CONTENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This review of Copeland Borough Council's Tourist Information Service has been undertaken to inform future management of the service to maximise the benefits to the tourism economy of the Borough. It takes place at a time of significant change for visitor information services nationally and within the region, including:

- A new national framework for tourism 'customer contact services' in Britain
- An emerging regional strategy for visitor information services
- The closure of a number of National Park Information Centres and threat to South Lakeland Borough Council operated Tourist Information Centres (TICs) in the south Lake District
- New kinds of provision by Cumbria Tourist Board (CTB) to address the closures – Visitor Information Points (VIPs) and a call centre for accommodation bookings

Radical changes in the way people obtain tourist information before and during trips and inconsistency in the quality of provision are driving the need to review the current position.

Although the new strategies and reviews recognise the important role of TICs at all stages of the visit, it is likely that by 2010, only 10%-20% of visitors will use a TIC and new technologies will continue to drive change, including:

- Customer contact centres with extended operating hours
- Mobile devices combining mobile phone, global positioning system and internet access
- Fixed point web access points at tourism destinations

The emerging regional visitor services strategy has three aims:

- Effective information management
- Providing a strong strategic direction for investment in visitor information
- Operational excellence on a cost-effective basis

The impacts of the current changes in visitor information services in the region will have a number of 'knock-on' effects on Copeland's TIC Service, including:

- Reduction of information provision in south Lakes reduces the profile of West Cumbria
- Visitor Information Points are a way to increase provision at no cost to Local Authorities
- CTB's accommodation booking call centre could reduce accommodation booking revenue at TICs in the longer term
- There is a need to clarify visitor information provision in West Cumbria in light of the emerging regional strategy

Copeland's TIC service is estimated to be worth £2,180,050 to the local economy and it provides a valued service to local residents. Whitehaven TIC appears to be operating cost-effectively in relation to TICs of comparable size.

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified for each of the TICs and as a result, the following recommendations are made:

The TIC Service

- Integration of the TIC Service into tourism strategies in Copeland
- Tightening of management of Egremont and Millom TICs
- Reviewing and replacing the current Tourist Information Points
- Reviewing visitor information provision in south Copeland, including supporting Gosforth Parish Council in considering a new TIC
- Encouraging the three TICs to work together more closely
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities in relation to enquiry handling and fulfilment in West Cumbria
- Promote the benefits of the TIC service to the Borough Council and tourism businesses
- Monitor possible future developments at Sellafield to maximise any opportunities

Millom TIC

- Secure the long term funding of the TIC
- Relocate to the town centre
- Various recommendations in relation to the current site

Egremont TIC

- Replace external signage
- Sign the TIC from the main car park, the Castle and Florence Mine
- Replace out-dated leaflet racking
- Replace and re-organise notice boards
- Replace out-dated welcome panel
- Implement the business plan and review it annually
- Closer link between business planning and counter staff
- Investigate feasibility of a courtyard café operation and WIFI internet access point
- Use expertise within the TIC Service to provide retail advice to increase profitability

Whitehaven TIC

- Redesign and refit the internal layout
- Incorporate light boxes for rent to local tourism businesses
- Find alternative to over the counter National Express bookings
- Re-locate market stalls in front of TIC to increase visibility on market days
- Brand/theme the TIC more strongly in line with Whitehaven's maritime heritage
- Increase retail sales through theming and improved display system
- Investigate feasibility of a booking service for corporate and private functions
- Pilot WIFI fixed point internet access provision

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   This study has been commissioned by Copeland Borough Council to review Whitehaven's three Tourist Information Centres (TICs), taking account of the following issues:

- Opportunities to generate additional revenue
- The location of centres
- Possible impacts of the closure of Lake District National Park Information centres on visitor numbers and staffing
- The future of the Destination Management System
- Impact of Cumbria Tourist Board's plans for future delivery of information services in Cumbria
- Opportunities to develop the tourist information service in partnership with another provider
- Future marketing of the TIC service
- Quantifying the business benefits of retaining the service and its importance to the wider tourism industry in Copeland

1.2   Tourist Information Centres were developed following the 1968 Development of Tourism Act, in which they were proposed as the principal means of delivering information to visitors. Since then, information technology has transformed (and continues to do so) the way in which people obtain tourist information making TICs just one of a range of information delivery methods.

1.3   This review considers the role of Copeland's TICs in relation to the overall provision of tourist information in the Borough as well as considering aspects of their operation.

1.4   Copeland has 3 TICs – Whitehaven and Millom, which are managed directly by the authority and Egremont, which is grant-aided by the authority.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

National Framework

2.1 At a national level, Visit Britain has developed a framework for action for customer contact services covering information needs throughout a visit, as follows:

- Information provision
- Reservations
- Customer relationship management
- Quality assurance
- Customers on the move

2.2 This makes some assumptions about the potential information needs of visitors by 2010, as follows:

- Continuing rapid growth in use of the internet for planning trips – 65% of all trips will involve some internet planning
- Continued, but slower growth in booking trips via the internet – 15%-20% will use real-time, on-line booking and 25%-30% will use e-mail booking
- The majority (60%-70%) will continue to use printed information when travelling
- 10%-20% will visit TICs
- 25% will obtain information from the internet whilst travelling to or around their destination (either via mobile devices of local internet access points)
- Increasing use of more than one information channel during any one enquiry/booking
- A significant increase in use of the internet by businesses. By 2010 most will engage in some form of electronic marketing and will sell on-line

2.3 The framework identifies six stages in a visitor journey and shows that TICs have a role to play in five of them, as follows:

Table 1: Communication Channels relevant to the Customer Journey

Visitor Journey Stage	Customer Needs	Channels Relevant to this Framework
1. Stimulation, planning and anticipation	- Awareness and inspiration about destinations and experiences of potential interest - Product information which is detailed, current, accurate, accessible at the time, place and in the form required - Recommendations that can be trusted	- Websites - Brochure ordering services - Customer contact centres - E-mail newsletters **TICs** - TV - Print
2. Booking	- Easy access to prices and availability, booking and payment services, in advance or en route - Support for later amendments or other post-booking needs	- Websites with e-booking **TICs**, **TIPs, kiosks** - Customer contact centres - Providers' booking services - Mobile web
3. Travel to destination	- Up-to-date travel information - Clear route finding information - Information about facilities and places of interest en route	**TICs, TIPs, displays** - Customer contact centres - Radio, electronic information boards - Mobile web - Maps, guides, rail stations, road signs - Tour guides

4. Destination experience	• Up-to-date information about places of interest, food and drink, events, etc • Access to last minute bookings for accommodation, events, entertainment, eating out, etc	• Accommodation reception desks, in-room information • **TICs, TIPs, displays** • Customer contact services • Tour guides, taxi drivers • People working in shops, restaurants, attractions, etc • Internet cafes • Mobile web
5. Going home	• Providing feedback to the destination on the experience • Travel information, route-finding • Places of interest en route	• **TICs, TIPs, displays** • Customer contact services • Radio, electronic information boards • Mobile web • Maps, guides, rail stations, road signs
6. Recollection of the experience	• A post visit feeling of overall value for money and time spent • Recommendations to others	• E-mail newsletters

Source: Customer Contact Services: A Framework for Action

2.4   The framework calls for a response to changing market conditions where fewer customers remain loyal to a particular destination and the choice of destinations in the UK and overseas, especially for short breaks, proliferates.

2.5   It identifies three IT-based solutions which are likely to be used to improve customer contact services in the future, as follows:

- *Customer Contact Centres* – operating over extended hours to provide information when consumers want it (a high cost option and no clear thinking is given on the scale of provision –national, regional, sub-regional)
- *Mobile Devices (Handheld and In-car)* – the combination of new devices which combine mobile phone, internet access and global positioning (GPS) will enable en-route information finding and accommodate 'electronic travel guides'
- *Fixed Point Web Access at Destinations* – Internet access is becoming widespread at internet cafes, in hotels, web enabled payphones, etc

2.6   The national tourist information strategy is led by Visit Britain. Its three key components are:

- Overseas contact centres
- Web
- On the ground tourist information network

2.7   Visit Britain plans to work with regional delivery partners to achieve a consistency of brand and services across England. It intends to supply a toolkit covering customer relationship management, on-line retail, public relations, etc, and other services including EnglandNet and new commercial services (including an on-line shop).

2.8   The framework recognises that, with the growth in new media, demand for traditional sources of information may diminish and there will be a need for greater coordination of provision. It suggests a 'hub and satellite' approach to realise this, based on the Yorkshire & Humber Information Provision Strategy, which consists of:

One Hub per Sub-region, providing:
- A centre of excellence in customer service
- Responsibility for all forms of information provision in the defined area
- Information management/quality assurance role
- Training
- Literature distribution
- Staff support (covering holidays, illness, etc)

Satellite Provision - which might include:
- TICs
- TIPs
- Kiosks
- Literature dispensers

2.9 It suggests that funding from RDA's, etc should focus on capital costs whilst revenue costs should be sourced locally – from where the economic benefits of the TIC/TIP are delivered.

Regional Strategy

2.10 Action 104 of the North West Regional Economic Strategy is to 'develop and implement a Visitor Information Strategy for the region'. North West Development Agency is in the process of formulating a regional 'Visitor Information Strategy. This involves a full review of visitor information services in relation to consumer demand and changing delivery platforms. The emerging strategy has a vision, three key aims and fifteen objectives:

Vision

'Our vision is of world-class visitor information services that exceed the expectations of our visitors, provide a competitive advantage to the region, and that make a measurable and valuable contribution to the visitor economy'.

Aims & Objectives

Table 2: Aims & Objectives from the Emerging Regional Visitor Information Strategy

Aims	Objectives
1. Effective Information Management	Manage information in a professional and commercial manner
	Develop and implement a regional data quality management approach
	Identify and use effective channels for distributing information
	Provide a single number virtual call centre for the region
2. Provide a strong strategic direction for investment in visitor information	Operate in a strategic regional framework with clear links to marketing activity
	Create a clear structure for the provision of information
	Create and use regionally consistent information brands
	Develop and implement a consistent, shared CRM approach
	Develop guidance on how best to maximise impact and return on investment

3. Achieve operadonal excellence on a cost-efficient basis	Create a customer-focused culture for all information deliverers
	Implement a regional service standard for all those delivering visitor information
	Set clear performance targets and monitor their achievement
	Provide and implement models of commercial good practice
	Provide high quality training to all visitor information deliverers
	Provide guidance on tourist information centre design and other forms of provision

Source: North West Development Agency, Regional Visitor Information Strategy Draft Report

2.11   The draft strategy is currently with Destination Management Organisation (DMO) managers – Cumbria Tourist Board in Cumbria - for comment and will be published later in the year.

2.12   A key policy in the Regional Tourism Strategy is 'Making it Easy – improving all stages of the visit process – information, booking, travelling, getting around and making it easy to return'. This underpins much of the thinking in the Regional Visitor Information Strategy.

Cumbria

2.13   The Cumbria Destination Management Plan has an objective to 'Ensure that visitors and the industry have easy access to information'. In March 2004, Cumbria Tourist Board commissioned a 'Best Practice Report' on TICs (The Winning Company, March 2004). The study identified best practice in TIC operation in Cumbria (copy available from CTB) and made a number of recommendations in relation to:

- Strategies, policies and business development plans
- Management information systems
- Staff
- Location and signage
- Premises
- Investment
- Communication systems
- Implementation, co-ordination and facilitation

2.14   The report recommended the following:

- Increasing the performance of individual TICs through a range of measures including training, sharing experience, increasing partnership working, etc
- Managing future investment in TICs through an investment programme linked to increased sales and revenue generation
- Establishing a cohesive management structure – a partnership between the DMO and the TIC operators

2.15   Events, however, then took an unexpected turn as the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) announced that it would be reducing its spending on information centres (excluding Brockhole) by approximately two thirds. Since then, events have moved quickly as CTB have moved fast to address the situation, including:
- Closure of Coniston and Grasmere National Park Information Centres

- Some doubt has arisen over the future funding of South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) TICs
- A further study into the future of information provision in Cumbria (Visitor Information Provision in the Lake District – A Renaissance of the Lake District Project, Locum Consulting, August 2005)
- Re-opening of Coniston Information Centre run by local businesses
- CTB has developed 'Visitor Information Points', two have been opened in Grasmere and Hawkshead and the Board is actively seeking partners to host them (see below)
- CTB established a call centre to handle accommodation bookings (see below)

2.16 CTB's attention has, inevitably been concentrated on managing the consequences of the National Park Information Centre Closures. Since there are none within Copeland, this does not impact directly on visitor information services in Copeland. However:

- The nature of information provision within the National Park will change and the implications of this are considered below
- As a result of the closures, CTB is seeking to investigate alternative 'models' for TIC operation and is promoting Visitor Information Points (VIPs) to fill gaps and improve the overall provision.
- In line with NWDA aims that there should be a single telephone number for all enquiries, CTB was been working with LDNPA and SLDC (with Eden District Council as an interested party) to investigate the feasibility of a call centre to handle enquiries currently handled by the 'under-threat' TICs

Impacts of National Park Information Centre Closures

2.17 The actual impact of the planned, phased closure of National Park Information Centres is unknown. However, it is possible to predict some outcomes, as follows

- Information provision by the National Park Authority within the Borough will not change
- Closure of some of the large centres in the central Lake District will reduce the scale of provision of information for visitors; this could have a number of impacts, including:
  - Replacement of TICs by VIPs will reduce the volume of information on display and mean that at these locations there will be a reduced opportunity to speak to information assistants
  - This change could mean that visitors in central Lakes are less well informed about places to visit and accommodation in central Lakes and beyond
  - It could also mean that visitors travel further to seek information – though it is questionable that they would travel from central Lakes to West Cumbria to seek information
  - As the changes are made and new information delivery platforms emerge, visitors will switch to these

2.18 In view of the reduction of information provision in central Lakes, it is likely that a strategically located TIC in Gosforth, or elsewhere in lower Eskdale, could be effective as follows:

- Providing information on places to visit and things to do for visitors arriving on day trips from central Lakes – increasing spend and length of stay
- Raising awareness of Copeland and West Cumbria as destinations amongst visitors staying in central Lakes

2.19   Keswick National Park Information Centre plays, in theory, a key strategic role in dispersing visitors to Keswick into the Western Lake District 'peripheral' destination. The closure of this centre, especially since the TIC and Sheep and Wool Centre have already closed down, would result in a reduced presence for Copeland and the Western Lake District and, it is likely, fewer visits to Copeland. In this event, Copeland Borough Council would need to assess the position strategically with its partner in the Western Lake District Tourism Partnership Allerdale Borough Council.

2.20   A further issue at Keswick TIC is that most of the staffing is by local volunteers, most of whom own or work for tourism businesses in Keswick. These individuals have a vested interest in keeping visitors in Keswick. As a result, it is the consultants' experience that little effort is made to direct visitors towards the Western Lake District.

2.21   This fact was recognised by the Western Lake District Tourism Initiative (WCTI) in 1999; in response WCTI rented a kiosk at the rear of the Moot Hall. However, the location was not ideal and WCTI had limited staff resources with which to man the kiosk and so this presence was lost.

2.22   In any event, Keswick TIC is strategically important to tourism in Copeland and efforts should be made to increase the profile of the Western Lake District and the role of the TIC and TIC staff in signposting visitors to the Western Lake District.

Visitor Information Points

2.23   CTB is mainly seeking partners to host VIPs. The offer to businesses is increased footfall as additional visitors are drawn into the business to seek information and choose to spend money whilst they are there.   The benefit to CTB is that some of the costs of delivering the service are paid for by the host business. It is anticipated that the increased business will out-weigh the cost to the host businesses and so the VIPs will be retained after the initial year's support from CTB.

2.24   The assumption is that businesses will respond to this offer and there does not appear to be any expectation that local authorities will be expected to fund the provision of VIPs unless they can derive some benefit from doing so.

2.25   The key aspects of VIPs are as follows (a copy of the VIP contract is included in Appendix 1):

- There is a formal agreement between CTB and the host
- CTB provides the following:
    o A telephone booth and phone for free calls to the CTB accommodation line
    o BT line rental for 1 year
    o A DMS 'kiosk' including PC
    o Free Welcome Host training for VIP staff

- o Free use of the "i" logo and internal and external signs
- o Promoting the host on CTB websites, etc
- ▪ The host provides the following:
  - o Use of space for the VIP at no cost, hosting kiosk and literature display stands and maintaining it in a tidy condition
  - o Broadband connection point and telephone socket
  - o A trained member of staff on hand daily from 10 am to 4 pm
  - o Direct accommodation enquiries to the free telephone service
  - o Inform contractors swiftly of any technical faults
  - o Display roadside signs for the VIP
  - o Provide a free local map on request
  - o Display and retail CTB literature
  - o Provide in confidence monthly sales information for monitoring purposes
  - o Cover CTB property on host's insurance

2.26 In the second year, the host is expected to take on the costs of BT line rental. The likely costs to a business of hosting a VIP are estimated as follows and detailed in table 3.

Table 3: Estimated Costs to Host of Operating a VIP

Year	Item	Estimated Cost
Year 1	Broadband connection point – installation	£ 70[1]
	Telephone socket - installation	£ 70[1]
	Member of staff to answer enquiries between 10 am and 4 pm and stock the VIP	£3,795[2]
	Staff time to clean the VIP	£ 913[3]
	Free local map	£ 100[4]
	Staff time to provide confidential monthly sales information	£ 144[5]
	Cover CTB equipment on insurance policy	£ 50[6]
	TOTAL	£ 5,142
Year 2	Broadband connection point – annual rental	£ 179[7]
	Telephone socket – annual rental	£ 164[8]
	Member of staff to answer enquiries between 10 am and 4 pm and stock the TIC	£ 3,795[2]
	Staff time to clean the VIP	£ 913[3]
	Free local map	£ 100[4]
	Cover CTB equipment on insurance policy	£ 50[6]
	TOTAL	£ 5,202

Notes
1: BT website
2: Estimate £11,500 annual salary, 33% of time for one member of staff
3. Half an hour per day @ £5 per hour for 365 days cleaning
4: Consultants' estimate. Businesses might view this as an advertising opportunity
or a free local map such as tat available for Egremont could be used
5: Estimate 1 hour per month @ £12 per hour
6: Consultants' estimate
7: £14.99 per month (Virgin Broadband cheapest option)
8: BT website £41 per quarter line rental
NB: This is not an official estimate, this is an estimate by the consultants

CTB Accommodation Booking Call Centre

2.27   Concurrent with this study, CTB has established a call centre to handle accommodation booking requests generated through the VIPs and from other sources; the accommodation booking line is being promoted on CTB's consumer websites and will be promoted on print items in the future.

2.28   The promotion of the accommodation booking line number by CTB in electronic and printed materials will, inevitably, result in a shift in bookings towards this service and away from the existing TICs, with a resulting reduction in commission revenue for TICs, however, the rate of change is not known; this will depend on the degree to which consumers believe it is better to ring a single number for Cumbria or ring a local TIC in the specific area they wish to visit.

2.29   Early indications from operation of the booking line (after just 4 weeks of operation) are that the types of enquiries being received are very different to those handles by TICs. Whilst most TIC bookings are mostly from people seeking accommodation for the night of their visit (sometimes multiple night bookings) and a smaller number of 'Book a Bed Ahead' bookings, enquiries received by the CTB accommodation booking line are mostly from people who have browsed CTB's website and want someone to make the booking for them. These are mostly advance bookings and include a higher proportion of self-catering bookings than TICs.

2.30   Though this service is at a very early stage, the indications are that it is attracting a different market to the TIC accommodation booking market. Whilst this is unlikely to have a significant impact on TIC accommodation revenues in the short term, the longer term impacts of the new accommodation booking line are unknown and possible impacts could be:

   ▪ The new service will constrain the potential for TICs/Cumbrian sub-regions to develop their own accommodation booking services
   ▪ Higher awareness of the new service might mean more people book in advance and so fewer people turn up at TICs looking for accommodation when they arrive

Cumbria Destination Management System

2.31   The Destination Management System (DMS) for Cumbria will play in increasingly significant role in visitor information in the sub-region, as a repository for static and real time visitor information.

2.32   Initially, a huge amount of work was required to 'populate' the DMS with information. Now that has been done, the main tasks are:

   ▪ Updating relatively static information as changes are made to attractions, accommodation facilities, etc
   ▪ Maintaining up-to-date information on events
   ▪ Maintaining real-time information on accommodation capacity

2.33   In the early days of he DMS, CTB asked local authorities to take responsibility for up-dating events information. However, this led to different levels of quality in different parts of Cumbria as some authorities did not have the resources to undertake the task. As a result, CTB now has a full time

member of staff responsible for up-dating the DMS with events information and other relatively static information. Information on accommodation capacity is maintained by accommodation businesses and although SLDC has done some up-dating of its information on the DMS, there is no expectation from CTB that local authorities should play a role in maintaining DMS information currently or in the future.

2.34   The Tourist Information Centres Best Practice Report recommended installation of the DMS in all TICs with over 50,000 visitors and the potential to make 1,000 accommodation bookings. However, as experience at Whitehaven TIC has shown, the DMS provides a range of benefits. Implementation of the North West Visitor Information Strategy is likely to oblige networked TICs to have the on-line DMS. This will have financial and service implications for Egremont and Millom TICs.

2.35   Eden District Council is currently funding on-line DMS facility at Appleby TIC and monitoring the impacts. The financial impacts have been limited to date (2 accommodation bookings in April 06 and 1 in May 06), but the other benefits are not yet quantified. CBC should monitor this 'pilot', as well as the roll-out of the regional strategy, and draw conclusions in relation to Egremont and Millom.

Visitor Information Services in Keswick & the Western Lake District

2.36   Tourism in the Western Lake District is delivered as follows:

- The Western Lake District Tourism Partnership (WLDTP) undertakes promotion consisting chiefly of:
    - Producing the holiday guide
    - Producing and distributing Top Attractions
    - Maintaining the Western Lake District web site
    - Delivering promotion campaigns
- Copeland and Allerdale Councils take responsibility for tourism development and infrastructure provision and management, including TICs
- In addition, the Borough Councils part fund WLDTP and jointly fund fulfilment for the holiday guide

2.37   Within the Western Lake District, there are a number of individual destinations which promote themselves through websites, print, advertising, etc. In Copeland, this included the Borough Council, Rediscover Whitehaven, Visit Egremont, Gosforth & Wasdale, and Millom.

2.38   Despite its complexity this structure, which has layers of destinations becoming progressively smaller, is a good one as organisations are able to buy in to promotional activity at a level which is appropriate to them resulting in relatively efficient marketing spend.

2.39   It can, however, cause confusion to potential visitors seeking information, hence NWDA's call for a single website and single number for information and bookings.

2.40   As noted in 2.16, bullet 3, above, CTB, in addressing the visitor information crisis in central Lakes has been working with LDNPA, SLDC and EDC to develop a call centre concept for handling enquiries for other Boroughs to

take on if they wish. CTB will not impose such a system, but many of the busier TICs in Cumbria miss a substantial number of telephone calls because staff are dealing with customers across the counter and so it could benefit some.

2.41   At present, it does not appear that TICs in Copeland are missing significant numbers of telephone calls. Staff capacity at WLDTP is one full time marketing administrator and one part time marketing manager. Although WLDTP telephone number is promoted on its website and publications it is not resourced to handle large numbers of calls – indeed these would be a disruption to its primary purpose of promoting the Western Lake District.

2.42   It makes sense, therefore to direct enquiries consumer enquiries about the Western Lake District to the TICs.

2.43   If the regional strategy, as is anticipated, recommends a hub and satellite approach to TICs with one hub TIC in each peripheral destination, then Whitehaven is a strong candidate. With the exception of Keswick, it has the highest number of visitors to TICs in the Western Lake District and the potential to build on the service at Keswick TIC is restricted by the size and nature of the Moot Hall in which it is located.

Copeland

2.44   Copeland Borough, with Allerdale, makes up the Keswick and the Western Lake District sub-region within the Regional Branding Strategy.

2.45   The Western Lake District Tourism Partnership (WLDTP) has responsibility for marketing and promotion of tourism of the sub-region. It aims to increase staying trips and spend by 62% by 2010 compared to 2000. Its activities include the following:

- Production, design, marketing and distribution of Visitor Guide
- Production, design, marketing and distribution of 'Top Visitor Attractions'
- Design, management and development of web site
- Advertising and media campaign
- Attendance at local, national and international trade shows and exhibitions
- Development and management of photographic library
- Production and design of B2B newsletters
- Direct mail campaign with 20% response rate
- Promotion, organisation and running of familiarisation visits for press, coach operators, accommodation providers and Tourist Information staff
- Organisation of 'Residents Week'
- Marketing and business support advice to tourism businesses in Allerdale and Copeland

2.46   The Copeland Local Plan 2001-2016 and the Copeland Borough Council Economic Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan 2005, both identify the importance of tourism to the economy of the borough. The following extract from the Economic Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan demonstrates the Council's commitment to tourism development:

"The development of both the regional and sub-regional tourism vision and strategy is of great importance to the future growth of the tourism sector in

both Copeland and the Western Lake District. The support and development of tourism and tourism marketing is an integral part of Copeland Borough Council's economic development aspirations. Wider than that, tourism contributes to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area. In February 2005 Copeland Borough Council approved a Borough-wide Economic Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan. Among the key action areas highlighted within the plan are four themes which have a tourism dimension and these include:

- *The need to "Develop Copeland's tourism market, growing both the value and volume of tourism activity in the borough".*
- *Drawing far greater economic value from Copeland's key natural assets (principally the coastline and the western parts of the Lake District National Park)*
- *Providing a plentiful supply of opportunities and attractions for the existing and next generation, retaining young people of all abilities in the borough.*
- *Boosting the image and profile of Copeland, both regionally and across the UK as whole*

Tourism development is especially important when set against the backdrop of the loss of a number of key employers within the area over recent years including Rhodia, and more recently the announcement of the closure of Huntsman and job losses at Sekers, as well as the medium and longer term impact in the decline of employment in the nuclear sector with the decommissioning at Sellafield".

2.47   Copeland's TIC Service sits within the 'Beacon and Tourism Services', which is part of CBC's Regeneration Section.

2.48   Information provision is a cornerstone of tourism development and currently, this is delivered in Copeland as follows:

- Three networked TICs at Egremont (grant aided by CBC), Millom and Whitehaven
- Six TIPs provided by Copeland Borough Council as follows:
    - Millom Market Place
    - Gosforth (£55 p. a. contribution by CBC)
    - Seascale
    - St Bees
    - Egremont
    - St Nicholas Church Whitehaven
- Displays and leaflets available at Sellafield Visitors Centre (private)
- Lake District National Park Information Points (private) at:
    - Boot Post Office
    - Ennerdale Sub Post Office
    - Gosforth Pottery
    - Ravenglass Railway Booking Office
    - St Bees Post Office

2.49   In addition, Carrier Direct provides fulfilment for requests for the Western Lake District holiday guide and costs are shared evenly between Allerdale and Copeland Borough Councils.

2.50   In common with many other local authorities, Tourist Information Centres are not included specifically in relevant policies and plans and, therefore, they

tend to occupy a policy vacuum, resulting in a relatively low priority when it comes to funding decisions.

Partnership Working

2.51   There are opportunities to strengthen the existing partnership with Lowes Court Gallery and to develop new partnerships to develop the provision of information services in the Borough. Three specific opportunities are considered as follows:

- A new TIC at Gosforth
- Tourist information at Sellafield
- A closer relationship between the TICs and businesses

Gosforth

2.52   Gosforth Parish Council and the Hidden Britain Group have been investigating the possibility of developing a TIC in Gosforth. Gosforth is strategically located close to the route from south lakes along Eskdale and at the 'gateway' to Wasdale. There are a number of facilities for visitors in the village and nearby. The village is promoted, along with Wasdale by attractive leaflets, booklets and website.

2.53   The current proposal is to build an extension onto the public conveniences in the car park to provide a space for a TIC and possibly two craft workshops. Other aspects include:

- The Parish Council already funds the day to day management of the toilets
- It is proposed that the centre is run by a part time information assistant working with volunteers
- Occupants of the craft workshops could also make a contribution to running the TIC by opening and closing it and possibly providing some staffing cover
- There is a tradition of art and crafts in Gosforth and it is felt that this could provide a useful income stream for the TIC
- New build could obscure recycling skips which are located adjacent to the existing building. These do not present a good impression to visitors particularly as they are sometimes covered in obscene graffiti

2.54   There would appear to be potential in this proposal as it would address the current TIC gap in lower Eskdale. However, it is not clear whether it would be possible to raise the capital funding to develop the building or raise sufficient resources (financial and human resources) to sustain the running of a TIC.

2.55   It is recommended that CBC works with Gosforth Parish Council and Hidden Britain Group to involve CTB in the commissioning of an independent study into the financial viability of this proposal.

2.56   The willingness of the Parish Council and Hidden Britain Group (essentially local tourism businesses) presents a significant opportunity to work in partnership, in a similar way to the relationship between CBC and Lowes Court Gallery, to deliver improved visitor information provision in Copeland.

Sellafield

2.57   It is understood that the operation of visitor facilities at Sellafield is being reviewed. CBC should monitor any developments to ensure that tourist information is available to any future increase in visitors which might result.

Closer Working with Businesses

2.58   There is an opportunity at Whitehaven TIC, especially if the interior fittings are reviewed (see 3.28 – 3.30) to work more closely with local businesses to increase sales and generate income for the TIC by:

- Providing and promoting a booking service for meetings, weddings, parties and other events
- Providing lit display units to promote local businesses/attractions

2.59   Ambleside TIC provides a model. This TIC operates a conference booking service that generates 10% commission on sales. Though demand for conferences in West Cumbria is low, there is demand for meetings and other events from businesses and the public and this could be a useful service for local residents and businesses and provide revenue to the TIC and participating businesses.

2.60   Ambleside TIC also generates revenue from local businesses by selling space in light boxes (cost £430 per annum rental) and other activities less relevant at Whitehaven. In the event of a re-fit of Whitehaven TIC (see 3.28) it would be possible to incorporate such displays into the design and so interest from local businesses should be tested.

Use of TICs

2.61   CTB research shows that 15% of visitors to Cumbria use a TIC during their visit and that the total value of TICs in Cumbria to the economy is £42.65m.

2.62   Using a similar calculation (see Tourist Information Centres Best Practice Report, The Winning Company for Cumbria Tourist Board, March 2004 – Appendix 7), it is possible to estimate the value of Copeland's TICs to the local economy as £2.18 million – though an unknown proportion of this spending will occur in neighbouring boroughs. The estimated impacts of Copeland's TIC service are shown in Table 4, overleaf. Note that the estimate for extension of trip as a result has been omitted as it was not possible to identify robust data for Copeland only.

Table 4: Estimate of Value of Tourist Information Services on Copeland

Impact	Value Formula	Value
Accommodation bookings through TICs	5% of visitors used TICs to chose their accommodation; STEAM estimated £39.5m spent on accommodation in Copeland	£1,975,000
Attraction visits (charged admission)	12% of TIC enquiries are in respect of attractions; 272,875 visits to admission charging attractions in Copeland; average spend per head £5.50 (£.90 admission and £1.60 retail/catering)	£ 180,097
Attraction visits (free admission)	12% of TIC enquiries are in respect of attractions; 130,000 visits to admission charging attractions in Copeland; average spend per head £1.60 (retail/catering)	£ 24,960
Day visits	Estimate 5% of day visitors use TICs to decide where to go; STEAM estimates £31.6m spent by day visitors in Copeland	£1,580,000
TOTAL		£2,180,050

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2.63 So, in addition to the direct benefits to businesses generated by TICs in Copeland (c £12,000 in accommodation bookings and in the region of £42,000 in other bookings – mostly National Express tickets), Copeland's TICs continue to be an important part of the visitor information mix and clearly provide an important signposting role for accommodation and attractions as well as other businesses which cater for visitors in the Borough.

Benchmarking

2.64 There is no formal counting of local and visitor enquiries at the TICs. However, TIC staff estimate the following.

Table 5: Visitor & Local Enquiries

TIC	Visitor Enquiries	Local Enquiries
Egremont	55%	45%
Millom	60%	40%
Whitehaven (Summer)	60%	40%
Whitehaven (Winter)	30%	70%

Source: Interviews with TIC Staff

2.65 The TIC Best Practice Report has information on performance during 2003 based on a number of key performance indicators for TICs. The KPI scores for Copeland TICs are shown in table 5 above along with the scores for Cumbria average and for comparable TICs shown in table 6 overleaf.

2.66 Comparison with other TICs is problematic as in most cases there are many variables, mostly arising from the geographic location of different TICs which mean different visitor numbers, types of enquiry, volumes on remote enquiries, etc. However, we feel that comparison with the TICs at Appleby and Kirkby Lonsdale might be helpful as they have similar visitor numbers to Whitehaven and a comparable 'peripheral' location within Cumbria.

Table 6: Key Performance Indicators for TICs in 2003

TIC	Visitors per Staff Hour	Telephone calls per staff hour	Value of Cumbria Bookings per Staff Hour	Income to TIC per Visitor
Egremont	1.71	0.68	£ 0.20	Not available
Millom	1.41	0.25	£ 0.34	Not available
Whitehaven	7.44	1.45	£ 2.80	£0.97
Cumbria All	22.42	2.12	£12.07	£0.32
Appleby	11.77	2.21	£ 0.69	£0.54
Kirkby Lonsdale	7.19	1.24	£ 6.95	£0.56

Source: Tourist Information Centres Best Practice Report 2004, The Winning Company for Cumbria Tourist Board

2.67   The difference in efficiency between Whitehaven and Egremont & Millom is predominantly the result of a higher visitor throughput at Whitehaven. Increasing efficiency at Egremont and Millom would be very difficult without a substantial increase in visitor numbers which appears unlikely in the short term. However, tourism development initiatives at Egremont and Millom are likely to increase visits to these TICs in the longer term.

2.68   Whitehaven TIC has a good income per TIC visitor figure, but a lower value of bookings per staff hour figure. This can be traced back clearly to the National Express bookings. These generate £42,000 of income for National Express and 10% commission revenue to the TIC (£4,203 in 2005/06). However, servicing the bookings takes the time of a whole member of staff (salary in the region of £12,000 plus on costs) – this is not a cost effective arrangement especially as most of the traffic is local residents travelling out of the Borough.

2.69   Possible alternatives to selling National Express tickets in the TIC are to open a booking office in the proposed transport interchange or encouraging a travel agent to take on the role.

2.70   When the Whitehaven transport interchange is developed at the railway station, it would be logical to locate a booking office within the development. This should be considered in development plans, including the possibility that the same office could provide information and bookings for rail, bus and coach services. This might or might not be financially viable. Viability might be increased if time periods for National Express bookings are limited and could be staffed part time by National Express staff.

2.71   To date, local travel agents have not been prepared to take on a national Express licence as the commission does not cover the cost of staff time required to make bookings.

2.72   The ability to book and pay for National Express tickets is valued by local people, but providing this service is costing CBC over £8,000 per year. This does not represent good value.

2.73   It is recommended that CBC opens discussions with National Express to explore the possibility of increasing the rate of commission on tickets sold. It is unlikely that National Express will do this as it would set a precedent which could have a significant impact on the company's profitability. In this event, it is recommended that the TIC discontinues this service.

2.74   Residents would still be able to make bookings via the National Express website or via the National Express telephone booking line. There is likely to be some pubic dissatisfaction with this action, but CBC has a strong financial case to justify it.

3.   COPELAND'S TICS

3.1   The consultants visited the TICs on 4th May and the key findings are summarised here. It is noted that health and safety issues are already being addressed.

Millom

3.2   Following a chequered history Millom TIC was relocated to the station building in 2001 together with the Folk Museum. The location of the building is virtually 'cut off' from the rest of the town by the railway bridge and this is further exacerbated by confusing and wrongly placed brown signage, which especially affects visitors arriving in Millom from the north. There are 16 marked parking bays in the car park.

3.3   Access to the TIC is via a disabled ramp and automatic doors taking the visitor into a long thin room with a counter at the far end. Information is displayed on a variety of tables, wracking shelves, carousels and display boards, wall mounted and free standing. The information is not clearly zoned. A door to the left leads to gents, ladies and disabled toilets.

3.4   Natural light is gained through roof windows and side window – however, there is a need for supplementary lighting throughout.   A counter surrounds the entrance to the TIC's administration office which is a 'dead end' with no other emergency exit in case of fire or violence. The office space is cramped and there are a number of health and safety issues arising from the lack of space.

3.5   There is not enough storage space to accommodate all the information. The overall impression of the space is that the TIC has been abandoned in the antechamber to the museum.

3.6   Staff are friendly and welcoming, but have limited knowledge of their market, including the breakdown of use by locals and visitors, the origins of visitors (from north or south) and the overall profile of enquiries. Millom TIC has opted not to access the regional DMS due to costs.

3.7   The TIC is open from 10.00 until 4.30 pm (closed for an hour at lunchtime) on weekdays and closed at the weekends. This is convenient for local people, but does not fit the likely needs of visitors to the area who are likely to be seeking information on things to do at the weekend and information on where to stay towards the end of the day.

3.8   Space available for retail display is limited and the fittings for displaying retail goods are poor.

3.9   The TIC operation appears to be financially precarious and the commitment from the Town Council by no means certain; we understand that the 2006 contribution from Millom Town Council has not yet been confirmed

Table 7: SWOT for Millom TIC

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Local usage and support • Proximity to visitors arriving by train • Added extra for visitors whose primary purpose is to visit the museum • Events programme • Enthusiasm and efficiency of staff	• Location • No zoning of information – or clear layout which can be easily understood • Office space and counter location • Appearing to visitors as have dual responsibility for both TIC and museum • Accommodation standard in area • Run down appearance of building and areas surrounding Millom
Opportunities	Threats
• To have a satellite VIP within Plant Centre at Muncaster Castle • Tourism development manager to boost tourism in the area • Generate more revenue from sales and events • Provide WIFI point	• Signage pointing visitors to the old location of TIC • 2008 the lease at the station site expires • Uncertainty of grants

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3.10   The lease on the current premises is soon to end and a decision must be made about the future location of Millom TIC. Most visitors to Millom find their way to the Market Square. Indeed, brown signs to the TIC still point in that direction despite the fact that it was relocated some years ago.

3.11   The Clock Tower Gallery has been sold during the period of this study. The new owner's plans are not known. The Market Square is considered the ideal location as there is short stay on-street parking and has the highest visibility, with banks, convenience facilities, etc.

3.12   It is recommended that one of the existing disused shop units on Market Square is obtained as a new location for Millom TIC. If this is not possible, for financial or other reasons, then there are premises available on Lapstone Road, which are easily accessible from the Market Square.

3.13   Our recommendation for new premises would be, in priority order:

1. Ground floor premise in Market Square
2. A stand alone kiosk in Market Square (although the likelihood of vandalism would mean high maintenance costs and possibly presenting a poor image)
3. Ground floor premises in Lapstone Road (possibility of generating additional income by renting out first floor office space)
4. Un-used space in the Town Hall
5. Corner property on Wellington Street

Egremont

3.14   Egremont TIC is located on the main street in Egremont within the Lowes Court Gallery. It is signed from the A595 and also in the town. The building is presentable; however, there is a TIC sign on the exterior which is in a poor state of repair and needs updating. To the right there is an archway leading to a rear garden area. To the right of the arch is a larger, and more presentable, TIC display board which is wall mounted (though staff are not

clear on who manages this board). Within the arch there is an integral window with a number of leaflets on display.

3.15   On entering the shop doorway the TIC counter/Gallery counter is straight ahead almost entirely covered in visitor information. There is a map on the left wall and a large notice board covered in posters and other information. More information leaflets are displayed on a carousel. Behind the counter is a custom made, but now dated, welcome board.

3.16   The confusion of information which greets the visitor on entry is bewildering. Racking systems for leaflets are out-dated. IT capacity is limited and the TIC has opted not to access to the regional DMS (on the grounds that the number of enquiries this would help do not justify the annual fee). However, staff are friendly and welcoming and, as evidenced by winning the national mystery caller competition.

3.17   A doorway leads to the store room which is a difficult and inadequate use of the space. There is a staff toilet and small kitchen facilities and a door leading out to the garden area. Lighting both natural (from wall and roof windows) and electric help to make the most of what could be a very dark interior. The rest of the ground floor is dedicated to items on sale for both the gallery and TIC. A spiral staircase leads to an upper floor where gallery exhibits are displayed. The overall appearance is cluttered but interesting and enhances the 'browsing' experience and resulting prolonged stay.

Table 8: SWOT for Egremont TIC

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Being coupled with the gallery gives visitors a duel reason for visiting • Enthusiastic and efficient staff • Working with volunteers • High quality of service as recognised in national mystery shopper award • Supported and used by local people	• A myriad of information displayed in a small space – information is cluttered and lost • Limited visibility from along the Main Street • No disabled access to upper floor • Financial management removed from staff working on counter • Egremont is essentially by-passed by visitors to the area
Opportunities	Threats
• Events put on by gallery attracting visitors to make better use of TIC • To develop and franchise the garden space outside to provide a simple café service • Provide more information on the local (Egremont) area • Provide WIFI point (particularly if café option is developed)	• Continuing economic/social decline of Egremont (failure of the MTI to reverse this process)

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3.18   Egremont TIC is in a good location in relation to current visitor flows in the town, though the visibility could be improved. In the event that the Crab Fair and town archive develops, location of the TIC might be reconsidered, based on visitor numbers at the respective locations.

3.19   Egremont might also consider providing WIFI internet access; especially in the event that a catering development to the rear is considered feasible (see 3.31–3.32 below).

Whitehaven

3.20   Located in the busy market square this town centre TIC provides a range of services for both local people and visitors. The large public area is bright, though bulky displays cut out some of the natural light. Despite being the most spacious of the three TIC's the space is badly organised mainly due to the outdated displays. Leaflet racking around the walls has integral storage space in cupboards at ground level.

3.21   The counter area is poorly designed and cluttered. Staff using the counter have no leg room. The two service points are close together so that the conversations of staff can distract each other. There is only one exit for staff from the counter area and staff/storage room, which is a potential safety hazard in the event of fire or violence. There are limited wall sockets and many appliances are connected via multi-socket extension leads (potential fire hazard).

3.22   The boiler in the staff/storage room gives off considerable heat. There is an exit from the rear right of the building which can be opened by a key pad. Storage space is limited. Information is zoned.

3.23   Retail activity is limited by lack of suitable racking/display material.

3.24   Staff are friendly and welcoming and recently won a local pride award showing that the TIC is valued by local residents. Since the closure of the bus station, the TIC has retailed National Express tickets. On-line access to National Express's booking system has increased efficiency, however, this service takes up most of a full time post but generates significantly less than the costs of employment in commission.

Table 9: SWOT for Whitehaven TIC

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Location convenient for visitors and local residents • Enthusiastic and efficient staff • Local usage and support • Good size of public area	• Poor use of space • Out dated display boards – heavy and blocking out natural light • Building obscured on market days • Amount of staff time spent on National Express bookings in relation to cost of providing service
Opportunities	Threats
• To redesign and refit to take advantage of the space and light • Theme the TIC to project Whitehaven's image and increase attractiveness to visitors • Increase retail sales area and sales volume • Provide a WIFI point	• Health and safety issues with wiring and personal safety • Possible threat of relocation to save money

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3.25   The location of Whitehaven TIC is excellent in relation to visitor flows in the town. The TIC occupies a strategic location in relation to the Georgian town,

the harbour and the town' attractions. Though it is not possible to park outside the TIC, there is adequate parking near-by and the location is excellent in relation to pedestrian routes.

3.26   Partnership opportunities which could be explored in Whitehaven include:

- Use of volunteers to help staff the TIC
- Use of volunteers from businesses and attractions to help staff the TIC
- Working with local businesses to provide a booking service for meetings and conferences, weddings, parties, etc
- 'Visit the TIC' posters on display in attractions, accommodation, etc

3.27   Refurbishment of Whitehaven TIC would cost in the region of £25,000 to include new shelving, re construction of the counter area,   building of retail display space and re-decorating and re-carpeting. The costings shown in table 10 were supplied by a local joinery and shop-fitting company.

Table 10: Cost Estimate for Refurbishment of Whitehaven TIC

Item	Cost Estimate
Remove and skip existing floor coverings, fittings and lighting	£850
Supply and fit new counter	£4,080
Fit veneer slatwall panels	£2,443
Supply and fit 10 metres of sloping card racks with cupboards beneath	£4,450
Supply and fit shelving to fit on slatwall	£440
Supply and fit 2 display and storage units to centre floor	£1,800
Supply and fit rope lighting and glass shelves in both windows	£1,280
Supply and fit spot lighting to all displays including centre floor units	£3,782
Supply and fit new carpet (excl. store room)	£3,087
Decoration of TIC (excl. store room)	£1,050
TOTAL	£23,262

Source: Haven Joinery, Whitehaven

3.28   The impacts on increased sales/revenue are difficult to predict. However, it is known that:

- When the Forestry Commission refurbished its' forest shops in 1998, creating a strong brand identity, sourcing lines which strongly appeal to its visitors and tightening stock control, display and other procedures, it trebled retail profit in two years
- Fleetwood TIC achieves annual £14k of retail sales in a very small retail space but with a strong nautical theme

3.29   We would anticipate in the region of a doubling of retail profit at Whitehaven TIC (from £7,640 to in the region of £15,000) in the event of refurbishment and theming as described above.

3.30   A further opportunity to generate revenue at Whitehaven and possibly to attract additional visitors who might then spend on other services, would be to offer and promote 'WIFI' – wireless internet access. This would enable

people with network ready laptops and similarly enabled palmtop devices to access the internet more cheaply than using a mobile phone connection. It is difficult to predict the likely revenue at this stage, but a use fee of £2-3 per hour and £5-10 per day would probably be realistic.

3.31   The indicative costs of providing a WIFI service would be £1,050, as follows:

- Encriptable wireless router device (e.g. DrayTek 2800g)   £ 150
- IT advice to set up time limited password system, install
  Router and train staff (commercial rate)   £ 600
- Promotion of the service (leaflet/poster)   £ 300

3.32   It is recommended that CBC further investigates potential demand for this activity or seeks funding (possibly from CTB) to run and monitor the project as a pilot.

3.33   The opportunities for partnership working at Whitehaven are few. They include the Rum Story, Haig Mining Museum and commercial sector partners in the town.

3.34   It is unlikely that any of the above could deliver a service as good as the existing provision and so it is recommended that the existing provision is continued.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1   Overall, Copeland Borough Council appears to be receiving good value for money from its TIC Service.

4.2   However, there are a number of ways in which the Council could improve the service in order to better meet the needs of visitors (and therefore contribute more to economic development in the Borough). These include the following.

Recommendations for the Whole Service

4.3   The following general recommendations are made:

- More explicit integration of the TIC service into tourism strategies for and within Copeland

- A tightening of management of the 'satellite' TICs at Egremont and Millom, by CBC and the two satellite TICs to include:
    - Service level agreements
    - Standardised methods of collecting and reporting data – use the CTB monthly reporting format and translate this into annual data
    - Annual review of business plans

- CBC to review its TIPs and develop a replacement system of TIPs - ideal locations would be at St Bees, Millom, Boot, Sellafield Visitors Centre, Ennerdale Bridge

- Review provision in South Copeland
    - Millom TIC is not the right location to serve visitors to south Copeland, most of whom come over Hardknott Pass from the central Lake District. In addition, its financial future is uncertain and there are weaknesses in its 'performance' (opening hours, etc).
    - VIPs could play a role, especially in the short term. CBC should review its provision of TIPs and replace them with a strategic network of VIPs, especially in South Copeland (consider existing LDNPA outlets and Jennings pubs – CBC should work with CTB to promote the VIP idea to potential host businesses in lower Eskdale)
    - A TIC at Gosforth would be strategically advantageous. The Parish Council and Hidden Britain Group wish to re-develop the existing toilet block to include a TIC and possibly craft workshops; CBC should support this initiative – a VIP could be a stepping stone

- Support Gosforth Parish Council in pursue the idea of developing a TIC

- Working together more, including
    - Common approaches to TIC management (business plans, financial targets
    - More sharing of knowledge and expertise, especially on retailing

- Working together to obtain capital funding to up-date the TICs at Egremont and Whitehaven and to support the development of a new TIC at Gosforth

- A clear agreement with Allerdale and WLDTP regarding consumer and travel trade enquiry handling and fulfilment for WLD Visitor Guide

- Promotion of the benefits of the TIC Service, including producing an annual report or newsletter for circulation to Council members, key officers and tourism businesses in Copeland

- Monitor possible future developments at Sellafield Visitors Centre to take maximum advantage of any future increase in visitor numbers

Recommendations for Individual TICs

Millom

4.4   Specific recommendations for Millom TIC are:

- Secure long term funding for the operation of the TIC
- Relocate the TIC to the town centre taking account of the recommendation in 3.13
- If TIC is retained and remains at its current location, consider the following
  - Renew misleading signage
  - Review opening hours to align better with visitor needs
  - Promote CTB accommodation booking service out of hours
  - Improve display systems
  - Whitehaven TIC staff to provide retail advice to increase retail sales space and lines
  - Re-locate Tourism Development manager to free up office space for TIC staff
  - Health and safety review

Egremont

4.5   Specific recommendations for Egremont TIC are:

- Replace external signing on and close to TIC
- Sign TIC from car park, Egremont Castle and Florence Mine
- Replace out dated racking
- Replace/re-organise notice boards
- Replace out dated welcome panel behind counter
- Develop a business plan for the TIC/gallery and review annually (a draft has been prepared)
- Closer link between financial management/business planning and front line staff
- Investigate feasibility of café operation in garden at rear
- Ask CBC TIC staff to provide retail advice in connection with re-design of counter area (consider wider opportunities to increase retail profit through stocking and display policies, etc)
- Consider adding a WIFI point subject to café feasibility and Whitehaven TIC WIFI pilot

Whitehaven

4.6   Specific recommendations for Whitehaven TIC are:

- Redesign/refit internal layout at Whitehaven
- Incorporate light boxes for rent by businesses/attractions (need to market test this first)
- Find alternative for over the counter National Express bookings
- Health and safety review (current)
- Re-locate 2 market stalls in front of TIC to increase visibility on market days
- Brand Whitehaven TIC more strongly in line with Whitehaven's maritime and Georgian offer
- Increase retail sales by improving retail display equipment and make retail goods more accessible to visitors, buy stock to match the theme and basic retailing principles need to be followed, including:
    - Fast-moving lines displayed on end units
    - Display children's lines lower down
    - Display lines for children adjacent to lined/ranges which will hold adults' attention
    - Display impulse buys close to the till
- Investigate opportunity to promote booking service for meetings, weddings, parties, etc
- Pilot WIFI fixed access point provision (see 3.30-3.32)

Appendix 1

Agreement between Cumbria Tourist Board and Dale Lodge Hotel, Visitor Information Point

CTB will

1. Provide a telephone and phone booth for free calls to the CTB's accommodation booking line. The phone and booth remain the property of CTB.
2. Pay for the BT line rental for one year
3. Provide and maintain a DMS "kiosk", free for one year. The DMS screen remains the property of CTB.
4. Provide Welcome Host training and other training deemed appropriate by CTB, free for one year, to VIP staff.
5. Provide continuing support and advice on all VIP matters free of charge for one year but excluding any payment of fees to third parties.
6. Authorise the use of the "i" logo by Dale Lodge.
7. Provide and fix new external and internal "i" signs in agreed locations. These signs remain the property of CTB.
8. Promote and advertise the Dale Lodge VIP on its websites and in its literature on an equal basis with other VIPs as the opportunity occurs.

Dale Lodge Hotel VIP will

1. Provide the conservatory at Dale Lodge Hotel for the exclusive use of the VIP
2. Provide a broadband connection point for the DMS kiosk and a socket for the telephone in agreed locations
3. Host the largest available stands of leaflets from both A-HA Designs and Northern Print Production in the VIP.
4. Ensure a trained member of staff is available every day from at least 10am to 4pm to answer questions and provide information, including but not limited to local transport, walking and shopping information.
5. Direct visitors who wish to book accommodation to the freephone booking line.
6. Inform the DBS supplier, New Vision, promptly of any breakdown in the DMS and telephone systems.
7. Keep the VIP area and equipment tidy and clean at all times
8. Display appropriate roadside directional signs advertising the VIP incorporating the VIP logo.
9. Provide a free map of Grasmere Village to visitors on request.
10. Display and distribute any free leaflets which the CTB may from time to time provide
11. Display and retail on a sale or return basis any paid for literature which the CTB may from time to time provide.
12. Provide in confidence monthly sales turnover information for the hotel and bars for the past year, and for each month in 2006/7 in order for the impact of the VIP on the hotel business to be assessed.
13. Ensure that all CTB property is covered for its full value under the All Risks section of the hotel insurance policy.

It is mutually agreed that there will be no payment and no demands for payment either by CTB or by the Dale Lodge Hotel to each other for the provision of the VIP.

It is mutually understood and agreed that the Dale Lodge VIP may not always be the sole VIP in Grasmere, and that no exclusive rights are being conferred. CTB retains the right to expand the VIP network at its own absolute discretion.

It is mutually understood and agreed that the Dale Lodge Hotel VIP is a pilot project intended to last from the date of the signing of this agreement until the 1st June 2007. The VIP's performance will be reviewed in November/December 2006. Either side may then give three month's notice of the termination of the agreement to expire on the 31st March 2007. Alternatively it may be mutually decided to continue with the arrangement, subject to any agreed amendment of the terms, for a further year or term of years.

For the avoidance of doubt but not part of this one year agreement, it is proposed that in the second and subsequent years, Dale Lodge would pay for the BT rental of the phone line, the rental of the broadband connection for the DMS and the annual maintenance charges for the DMS kiosk, currently £550. CTB would continue to pay for the 'freephone' calls, the maintenance of the signage, the phone and booth, and the DMS kiosk.

Signed on behalf of the Cumbria Tourist Board by

Ian Stephens, Chief Executive, CTB

_____ Date _____

Signed on behalf of the Dale Lodge Hotel by xxxxx

Proprietor

_____ Date _____

APPENDIX 2: IMAGES