



Request for Proposal (RFP)

Perception Research for Visitors to North East England

Covering County Durham, Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside, Sunderland and Northumberland

1. Introduction

This research is commissioned by NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI) on behalf of regional partners.

Tourism partners across North east England are seeking proposals from research agencies to conduct comprehensive perception research among current, lapsed, and potential visitors to the region. This research will directly inform a regional branding exercise aimed at promoting the North east as a compelling and distinctive place to visit. The study will focus on perceptions of County Durham, Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside, Sunderland and Northumberland; visitor attitudes, motivations, barriers, and brand associations across both domestic and international markets.

2. Background

North east England is a region with strong cultural heritage, natural landscapes, and diverse visitor experiences. To support future marketing, destination development, and investment strategies, partners require robust and actionable insights into how the region is perceived domestically and internationally.

This RFP aims to commission research that will:

- Identify strengths and weaknesses in regional perception.
- Understand drivers of visitation and barriers to travel.
- Explore awareness and distinctiveness of each sub area.
- Provide recommendations for messaging, target audiences, and strategic positioning.

3. Objectives

The selected partner will design and deliver a research programme that addresses the following core objectives:

- Perception Benchmarking: Measure current perceptions of Northeast England as a visitor destination.
- Regional Differentiation: Give clarity to levels of awareness and perception of destinations within the North East and where our strengths lie across different markets

- Visitor Motivations & Barriers: Identify reasons for visiting, emotional drivers, and practical barriers.
- Brand Awareness & Messaging: Assess awareness of current destination brands and test potential messaging/positioning.
- Audience Segmentation: Identify key visitor segments with the greatest potential for growth.
- Recommendations: Provide clear, evidence-based guidance for marketing, product development, and investment.

4. Scope of Work

The research programme should include, at minimum:

- Desk Research: Review of existing perception, tourism, and competitor data.
- Quantitative Research: A statistically robust survey, across UK and international markets. Proposals should suggest appropriate sample sizes. We want to understand perceptions amongst residents, visitors and non-visitors of the region. We anticipate that this phase would determine the markets we test in the qualitative phase of work. (i.e. we expect for international research at this stage we test across multiple markets and refine for the qualitative phase)
- Qualitative Research: Focus groups, depth interviews, or online communities to explore perceptions in depth.
- Competitor Analysis: Benchmark against relevant UK competitor destinations.
- Reporting & Insights: A final report, regional breakdowns, dashboards, and presentation of findings.
- Bidders may propose additional methodologies they feel will strengthen the research.

5. Deliverables

The successful bidder will be expected to deliver:

- Research design and methodology plan.
- Fieldwork implementation and interim updates.
- A final written report with clear insights and recommendations.
- Sub area analysis for Durham, Newcastle, Gateshead, and Northumberland.
- Data tables and raw anonymised data files.
- Presentations/workshop for key stakeholders to cover outcomes

6. Timeline

Please provide a detailed project plan that includes:

- Project initiation.
- Research design approval.
- Fieldwork timeline.
- Analysis and reporting stages.
- What could be achieved by March 2026
- What the final delivery timeline would be

7. Budget

- **Bidders should supply a comprehensive budget including:**
 - Costs for each methodological component.
 - Itemised expenses.
 - Optional enhancements or alternative research approaches.
- As a guide we would be willing to invest circa £50,000 into this work however we would like bidders to provide costs they believe would provide the most robust options for the delivery of this work

8. Evaluation Criteria

- **Proposals will be evaluated on the following:**
 - Demonstrated experience conducting destination perception research.
 - Methodological robustness and creativity.
 - Ability to deliver actionable insights.
 - Value for money.
 - Team expertise and relevant case studies

9. Submission Requirements

- Proposals must include:
 - Company overview and credentials.
 - Proposed methodology and approach.
 - Timeline and milestones.
 - Detailed budget.
 - Examples of previous similar work.
 - Key staff assigned to the project.

10. Submission Deadline

All proposals must be submitted by 10th December to Laura Freer (Assistant Director Visitor Economy)

We would seek to hold inception meeting week commencing 5th January so please inform us of any dates you would not be able to do during that week

11. Contact Information

For questions or clarifications, please contact:

Laura Freer

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