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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 BE Group was appointed by High Peak Borough Council, on behalf of Buxton Partnership in August 2003 to undertake the Buxton Market Town Healthcheck (MTH) and draw up an Action Plan.
- 1.2 The study commenced in September 2003 and has involved a detailed investigation of the town, covering the local economy, environment, transport and accessibility, social and community issues. To inform the study and make it inclusive, extensive consultation with residents and businesses has been undertaken. This has involved: public consultation events, business and performing arts focus groups, school visits and meetings with key stakeholders. This report will be used to influence Local Authority priorities for Buxton and inform the forthcoming Buxton Partnership Business Plan 2004 – 2009.
- 1.3 The six project objectives which have formed the basis of the MTH:
- To gather an accurate and complete picture of the current condition of Buxton;
 - To develop the vision for the town into a clear Action Plan;
 - To identify priority actions/projects for the short, medium and long term;
 - To provide an information base for comparison to other towns, for use in attracting new businesses to the town, and for funding strategies to deliver the action plan;
 - To inform management decisions;
 - To assist in managing and informing public expectations against practicalities.

Buxton In Context

- 1.4 Buxton originally developed as a market town, however it was during the 18th and 19th centuries that the town grew in stature and importance when the Duke of Devonshire invested in its development as a spa town. The beautiful architecture of The Crescent and Devonshire Royal is attributable to this

period and the buildings symbolise the Duke's desire to cement Buxton's spa status.

- 1.5 The town remains the principal service centre for the Peak District and is a major draw for visitors. The town is undergoing significant transformations with a number of town centre projects being undertaken, serving to regenerate Buxton, including, the redevelopment of the Devonshire Royal into the new University of Derby Buxton Campus; the prospective restoration of The Crescent and Spa; and the Market Place and Higher Buxton Regeneration Scheme.
- 1.6 However, it is inevitable that due to the scale and nature of these initiatives that new issues and challenges for the town will result.
- 1.7 The Market Town Healthcheck and Action Plan therefore builds upon the existing projects and regeneration initiatives underway and proposes new projects that will develop Buxton as a major service centre for people living in the town and surrounding area as well as those visiting the town.

2.0 THE HEALTHCHECK

Market Town Initiative

- 2.1 The Government is committed to the regeneration of deprived market towns and rural areas through the Regional Development Agencies and Countryside Agency programmes.
- 2.2 In response, the Market Town Initiative (MTI) was established by the Countryside Agency to help regenerate and to revitalise market towns, ensuring their role as a rural service centre in the 21st Century. Central to the MTI is the involvement of the local community in the process, so that they actively contribute to the town's future.
- 2.3 The Countryside Agency's vision to be achieved through the Initiative is to:

"Promote local solutions and help market towns to become places where people from the town and surrounding countryside can:

- Buy most things they need;
- Obtain a range of basic services, such as legal advice and libraries;
- Find housing of all types – rental and for purchase;
- Have a choice of jobs, particularly in business related to the products of the surrounding countryside;
- Obtain the training and education they need;
- Enjoy eating out, the cinema, theatre and musical events.”

Defining the Hinterland

- 2.4 The first stage of the Market Town Healthcheck (MTH) was to define the hinterland in order to ascertain the sphere of influence and catchment area of the town. Due to the size of Buxton, with a population of more than twenty thousand, and the wide sphere of influence, two strata of hinterland were identified: the core and transitional hinterlands (refer to page 5).
- 2.5 The core hinterland (referred to as hinterland from herein) is defined as the main catchment area for the town. This is the area in which Buxton is the main service centre, and whose population regularly use the town for essential services such as doctors and dentists, schools, to shop and for leisure purposes. The transitional hinterland represents the area from which residents visit the town on a regular basis to use one or two services, but it is not their primary service centre.
- 2.6 The geographical reach and influence of the town has been defined through community and key stakeholder consultation, as well as from the initial findings of the healthcheck, considering factors such as public transport routes, retail customer base, tourist catchment area, police coverage, health services, secondary school catchment area, travel to work area and leisure catchment area.
- 2.7 Consequently the wards included in the hinterland are:
- Buxton Central
 - Barms

- Stone Bench
- Cote Heath
- Temple
- Burbage, and
- Corbar

The transitional hinterland has been defined as the wards of:

- Hartington and Taddington (Derbyshire Dales D.C.)
- Tideswell (Derbyshire Dales D.C.)
- Blackbrook
- Chapel East
- Chapel West
- Whaley Bridge, and
- Hope Valley.

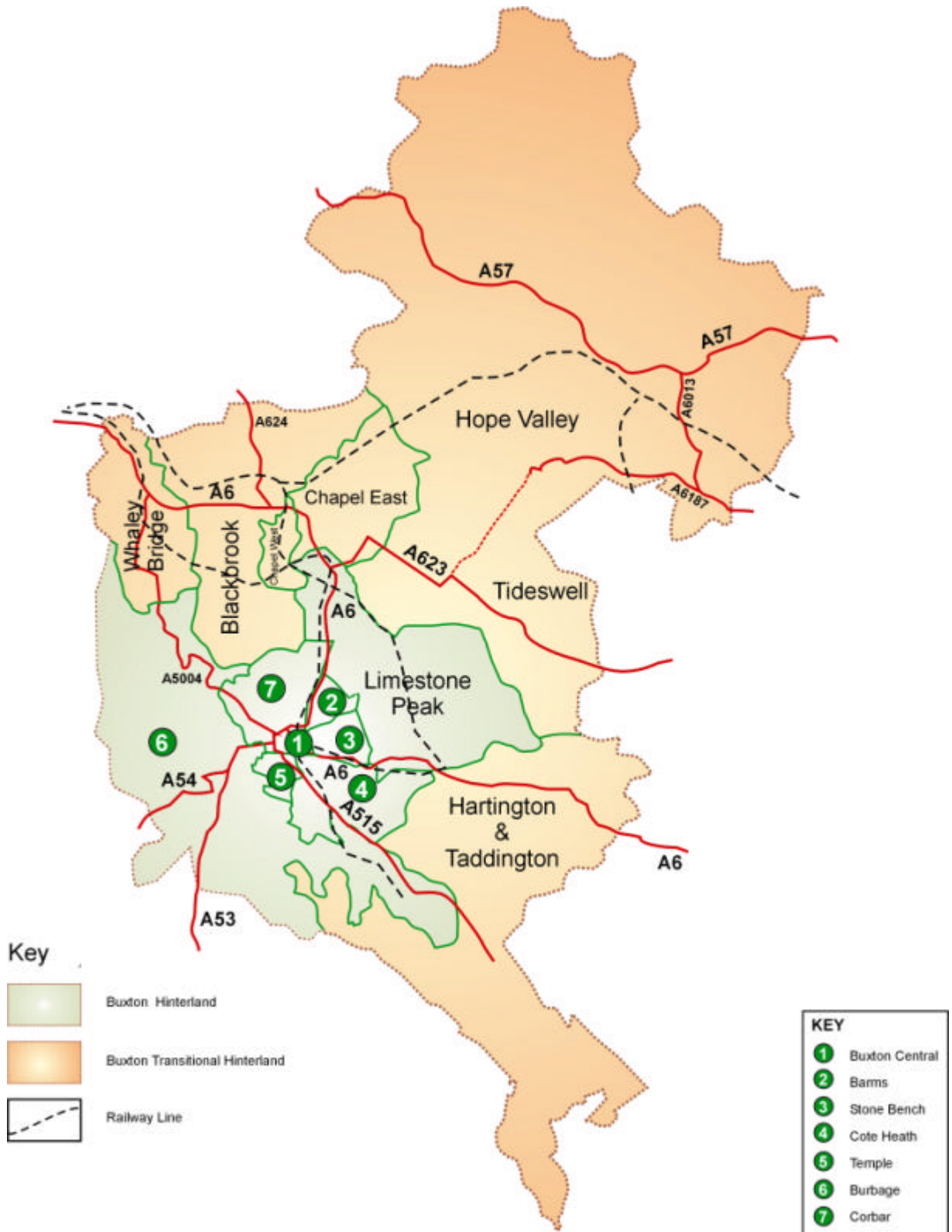
2.8 Although Buxton is located within the East Midlands, it borders both the North West and West Midlands regions. Therefore some settlements in those regions may look to Buxton for some services. However, due to prospective problems in the delivery and effectiveness of the Action Plan, the decision was made to 'cut off' the hinterland at the East Midlands regional border. However, it is important to acknowledge Buxton's reach is not simply confined to the East Midlands region.

Aim of Healthcheck Process

2.9 The Healthcheck has been an ongoing process of consultation, information and data collection taking place throughout the life of the project (September 2003 to February 2004). And the main aims of the Healthcheck process have been to:

- Identify the economic, environmental and social strengths and weaknesses;
- Consult with local people, businesses, groups and stakeholders to find out their perception of Buxton and gain their views on the present and future needs of the town; and
- Establish a sound basis for creating an Action Plan for the town and hinterland.

Plan Of Buxton Market Town Healthcheck Hinterland And Wards



Methodology

2.10 The Healthcheck provides a comprehensive overview of the town, and detailed information has been gathered on key economic, social, transport and accessibility and environmental issues. The main stages of which have been:

- **Key Stakeholder Consultation:** Topics for discussion included identifying the geographical area of Buxton's hinterland and the key issues surrounding: housing, health and education; tourism, leisure and development; retail; commercial property and employment; and crime and transport. The principle findings of the consultation event are detailed in **Appendix 1**.
- **Document Review:** This formed an ongoing element of the healthcheck process, collating information from a range of sources, including: High Peak Borough Council, Derbyshire County Council and East Midlands Development Agency.
- **Market Towns Website (Jigsaw):** Jigsaw was used to disseminate and gather information about the Healthcheck to members of the community and stakeholders to the MTH. Jigsaw is an interactive website where the worksheet questions and answers are displayed and views and comments encouraged from visitors to it. Its aim was to broaden the consultation process and act as a useful tool for sharing views about the town. Although the ultimate objective was to eventually hand over Jigsaw to its users, problems have been encountered which are likely to prevent its transfer.
- **Consultation with Parish Councils:** The 20 Parish Councils perceived to be in Buxton's hinterland were contacted, firstly to establish views on whether they considered themselves to be within Buxton's hinterland or outside Buxton's catchment area altogether. Secondly, and dependent on their response to the first question, a number of key questions were put forward that required their detailed local knowledge, for example, local access to services.

- **Public Consultation Events:** Three one day public consultation events were held in early December to establish the views of the local community. Two were held in Higher Buxton on market days (Tuesday and Saturday) and the third (Thursday) in Spring Gardens Shopping Centre to capture visitors to Lower Buxton. Some of the main issues highlighted are detailed in **Appendix 2**.
- **Manchester Metropolitan University Student Study:** As part of Manchester Metropolitan University's (MMU) Retail Marketing Degree course six final year students undertook a study in Buxton, "to identify how Buxton can be developed further as a shopping destination in order to attract inward investment, especially by independent traders in the Higher Buxton area". The project was supported by the Retail Enterprise Network, a grouping of over 40 organisations dedicated to the protection and promotion of diversity in the independent retail sector. The main findings of the study are included in **Appendix 3**.
- **Performing Arts Focus Group:** Performing art plays a central role in the vitality of the town and in the attraction of tourism, particularly through the Festivals and the Opera House. The strength and opportunities offered through performing arts in Buxton are therefore considered to be central to the future of the town. The aim of the Focus Group was to harness some of their ideas for the town. Refer to **Appendix 4** for a summary of the main issues identified.
- **Business Survey:** A questionnaire was distributed to 200 local businesses (generating a 26% response rate) to ascertain the key concerns of local businesses and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy. The results of the questionnaire are presented in **Appendix 5**.
- **Hotel/Tourism Survey:** Due to the importance of tourism, a separate hotel/tourism questionnaire was distributed. The aim of this was to gain an insight into the tourism sector, its key trends and attractions of Buxton.

The results of the questionnaire issued to 39 organisations (46% response rate) are presented in **Appendix 6**.

- **Consultation with local schools:** Two local primary schools (Harpur Hill and Peak Dale) and Buxton Community Secondary School were visited. Interactive exercises with the students were undertaken, which used large plans of the town, as a base to identify those aspects of the town they considered to be: good, bad, ok or needs improving. In addition, open discussions were held about what they, as the young people of Buxton and its hinterland, would like to see happen in the area. The key points highlighted through the consultation are detailed in **Appendix 7**.
- **Key Stakeholder Meetings:** A number of key stakeholders were identified, with whom individual meetings were held in order to gain valuable views and concepts about the town and its future development. These included: Trevor Osborne, The Trevor Osborne Property Group; Scott McCauley, Pavilion Gardens; Andrew Aughton, Buxton Opera House; Bill Preece, Otter Controls; and Ros Westwood, Buxton Museum and Art Gallery.
- **Survey Work:** This formed an integral part of the information gathering process for the Healthcheck, undertaken at various stages throughout the programme.
- **Buxton 4 Youth:** A consultation event was held at the centre, involving young people and Youth and Community Workers. The key findings are detailed in **Appendix 8**.
- **Buxton Business Forum:** A group discussion was held to determine the views of local businesses and to gain a deeper understanding of their needs. This augmented the business survey. The main issues highlighted are included in **Appendix 9**.

2.14 In addition, a variety of other organisations and individuals provided valuable information, these included: Business Link, Fairfield Residents Association, North Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce, Derbyshire County Council, High

Peak Borough Council, Derbyshire Police Constabulary and Primary Care Trust.

3.0 EXISTING INITIATIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS

- 3.1 A number of existing Initiatives are in place in Buxton and the surrounding area, which will help to shape and influence the future of the town. Some of these, most notably, The Crescent and Spa development, the Higher Buxton and Market Place Regeneration Scheme and the redevelopment of the Devonshire Royal, will have a significant impact upon the town and are therefore central to the Market Town Action Plan. It is essential that the Healthcheck and Action Plan endorses these schemes to ensure that a holistic and coordinated approach is taken to the regeneration of the town. In addition, there are a number of important local partnerships and organisations who are playing a key role in the growth and promotion of the town.

Existing Initiatives

Restoration and Redevelopment of Pavilion Gardens

- 3.2 A seven-year restoration and redevelopment programme is due to be completed later this year at Pavilion Gardens. The Heritage Lottery Fund provided £3.5 million of the £4.6 million scheme, which has included the re-vamping and extension of the car park, new toilets, new play areas and a miniature train, bandstand, restored bridges, planting of trees and shrubs, and a new fountain.

SRB6 Buxton and the Peak District Partnership

- 3.3 Funding was obtained through the Single Regeneration Budget (round 6), for a five-year programme, which commenced in 2000 and is due to be completed in 2005. The multi-faceted regeneration strategy has been designed to address many of the social, economic and environmental issues in the town, including: the sustainable growth and regeneration of Buxton as a thriving market town; support the redevelopment of the Devonshire Royal site as the new University of Derby Campus; improve training and access to jobs and services; and reduce crime and the fear of crime.

Higher Buxton and Market Place Improvement Scheme

- 3.4 Funding from the SRB6 programme has contributed to the regeneration and redevelopment of the Market Place, aimed at supporting the regeneration of the traditional town centre commercial area. Phase one of the work began in January 2004 and is due to be completed in April 2004.

Higher Buxton Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS)

- 3.5 Grants are available from English Heritage and High Peak Borough Council towards the external repair and restoration of buildings in the Buxton Market Place and High Street Conservation area. The scheme is concerned with commercial properties in the main and particularly focuses on traditional shopfront repair and restoration projects.

Fairfield

- 3.6 The Fairfield area of Buxton has received funding for a number of programmes and projects. These include a Skate Park, ICT suite at the Fairfield Centre, a Community Café, and a Sure Start Programme. The latter includes plans for a primary health care Sure Start Programme, facility.

Manchester to Derby Railway

- 3.7 A feasibility study is being undertaken to determine the feasibility of re-opening the Manchester to Derby railway line, which would re-instate the link between Buxton and Matlock. If the plan goes ahead it could result in the replacement of the existing Buxton Station with a new one to allow direct access for trains from both directions.

VALE Project

- 3.8 The Village Access to Learning and Education (VALE) programme has provided the use of Local Training Centres for local people, jointly managed between Derbyshire County Council and the University of Derby.

The Crescent and Spa Development

- 3.9 In December 2003 the Trevor Osborne Property Group was selected as the preferred developer to restore the Grade I listed Crescent, situated in the heart of Buxton town centre. The development will include an 87-bedroom high quality hotel, Spa and natural baths, an Interpretation Centre, relocation

of the Tourist Information Centre, restoration of the Ballroom and Function Room and the conversion of the Pump Room and several retail units. If the second round Heritage Lottery Fund bid is successful then it is expected that construction on the building will start in 2005, with completion in 2007.

University of Derby Redevelopment of the Devonshire Royal

- 3.10 The former Devonshire Royal Hospital is currently being redeveloped to become the new state of the art University of Derby, Devonshire Campus, Buxton. A grant of £4.7 million was received from the Heritage Lottery Fund to contribute to the restoration of the Grade II* listed building. Although the work is largely on schedule to accommodate the first influx of students in September 2004, a problem with asbestos was discovered under the Great Dome floor, which necessitated a painstaking process of removal, resulting in some delay in the project. The project is due to be completed with full student occupancy in September 2005.

Buxton Proposed Parking Schemes

- 3.11 Following significant public consultation and the identification of parking as a major issue in the town, Derbyshire County Council commissioned a study by Private Consultants Scott Wilson to look into possible parking solutions, in the context of Buxton as a historic Market Town. A proposed parking scheme was put forward for public consultation in January 2004. If agreed this will consist of two main parts:
1. Residents Parking – which will give priority to the residents of an area by allocating lengths of road where parking is confined to permit holders;
 2. On-Street Charging – introduction of charges for on-street short stay parking, using pay and display parking machines on a number of the streets in and adjacent to the main shopping areas.

Existing Partnerships

The Buxton Partnership

- 3.12 Buxton Partnership is an organisation with approximately 120 members, made up of local businesses, High Peak Borough Council, local Councillors and other interested bodies who wish to become actively involved in the

future development of the town. The Mission Statement of the Partnership is, "To make Buxton a better place to live, work and play". The Partnership's vision is: "To develop and market Buxton as a thriving Spa town, with a lively tradition of festivals, music and culture, at the centre of the Peak District; which attracts both staying and day visitors and maximises the opportunity for investment in the town". The Partnership steers the priorities of the Town Centre Coordinator and works very closely with High Peak Borough Council in determining the future and priorities for Buxton.

Buxton Business Forum

- 3.13 Buxton Business Forum is an organisation of local businesses who volunteer their time to meet once a month. The focus of the Forum is to improve the local economy, through joint working and raising awareness of pertinent issues in the town and local economy.

Bridgehead Arts Ltd

- 3.14 Bridgehead Arts Ltd is a newly established company of artists, who have been meeting regularly over the last 20 months. The aspiration of the company is to, "increase participation in enjoyment of the arts in their community through networking and support for individuals". SRB6 funding has recently been received to commission a feasibility study to look into the creation of a creative base in Buxton (the Magic Carpet project).

4.0 A SNAPSHOT OF BUXTON – FACTUAL SUMMARY

- 4.1 The following section of the report details the findings of the MTH process. The complete healthcheck worksheets can be found in the separate appendices document. The factual snapshot below provides a detailed summary of the key social, economic, transport and environmental characteristics of the Buxton area, derived from the core findings of the study.
- 4.2 The emda Market Towns template for larger market towns (defined as those with populations of between ten and twenty five thousand inhabitants), has been used to inform and shape the snapshot. This information may be used to assist with any funding bids associated with the projects detailed in the Action Plan.

Physical and Environmental Assessment

- Buxton is a historic market and spa town nestled in the Derbyshire hills, over 1,000ft above sea level it is the highest market town in England.
- The A6 north is the arterial route into Buxton from Stockport and Manchester. The A54 'Cat and Fiddle' connects the town to Macclesfield. The A6 east connects to Matlock and Bakewell. The A515 links to nearby Ashbourne, south east of Buxton, and the A53 links Buxton to Leek in the south west.
- The town centre is split into two areas: Higher and Lower Buxton. Higher Buxton is the traditional centre and developed around the Market Place, home to the twice weekly Traditional Market. Lower Buxton has usurped Higher Buxton as the retail core and is also the primary location for cultural, leisure and visitor attractions.
- Buxton is located on the edge of the Peak District National Park, lying on the boundary between the White and Dark Peaks (limestone and gritstone areas). The countryside surrounding the town is characterised by limestone hills and dales, as well as a rich and diverse heritage of moors, meadowland, bog and wetland.
- Buxton's hinterland is important for agriculture. Due to climatic factors, topography and soil quality the land is primarily used for sheep and cattle farming.
- The Peak District National Park provides an ideal setting for a variety of leisure and sporting activities including walking, cycling, caving, horseriding and rock climbing.
- There are a number of national and local landscape designations in the locale, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Nature Reserves, reflecting the high quality of the landscape surrounding Buxton.
- Buxton developed as a market town, with a strong history of quarrying which continues today. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries the 5th Duke of Devonshire began to develop Buxton as a Spa town. Prominent town centre buildings such as The Crescent and Devonshire Royal were constructed from locally quarried gritstone and their stunning architecture ensures that they remain key focal points in the town today.
- Buxton Town Centre is a designated Conservation Area, reflecting the town's strong historic core, largely unspoilt by modern development.

- Buxton has a wealth of distinctive buildings and areas within the town. The main features are:
 - The Grade I listed Crescent;
 - The Grade II* listed Devonshire Royal Hospital, originally built as stables to The Crescent;
 - Grade II Old Hall Hotel;
 - Grade II* listed Buxton Opera House;
 - Grade III* listed Pavilion Gardens;
 - The Market Place; and
 - The Slopes.
- A number of heritage schemes are currently underway, these include:
 - The conversion and restoration of the Grade II* listed Devonshire Royal Hospital by the University of Derby;
 - The redevelopment of the Grade I listed Crescent for a high class hotel and Spa;
 - The redevelopment of Pavilion Gardens, due to be completed in May 2004.
- The natural environment enhances the character of Buxton. The River Wye flows along the Serpentine Walk before passing through the centre of the town. The historic parks and gardens, notably Pavilion Gardens and The Slopes, provide quality green space within the urban area. The trees are an important feature, reflected by the large number of Tree Preservation Orders.

Social and Economic Profile

- In 2001 the population of Buxton and its hinterland was 24,112, 27% of the High Peak Borough's population.
- The population of Buxton and its hinterland has grown over the last 10 years, increasing by approximately 10% since 1991.
- 62.5% of the population of Buxton and its hinterland are of working age (16 years to 64 years).
- Local unemployment rates in Buxton and its hinterland are below County and National averages. 2% in October 2003, this is a decline of 0.5% since October 2002.
- The majority of the population is employed in professional and managerial jobs (46% for Buxton and its hinterland), although this is below High Peak and

National levels. 20% of the population (Buxton and its hinterland) are employed within the semi-skilled and unskilled sectors.

- Average annual gross household income in Buxton and its hinterland is £15,880 this compares to £16,700 for the High Peak and £24,617 nationally. However there are significant disparities between wards, for example, College Ward's figure is £29,640 whereas Cote Heath's is £9,283.
- The largest employment sector in Buxton and its hinterland is manufacturing employing 21.2% of the population. Employment in mining and quarrying remains significant and well above the regional and national average at 4.2%. The leisure and catering sector is strong and growing with 5.4% of the population of Buxton and its hinterland employed in the industry, increasing to 7.6% for Central Buxton Ward only.
- Buxton is one of the major tourist attractions in the Borough, and provides 64% of bed spaces in the Peak District. £73 million is spent by visitors annually in the Borough.
- The High Peak Local Plan highlights Buxton as the principle area for housing and industrial expansion in the Borough over the Plan period up to 2011.
- Since 1998 the number of business start-ups and failures in the High Peak has remained relatively stable. Between 1998 to 2002 there were 1,195 VAT registrations and 1,155 de-registrations.
- Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce in partnership with Business Link provide business support, advice and training throughout Derbyshire and the High Peak. Business Link operates a satellite office from the Tourist Information Centre.
- Financial business support is limited to small pots of funding for new start-ups. There is no local grant funding or economic development/inward investment grants.
- Rental levels for industrial and commercial property have been relatively stable. Prime office rents are £7.50 per sq ft and industrial rents are £3-£5.50 per sq ft. There has been little new commercial or industrial floorspace built in the last few years and there is a shortage of good quality space for small and start up businesses.

Housing

- There is a diverse mix of housing types in Buxton and the surrounding hinterland. In September 2003 the average price for a house with four or more bedrooms was £273,000, falling to £140,00 for three beds and £125,000 for two.
- There is a significant shortage of affordable housing within the Borough.
- There are thirteen private sector run homes for the elderly in Buxton.

Health

- There are four doctors surgeries located in Buxton, with one doctor available per 1,250 people. Compared to a national targets of 1 per 1,500-2,000 for rural areas.
- There are five NHS dentists in Buxton, although only one practice continues to accept registrations (restricted to children aged 0 to 6).
- There are two hospitals in Buxton: Buxton Cottage Hospital and Cavendish Hospital. These operate a range of maternity, outpatient and minor injury services.
- There is no Accident and Emergency Department in the town, people have to travel to Stockport, Macclesfield or Chesterfield.
- A variety of social and welfare services are available these include health visitors, Care Link service and Meals on Wheels.

Organisations

- The High Peak Borough Council have offices in Glossop, Chapel-en-le-Frith and Buxton.
- The High Peak Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) records show that there are around 70 voluntary and community groups in Buxton covering a variety of interests including advice, counselling, arts, craft, music and conservation.
- Buxton 4 Youth is an organisation run by Youth Workers, providing youth and after school clubs, advice and a drop in centre.

Community Facilities

- The main community facilities in Buxton include: swimming pool; outdoor and indoor sports amenities at Buxton Community School; sports facilities at High

Peak College; the Public Library; Fairfield Youth and Community Centre; Buxton 4 Youth; parks including: the Grade II listed Pavilion Gardens, The Slopes, Ashwood Park, Cote Heath and Fairfield Common.

- Many of the public buildings have disabled access, however significant changes will be needed to privately owned properties to meet the standards set out in The Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- Within Buxton and the hinterland there are a number of sports groups and activities available including: rugby, hockey, football, running club, golf and cricket.
- A range of outdoor adventure and endurance sports are possible in the surrounding Peak District National Park, such as rock climbing, mountain biking, orienteering, horse riding and clay pigeon shooting.
- There are a number of different denominational places for Christian worship within Buxton and the hinterland, although provision for other religions is limited.

Cultural and Visitor Attractions

- Buxton is renowned for its annual festivals, attracting visitors on a local, regional, national and even international level. Highlights of the festival season include the seventeen day long Buxton Festival and the three week long Gilbert and Sullivan Festival.
- Buxton has a very strong creative arts sector, which not only provides local entertainment and events but also plays a central role in the distinctive image of the town.
- Key visitor attractions in the town include Buxton Museum and Art Gallery, Buxton Opera House, Pavilion Gardens and Poole's Cavern.

Media

- Local newspapers available include: the Buxton Advertiser, the Buxton Times and the High Peak Courier. Local radio is provided by BBC Radio Derby and the launch of High Peak Radio is imminent.
- A variety of local guides and maps of Buxton and the Peak District National Park are widely available. These serve as promotional and marketing

material for the town, aimed at wider regional and national audiences as well as the local population.

- Public internet access is available: the Library, Buxton Museum and Art Gallery, Fairfield Community Centre and Buxton 4 Youth.

School and Education

- There are five primary schools within Buxton and its hinterland, of which, two (Harpur Hill and Burbage Schools) rank in the top 100 schools in Derbyshire.
- Sixth form provision is provided at Buxton Community School. Students also attend: Lady Manners in Bakewell and New Mills School and Sixth Form and Ridge Danyers College, Marple. Average 'A' level point scores range between 73.6 and 86 for schools in Buxton and its hinterland.
- Quality of school provision varies and is dependant on the individual schools. At secondary level St Thomas Moore Catholic School consistently performs better than Buxton Community School and at primary level Harper Hill and Burbage Schools stand out above the rest.
- There are eight nurseries and playgroups, providing 324 places, all have vacancies.
- The University of Derby provide Higher Education courses in Buxton. A number of vocational and non vocational courses including BTEC, BTEC HND, HNC, NVQ, GNVQ AVCE, National Diplomas and Degree programmes are available.
- Adult learning programmes are offered through the Buxton Training Club and Derbyshire County Council's Adult Community Education courses, as well as the internet based Learn Direct.

Town Centre

- There is a wide range of shops including: bakers, greengrocers, convenience stores, butchers, chemists and post office. The largest supermarket is Safeway, located outside of the town centre on Bakewell Road. Supermarkets within the town centre are: Somerfield, Aldi, Iceland and Kwik Save and there is a food hall in Marks and Spencers.
- There is a broad selection of comparison goods – clothes and shoes, homeware, jewellery, books, arts and crafts.

- Many services are available, primarily in Lower Buxton, such as: the main high street banks (Barclays, Lloyds TSB, Royal Bank of Scotland and HSBC), estate agents, a veterinary surgery, hairdressers, tea shops, public houses, takeaways.
- The Traditional Market is held in the Market Place, Higher Buxton on Tuesdays and Saturdays throughout the year. However, due to the Market Place regeneration it has been temporarily relocated to in front of The Crescent. A monthly Farmers Market is held in the Pavilion Gardens.
- In September 2002, there were 32 vacant shops in Buxton, representing a vacancy rate of 9%, lower than the national average of 11%. However the vacancy rate is twice as high in Higher Buxton as compared to Lower.
- The provision of disabled access to shops is variable. Alterations have been made to many of the shops in Spring Gardens, but due to the age of many the buildings elsewhere, most notably in Higher Buxton, disabled access is more problematical. An issue with the advent of The Disability Discrimination Act 1995. There is no shopmobility scheme operating in Buxton.

Transport

- High Peak lies at the heart of the M1-M60-M6 motorway network.
- Macclesfield is the nearest large town to Buxton, 12 miles to the west. Other towns and cities within easy reach are: Sheffield, Chesterfield, Manchester, Derby and Stockport.
- Although Buxton does not suffer from a serious congestion problem, traffic levels do increase in the tourist season, at rush hour and with the 'school run' traffic. The Fairfield Road leading into Buxton is a particular hotspot.
- The train station is in the town centre adjacent to Spring Gardens Shopping Centre. Daily commuter services run to Stockport (40 mins) and Manchester (1 hour) via Chapel-en-le-Frith.
- The main bus termini are located on the Market Place. Buses travel to a wide variety of destinations, including settlements in Buxton's hinterland, as well as Chapel-en-le-Frith, Macclesfield and Manchester.
- Disabled access to public transport has improved and new buses are gradually being introduced with low floors and wheelchair access. Supplementary services include a dial-a-ride service and a voluntary car scheme run by the Buxton Volunteer Service.

- A car-share scheme has been launched (March 2003) by High Peak B.C.
- Buxton has car parks, in both Higher and Lower Buxton with a total of 1052 spaces including 47 disabled spaces. On street parking, including some residential roads is a problem. A proposed parking strategy has been published by Derbyshire County Council, which includes the introduction of on-street parking charges and residents parking permits.
- Traffic calming measures are in operation, these include fixed speed cameras on the A6 and A53 and speed humps on problem roads. A concerted effort has been made to improve road safety with modern pedestrian crossings.
- Pedestrian and vehicle signage to key attractions in the town centre is generally good. Buxton Partnership is undertaking a review of signage to identify where improvements are needed.
- The quality of the public realm varies. Pavements also vary in quality, most notably between Higher (poor, but subject to regeneration) and Lower Buxton (good).

5.0 KEY FINDINGS FROM THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

5.1 The following section details the core findings of the extensive consultation process (more comprehensive consultation notes are detailed in the Appendices). A range of local groups, organisations, schools and businesses were consulted, to gain their views on the town and the issues they consider important for the future development of Buxton and its hinterland, in addition to the three public consultation events. A wide range of fundamental issues have been identified through the consultation process, which have formed the basis of the Action Plan.

Key Stakeholder Consultation (Appendix 1)

5.2 A range of issues were discussed focused around the key themes of: housing, health and education; tourism, leisure and environment; retail, commercial property and employment; and crime and transport.

- Lack of affordable housing.
- Lack of facilities for teenagers.
- The lack and inadequacy of the existing public toilets.
- Improved publicity needed for the town.

- Disconnection between Higher and Lower Buxton.
- Need more facilities and accommodation to cater for business tourism.
- Lack of leisure facilities, notably cinema, arts centre, leisure centre, bowling alley.
- Lack of performance space – venue to hold audience of 250 required.
- Swimming pool in need of major refurbishment.
- Gateways into town are unclear.
- Shortage of industrial/commercial property.

Public Consultation Events (Appendix 2)

5.3 Key themes that emerged from the public consultation events:

- More niche market and independent retailers to distinguish Buxton from other towns.
- Desire for an indoor market.
- New/improved swimming pool and new leisure centre.
- High demand for cinema and bowling alley.
- Buxton should have provision for guided tours, heritage trails and woodland walks.
- Improve the market – physical appearance and range of goods on offer.
- Need new and modernised public conveniences with access to baby changing facilities.
- Environmental improvements to the train station, including signage and kiosk.
- Inadequacy of local bus services, notably to: Cavendish Hospital, Harpur Hill Industrial Estate, Staden Lane Industrial Estate and the provision of late night services.

Performing Arts Focus Group (Appendix 4)

5.4 The issues identified by the Performing Arts Focus Group as “realistic expectations” within Buxton over the next three to five years are:

- Improved publication/publicity of events, venues and activities.
- Development of a collective arts networking/resource.
- Undertake creative spaces study – review of existing facilities and feasibility study into the options for the provision of additional facilities.
- Develop a “what’s on magazine” – regular arts publication for information and to advertise events.

- Employment of an Arts Strategy Officer, who could also deal with funding.
- Would like a dedicated Arts Centre – creative space for drama, art, lectures, photography.

Consultation with Local Schools (Appendix 7)

5.5 The main points raised during consultation with both primary and secondary school pupils were linked to the provision of activities and facilities for young people in Buxton. The key issues were:

- The skate ramp needs a rain cover so it can be used in all weather conditions.
- Want a place to ‘hang out’ like an internet café.
- Buxton Spa Swimming pool needs improving.
- Want a cinema and bowling alley.

Buxton 4 Youth (Appendix 8)

5.6 The perceived lack of facilities and activities for young people in Buxton was highlighted as the main concern amongst those consulted at B4Y. The key issues highlighted included:

- Buxton swimming pool is poor – tiny pool and no diving board.
- Need a cinema – just a small /medium sized one in keeping with the town.
- Need better sports facilities.
- There isn’t anywhere in Buxton for young people to go and just ‘hang out’.
- A youth website – focused at youths who live in both Buxton and the rural hinterland. Provide a chat room and message board so that kids can suggest trips out and give options of when they would like to go, for example to the cinema, ice skating on a particular weekend. If enough kids sign up and want to go then a minibus is put on which will pick up and drop off at their homes. The website has been trialed in Cheshire.
- Need more low cost, affordable housing.

Buxton Business Forum (Appendix 9)

5.7 A number of topics were raised for discussion, including: infrastructure, travel to work area, land and premises provision, business support and labour supply. The main points raised included:

- Office space is an issue – starting small businesses find it difficult to find premises. Shortage of 1000 to 2000 sq ft offices and workshops.

- Affordable housing is a problem.
- Recruitment is difficult, especially of semi and unskilled labour.
- Public Transport – inadequate for use by workers, especially shift workers.
- Better public toilets needed.
- Need a car park strategy for Buxton.
- Train station needs environmental and physical improvements, as well as a taxi rank.

6.0 THE BUXTON VISION

- 6.1 The Healthcheck has been developed as a tool to achieve the vision for the regeneration and future prosperity of Buxton. The vision for Buxton as established by Buxton Partnership, is:

“To develop and market Buxton as a thriving Spa town, with a lively tradition of festivals, music and culture, at the centre of the Peak District; which attracts both staying and day visitors and maximises the opportunity for investment in the town.”

Mission Statement:

“To make Buxton a better place to live, work and play”

- 6.2 A number of other initiatives and regeneration schemes are currently underway in the town, it is therefore imperative that the MTH works in conjunction with these to achieve the Vision and in doing so the best possible future for Buxton.
- 6.3 The findings of the Healthcheck and Action Plan will be used to inform the ensuing Buxton Partnership Business Plan (2004 – 2009). The MTH was commissioned by the Partnership to inform and steer the development and regeneration of the town over the next five to ten years.

7.0 BUXTON ACTION PLAN

The aim of the Action Plan is to form a key tool in achieving the Buxton Partnership Vision. The Action Plan consists of a number of proposed projects that have been devised through a detailed assessment of the Healthcheck findings and the outcome of the extensive consultation process.

The proposed projects have been divided into topic areas to allow ease of reference and to allow linkages between the different projects. Each Project will require a Lead Partner, Project Partners, and funding, without which the project can not proceed. Each project has been given a High, Medium, or Low priority, and been identified as being a Short, Medium, or Long term project.

The next step is to secure Lead Partners for each project, starting with the High Priority first. Likely Partners and funding sources have been identified. If you would like to get involved in or feel that you have a contribution of any kind to make to any of these projects please contact the Buxton Town Centre Co-ordinator.