

Annual Report 2010/2011





“..the ever dedicated and professional staff continue to deliver outstanding quality..”

Overview

It is not an overstatement to say that 2010/11 was a year that saw the biggest change for Tourist Boards in the last 40 years.

Throughout the country, cutbacks in public spending have had a massive impact on tourism business support structures be they delivered by DMOs, Tourist Boards or Local Authorities.

Cumbria Tourism did not escape the cutbacks, losing around £1.3 million from its marketing and business support budgets.

Despite the inevitable disruption caused by the cutbacks, I am proud that the ever dedicated and professional staff continue to deliver outstanding quality of service and a first class range of activity which has made a difference to Cumbria's economy over the last 12 months.

‘Staycation’ continued, assisted by unfavourable exchange rates, an increase in travel costs and the disruption at airports caused by industrial action and Iceland's volcanic ash clouds.

The volume of visitors appeared to hold up well throughout the year albeit characterised by ever increasing numbers of last minute bookings.

Spending in most categories of visitor dependent businesses was also maintained, and growth in particular was reported in the caravan, camping and high quality serviced and self catering sectors.

Businesses reported increases in costs and squeezed profits, a trend expected to continue according to VisitEngland and Government forecasts.



“Visitors spend over £2 billion supporting 33,000 direct and 56,000 indirect jobs”

Lobbying, Leadership and Policy Issues

Early in the administration of the new Coalition Government the Prime Minister stated his support for tourism and the importance of the visitor economy in the country's economic recovery.

In early March the Government launched its Tourism Policy building on the work of VisitBritain and VisitEngland and promising to exploit the economic opportunities presented by next year's Diamond Jubilee and the London Olympics.

Four million extra overseas visitors over the next four years are predicted, bringing an extra £2 billion worth of visitor spend and helping to create 50,000 new jobs across the country over that period. The Government stress that this growth will be private sector led although it will use its powers, at the heart of Government, to champion improvements in skills, development of new 'wet weather' attractions, spreading Bank Holidays, reducing and providing Better Regulation, Visas and Transport Facilities.

The emphasis on private sector leadership has already been embraced by CT with the Commercial Members guiding the restructure and formation of a new commercially focussed CT.

On a wider front, CT contributed to the County's successful bid for, and is a partner in the new Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership. Tourism continues to be a high priority in Cumbria's Economic Strategy and CT will continue to make the case for the effective use of scarce public sector funds.

The private and voluntary sectors have also increased their involvement in the operation of Tourist Information Centres and public toilets, with the Lakes Hospitality Association and the Chamber of Commerce taking on provision in Windermere and Kendal respectively.

CT, with others, successfully lobbied opposing the sale of forestry land and assisted the local authorities and communities with the new arrangements for Tourist Information Centres.

CT strongly opposed the Government's proposal to base its grant support formula for Local Authorities (the 'Environmental and Cultural Services Relative Needs Formula') by replacing the current day visitor indicator with an indicator based on foreign visitor nights. After lobbying and providing detailed evidence with others, this idea has now been withdrawn.

Research & intelligence gathered helped us provide advice to hundreds of businesses and to inform the plans and policies of public bodies at National, County, District, National Park and Quango levels.

The economic value and impact figures for the County's visitor economy have been updated and improved. The 'STEAM' model now shows that Cumbria receives more than 41 million visitors, made up of 35 million day trips and 5 million 'staying' visitors. Visitors spend in excess of £2 billion supporting the employment of 33,000 direct full time jobs and a further 56,000 indirect jobs. The new higher figures are based on a more accurate research on the day visitor market conducted by the NWDA.

A report on Cumbria's self catering industry was also completed confirming the importance of the sector contributing £380 million to the Cumbrian economy. The report provides a valuable insight into the scale, quality and performance of the sector as well as consumer trends and changing demands.

Destination Marketing, Festivals and Events



The 'golakes' website continues to provide a cost effective route to market for thousands of tourism businesses throughout Cumbria. The website is certainly one of the most effective 'destination' based websites in existence and hailed as an example of good practice throughout the UK and beyond.

Online bookings continue to increase as do referrals to members' own websites.

The Lake District – Cumbria brand remains one of the main UK destination brands consistently achieving high rankings in market research surveys and polls. CT ensures that brand imagery is consistently communicated through a wide range of channels and campaigns.

CT's marketing campaigns included media advertising, the production and distribution of various publications such as the 'Official' Holiday Guide, the Best of Lakeland visitor attractions leaflet, guides and leaflets on outdoors, food and drink and cultural activities. Public and media relations, direct mail, inserts in targeted publications, door drops, trade and consumer exhibitions and events were all successfully deployed reaching millions of potential visitors to Cumbria.

CT's marketing activities continue to be in strong demand from businesses. With so many small, isolated and under performing businesses in Cumbria, CT provides an essential coordination function and provides the economies of scale for businesses to make an impact and get a return on their marketing investment.

Some notable highlights in CT's marketing in 10/11 included:

Golakes



It has been another excellent year for Golakes with 4.1 millions estimated users and 46 million page views. The website currently attracts over 950 advertisers which consist of a mixture of accommodation, attractions, food and drink, retail etc. CT moved to a commission based model last winter providing a commercially sustainable model for the website that will ensure the vital investment and promotion of 'golakes' into the future. Encouragingly there are now over 600 advertisers who take online bookings on the website compared with 350 in the previous advertising year.

Mobile Golakes

Mobile Golakes receives an average of 7,500 estimated users per month which compares very favourably with other 'destination' mobile sites. The site is doing well in the search engines and will be a valuable resource to those who are looking for late availability. CT are planning to launch ecommerce on the Mobile website in June 2011.



Social Media

CT are actively promoting 'The Lake District, Cumbria' through social networking sites. Currently 'The Lake District Cumbria' has over 28,000 'likes' on Facebook. CT also has two Twitter accounts (@golakes and @lakedistrictPR), which have 6,400 followers.

Adventure Capital



TripAdvisor customers voted the Lake District as the number one area in the UK for enjoying outdoor activities; second place in Europe and 7th in the World. The Great North Swim, marathons, tri and biathlons, water based activities, the development of mountain biking centres at Grizedale, Whinlatter and Staveley and the dozens of related events clearly shows the potential and growth in this sector.

The Wish You Were Here Campaign



In May 2010, six months after the terrible floods in Cockermouth and Workington, CT organised an exhibition in Cockermouth of postcards containing autographs, poems, personal photos, drawings and reminiscences by celebs of their Lakeland holidays and trips. Over 80 A-list celebs including

Dame Judi Dench, Sir Alex Ferguson, Richard E. Grant, Tess Daly and Jonny Wilkinson all provided personalised messages. A book of the cards was also published raising over a £5,000 for local charities.

Go Make Some Memories



The integrated campaign involves digital marketing such as eNewsletters, Twitter and Facebook and other direct marketing to our extensive databases and was launched in mid January 2011. Between January and March 2011 the memories section received 2,500 hits. It attracted 21 advertisers and was well received. The campaign is a new commercial approach for CT and will provide promotional opportunities for businesses on a frequent on-going basis. Members have given positive feedback, reporting good results.

Conferences and Meetings



NWDA provided funding for marketing and improving Cumbria as a conferencing and meeting destination. The programme has been managed and delivered by the Carlisle Tourism Partnership and some 21 venues have become involved in an accreditation and marketing programme and the establishment of a new venue finding website www.myplacecumbria.co.uk. With this source of public funding no longer available, and the prospective loss of a staff resource at Carlisle City Council, the future of the programme is now entirely dependent on private sector funding.

Lakeland Ltd



CT worked with leading kitchenware retailer Lakeland Ltd on a joint promotion rolling out in their 47 stores across the country last summer. It lead with a competition to win the ultimate gourmet break in the Lakes which included Michelin dining, award-winning accommodation, classic car hire and a personalised gourmet tour. Thousands of specially-created brochures were distributed 'in-store' showcasing the best of Cumbria's accommodation along with inspiring stories on the county's wealth of gastronomy.

The North West Food Tourism programme



CT manages the programme which continues with DEFRA funding until mid 2012. The programme has set up new events and festivals, such as the Cockermouth Food Festival in September 2010 which was a major success. The programme also supports Food and Drink Award Winners to elevate and promote their products and venues at a national level.

Aqua Pura – the Cumbrian based bottled mineral water company provided sponsorship funding for the Best of Lakeland Attractions leaflet and promoted the 'golakes' website with an on-pack competition reaching millions of households throughout the UK.

Destination Development



In spite of the difficult financial climate there are a number of new investments underway at Cumbria's attractions. A number of these investments focus on the outdoor market and continue to enhance the county's Adventure Capital UK status; these include:

- the new climbing wall and adventure centre at Keswick
- a play trail at Whinlatter Forest
- Ambleside Climbing Wall and Café Altitude

- new exhibition facilities, steamer jetty and high ropes course at Brockhole
- the substantially refurbished Ship Inn will reopen on Piel Island with letting rooms and a campsite.

Meanwhile the National Trust is partnering with Adventure Capital to lay-on a number of special events and activities at its sites throughout Cumbria.

Also on the heritage and cultural theme, new investments at Lowther Castle and Gardens were launched in April.



Meanwhile between January 22nd and April 7th the Royal Academy in London will host an important Kurt Schwitters exhibition with a reconstruction of the Cumbria Mertz barn.

As always there has been a significant amount of investment in visitor accommodation over the winter period. Some of this has been stimulated by the Tourism Connect Programme where seven projects totalling £1.03 million received grant approvals amounting to over £400,000 and a further 15-20 schemes are in the pipeline.



In West Cumbria and Carlisle the future of the public-private sector Tourism Partnerships has been jeopardised by the loss of some public sector funding sources. However in West Cumbria we now have an approved programme of marketing, accreditation, skills, cluster development and food festival (with a value of some £800,000 over two years). The England Rural Development Programme, Nuclear Partners, Copeland and Allerdale BC are the main sources of funding for this package which will be managed by two CT staff based in the west of the county.

In Carlisle the City Council is currently proposing a potential merger between the Carlisle Tourism Partnership (involving CT and Hadrian's Wall Heritage Ltd) and the City Centre Management Partnership. This would lead on a range of activities which would include place marketing, management of events and festivals as well as tourism development activity.



Our Partners' Achievements

CT provides support and assistance to many outstanding businesses and events. Far from claiming the credit for these, it is nevertheless important to highlight CT's wider impact achieved by working in partnership with others. It is also important to celebrate such achievements which feed our PR activity and furthers the reputation of the Lake District – Cumbria brand. Some of the key highlights include:

Lakes Alive



Stewart Smith Photography

In 2010 the season kicked off in style with a unique Sufi: Zen performance in the grounds of Furness Abbey, a blend of Cumbria and Asia; in setting, catering, music and dance. The first May Bank Holiday saw Lakes Alive arrive in Whitehaven with a festival of street artists entertaining crowds on the harbour, with a night time procession by Spanish artists **Sarruga** of large mechanical sea creatures, including a barmy shark causing havoc amongst crowd and street furniture! May half term also saw Carlisle city centre rebuilt with cardboard boxes by children, as Aussie artists **Polyglot** took over the city's streets. About 75,000 people attended Lakes Alive events across the county, generating £3 million of extra spending.

Nurture Lakeland

Lake District won the 'Green Destination' Award for the Best Destination Award in the global Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards 2010.

Tourism Awards



Yet again Cumbria struck precious metal at the VisitEngland National Tourism Awards with Gilpin Lodge winning Gold for Small Hotel and Low Sizergh Barn winning Silver in the Taste England category. This is the fifth consecutive year that Cumbria has struck Gold for our accommodation product.

Looking Forward

What we will do...

- **Destination Marketing** – we will ensure that the 'Lake District – Cumbria' brand is vigorously promoted nationally and internationally
- **Destination Management** – we will coordinate and promote the improvement of Cumbria's significant visitor economy
- **Marketing opportunities** – we will give businesses and public sector organisations effective promotional and marketing opportunities
- **Voice for tourism businesses** – we will lobby for improved conditions to enable business to prosper
- **Voice of the visitor** – we will monitor tourism trends and visitor needs and relay opportunities and issues and to both our private and public sector partners

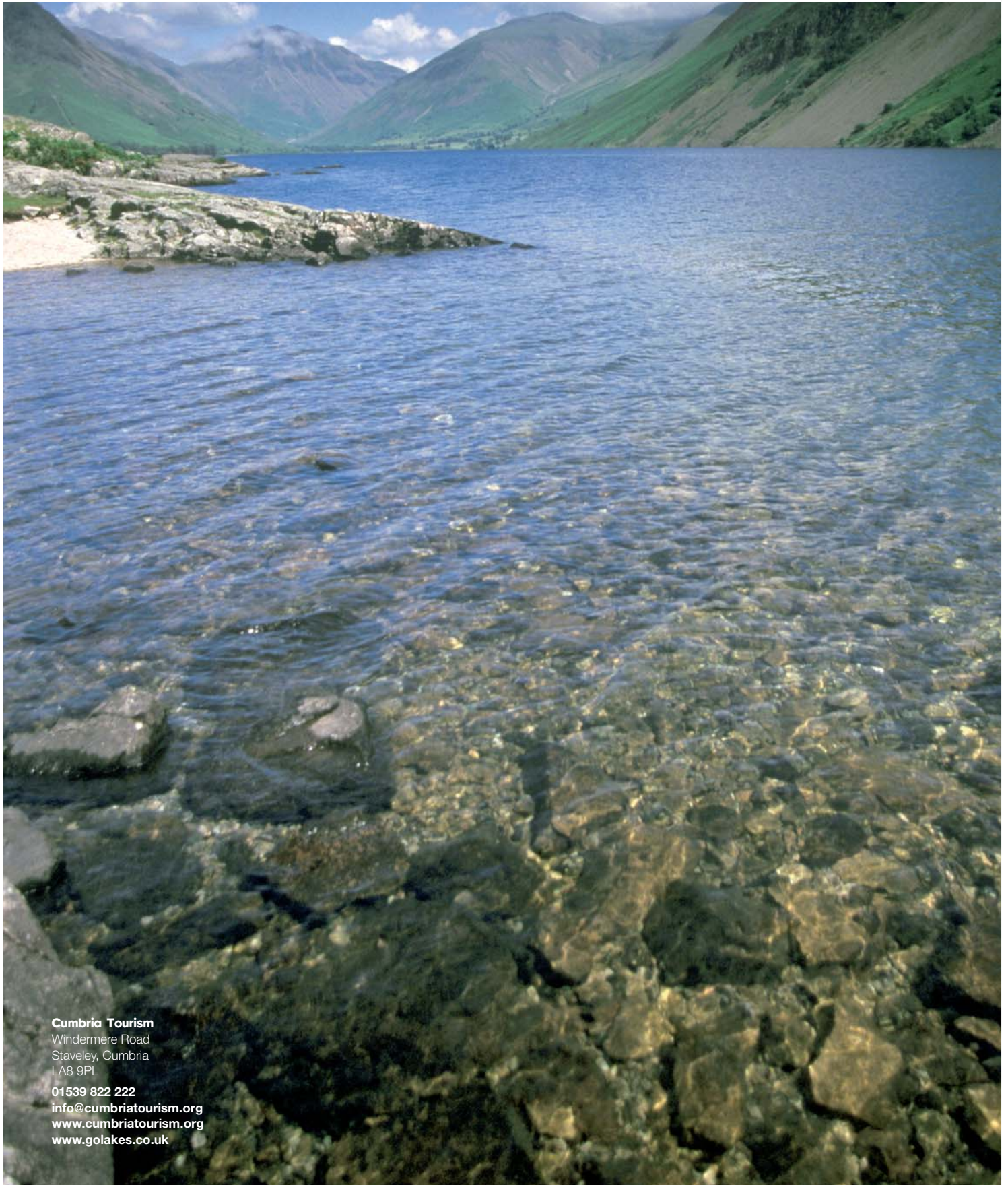
What we will deliver...

- Additional **revenue, new jobs** and better quality existing jobs.
- **Higher value** tourism by improving the quality and range of visitor experiences in partnership with businesses and our public partners.
- **Leadership and coordination** of Cumbria's highly fragmented tourism industry

How will this be done...

- optimise our web sites (golakes and CT.org) income
- develop commercially attractive marketing campaigns for businesses to engage with CT all year around
- make more of our talented and skilled workforce and give them a chance to sell their expertise on the open market
- utilise our research and intelligence more effectively and increase income from selling research reports and 'start up' advice packs
- extend and put a value on our professional advice e.g. supporting planning applications and grant applications
- continue to be a voice for the industry and visitors by lobbying for improvements in public sector policy/provision, responding to the media and by hosting representatives of national bodies
- integrate the AdCap, Food and Cultural Tourism projects as effectively and efficiently as possible
- signposting businesses to Local Authorities and other public bodies who provide a wide range of support services for tourism business e.g. guidance and advice on Food Safety, Tourist Information Services, Car parking, public toilet, Trading Standards, Health and Safety and Heritage, the Arts and Cultural services.

Cumbria Tourism^e
At the heart of our visitor economy



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