

Town Audit

Reasons for the audit

This audit is an important part of the Market Town Welcome Programme. It will help each market town to appreciate its current tourism offer and interest to visitors, as well as identifying problems, potential gaps and opportunities for future developments. By collecting the same information for each town we can give evidence of comparative strengths and weaknesses.

Many businesses contribute to the tourism appeal of a market town. So, the audit covers not only accommodation providers and attractions, but also specialist retailers, markets, sports, countryside and cultural facilities. It is also important to consider the visitor's experience from their arrival in the town for the first time and how they find their way around the town. Therefore we will consider infrastructure issues such as signposting, car parking, toilet provision and information availability in the town. Studies have shown that they can significantly affect the quality of the visit and influence whether the visitor returns.

The information collected will be fed into workshops being held in each town in early March to inform discussions about the town's special character, its strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be improved.

Completing the audit and help available

The form should ideally be completed in partnership by several people from the market town. This could include the local tourism or market town officer, manager of the tourist information centre, rep from the tourism association or longstanding business operator in the town. Some of the information will already be available, some will need collating from sources such as visitor guides and some will require volunteers to carry out some simple survey work on the ground.

Each town has a contact on the Miller Research Team who will help advise and assist with the audit (see list below). For those towns previously involved in the Retail Distinctiveness Programme we will already have much of the information on the retail offer of the town and will complete these sections for you in advance.

There are 10 sections to complete. You could delegate different people to complete certain sections. For example your local tourist information centre manager will be best placed to complete information on the TIC and possibly the sections on attractions or accommodation. We suggest a two phase approach: firstly compiling as much of the factual information as possible. Then, secondly, a group session to pull the different sections of the audit together, check the details and complete the quality assessment aspects - which require an agreed group opinion about how the facility meets the needs of visitors. Your contact from the research team can advise on how to complete the form and could also attend your group session to help assess quality aspects and finalise the process.

Note - please be as accurate as possible but don't spend too long trying to gather figures if they are not readily available - a best estimate will be sufficient. The audit is supposed to be thorough but not overly onerous.

Completion timescale

We anticipate it will take nearly a month to gather the relevant information. Please fill in as much of the factual data by **Friday 15 February 2008**. You could then hold your session to pool and agree the final version, including

the quality aspects in the last two weeks of February. **The whole audit needs to be complete and finalised by 28 February.**

Quality assessment

For some of the information you collect we would like you to assess how well the facility meets the needs of visitors to the town - see boxes shaded grey. Some businesses or facilities (e.g. pubs) may not be targeting visitors, so it is useful to add a qualitative element to the factual data.

Using a scoring system of 1 to 5 give each of the elements a score where

5 = very good, exceeds visitors' expectations, is a draw for visitors in itself

4 = good, meets visitors' expectations and an asset to the area

3 = moderately good, meets most visitors' needs

2 = adequate but room for improvement

1 = not suitable for visitors - you would not advise visitors to use/visit.

This scoring should be done collectively, i.e. is not just one person's opinion. It is not intended as criticism of particular sites but an objective assessment to identify gaps.

Research team contacts for each town:

Town	Contact	Tel	Email
Berwick on Tweed	Alison Caffyn	01568 611575 / 07811 353986	alison.caffyn@tiscali.co.uk
Alnwick	Kristel Sootarsing	01873 851889	kristel@miller-research.co.uk
Amble	Sam White	01873 851887	sam@miller-research.co.uk
Haltwhistle	Kerry Lewis	01873 851886	kerry@miller-research.co.uk
Seahouses	Kristel Sootarsing	01873 851889	kristel@miller-research.co.uk
Wooler	Sam White	01873 851887	sam@miller-research.co.uk

Market Town Welcome Audit for _____

Before you start - definition of market town area

It is important to define the area within which you are to collect the audit information. This could be the boundary of the built up area of the town. However there are usually some attractions, pubs, hotels, farmhouse B&Bs etc in the immediate hinterland which are closely linked to the town. They may be easily reachable on foot, by bicycle or a short drive/taxi ride away for visitors. So you may want to use a boundary with a radius of two or three miles outside your town. We would advise not using a radius of more than five miles.

Market town area is defined within an approximate radius of _____ miles from the town edge.

Which includes the hamlets/settlements of _____

1. Accommodation

Please collect numbers of each type of accommodation. For smaller towns you may want to list all accommodation businesses individually.

	Number	No. of bedspaces, units or pitches	Number officially quality inspected
Hotels			
Guesthouses/B&Bs			
Inns or pubs with accommodation			
Self-Catering businesses			
Caravan & Camping sites			
Youth or other hostels			
Other group accommodation			

Are there any particular gaps in the type or quality of accommodation for the size of your town?

2. Attractions

Please include all sites which would be of interest to visitors, adding additional rows as necessary.

	Names	Opening days/months	Your quality score*
Historic houses, castles			
Museums, heritage centres			
Churches of interest to visitors			
Animal/wildlife attractions inc. nature reserves			
Farm attractions			
Gardens			
Railway, transport attractions			
Country parks, woodlands, special countryside sites			
Craft centres			
Other			

* Also mark any which have an official quality grading from the Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme

2b Festivals and Events

List regular or annual festivals and events which will be of interest to visitors, in calendar order, using extra lines if necessary.

Date	Event	Details

Are there any gaps, for example at particular times of the year

Does the range of events match the types of interests that visitors have?

3. Retail

Those towns which took part in the Retail Distinctiveness Programme will be able to use that information to complete this sheet. Note only those shops which will be of particular interest to visitors. In smaller towns that is likely to include food shops, but in larger towns focus on speciality shopping rather than the whole retail sector.

Shops

Retail type	No. of shops	Names (omit if too many to list)	No. of which in each quality category				
			5	4	3	2	1
Speciality Food							
Antiques							
Books							
Arts / Crafts							
Gift							
Outdoor/Leisure							
Clothing							
Garden centres/ nurseries							
Other Speciality or 'destination' shops							

Markets

Market type	name	regularity	day(s) of week	5	4	3	2	1
Outdoor								
Indoor								
Speciality								

Eating out

	No.	Names (omit if too many to list)	5	4	3	2	1
Restaurants							
Take-aways							
Cafes/tea shops							
Pubs serving food							
Other							

Vacant shops

How many vacant shops are there in the town currently?

Sunday opening

How many shops are open on Sundays?

How many eating places are open on Sundays?

Early evenings	
How many shops are open in the early evening 5pm-7pm?	
How many eating places are open in the early evening?	
Half day closing	
How many shops observe a half day closing?	
Which day of the week?	

Are there any particular gaps in the retail and catering offer of your town for a town of its size?

4. Sports, outdoor activity and entertainment facilities

Please note all facilities which are available for visitors (i.e. not private clubs etc). Add extra rows as necessary.

Facility	Name	Brief details	Quality grading					
			5	4	3	2	1	
Leisure centre/ gym								
Swimming pool								
Golf								
Long distance footpaths								
Other named walks								
Bicycle hire								
Cycle routes								
Riding/pony trekking								
Special riding routes								
Fishing								
Sailing								
Canoeing								

Other outdoor activities, sports								
Theatre								
Cinema*								
Other entertainment facilities								

* include regular film showing arrangements if appropriate

Are there any particular gaps or weaknesses for a town of its size?

5. Support facilities and infrastructure

Car parking

	Free	Short stay	Long stay
No. of car parks			
No. of spaces in total			
	Free	Metered	
On street parking places (approx)			

Coach Parking

	Location	capacity
Location(s) for dropping off passengers		
Location(s) for coach parking		
Estimated no. of coaches visiting the town each week?		
Any related issues?		

Other transport facilities

No.s and locations of bicycle racks/storage	
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Location of central bus station/shelter	
Facilities available at bus station/shelter	
No. of daily buses linking to other towns	
Distance from town centre to nearest railway station	

Public toilets

Toilet location			
Opening hours			
free/paid			
disabled access yes/no			
baby changing yes/no			

Are there any particular weaknesses or gaps for a town of its size?

6. Visitor Information Centre

Visitor / Tourist Information Centres (VICs/TICs) are the public face of tourism. They provide a vital role both in the planning of visits to the destination and influencing activity once the visitor has arrived, thus encouraging longer stays and increased spend. They also play an important role in providing an information service to residents and hence support the key Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market.

Does your town have a VIC/ TIC?	yes / no	If not, where is your nearest centre?	
Location		Contact Name	
Telephone Number		Email Address	

For those towns with a VIC/TIC, please compile the most recent figures available

Enquiry type:	Total Number of Enquiries		
	2005	2006	2007
Counter			
Postal			
Telephone			
Email			
Accommodation bookings			

Please estimate proportions of enquiries from each of:

	%
Local residents	
UK visitors	
Overseas visitors	

Visitor Information Needs

What are the most frequent information requests that you receive from visitors and potential visitors?	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Are there gaps in the current information available to meet these requests? If so, what further types of information would be useful?

How well does the town meet the needs and expectations of visitors and what improvements are needed to better meet their requirements?

7. Tourist Information Points (TIPs)

TIPs are the notice or information boards which provide useful information for visitors such as a map of where they are and things to see and do. They are often located in car parks, town centres or key sites. Please survey and include details of those in your town, using additional columns if necessary.

Number in town:

Locations			
Content of each e.g. maps, adverts, events			
Is it well maintained?			
Who is responsible for maintenance?			
Is the content appropriate and up to date?			
Are there any additional locations where a TIP is needed?			

8. Interpretation

Interpretative materials play a key role in providing visitors with in depth information about a town or destination – beyond basic directions and information, they tell the story of a destination, informing visitors about its history and points of interest. Interpretative materials can vary tremendously - we suggest you focus on interpretative boards/panels, wall plaques, tours/signed trails, and guided tours.

Is there any interpretation around the town?	Details
Boards or panels at key sites or on key buildings of interest	
Plaques on specific buildings	
Signed tours or trails around the town	
Regular guided tours around the town	
Other interpretation materials	

<p>Who is responsible for maintenance of panels, plaques and signs?</p>
<p>Are there any gaps where further / new interpretative materials could be provided?</p>

9. Visitor Pedestrian Signposting

Pedestrian signposting, usually in the form of finger posts, plays an important role in ensuring that visitors to a town centre are able to orientate themselves effectively and find their way about. Looking at every individual finger post in larger towns is potentially a complicated and time consuming task - for the audit in this case we suggest the following approach;

- Choose a maximum of four locations (and the subsequent walking route to the town centre) which are key entry points/points of arrival for visitors – i.e. the main visitor car parks, bus/railway station/ dropping off point - and assess the following points
- In smaller towns where there are fewer than four fingerposts simply assess each in turn.

	Location 1	Location 2	Location 3	Location 4
Location or start point				
Is there a TIP showing where you are in relation to the town centre?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Signs to the Tourist / Visitor Information Centre?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Signs to public toilets?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Signs to main visitor attraction(s)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is there good continuity of signposts/fingerposts along the route?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Quality of Signing

Are routes clear?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Are fingerposts obscured or pointing the wrong way?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Are fingerposts well maintained?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Are there any obvious gaps in terms of facilities which are not currently signed?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

10. Road signposting for visitors

Feedback from visitors suggests that visitor signposting is consistently identified as something destinations could improve. More often than not, when a first time visitor travels to a destination, advance signposting will be their first experience of the destination – so it is important to make a good first impression. Visitors particularly value brown and white visitor signing which is easy to recognise and is designed specifically for their purposes.

Perhaps more so than the previous areas of the information audit, assessing road signposting to a destination is a complex area to consider – encompassing a range of logistical, technical and road safety and highway management issues. In practical terms, the most important areas to consider are the main road routes into the market towns

- Choose a maximum of four main road routes into the market towns (if there are fewer than 4 main routes, only assess those that are appropriate), starting from the nearest strategic road or junction.
- In larger towns these routes will be assessed by travelling along the route in a car, two people are required to carry out this aspect of the audit. Drive along the route from your chosen starting point, noting details on the issues set out in the template. **Safety warning - only carry out this survey at a quiet time and in good weather. Plan your route and stops in advance. Drive carefully and be aware of traffic behind you. If any routes are hazardous for this type of survey do not undertake it yourselves but discuss signage with your highways authority.**
- In smaller towns it may possible to complete this survey on foot - **Safety warning - again consider safety issues carefully before surveying along busy roads on foot, particularly if there is no pavement. Be especially careful if taking photographs.**

	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3	Route 4
starting point				
finishing point				
Are there any signs on the route indicating that this is a market town of interest to visitors? <i>(this could include white on brown tourist signs, welcome signing etc)</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Are there any white on brown tourist signs?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>- Record any details / location</i>				
Signposting to the Tourist Information Centre	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>- Record any details / location</i>				

Signposting for main attractions?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
- Record any details / location				
Signposting for visitor car parks?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
- Record any details / location				
Signposting for public toilets?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
- Record any details / location				
Is there an out-of-town Tourist Information Point on the main road before entering/turning off to the town?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
- Record any details / location				
Continuity of signposting				
Where facilities are signposted, does this remain consistent along the routes?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of signing.				
Are the signs appropriately maintained	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Visually- are they clear/obscured	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Are there any out of date signs which need to be removed or rationalised	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Note details for reporting to Highway authority				

The End!

Many thanks for collecting all the information.