City Centre Management and the Visitor Economy

Guidance Document

VisitEngland

City Centre Management and the Visitor Economy
This guidance is to help organisations and individuals involved in destination management and town centre management (in whatever form that takes) to work together and to highlight how collaboration between organisations and businesses can grow the economy of towns and cities.

City or town centre management is often described as ‘a coordinated pro-active initiative designed to ensure that town and city centres are desirable and attractive places’. Town Centre Management, in particular in its most recent incarnation Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), often has a mandate for marketing the place.

Destination management is a process of leading, influencing and coordinating the management of all the aspects of a destination that contribute to a visitor’s experience. Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) are involved in developing product, setting out what is needed in terms of physical improvement, service standards and facilities in order to meet the growing expectations of tourists and delivering initiatives to meet those expectations. Although the most visible output of destination management is often the marketing so there is a misconception that it is a marketing based activity. In many cases DMOs cover a much wider geography than a town or city centre.

The reality is often not that clear cut and every local area has variations and as local priorities and funding levels change the work of destination management and city or town teams cross over. Regardless of local roles and responsibilities between delivery organisations the functions are interdependent and each type of organisation has expertise that should be shared and activity that should be aligned to enable each to maximise the growth potential for local areas.
CITY CENTRE/ TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT

City centre/town centre management is most commonly delivered by:

**Town teams**
A loose association of interests including town councils, chambers of commerce, large retailers and shopping centres, local authorities, traders associations and community groups. Often they are attached to one of the main organisations active in town. They don’t always have a dedicated budget and will bid for funds for specific projects.

**City/Town Centre Management companies**
More formal versions of town teams that are legal entities, employing dedicated staff and working to a business plan that is overseen by a management or advisory board.

**Business Improvement District companies**
A specific entity that comes into being when businesses in a locality vote to deliver a business plan and fund this by paying an additional levy on top of their business rates. It is common for BIDs to see themselves as destination management organisations.

The Association of Town and City Management is the national coordinating body that provides support, advice and guidance.

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Destination management is most commonly delivered by:

**Destination Management Organisations**
Usually a public/private partnership, a community interest company or private sector company that is formally constituted. It is usually, though not always, financed through mixture of public and private funds. It often operates commercial activity alongside its strategic functions and can also have a remit for place marketing, development of cultural product and the delivery of events. Some of the larger DMOs in major cities are also responsible for inward investment.

**Destination Management Partnerships**
These are less formal and are made up of a range of organisations that come together to perform the destination management function and deliver a mutually agreed Destination Management Plan.

**Local authority tourism teams**
Delivering a range of activity to develop the visitor economy. The team is usually placed within a department that focuses on economic development, culture or sport and in some instances the local authority’s communications division.

In some places, the two functions have been managed separately and in others they have been managed together. There isn’t a blueprint that every place can follow, arrangements will be tailored to the location and will change over time.
A productive partnership is essential if DMOs and town teams are to help businesses in cities and towns benefit from their work and together grow the local economy.

City Centre partnerships and DMOs need to regularly review and revise how they operate to take advantage of individual strengths and realise collective ambition.

Linking up at a strategic level provides a mandate for operational staff to work together.

Joining up communications can help destination and city centre managers save time and money and be more effective.

Making contact with existing organisations and finding out about their aims, objectives and strategies can guard against creating conflict from the start.

Ensuring the right people are involved in producing your plans will make them more deliverable and avoid duplication.

No one sector should dominate the business plan of a DMO or a town team.

Good communication is central to any partnership and there can never be too much of it.

Neither the destination manager nor the town centre manager needs to develop expertise in each other’s area, instead they can work together.

Maintaining the relationship between destination management and town centre management should be regarded as a priority.

Destination managers are very likely to have valuable market intelligence that can be used by city centre managers and city businesses.

Marketing is an area where a coherent approach between destination management and city centre management is paramount.

Digital marketing tools such as websites, social media channels and apps are flexible and easy to tailor to specific audiences and sectors, it is an area with great potential for collaboration.

If destination and city centre managers work together to streamline their activity and coordinate their communications they can become the partners of choice for the business community.
Bristol got its first City Centre Management Organisation in 1995 when John Lewis indicated that it was leaving Bristol City Centre.

It got its first DMO in 2002 when the tourism team of the local authority was externalised and Destination Bristol was born. In 2008 city centre management and destination management came together into one organisation and created a new iteration of Destination Bristol. For six years the two functions were managed together and this produced growth in the overall tourism economy including:

- Increased visitor numbers
- New hotels, restaurants and retailers
- Rise in the number of people working in the sector
- 30% rise in the number of visitors

The 2008 merger was not however without its challenges. There were some in the tourism and hospitality sector in particular that felt resource allocated to their sector was being diluted and used for city centre management purposes. Some never really moved away from this view even though the city’s visitor economy was increasingly successful.

In 2012 Bristol elected its first mayor and fifteen months on change is once again on the horizon. City centre and destination management may be split prompting a new and enhanced approach to city centre management while destination management may become part of an entity with a broader remit than just the visitor economy. Most of those involved view these possibilities positively. It would mandate city centre management to focus on the public realm, deal more effectively with the nuts and bolts of the fabric of a city and deliver improvements to the visitor experience through greater attention to cleanliness, crime reduction, signage etc. Destination management on the other hand may be part of a body that takes a strategic view of the city’s overall marketing plans, as well as development for visitors, investors, residents, students and businesses - an overview that has perhaps not been integral to strategy and decision making in the recent past.

DMOs in England work closely with VisitEngland, the national tourist board, to grow the country’s visitor economy. Collectively they are focused on delivering the Strategic Framework for Tourism in England, produced with the tourism industry in 2009. VisitEngland helps and supports English destinations with practical advice, research and intelligence, strategic marketing activity and by producing case studies of best practice and new initiatives. They also lead development in areas such as policy and events of national importance.

“John Hirst, currently CEO of Destination Bristol, is clear that change is not something to be scared of, perceiving that places need to regularly review and revise how they operate to take advantage of individual strengths and realise collective ambition.”
Destination management is the function of taking a 360 degree view of a place from a visitor perspective, assessing its product, identifying its markets and then facilitating, supporting and cajoling a complex partnership to attract visitors and ensure that when they visit they stay longer, spend more and have a great time so that when they return home they recommend and ultimately return. They also deliver on the ground. This is how Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) seek to achieve economic growth.

By necessity the job involves a very wide range of organisations and individuals: tourism and hospitality businesses, institutions (cathedrals, universities), local authorities, retailers, transport providers, education providers and many more.

Town centre management is equally complex and multifaceted. It leads, influences and coordinates towns and cities so that they work as service centres for residents, as attractive places for local visitors and tourists and as profitable locations for businesses. It is a critical player in the destination management process. While tourists may not be a primary focus for centre managers, they are often a major consideration and much of what the centre management function does has a significant impact on a visitor’s experience as the table below shows.

Destination Management Organisations manage places that are identified as destinations by visitors. A destination can include several towns – the New Forest for example – and occasionally several cities as in the case of Manchester. As a result DMOs can be required to work with several town teams and will find that their resources are stretched.

Destinations rarely follow administrative or political boundaries and not every town or city is a visitor destination. It is helpful to be realistic about the opportunity that tourism presents for a town or city. DMOs will work with town teams and the business community to assess the tourism potential of a particular location.

### The destination management process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town Centre Management</th>
<th>Visitor/DMO benefit</th>
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| Managing the city/town events diary | Addressing seasonality  
Helping to make a town distinctive |
| Facilitating/managing markets | Contributing to local vibrancy  
Helping to make a town distinctive |
| Running local quality schemes e.g. Best Bar None, Britain in Bloom | Contributing to a feeling of safety and well-being  
Creating an attractive public realm  
Delivering good customer service |
| Liaising with stakeholders that have an impact on the smooth running of the town in particular police, the local authority, traffic managers etc. | Ensuring basic facilities for visitors i.e. toilets, parking  
Providing a safe environment |
| Liaising with and supporting traders both individually and through associations | Contributing to local vibrancy  
Delivering good customer service |
| Helping to deliver business support initiatives such as shop watch | Helping to sustain the product |
| Monitoring the health of the town/city in terms of shop vacancy rates and encouraging new businesses | Contributing to local vibrancy  
Helping to make a town distinctive |
| Monitoring the appearance of the town/city and helping to deliver improvements e.g. graffiti removal | Helping to create a welcoming and attractive environment |
| Conducting audits and research activity to help with decision making | Contribution to developing tourism sustainably |
| Inward investment | Contributing to local vibrancy  
Helping to refresh the destination offer/product |

### DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLANS

A Destination Management Plan (DMP) has been defined in detail in the VisitEngland document ‘Principles for Developing Destination Management Plans’ (see Resources and Links). In summary it is the equivalent to a strategy and action plan for tourism in a destination. It includes a shared statement of intent to manage a destination over a stated period of time, articulating the roles of the different stakeholders and identifying clear actions they will take, as well as the apportionment of resources.

In creating a DMP a Destination Management Organisation will seek a high level of consensus from a very wide range of partners and stakeholders so that it becomes a plan for everyone to work towards. This consensus building includes stakeholders in any city or town within the DMOs ‘patch’ including any group or organisation concerned with town centre management.

Destination Management Plans are concerned with strategic priorities but also practical actions. City Centre Management Organisations are often the natural co-ordinating and delivery bodies for these practical actions.
In Cambridge the functions of city centre management and destination management have followed a similar trajectory, from Council-led partnerships to sustainable private-sector-led companies and the journey is still underway.

City centre management has taken seven years to effect the transition, becoming along the way a City Centre Management Company before emerging in 2013 as a Business Improvement District. The city’s tourism service, Visit Cambridge, embarked on a similar journey transitioning from a Council-led partnership with 275 members to a fully-fledged Destination Management Organisation with an estimated launch date of spring 2015.

Emma Thornton, Head of Tourism and City Centre Management at the City Council has been at the centre of both journeys. She is leading the work on Visit Cambridge’s Destination Management Plan that is being developed in close consultation with the Cambridge BID and other BIDs in the surrounding area. She is clear that the two functions must work, “Hand in glove, from the bottom up, in order to avoid overlap and duplication on delivery”. Emma’s priority in facilitating the development of Visit Cambridge is to ensure that its project activity builds on and strengthens the activity delivered by the BIDs. She says, “This will be essential in order to deliver a completely joined-up approach to destination management for the destination ‘Cambridge and Beyond’.”

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A shopping street in Cambridge

Cambridge
working hand-in-hand from the bottom up

This will be essential in order to deliver a completely joined-up approach to Destination Management for the destination ‘Cambridge and Beyond’.
Building a productive partnership

A productive partnership is essential if DMOs and town teams are to help businesses in cities and towns benefit from their work and together grow the local economy. The result of a dysfunctional relationship between organisations will be confusion, conflict and missed opportunities.

DMOs and town teams have customers and stakeholders in common, in particular visitor attractions, activity providers, retailers, hospitality, leisure and transport operators all of whom will be as interested in attracting the custom of visitors as locals. Working together the DMO and the town team can make sense of their roles for their stakeholders, make it easier for businesses to participate in and derive benefit from their activity and foster collaboration between the sectors. These are some of the ways to build a productive partnership.

“Building a productive partnership is essential if DMOs and town teams are to help businesses in cities and towns benefit from their work and together grow the local economy.”

Forge Strategic Links

If the destination management or town centre management organisations are formally constituted, effective partnerships can be forged by inviting directors to sit on the boards of both, so that each is involved with the work of the other at a strategic level. If there are less formal groups, such as town teams and Destination Management Partnerships, the same principle can be applied. Invite your counterparts to be part of your meetings and decision making. Linking up at a strategic level provides a mandate for operational staff to work together.
Three distinct entities are concerned with the health and success of Bournemouth town centre. The Town Centre Business Improvement District (BID) covers the town centre of Bournemouth; the Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) takes in 7 miles of the coastal strip including the seaside towns of Boscombe, Southbourne and Westbourne; Bournemouth’s Tourism Management Board predates both and it is the resort’s Destination Management Organisation (DMO). The local authority is active in all three, as well as providing the resource for Bournemouth Tourism and managing many of the resort’s significant assets.

Direct links between the organisations at director level facilitate mostly harmonious relationships and foster a sense of common purpose: for example the DMO chair also sits on the board of the Town Centre BID, the Director of the DMO is also a senior council officer and several people sit on two or more of the boards.

Solid links at director level have ensured that on a key area of collaboration, marketing, there is an agreed focus for each: the BID focuses on the Christmas build-up, critical to retailers; the TBID focuses on shoulder seasons, important in stretching the season for the tourism and hospitality sector; while the DMO focuses on the main summer season and leads on the large signature events that define the town and grow its reputation nationally. The result is that Bournemouth is promoted year round to relevant audiences according to the season.

"Direct links between the organisations at director level facilitate mostly harmonious relationships and foster a sense of common purpose."
Collaborate on Communications

Joining up communications can help destination managers and city centre managers to save time and money and be more effective. It can be as simple as signposting to opportunities or as integrated as producing joint newsletters. The degree of collaboration will be appropriate to the opportunity or message being communicated. It is unlikely that organisations will choose to produce a joint annual report, but a joint newsletter may be more feasible. Most city centre managers and destination managers will hold regular forums to tell their stakeholders what they are doing. They can reduce costs by holding them jointly sharing the costs of venues, catering and guest speakers. If this isn’t appropriate a city centre forum can provide a platform for the destination manager through a guest speaker spot or by including destination content in information packs. If either use printed communications, working together can produce significant savings in the basics of stationery and postage. Joining up adds value for the organisations and the stakeholders but it also needs careful planning to ensure that everyone gets what they need out of the activity. If not the collaboration will be short lived.

Don't assume you are

Don't let individuals or single agendas dominate

When a DMO or a town team/BID newly emerges it is almost certain that some kind of organisation or group will already exist and that it will cover some of the functions concerned with the management and promotion of the city or town.

Making contact with existing organisations and finding out in detail about their aims, objectives and strategies can guard against creating conflict from the start. Additionally it can help manage the expectations of the newcomer by clarifying how they fit into the existing organisational landscape. If the newcomer comes into conflict with potential partners early on, it will take longer for them to forge good working relationships.

Share your plans

If both functions have existed for some time and haven't been working together it is never too late to start talking. Ensure that the right people are involved in producing your plans. It will make them more deliverable and avoid duplication. It can also reveal short cuts - your counter parts may be able to achieve your aim more quickly and effectively than you.

Communicate with each other

Good communication is central to any partnership and there probably can never be too much of it. The method of communication needs to be tailored to circumstances but a face-to-face meeting at least quarterly is a good aim. Communication needs to take place between senior staff. It would be unfair to expect more junior staff to have the organisational overview necessary to communicate effectively. Meetings that review the previous quarter’s activity and look forward three months are usually enough to ensure that there is good mutual understanding and a basis for collaboration. In many instances a monthly meeting will be feasible and beneficial. Where joint projects have been agreed, specialist staff will need to meet and talk frequently to draw up project plans, check their progress and evaluate their results.

If one organisation or group is significantly larger and multi-layered it may not be possible for the smaller organisation to interact with all the necessary levels. In this instance it is sensible for the larger organisation to consider providing a single point of contact through which information flows. A key account management system may be appropriate.

Leave it to the experts

It sometimes makes sense to leave areas of particular expertise to the experts. DMOs usually have expertise in brand development and marketing, strategic planning and research. This is because their customers have no loyalty to the destination (they have the world to choose from for holiday and short breaks) and maintaining awareness and turning fleeting interest into a booking is a priority. Town Centre Management Organisations usually have expertise in making a town or city function well. This is because their end users require a functional town or city to go about their daily lives. Neither the destination manager nor the town centre manager needs to develop expertise in each other’s area, instead they can work together.

“Good communication is central to any partnership and there probably can never be too much of it. The method of communication needs to be tailored to circumstances but a face-to-face meeting at least quarterly is a good aim. ”
In 2010, Newcastle’s council-owned car parks and city centre retailers joined together to launch the Alive after Five initiative.

Parking became free after 5pm and retailers agreed to keep their doors open until 8pm Monday to Friday and until 7pm on Saturdays. In 2012 it was estimated that the scheme had provided a £157m boost to the city’s economy. Sean Bullick, CEO of the city’s Business Improvement District NE1 was quoted in the press saying, “The benefit of Alive After Five goes far beyond the retail sector.

The city’s universities and professional services companies benefit from having a more cosmopolitan and attractive city centre offer for their employees and students, and the city’s bars, restaurants and cultural venues also benefit from the free parking after 5pm element of the initiative. Free parking has always been highlighted as absolutely critical.”
Morpeth is a market town in south Northumberland that 18 months ago established its first town team in response to the Portas pilot initiative.

The town council, the Morpeth and District Chamber of Trade, the Greater Morpeth Development Trust and the newly opened Sanderson Arcade came together to bid for a possible £100,000. They received a consolation prize of £10,000 and decided that it could be spent wisely to everyone's benefit if they continued to work together.

The priority of the team is promotion within the area, via the More in Morpeth website, print, events and also to tourists using the opportunities offered by the DMO for the area, Northumberland Tourism.

The centre manager for Sanderson Arcade is a key member of the town team and has taken a lead in relationship building on its behalf. She talks frequently to a wide range of community, special interest and business groups. Hers is a critical role in an essentially informal partnership that has no constitution, legal status or statutory function and gives the town team the mandate to make decisions and spend money. The focus on relationship building extends to the DMO: on behalf of the town team the centre manager attends the DMO's regular stakeholder meetings and the general manager of the DMO reciprocates by attending town team meetings every eight weeks or so. As well as their own activity, the town team buys into some of the promotional opportunities offered by the DMO to increase the profile of Morpeth within the Northumberland destination offer.

The town team and the DMO are clear about who they are focusing on when it comes to growing visitor numbers. The town team is keen to attract groups while Northumberland tourism focuses on the independent market. Both are comfortable with the other's approach and feel that they are complimenting each other.

The town team would like to do more in relation to the visitor economy and can see opportunities in working with the cruise market and the ferry operators. They look to Northumberland Tourism for help with this ambition.

INVEST IN RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE

Just like marriages professional relationships, once established, need maintenance. It is easy to forget your partners when you are busy or just call on them when you have a problem. Maintaining the relationship between destination management and town centre management should be regarded as a priority.

The town team and the DMO are clear about who they are focusing on when it comes to growing visitor numbers. The town team is keen to attract groups while Northumberland tourism focuses on the independent market.
Destination Management Organisations are useful partners both for town teams and businesses operating in cities. They possess information, knowledge and expertise that can help achieve the shared ambition of economic growth. They provide promotional and business improvement opportunities. Here are some of the practical ways that city centre businesses and city/town teams can work with DMOs.

**Research and Monitoring**

Destination managers are very likely to have valuable market intelligence that can be used by city centre managers and city businesses. Visitor surveys, economic impact studies and sector specific feasibility reports will all contain information that can be used to plan business development and marketing activity.

Visitor surveys will often include a sample of local people and the results will therefore reflect what visitors and local audiences think about a city. Feedback that will be most useful to city centre managers and city businesses is the customer view of: service standards, attractiveness of the public realm, ease of getting around the city, the range and quality of the shopping offer, ratings of facilities such parking and toilets and provision of information. The city can use this information to improve their offer and change their business practices in response to changing consumer demands.

Sector specific studies can be helpful if centre management has responsibility for inward investment. Knowing about the demand for hotel bedrooms, whether more budget or boutique provision is called for or if there is a danger of over-supply, can help centre managers that work with developers and investors. If the range of shopping is viewed as limited this can point to a business opportunity or a development initiative.

Economic impact studies are conducted annually by most DMOs to monitor the health of the visitor economy. In addition to volume and value figures the studies provide intelligence about spend in different sectors and seasons. This information can be used by city centre management and businesses as a planning tool, particularly for events and promotions.

Market Intelligence is particularly useful if it is benchmarked against similar cities and towns. In England there are two groups that are worth noting: Core Cities that includes most of the country’s major conurbations and Heritage Cities. Centre managers and businesses operating in urban areas can use this information to see where they are performing well in comparison to the national competition. Benchmarking naturally leads to sharing of ideas and learning.

VisitEngland’s research and insights service provides valuable information for cities and towns and is well used by DMOs. Key facts about the country’s visitor economy, the results of major tourism surveys, information about consumer trends and studies into tourism sectors can all be found online. Of particular interest in the context of this document is the Destination Intelligence System, an online database that brings together a range of information to produce summaries relating to local areas. The Tourism Intelligence Unit at the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has also produced economic data relating to the visitor economy. VisitEngland and ONS intelligence can be found at visitengland.org/insight-statistics.
Bath Tourism Plus and the Bath Business Improvement District work closely together to promote the city.

In its early days the BID lacked a working relationship with the pre-existing DMO but had a mandate to promote the city. Fortunately the BID manager discovered that there was a partner organisation, Bath Tourism Plus, that has a strength in marketing. Together the two organisations created a brand positioning for Bath and started working on joint marketing activities. This avoided duplication of effort, saved money and, ensured that the city had one brand for everyone to get behind. Since then the two organisations have worked closely together to fund and deliver marketing campaigns and the brand of the city is stronger as a result.

MARKETING
Marketing is an area where a coherent approach between destination management and city centre management is paramount. Confused marketing messages and multiple marketing propositions will make the city appear schizophrenic. The businesses in the city want their marketing activity to be successful and bring them more customers and so do hotels and visitor attractions. Both look to their relevant agency for help and rightly expect them to work together to achieve coherence and consistency.

Ensuring that there are complimentary marketing plans in place, that there are agreed key messages about the city and that they are incorporated into the marketing tools of both functions, will make all marketing more effective.

“the two organisations have worked closely together to fund and deliver marketing campaigns and the brand of the city is stronger as a result.”
In 2013 Durham staged an exhibition of world-class quality bringing the priceless Lindisfarne Gospels from the British Library to the city’s World Heritage Site.

For over two years the businesses in Durham City were encouraged to use the event to their benefit as well as provide a whole town welcome to an expected audience of 100,000.

A series of briefings were held for city businesses keeping them up-to-date on the progress of the event. The response was positive and productive. In order to give a feeling of celebration stickers were produced for shop windows which said ‘Come in and ask me about the Gospels’ and many visitor did just that. Small leaflets that contained key facts about the exhibition were distributed among retailers so that they could answer questions.

A competition was run to identify the businesses that were the best ambassadors for the exhibition and certificates were awarded that could be displayed in store.

Some businesses went the extra mile: Warmsanctuary, a local flooring shop, used carpet offcuts to create a ‘carpet dragon’ statue that became part of the exhibition. Waterstones became a temporary box office for ticket sales. Many businesses decided to extend their opening hours into the evening to capture extra business when the exhibition stayed opened until 10pm. Several restaurants created Lindisfarne Gospels menus. All of these initiatives were picked up by the DMO’s marketing team and the businesses received local publicity and were profiled on the event website.

The exhibition was a great success with many of the city’s businesses saying that it had increased their trade. They responded to the event and they reaped the rewards.

"Creating a successful event requires good curation, effective promotion and excellent logistics. It is in everyone’s interest that an event attracts a good audience, that it benefits local businesses and that it is delivered safely."

EVENTS

Events, particularly large outdoor events, are whole town projects that impact on every aspect of the location and the people within it. Creating a successful event requires good curation, effective promotion and excellent logistics. It is in everyone’s interest that an event attracts a good audience, that it benefits local businesses and that it is delivered safely. DMOs and town centre management working together can address all of these critical success factors. DMOs can define the type of event that will attract visitors (they will usually please residents too) and promote the event, town centre management can engage businesses, help them maximise the opportunity and work with the local authority to ensure the event is delivered safely.
Digital marketing tools such as websites, social media channels and apps are flexible and easy to tailor to specific audiences and specific sectors. It is an area with great potential for collaboration.

Many places have a number of websites that claim to be the one-stop-shop for all information about a city or town. In reality it is highly unlikely. A DMO-run website will focus on experiences that will attract tourists, while town centre sites will carry content about local activity for residents and businesses. Even so, they will often duplicate large tranches of information in the form of listings of product (businesses) that are in their own partnership, membership or group of levy payers.

There is no reason why one site, well-structured and managed, cannot meet the needs of everyone. DMOs already do this by creating channel sites within their ‘destination’ website to appeal to different types of visitors with special interests. For example a campaign promoting cycling on holiday will need a website that publishes information on cycle routes, cycle hire, outdoor suppliers, accommodation that welcomes cyclists etc. DMOs will channel relevant information into a dedicated set of cycling pages and then use marketing techniques to direct consumers interested in cycling to these pages rather than the generic homepage.

It is possible for the destination website to do the same for a specific town or city. The solution lies in the technology behind a destination website. It is usually data driven with the DMO spending time in the town or city. The solution lies in the technology behind a destination website. It is usually data driven with the DMO spending time in the town or city. Even so, they will often duplicate large tranches of information in the form of listings of product (businesses) that are in their own partnership, membership or group of levy payers.

‘The principle of gathering and entering data once and then publishing it in multiple formats through multiple channels is more than possible, we do it all the time’. Sarah Johnson, Marketing Manager, Visit County Durham

It is not enough today for websites to be designed for use on a desktop or laptop computer. The increased use of mobile devices and the consumer expectation that they can get the information they want ‘anytime, anywhere’ means that a website must have a version that is easily used on the move. Most DMOs do this as a matter of course and their mobile sites can be good vehicles for town teams.

With resource hard to come by, it makes little sense for one place to support multiple websites in multiple formats carrying very similar information.

Apps are a digital tool increasingly used by DMOs to highlight discounts, deals and special offers and provide self-guided trails and tours. Their purpose is to encourage spur of the moment action by visitors post arrival and give them reasons to stay in the destination longer and spend more money. Their application for town teams is obvious: businesses in a town can use an app to react swiftly to local circumstances, increasing their profile at times of high footfall and driving more custom when it is quiet.

A collaborative approach to developing and managing apps can be helpful and ensure that they are effective tools. A good question to ask is - how many apps does one town need?

Traditional tools

Print is the traditional way for destination managers and town teams to demonstrate visibly that they are promoting their stakeholders to the consumer. The only reason for producing print is if it supports economic growth and there is no doubt that consumers are increasingly switching to digital channels to fulfil their information needs - many destinations have already dispensed with the traditional pre-arrival holiday guide. In time, print may become completely obsolete. For now, many destination managers continue to produce post-arrival print because, together with apps, it plays a part in lengthening stay and increasing spend once the visitor is ‘in destination’.

The destination manager will produce and distribute a guide with the visitor in mind. It will contain information about attractions and activities and get distributed to places where the visitor is likely to pick it up – destination gateways, hotel foyers, information centres, attraction entrances.

Town centre managers who know that print still works for their local market can use the destination guide for their own purposes by distributing it differently - at leisure centres, council information points, community centres, or by door dropping it to selected postcodes. They may have to pay for additional copies and additional distribution, but it will save time and money to use an existing guide rather than produce a duplicate.

They can also add value to their destination partner by encouraging a town’s businesses to support the guide, driving more revenue into its production, ensuring its sustainability and helping to make its content more comprehensive.

One of the challenges for town centre managers of using destination marketing tools is that they are not always suitable for all their stakeholders. The destination guide will be ideal for restaurants, bars, clubs, shops, and transport providers who want to attract the custom of people on a day out or a longer holiday, but it is unlikely to be appropriate for professional services.

Centre managers are tempted therefore to reject the destination guide in favour of a publication that can list all their businesses in one place. Most marketers would agree that this is not the best approach. Different tools and channels are needed for different sectors and a more fine grain approach will help the very wide range of city businesses to promote themselves to the right people.

One marketing vehicle is unlikely to do the whole job for everyone.

Making sense of the opportunities

Businesses have a lot of calls on their budgets. The local press, on and offline publishers, training providers, event producers, DMOs, town teams - all of these and more will view a city’s businesses as potential sources of income.

Destination and city centre managers will be regarded as just one of many touting for their marketing budget but if they work together to streamline their activity and co-ordinate their communications they can become the partners of choice for the business community. Joining up communications (see above) is important to make information easily accessible and to reduce the quantity of contacts the business has to handle. By working together the DMO and town team are overtly putting the interests of the businesses at the front of their thinking.

It will be appreciated.
## Resources and links

### Towns and cities

- **Bournemouth**
  - atcm.org
  - corecities.com
  - heritagecities.com

- **Bristol**
  - towncentrebid.co.uk
  - coastalbid.co.uk
  - bournemouth.co.uk/about-us

- **Cambridge**
  - cambridgebid.co.uk
  - visitcambridge.org/information/about-us

- **Morpeth**
  - moreinmorpeth.co.uk

- **Newcastle**
  - newcastlener1td.com

- **Northumberland**
  - northumberlandtourism.org.uk

- **VisitEngland**
  - visitengland.org/strategicframework
  - visitengland.org/insight-statistics
  - visitengland.org/england-tourism-industry/how-tourism-is-managed
  - visitengland.org/england-tourism-industry/how-tourism-is-managed/dmactionplan.aspx
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