

	<p>Make use market square more</p> <p>Bus station / shuttle buses</p>
<p>SWOT Analysis Retail</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <p>Varied retail offer Specialist shops Good retail environment Well-functioning shopping centres / retail hierarchy Attractive town scape</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>Concentration of empty shops Economic Climate (Expenditure fall) Reduction in staff levels Poor trading (at certain times) Slowdown in growth plans Change of use difficulties (Planning) Lack of destinations / anchor stores Lack of Wayfinding Stores (Coffee/ Gifts/ Local Food)</p> <p>Opportunities:</p> <p>Attraction of new anchors New regeneration schemes Revision of Town Centre Action Plan Commercial Leisure as pull factor Pop up shops Vitalisation of the market through new owners Widening the Town Centre boundary</p> <p>Threats:</p> <p>Internet Shopping Scotch Corner development / out of town Business Rates Further big name – business failure Pedestrian Flow is too weak for modern lifestyle</p>

2) LEISURE PROSPECTS WORKSHOP

Question	Issues Raised
<p>Constrained by ring road – Bank top, Central park, College, University, Theatre</p>	<p>SWOT of Leisure</p> <p>Strengths Strong evening economy Easy to get to Big population Broad based ethnic community Big groupings of socio “A” Strong independent offer More multicultural – over last 10 years</p> <p>Weaknesses Easy to get out of Competitors Lack of infrastructure to put on key events Lack of central point / form of information We don’t promote ourselves externally very well</p> <p>Opportunities Arrest decline of important assets – such as covered market / fountains etc. Historical opps if can be presented in right way Way finding / signage Improving engagement with outward facing Zero tolerance to anti-social behaviour – joint</p> <p>Threats Lack of other attractions / offers Lack of disposable income Scotch Corner retail park Park ranger Anti-social behaviours</p>
<p>Where do we want to be?</p>	<p>Improved look to save other areas – facelift Central tourist / information point Save connection between trains Street Theatre – engaging young people River walks – and plan for future maintenance</p>

3) ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE WORKSHOP

Question	Issues Raised
<p>Town Centre Boundaries</p>	<p>Incorporate Hippodrome / Forum , Hullaballoon and Bank Top station – likely to highlight rail heritage Incorporate Quaker cemetery Some key rail heritage assets up North Road to N Road station External to include North Road tell the rail story Woodland Road to incorporate heritage South park events and culture – connect to Town Centre economy (better to attract people to Skerne)</p>
<p>SWOT of Arts, Culture and Heritage</p>	<p>Strengths Rail heritage Theatre offer Connectivity Town as place itself Virtually intact town centre Self-sufficient town Huge industrial town Rail Drama Engineering St Cuthbert’s Heritage (religious)</p> <p>Weaknesses Lack of clear message Capacity to manage Underselling town Night time economy Lack of dedicated centre Heritage trail revamp/enhance Culture and leisure integrated in Local plan</p> <p>Opportunities 2025 Better linking up Lovely market town Better signposting Cross pollination – railway etc. (Saltburn – Darlington sea) Shout out more Work together to tell story Railway attracting – exploring stories</p>

	<p>Threats Not promoting Capacity Getting message out there</p>
Where do we want to be?	<p>Promoting connectivity Known for our rail heritage and theatre offer Known as distinct place Stories of place as well as attractions / programme securing spend Offering something different Off road use of assets A place where various parties get involved The site of a new large scale festival or scaled up existing festival</p>
What actions?	<p>Better knowledge of visitors Joint offers (Tees Valley, Darlington Connections) Better sell promote connectivity – e.g. last train home festival Solicit / grow hobbies / conference visits (Bridge – card game conference popular already) All parties getting involved Bedroom browsers – combined authority allocating resource to DMO - better promote the region Better promotion of rail heritage Last train home festival? Tell stories to get hooks A central information point Trail and promote free cark park Saturday (all day free)</p>
Barriers	<p>Culture, arts and heritage not yet drivers for local plan rather than add ons Volunteer and budget capacity Perception of events as threat Level of data captured Perception of events as a threat rather than an opportunity Capacity and people to organise volunteers getting involved Need DMO capacity</p>

4) DIGITAL WORKSHOP

Question	Issues Raised
<p>Problems in Town Centre</p>	<p>Losing bigger shops Not one hub in town to find out what's going on – loss of tourist information Parking – first issue businesses complain about Digital City have recently met with an organisation who have developed a Parking app – money off your next parking dependant on how much spend in local shops on first visit – digital solution to a problem, encourage repeat visits</p>
<p>Opportunities through digital</p>	<p>Huge amount of interest in town centre but not in interpretation – how animate town centre digitally – working with artists Something digitally in car parks / train station – digital projections onto a building When arrive in town need to be more proud of what we have – remember what's distinctive about Darlington When arrive at Durham station get map of town – electronic – feels welcoming Interactive displays used in museums for information Digital displays in shop window Mobile parking app – tracking of who is visiting/ where there coming from – can send push notifications Digital can solve multiple problems in one – issues not dealt with silos</p> <p>In you can collectively advertise in town centre to get people to buy in – download app – digital / creative company – solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to research not just traders problem but visitor shoppers • Need to make town centre more vibrant – that can be done more digitally – big screens – hearing music – street threat – digital culture • Ask SIRI on phone – app ask Darlington – mobile tourist info • TV in hotels – info on screen <p>Overnight visitors don't know where to go – digital city walking with business – streaming service – live streaming – live music</p>

	Digital info people similar to in Kings cross as mechanism to provide information to tourists
Are the current Town Centre boundaries correct? Should these change and where do you see different activities happening?	<p>Feel Theatre / Hullaballoon / Business Central / Forum should be included in town centre – need to include train station –proud message</p> <p>Route from station into town needs improvement</p> <p>Pedestrian route from Parkgate to station terrible – cars predominate</p> <p>Needs to think how current head of steam and station</p> <p>Story of Darlington projected onto a building</p>
Where do we want to be?	<p>Better utilise digital to help solve problems in town</p> <p>Providing distinct welcome / identify visitors – info for tourists</p> <p>How we do connect?</p>
What actions will get us there?	<p>Needs research into what visitors / shoppers actually want rather than just what traders think are the problems</p> <p>TV in hotels to promote wide offer</p> <p>Pedestrian route from the top of town needs improvement</p>
What barriers will need to be overcome?	<p>How to use digital in a more appropriate manner – apps etc. tend to rely on visitors being proactive</p> <p>Need to utilise digital so people know what Darlington is distinctive for</p>

5) TOWN CENTRE HOUSING AND ACCESS

- Well managed housing
- Vibrancy
- Moving beyond trade
- Reasons to visit
- Boosts evening accommodation
- No expansion of the town centre housing visible currently
- Create Innovation hub
- 5 unique businesses
- Connections to the town centre important
- Need more bus lanes on Parkgate and Victoria Road
- Connected to town centre Wifi
- Importance of Social media 0800 316 4411 option 1
- Rise and important of individual retail
- Landmarks – better signage and way finding
- Yards protruding
- Darlington DIRECTORY
- Taste of Darlington – in shops and businesses
- More research on why people visit and stay
- What's on in Darlington?
- More concentrated retail core
- Better connectivity into town centre – better buses
- Needs for better information for visitors – sell the town and the town as a hub
- Better signage for independent sector – pop up shop ceasing
- Improved market offer
- Better use of digital
- Improved image of gateway areas
- Extend town centre to Parkgate, Northgate and Victoria Road

6) TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN

Question	Issues Raised
Retail	<p>Support for independent retailers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase footfall • Most events held around main High Street Nothing to direct people to independent shopping areas Signage / zoning would be good • Town maps at car parks • Online maps – phone <p>Encouragement of tourism, very relevant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big potential to grow • New hotels – potential to promote offer in rooms <p>Tourism strategy important</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Road opportunities – a honey pot to attract visitors • Environmental issues on route between Town Centre and Head of Steam <p>Reduce restrictions on using space in front of stores Boost Café culture and Street trading Bring life to the streets Too restricted – traders have to jump through hoops</p> <p>Other issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lost TK Maxx • Bigger businesses designed out • Reinstate plan at Commercial street Desire to have bigger units • East street car park – tired – needs modernising • Car parking important (Footprints) • Some customers prefer going to Bishop Auckland as parking is free there • Offer 2/3 hours free parking, after that a rate to park all day. (there could be 2 rates) • Attract tourists – give them something to appeal to them • M&S idea- when spend in shop get £1 back

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independents could do a similar scheme (similar to previous one in Houndgate/Blackwellgate) <p>BID</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there finance to carry on (from DBC)? • Revisit BID – what was good? • Can TVCA help? • Still have Town Centre Board – but need fresh injection of traders • Confusion of who does what – DBC/Town Centre Board/BID <p>Basics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look after environment • Untidy Benches need painting • need good housekeeping plus longer term strategy • General Darlington is a nice town <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generally clean and safe <p>Darlington Market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better in the Market Square - Now fragmented - Market should adapt - Good quality products - Orange Pip Festival (Middlesbrough) - Mistake to move market from square <p>Since the 'No' vote (BID) there are major concerns amongst some businesses.</p> <p>What are DBC's plans to get people into Darlington in order to maintain the same events as before?</p> <p>Due to budget cuts DBC cannot match business levies.</p> <p>We knew the plans that BID had for the future but DBC's plans are unknown.</p> <p>BID to be used as a vehicle and due to staff cuts who will take over the role</p>
Key Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for independent sector - Improved market offer - Support tourism - Bringing life to streets - Good housekeeping