe, capable of hosting national and international competition.

e) Leisure Facilities

Splash Leisure Facility has a £2.5 million investment to extend the dry sports facilities which will almost double the size of the current gym. Phase 1 was completed in October 2009, with phase 2, which will improve the reception and café areas as well as creating two multi use rooms, due to complete early 2010.

Billingham Forum is currently undergoing a £15.3 million refurbishment of the existing facilities and will reach completion in January 2011. The venue will include new ice, swim and recreational facilities. The Theatre, which is a listed building, is also undergoing essential, mechanical and electrical maintenance.

Take to the Tees Festival was a new event for 2009 with the aim of establishing and improving a whole range of sporting and leisure opportunities around the River Tees.

New packages, including walks, cycle routes, golf, cricket and rugby will be developed with existing attractions, facilities and events, in partnership with both public and private sector partners.

f) Heritage & Culture

The Cultural Quarter has benefited from investment in its historic buildings, with the refurbishment of the Georgian Theatre enabling it to cater for even larger capacity events. The Green Dragon Studios (formerly the Green Dragon Museum) has been converted into rehearsal and recording studios, nurturing Stockton's cultural businesses and home grown talent. Plans are also being worked on to return the Globe Theatre to a music and entertainment venue, at the northern end of the High Street.

Work is underway on the expansion of activity to Hodgsons Yard, where acoustic performances, markets and outdoor eating can add to the niche offer of the town centre.

In March 2009 Cabinet approved the development of a Heritage Strategy (App 1, ref 9), to celebrate and capitalise upon the Borough's industrial and social heritage, in particular the Borough's railway, which would see the re-development of the Train Trail partnership, established originally in 2005, industrial and Christian heritage as well as its role played during both World Wars.

This strategy must reflect the rich heritage of historic buildings and old industrial areas in Stockton town centre and riverside if the area's history is to be respected and maximized to full effect.

Work has already begun to restore and enhance the historic fabric of the town centre through the Stockton Heritage in Partnership (SHiP) scheme. The SHiP is a five-year programme to repair and restore buildings in the urban core of the town with £700,000 of English Heritage, private sector and Council resources. Work was recently completed on a streetscape improvement scheme in the Cultural Quarter, installing feature paving and lighting in Green Dragon Yard and all the ginnels leading into it to enhance the historic buildings at its heart, which will provide the perfect backdrop for the future outdoor activities programmed for the up coming festivals and events.

Due to the diverse nature of the borough's visitors and residents we must recognize and embrace the different cultures, ensuring events and festivals benefit from, and celebrate all traditions and beliefs.

g) Parks, Greenspaces and the Natural Environment

Already a Gold winner of Britain in Bloom and achieving 6 Green Flag Awards for parks such as Ropner Park and Billingham Beck Valley Country Park, we will create pride in our parks, greenspaces and natural areas.

Through the delivery of the Tees Valley and Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategies the borough will increase the visitor offer through the development of a network of high quality, well-connected parks, greenspaces and green corridors, linking town and country. Key development areas will include:

- Saltholme/ Teesmouth/ Cowpen Bewley (proposed 'regional nature park') - providing an integrated approach to the management and promotion of key wildlife sites around the Tees estuary. RSPB Saltholme would provide the hub, with other attractions including Teesmouth National Nature Reserve and Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park.
- Tees Heritage Park – enhancing and interpreting the landscape and heritage features between Stockton and Yarm and improving access on foot, cycle and on the river itself, Would include the development of Yarm, Stockton Riverside, and Preston Park as key 'gateways' to the Heritage Park.

- Wynyard - the further development of Wynyard Woodland Park and surrounding area as a destination for outdoor recreation, including the provision of an enhanced cycle network and the Planetarium.
- Stockton to Darlington corridor – enhancing and interpreting the landscape and heritage features between west Stockton and Darlington and developing a continuous off-road cycle network between the two towns. Opportunities to promote Coatham Wood, the largest new woodland in the Borough, as a destination for outdoor recreation.

Improve the position of Stockton Borough as a short break destination and develop new and existing products, packages and experiences based around the River Tees and its heritage

4.3 Visitor Management

Is about managing and packaging the whole of the visitor offer to a wide audience with a wide range of partners and colleagues. We must materially improve and develop the whole visitor experience by raising standards, quality and expectations, encourage training and development across all sectors such as accommodation, events and attractions. Sub regional Local Authorities are all being encouraged to sign the Destination Management Charter. By using the River Tees as the main focal point, develop themed packages in partnership with both private and public sector colleagues.

i) Visitor Offer

National marketing campaigns are carried out by ONE with vTv marketing the post arrival and destination marketing. Stockton Borough Council (SBC) actively engages in a number of tourism marketing and development projects and provides much of the infrastructure of tourism essential services such as the Tourist Information Centre, signposting, street cleaning and waste management, public toilets and car parks which ensure that basic visitor needs are catered for.

SBC supports the development of arts and sports, delivers major annual festivals and events which are of great appeal to visitors as well as residents and operates visitor attractions of its own such as Preston Hall Museum and Park.

SBC manages parks and open spaces along with other public areas, makes planning decisions which can have an important impact on tourism, gives grants, advice and practical support to arts organisations and events and is the licensing authority issuing licences to taxi drivers, pubs and public entertainment venues.

Generating a high enough profile, particularly for the sporting events, is again a major opportunity for moving forward. Tees Barrage, The River Tees, Take to the Tees Festival, Golf Week, Christmas Festival, SIRF, 2012 Olympics, walking & cycling packages and Nature and Activity Tourism represent huge marketing opportunities for us to:

Develop better planning to anticipate and exceed the needs and requirements of all our visitors and residents whilst upgrading the whole visitor experience by providing quality and accurate tourist and visitor information

also

Dramatically improve the overall image and perception of the area by developing in partnership a series of themed marketing campaigns to raise the profile of the Borough nationally, regionally and locally, aimed at increasing visitor numbers and spend all year round

ii) Tourist / Visitor Information

The Tourism service has 2 full time officers in Tourism Promotions, based in Municipal Buildings in Regeneration & Economic Development and 2.5 FTE staff based in the Tourist Information Office (TIC) which is to be based in the Shambles.

Stockton's is the only Charter Marked tourism service in Tees Valley. The service was one of the first to go through the Customer Service Excellence Standards in August 2009.

The 'Visitor Experience' is now established, delivered and managed through the Tourism section. It will support all the Borough's major events and festivals in partnership with other services, such as events, marketing and arts & culture by:

Managing and delivering the 'Visitor Experience' at all major events and festivals

The TIC re-located to the Library from Green Dragon Yard in October 2002, where visitor figures rose quite dramatically until 2004. In 2010 the TIC will be relocated to the Shambles on the high street to further raise the profile of the TIC, the town centre and improve visitor access and awareness.

Desti.ne is the North East England Tourism e-Business Platform. It has been developed to help the region's tourism industry make the most of the massive opportunities the Internet provides and meet the rising challenge of changing customer demand.

Desti.ne is more than just a website or online booking system. It provides a set of tourism management, promotion and fulfilment tools with Product, Content and Consumer databases at its core. Specifically, Desti.ne delivers a single, cost effective and consistent approach to:

- Product information collection and maintenance
- Website construction and content management
- Information distribution and provision
- Online and offline marketing
- Online and offline booking
- Market Intelligence gathering

iii) Trade Associations and Partnerships

Focus and partnership working groups are currently being nurtured and developed as it is essential that we work with all partners, including those normally perceived as being outside the industry, to improve understanding of the economic, environmental, physical and social impact of tourism across the borough. Venue managers, B & B's and self catering, also attractions and events organisers all meet on a bi-monthly basis, with feedback from individual sessions fed back to the other forums.

SBC hold regular forums with town centre partners to develop incentives related to the annual events calendar.

Tourism has the potential to deliver enormous benefits across the full spectrum of services the council provides for the residents of and visitors to Stockton, and provides a focal point to which other sectors can gravitate, so we will aim to:

Develop new and existing partnerships and manage them more effectively to continue to develop the Tourism potential of the area to increase employment and training opportunities

iv) Town Centres

Closer links are currently being developed between Tourism and Town Centre Management as both areas of work have similar aims and objectives. Developments are ongoing with the retail and eating out providers as this sector is identified as the highest spend across the visitor sector

The future vision for Stockton town centre is a modern, successful and vibrant market town which is accessible to all with a thriving university and modern educational establishments, high quality public spaces and a retail offer that serves the needs of residents of the Borough whilst remaining complementary to that of nearby centres.

Stockton town centre and riverside will be a focal point for cultural and leisure activity through the provision of year round festivals, events and modern leisure facilities, making the most of its unique built heritage through the preservation and enhancement of historical buildings and will continue to build on the asset of the River Tees and riverside area which provides a high

quality setting for new businesses, recreational activities and unique opportunities for riverside living.

Yarm High Street represents a successful and vibrant centre and was voted 'Best High Street' by BBC viewers in 2007. Its success sees continuing re-investment in vacant properties, and a flow of new occupiers and niche, contemporary offers. Norton High Street and Norton Green also provide a retail and eating out experience within an historical setting.

Billingham town centre is due to undergo major refurbishment with some short-term initiatives to improve the ambiance and appearance of the main shopping area.

Thornaby is currently nearing the final phases of a major town centre refurbishment and attracting new and exciting retailers.

Working with partners to increase the number and quality of events in Stockton could have real on the ground benefit to all tourism businesses. Packages are currently being developed in partnership with Restaurants, Hotels, Retail, Events and Town Centre with the primary aim of increasing visitor spend at festivals and events during less busy periods.

FeastforFestivals is a new voucher scheme initiative, developed by the tourism section in partnership with businesses, events and town centres, aimed at increasing visitor spend and length of stay. A full evaluation of the overall impact will be assessed in 2010.

5) Monitoring and Evaluation

This is led by ONE tourism research team and figures can be obtained down to sub regional level. Priority identified here is to encourage participation in occupancy surveys, "how's business" surveys and obtain monthly visitor attraction figures from a wide range of our visitor sector.

The value of the tourism industry to Tees Valley in 2007 was £535 million, 56% of this was from day visitors (£300 million), and 15.2 million people visited the Tees Valley (up 2% from 2003). 10,680 people are employed (FTE) in tourism in the Tees Valley, 8,431 of these are direct jobs and 2,249 indirect.

Employment in tourism has grown by 8% since 2003. The most recent data available for Stockton is for 2007 (STEAM Economic Impact Model) and shows that the total number of people in full time tourism related jobs was 3,408 with 4.26% of the workforce actually employed in tourism.

There is a lack of regular, robust local data due to small sample sizes which currently do not provide us with a meaningful report at a local level. The last economic impact survey undertaken was in 2003 with the value of tourism to the economy of Stockton estimated at £89m.

We need to obtain accurate and useful data on a regular basis, with the ultimate aim of providing measurable figures on the economic impact across a number of sectors, mainly accommodation, attractions, events and restaurants. Until such higher level impact data is available we will monitor progress through questionnaires, website feedback and event surveys.

Rigorous measurement of performance and evaluation of effectiveness is essential so the partners can identify what really works and base future action on knowledge and experience. Projects and activities need an evaluation and monitoring process embedded in them.

Our future projects will be designed in such a way that key data required for evaluation is captured, the objectives and targets of the activity are SMART and that activities are recorded in an appropriate way to provide examples of good practices and learning opportunities.

1. Delivery – A framework for action

Priority 1			
Establish a robust and realistic method of data intelligence across our known and new market segments to enable specific and accurate target marketing			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
1.1 Customer satisfaction questionnaires in current publications evaluated annually	Will give data on where visitors are from, views and comments	LA, visitors, vTv	Bi-annually
1.2 Introduce more opportunities to consult with Black and Minority groups and those with a disability	Will allow SBC to better plan and understand needs to ensure we can create a more accurate marketing regime	LA, Public	To implement Bi-annually
1.2 e-marketing campaign	Increase visitors and spend and create customer profiles	LA, Tourism, Private & Public sector, vTv	To implement
1.3 Annual national benchmarking through Destination Performance UK (DPUK)	Will set baseline targets for annual evaluation	DPUK, LA, Private & Public Sector, City Group 4 partners	Annually
1.4 website development	Web site development www.visitstockton.co.uk and www.bitetoeat.co.uk will increase awareness of product and offer and also create customer profiles	LA, Tourism, Private & Public sector, vTv	Established
1.5 Establish coach & tour operators database	Will create profile of visits from tour operators	LA, private sector, vTv	Established

Priority 2			
Actively develop the in-bound coach/travel trade and youth market alongside new and established events			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
2.1 Familiarisation events delivered to the Group/ Coach markets	Will raise awareness of existing and new events, increase visitor numbers, increase visitor spend	SBC tourism, vTv, private & public sector partners	2 annual events
2.2 Develop marketing plan for • Day Visitor Market	Increase visitor numbers at events, attractions and Town Centres and increase private sector	SBC Private Sector Tourism TIC	3 marketing campaigns by June 2010

Priority 2			
Actively develop the in-bound coach/travel trade and youth market alongside new and established events			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Travel Market • VFR & Business Market 	business	vTv	
2.3 Develop new and existing products and experiences aimed at the Youth markets	Will increase and expand the current events calendar, increase visitors and improve perceptions	SBC Private Sector Tourism vTv, events	New events proposed for 2010, develop partnerships and packages.

Priority 3			
Develop and establish regular contact with the non-assessed accommodation providers to collate and monitor useful visitor movement and spend			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
3.1 To create and develop a working forum of our non-assessed partners	Will increase the economic impact across the Borough	Accommodation providers (contractor market) Attractions, vTv	Dec 2011

Priority 4			
Raising standards, environmental awareness, quality and performance across the private and public sector providers, to meet and exceed visitor expectations			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
4.1 Customer Service Excellence Standards	Improve performance and standards, improve efficiency and service delivery	Tourism TIC, LA	August 2009 – annual review
4.2 Ensure that all attractions maintain the quality standards VAQAS rating	Will contribute to raising the perceptions of the visitor offer and encourage repeat visits	Attractions, vTv, Tourism and private sector partners	Annual assessment
4.3 To raise quality standards and performance through entry into national awards	Will increase quality through higher accreditations and higher standards, therefore increase visitor numbers	Tourism, Private & Public sector partners, vTv	2 entries annually into the North East Tourism Awards
4.4 Raise environmental awareness amongst public and private businesses through support and the promotion of online business toolkits	Reduce the tourism environmental impact and increase businesses resilience to risks associated with climate change	Tourism, Private & Public sector partners, ONE, vTv	

Priority 5			
Further develop the events calendar with new and improved festivals and events, also establish the Visitor Experience team alongside the events calendar			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
5.1 Develop new initiatives and packages i.e. Golf week, River Tees Week	Will increase awareness and visitor figures and add value to the year round events calendar	SBC Private Sector Tourism TIC, Sports Dev	March 2010
5.2 Work in partnership with Saltholme & RSPB to provide packages	Will raise awareness for bird related events and increase visitor numbers	SBC RSPB Saltholme vTv	March 2010
5.3 Deliver Visitor Experience at all major events and festivals giving focus to the delivery of the services we provide to our visitors that have a disability	Raise awareness and promotion of the Tourism and events services whilst exceeding the visitors' expectations. Improve service delivery to encourage return visits and spend. Ensure that we have clear signage for accessibility, publications in various formats such as Braille, large print. Ensure that we can provide adapted/ disability friendly accommodation/ attractions and events	VE, Tourism Events	Established and ongoing

Priority 6			
To gather enough quality data from the accommodation providers on a quarterly basis to provide SBC with an accurate measure of the value and volume to the visitor economy			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
6.1 To collate regular occupancy surveys from Accommodation sector to enable accurate performance surveys	SBC will have an accurate measure on the volume and value of tourism. Collect, collate and evaluate data from numerous sectors to provide accurate data relating to the visitor economy across the whole visitor offer.	LA departments Accommodation providers Tourism, ONE, vTv	Quarterly data collection. STEAM every 2 years.
6.2 Establish contact and data collection with non assessed accommodation providers throughout the Borough	Will add value to our economy and increase the partnership network e.g. contract market (lower end business)	Accommodation providers and tourism, vTv	Established and ongoing

Priority 7			
To assist with the quality assessed upgrades of our visitor accommodation stock			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
7.1 To improve the quality and upgrade the ratings of the current accommodation providers	Will improve the visitor offer, add to customer satisfaction and increase the visitor spend and length of stay	AA, RAC quality assessors, accommodation providers, tourism,vTv	1 upgraded accommodation annually

Priority 8			
Improve the position of Stockton Borough as a short break destination and to develop new and existing products, packages and experiences based around the Borough's heritage and countryside			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
8.1 Stockton & Yarm Publications – Pocket guides for use on arrival at destination	Will increase length of stay and day visitor spend across the Borough	LA, Tourism, Private & Public sector	Annual – 18 month
8.2 Develop Heritage/ Cultural packages	Will improve cross departmental relationships and increase visitor awareness	vTv SBC Tourism TIC	Dec 2010
8.3 Develop key hubs and areas for nature-based and activity-based tourism, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saltholme / Teesmouth / Cowpen Bewley • Tees Heritage Park • Wynyard • Stockton to Darlington corridor 	Improved outdoor recreational facilities, interpretation and networks for sustainable travel. Proposals will make full use of the natural environment to provide an attractive setting for active recreation; help visitors to enjoy the area's special landscapes and heritage; increase visitor spend and length of stay.	Council depts, Forestry Commission, neighbouring local authorities, Sustrans, RSPB, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Groundwork North East, private sector, including rural businesses, and ONE (including RDPE programme),vTv	Identify priorities as part of Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy (March 2010)

Priority 9			
Develop better planning to anticipate and exceed the needs and requirements of all our visitors and residents, whilst upgrading the whole visitor experience by providing quality and accurate tourist and visitor information			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
9.1 Improve road and pedestrian signage for Visitor information, attractions and events i.e. Riverside	Will improve visitor experience, increase visitors and improve the visitor offer.	SBC dept, Tourism TIC Town Centre	March 2012
9.2 VIN – Visitor	Will improve access	Tourism	Established

Priority 9			
Develop better planning to anticipate and exceed the needs and requirements of all our visitors and residents, whilst upgrading the whole visitor experience by providing quality and accurate tourist and visitor information			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
Information Network	delivery, increase visitor awareness and spend. Will provide ongoing updated data on enquiries	TIC ONE Private/ public Sector	
9.3 Desti.ne – including promotion of it's use by businesses.	Will provide information collection and provision, online and offline marketing and bookings, market intelligence gathering	Tourism TIC ONE Private/public Sector vTv	Established
9.4 Tourism For All	Will improve access across the whole visitor sector for visitors needs, requirements and abilities	Tourism, private and public sector partners, events, vTv	Dec 2012

Priority 10			
To dramatically improve the overall image and perception of the area by developing in partnership a series of themed marketing campaigns to raise the profile of the Borough nationally, regionally and locally, aimed at increasing visitor numbers and spend all year round			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
10.1 Develop in partnership and linked into other campaigns a series of themed marketing campaigns to raise the profile of the Borough nationally, regionally and locally	Will increase visitor numbers and spend all year round. Work in partnership to deliver funding packages that are sustainable	Private & public sector partners, Tourism, vTv, LA, RDPE- Activity Tourism Nature Tourism	Dec 2012
10.2 Develop Stockton/ Civic Pride Initiative	Build on current events with the Visitor Experience Team. Develop partnerships with Taxi drivers, private sector partners etc to act as ambassadors for the town.	Tourism TIC Private sector partners vTv	Dec 2012

Priority 11			
Manage and deliver the 'Visitor Experience' at all major events and festivals			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
11.1 Establish the Visitor Experience team at all events throughout Stockton Borough	Will improve customer satisfaction, raise awareness on forthcoming events, improve information provision at events and on arrival for visitors and increase visitor numbers	Tourism, TIC, Visitor Experience Team	Established

Priority 12			
Re-locate the Tourist Information Centre to a more permanent, higher profile location			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
12.1 TIC re-location to the Shambles	Will increase visitor figures and usage and improve service delivery	Tourism LA, Town Centre	Jan – March 2010
12.2 TIPS (Tourist Information Points) Stockton, Norton, Yarm, Billingham & Thornaby	Implement TIP points in town centres and 'Hot Spots' where there is currently no visitor provision to provide up to date visitor information	Tourism TIC SBC Outside agency Town centres	Dec 2012
12.3 Continue to develop customer service along with the profile	Maintain and improve our current high standards of customer care	Tourism TIC SBC Outside agency Town centres	Dec 2012

Priority 13			
Develop new and existing partnerships and manage them more effectively to continue to develop the Tourism potential of the area and increase employment and training opportunities			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
13.1 Set up working forum between hotels, restaurants and food suppliers	Will reduce costs and add value to the local economy for locally sourced produce between farmers and buyers. Will add value to existing product.	Public / private sector partners, farmers, tourism, vTv	March 2010
13.2 Working Forums- Accommodation Restaurants	Will establish working partnerships and increase business through packages such as FeastforFestivals across the retail, restaurant and events sector	SBC partners Private Sector Tourism TIC Town Centre vTv	FeastforFestivals voucher booklet available by July 2009
13.3 Establish consultation meetings with both users and non users, including minority groups to establish areas for future development	Improved awareness of quality and development needs in the Borough – consultation group established	Viewpoint, residents, users and non users, tourism, vTv	1 event in 2010 & 2011

Priority 14 Work towards developing a 'World Class Welcome' across the Borough's town centre's and across all sectors			
Ref-Action	Outcome	Key Partners	Timeline
14.1 Develop a Welcome Programme across all sectors.	Will raise civic pride, raise awareness of the overall product and events	ONE, vTv, LA's, Private Sector	2010 - 2013
14.2 Identify Trainers and hold training events across the Borough	Will up skill the workforce and raise customer expectations	ONE, vTv, LA's, Private Sector	2010 - 2015

Appendix 1 - References

- Ref 1 Leading the Way: Regional Economic Strategy for North East England 2006 by One North East
- Ref 2 Draft Visitor Economy Strategy 2010 – 2020 for North East England by One North East
- Ref 3 An Investment Plan for the Tees Valley City Region 2006 by Shared Intelligence
- Ref 4 Tees Valley Area Tourism Management Plan 2009 – 12 by Visit Tees Valley
- Ref 5 Shaping Our Future: A Sustainable Community Strategy for the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees 2008 - 21 by Stockton Renaissance
- Ref 6 Regeneration Strategy for Stockton Borough 2007 – 12 by Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council
- Ref 7 OneNE research survey 2008
- Ref 8 Tees Valley Hotel Futures 2009 by Hotel Solutions
- Ref 9 Stockton Heritage Strategy & Action Plan: A report to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Cabinet March 2009

Appendix 2 – Investment Plan

PROJECT TITLE	DESCRIPTION	TIMESCALE	INDICATIVE COST
Billingham Forum	Refurbishment of gym, ice rink, bistro, changing facilities, spectator areas, entrance way, re-modification of pool, installation of adventure play area, new dance studio, exhibition areas. Improved theatre offering a range of performances.	2009 – Jan 2011	£15M
Billingham Town Centre	Mixed use town centre regeneration	2010 – Phased through 2013	£9M
Townscape Heritage Initiative	Structural repair and restoration that will reinstate the historic fabric of assets and bring currently void Stockton town centre floor space back into sustainable use. A partnership approach with HLF and private property owners.	2011 - 2016	£3m
Integrated Health & Social Care scheme	Integrated Health & Social care across 2 sites (BTC – library, customer services, GPs, PCT, adult health & social care, children’s health & social care and potentially Police and JCP and TBC – 50 units extra care). £35M PFI credit – allocation in principle.	OBC – March 2010 Stage 1 – Feb 2011 Stage 2 – June 2011 FC – Sept 2011 Build 2012 – summer 2013	£25M capital
Green Dragon Yard Cultural Quarter	Development of existing area/space for cultural units & facilities including Georgian Theatre, Green Dragon Studios and Calvin House workshops.	2005 - 2010	£600K
North Shore	25,000 sq ft of leisure space within a mixed use development on a 56 acre riverside site, which includes proposals for a re-vamped boating facility and	2010 -	

PROJECT TITLE	DESCRIPTION	TIMESCALE	INDICATIVE COST
	associated marina.		
Stockton Central Area	Action Plan produced in 2009. Proposals include the provision of a new public square and associated public realm improvements and new leisure and retail and improved linkages with the town and riverside. Future refurbishment of events space for SIRF and other events	2009 - 2024	£300m
Stockton Central Library Refurbishment	Major refurbishment and extension	2009 -	
Splash Extension	New dry side leisure provision including new café, entrance and aerobic studios	Nov 2008 – Dec 2009	£2.5m
Green Blue Heart	Various feasibility work is ongoing to consider the viability of a range of uses in this area which include leisure/entertainment and residential.	2009 onwards	£100m
Bowesfield Riverside Marina feasibility	The provision of a 30+ berth marina and associated development. Feasibility work underway.	2009 -	£30k
Thornaby Town Centre	Mixed-use town centre regeneration, which includes new retail, leisure and commercial facilities.	2007- completed in September 2009	£30m
River Tees Park	A riverside park from Yarm to the Tees Barrage. This proposal is for informal leisure space utilizing the river and linking other major leisure attractions.	2012	
Globe Theatre Stockton	Refurbishment of the former Globe Theatre in Stockton Town Centre for a touring music venue	2010 - 2011	£3 – 4m
Preston Hall Museum and Park	Restoration and development of Hall and	2009 - 2012	£6m

PROJECT TITLE	DESCRIPTION	TIMESCALE	INDICATIVE COST
	Park to create a tourist attraction of regional significance		
Stockton Heritage in Partnership	Improvement of heritage buildings in Stockton Town Centre bringing back into use as vibrant business and cultural space enhancing the historic town centre alongside commercial uses.	2008 - 2013	£0.7m
Infinity Bridge		2009	£15m
North Tees Nature Conservation	Enhancement of visitor facilities, inc. interpretation, at Teesmouth National Nature Reserve and links with Saltholme Nature Reserve	2010 - 2012	
Saltholme Nature Reserve	New wildlife experience for the public to enjoy whilst protecting the birds and other animals in the environment.	2009	£6.7m
Tees Barrage White Water Course Enhancement	Installation of pumps on whitewater course linked to renewable energy provision. Development of major sports and leisure facility of national an international significance for Whitewater and slalom canoeing.	2010 - 2011	£5M
North Shore Gateway	Hotel Accommodation proposed as part of the first phase of the North Shore development.	2010 onwards	£300m
Wynyard Golf Course Hotel Development	Add a five star hotel to golf course incorporating 150 rooms, spa facilities and changes to course layout.	2010 - 2012	
Wynyard Park Hotel Development	3 star hotel and pub development	2010	
Tall Trees Hotel Refurbishment	Enhance facilities to upgrade hotel to be the first six star hotel in the region.	2010 - 2011	