

**Neighbourhood Services**

**Environment Health and Consumer Protection**

# **Revitalising Markets**

**A Strategy for Supporting the Growth  
and Enhancement of County  
Durham's Street Markets**

*Altogether better*



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## **1. Background and Existing Provision**

- 1.1 Markets were the birthplace of towns and cities across the world and many of the UK's major retailers started life in markets. In 2009, work for the Retail Markets Alliance indicated that the markets industry supports over 100,000 jobs and 45,000 businesses in the K.
- 1.2 Durham County Council plays a significant role in the governance and management of a range of markets throughout the County's major centres. The council is therefore in a position where it is empowered to make key decisions to shape the future of markets' provision across the county and to determine the contribution that markets can play in supporting the revitalisation and sustainability of our town centres.
- 1.3 Durham County Council currently has an interest in the management and operation of ten markets in major settlements across the county. Further details of the markets, their location and days of operation are provided at Table 1.
- 1.4 Nationally markets have experienced a steady decline in activity over the past decade. This is probably linked to similar declines in activity on the UK's high streets, characterised by falling expenditure in high street retail outlets, increased property voids, the dominance of superstores, a shift to out-of-centre retail parks and increased volume of purchases over the internet. This has led to a displacement of high street economies which in turn has affected markets.
- 1.5 Within the group of markets under DCC control, performance is mixed.
- 1.6 The ten markets are the responsibility of DCC's Environment, Health and Consumer Protection Department within Neighbourhood Services. In February 2011, the County Council completed a review of market provision in order to highlight risks and opportunities to inform options for future service delivery. The review involved the collection of baseline information on the current market offer and consultation with shoppers, traders and licensed operators.

This work has enabled a picture to be formed of the current characteristics and performance of the individual markets to give a position from which to work and illustrate that whilst markets (in common with high streets) face a number of threats, there are significant opportunities to work with markets to enhance town centres, economic development, entrepreneurship, tourism, health and diversity and the sustainability of our major centres.

- 1.7 Research into the visitor economy shows that market towns have the ability to draw people into rural areas for day trips and longer stays and to act as

service centres for tourists on rural holidays and short breaks. A market in a market town is an integral part of market towns fulfilling both of these functions. Stabilising and growing the market offer in the county's market towns is therefore consistent with delivering on the county's tourism management plan that identifies market towns as critical to the success of a rural visitor economy. Markets also have the ability to promote distinctiveness. Understanding distinctiveness and experiencing it in a practical way is a main benefit that tourists are looking to gain from their leisure decisions and spend.

- 1.8 Currently, the markets are held on the days that are prescribed or have become established over the years which presents some degree of competition particularly amongst those markets operating on a Saturday.
- 1.9 Whilst there may be no statutory requirement to hold markets, there are legal considerations as to the Charter status of markets and of the common law practice of prescriptive markets, which may dictate when markets are to be held and their location. In addition, once a statutory market has been established and has gained planning permission, there will be a statutory reason for holding that particular market on that particular day at that particular location. This may be changed, but to do so would be subject to legal processes including consultation, advertisement and change of planning permission.
- 1.10 As the markets authority, the council is also the primary regulator for the county under Part IIA of the Food Act 1984.
- 1.11 In addition to the various powers available under charter, prescription, custom and practice and local legislation, it is also possible to utilise the provisions of Part III of the Food Act 1984 under which a local authority can:-
- s.50 Establish or acquire a market
  - s.52 Appoint market days and hours
  - s.53 Demand charges
  - s.60 Make byelaws
- 1.12 The current management arrangements for markets across County Durham presents two different management models to market provision, with different operators continuing to operate each market under the terms and conditions contained in their agreements which were inherited following local government reorganisation.
- 1.13 Sustainability under the current management and operational arrangements is extremely limited and, in order to revitalise markets and get the best market offer for County Durham, the arrangements for market provision would need to change.

- 1.14 The review recommended that the council should develop a strategic approach to improve the performance of markets and take appropriate steps to promote market activity within town centres and maximise opportunities for economic growth.
- 1.15 Markets have been an integral part of town centre economies and, with strategic planning, innovation, quality of offer and integrated management they have the potential to continue to play a significant role.
- 1.16 Taking an approach based around support for town centres and markets is entirely consistent with central government policy, acknowledged best practice and the council's own economic policies and regeneration focus.
- 1.17 The purpose of this strategy document is to establish the broad economic and policy justification for managing County Durham's markets in a more efficient, innovative and structured way in order to better link with wider town centre and tourism initiatives in support of our major centres. In turn, this will secure stronger and more sustainable town centres benefitting retailers, traders, other town centre occupiers, shoppers and residents. It will also point to some suggested next steps towards delivering an integrated approach

## **2 Our Vision for County Durham's Markets**

- 2.1 It is important to establish what functions our markets should serve, what we want them to do and what we want them to look like, in order to understand how we can best support them.
- 2.2 Supporting the enhancement and growth of markets can be viewed as part of the council's role under the Regeneration Statement of "adopting a 'Whole-Town' approach to creating vibrant and successful towns encompassing the economy, housing, health and the infrastructure to make it work".
- 2.3 The development of this strategy follows on from the Markets Review of 2011 and seeks to establish vibrant, dynamic markets that provide access to quality, affordable food and other goods, have significant economic benefits both for the county and for local market towns, that promote and sustain enterprise and community and that contribute to a positive, inspirational sense of place and belonging.
- 2.4 In purely physical terms, markets can play a significant role in adding to a sense of place and engendering a sense of belonging, identity and common ownership. To be effective, the market needs to be located in a sensible position and offer traders uniformity of quality in pitches but with a degree of flexibility built in. The first element of our vision is that County Durham will seek a structured, weekly cycle of markets, each sensibly located within a

major centre and offering a well-planned, efficiently-managed, quality trading environment to be readily accessible to all and to offer a range of quality/value goods with a complementary mix of proactive traders and the active support of local retail interests and shoppers.

- 2.5 In economic terms, well run, well supported markets have the ability to enhance a town centre's appeal and to offer a significant draw to visitors and (in some instances) tourists. The second element of our vision is that County Durham's markets will, as part of a wider impetus for town centre regeneration and economic development, become noted for their ability to increase footfall and customer spend in our town centres and will be hubs for entrepreneurial activity, test grounds for small businesses, potential locations for new employment generation and the first port of call for buying local produce. The markets will be integral to the community, the benefits they bring will be obvious to all and they will operate in co-operation with local retailers and without protectionism from any quarter. Markets will be well integrated with festivals, events and other types of market and will tie in with town centre regeneration and tourism strategies to maximise footfall, local expenditure retention and job creation potential.

## Vision

**Our vision is that County Durham's markets should be well-managed, integrated components of successful town centre economies, offering good quality and good value local produce and speciality goods in support of our communities. Shopping in County Durham's markets will be a pleasurable experience, characterised by high quality, accessible stalls, an excellent mix of well-trained and passionate traders and links to retail stores and town centre events and attractions**

## 3 The Economic Case for Intervention

- 3.1 Wider research on markets has produced clear evidence of the contribution they make towards a wide range of economic and social policy goals. This includes benefits in regeneration, economic development, culture and tourism, food and health, community cohesion and the environment.
- 3.2 The ten markets operating across County Durham could make a significant contribution to the vitality of the county's town centres. In addition, they have the potential **to generate significant multiplier effects**, with market customers more likely to spend money in other shops in the town centre for every £1 they spend in the market.
- 3.3 This has the effect of **retaining expenditure in the local town economy**. The recent Portas Review highlighted the fact that spending in the out of



town shopping developments and larger supermarkets led to the instant loss of expenditure from the local area, thus having less economic impact than spending on retailers with a localised supply chain.<sup>1</sup>

- 3.4 Markets can also be of **particular importance to deprived communities** and most of the market town locations contain proximate areas of deprivation. Markets can offer good value for money on a wide range of convenience goods and this has the potential to support higher living standards among lower income groups due to their lower prices. .
- 3.5 Markets provide important sources of employment and income generation for significant numbers of people. They also **create venues in which new business can be launched on a test trading basis at lower costs than in other premises**, and therefore have a role to play in promoting entrepreneurship and business start-up.
- 3.6 Retail markets remain an important part of the retail offer in towns and cities and local retailers are generally supportive of markets. Markets also provide an opportunity to **deliver business-led solutions to regeneration problems**.
- 3.7 Markets, with their associated food and cultural festival events have the potential to **strengthen County Durham's cultural offer** and image and, to support economic growth by co-ordinating and promoting cultural events and attractions. They also contribute to the County's economic identity by:
- Improving the quality of place in specific sites across the county
  - Increasing positive perceptions of the county
  - Raising the profile of the county
- 3.8 The increased profile for the county's economic identity has the potential to be reflected in the proportion of the county's residents and businesses who feel that the market asset base increases local pride, visitors who cite markets as one of the reasons for their visit to the county and the generation of media attention.
- 3.9 There has been a clear growth in speciality markets in recent years, which demonstrates that a variety of **good markets remain popular with customers**.
- 3.10 At a retail level, there is great scope for markets to play a role in **ensuring that local communities have access to fresh produce**.

They can offer ideal locations for providing information and learning/skills opportunities on a wide range of health issues including healthy eating, and

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<sup>1</sup> The Portas Review – An Independent Review into the future of our high streets – page 12 – evidence provided by New Economics Foundation

food buying/cooking skills. They can also be used to market and promote healthy eating campaigns such as the 5-a-day and Change 4 Life initiatives.

3.11 In 2006, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published research on the value of markets as spaces for social interaction<sup>2</sup>. This concluded that:

- Markets were important sites of social interaction for all groups in the community, but most significantly for older people, especially women. Markets also represent **important social spaces** for mothers with young children, young people, and families with children, particularly at weekends
- Markets had a **significant social inclusion role**, as places to linger, particularly for older people and young mothers
- The social life of traders played a significant role in creating a vibrant atmosphere in markets, and in forging social bonds and links in the trading community as well as with shoppers
- For markets to function well as social spaces, various factors are significant. Essential attributes include: a large diverse range of products fitting well with local needs and tastes; café or food vans on site or nearby; good access to the site, especially by local transport; and an active and engaged community of traders.

3.12 In recognising the contribution that markets make to a range of economic, social and cultural factors, this strategy aims to create an environment for success and economic regeneration through:

- Increasing footfall and customer spend
- Attracting new traders and maximising the potential of existing traders
- Improving the local trading environment and opportunities for the surrounding town centres

3.13 In line with the emerging national view of markets, the council recognises the mutual benefits that vibrant and dynamic markets can bring to town centres for local businesses and communities particularly in relation to:-

- Providing a sense of place and belonging
- Local employment and independent retailing
- Opportunities to promote entrepreneurialism and business start-up.

3.14 In realising our vision for Durham County markets, the council will endeavour to deliver the very best offer for County Durham, whilst recognising the historic market rights that exist across the county. The need to revitalise markets, in order to provide jobs for local people and meet environmentally sustainable objectives, will be a stimulus for future action. The council recognises the role that markets play in adding value to the economic, social and cultural fabric of the county.

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<sup>2</sup> Watson, S. et al (2006) Spaces of diversity: markets as sites for social interaction. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The Policy Press

3.15 This strategy seeks to address the immediate challenges presented by the economic downturn whilst preparing the foundations for future success. It covers a range of priorities aimed at addressing the immediate challenge of the economic downturn, priorities aimed at building capacity and resilience within market towns and long term priorities aimed at building strong foundations for a prosperous future.

3.16 Key to these priorities is the aim to develop sustainable management solutions which transition emphasis away from regulation and enforcement toward investment and commercial management. The overarching objective is to develop the county's existing market asset base on a sustainable platform which drives up the provision of high quality goods and services and consistency across the county.

## **4 Key Strategic Aims and Themes**

4.1 In formulating this strategy to revitalise the county's markets, several key themes have emerged. It is intended that future actions should address one or more of these key themes in order to secure a coherent and effective approach

### **Key Theme 1- Supporting Our Town Centres**

4.2 A market that is well-positioned, easily accessible, customer facing, sensibly laid out and offering a clean, tidy, well-maintained and uniform image with an appropriate mix of stallholders is an asset to a town centre. It is a key theme that we should strive to achieve such a facility in each of the county's major centres and that markets should form a component of the wider regeneration and economic development agenda to:

- Increase footfall and customer spend in town centres.
- Increase visitor numbers and dwell time in our market towns.
- Attract new traders and offer the opportunity for existing traders to maximise their potential.
- Form an integral part of the town centre retail offer and assist in meeting the challenges posed to the vitality of the high street in a climate of minimal, current economic growth.

### **Key Theme 2 - Place Shaping**

4.3 For the longer term, it is essential that markets work with wider town centre interests to sign up to plans of action in support of the "business" of the high street. Town centres comprise a diverse range of interests of landlords, retailers, councils and others and that a lack of cohesion has exacerbated the decline in footfall and retail performance.

4.4 As a priority measure, we should seek to encourage markets which (as a first step) follow basic principles of good retailing with good quality, well maintained, accessible and uniform stalls, active frontages and welcoming

signage to greet shoppers. There should be a logical mix of quality goods. Shoppers should be able to enter and pass through the market easily and gain ready access to nearby shops. Such basic steps will improve the local trading environment and provide opportunities for the surrounding area.

4.5 In the longer term, markets should be viewed as major players in the town centre and involved in town centre improvement proposals.

### **Key Theme 3 - Supporting Businesses**

4.6 There are numerous examples from around the UK where local authorities and private operators have successfully encouraged the development of budding entrepreneurs.

- The national “Make Your Mark” competition, run by Enterprise UK in association with the Retail Markets Alliance offers prizes to entrepreneurs in the form of 6 months free trading, £1,000 to support the business, free marketing, free business starter pack and free NMTF (What does this stand for?) membership including public liability insurance.
- NMTF runs a First Pitch programme to enable starter businesses to test trade on a market stall.

4.7 Markets can be used as a low cost entry point to retailing for fledgling businesses with financial support for creative businesses. Markets offer an opportunity to help establish new businesses and to help engender a culture of customer care. It is recommended that start-up micro businesses who seek to trade through markets in County Durham be encouraged with appropriate incentives during their first few months of trading to support their business development.

### **Key Theme 4 - Supporting Communities**

4.8 It is an aim of the strategy that markets do more to support both the business community and some of the county’s more deprived communities which, in many cases, are “on the doorstep”.

4.9 Ideas will emerge, dependent upon the character of each town and the opportunities arising, but potential activities that might receive support include:

- Promotion of healthy eating, healthy lifestyle, exercise and leisure activities.
- Activities to complement specialist markets and town centre events.
- Special events for schools and community groups.
- Initiatives to introduce young people to retailing and customer care.

### **Key Theme 5 - Supporting Local Produce and Speciality Goods**

4.10 Activity under this theme will strive to enhance the distinctiveness of town centres and contribute to a number of objectives.

4.11 Generating more local produce and producing more local goods will help to diversify the economy, building on the existing local food sector and helping producers move into higher value added activities, such as food processing.

4.12 There are also important opportunities in developing niche sectors, such as the creative and cultural industries and crafts.

4.13 As shopping and the food and drink offer become increasingly important parts of the visitor experience, the development of local food and produce will increase the attractiveness of town centres.

- Potential opportunities include:
- Developing a thriving local food sector.
- Encouraging farmers' markets.
- Promoting retail distinctiveness.

### **Key Theme 6 - Marketing and PR**

4.14 The markets industry is characterised by a general lack of funding to support marketing and promotion. Similarly, the industry makes sporadic use of websites which are of varying quality, design and maintenance.

4.15 Taking a strategic overview of ten markets enables the pooling of potential funding and media to assist in marketing and promotion. HOW will we do this??

- The use of logos to show loyalty to local markets and local produce.
- Well-designed, easy to use and informative websites.
- Use of social media to link activities and traders to on Facebook or twitter sites

### **Key Theme 7 – Structured, Effective Management**

4.16 In September 2010, the Department for Communities and Local Government published a guidance paper on management models for markets.

4.17 Whilst the paper points to a range of management structures that work across the UK, the successful models are geared to:

- Being accountable yet cost efficient in their operation and with minimal bureaucracy.
- Being focussed on the core business of promoting and running successful markets incorporating, where possible, economies of scale.
- Having the ability to access capital investment.
- Attracting and retaining market traders and ensuring that they have an increased sense of “ownership” in the operational details.
- Building closer links with local businesses and the wider community.
- Having the ability to share best practice and provide training and support for traders.

- Being integrated with town centre, business, event and tourism marketing and promotion activities.

4.18 It is recommended that the preferred, future management regime for the county's markets adopts these core principles.

4.19 There is a need for good systems which capture key data without being burdensome and bureaucratic. Such a system should be able to track all rents and other finances, trader contacts, attendance records, trader history and holidays and invoicing procedures to internal audit standard.

### **Key Theme 8 – Engaging Partners**

4.20 Partnership working is one of the essential components in successful, sustainable markets.

4.21 This strategy recommends the promotion of enhanced integration between the key players, particularly:

- To contribute to existing forum/town centre boards.
- To take strategic decisions within the agreed management and governance arrangements.
- To co-ordinate marketing, promotions, events, training, access, safety in the context of whole town centre economic development and regeneration, business development and support, tourism and employment.

## **5 Delivery of the Strategy**

5.1 It is clear that the council needs to continue to consider fully the wishes and aspirations of all parties involved in markets, town centres and surrounding communities and to respect the historic market rights that exist across the county.

5.2 It is recognised that in taking a long-term strategic approach to the revitalisation of markets the council will need to change the manner in which it manages, supports and promotes local markets across the county.

5.3 The Council must seek to design and implement a more effective management model (fully reflecting local circumstances and respecting the character of individual centres) to deliver the following strategic objectives:

- Affording the council the ability to continue to perform its functions effectively, provide strategic direction and to facilitate the effective management of markets across the county.
- Providing a structured, efficient and transparent management model which is purpose-designed for County Durham and allows markets the opportunity to operate at peak performance.
- Affording the council the opportunity to work with market operators to maximise the performance of markets but also to deliver the council's

other strategic objectives in terms of wider economic impact, business start-ups and growth and support for communities.

5.4 The most appropriate management arrangements for each individual market will be determined on the basis of efficiency and effectiveness as well as the potential for future growth and enhancement of the market offer.

5.5 Any management model should **enable the council to use its influence and resources to invest in the future of markets, direct strategic policy and implement initiatives, as part of wider town centre regeneration strategies, to maximise the economic effectiveness of markets.** Specific objectives are:

- Increasing footfall and customer spend in our town centres.
- Achieving a more structured approach to the location, frequency, style, quality and operation of the county's markets.
- Attracting day visitors and tourists and increasing dwell time.
- Promoting markets as drivers for improved town centre management and regeneration.
- Encouraging markets to become involved in business start-ups, entrepreneurial activity and local speciality goods, arts and crafts.
- Attracting new traders to underpin the sustainability of markets for the future.
- Encouraging links between street markets and private indoor markets where appropriate.
- Further developing links with local produce, healthy eating and healthy lifestyle promotion.
- Establishing better links with schools and communities.
- Modernising and improving the promotion of markets as part of the branding and image of the county.
- Implementing reduced packaging and recycling initiatives.

5.6 Should any management arrangements involve the transfer of management and operational responsibilities to a third party, the Council will need to seek prospective partners. As part of any selection process, it will be for each third party provider to demonstrate how they would operate each market in accordance with the key themes of this Strategy.

5.7 The management arrangements must allow for input from a wide range of parties with interests in our town centres if consensus is to be reached and step changes made. They must also act as a tool for performance management and review.

5.8 The council needs **to keep all interested parties informed and involved in the continuing development of markets as part of the town centres' agenda.**

5.9 In the longer term, the council should **work with all interested parties to utilise markets to help shape our town centre places and to form an integral part of physical regeneration initiatives.**

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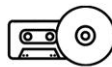
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