

Northumberland

MARKETING STRATEGY

2021/2022

VISIT NORTHUMBERLAND

Our vision is to develop a destination organisation with an outstanding record of successful delivery which puts the county firmly on the map as a premier visitor destination and proactively leads the tourism business community in Northumberland.

Rich in internationally renowned heritage, world-class attractions and authentic experiences, Northumberland will be a successful, integrated destination providing a high-quality and distinct visitor experience.

Visit Northumberland will bring together the expertise of Northumberland Tourism (the official Destination Management Organisation for Northumberland) and the proactive tourism team based within Northumberland County Council .

OUR PRIORITIES

**Leadership
and
engagement**

**Increased
visitors-
quality over
quantity**

**Sustainable
product and
destination
management**

**Better use
of data and
intelligence**

**Focused
monitorable
marketing &
promotion**

**Business
and people
development**

KEY ACTION AREAS

STRATEGY

**Leadership,
co-ordination and
strategy**

Visitor experience

**Destination
development
and Destination
Management Plan**

**Evidence and
intelligence**

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Business engagement

Business development

Product development

**People development
and skills**

MARKETING

**Marketing and
promotion**

**Digital strategy and
development**

**Communications and
content**

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Northumberland's Destination Management Plan (NDMP) outlines our collective vision and plan for the development of Northumberland as a tourism destination.

Northumberland's Destination Management Plan identifies three key issues pertaining to position and profile:

1. Northumberland is not communicating its current offer and unique attributes effectively.

Northumberland is surrounded by strong more easily recognisable and better known domestic destination competitors. Northumberland is heavily reliant on domestic day visitors and is not seen as a holiday or first-choice short break option.

2. A consistent, focussed and common destination brand proposition should be adopted by the industry and be widely implemented at stakeholder level.

The strength of the destination brand lies in the pack - wider implementation by all in the industry will aid its amplification. Through its partnership base, Visit Northumberland must roll out a consistent, focussed and common brand proposition which can be embraced, supported and easily implemented at stakeholder level. Diversification of our visitors should be encouraged to attract newer, younger audiences that are attracted to the destination by more than the appeal of the county's heritage and history offer.

3. New audiences must be targeted and new products developed to play to the destination strengths to help differentiate Northumberland from regional competitors

There is a need for Northumberland to differentiate marketing and communications messaging to account for the nuances of demand, bookings and consumer attitudes. Existing and emerging marketing campaign themes should aim to stimulate demand over the traditional 'closed' winter season to maximise opportunities when the summer and shoulder season demand drops. Communications for these new audiences must be designed to reflect the spectrums of the communications lifecycle, consumer confidence and highlight responsible behaviour messaging through a wider range of media outlets, not just existing channels that new visitors may not use.

IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM

In Northumberland, in 2019, there were 10 million visitors to the county generating over £1billion. This economic impact showed a growth of 57% over 10 years, demonstrating the increasing popularity of the county.

Tourism has been severely affected by the 2020 COVID pandemic. From late March to early July 2020, Covid-19 restrictions resulted in a near-total shutdown of international tourism into and out of the UK and severe restrictions on travel within the UK. STEAM data shows a 50% decrease in number of visitors in 2020 (c.f. 2019) and a 60% decrease in visitor expenditure. In addition there was a 56% decrease in the number of people directly employed in the tourism sector.

MARKETING OBJECTIVES

'Visit Northumberland must roll out a consistent, focussed and common brand proposition which can be embraced, supported and easily implemented at stakeholder level. Diversification of our visitors should be encouraged to attract newer, younger audiences that are attracted to the destination by more than the appeal of the county's heritage and history offer.'

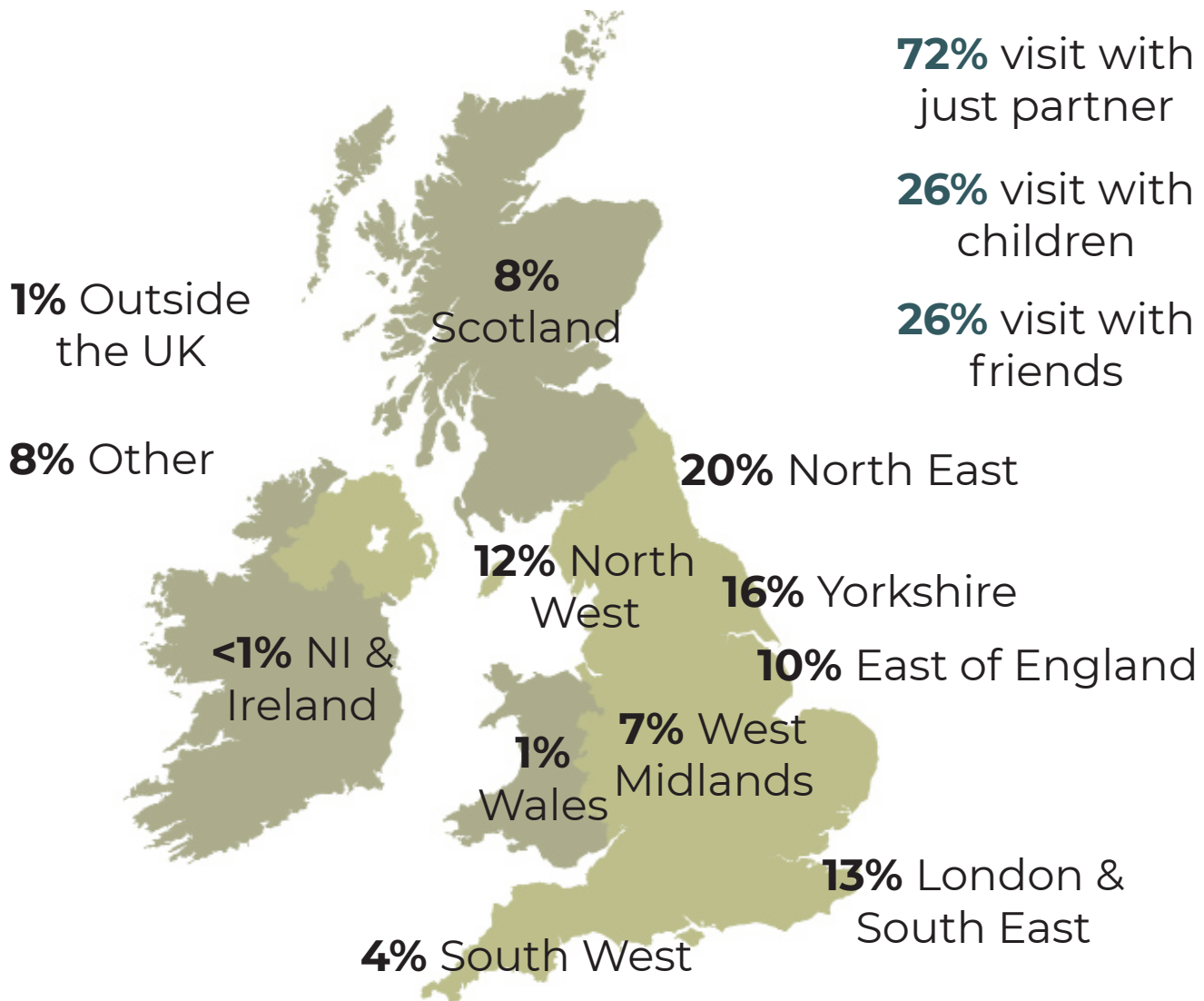
Visit Northumberland's marketing activities will contribute to the counties objectives by adopting the following organisational marketing objectives:

- To engage more potential visitors and inspire them to visit (measured by number of visitors reached by our activities and the percentage of those surveyed who were inspired to visit).
- To promote the wide range of experiences available, encouraging visitors to stay longer. (Measured by visitor satisfaction and average visitor length of stay).
- To encourage visitors to spend more (measured by visitor spend and evidenced by a return on investment for Visit Northumberland marketing activities of 10:1 or more).
- For partners and stakeholders to support and implement marketing activity. Measured by 20% of all partners using supplied marketing material, including the partner logo or sharing our messaging.
- Whilst still attracting the current high spending visitors attract newer, younger visitors, thereby decreasing the average age of visitors.
- To ensure that Northumberland is known as an all year round destination with a wide variety of endless experiences throughout the seasons.

N.B. Marketing objectives rely partly on a partnership approach across the county.

OUR CURRENT AUDIENCE

Audience information taken from an online visitor survey that ran for a three-week period at the end of May/early June 2021. The survey was distributed via the Visit Northumberland consumer database and social channels.



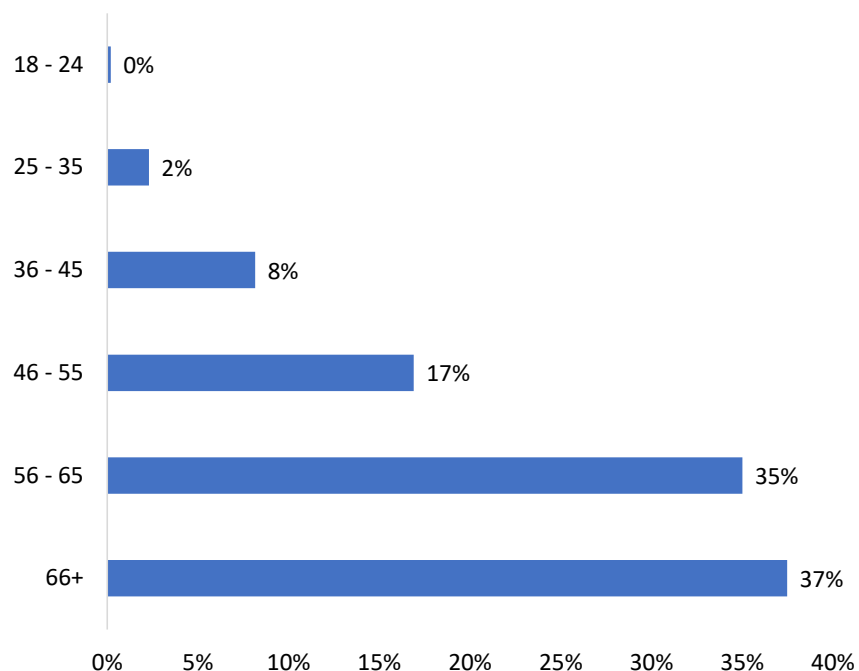
72% visit with just partner

26% visit with children

26% visit with friends

AGE

72%
56 or older



WHO DO WE WANT TO TARGET?

Families with children

Currently only 26% of visitors come with children

Pre-nesters

18-34s typically with no children in the household

Country loving traditionalists

Empty nesters with traditional values, they are likely to have recently taken a countryside break in England; good quality, secure accommodation is a priority when booking a holiday.

VisitEngland 3 Key need states

We will as much as possible align all our marketing with VisitEngland's 3 key need states:



Discovery

Seeking experiences that are off the beaten track. From hidden gems, to new exhibitions, or mythical legends about some of our coastal towns, they're looking for something new or different to immerse themselves in.

Freedom to explore

People want to get out and explore whether by road, cycling, walking or waterway routes and visit off-grid destination where they can enjoy crowd-free city adventures.

Treat yourself

We're here to show how they can relax and unwind in Northumberland; whether their idea of unwinding is a spa weekend or a cookery class they've been dying to take, it's available in Northumberland.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

To ensure there is alignment between our social media, email newsletters, content on the website and potential avenues for sales we devise and regularly refer to our content plan. This highlights topics for each month relevant to the time of year. We refer to the plan for both B2C and B2B communications.

FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
SPRING			SUMMER	
ENDLESS EXPERIENCES				
ENJOY FROM HOME/PLANNING AHEAD		NORTHUMBERLAND UNPLUGGED AND ESCAPE THE EVERYDAY		
We want to encourage everyone to let Northumberland into their living room. Cook, bake, watch, and experience our food, attractions and events from home, and keep Northumberland in the forefront of your mind while you plan your next holiday.		Whether it's windswept walks, peaceful gardens, or back-to-basics getaways, there are a number of ways to disconnect in Northumberland. This theme is all about reflecting, recuperating and relaxing after a tough year in our barely-trodden county where the only batteries you need to recharge are your own. In line with VisitEngland's #escapetheeveryday campaign.		
Northumberland from home		Disconnect	Treat yourself	Adventure
Recipes Film and TV Food and drinks deliveries Photography Virtual events		Gardens Wildlife Puffins Rhodedendrons (end of May) Cherry Blossom (end of April) Outdoor activities	Restaurants/spas Try new things Indulge in local food Picnic, foraging	Watersports NP Experience Collection Off the beaten track Mountain biking Hike remote landscapes & forests

JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
		AUTUMN		WINTER	
ENDLESS EXPERIENCES					
OUT & ABOUT			OLD TRADITIONS, NEW MEMORIES		
Out and about is for getting outside and enjoying socially distanced activities. Grab your walking boots and go on an adventure, explore the great outdoors, do something active, and celebrate the county's sporting events. Hike, cycle, climb, snorkel and surf your way through Northumberland.			This time of year is bursting with celebrations, so this theme is about experiencing our traditions while making everlasting memories. Whether it's a haunting Halloween getaway, coming together at Christmas or seeing in the New Year with family and friends, spend this oh-so-seasonal period in Northumberland.		
Sports events	Family fun	Dog friendly	Culture and Heritage		Christmas
Cycling Golf Celebrating sporting events	Summer holidays Family events Activities & experiences	Restaurants and cafes Walks/ dog friendly routes Dog friendly attractions Accommodation	Music & Food Festivals Had Wall anniversary (2022) Lindisfarne Gospels (2022) Historical attractions		

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
WINTER	SPRING		
ENDLESS EXPERIENCES			
WRITTEN IN THE STARS			
Just call us cupid, as we are pairing history and heritage with romance and passion. This theme aims to entrance and captivate visitors with our ruinous castles, star-studded dark skies, Valentine's getaways and whimsical wedding venues.			
Dark Skies	Romance		
	Weddings Valentine's Day Heritage Romantic sites and beauty spots		

CAMPAIGNS

2020/21 Campaigns

With Covid restrictions for a large part of the year our advertising was limited. Over the 12 Days of Christmas we ran a series of competitions on Facebook which were very popular.

Financed via North of Tyne Combined Authority funding



12 Days of Christmas

Facebook promotion with entries for the final prize via the website

As businesses have had a very difficult year due to Covid we decided to buy the prizes (Historically we would ask businesses to donate the prizes in return for the promotion). Battlesteads Observatory, Vindolanda and Berwick Boat Trips all donated their prizes.



- 1 - Battlesteads Observatory experience for a family of 4
- 2 - Walking tour with Footsteps in Northumberland
- 3 - Roman adventure at Vindolanda
- 4 - Afternoon tea at Doxford Hall
- 5 - Zip coaster and target sports package at Calvert Trust
- 6 - Spa day at Saley Hall
- 7 - Wild food foraging and cooking with Northern Wilds
- 8 - Boat trip with Berwick Boat Trips (3 prizes)
- 9 - E-bike tour in Northumberland National Park
- 10 - Brewery tour at Twice Brewed
- 11 - Overnight stay at Chillingham Castle
- 12 - 2 night mid week stay at Woodland Chase

Cost to run the promotion

Prizes: £945

Promoted posts on Facebook: £1390

Total: £2335



Reach

404,346

Engagement

40,972

On the twelfth day competition

7,859 entries



2021/22 Campaigns

Endless experiences spring marketing campaign running April to May 2021. A 30 second promotional video was the focus of the campaign.

Financed via North of Tyne Combined Authority funding



ENDLESS EXPERIENCES SPRING MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Funded via the North of Tyne Covid Capacity Fund



TV Campaign 1st to 15th May



REACH 944,000
OTH 2.7



REACH 216,000
OTH 2.7



Social Media Promotion 19th April to 31st May Facebook promoted post

REACH 592,219
ENGAGEMENT 90,406
CLICKS TO WEBSITE 37,097



TV On Demand 20th April to 31st May



VIEWS 47,886
COMPLETION RATE 98.7%*
VIEWED ON TV 77.9%

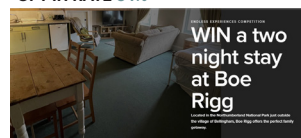


VIEWS 57,049
COMPLETION RATE 99.15%*
VIEWED ON TV 84.8%

*INDUSTRY BENCHMARK 63.1%

Visit Northumberland Website 12th April to 31st May

COMPETITION to win a two night stay
with Boe Rigg: 5889 ENTRIES
OPT IN RATE 64%



CAMPAIGN COST £37,500
TOTAL CAMPAIGN REACH
OVER 6.3 MILLION

Radio Campaign 12th April to 24th May



CFM
Forth
Great Hits Harrogate & Yorkshire Dales
Greatest Hits York & North Yorkshire
Metro Radio
Radio Borders
TFM Radio
Greatest Hits NE

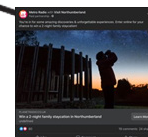
REACH 4.3 MILLION



Radio web page
VIEWS 9,368
AVERAGE TIME ON PAGE 2MIN 18 SECS
COMPETITION to win a two night stay with
the Inns Collection: 5007 ENTRIES



Radio e-newsletter
SENT TO 134,331
OPEN RATE 13.5%
OPENED 18,134



Radio social media
REACH 51,400
CLICKS 1020

'It's time to spring into adventure
Come and say hello to the locals
Learn how to fly,
Whilst conquering one of our many iconic castles
Then discover the edge of an empire
Explore the breathtaking landscapes
And stay up late to capture the brightest of night skies
Visit Northumberland and its endless experiences'

Northumberland

2021/22 Campaigns

Remaining North of Tyne Combined Authority Covid capacity funding (£28,000) to be split three ways:

Endless experiences video and photo content.

Photography is a key part of the Northumberland brand and the logo has been designed to sit on top of or interact with photography. We are looking to commission photography which must reflect our strapline endless experiences. It must be engaging, challenging and beautifully shot. The purpose is to create a bank of images/videos that we can use to promote Northumberland and it's endless experiences to the visitor market.

Endless experiences influencer work

We will release a tender for working with a minimum of 5 influencers to secure coverage aimed at extending the shoulder season. We are looking for a diverse range of influencers covering a range of demographics and people we haven't previously worked with.

Visit Northumberland Autumn/Winter Campaign

Overview

Following a difficult year last year and an extremely slow start to the year this year we are looking to support Northumberland's tourism industry into the shoulder season by encouraging consumers to explore and discover endless experiences on a UK short break or holiday this autumn/winter.

Aims

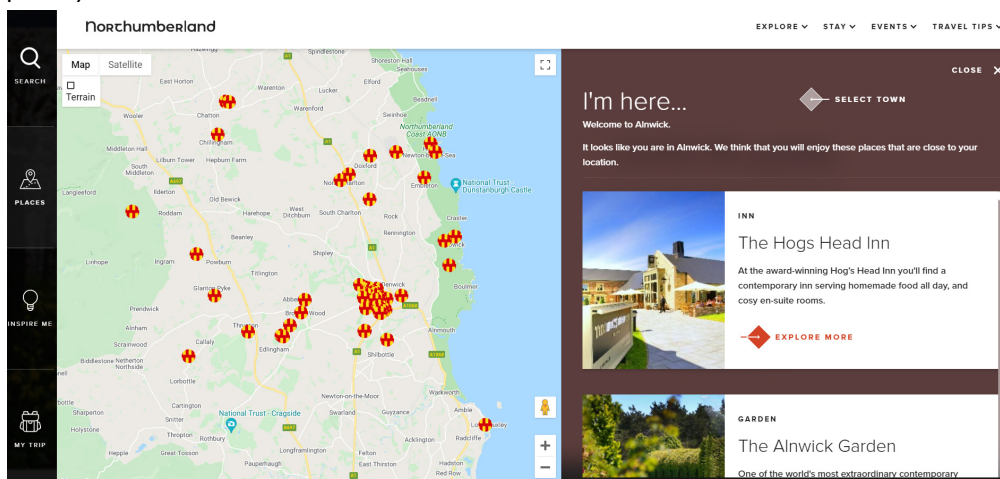
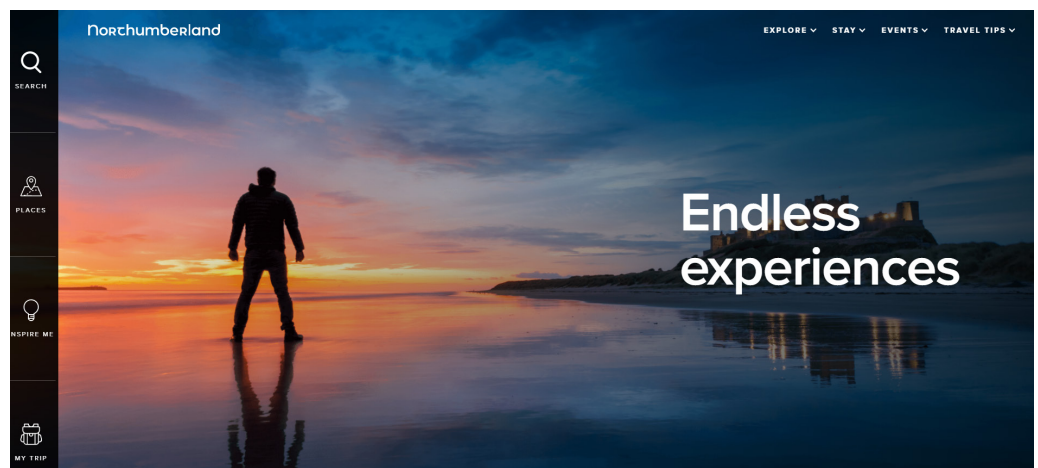
- Encourage people to choose Northumberland for their autumn/winter staycation and for day trips/weekend breaks.
- Increase traffic to the visitnorthumberland website by 5% (c.f same months in 2019).
- Highlight experiences that visitors may not have previously considered or different slants on more popular experiences.

WEBSITE: VISITNORTHUMBERLAND.COM

The new Visit Northumberland website was launched in February 2021. The website also launched the new branding giving it a fresh look and feel. With additional functionality such as 'My Trip' where visitors can create a profile and save places they would like to visit and improved map layouts the site offers greater benefits to visitors both in planning their visit and whilst they are here.

During 2019 whilst the country was in lockdown visits to the website were, as would be expected, dramatically down. We aim to increase the number of unique visitors to the website by 10% by Dec 2021. This will be compared to 2019 when there were 1,182,786 visitors to the website.

During 2021-22 we will finalise updating all the original content on the website. As part of the migration to the new site this had to be done gradually so as not to impact on SEO. We will then continuously review the content on the website (in line with the content plan) to ensure we are



constantly updating pages. We will continue to work with an SEO agency to maintain our prominence in searches. All marketing activity will drive traffic to the website, either to the homepage, to relevant information or to a campaign landing page.

All Visit Northumberland partners have a listing on the website to promote their business. The detail on the listing is dependent on their partnership level. In addition businesses are actively encouraged to list their events free of charge on the website.

In February 2022 (one year after launch of the new website) we will carry out a website survey measuring satisfaction levels and conversions to bookings. Our aim is that for 70% of those that visited, the website was influential in their decision to visit Northumberland.

PR

PR remains a powerful communication tool and an important focus of our marketing activity. All PR activity is carried out by our Content & PR Executive, who is also responsible for social media.

PR Objectives

- Issue a minimum of one pro-active press release per month
- Generate average of four pieces of media coverage per month
- Arrange pro-active and reactive press trips with guaranteed coverage - average of one per month (Once Covid restrictions allow)
- To provide content which marks Northumberland Tourism as the go-to organisation for all Northumberland visitor information.
- To build specific lists of topical press contacts for more effective targeting.

Pro-active PR

- Our communications plan outlines key events in the Northumberland calendar and in-house pro-active PR will focus on this. The communications plan will be regularly updated as businesses within the county publicise their events.
- Target national and regional press with regular releases.

Reactive PR

- Respond to Visit England/Visit Britain Opportunities.
- Respond to any direct enquiries, co-ordinating press visits.

Press Desk Service for the county

- Supplying quotes, contents and images and arranging press trips for journalists. Where possible this will be provided at no cost utilising in kind contributions from businesses in return for press coverage.

Databases and relationships

- Expand and build upon our current relationships with journalists and bloggers.
- Further develop our relationships and communications with VisitEngland and VisitBritain to ensure they are aware of all our key stories to enable them to promote Northumberland on our behalf.
- Continue to develop relationships with partners willing to host press visits and provide competition prizes.
- Continue to build upon our relationships with the Northumberland County Council's Communications team and PR teams of other DMOs, especially those within the region.

Monitoring

- A log will be maintained of all trips and coverage directly generated.
- Vuellio, a media monitoring service, will be used to track and report on media coverage.

PUBLICATIONS

Historically we have designed, printed and distributed a Holiday Guide, Bedroom Browser and Days out Leaflet each year.

In 2020 all three guides were out in circulation at the start of the year, however due to the impacts of Covid they weren't as popular as in previous years. This was a combination of the industry being closed for up to 6 months, businesses not willing to take literature and people uncertain about picking up literature.

In order to be able to produce these three pieces of print we require businesses to place adverts. At the start of 2021 we contacted businesses to establish their interest in advertising for 2021 editions. At this point businesses were closed and had been for some time, so understandably interest was very low. It was therefore not viable to create any print for 2021.

Normally we would start planning the following years print material from May, however for 2021/22 we will wait till after the summer. At this point we will contact businesses again to establish if there is an interest in advertising and will at that point decide if we will produce printed guides for 2022.

MARKETING ACTIVITY RESEARCH

For all marketing activity that we undergo we will carry out research to enable us to continue to learn about our audience, including how long they stay, which demographic they fit into and the impact of marketing on aspects such as their decision to visit.

Research will be carried out for:

- May campaign (endless experiences) - JULY
- Autumn/winter campaign - JANUARY 2022
- visitnorthumberland.com - FEBRUARY 2022
- Early 2022 campaign - APRIL 2022

Following the research a one page summary will be made available to view on the corporate website, www.northumberlandtourism.co.uk

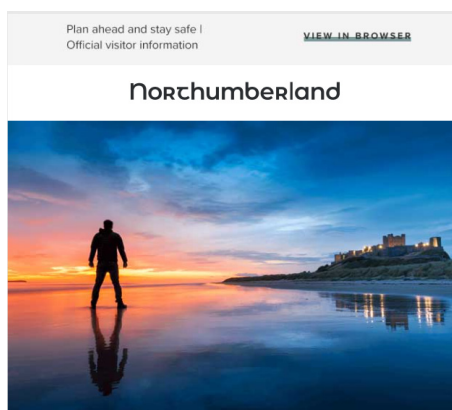
EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

JUST UNDER
42,000
CONTACTS

21.9%

32.9%
OPEN RATE

CLICK
THROUGH
RATE



We have a consumer database of just under 42,000 people and periodically cleanse the database to ensure it remains relevant and up to date. It can be detrimental to send out too many e-newsletters so we ensure we carefully plan our schedule. In order to include feature stories from level 5 partners most months we will produce two consumer e-newsletters. We continue to carry out work on segmenting the database and this is ongoing as it enables us to send more targeted emails.

Statistics including open rate, click through rate and the most popular features are monitored for each newsletter sent.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Throughout 2020 we continued to grow our social media followers on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. During 2021/22 we will continue to focus on increasing follower numbers as well as maintaining reach and engagement and quality posts.

FOLLOWERS



visitnorthumberland **20%**



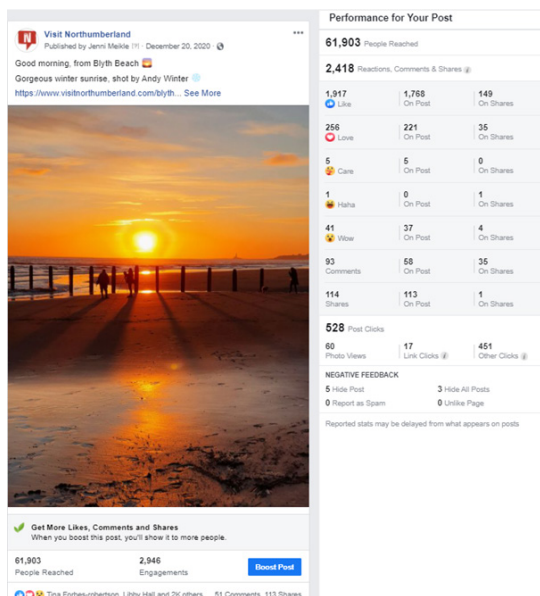
VisitNland **6%**



visitnorthumberland **50%**

Total followers
December 2020

70,770



As part of their partnership package levels 3,4 and 5 all get social media posts. This means that a lot of the posts will be about the partners. We will monitor this over the year to ensure it doesn't have a detrimental effect on reach and engagement.

B2B COMMS

Any B2B comms will reflect the overall comms plan, but may be slightly earlier. For example if we have a theme for the month B2B posts/stories to encourage partners to share their information regarding the theme will be a little earlier.

E-NEWSLETTER

From the start of April last year we started sending out weekly B2B e-newsletters (Previously this had been once a month) to communicate updates regarding Covid and information such as applying for grants. The B2B e-newsletter is sent to a database of just over 1900.

30.7%

OPEN RATE

10.9%

CLICK THROUGH
RATE



In 2021 the partnership team will launch a partnership e-newsletter, at this point the current B2B e-newsletter will go to being once a month.

SOCIAL MEDIA



visitnlandbiz

1569 followers



visitnlandbiz

4540 followers



Visit Northumberland DMO

1146 followers

Closed Facebook group just for partners. Currently 90 members of the group. Aim to get more partners onto the group and contributing to it.

