

**Ross-on-Wye  
TOWN BENCHMARKING**

**2012 Handbook**

# INTRODUCTION

Town Benchmarking has been developed to address the real issues of how to understand, measure, evaluate and ultimately improve town centres. The approach offers a simple way of capturing data on 12 town centre Key Performance Indicators selected by those involved in town centre management. By having the tools to measure performance, strategic decision making is both encouraged and improved. By considering performance, forward strategies and action planning can be more focused and effective.

Town Benchmarking data is key in developing targeted bids for funding and the effectiveness of a project can be more easily demonstrated. The easy to use approach builds the skills of those involved in collecting and recording the information as there is no reliance on external expertise.

At the end of each year, when Benchmarkers' have collected the key performance indicator data, localities are provided with a valid and robust annual report on the performance of their town centre during weekday trading conditions. The data is analysed further to compare localities against all other towns undertaking Benchmarking in their region and nationally. Measurements against similar ‘types’ of towns from across the country are also available.

The success of the Town Benchmarking approach has seen the number of license holder’s increase from 14 in 2004 to 70 in 2011. The range of users has also become increasingly varied including:

* Market Town Partnerships
* Local Authorities
* Town Councils
* Universities
* Community Interest Companies

# Now you are a registered Benchmarker you simply need to read the following Handbook and ensure you collect and record the data required in the systematic manner outlined. As the named license holder, amt-i suggest that you nominate a Project Manager to oversee data collection and most importantly data entry into this Handbook for your town(s). Please also provide a copy of the Handbook to all those undertaking Town Benchmarking in your locality.

# By the 31st December 2012, you need to ensure that your completed Handbook is emailed to [mike.king@towns.org.uk](mailto:mike.king@towns.org.uk) and copies of all the Business and Town Centre User Surveys have been sent to:

# Mike King Senior Consultant amt-i 7 St Helens Grove Monkston Milton Keynes MK10 9FG

# During February 2013, as the named license holder you will receive a copy of the 2012 Town Benchmarking report for your individual town(s) to distribute accordingly. Please note if the completed Handbook and associated surveys have not been received by 31st December 2012, you will not receive a 2012 Town Benchmarking Report.

# If you have any issues or enquiries during the course of the year, please contact Mike King on the email address above or on 07818 068982

# Happy Benchmarking



# Mike King (amt-i Senior Consultant)

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**GETTING STARTED**

# The following Handbook has been designed as a guide to help you with creating your own Benchmarking Schedule to collect the Key Performance Indicator data.

# Alongside in-depth information in regards to the individual 12 Key Performance Indicators, ‘Top Tips’ and ‘Good Practice’ are also included in shaded text to make the Benchmarking process as simple as possible.

# SCHEDULE

# In order to compare most accurately across towns and over a number of years it is important to measure the key performance indicators (KPIs) at set times of year.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **KPI** | **Frequency** | **When** |
| 1 Total number of commercial units | Annual | First benchmarking activity |
| 2 Comparison / Convenience | Annual | First benchmarking activity |
| 3 Key attractors / multiple traders | Annual | First benchmarking activity |
| 4 Number of vacant units | Annual | First benchmarking activity |
| 5 Number of markets/ traders | Annual | Market Day |
| 6 Prime retail property yields | Annual | Anytime |
| 7 Zone A rents | Annual | Anytime |
| 8 Footfall counts | Twice pa | ‘Market Day’ during the week and ‘Non Market Day’ during the week/ or one day in Summer and one day in Autumn |
| 9 Car parking usage | Twice pa | ‘Market Day’ during the week and ‘Non Market Day’ during the week/ or one day in Summer and one day in Autumn |
| 10 Business Confidence Surveys | Annual | Anytime |
| 11 Town Centre Users Survey | Annual | 2012-08-16 |
| 12 Shoppers Origin Surveys | Annual | Anytime |

The table above illustrates the frequency with which you need to collect individual KPI data, whilst the ‘when’ column indicates that the process can be broken down into specific ‘days’

* First benchmarking activity day
* Market Day
* Non Market Day
* Anytime

For example, KPI8 Footfall Counts need to be conducted twice, once on a ‘Market Day’ and once on a ‘Non Market Day,’ whilst KPI’s 1-4 can all be combined as part of the ‘First Benchmarking Activity.’

An example of a Data Collection Schedule is available in Appendix 3.

AMT estimate that if you are new Benchmarker, completion of data entry and data collection would on average take one person 6 full days. However, if you have previously conducted Town Benchmarking, you should set aside 4 days to complete the process.

**DEFINING BOUNDARIES**

Before any KPI data is collected in your locality, it is necessary to define the town centre. The town centre will form the area on which you gather the Benchmarking information both in 2012 and years to come. The limit of the town centre is usually obvious and will become clear on the first survey walk round e.g. it is defined by a major road junction/a ring road junction/where the commercial offer stops and residential properties commence/a river bridge etc.

Draw the town centre boundary on an OS map. This map should be dated and kept for reference so that there is consistency in future when each of the KPIs is revisited. Your council should be able to supply you with a suitably scaled map for this.

* *Car Parks within 200 metres of the defined town centre boundary should be included in the KPI 9 audit*

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**COLLECTING THE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

# The following section is essential to a successful data collection and data entry process, so please ensure that you read carefully. Each of the 12 KPI’s are introduced with information as to why they are important to understand, how they should be collected and how the data should be recorded. ‘Top Tips’ and ‘Good Practice’ are highlighted in the shaded italic text.

# KPI 1 - TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMERCIAL UNITS

**Aim:** To assess the total number and range of **ground floor** ‘commercial’ units in the town centre.

**Why:** It is important to understand the scale and variety of the ‘commercial offer’ throughout the town as this will impact on its long term vitality and viability. A variety of shops and a wide range of services in a town are important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. Sustaining a balance between the different aspects of buying and selling goods and services ensures that the local population (and visitors from outside) can spend time and money there, keeping the generated wealth of the town within the local economy. Importantly, it forms the employment base for a substantial proportion of the community too.

Measuring the total number of units will indicate the baseline stock of units in the town, against which future expansions / contractions can be monitored.

**When:** This KPI should be collected as the first benchmarking activity and then reviewed annually.

|  |
| --- |
| * *If your town is new to the Benchmarking system, you should set a day aside to walk around define the designated town centre area and combine the collection of KPI’s 1,2,3,4 as part of your ‘first benchmarking activity.’* * *For subsequent years, we suggest that you simply print out a copy of your Business Unit Data Sheet and use this to check the information as part of your ‘first benchmarking activity’ tour of the designated town centre.* |

**How:** Print off the relevant number of copies of the Business Unit Data Sheet. (Emailed to you with this Handbook)

Alternatively, if you 'Benchmarked' in 2011, on request, amt-i will email you a copy of the Business Unit Data Sheet, which you can use to check on the commercial offering and record any changes such as a unit becoming vacant, change in name or a change in Use Class Order.

Simply walk around the defined town centre and for each **ground floor** commercial unit record:

* Street Name
* Unit Number
* Business Name
* Use Class (see below for Use Class information)
* *If you cannot find a number for the premises, provide it with a unique reference such as OFS for Old Fire Station or WHS if the unit is owned by WH Smith. For data entry purposes you may then wish to use any of the internet search engines to type in the business details to ascertain the premise number.*

If you are new to Town Benchmarking examples of how the data needs to be recorded are provided at the top of each Business Unit Data Sheet in the shaded boxes.

* *Only record commercial units on the ground floor of your town centre. The only exception is multi levelled shopping centres.*
* *Units in dual/ multiple use which have a single point of access should be counted as a single unit.*
* *Units in dual use should be recorded according to the predominant use.*

**Use Class Order**

#### The following definitions come from the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and its subsequent amendments and need to be used when entering ‘Use Class’ on the ‘Business Unit Data Sheet’.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Class** | **Type of Use** | **Class Includes:** |
| A1 | Shops | Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices (but not sorting offices), pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors, tyre fitters and internet cafes |
| A2 | Financial and professional services | Financial services such as banks and building societies, professional services (other than health and medical services) including estate and employment agencies and betting offices |
| A3 | Restaurants and Cafés | Food and drink for consumption on the premises- restaurants, snack bars and cafes |
| A4 | Drinking establishments | Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments (but not nightclubs) |
| A5 | Hot food takeaways | Sale of hot food for consumption off the premises |
| SG | Sui Generis ("unique" establishments) | Theatres, hostels providing no significant element of care, scrap yards. Petrol filling stations and shops selling and/ or displaying motor vehicles. Retail warehouse clubs, nightclubs, laundrettes, taxi business, amusement centres, casinos, haulage yards, transport depots, veteniary clinics, dog parlours, tanning and beauty salons and tattoo studios. |
| B1 | Business | Offices (other than those that fall within A2) research and development of products and processes, light industry appropriate in a residential area. |
| B2 | General Industrial | Use for industrial process other than one falling within class B1 (excluding incineration purposes, chemical treatment or landfill or hazardous waste) Includes Garages offering car repairs, Car Valeting |
| B8 | Storage and Distribution | Warehouses, includes open air storage |
| C1 | Hotels | Hotels, boarding and guest houses where no significant element of care is provided (excludes hostels) |
| C2 | Residential Institutions | Residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres. |
| C2A | Secure Residential Institution | Use for a provision of secure residential accommodation, including use as a prison, young offenders institution, detention centre, secure training centre, custody centre, short term holding centre, secure hospital, secure local authority accommodation or use as a military barracks. |
| D1 | Non residential institutions | Clinics, health centres, crèches, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non residential education and training centres. |
| D2 | Assembly and leisure | Cinemas, music and concert halls, bingo and dance halls (but not nightclubs), swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiums or area for indoor or outdoor sports and recreations (except for motor sports, or where firearms are used). |

**How to enter:** For each commercial unit in the town centre complete the Business Unit Data Sheet as shown in the shaded examples at the top of the document.

If you 'Benchmarked' in 2011, you need to update the data from the Business Unit Data Sheet and amend any changes.

Completed Business Unit Data Sheets should be returned with this Handbook by 31st December 2012.

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**KPI 2 - RETAIL UNITS BY CLASSIFICATION (COMPARISON / CONVENIENCE)**

**Aim:** To assess the balance of comparison and convenience retail units in the town centre.

**Why:** A1 commercial units selling goods can be split into two different types – Comparison and Convenience (see the definitions below).

The presence of a variety of shops in a shopping centre is important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. A balance of both comparison and convenience retail units is therefore ideal in terms of encouraging visitors/potential customers.

**When:** This work should be undertaken at the same time as the KPI1 survey in the ‘first benchmarking activity’ and revisited annually.

**How:** Using the Business Unit Data Sheet, in the Business Type (Comparison/ Convenience) column record whether the A1 Use Class Order commercial units sell mainly Convenience or Comparison goods.

Alternatively, if you 'Benchmarked' in 2011, on request, amt-i will email you a copy of the Business Unit Data Sheet, which you can use to check on the commercial offering and record any changes.

* *Only record data on the Business Type (Comparison/ Convenience) column of the Business Unit Data Sheet for those commercial units classed as A1. For all other commercial units mark the Business Type (Comparison/ Convenience) column as ‘N/A’.*

**Convenience/ Comparison:**

**Convenience goods** – low-cost, everyday items that consumers are unlikely to travel far to purchase. Defined as;

* food and non-alcoholic drinks
* tobacco
* alcohol
* newspapers and magazines
* non-durable household goods.

2. **Comparison goods** – all other retail goods.

* Books
* Clothing and Footwear
* Furniture, floor coverings and household textiles
* Audio-visual equipment and other durable goods
* Hardware and DIY supplies
* Chemists goods
* Jewellery, watches and clocks
* Bicycles
* Recreational and Miscellaneous goods
* Hairdressing

**How to enter:** For each A1 commercial unit in the town centre complete the Business Unit Data Sheet column marked Business Type (Comparison/ Convenience) as shown in the shaded examples at the top of the document.

Alternatively, if you 'Benchmarked' in 2011, on request, amt-i will email you a copy of the Business Unit Data Sheet, which you can use to check on the commercial offering and record any changes.

Completed Business Unit Data Sheets should be returned with this Handbook by 31st December 2012.

**KPI 3 - KEY ATTRACTORS / MULTIPLE TRADER REPRESENTATION**

**Aim:** To assess the level of key commercial attractors, multiple, regional and independent trader representation in the town centre.

**Why:** The vitality of a town centre depends highly on the quality and variety of retailers represented. National retail businesses are considered key attractors and are particularly important in terms of attracting visitors and shoppers to a town. However, the character and profile of a town often also depends on the variety and mix of independent shops that can give a town a ‘unique selling point’ and help distinguish it from other competing centres. A sustainable balance of key attractors and multiple names alongside local independent shops is therefore likely to have the greatest positive impact on the vitality and viability of a town.

**When:** This work can be undertaken at the same time as KPI’s 1, 2 and 4 in the ‘first benchmarking activity’ to identify the total number of commercial units. It should be repeated on an annual basis.

**How:** Using the Business Unit Data Sheet record whether the A1 Use Class Order commercial units are a Key Attractor, Multiple Trader, Regional Trader or an Independent trader in the Business Type (Key Attractor/ Independent) column.

Alternatively, if you 'Benchmarked' in 2011, on request, amt-i will email you a copy of the Business Unit Data Sheet, which you can use to check on the commercial offering and record any changes.

* **Key Attractors**

To help you classify the A1 Use Class commercial units the following are considered key attractors. (Experian Goad Key Attractors)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Department Stores** | **Clothing** | | BHS | Burton | | Debenhams | Dorothy Perkins | | House of Fraser | H & M | | John Lewis | New Look | | Marks and Spencer | Primark | |  | River Island | | **Mixed Goods Retailers** | Topman | | Argos | Topshop | | Boots |  | | TK Maxx | **Other Retailers** | | WH Smith | Carphone Warehouse | | Wilkinson | Clarks | |  | Clintons | | **Supermarkets** | HMV | | Sainsbury’s | O2 | | Tesco | Superdrug | | Waitrose | Phones 4 U | |  | Vodafone | |  | Waterstones | |
|  |

* **Multiple Traders** have a countrywide presence and are well known household names, but do not feature on the Key Attractors list.
* **Regional Traders** are identified as those with stores / units in several towns throughout one geographical region only.
* **Independent Traders** are identified as those that are specifically local to your town centre.

|  |
| --- |
| * *You are only required to record and enter Key Attractor/ Multiple Trader/ Regional Trader/ Independent Trader data for A1 Commercial Units.* * *Only record those commercial units which appear on the list above as a Key Attractor.* |

**How to enter:** For each A1 commercial unit in the town centre complete the Business Unit Data Sheet column marked Business Type (Key Attractor/ Independent) as shown in the shaded examples at the top of the document.

Alternatively, if you 'Benchmarked' in 2011, on request, amt-i will email you a copy of the Business Unit Data Sheet, which you can use to check on the commercial offering and record any changes.

Completed Business Unit Data Sheets should be returned with this Handbook by 31st December 2012.

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# KPI 4 - NUMBER OF VACANT UNITS

**Aim:** To assess the total number of vacant ground floor units throughout the town centre.

**Why**: Vacant units are an important indicator of the vitality and viability of a town centre. Whilst low vacancy rates do not necessarily indicate a healthy economy, the presence of vacant units over a period of time can identify potential weaknesses in a town centre, whether due to locational or size criteria, high rent levels or strong competition from other centres. Obviously the more empty units there are in the town centre, the higher the number of failed businesses that have had to give up. Understanding the reasons behind the closures can therefore also provide some very valuable pointers.

**When:** Ground floor vacant units should be counted via a visual survey within the defined town centre boundary. This work can be undertaken at the same time as KPI’s 1, 2 and 3 in the ‘first benchmarking activity’ to identify the total number of retail/ commercial/office units.

**How:** Print off the relevant number of copies of the Business Unit Data Sheet. If a commercial unit is vacant, record the Street Name and Business Number on the Business Unit Data Sheet, then simply write ‘VACANT’ in the Notes column.

Alternatively, if you 'Benchmarked' in 2011, on request, amt-i will email you a copy of the Business Unit Data Sheet, which you can use to check on the commercial offering and record any changes

* *A vacant unit can be fit for any commercial use, as a shop or an office.*

**How to enter:** For any vacant commercial unit, record the Street Name and Business Premises Number in the Business Unit Data Sheet. In the column marked ‘Notes’ simply write ‘VACANT’ as shown in the shaded example at the top of the document.

Completed Business Unit Data Sheets should be returned with this Handbook by 31st December 2012.

# KPI 5 - NUMBER OF MARKETS / TRADERS

**Aim:** To assess the number of street markets and traders in the town centre during the week.

**Why:** Good quality markets provide competition and choice for consumers. A busy and well-used street market can therefore be a good indicator of the vitality of a town centre. Conversely, if a market is in decline (e.g. empty pitches/ declining numbers), it can be an indication of potential weaknesses in the town centre, e.g. a lack of footfall

Street markets can also generate substantial benefits for the local economy. Markets can also provide a local mechanism for a diverse range of local enterprises to start, flourish and grow, adding to the sustainable mix of shops / services on offer throughout the town.

**When:** This work could be undertaken at the same time as the KPI 1 survey in the ‘first benchmarking activity’ to identify the total number of retail / commercial / office units or with KPI’s 8 and 9 as part of the ‘Market Day’ Counts. It should be undertaken once each year.

**How:** The number of markets / traders should be assessed via a visual survey undertaken throughout the town centre.

* *Only weekday markets are included*
* *Only include Specialist Markets, (Farmers, Antique etc) if they happen every two weeks or more frequently.*
* *Note the number of days per week the market/s take place*
* *Note the type of market - indoor or street*

# How to enter: In the table below simply record data for the main market(s) in your town.

# EXAMPLE:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Market Day | Type | No of Traders | Comments |
| *Tuesday* | *Indoor* | *20* |  |
| *Tuesday* | *Outdoor* | *10* |  |
| *Thursday* | *Indoor* | *20* |  |

# FOR DATA ENTRY

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Market Day | Type | No of Traders | Comments |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
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# KPI 6 - PRIME RETAIL PROPERTY YIELDS & KPI 7 - ZONE A RENTAL VALUES

**Aim:** To gather the latest information on how the commercial property in your town centre is faring.

**Why:** The values for prime retail property yield and Zone A rentals are the “industry” benchmarks for the relative appeal of a location with its occupiers and with the owners or investors in property. All real estate has a value and this value is based on the rental return and capital growth. As these indicators rise and fall, they provide a barometer of success or failure and, because the same property dimensions are assessed to determine them, they can be used as an indicator of improving or declining fortunes for towns.

In particular retail rents can provide a useful indication of a town’s performance and highlight how attractive it is to businesses. Whilst rising rental values are not good news for most tenants occupying a unit, the broader implications of high and increasing values make sound sense to external investors and will likely indicate a demand for floorspace. Conversely, where rents are falling, it can be an indicator of decline.

**When:** It is sensible to undertake this once a year too. The values do not usually move hugely because of the investment timescales in the commercial property industry.

**How:** Your local commercial letting agent will be able to tell you the level of rental for the prime trading position in your town. If you are unsure who the best person to talk to is, look for ‘to let’ boards or ‘for sale’ signs in your town centre and phone the number on the board. You can also talk to your friendly local estate agent about this. Precise details for individual units may be withheld due to commercial sensitivity, but ‘ball-park’ numbers should be readily forthcoming.

* *Retail Property yield is a function of the multiplier used on the rental income stream to produce a capital value. The lower the yield the more valuable the property is because it assumes that there will be greater capital growth in the future. These are regularly recalculated for large towns and cities where demand and supply of property can change quite rapidly.*
* *Prime pitch defines the busiest footfall area in the town centre; a prime retail property is one that lies within this prime pitch. Often it is the named multiple retailers and strong independent retailers who occupy the space in ‘prime’ locations.*
* *Retail rents are zoned, with ‘Zone A’ being the first 20 feet of depth from the shop front - this is the most valuable shop display area. Zone A rents are expressed as £ per sq.ft. Zone A values are measured this way to take into account the variation in rents that are created as a result of different sized and shaped units.*

# How to enter: In the table below simply record data for the Zone A Rental information expressed in £ per square feet and the Prime Retail Property Yields expressed as a %.

# EXAMPLE

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Zone A Rental £/ sq. ft | £32 sq. ft |
| Prime Retail Property Yields % | 7 % |

# FOR DATA ENTRY

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Zone A Rental £/ sq. ft | £sq. ft |
| Prime Retail Property Yields % | % |

# \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# KPI 8 - FOOTFALL

**Aim:** To assess the intensity of visitor movement within the town centre during the week.

**Why:** The arrival and movement of people, whether as residents, workers, visitors or shoppers are vital to the success of the majority of businesses within the town centre. The more people that are attracted to the town, the better it trades and the more prosperous the businesses in it become, provided there is ample available disposable income in that audience. Measuring passing people in a consistent manner in the same place, at the same time builds up a picture of the town, its traders and their relative success over the weeks and months.

Footfall counting allows for the prime locations in the town centre to be identified.

**When:** Footfall counts need to be conducted on weekdays twice a year. If your town has a market you can choose a ‘Market Day’ during the week and a ‘Non Market’ day during the week to conduct the footfall counts. Alternatively, if your town does not have a market you could choose a weekday in Summer and a weekday in Autumn. Footfall counts can thus be combined with KPI’s 1, 2, 3 and 4 as part of ‘first benchmarking activity’ or with KPI’s 5, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 in other visits to the town centre.

**How**: Pick two days, one ‘busy’ (Market Day during the week/ weekday in Summer) and one ‘quiet’ (Non Market Day during the week / Weekday in Autumn). For a set period, between 10.00am to 1.00pm, count the people passing in both directions through a fixed point (e.g. an imaginary line across the road) for a precise ten minutes in every hour (e.g. 10.00 – 10.10am, 11.20am-11.30am, 12.40pm-12.50pm). Do this in the busiest locations in the town centre. If more than one location is used the count point with the highest aggregate footfall recording will be used in the main Town Benchmarking analysis.

* *Use an accurate stopwatch and a hand operated mechanical counter.*
* *The rule of thumb is count anyone who looks like they might have money of their own to spend so toddlers don’t count, but older looking children do.*
* *Make sure you record the prevailing weather conditions, as it does make a difference!*
* *Ensure that all footfall count locations are recorded.*

# How to enter: In the table below simply record data for each footfall location as per the example in shaded text.

# EXAMPLE:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Count Point Location: Hobbs Square, 11/08/2011* | | | |
| *Time* | *Market Day/ Busy Day Count* | *Time* | *Non Market Day/ Quiet Day Count* |
| *10.00-10.10* | *105* | *10.30-10.40* | *80* |
| *11.00-11.10* | *127* | *11.50-12.00* | *95* |
| *12.00-12.10* | *160* | *12.45-12.55* | *114* |
| *Comments* | *Warm, hot day* |  | *Cold and wet weather condition* |

# FOR DATA ENTRY:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count Point Location: Name and Date | | | |
| Time | Market Day/ Busy Day Count | Time | Non Market Day/ Quiet Day Count |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Comments |  |  |  |

# Please copy and paste the tables if you enter more than one Footfall Count Point Location.

# \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# KPI 9 - CAR PARK USAGE

**Aim:** To establish the number of car parking spaces available for public use throughout the town centre and how they are used.

**Why:** These days a significant proportion of spending customers in a town centre come by car. In the rural setting, the car tends to be an essential tool, used by both those who come to spend and those who come to work. The provision of adequate and convenient car parking facilities is therefore a key element of town centre vitality. An acceptable number of available spaces with a regular, quick turnover is the ideal.

**When:** Physically counting the spaces available is a “one-off” exercise and can be done at any time. It should be rechecked annually. Any major changes in the interim should be noted.

Car park occupancy however, should be checked twice a year. You should choose a ‘Market Day’ during the week and ‘Non Market Day’ during the week/or a week day in Summer (to act as a ‘Market Day’) and a weekday in Autumn (to act as a ‘Non Market Day’). You can then complete the ‘Occupancy’ information for each individual car park alongside KPI 5 and 8.

**How:**  
Number of Spaces:

The survey should count the total number of car parking spaces for use by visitors to the town centre, available in designated car parks and on street, within or directly adjacent to the defined town centre boundary.

In some towns, parking spaces adjacent to housing can be dedicated to residents only. Sometimes this is absolute with no other parking permitted at any time. In other cases, the parking is dedicated for specific hours and becomes available for the use of the general public for part of the day. Check the local rules and if the public has access for some or all of the day then include the bays that this applies to in your counts. You will be able to record this information in a text box so you are clear what you have done next time.

Car Park Occupancy

Once the total number of spaces is known and recorded, it will be easy to check the occupancy of the car parks and other parking areas at both the ‘Market Day’ or a week day in Summer and a ‘Non Market Day’ or a weekday in Autumn. Walk round the car parks/ on street parking areas and note the number of empty spaces between 10am and 1pm.

Recording the Data  
Use the Car Parking Data Sheet emailed with this Handbook. For each Car Parking/ On Street Car Parking location record the details as per the example below.

**EXAMPLE:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name:** | King Street |
| **On Street/ Car Park:** | Car Park |
| **Total Spaces:** | 100 |
| **Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)** | 20 |
| **Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)** | 70 |
| **Disabled Spaces:** | 10 |
| **Charge:** | Pay and Display |
| **Vacant Spaces on a Market Day:** | 10 |
| **Vacant Spaces on a Non Market Day:** | 20 |
| **Illegal Spaces on a Market Day:** | 0 |
| **Illegal Spaces on a Non Market Day:** | 0 |

Alternatively, if you 'Benchmarked' in 2010, amt-i will email you a copy of the Microsoft Excel Car Parking Information doc, which you can use to check on the offering.

* *In each Car Parking location, the number of Short Stay Spaces, Long Term Spaces and Disabled Spaces should equal the number provided in the Total Spaces column*
* *Counts include privately owned car parking spaces, e.g. supermarkets, if formally available for use by the general public.*
* *District councils will have information on the capacity of their car parks but it is wise to check the detail.*
* *On-street car parking is the responsibility of your County Council but again a visual inspection is advised*
* *Designated short-term and long-term spaces often exist with a clear distinction made between the two. For the purposes of Benchmarking, a car park with a maximum stay of four hours or less is classed as short stay, all other parking should be classed as long stay.*
* *Car Parks up to 200 metres outside the defined town centre should be included in Town Benchmarking.*
* *Illegal spaces refer to vehicles parked outside marked bays in Car Parks or on double yellow lines.*

**How to enter:** For each Car Parking location complete a Car Parking Data Sheet table.

If you Benchmarked in 2011, on request AMT can email your 2011 Car Parking Data Sheet and you will need to amend any changes to the Number of Spaces columns and input the 2012 recordings for Vacant and Illegal Spaces.

Completed Car Parking Data Sheets should be returned with this Handbook by 31st December 2012.

# \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# KPI10 - BUSINESS CONFIDENCE SURVEY

**Aim:** To establish an understanding of the economy of the town.

**Why:** By establishing the trading conditions of the town centre businesses key local stakeholders are able to focus their efforts on looking at issues which are of concern and how to improve them. Strong local businesses will forge a vibrant local economy which will benefit those who live and work in the town.

**When:** A survey of the local businesses should be undertaken annually and could be combined with the collection of KPI12. Town Benchmarking uses a short questionnaire for the purposes of comparison across towns as businesses will only contribute if it is simple to complete. However, please feel free to add additional questions to the core offering in the survey.

**How:** Each of the businesses in the defined town centre should be given the opportunity to complete a survey. Print off as many Business Confidence Surveys (emailed with this Handbook) and tailored covering letters (Appendix 1a/1b) as required, and either distribute by hand, returning to pick the completed surveys up a few weeks later, or by providing a paid envelope.

* *The Business Owner or Store Manager of the commercial unit should complete the survey, but often these people are not available to speak to as part of a ‘cold call visit. Attaching a tailored covering letter, using the sample in Appendix 1a/1b as a template, is thus a good idea, as the survey can be passed on to the relevant person with an explanatory note.*
* *Return rates can be improved by completing the surveys with the Business Owner or Store Manager via telephone or electronically. If you would like a Business Confidence Survey that can be sent via email please contact Mike King for further details on additional costs.*
* *Hand out a Shoppers Origin Survey with each of your Business Confidence Surveys.*

* **How to enter:** Simply send copies of your completed Business Confidence Surveys to:

Mike King  
amt-i  
7 St. Helens Grove  
Monkston  
Milton Keynes  
Bucks  
MK10 9FG  
  
by 31st December 2012. All the survey data will be entered and analysed on your behalf. Each locality will benefit from an analysis comparing each question on the Business Confidence Survey at a Town, Region, National and Typology level.

# \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# KPI 11 – TOWN CENTRE USERS

**Aim:** To establish how your town is seen by those people who use it. Each town should aim to complete between 50-100 surveys. However, if towns would like to know the exact number of visitor surveys need to be completed for statistical reliability please contact Mike King, amt-i at [mike.king@towns.org.uk](mailto:mike.king@towns.org.uk) or on 07818 068882.

**Why**: Key stakeholders within a town may be too close to the issues to see clearly what is good or not so good about their town. By asking town centre users, of all types, a more detailed picture can be obtained. What matters to regular town centre users (i.e. locals who pop in every day or work in town) can be very different to someone who has never been to the place before. For the first group signage is not an issue, for example, and the second may not worry about fear of night time crime.

**When:** An annual face to face street survey stopping a random cross section of people.

* *One person can reasonably be expected to conduct around 30-50 Town Centre User Surveys in a day*

**How:** Print off as many Town Centre User Surveys as required. Choose a busy day like a ‘Market Day’ during the week or a weekday in the Summer, but not when a special event is taking place as this will impact on who is present. Do take care not to swamp the town as then you run the risk of someone being asked to contribute more than once which is not a comfortable experience.

For those wishing to undertake a more holistic review of their town, and wanting to gather the views of those residents who cannot make it into the town centre during the day, or who do not use the town at all please contact Mike King at [mike.king@towns.org.uk](mailto:mike.king@towns.org.uk). amt-i, at an additional cost, can provide online surveys which are hosted on local community websites and advice on strategies to ensure high response rates.

* *For those conducting the interviews you will need to consider insurance and health and safety issues for local volunteers.*
* *For face to face interviewing it is good to adhere to the Market Research Societies Rules of Professional Conduct. (*[*www.mrs.org.uk*](http://www.mrs.org.uk)*)*
* *Provide each interviewer with a copy of the Market Research Societies Rules of Professional Conduct*
* *Think about providing interviewers with an Identity Card* *for those conducting the Town Centre User Surveys it may be advisable to provide them with a short introduction sheet to explain why the face to face surveys are taking place.*
* *Return rates can be improved by hosting the Town Centre Users Surveys online. If you would like an online Town Centre Users Survey please contact Mike King for further details on additional costs.*

**How to enter:** Simply send copies of your completed Town Centre Users Surveys to:

Mike King  
amt-i  
7 St. Helens Grove  
Monkston  
Milton Keynes  
Bucks  
MK10 9FG  
  
by 31st December 2012. All the survey data will be entered and analysed on your behalf. Each locality will benefit from an analysis comparing each question on the Business Confidence Survey at a Town, Region, National and Typology level.

# \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# KPI 12 - SHOPPERS ORIGIN POSTCODE DATA

**Aim:** To assess details of the catchment area for shoppers to your town(s).

**Why:** This data will permit you to target local marketing or promotional literature at specific parts of the wider catchment for your town to encourage others to make the journey. It can also be used as evidence of the success of such campaigns and to gauge the penetration into the population of the understanding of the benefits your town offers. Finally it will be useful to track the changes to this external audience over time to endorse further grant funding for local projects that are designed to enhance the appeal of your town to a wider market, such as events.

**When:** For those towns that experience a seasonal fluctuation in their footfall, it would be beneficial to run this twice a year, in and out of season. For the majority, it is sufficient to take stock once a year (combined with KPI10), ideally in the busier summer months but outside the school holidays (people are more prone to travel when the weather is better!).

**How:** Print off as many Shoppers Origin surveys (emailed with this Handbook) as required with accompanying tailored covering letter (Appendix 1b/2). Over a two-week period, invite retail outlets in the town centre to gather data on their customers’ postcode at the point of sale.

The postcodes should be collected in the following format:

e.g. MK10 9 (i.e. the first part of the code and the first digit of the second half)

The Shoppers Origin Surveys can be handed out to each retail based commercial unit in the town centre as a separate exercise with the associated covering letter, (Appendix 2) or it can be combined with the distribution and collection cycle of KPI10 Business Confidence Survey. (Appendix 1b for covering letter)

The pooled results from all participating businesses will give a clear indication of the distance travelled, the scale of the catchment population, the density of penetration from specific areas and the “visitor appeal” of your particular town centre.

Post Codes can also be gathered as part of the Town Centre Users Survey. If you utilise the question at the end of the Survey, “Please could you provide the first five digits of your Post Code?” you will need to merge and analyse this data alongside those collected from Businesses.

**How to enter:** Once the hard copies of the Shoppers Origin Surveys have been returned, the data needs to be entered onto a master version. You then need to split the post codes into three categories:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | * Locals (i.e..the post codes which cover the town) * Visitors(i.e. in adjoining postcodes within a half an hour car journey) * Tourists (i.e.post codes which require more than a 30 minute car journey to the town centre)   The raw data needs to be entered into the columns below as per the shaded example.  amt-i will work out the relevant percentages for reporting purposes.   * [www.postcode.org.uk](http://www.postcode.org.uk) can be used if you are unsure as to which post codes cover your town(s) * [www.theaa.com](http://www.theaa.com) can be used to work out the driving distances between post codes. Simply type in the post code of the town centre in the ‘From’ section and the shoppers post code in the ‘To’ section.   **EXAMPLE**   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **Locals** | **Visitors** | **Tourists** | | **No of Post Codes** | **302** | **167** | **90** |   **FOR DATA ENTRY**   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **Locals** | **Visitors** | **Tourists** | | **No of Post Codes** |  |  |  | |
|  |  |

###### APPENDIX 1a: BUSINESS CONFIDENCE COVERING LETTER EXAMPLE

Dear Business Owner/ Store Manager,

We are currently undertaking a *Benchmarking Project* in association with **XXXX**. The *Benchmarking Project* involves capturing data on 12 Key Performance Indicators:

* Total number of commercial units
* The balance of comparison/ convenience retail
* Key attractor/ multiple trader representation
* Number of markets/ traders
* Number of vacant units
* Prime retail property yields
* Retail rents
* Footfall counts
* Car parking availability and usage
* Business confidence survey
* Visitor satisfaction survey
* Shoppers origin survey

One important source of data is capturing the ‘business confidence’ of traders in **XXXX**, as by establishing the trading conditions of town centre businesses key local stakeholders can focus their efforts on looking at issues which are of concern and how to improve them. Thus, it would be greatly appreciated if you could complete the attached short *Town Benchmarking Business Confidence Survey* and return in the envelope supplied by **XXXX.**

Your views and opinions will be amalgamated and included in the overall *Benchmarking Project* report. If you have any questions or queries before completing the survey, please contact **XXXX**

Yours sincerely

###### APPENDIX 1b: BUSINESS CONFIDENCE/ SHOPPERS ORIGIN COMBINED COVERING LETTER EXAMPLE

Dear Business Owner/ Store Manager,

We are currently undertaking a *Benchmarking Project* in **XXXX** on behalf of **XXXX**. The *Benchmarking Project* has been conducted in over 140 other towns in England and involves capturing data on 12 Key Performance Indicators. We would particularly like your contribution on two of these KPI’s, *Business* *Confidence* and *Shoppers Origin*.

In regards to the ‘business confidence’ by establishing the trading conditions of town centre businesses, local stakeholders can focus their efforts on looking at issues which are of concern and how to improve them. Thus, it would be greatly appreciated if you could complete the attached short *Town Benchmarking Business Confidence Survey* and return in the pre paid envelope supplied.

The *Shoppers Origin* of consumers provides a clear indication of the distance travelled, the scale of the catchment population, the density of penetration from specific areas and the visitor appeal of your town centre. Hence similarly, if over the next few weeks you could use the attached *Post Code Survey* to gather your customer’s postcodes at ‘point of sale’ it would supply valuable data on **XXXX**. Please return both surveys in the envelopes supplied by **XXXX.**

###### The information gathered will be included in the overall *Benchmarking Project* report. If you have any questions or queries before completing the surveys, please contact XXXX

###### Yours sincerely

###### APPENDIX 2: SHOPPERS ORIGIN SURVEY COVERING LETTER

Dear Sir/ Madam,

We are currently undertaking a *Benchmarking Project* in **XXXX** in association with **XXXX.** The *Benchmarking Project* involves capturing data on 12 Key Performance Indicators;

* Total number of commercial units
* The balance of comparison/ convenience retail
* Key attractor/ multiple trader representation
* Number of markets/ traders
* Number of vacant units
* Prime retail property yields
* Retail rents
* Footfall counts
* Car parking availability and usage
* Business confidence survey
* Visitor satisfaction survey
* Shoppers origin survey

One important source of data is capturing the *‘Shoppers Origin Postcode’* of consumers in **XXXX**, as the data provides a clear indication of the distance travelled, the scale of the catchment population, the density of penetration from specific areas and the visitor appeal of the town centre. Thus, it would be greatly appreciated if over the next week you could use the attached *‘Post Code Survey’* to gather your customer’s postcodes at ‘point of sale’. All completed forms should be sent back to **XXXX.**

Your help is essential in this holistic review of **XXXX** and the *‘Shoppers Origin Postcode Data’* will be amalgamated and included in the overall *Benchmarking Project* report. If you have any questions or queries before completing the survey, please contact **XXXX.**

Yours sincerely

###### APPENDIX 3: DATA COLLECTION SCHEDULE

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Visit* | *KPI’s* |
| *VISIT 1: First benchmarking activity* | *Define Town Centre*  *1. Total number of commercial units*  *2. Comparison / Convenience*  *3. Key attractors / multiple traders*  *4. Number of vacant units* |
| *VISIT 2: Market Day/ Summer Day* | *5. Number of Markets/Trader*  *8. Footfall Counts for Busy Day*  *9. Car Parking One off Count and Market Day Occupancy*  *10. Business Confidence Surveys handed out*  *11. Town Centre Users Surveys*  *12. Shoppers Origin Surveys handed out* |
| *VISIT 3: Non Market Day/ Autumn Day* | *6 and 7. Visit Commercial Letting Agent*  *8. Footfall Counts for quiet day*  *9. Car Parking for Non Market Day Occupancy*  *10. Business Confidence Surveys collected*  *11. Town Centre Users Surveys*  *12. Shoppers Origin Surveys collected* |