

## BERWICK: A MARKET TOWN UNDER PRESSURE

### THE PLACE

Whether you've arrived today or lived here all your life, the Berwick Civic Society which opens this building every summer hopes you'll get something out of this exhibition. All over the country, towns like this one are facing the same type of challenge. Despite, and sometimes because of, their beautiful and away-from-it-all locations and high quality of life, they can face problems with low incomes, high property prices, flagging town centres, disappearing amenities and an increasingly unbalanced population.

In Berwick, as in many places, there is pressure – from the market, from the local authority, from the public – to solve these problems through development. But what kind of development this should be is often a matter of strongly held opinion. The question of how to address the issues facing Berwick and its surrounding communities, without compromising or obliterating their unique characteristics in the process, arouses plenty of passion in locals and visitors alike.

Passion is futile, however, unless it can be channelled into informed debate or the ability to actually do something. This exhibition aims to show how the issues facing the town and the attempts to tackle them fit together, and how this year in particular is an excellent opportunity to actually get involved and have an input into how the area develops.

Whatever your perspective on the town, the Civic Society would be delighted to hear your thoughts and impressions, so don't forget to sign the visitors' book.



Spittal is a former fishing village and spa resort, highly popular in Victorian and Edwardian times. Its renovated prom is enjoying a new lease of life.



Tweedmouth is the historic manufacturing and port centre, though there is no longer a link between the working docks and a railhead on the main line.



Lifestyles have changed since this town guide was written in the 1950s, but behind the quaint language most of these things are still relevant.

### BERWICK IN FACTS AND FIGURES

<b>Population</b>	11,700 in 2001 (12,405 in 1991)	
<b>Local authority</b>	Berwick Borough Council, serving Berwick and its rural hinterland, including Seahouses, Belford and Wooler	
<b>Nearest colleges</b>	Ashington (56 miles) and Galashiels (41 miles)	
<b>Qualifications</b>	Above Level 3 (A level or equivalent) (national average 30%)	18%
	No qualifications	30%
<b>Unemployment</b>	3.7% in 2005 (North East average 3.1% – it is unusual for a market town to have higher than the regional average unemployment)	
<b>Jobs in town (rounded to nearest 50)</b>		
	Distribution, hotels and restaurants (37.7%, compared to a national average of 24.8%)	2,650
	Public administration, education and health	1,800
	Manufacturing	1,000
	Banking, finance and insurance	600
	Other services	500
	Construction	200
	Transport and communications	150
	Agriculture and fishing	50
	Energy and water	50
<b>Commuters</b>		
	Roughly 100 each to Tyne and Wear and Edinburgh, 330 to Northumberland, 70 to Dunbar and 570 to the Scottish Borders	
<b>Distances</b>		
	Edinburgh 56 miles	
	Newcastle 60 miles	
<b>Last train</b>		
	From Edinburgh – 9pm weekdays, 7pm Saturday and 8pm Sunday	
	From Newcastle – 10.08pm weekdays, 9.02pm Saturday and 9.59pm Sunday	

During the summer the number of visitors to Berwick Borough can reach 75,000 per day  
Sources: JSA Regeneration, Market Towns Review for ONE North East, 2005; BBLSP Community Plan, 2005



All of the buildings coloured red are listed.

In the eleventh century and again in the early fourteenth, Berwick was the busiest port in Scotland. It was walled in medieval times, and the Elizabethan fortifications were Elizabeth I's biggest item of expenditure. Berwick's 'prosperous century' was 1750–1850, when the old centre was largely replaced with the stone-built Georgian town that you see out of the window of this room.

Now the town centre is completely surrounded by a scheduled ancient monument (the same designation as Hadrian's Wall and Stonehenge), and Berwick has the greatest concentration of listed buildings for a town of comparable size in the country.

### MARKET TOWNS UNDER PRESSURE NATIONALLY

With between 3,000 and 30,000 inhabitants, market towns are the raw material for ideal, human-scale communities – safe and desirable for all ages. These towns evolved over hundreds of years in response to distinctively local wants and needs, but their charms are vulnerable and can easily disappear in the globalised present, overwhelmed by urban competition, or left behind through geographical remoteness.

#### POTENTIAL THREATS TO MARKET TOWNS

##### Development factors

- Large-scale uniform development which can generate intolerable levels of congestion
- Dormitory developments
- Development that is not in character with the rest of the town
- National food retailing, reliant on cheap road transport and capable of killing off local food availability

##### Lifestyle factors

- Families where neither parent can get to the shops during working hours
- Home shopping over the internet
- The desire for greater choice (a single large retail park of 50,000 square metres in Edinburgh or Newcastle has more than twice the total shopping area that a town the size of Berwick can sustain)

##### Other factors

- The dominance of the car – increasing traffic, congestion, lack of parking, pollution
- Increasing house prices due to the influx of city dwellers
- The loss of young people through lack of affordable housing and the resulting problem of an ageing population
- The apathy of town residents
- A lack of facilities for adolescents, leading to social problems

#### Surf, seafood and second homes create property hotspot

Cornwall shows biggest price leap over 10 years – MP says it is a 'disaster for local people'.  
*Guardian, April 2006*

'Sleaford has already got a traffic problem during the working part of the day. The town layout leaves little or no room to improve the situation.'  
*Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) survey*

'More building in Framlingham would swamp the already stretched local services. Enough is enough!'  
*CPRE survey*

'The high street in Glossop is dominated by building societies, banks, charity shops and estate agents with very few local retail outlets.'  
*BBC website*

'A place with such huge natural advantages as Berwick should make the most of them, but there is evidence of parochialism and lack of ambition. Why no park-and-ride? ... Why no top-of-the-range supermarkets? ... And why has the only cinema in town just closed?'  
*Daily Telegraph, March 2006*

'Architecturally, it is one of those towns you fall in love with at first sight.'  
*Daily Telegraph, March 2006*