

**ENJOY  
STOCKTON-ON-TEES**

**DRAFT**

**A VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY  
AND DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN  
FOR STOCKTON-ON-TEES**

**2019 – 2025**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **A Stockton-on-Tees Welcome!**

The residents of the Borough know it's a great place, their visiting friends and relatives make up a big part of our existing visitor economy, but we can attract more people, from further afield, and make them stay longer. Enhancing the welcome and improving the experience of visitors to Stockton-on-Tees will affect how long they stay, how much they do, how likely they are to recommend visiting to others and how likely they are to return. Even a relatively modest increase in visitors and overnight stays will deliver a significant economic benefit.

Enhancing the visitor economy requires the coordinated effort of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and its partners, including private sector tourism related businesses and those promoting the wider Tees Valley destination. Enjoy Tees Valley is becoming a powerful platform and brand, helping project our visitor offer to wider audiences. This strategy is designed to complement the Enjoy Tees Valley investment, aligning our product to support and benefit from the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) investment without losing the identity and character of our attractions.

Within the Tees Valley, Stockton has a strong reputation for its events, heritage, and for the River and Barrage facilities. A lot has already been achieved and the expanding offer to visitors already provides a positive experience reflected in increasing visitor numbers.

To build on this success and maximise the impact and benefits of a growing visitor economy, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and its partners need a shared vision for the visitor economy, shared aims and objectives and an agreed plan of action for achieving our goals.

This strategy document outlines this shared vision, reflects on what has been achieved so far but also establishes new aims and objectives, outlines why these are important and explains the action needed to achieve them.

These aims include encouraging more visitors, stimulating investment in the local area and establishing a new profile for the visitor economy in Stockton-on-Tees.

The strategy is not a call for additional resources, though there may be a case for further investment. In the current economic climate, the priority is to better align existing resources; to make the whole greater than the sum of the parts by making the existing attractions, events, facilities and tourism businesses more visible and coherent.

The local business community along with the community and voluntary sector will have an integral role to play in the future success of the visitor economy and their views have been instrumental in forming the priorities in this plan.

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The offer of events, culture, heritage, leisure and the natural landscape has an important role in shaping the quality of the Tees Valley tourism proposition and making the area an attractive place to live, work and visit. It can help to create places that attract and retain businesses investment and business leaders, as part of a place-promotion and investment strategy. However, this strategy is focused on tourism and the visitor economy.

Culture and tourism form part of the 5 Foundations of Productivity as identified in the National Industrial Strategy in relation to 'Place', which includes activity areas for 'profile and perceptions' and 'Culture, Leisure and Quality of Life'.

The TVCA has confirmed its commitment to Culture and Tourism and has allocated resources of £11.5m in its 2017-21 Investment Plan. The TVCA Strategic Economic Plan identifies six priorities, including one for culture;

- Change the external perceptions of Tees Valley through the arts, cultural and leisure offer, create places that attract and retain businesses and business leaders, and make the area an attractive place to live, work and visit

In 2018, TVCA launched **Enjoy Tees Valley** – a dedicated destination marketing service, website and brand. The establishment of a destination marketing service for the Tees Valley aims to increase visitor expenditure in the region by attracting new visitors and increasing the length of stay of existing visitors. This will ultimately support business growth in the tourism industry, creating jobs and supporting the wider Tees Valley economy. The **Enjoy Stockton-on-Tees** Strategy provides a realistic framework within which the different partners can work to maximise the opportunity.

The national tourism promotion bodies, Visit Britain and Visit England, provide tourism business support and promotional programmes through the network of destination promotion agencies such as Welcome to Yorkshire, Newcastle Gateshead Initiative, and Visit County Durham. It is almost impossible for single attractions or destinations to gain support from the national agencies. Therefore, aligning our visitor offer with the Enjoy Tees Valley service, also enables us to benefit from national programmes.

The ambition of the Tees Valley to bid to become UK City of Culture 2025, with huge potential exposure and media reach, provides a clear goal and added incentive to align and more effectively promote our visitor offer, building on existing strengths and addressing relative weaknesses.

The visitor economy is a fast moving one with trends in demand being driven by consumers' changing patterns of behaviour regarding the variety of experiences they expect and the multi-modal channels of delivery that are emerging through new technologies.

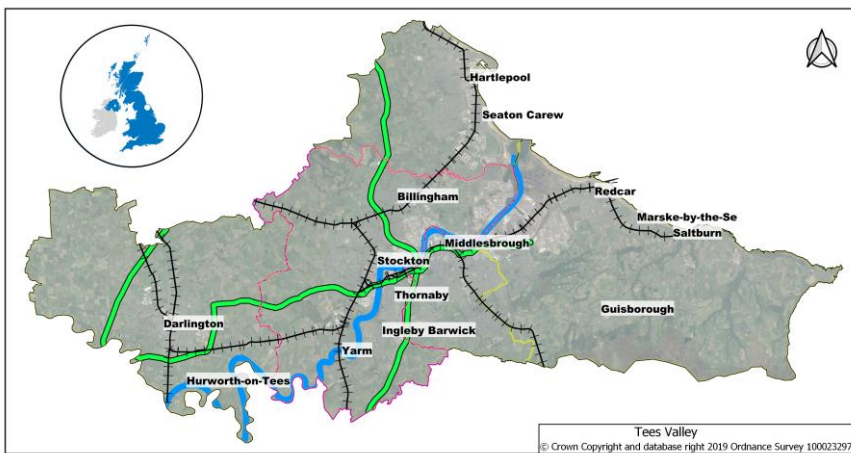
We must consider the key areas of growth in UK tourism as well as the challenges that the industry is facing if we are to developing a tourism offer that could potentially access European markets; with new ways of booking, travelling and experiencing places, which is driving new digital skills and the ability to compete on a global scale.

## STOCKTON-ON-TEES - THE PLACE

Sitting at the heart of the Tees Valley in North East England, the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees is one of great variety. The principal settlements are Stockton, Billingham, Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick, Norton, and Yarm.

As an economic asset, the River Tees courses through the Borough and sustains a variety of uses; from a working river upstream; a leisure destination; and forming part of the tranquil green corridors. The Borough is bounded by Darlington to the west, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Hartlepool to the east. The Borough also shares a boundary with County Durham to the north and Hambleton to the south. Stockton-on-Tees benefits from good access to the strategic road network – A1M, A19, A66 and A67 – and a network of bus routes that provide frequent services to connect residents to work and leisure destinations predominantly across Tees Valley, and for the movement of goods and services.

There are six train stations in total providing frequent access to destinations in Tees Valley and across the north, and a direct link to London via the East Coast Mainline. The Borough is home to Durham Tees Valley Airport located in the south west and is also linked to Teesport to the east, which is one of the largest ports in the UK.



## VISION

The following “vision” is a statement of where Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council wants the Borough to be as a visitor destination in 5 years’ time. Based on the current strengths of the Borough’s product as part of the wider Tees Valley visitor economy and in the context of emerging opportunities, the vision for the Borough by 2025 is:

- Stockton-on-Tees and the wider Tees Valley will have seen rapid growth in the size and success of its visitor economy after growing its visitor offer to make it a widely recognised destination.
- The local area will be recognised for its diverse landscapes, from the natural beauty of River Tees and its estuary, to intimate surroundings of its historic towns and villages. It will be a place renowned for its rich industrial heritage and for the diverse experiences on offer including art, culture, history, adventure, sport, shopping, and dining
- The ‘Enjoy Tees Valley’ and ‘Enjoy Stockton-on-Tees’ campaigns and services will have given visitor attractions the platform and collective voice to attract record visitor numbers. Information will be easy to access so that visitors are well informed of the experiences on offer and encouraged to engage in more of them.
- Attractions, experiences and Stockton Borough itself will be easy to find and travel to with signage and information services allowing easy navigation within the Borough and beyond.
- The local offer of attractions and SBC’s events programme will have expanded and incorporated the Globe Stockton venue to attract a larger audience from a further afield.
- The Hampton by Hilton hotel will be part of an expanding accommodation offer which caters for the growing number of visitors wanting to stay for greater lengths of time.
- Improved awareness and perception of local people results in a higher propensity to engage in the visitor economy and recommend experiences to friends and family, having a twofold impact on visitor numbers.
- A City of Culture bid will have coordinated efforts across the Tees Valley to grow the visitor economy acting as a catalyst to achieve the aims and objectives outlined in the Tees Valley visitor economy strategy and that of its constituent local authorities.
- The growth in the visitor economy will have seen an increase in jobs, skills, qualifications and businesses not only contributing to the economic output of Stockton-on-Tees but the health, wellbeing and aspirations of its residents.

## THE ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF THE VISITOR ECONOMY

Tourism in England contributes **£106 billion** to the British economy (GDP) when direct and indirect impacts are taken into consideration and it supports **2.6 million** jobs. The sector is recognised as a fast growing one; with the opportunity to create jobs at both entry and career level and to act as a significant incubator for entrepreneurial activity.

The visitor economy in Stockton-on-Tees already supports an increasing number of jobs and businesses, with opportunities to up-skill and create new inward investment and visitor attractions. It also highlights the need to enhance the natural environment, improve infrastructure and to know what the opportunities are to supply new products and services within the local economy. The visitors and businesses in the Borough help to sustain the demand for shopping, eating, drinking and cultural venues that act to benefit the local community too. There are direct supply chains that the visitor economy supports as well as within other sectors such as the creative industries, food production and construction.

Whilst the visitor economy in Stockton-on-Tees is a significant employer and a generator of wealth, the levels of employment and visitor numbers are significantly lower than in other parts of the UK. There is, therefore, scope for improvement and for the benefits to be spread across the Borough more widely to support economic development. The work done to date has already had an impact, and data from the national STEAM modelling suggests the visitor economy is growing in Stockton-on-Tees.

### 2017 VISITORS TO STOCKTON-ON-TEES



### 2017 EMPLOYMENT IN THE VISITOR ECONOMY



### 2017 VISITOR SPEND IN STOCKTON-ON-TEES



## ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES

Our economic objectives and targets are what we will aspire to achieve. They are based on a critical analysis of past economic performance and trends, and where there is potential to achieve inclusive economic growth across Stockton-on-Tees and Tees Valley.

### 1. Year on year increases in visitor spend and visitor numbers

By developing and adopting a Visitor Economy Strategy, with stakeholder support, we can encourage more people to visit Stockton-on-Tees and increase the amount of money spent in the local economy. A single % point increase in visitor spend on 2017 estimates would mean an extra £2.26 million being spent in the local economy.

**Our targets are to see visitor spend and the visitor numbers increase each year for the next 5 years**

### 2. Increase in the length of stay of visitors

90% of visitors are day visitors, which are known to spend less money in the local economy compared to those visitors that stay overnight. Therefore, there is a potential economic boost that can be achieved by increasing the duration of visitors' stays, extending the distance that visitors originate from and the proportion of visitors who stay overnight.

**Our target is to see the proportion of visits that are overnight stays increase to more than 10%**

### 3. Job creation

The activities and aims of this strategy have the potential to create jobs that could reduce unemployment and increase the size of the labour market. There is also the potential for the development of skills and experiences associated with the visitor economy that will improve residents' employability and reduce skills gaps; subsequently benefitting the local economy through a more productive and higher earning workforce. Growing the workforce by 10% would result in over £5 million in wages in the local economy every year.

**Our target is to see the workforce associated with the visitor economy grow by 10% over the next 5 years.**

### 4. Attracting investment and talent

The activities outlined in this strategy will improve the perception of Stockton-on-Tees and showcase what the area has to offer. Putting Stockton-on-Tees on the map and enhancing what attracts people to the Borough would increase the number of people coming to Stockton-on-Tees to buy a home, look for work or set up a business.

**By 2025 we will have seen 30 more businesses associated with the visitor economy set up in Stockton-on-Tees**

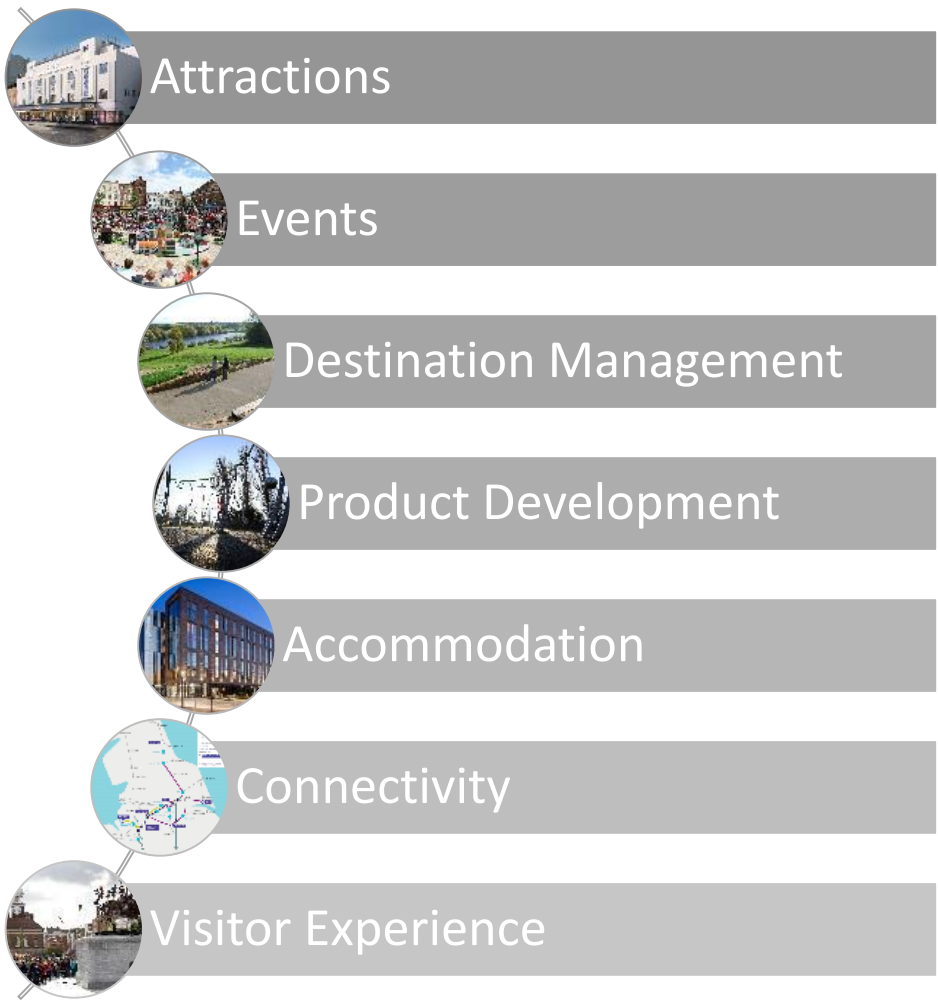
### 5. Increased health and wellbeing

Implementation of this strategy will increase local people's opportunities for experiencing culture, the natural environment, and physical activity opportunities, all of which have recognised benefits for community cohesion, a sense of belonging, and the opportunities for employment, training and volunteering that the activities will bring. The indirect economic benefits of improved health and wellbeing in the population, whilst hard to quantify, would be significant; with healthier people being more likely to gain and remain in employment, which in itself has a positive impact on someone's health.

**We will explore options to monitor the impacts of the visitor economy on wellbeing**

## THE PILLARS OF GROWTH IN THE VISITOR ECONOMY

As a starting point in the formation of this Strategy we have looked at the existing assets and facilities that the Borough has to offer as a position that we will seek to build upon. This section is organised into themes that are considered the constituent parts of a successful visitor economy. These are:







## ATTRACTIONS

Developing new and improving existing attractions is a key component of growing the visitor economy. The quality, number and diversity of attractions on offer in an area can have an impact on the number of visitors and their experience in several ways. For instance, the distances visitors are prepared to travel, the amount they spend, and the duration of their stay can be linked to the likelihood that they will feel positive about their experience and return for a repeat visit.

### Current Offer / Work So Far

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council directly and indirectly supports the attractions and experiences on offer in Stockton-on-Tees, which forms part of a varied and extensive Tees Valley offer. The map above highlights some of the key attractions in Tees Valley.



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The River Tees provides a highly attractive setting for a wide range of activities both on and off the water: rowing, canoeing, cycling, angling and walking, including the beautiful Teesdale Way. RSPB Saltholme and the Tees Estuary is also a key destination where people can experience a vast array of birds, go seal-watching and set out along the England Coast Path National Trail. Meanwhile the Borough's town parks, country parks and nature reserves provide many more opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and get close to nature. For the more adventurous, 'AirTrail' is the UK's tallest high ropes adventure course, which is situated next to a world class Tees Barrage International Whitewater Centre. Leisure Centres and Libraries widen the range of experiences on offer with activities like ice skating, rock climbing, as well as talks by local historians, film screenings, and book festivals.

Preston Park Museum and Grounds is a wonderful destination for a family day-out any time of year. The Museum provides a fascinating insight into Borough's rich, diverse and distinctive past, while the surrounding park really does offer something for everyone.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council continues to expand the number and type of attractions on offer and in 2020 the 'Stockton Globe' live entertainment venue will open its doors to the public providing the largest venue of its kind between Newcastle and Leeds. Other venues in Stockton Town Centre such as Arc, the Georgian Theatre, Storeytellers, and Ku Bar provide a complementary offer in smaller venues.

Yarm's boutique shops, bars and restaurants complement the successful Princess Alexander Auditorium. The Forum in Billingham provides a unique mix of theatre and leisure, including the Tees Valley's only ice rink. The Thornaby Pavilion has one of the region's largest sports halls with a permanent 380 seat gallery.

### What still needs to be done

We shall build on the success of existing attractions whilst developing new ones and keep an eye on the future trends that are shaping the visitor economy nationally and globally. We need to maximise the value of our key assets such as our historic town centres and natural features such as the River Tees.

The Council will complete the final stages of Stockton Globe's refurbishment and work with the operator to deliver an outstanding programme of activities and to establish strategic partnerships with other culture and leisure providers.

The marketing and communication of all attractions should be co-ordinated to complement the 'Enjoy Tees Valley' and 'Enjoy Stockton-on-Tees' campaigns, and cultural programmes and events should be structured to utilise key attractions and assets where possible to strengthen the profile of the area further.

Visitor economy partners and stakeholders should work together to research the potential for new attractions and explore the opportunities for funding, particularly capital development.



## EVENTS

Events have the potential to attract large numbers of people and increase the geographic reach of visitors, as well as providing memorable experiences that are inclusive for local people. The economic benefits can be substantial; with boosted local spending supporting new and existing businesses and jobs. Events can increase the perception and awareness people have of an area and can shape positive cultural experiences.

### Current Offer / Work So Far

Stockton Borough Council and its partners have a successful track record of delivering an annual programme of events across the Borough and there is the potential to grow this offer further by ensuring a diverse and inclusive offer in the future that provides a seamless link and marketing proposition across Tees Valley.

The current offer includes:

- Sporting events such as the Duathlon and Cycling Festival, whilst 2019 will see for the first time the Great North City Games being hosted by Stockton-on-Tees.
- Seasonal events such as Halloween, the Christmas 'Stockton Sparkles' programme, and a Bonfire Night Fireworks display; with the latter increasingly being recognised as one of the best available in the North East.
- Unique events such as the 'Fire Engine and Vintage Vehicle Show' at Preston Park and the 'Supercar Saturday' in Stockton High Street.
- Live entertainment events such as 'Stockton Calling' and 'Stockton Stages', complemented by a variety of small music activities in leisure establishments across Stockton Town Centre.
- Cultural events such as 'Billingham International Folklore Festival' in Billingham Town Centre and the Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF) around Stockton Town Centre and the Riverside.

The events programme attracts new visitors and businesses to the Borough; providing them with an experience that encourages them to make a return trip. The existing businesses in Stockton-on-Tees benefit directly from the increase in footfall and indirectly through the supply chain in events delivery and support services.

### What still needs to be done

There is still more to do to expand on and enhance the events offer in Stockton-on-Tees by exporting our best practice in delivering events and attracting new investors from national and international sources. We want Stockton-on-Tees to provide 'The Biggest Welcome' to visitors to the Borough and that we are all "talking up" the Borough and Tees Valley in a positive way. Regardless of the entry point into the

Borough by a visitor they should be met with a high standard of welcome that profiles the 'Enjoy Stockton-on-Tees' brand and that can direct the visitor to where they need to go. We need to be able to increase the length of stay of visitors by selling what we have to offer in the Borough in a confident and compelling way. Events have the potential to engage those not currently taking part in cultural activities by providing an easy way for them to experience something new that could have an impact on their general health and wellbeing or create a job, volunteering or work experience opportunity in their local area.



## DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Because every destination has its own distinctiveness, challenges and opportunities, by creating a focus on destination management will help unite the various partners and stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sector with a vested interest in growing the visitor economy in Stockton-on-Tees. This will culminate in a shared statement of intent to plan, develop and promote Stockton-on-Tees in a way that provides priority of activities, clarity of roles and responsibilities and identifies the resources needed to achieve this.

### Current Offer / Work So Far

Currently attractions and experiences in Stockton-on-Tees are marketed through a range of channels. The Council promotes the Borough through activities and on its website and social media channels whilst the 'Rediscover Stockton' shop on Stockton High Street provides visitor information. Individual attractions and businesses have their own marketing activities and contribute to, or are featured as part of, various "what's on" and "things to do" features across several websites and magazines. Tees Valley Combined Authority has established the 'Enjoy Tees Valley' service that promotes Stockton-on-Tees businesses, attractions, events and experiences as part of a combined Tees Valley offer. The growing awareness of the 'Enjoy Tees Valley' brand is helping to co-ordinate destination management activities although there is still more work required.

### What still needs to be done

Tourism promotions needs to be rationalised so that attempts to attract visitors are more effective. Key messages and accurate information about what Stockton-on-Tees has to offer need to be at the top of internet search engine results when searches for "what's on" and "things to do" are carried out.

There are clear links to the 'Connectivity' theme below in relation to managing the movement of visitors at various entry points into the Borough, and for journey planning within, and back out of the Borough.

Aligning the 'Enjoy Tees Valley' brand and those of its constituent Local Authorities brands would provide a clear and consistent approach to marketing the area that avoids confusion, duplication and creates a strength of voice to maximise the area's increasing ability to attract visitors. Therefore, Stockton-on-Tees should establish an 'Enjoy Stockton-on-Tees' sub-brand and support the Combined Authority in its destination marketing activities. Individual attractions and events, such as Preston Park or SIRF, will retain their existing brands and identities, supporting but not being subsumed into the 'Enjoy' brand. In broad terms, any marketing should showcase the breadth and depth of the Tees Valley offer with the addition of a more focused lens on key assets and attractions such as the River Tees and The Globe.

The use of suggested itineraries and recommendations from frontline staff should be encouraged to increase their capacity as cultural practitioners. Improvements in the perception of the area held by the local population and their awareness of what is on offer can add a useful local narrative to the marketing product of the area, through word of mouth and by encouraging their visiting friends and family to engage with local attractions and businesses.



## PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

If we consider 'Enjoy Stockton-on-Tees' as a product made up of various parts, e.g. tourism facilities, heritage and culture, landscape and countryside, built environment, access and transport, visitor services, then developing the product requires us to know all the features of Stockton-on-Tees that relate to the visitor economy. It will also require us to keep up-to-date with new developments being constructed, planned or proposed, new neighbouring products, and changes to the visitor economy nationally and globally so that we stay "ahead of the curve" in adapting and branching into new markets / use of new technologies.

### Current Offer / Work So Far

Extensive work went into bringing forward the 'Rediscover Stockton' brand, which had an important role in bringing together a variety of key messages and marketing campaigns for Stockton-on-Tees. The various elements of the 'product' are known but are disparate, and not as co-ordinated as they could be. There is no current marketing brand for tourism within the Borough, which means that partners and stakeholders have produced their own materials that can at times cause more confusion for the visitor and do not enable an easy nor clear navigation around the various attractions and experiences on offer. There is little known about the requirements for entrepreneurial activity in the visitor economy specifically and the opportunities that exist to reach the market with new products and services.

### What needs to be done

There is a need to rebrand the tourism offer in the Borough and bring all stakeholders together to manage Stockton-on-Tees as a destination within the Tees Valley and the North East of England. The Council needs to work with partners to realise the full recreational and economic potential of the key assets such as the River Tees; building on the success of existing attractions, supporting the development of key sites, enhancing access and promoting its collective offer.

The Globe must be supported to add to the existing programme of events and venues to develop the Borough into a home of live music, comedy and other artforms, and using this as a catalyst to decide what we want for the evening economy and how can we make sure that the surrounding business uses, e.g. food and drink establishments are of a high-quality and offer the visitor the experience they are looking for.

The 'Enjoy Stockton-on-Tees' product could expand to cater for emerging markets, or existing markets that are under-represented in the Borough, e.g. a new exhibition space, conferencing and banqueting facility, more fine-dining, cruise excursions, health and sport activities, stag and hen activities etc.



## ACCOMMODATION

A strong accommodation offer is a key attractor for visitors and businesses alike. The wider economic benefits of a strong accommodation sector should not be under-estimated, with increased footfall and visitor spend; more business travellers, an increase in the family and friend's market, and the subsequent increase in local business activity and job creation.

### Current Offer / Work So Far

Stockton Borough Council has an ongoing strategic aim of supporting a varied accommodation offer in the Borough with a key focus on Town Centres. In 2019, the opening of its 125-bedroom Hampton by Hilton Hotel has seen a significantly improved accommodation offer to visitors whilst creating local jobs, contracts for local businesses within the supply chain during its construction phases and now into its operating cycles and attracting new visitors to the area.

There are a range of accommodation types with particularly strong representation in the budget and 3 star serviced accommodation categories. Less than 10% of hotels in Tees Valley have more than 100 rooms reflecting a high proportion (two-thirds) of hotels that are independently operated. The Hampton by Hilton Hotel has significantly increased the amount of hotel bed space available in the Tees Valley via an internationally recognised brand.

There is limited provision of non-serviced accommodation such as static caravans, chalets, campsites and youth hostels in the Borough and emerging accommodation types such as room/house sharing apps are also limited. It is envisaged that the growth in visitors that will be achieved from implementing this strategy will see growth in the demand for hotel and accommodation space.

### What still needs to be done

The Council must continue to support a varied accommodation offer with a key focus on Town Centres. It needs to work with and support accommodation providers and hotel operators; from small independents to global brands such as the Hampton by Hilton Hotel. This work should involve co-ordinating providers to support a collective accommodation offer to be marketed and communicated through 'Enjoy Tees Valley' and 'Enjoy Stockton-on-Tees' brands and marketing channels.

Support should also be provided to ensure the visitor experience is a positive one through ensuring high standards and enhancing the awareness and accessibility of nearby attractions and experiences to visitors who stay overnight.

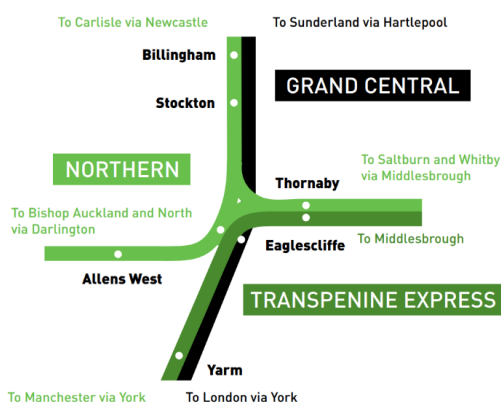
An improvement in the accommodation market that meets the standards and an "at scale" model for e-bookable types of accommodation should be considered.



People are more likely to visit a place if it is easy to get to, move within it and return to where they travelled from, so improving ease of access is a key element to establishing a successful visitor economy.

### Current Offer / Work So Far

Stockton-on-Tees currently benefits from journey speeds above national averages and the A19 provides a key piece of north-south road infrastructure allowing major cities of Newcastle and Leeds to fall within 1-hour travel time of the Borough. Direct rail links to Manchester, London, York, and Newcastle, and beyond through Darlington means there are existing connections to a plentiful source of potential visitors to the Borough. Current transport links are international with Durham Tees Valley Airport located on the Borough's south west boundary with Darlington. The Borough also has significant active transport infrastructure with 70 miles of cycleway and 117 miles of Public Rights of Way linking key attractions and experiences for visitors.



### What still needs to be done

Within Stockton-on-Tees and across Tees Valley the ease of travelling around is perceived as poor. Pinch points exist within the road infrastructure and at peak times major routes such as the A19 Tees flyover become congested. Some parts of the rail network are isolated from major routes and those to major attractions and to enjoy experiences from public transport stations can be difficult to understand and navigate. In general public transport does not serve the evening economy and there is a heavy reliance on taxis, leading to very localised patterns of consumption.

There are few opportunities for visitors to arrive, park their car and use public transport during their visit and public transport in rural areas can be an issue; with services either lacking or infrequent in some parts of the Borough, an issue common with many rural areas across the country.

The Council will continue to work to improve the transport infrastructure in the Borough and make moving around the Tees Valley a simple and positive experience. This will involve supporting major infrastructure works such as a new Tees crossing and developing an understanding of key routes, destinations and information needed to direct visitors easily through waymarking and tourist information.

There is work required to develop an integrated programme of wayfinding in Stockton-on-Tees, and a co-ordinated design identity that will help create a more welcoming and cohesive destination for visitors.



## VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Places that welcome visitors are desirable places in which to visit, live, work, and invest. The welcome and experience that a visitor has of Stockton-on-Tees is fundamental to the 'Visit Stockton-on-Tees' product and brand in terms of reputation, recommendations and repeat visits. First impressions make lasting impressions and the experience on offer to visitors can have a significant impact on future economic performance and the perceptions of residents and businesses.

The needs of visitors and why they want to visit need to be understood so that those experiences are available. By helping visitors to make a real connection with Stockton-on-Tees and the Tees Valley as a 'Place' and to have opportunities to connect with local people and their way of life will create meaningful stories for visitors to consume the experience in the best possible way.

### Current Offer / Work So Far

All visitors to Stockton-on-Tees have easy access to the natural environment. However, by having a range of facilities and services available to visitors it would enhance their experience and increase the likelihood of a return visit.

Many of the parks and greenspaces in the Borough can be visited with ease and have adequate parking, accessibility and facilities. The Urban Centres also provide an attractive environment and a significant amount of investment has led to their regeneration into places that visitors can easily access and enjoy. The many attractions throughout the Borough are well promoted and benefit from parking and facilities that contribute to a positive visitor experience.

Visitors who want to learn about the Borough or have a specific request for information can access key information in a variety of ways through signage, the tourist information shop on Stockton High Street and through a range of online and offline resources.

### What still needs to be done

There is still potential for improvement in the experience of visitors to Stockton-on-Tees and its attractions. Awareness of what is on offer can be limited, even in the resident population where negative perceptions of navigating to and within key locations can create a reluctance to visit. Information is often available but with limited awareness of how to access it due to an overcomplicated range of sources and formats.

Visitor information centres should be working with businesses and attractions to streamline the information and services they provide and develop a clear and consistent message. Attractions and businesses within the visitor economy should continue to champion customer service and encourage frontline staff to develop the knowledge and skills to provide information and recommendations that can enhance the visitor experience and allow a more comprehensive exploration of what is on offer within Stockton-on-Tees and beyond.

It is widely recognised that the availability of a range of food and drink establishments at a destination can increase dwell times and provide a great place for visitors, friends and family to meet. There is an aspiration to extend the current offer and to create a high-quality food and drink environment that complements and adds value to the growth that is anticipated in the evening economy.

To build the momentum to increase the number of people that both engage with arts and culture, and to develop the role of volunteers as practitioners in the visitor economy; to champion the 'Visit Stockton-on-Tees' product and advocate on behalf of visitors. The need to recruit younger volunteers will be essential to ensure that future generations are engaged and passionate about the visitor economy.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

### Strengths

- Diverse landscapes, attractions and experiences within and in close proximity to Borough
- Strong and growing events programme
- Rich industrial heritage
- Proud and resilient people
- Dedicated practitioners, volunteers and organisations with shared aspirations for visitor economy
- Unique experiences such as 'Airtrail' and the Whitewater Course
- Large population within a short travel time
- Many affluent neighbourhoods with high cultural propensity

### Weaknesses

- Lack of identity (What county?)
- Complexity of co-ordinating activity around administrative and product boundaries
- Lack of spaces and opportunities for businesses associated with visitor economy to develop to reach market
- Lack of awareness and engagement amongst the population of the assets and experiences available
- Poor domestic audiences and external perceptions of the area
- Low levels of non-resident visitors / overnight stays
- Connectivity between existing assets, e.g. poor rail connections outside of Darlington, and public transport networks across Tees Valley
- Pockets of deprivation with low cultural propensity

### Opportunities

- Globe reopening opportunity to host large crowds and raise awareness of cultural programme
- 2025 Bicentenary celebrations
- City of Culture Bid
- Growing appreciation of the economic and social value of experiences
- Emerging trends in evening economy, sports tourism, food and drink, buy local etc.
- Link the Tees Valley assets better as a single 'Visit Tees Valley' product for the visitor

### Threats

- Financial pressures and limited public sector funding
- Difficulties co-ordinating a complex network of partners / duplication of effort
- Saturated markets
- Apathy amongst future generations to engage with the visitor economy
- The visitor economy product does not remain fit-for purpose and innovative



## DELIVERY PLAN – 2019 - 2025

The following delivery plan for Stockton-on-Tees sets out a series of priorities and actions that will contribute to achieving the aims and objectives of this Visitor Economy Strategy and Destination Management Plan over a 5-year period. It is the blueprint for all partners and stakeholders to work from and helps to focus attention, time and investment on activities that will make a real difference - it is an action plan that the whole Borough can implement. The action plan identifies suggests who is best placed to lead on an action and who can provide additional support. It is linked to a range of strategies, all of which describe how the Borough is developing a product or experience that is not exclusively for visitors but may be consumed by them. The action plan is intended to be a live document that will change over its lifetime. Clear Leadership and Governance arrangements will enable the action plan to be well managed and regularly monitored and reviewed by key partners who have an active part to play in the visitor economy.

Destination Management, Marketing and Product Development				
Action	Detail	Timeframe	Roles	Resources
<b>Adopt the 'Enjoy Stockton-on-Tees' brand in a way that complements TVCA place promotion</b>	Secure buy in from senior leadership and raise awareness and use of brand throughout Stockton Borough Council		SBC - Lead TVCA - Support	
	Destination Marketing Campaigns to promote 'Enjoy Stockton-on-Tees' brand alongside 'Enjoy Tees Valley'		SBC - Lead TVCA - Support	TVCA Programme activities – revenue?
	Inclusion of brand (e.g. logo and key messages) in marketing materials and other resources both online and offline		SBC – Lead Various Partners - Support	
	Consideration of creating an 'Enjoy Stockton-on-Tees' micro site that links to the 'Enjoy Tees Valley' website		SBC - Lead	TVCA Programme activities – revenue?
<b>Raise awareness of Stockton-on-Tees nationally and internationally</b>	Focus promotion on key events to gain media attention		SBC – Lead TVCA - Support	
	Explore opportunities to attract positive media interest		SBC – Lead TVCA - Support	
<b>Quality standard for the 'Big Welcome' to Stockton-on-Tees</b>	Explore the benefits of a quality standard being developed, e.g. World Skills in Customer Service (London Olympics comes to mind!)		SBC - Lead	

<b>Develop and market the River Tees as a visitor destination</b>	The Council will work with partners to realise the full recreational and economic potential of the River Tees: - building on the success of existing attractions - supporting the development of key sites - enhancing access, and - promoting the river as an attractive and diverse visitor destination		TVCA – Lead SBC - Support	
<b>Explore best practice elsewhere to shape the development of the visitor economy</b>	Research what performance measures are being used elsewhere to measure the success of the visitor economy, and how Stockton-on-Tees is performing in comparison		SBC - Lead	
	Develop a framework to measure the local economic impact of the visitor economy		SBC / TVCA – Lead	
	To develop a skills system that supports business growth and identifies what the skills gaps are within the sector currently and what the future needs of businesses' replacement demand might be		SBC / TVCA – Lead	
	What types of occupations are in greatest need and do we have a career profile that can be used in schools and in CEIAG?		SBC / TVCA – Lead	
	What would “good” inclusive growth look like locally?		SBC - Lead	
<b>Manage the infrastructure of ‘Place’</b>	Include the consideration of transport networks, parking infrastructure and future wayfaring into any event and attraction development		SBC – Lead	Is this something that the Events Board already consider as part of a risk assessment for events?

Attractions, Experiences and Events				
Action	Detail	Timeframe	Roles	Resources
<b>Increase the level and range of experiences on offer for visitors in Stockton-on-Tees</b>	Increase the amount of public art		SBC - Lead	
	Improve the public's access to art through increasing exhibition space (Build an Art Gallery?) Who do we aspire to attract? Artists in residence? What is the market crying out for?		SBC - Lead	
<b>Support the success of the Globe Stockton</b>	Support the final stages of the building's refurbishment and opening		SBC - Lead	
	Support the operator to establish strategic partnerships with key stakeholders		SBC - Lead	
	Include Globe Stockton as a key asset in marketing and communication and as a focus of future cultural and events programmes		SBC - Lead	

Accommodation				
Action	Detail	Timeframe	Roles	Resources
<b>Support the success of the Hampton by Hilton Hotel</b>	Work with Study Group to include the hotel offer in communications to student's families and explore other linkages between the hotel and Durham University		SBC - Lead	
	Produce visitor welcome packs that are niche for a business audience		SBC - Lead	
	Regular update meetings with the hotel General Manager / Business Engagement Specialist		SBC – Lead TVCA - Support	
<b>Increase the amount, variety and quality of accommodation within the Borough and adopt a key focus on town centres</b>	Develop proposals that meet the growing need for accommodation within the Borough including specialist / niche accommodation types		SBC - Lead	
	Consider reinstating inspection ratings for B&B accommodation in the Borough		SBC - Lead	

Connectivity				
Action	Detail	Timeframe	Roles	Resources
<b>Deliver an integrated transport approach that unlocks the growth potential of the visitor economy</b>	Secure funding and deliver new local rail network improvements at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eaglescliffe Station Western Access</li> <li>- Billingham Station Accessibility</li> </ul>		SBC – Lead TVCA - Support	

<b>Improve the waymarking and signage so that it is easy to navigate around the Borough and across Tees Valley</b>	Develop a plan to audit and upgrade waymarking for key routes in the Borough		SBC – Lead TVCA - Support	
	Develop a set of clear design concepts for signage points across the Borough		SBC - Lead	
	Connect the transport infrastructure in Tees Valley to create a seamless journey between attractions		TVCA – Lead SBC - Support	
<b>Increase the accessibility of key attractions, events and experiences.</b>	Develop facilities to accommodate those engaging in active transport modes (e.g. bike storage at key attractions)		TVCA – Lead SBC - Support	

<b>Visitor Experience</b>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<b>Establish a recognised visitor economy accredited training programme as the benchmark for destinations and businesses</b>	Create a new accredited training qualification		SBC / TVCA - Lead	TVCA – Adult Education Budget
	Increase the numbers of frontline staff undertaking the training		SBC / TVCA - Lead	
<b>Improve the knowledge of frontline staff about the ‘Visit Tees Valley’ and ‘Visit Stockton-on-Tees’ products</b>	Deliver destination specific product knowledge programmes		TVCA – Lead SBC - Support	VIC Network Volunteer Champions / Ambassadors?

				Could current Globe volunteers transition into this role?
<b>Ensure gateway/access points and attractions are welcoming to visitors</b>	Review the quality of signage and provision of information at key gateway/access points and attractions in Stockton-on-Tees		SBC - Lead	
<b>Develop a range of visitor information points</b>	Review and rationalise information provided on SBC websites		SBC – Lead	
	Develop new map displays and brochures		SBC - Lead	
<b>Maintain a high-quality environment for visitors, e.g. cleaning, public facilities, streetscapes, building maintenance and repair</b>	Continue to maintain and improve the environment within the urban centres and greenspace across Stockton-on-Tees		SBC/TVCA - Lead	
<b>Remove barriers that prevent some groups/communities from attending events, attractions and experiences in Stockton-on-Tees</b>	Identify the demographic groups and/or geographic areas within the Stockton-on-Tees population that are excluded from the visitor economy and identify the barriers that prevent engagement		SBC - Lead	
	Target marketing and communication to the groups with low engagement within visitor economy attractions and experiences		SBC - Lead	
	Adapt the accessibility of attractions and experiences to the needs of groups with low engagement		SBC - Lead	

Cross-Cutting				
Action	Detail	Timeframe	Roles	Resources
<b>Support Tees Valley City of Culture Bid</b>	Take part in and encourage others to take part in the “Big Conversation” around the City of Culture Bid		TVCA – Lead SBC – Support	
	Start to explore options for developing new attractions and events as part of a potential CoC programme		TVCA – Lead SBC - Support	
<b>Develop the evening economy including enhancing the food and drink offer at town and village centres where possible</b>	Proactively market units to respective fine-dining restaurateurs			
	Establish links between evening economy businesses and local training providers to encourage the supply of fine-dining skills.			
	Explore ways to showcase local food and drink produce and support events which bring together local traders			
<b>Create and maintain a robust evidence base for decision making and</b>	Use STEAM data and other metrics such as T-stats to monitor the size and trajectory of the visitor economy		TVCA – Lead SBC - Support	

<b>monitoring of trends in the visitor economy</b>	Encourage assets and attractions to track visitor numbers (and spend where applicable) and assist with co-ordinating this information		SBC – Lead	
	Share findings and intelligence with partners and through communication channels such as the Stockton Council website where applicable		SBC - Lead	
	Undertake new market research at key events where it doesn't currently exist, e.g. NEMS surveys		SBC - Lead	
	Agree the way we want to measure the health and wellbeing outcomes from the role of culture and leisure		SBC – Lead	
<b>Secure additional resources to deliver 'pipeline' projects</b>	Liaise with funding bodies and private sector partners to develop 'pipeline' projects and prioritise for delivery		SBC – Lead TVCA – Support	Arts Council England Heritage Lottery Fund DCMS Private sector Trust and Foundations Visit Britain
	Tees Valley Local Authorities and cultural organisations to deliver cultural engagement activities that target communities with high-quality participatory projects and events	3-year programme ends in 2020	TVCA – Lead SBC – Support Cultural Organisations - Arc, SIRF (Support)	Grant funding received from HLF as part of the £1.5m 'Great Place' Programme



				Match funding provided from SBC as one of the 5 LA's that will benefit from the Programme)
	Secure Heritage Action Zone status by Historic England for the Darlington and Stockton Railway 200 <sup>th</sup> anniversary		TVCA – Lead SBC - Support	TVCA Capital Programme
	Work with public sector organisations to identify potential funding streams		SBC / TVCA – Lead (depending on the project scale)	
	Influence the allocation of national funding and submit proposals, where appropriate, to unlock further funds		TVCA – Lead SBC - Support	

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**Contact:**

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