

# Festive cheer

## The local impact of Christmas markets



# Foreword

Christmas markets have become an established feature of the UK festive period. They can attract jobs, activities and visitors into local economies at a time when the usual visitor economy is less active. While they will not be suited to every area, they can be an effective tool to attracting people to your towns and cities, if designed correctly.

I am pleased that we have been able to work with the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) to explore their impact. Although generally reaching a different audience to regular street markets, Christmas markets share a number of trends with their everyday counterparts, including a growing emphasis on quality street food, creating destination experiences, and supporting local suppliers. Both types of market can learn from the other and enhance their impact.

This publication presents eight case studies of places where Christmas markets are now a key tourist attraction, and where this has led to increased visitor numbers and economic activity. Whilst anyone who has visited a Christmas market will see the appeal of the variety of stalls on display and the benefits to a local community and place the markets can bring, there is a great deal of planning and hard work required to make the Christmas market a success. This publication highlights key factors which, if implemented well, can lead to a successful Christmas market.

If you haven't already, I would encourage you to visit the Christmas markets included in this publication or the many others across the UK and if you are thinking of holding a Christmas market in your town or city, I recommend this publication as a starting point in your journey.



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Chair, LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board

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# Executive summary

Christmas markets have become an established feature of the festive landscape. From an estimated 30 markets in 2007, they have grown to over 100 markets in 2017, with a corresponding increase in the number of days and hours they are open.

They continue to make an increasing contribution to the economic wellbeing of the host town or city, with each of those surveyed making a positive economic benefit for the host town or city; and they can be a key tool in the marketing and promotion to increase visitor numbers, allowing the host town or city to offer that additional attraction and compete more effectively against out of town competitors.

In commissioning this research, the Local Government Association (LGA) wished to capture some of the key benefits of these markets, including:

- the amount of income generated for the area
- the number of extra visitors
- the number of jobs created.

The LGA also wished to investigate the impact of these temporary markets on more permanent traders, and to identify whether there was a net gain for the local economy from these markets or if activity was simply displaced to the temporary market. The findings from our eight case study areas strongly suggest that, if designed effectively, the Christmas market can significantly boost the local economy for permanent traders as well as for market stallholders.

The research has explored all of these issues, and this publication highlights their growing economic impact, along with advice on how to ensure local Christmas markets have the maximum positive impact. However, the research has also highlighted that there is limited data captured from these markets – both large and small. This means the research should be considered only as one step towards understanding the value and potential of Christmas markets. Nonetheless, we hope it will be helpful for those areas looking to develop their local market, or to hold one for the first time.

## Key findings

### Increasing visitor numbers

Despite severe weather forcing the early closure of at least three of the case study markets, visitor numbers are estimated to be up by anything between five per cent and 90 per cent – the latter reported by Stratford-upon-Avon Business Improvement District (BID) Team.

The percentage of 'out of town' visitors also appears to be increasing:

- Birmingham up 60 per cent
- Newcastle up 72 per cent
- Exeter up 62 per cent
- Bath up 65 per cent
- Lincoln up 56 per cent
- St Albans up 67 per cent
- Stratford-upon-Avon up 61 per cent.

### **Increasing average spend**

Early indications are that there is a significant increase in the estimated total visitor spend to around £500 million in 2017. This is a significant increase in the average visitor spend of £250 million reported for 2015 by consultancy firm ROI.

### **Wider benefit for the town**

Case study areas indicated that almost all people surveyed in their own independent surveys on customers visiting the Christmas market made additional purchases elsewhere in the town centre. In most venues there was a reported boost for shops and cafes close to the Christmas markets with many cafes having queues throughout the day, and car parking income also received a significant boost. However, it is important that the market is carefully designed to ensure this wider impact.

### **Demographics and appeal**

Christmas markets continue to be attractive to a wider demographic than the normal markets in the UK. Christmas markets are seen as something different, more of a leisure activity offering quality, diversity, fun, social ambience, and festive cheer.

### **Tourism**

UK Christmas markets are increasingly becoming destinations in their own right. Coach tour operators are promoting UK Christmas markets as a major attraction with tour offers and coach tours, with one case study area receiving over 50 coach visits in 2017. Accommodation providers also report an increase in overnight stays by visitors intending to see the Christmas market; while travel companies such as Flybe now feature British Christmas markets as travel destinations alongside their European counterparts.

### **Lack of data**

The research identified that there was a lack of data capture, particularly among smaller markets; even the larger case studies which have been running for a number of years have only captured limited information. A number of the case study partners are undertaking economic and customer surveys during the Christmas markets of 2017, meaning that a significantly clearer understanding of the impact of Christmas markets should emerge in 2018. However, more work could be done to evidence their impact and NABMA will be developing a standard questionnaire to assist smaller markets record their visitor numbers.

### **Leaving the European Union**

Many of the overseas traders which have frequented UK Christmas markets for many years have established businesses in the UK. However, until arrangements are finalised and terms of trade agreed between EU states, the impact of Brexit is unknown, but early fears about a negative impact do not seem to have been realised in 2017 trading.

# Introduction

Christmas markets have been around for over 35 years in the UK. Lincoln brought the first traditional German Christmas market to the UK in 1982 as part of its friendship and twinning relationship with the town of Neustadt in Germany. Until the emergence of the 'big' Christmas markets, Lincoln virtually dominated the coach tour visits to Christmas markets in the UK.

It wasn't until Manchester in 1999 and Birmingham in 2001, in collaboration with the city of Frankfurt, that Christmas markets to rival those in Germany came to prominence in the UK. Since then, German style Christmas markets have seen rapid growth not just in the UK but other areas of the European Union. Most capital and major cities in Europe host their own style of Christmas market, but most are based on traders operating from ornate alpine style chalet units.

It is not just European cities which are hosting huge Christmas markets based on the original Bavarian theme, America and Canada now host some very successful Christmas markets which are attended by traders from across Europe. New York has several Christmas markets, with the largest taking place in Bryant's Park, where the Christmas market funded by the Bank of America has its own unique glass pavilion style chalets. Stockholm is looking to follow the Bryant's Park example and has acquired the glass pavilion style chalets to launch its new Christmas market experience in 2018.

The growth of Christmas markets has been most significant over the last five to 10 years. In 2007, there were an estimated 30 Christmas markets operating in the UK. In

2017, there were more than 100 Christmas markets operating from one day up to 50 days in duration. While this is a positive reflection on the value they can bring, it also means there are raised consumer expectations of what will be offered. Councils considering hosting a Christmas market will need to consider carefully about how to approach it and offer a unique pitch that will increase the visitor economy, rather than spread limited visitor numbers across more attractions.

Christmas markets are an increasing economic contributor to the winter economy for many towns and cities. It is anticipated that the £250 million (identified in 2015<sup>1</sup>) in visitor spend will have doubled in 2017. This expectation comes from an increase in:

- the number of Christmas markets in England
- the duration of the larger Christmas markets
- the size of some of the larger Christmas markets extending into other areas of the town and city centre
- visitor numbers increasing with one case study reporting a 90 per cent increase in footfall.

Christmas markets are important generators of footfall and retail turnover to town and city centres at a time when some towns may see a natural downturn in trade to out of town shopping facilities. They can be a valuable tool that supports towns and cities in

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<sup>1</sup> Birmingham Christmas market was not part of the 2015 study which provided the £250 million benchmark figure but is included here and is a significant contributor to the estimated economic projection).

competing against the out of town facilities, drawing people back into town and city centres and, if properly designed, reminding people of the offer in these spaces. This research and publication aims to support councils and operators to achieve this.

## Methodology

Within this research we have attempted to look at the economic benefits across a diverse group of markets ranging from small two-day events in a small town to the huge multi week venues in major city centres. NABMA Market Place were appointed to conduct the research for the LGA and undertook the following:

- identifying and agreeing a case study group of markets
- developing and agreeing a case study matrix
- reviewing existing research documentation
- desk top review of media based articles
- telephone interviews
- market visits to Exeter, Newcastle and Manchester.

Having posted a call for case study partners via the National Association of British Market Authorities Membership Forum, a number of local authorities expressed an interest in participating in this project.

## Case study partners

- **Manchester Christmas markets**  
Manchester City Council
- **Birmingham Christmas market**  
Birmingham City Council
- **Newcastle Christmas market**  
Newcastle City Council
- **Exeter Christmas market**  
Exeter Cathedral
- **Bath Christmas market**  
Bath Tourism Plus, Bath and North-East Somerset District Council
- **Lincoln Christmas market**  
Lincoln City Council
- **St Albans Christmas market**  
St Albans City and District Council
- **Victorian Christmas Fayre**  
Stratford-upon-Avon

It is important to note that all the case study partners operate Christmas markets which are well established, managed, organised, structured and supported by a positive marketing strategy and which offer a diverse quality product offer. The case studies include six of the UK's top Christmas markets in terms of scale, duration and economic contributions. Smaller markets were approached, but due to a lack of capacity to respond within the timescales, did not accept the offer to be a case study. Councils hosting these smaller markets may wish to make some resources available to help capture data from these markets.

This report has attempted to correlate information from various sources in the media and research data captured by Christmas market operators in England. The data available is extremely limited and can be inconsistent. Data capture has been made at the larger Christmas markets, but data from the smaller events is irregular or simply non-existent. NABMA will be developing standard templates to assist markets to routinely capture key information, which will be a welcome development.

Information on the numbers of people employed on the Christmas markets is particularly limited. This report therefore considered research undertaken by Market Place (Europe) Limited, who used figures from the Christmas markets at Glasgow, Belfast, Newcastle and Exeter to determine an average employment figure per stall across all four markets. These figures may or may not include the business owner and it must be noted that there is limited intelligence on how many people are engaged or employed as contractors or employees for the operational elements; including management, construction cleaning and security for each case study partner, or in the supply services to the traders themselves. These averages are therefore included in this report as indicative figures only.

However, this research found that councils and markets were increasingly recognising the importance of capturing data, with a number conducting their first studies over the 2017/18 period. In the last two years, there also appears to be a greater interest in setting objectives and measuring performance amongst operators of the larger established Christmas markets and a number of economic surveys in Birmingham, Bath, Exeter and Newcastle were conducted during 2016 with surveys planned in Manchester, Bath, St Albans, Stratford-upon-Avon and Lincoln in respect of the 2017 Christmas markets.

# Market reach and impact

## Market visitors

Christmas markets are bringing a much wider demographic group to markets, attracting new customers of all ages and cultures to the festive markets. Many of the Christmas markets are looking at making themselves more attractive to family groups by including activities or experiences, such as rides, Santa's grottos, or carol singers.

Unlike the stereotypical market shopper, who is from the socio-economic C2DE grouping<sup>2</sup>, the Christmas markets are clearly an increasing attraction for higher income earners. A high percentage of ABC1's now frequently attend the quality Christmas markets, but there is still scope to reach a wider range of socio-economic groups.

Social media among younger visitors clearly identifies that young people 'save up' to visit the Christmas markets and are arranging visits to meet friends as soon as the Christmas market dates are announced, and forming a dominant trend on the Facebook pages of Christmas markets. A number of the case studies invest heavily in social media advertising, with the hashtag #manchesterchristmasmarkets used 24,308 times on Instagram in 2017 – more than any other market in Europe.

<sup>2</sup> C2DE socio-economic grouping refer to people in manual professions and/or lower income households whilst socio-economic group ABC refer to people from higher income professional, managerial and skilled manual occupations.

## Destinations of choice

Christmas markets are also seen more as a leisure experience than a shopping experience by many visitors and seen as a day out with a range of things to do and experience. Successful markets focus on this aspect and encourage visitors to 'dwell' at specific activities, as well as lead them past quirky or unique places in the town, which might attract them back later in the year.

Bath Christmas Market, for example, not only adds significantly to the tourism offer of the city but has also been designed to showcase some of the City's less known pockets and hidden gems of small independent retailers from the city. This support offers both a commercial opportunity to many small businesses, providing additional income to sustain them through into the following year, and a high-profile shop window in which to promote their full-time business location.

There is no doubt that the established UK Christmas markets are being increasingly recognised as rivals to their European counterparts. For instance:

- **Manchester Christmas markets** was voted the UK's best market in Europe's Top 20 2017. The annual competition, held by travel website European Best Destinations, saw Manchester shrug off strong competition from a list of 100 Christmas markets, and placed higher than stalwart Christmas destinations such as Dresden, Leipzig and Cologne.
- **Bath Christmas market** was presented with the prestigious Event of the Year Award 2017 by the National Outdoor Events Association.

A reflection of this competitive success can be seen in the increasing numbers of coach tour companies organising tours to all of the case study markets, bringing visitors from all parts of the UK and overseas visitors. Birmingham reported that of the total number of visitors to the Christmas market 400,000, or nearly 10 per cent, came as part of organised tours during 2016. St Albans recorded over 50 coach tours visiting the town during the Christmas market.

## International traders

The UK Christmas markets are a big attraction for many overseas traders and an opportunity for international traders to test and break into UK markets. Many of these international traders are now operating at more than 10 different Christmas markets simultaneously at various venues around Europe.

The big Christmas markets have also enabled the creation of the 'Super Trader', which is a trader who has the capacity to have multiple stalls in one market, as well as in multiple towns and cities across the UK and, in some cases, at different venues throughout Europe, somewhat similar to the large supermarkets. There are a growing number of traders operating in this way, which may require some careful selection of traders by markets to avoid duplication and loss of distinctiveness of their offer.

In addition to the German, Dutch, Belgian, French and Italian traders who have been trading at events throughout the UK since 1992, the last 10 years has seen a significant increase in traders from other parts of Europe in particular Scandinavia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, and traders from other areas of the world including Peru, Ecuador, Nepal, and Russia coming to trade in the UK during the Christmas markets.

Some of the large Christmas markets across the UK now offer a much greater diversity of country representation (with up to 32 different countries being represented at one of the UK's Christmas markets), with products

typical of that country adding interest for visitors. Manchester has also significantly increased its individual country representation in recent years.

## Economic impact

Christmas markets generated at least £500 million to the economy in 2017, based on the information gathered from our case study areas. However, it is clear that there is a lack of information being gathered and this is likely to be a significant underestimate.

We expect the results of a number of individual market surveys, conducted in 2017, to be published in 2018 and add to the information available. However, we encourage Christmas market organisers to make more use of surveys and interviews to record the success of their markets.

Despite this lack of recorded information, it is possible to identify areas of spend that will have a positive impact on the local economy, and which should be considered as part of an assessment of a Christmas market. It is not just the direct spend in the market that needs to be evaluated.

A market has a wider economic and employment footprint than the stalls themselves. It is important to consider the impact, and potential to locally grow the supply chain for the Christmas market. Some of the big Christmas markets have annual operating costs in excess of £500,000, much of which can be expected to boost business for local service providers. As an example, traders at one Christmas market with around 20 international street food traders spend approximately £130,000 across 19 local suppliers of fresh food products such as eggs, flour, cheeses, milk, oils and so on.

The scale of impact will differ significantly between the smaller Christmas markets on fewer days than those of the big covering longer periods, but with careful planning, this impact can be maximised by a smart operator. A simple way for a council or business improvement district (BID) to boost

the local economy, and help the market, is by providing a 'meet the supplier' service. Alternatively, one case study market has a local supplier charter to which stallholders sign up, committing to buying local produce where possible, achieving a similar effect.

International traders also like to secure local items as Christmas presents. In Belfast, 100 traders spend approximately £35,000 on Christmas presents in the city shops.

There will also be significant variance in the impact of Christmas markets, depending on the split between local and international traders. For instance, in Bath, where over 80 per cent of traders are local, the economic benefits they add to the town will be significantly different and may have less of an impact than visiting traders, especially those travelling from abroad. However, local traders with sustainable all year round businesses may provide long term benefits through business rates and rental values.

The economic performance in almost all of the case study partners is derived from visitor surveys to include visitor spend in a range of areas: including parking, accommodation, subsistence, and shopping. This information, together with estimated footfall, has been used to provide the figures contained in this report.

**Table 1: Gross economic spend at Christmas markets**

Location	Gross economic spend	Date of research
<b>Manchester</b>	£91 million	2014
<b>Birmingham</b>	£399.8 million	2016
<b>Newcastle</b>	£83 million	2016
<b>Exeter</b>	£27.3 million	2016
<b>Bath</b>	£21 million	2016
<b>Lincoln</b>	£10.6 million	2014
<b>St Albans</b>	Comparable figures unavailable	
<b>Stratford-upon-Avon</b>	Comparable figures unavailable	

There are also many smaller towns and villages throughout the UK which operate very successful Christmas markets for a short period of time during the festive period. However, due to the costs involved in producing an economic impact report and the lack of need for the detailed information that it would provide, there is little or no research done into these smaller markets and consequently no hard statistics on which to report.

The success of these events tends to be measured by how busy the town/village is on that particular day/s and word of mouth from retailers along the high street as to how good trade has been. The value of these events should not be discounted because of a lack of statistics as many of the smaller events provide a feel-good factor for local people, with an incentive for day trippers from surrounding towns and villages to choose a particular town for Christmas shopping.

## Employment

People employed directly on the market stalls may be the most visible employees, but there are many more people employed indirectly because of the Christmas markets. There are those involved in the construction, servicing, security and stewarding, cleansing, waste management, and promotion and publicity, to those employed by the operational and management teams.

It is clear there are significant numbers of people and companies engaged in delivering and servicing elements of the Christmas markets in various disciplines. However, there is very little information available in terms of the numbers of people employed in the Christmas markets or the economic impact they have in the wider community.

Generally, the overseas traders now look to employ local people to work on the stalls in order to save costs for bringing overseas employees, which in turn has the beneficial impact of boosting local employment.

In terms of direct employment on the trading units there is a lack of statistical information, however, using the formula outlined in our methodology, the following has been estimated for employment on stalls in each of the case study markets for the duration at each venue:

**Table 2: Estimated number employed at Christmas markets**

Venue	Numbers
Manchester	442 employed
Birmingham	265 employed
Newcastle	88 employed
Exeter	165 employed
Bath	390 employed
Lincoln	362 employed
St Albans	109 employed
Stratford-upon-Avon	330 employed

Given the number of street food stalls, bars and larger stalls found at most of the big Christmas markets, such as Manchester and Birmingham, which are traditionally larger employers than most other stalls, the average of employees per stall would increase significantly. However, the figures in table one are a more robust, conservative estimate.

## Designing out failure

The aim of this guide is to help councils effectively weigh up the opportunities and risks of hosting a Christmas market, and to avoid some of the most common causes of failure.

Throughout the UK, many councils have been put under pressure by residents, councillors and retailers to deliver that something extra at Christmas to boost trade in the town. Many will prefer a Christmas market in the belief it will increase both footfall and dwell time within the core retail offer. Unfortunately, experience shows that there are probably more failures than successes and though not greatly documented, the cost of failure in budgets, resources and reputation can be high.

The case study partners are well established Christmas markets (with the exception of

Stratford-upon-Avon where they introduced a new Victorian themed event) being in existence for five years or more. They are all managed with a very clear strategy, designed to benefit other areas of the town or city centre, well located within the town or city and well promoted. These are proven requirements for a successful market. New markets should try to embed this approach in their design from the start if they wish to keep the support of local businesses.

Whilst the success of many established markets cannot be disputed, it would be unrealistic to expect instant success for any town planning such an event. A Christmas market can be costly to deliver in any town that doesn't already have high levels of footfall, a vibrant evening economy, the right location or the right demographic mix. Customer expectations are high when visiting a Christmas market and, if expectations are not met, it can be difficult to recover from the set back. This is particularly important to coach operators and visitors travelling from outside the town or city, where the time invested to get there means the implications of a disappointing visit may be particularly severe. These customers may never return if the market falls below consumer expectations, given the level of competition and choice in destinations.

As well as acting as a positive marketing tool, social media also offers a way to monitor the main criticisms of Christmas markets, and to understand what improvements are necessary to provide an improved offer in future. The most common criticisms tend to centre on congestion and price.

A number of Christmas markets, including Birmingham, Manchester, Stratford-upon-Avon and Bath, are responding to this by publishing prices, particularly those related to food and beverages as part of the pre-publicity campaign, and at least two of the case study group have expanded the Christmas market event into other areas in order to alleviate complaints of congestion, or are planning to open the markets for longer periods to thin out the number of customers each day.

# Delivering a successful Christmas market

There are a number of common themes to delivering a successful Christmas market and spreading the economic success across the town centre. The following factors can lead to a council delivering a successful Christmas market:

- **Management and organisation** Markets need specialist knowledge to deliver and should have a clear strategy which outlines how the market will deliver against the points discussed below.
- **Well designed and laid out** The design and layout of any Christmas market is important for many reasons. These include:
  - good customer flow around the market so that all areas benefit
  - avoiding the creation of ‘pinch points or bottlenecks’
  - careful positioning of traders expected to generate a large queue will avoid serious areas of congestion, and the complaints associated with it
  - creative layout can guide visitors towards permanent independent stores or heritage features that people may wish to return to at other points in the year
  - a good balance of quality street foods with a diverse and interesting offer and the inclusion of beverages will increase the average spend of customers
  - strong links between various elements of the Christmas market experience to create a unified theme – as in a Victorian market – will make the experience more memorable and tends to improve satisfaction.
- **Location** Whilst location is important, it is interesting to note that many of the successful Christmas markets have their hub outside of the main retail core. Manchester, Birmingham, Belfast are all based in close proximity to the respective city halls. Winchester, Exeter and St Albans Christmas markets are located in the grounds of the Cathedral, and the market in Bath is situated between the historic pump room and the Cathedral. All of these locations are somewhat ‘off pitch’ in retail terms, but all are easily accessible from the main areas of retail footfall.
- **Authenticity** This is very important, particularly to the new market customer base who, when attending a German style Christmas market, expect the real thing. They want to drink real Bavarian beers, authentic quality Glühwein, and eat German Bratwurst or Currywurst; and equally importantly, they want to be served by the German / Italian / Polish trader on that stall. They also like the traders to wear appropriate costumes.

Authenticity not only applies to the product but to the visual experience of the theme of any market. For example, in a Victorian Christmas market, visitors would expect to see traders in Victorian costumes, Victorian style attractions and décor. For a German style Christmas market, visitors have an expectation of the Alpine style wooden chalets set in a village theme.
- **Quality hot food and beverage** This is probably one of the biggest drivers of footfall, especially in the larger German style or international Christmas markets. These sometimes include the large two

tiered German or Belgian bars supported by a vast array of street food outlets, allowing visitors to sample authentic foods from around the world. This provides an attraction for both the younger clients and students, and for work groups, particularly from the business community who enjoy something different on the market. But not all the case study markets are German style. Many are local English markets, but there is still an expectation on quality and diversity for food and beverages. Christmas market visitors still have higher expectations on the quality of street foods they are offered at these events.

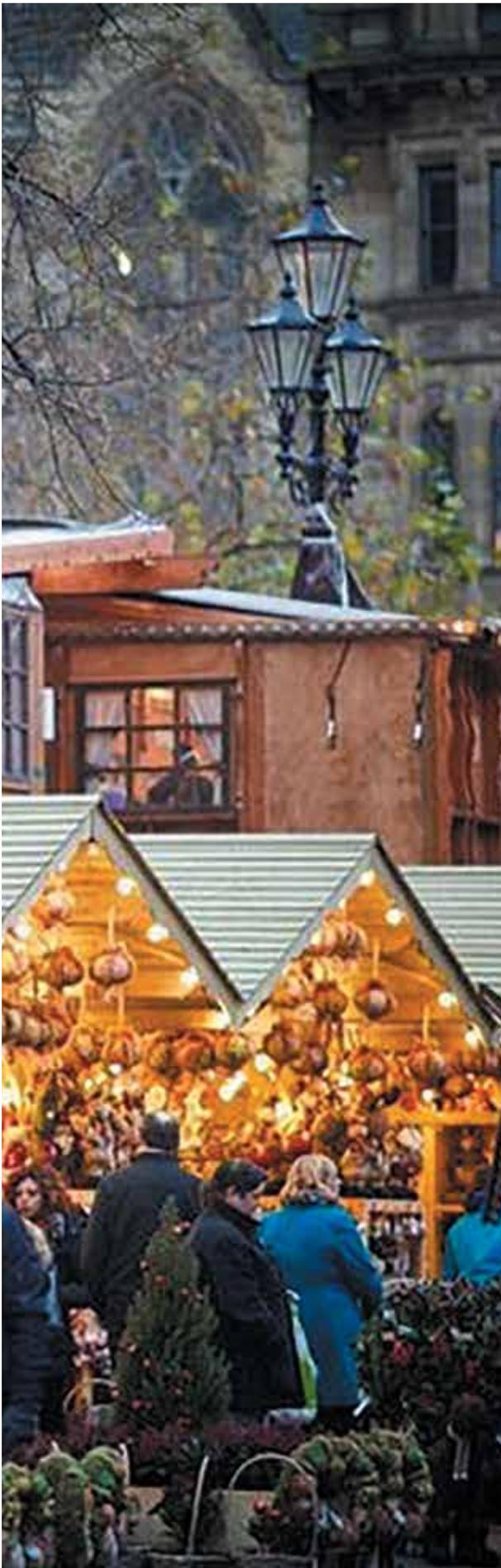
- **Showcasing local** A showcase for local producers, artisans and crafters. There is a growing demand to see an increase in attendance at the Christmas markets by local producers, particularly artisan traders and specialist food producers but not necessarily street food vendors. Recent surveys have indicated that the customer wants a wide balance and choice with products that are not readily available on the high street. They see the Christmas markets as an opportunity to purchase something unique, something different.
- **Maximising benefits for local business** In order to maximise the economic benefit to the local economy, one Christmas market operator has developed a food charter for the food retailers attending their international Christmas markets. Each fast food retailer must agree to purchase all general raw ingredients and products locally when trading at the Christmas market. This includes flour, milk, bread, cheese, eggs, butter, soft drinks and so on, unless a specific type unavailable locally is needed to maintain the authenticity of the food being prepared.

Some of the case study groups work closely with local business partnerships and community groups to develop opportunities for the wider business community; whether it be offering free positions within the market to showcase individual business or to promote the

work of the Business Improvement District (BID) or its Levy payers or showcasing new start up business opportunities. There are some interesting opportunities and partnerships being developed to ensure that the economic benefits of the Christmas markets are inclusive, interactive and collaborative.

- **Product diversity** Christmas markets are successful because they offer a more diverse range of products not readily available on the high street or usually associated with the general markets in our town and city centres. Maximising this diversity will help make the market successful.
- **Trading times** Carefully selecting trading times is important if you are looking to enhance the evening economy. The trading times must however reflect the natural rhythm of the town. If everything closes at 6pm and the town empties then it is unlikely that the market staying open later will have any benefit. Experience shows that towns and cities that do not have a natural evening economy struggle to deliver on footfall during out of normal business hours, which should be a very busy time for Christmas markets.
- **Good transport links and parking** Given that Christmas markets attract large volumes of people, particularly during key times such as the Christmas lights switch on, or the official opening of a small town Christmas market, it is essential that consideration is given to adequate parking and the provision of additional parking in advance, offering park and ride schemes with the local transport provider
- **Promotion and publicity** Christmas markets are marketed and promoted as one of the key drivers to increase footfall into the town/city. Strong consistent publicity and promotion is essential, and statistics show that the return on promotion investment is quite significant.

Christmas markets are separately branded and advertised locally, regionally and in



some cases nationally. Christmas markets may also feature in many on board/in flight brochures for destinations of travel companies including the likes of Flybe and Stenna Line.

Markets near transport hubs will also pick up a boost from people waiting for public transport, and who may spend their waiting time in a market.

Survey results at Manchester suggest that ongoing publicity throughout the event is also important, as statistics show that a large percentage of visitors pay an impromptu visit if there are constant reminders. Effective social media advertising can be critical to this, as the success of the hashtag #manchesterchristmasmarkets illustrates – used 24,308 times on Instagram in 2017. Markets may wish to build in photo opportunities, or consider making Wi-fi available, to make it easy for visitors to join in the promotion of the market to their friends.

- **Added attractions** Markets can offer additional family attractions sympathetic to the theme of the market so that all the family can enjoy the experience. They create a Christmas experience of fun and leisure activities and are not seen as a mundane shopping trip.

The most popular non retail family attractions are a Victorian carousel, vintage helter skelter, observation wheel, snow globe and Santa's grotto. The greater the diversity and originality of product; the better quality, the better the market, and the more diverse a clientele.

- **Scale** Scale is one of the key elements for creating a successful Christmas market as it needs to be big enough to maximise dwell time, reflect the scale and population of the town, the capacity for visitors and offer a diversity of products and other attractions.

The scale of the Christmas market should be conducive to the size of the town.

However, there are examples where for very short period events, such as one or two day events, that smaller venues can support larger markets. Knutsford in Cheshire is a very good example with over 120 stalls.

- **Expanding** Many of the Christmas markets between 2014 and 2017 have expanded in scale, both in terms of trader numbers and the areas in which they trade. It is important in making these decisions to have a very clear strategy with reasoned arguments about why there is a need to expand. There is evidence in a couple of the case study groups that extending the trading area has been done to alleviate areas of congestion; and also examples of expanding the Christmas offer just to make the experience a much bigger affair and extend its influence to other areas of the town or city centre. Whilst there are very clear positives in expanding the trading area and trader numbers, there are also negative elements which need to be guarded against.

Increasing the number of traders is a positive step if it increases the product range and offer and extends the interest of the Christmas market. However, it can also risk diluting the impact of the market, spreading existing spend more thinly, and affecting the financial viability of some of the stalls.

There are a number of examples where expanding the Christmas market experience may have been successful in one respect, but has created duplication of products and traders, and as a consequence, not necessarily added to the value of the Christmas offer. One common complaint on social media is that of repetitive products in the new areas. This reflects the earlier point about the creation of the 'super trader' in many markets. If expansion will attract a new set of visitors to that area of the market, then repetition of traders or products will not be an issue, but where the aim is to encourage existing visitors further around the expanded market, the emphasis should be on providing new attractions and products.

## Managing security

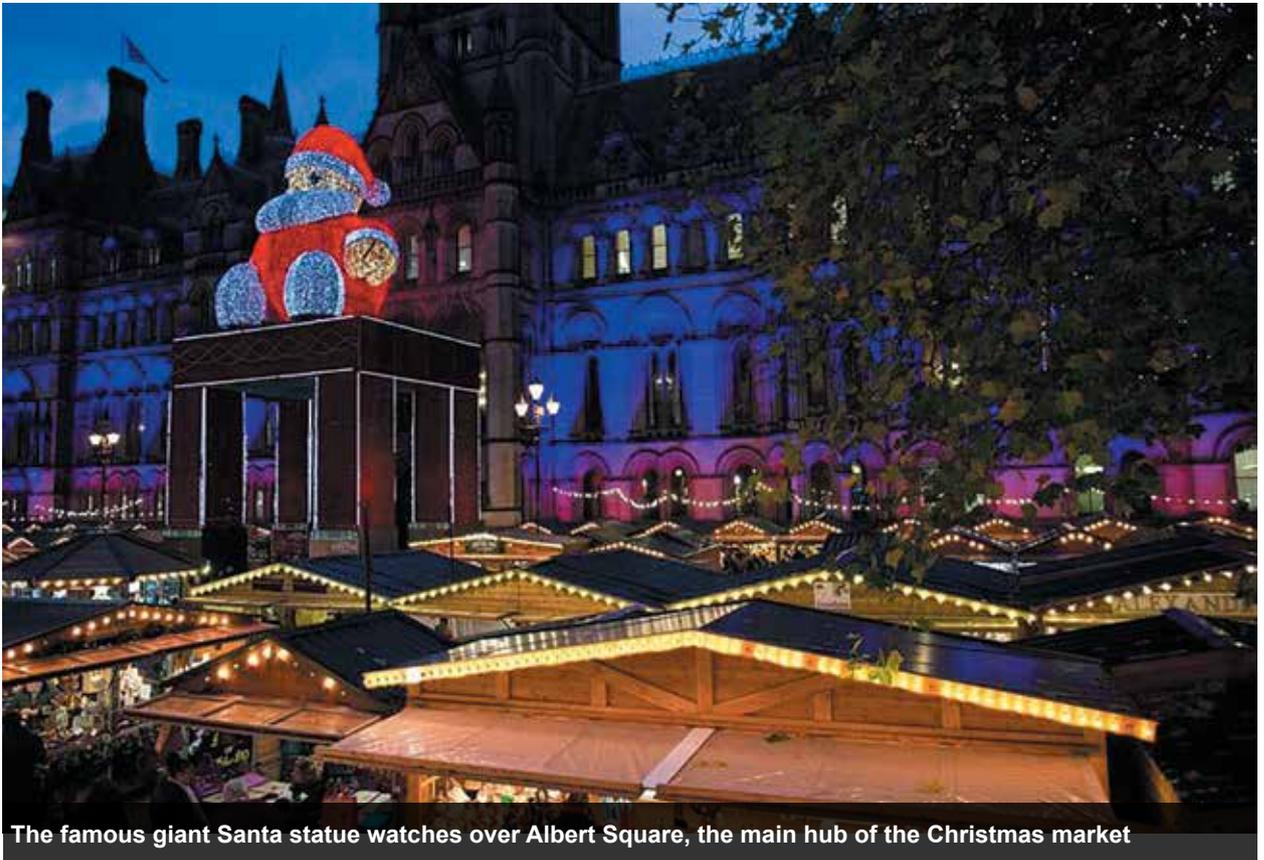
Following a rise in tensions and risk around public events, including attacks on some German markets in 2016, UK markets have undertaken a range of new precautions to further enhance security and ensure that visitors and stallholders can enjoy a relaxed atmosphere.

The possible terrorist threats did not seem to have dampened the festive spirit of visitors for the Christmas markets in 2017 and the counter terrorist measures put in place by all councils have been seen as reassuring for the public. Some of the measures put in place included:

- pre-event planning with emergency services and the council's safety advisory groups
- armed police patrols
- increased police presence
- barrier system installations of various designs and structures to prevent mainly vehicular borne attacks
- metal detectors
- random bag searches.

# Case studies

The case studies that follow reflect eight of the UK's well established Christmas markets (with the exception of Stratford upon Avon where they introduced a new Victorian themed event in 2017) being in existence for five years or more. They are all well managed with a very clear strategy, well designed to benefit other areas of the town or city centre, well located within the town or city and well promoted.



The famous giant Santa statue watches over Albert Square, the main hub of the Christmas market

## Manchester Christmas markets

Now operating for 42 days from 10 November to 21 December in 2017, Manchester is not only the biggest Christmas market experience in the UK but has recently won recognition as one of the best Christmas markets in Europe. It was the only UK market to make the cut in the prestigious European Best Destinations Christmas market competition, which is decided on public votes from all over Europe. The Brussels based organisation, which promotes the best tourism across Europe, asked the public to choose their 20 favourite markets across the continent out of 100 options. Manchester polled more than 5,800

votes and was named the 13th best market in Europe 2018, beating Cologne in Germany and Bern in Switzerland. It has also moved up seven places in the list, after being named the 20th best market in Europe 2017, last December.

It has also been named the most popular in Europe among Instagram users. The hashtag #manchesterchristmasmarkets has been used 24,308 times on the social media app this year – more than any other market in Europe – and providing clear evidence of the younger customer group now visiting the market. Around 24.5 per cent of all Manchester residents are aged 20-29 and it seems that the Manchester Christmas markets appeals strongly to this cohort. It appeared in more

than double the number of posts than its nearest rival, Bath, whose respective hashtag #bathchristmasmarket was used 10,439 times. The UK had five markets in the top 10 list, with Lincoln, Birmingham and Winter Wonderland in London's Hyde Park, also proving popular on Instagram.

But Manchester Christmas markets have become much more than its original German influenced markets in Albert Square and its historical home of St Anne's Square, to that of a truly international market with a diverse representation of European and UK based traders and products.

Manchester Christmas markets, now in its 18th year, features 230 stalls and attractions across 10 locations linking a large part of the city centre through its pedestrianised areas. It's so big that it is perhaps no longer a market as we traditionally understand it, but more of a festive extension of the Christmas shopping experience of Manchester. The 10 locations are:

- Albert Square (European market and main hub)
- St Ann's Square (German market)
- King Street (French market)
- Exchange Street – general market chalets
- New Cathedral Street – general market chalets
- Exchange Square – European market
- Cathedral Gardens (family friendly area)
- Market Street – Dutch market garden and general market chalets
- The Corn Exchange – European market
- Brazenose Street – general market chalets.



Although now dating from 2013 and 2014, research identified a gross economic benefit of circa £91 million with a net benefit of £42 million, as a direct result of those attending the Christmas market.

Manchester's BID has recently confirmed that year-on-year footfall is up 13.4 per cent in November compared to the previous year, reflecting the market's continuing appeal and drive towards an improved offer.

## Birmingham Frankfurt Christmas market

The Birmingham Frankfurt Christmas market has been operated in partnership between Birmingham City Council and Frankfurt City Council through its 50 year old twinning agreement since Christmas 2001.

Due to major city centre re-development schemes, the Christmas market has reduced in scale from having 180 stalls in 2015 to 93 stalls in 2017, which were set up in Victoria Square and New Street. The ice rink and observation wheel, which usually sat adjacent to the Craft Market, have also been relocated to an alternative site in the Digbeth area of the City.

Despite the reduction in stalls, the Christmas market continues to thrive and the economic impact of the market continues to grow. In 2016, Birmingham City Council commissioned Enventure Research to undertake a detailed survey of the Birmingham Christmas market. The report identified extended opening hours and increased visitor spend as the reasons for this continuing increase in its economic impact.

Key findings from the 2016 research identified:

- a net positive economic contribution to Birmingham of circa £252,448
- 55 per cent of all those surveyed said the main reason for visiting Birmingham was because of the Christmas market
- 38 per cent of all those surveyed would not have visited Birmingham if the Christmas market was not on
- 54 per cent visited other places within the city centre
- spend at the markets was £6 whilst spend elsewhere in the city was £17
- 96 per cent of visitors rated their visit to Birmingham over the Christmas period as very good or good.
- 86 per cent of visitors rated the Christmas market as very good or good.

- 13 per cent indicated it was their first visit to the Christmas market.

**Table 3: Birmingham Christmas market economic impact**

	2014	2016
<b>Number of stalls</b>	180	138
<b>Estimated number of visitors</b>	5.5 million	4.6 million
<b>Economic impact</b>	£397 million	£399.8 million*
<b>Accommodation spend</b>	17.11	£40.06
<b>Total average spend</b>	23.19	£43.87
<b>Average spend at market</b>	Not available	£14.16
<b>Average spend in locale</b>	Not available	£24.26

\*Excludes travel spend

Visitors to the market opting to stop overnight have increased from 10 per cent in 2013 to 11 per cent in 2016. Average spend on accommodation increased from £17.11 in 2014 to £40.06 in 2017; a huge 134 per cent increase.

There has also been a significant increase in average visitor spend between 2014 and 2016 resulting in an increase in average total spend per person (shopping, food and beverages and transport) from £23.19 in 2014 to £43.87 in 2016 – a massive 89 per cent increase.

The average visitor spend per person per visit across the city has increased from £23 in 2014 to £44 in 2016. This is broken down as follows:

- shopping, £23
- food and drink, £13.50
- attractions and entertainment, £1.50
- travel and transport, £5.50
- small purchases, £0.50.

A further study into the success of the market in 2017 is being undertaken.



**Grainger Street leading to Greys Monument**

## Newcastle Christmas market

The Newcastle Christmas market is located around the iconic Greys Monument on Grey Street and Grainger Street in the city centre, close to the council's famous Grainger Market, a large indoor market still accommodating Marks and Spencer's last market stall. The location constrains the scale of the market, so it is quite a small one for one of the UK's biggest retail cities.

The market is operated under a partnership arrangement delivering two very different elements to the Christmas market experience in Newcastle. The international Christmas market, operated by a private sector company under procured contract from the council, uses Alpine style Christmas wooden chalets for 24 days. In 2017, the three week trading period was from 17 November to 10 December. On the last day, the international traders moved out of the chalets to be replaced by local traders under the governance of the city council. The private sector company leaves the chalets on site free of charge for the city council to operate

its own one week Christmas market. The council achieves a significant budget saving from this partnership arrangement as well as a substantial tendered fee.

Until 2015, the Christmas market was only permitted to use demountable structures of a pop-up gazebo type, but in 2015, the council agreed to the Alpine style wooden chalets being constructed. These are transported, erected, dismantled and stored by an event Management company.

The market launch is timed to fall after the switch on of the festive lights around Greys Monument, creating a symbolic start for Christmas.

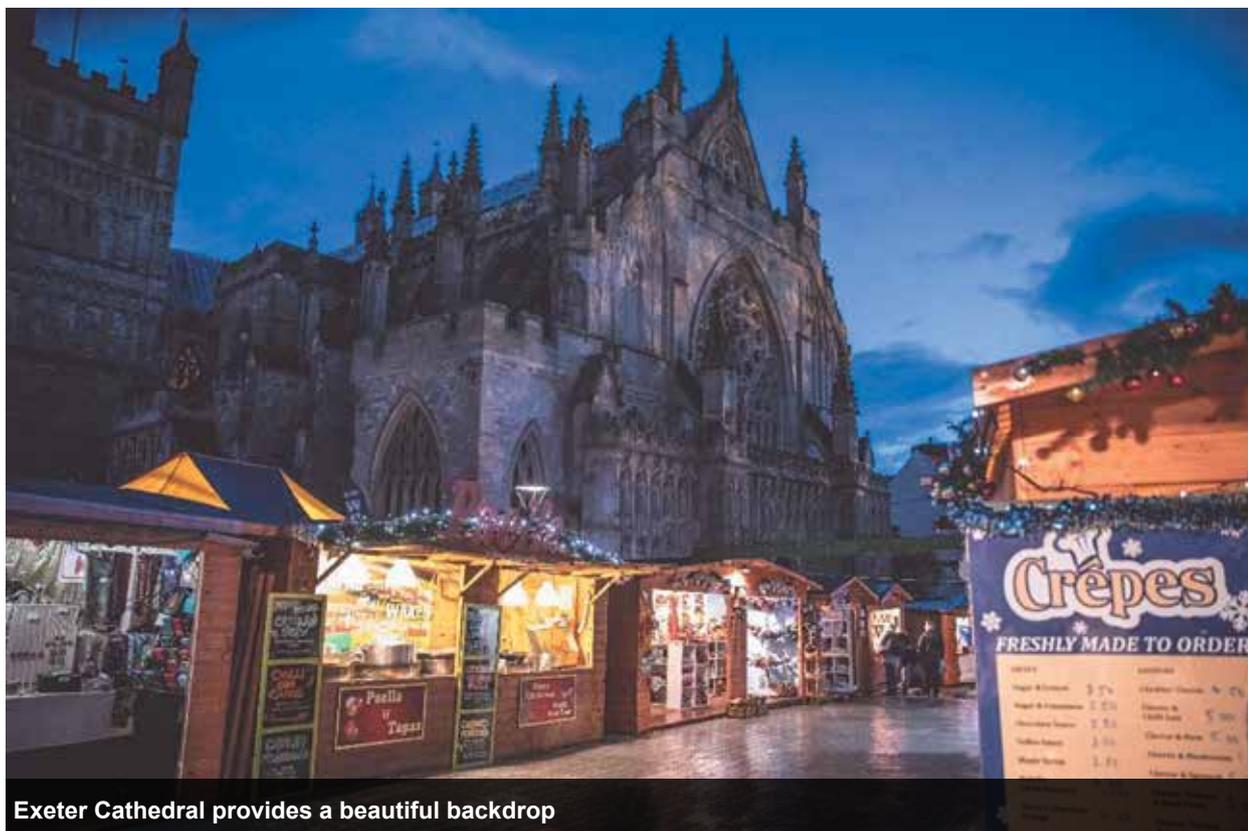
The additional footfall to the Christmas market not only benefits the other retail in the locale but also the council's Grainger Market due to its proximity. Each year, the operators of the international market make a chalet available to the Grainger Market to showcase businesses within the regular market and help promote Grainger Market in general. It allows traders and the council to distribute information about the council's market attractions.

**Table 4: Impact of Newcastle Christmas market**

	2016
<b>Number of stalls</b>	44
<b>Estimated attendees</b>	1 million
<b>Accommodation</b>	£4 million
<b>Eating out</b>	£11.5 million
<b>Shopping</b>	£57.5 million
<b>Entertainment</b>	£5.76 million
<b>Transport</b>	£4.16 million
<b>Gross economic impact</b>	£83 million

The contracted operator is responsible for all publicity and promotion for this event which it manages with a private sector PR agency. The budget for promotion in 2016 was £25,000 which equates to £568 per stall.





Exeter Cathedral provides a beautiful backdrop

## Exeter Christmas market

With the magnificent backdrop of Exeter Cathedral, the Christmas market is operated within the cathedral grounds. Now in its sixth year of operation, and with over 85 Alpine style wooden chalets, the market continues to go from strength to strength. The Christmas market 2017 operated from 18 November until 17 December.

The cathedral grounds are situated just off the main retail areas of the High Street and Princesshay shopping centre and, unlike many city centre locations, it is not a cut through so does not benefit from natural passing footfall. The Christmas market is therefore a destination of choice for those wishing to visit.

Since 2012, the Christmas market was operated under contract with the cathedral by a private sector operator, but in 2016, following the departure of the chief executive and dean, the cathedral administrators decided to take the Christmas market in-house and build on the success of the first five years.

**Table 5: Economic impact of Exeter Christmas market**

	2016
<b>Number of stalls</b>	87
<b>Estimated attendees</b>	497,255
<b>Accommodation</b>	£1.32 million
<b>Eating out</b>	£6.1 million
<b>Shopping</b>	£17 million
<b>Entertainment</b>	£631,150
<b>Transport</b>	£2.1 million
<b>Gross economic impact</b>	£27.3 million

In 2014, 86 per cent of people visiting the Christmas market said they would come back to Exeter at another time, making it a powerful marketing tool for the local visitor economy. In 2016, 91 per cent of visitors said that the market exceeded expectations, which reflected the continued improvements being made to the market.

In 2016, following the devastating fire at the historic Royal Clarence Hotel, the layout for the Christmas market needed to change at the last minute, but the market was able

to offer a lifeline to each of the businesses affected by the fire by offering them a free stall at the Christmas market, supporting local business in a time of need.

Like Newcastle, the Christmas market also features a range of organised educational tours for school and other educational groups and community led initiatives.

The Christmas market was promoted by the private contractor through its own public relations agent with a budget of £25,000 pa, an average of £287/stall. The market promotion benefits from media partnerships with local media Devon Live and Radio Haart.





Abbey Green

## Bath Christmas market

Now in its seventeenth year, the Bath Christmas market has become one of the UK's best known and largest Christmas markets.

In 2010, the market duration changed from 11 to 18 days, making a significant improvement to congestion issues during the busier periods. The same results are expected from a similar seven day extension to duration planned from 2018.

The Christmas market, billed as 'the largest shopping event in the South West', is located through the streets of this UNESCO World Heritage Site, set in five zones around the tourist sites of Bath Abbey, Abbey Church yard and the Roman Baths extending into Southgate Street, Union Street and Hot Bath Street.

There were over 200 chalets in 2017, 30 more than 2016, covering a full range of gifts, homewares, food and drink, jewellery and much more. In 2017, organisers handpicked over 60 brand-new stallholders to ensure continuing quality and a diversity of offer.

Over 80 per cent of the stallholders come from Bath and the South West, and an estimated 99 per cent of all products are either handmade by the stallholders' own hands, or abroad with Fairtrade certification, making a visit to this market a truly distinctive experience.

"When I set up my business I was living in Bath and as I do not have a physical shop it was difficult for me to get out there and meet the customers that were right on my doorstep so to have a stall here is simply amazing. Bath Christmas market accounts for 1/3 of all my trade for the whole year and it is vital to get the trade towards the end of the year to ensure I can carry the business on throughout the quiet months of January, February and March before show season starts again."

Bath Christmas market has been operated since 2015 by Bath Tourism Plus, a not for profit organisation. Any profits generated are reinvested through multiple marketing initiatives back into the local economy aimed at driving footfall and encouraging visitors throughout the year.

In 2016, the 429,000 visitors to the Christmas market spent £21 million in the city centre with £5 million at the market and £16 million elsewhere in the city.

In 2017, they developed a programme of community engagement activities, working in conjunction with a wide range of people and organisations, including schools, faith groups, special interest groups and charities. Activities included a pop-up cinema, craft workshops, a children’s Christmas storytelling grotto, artisan market, outdoor Christmas services and musical performances.

The plans to expand the Christmas market, both geographically and the numbers of days it operates, has been met with positive comments from local business:

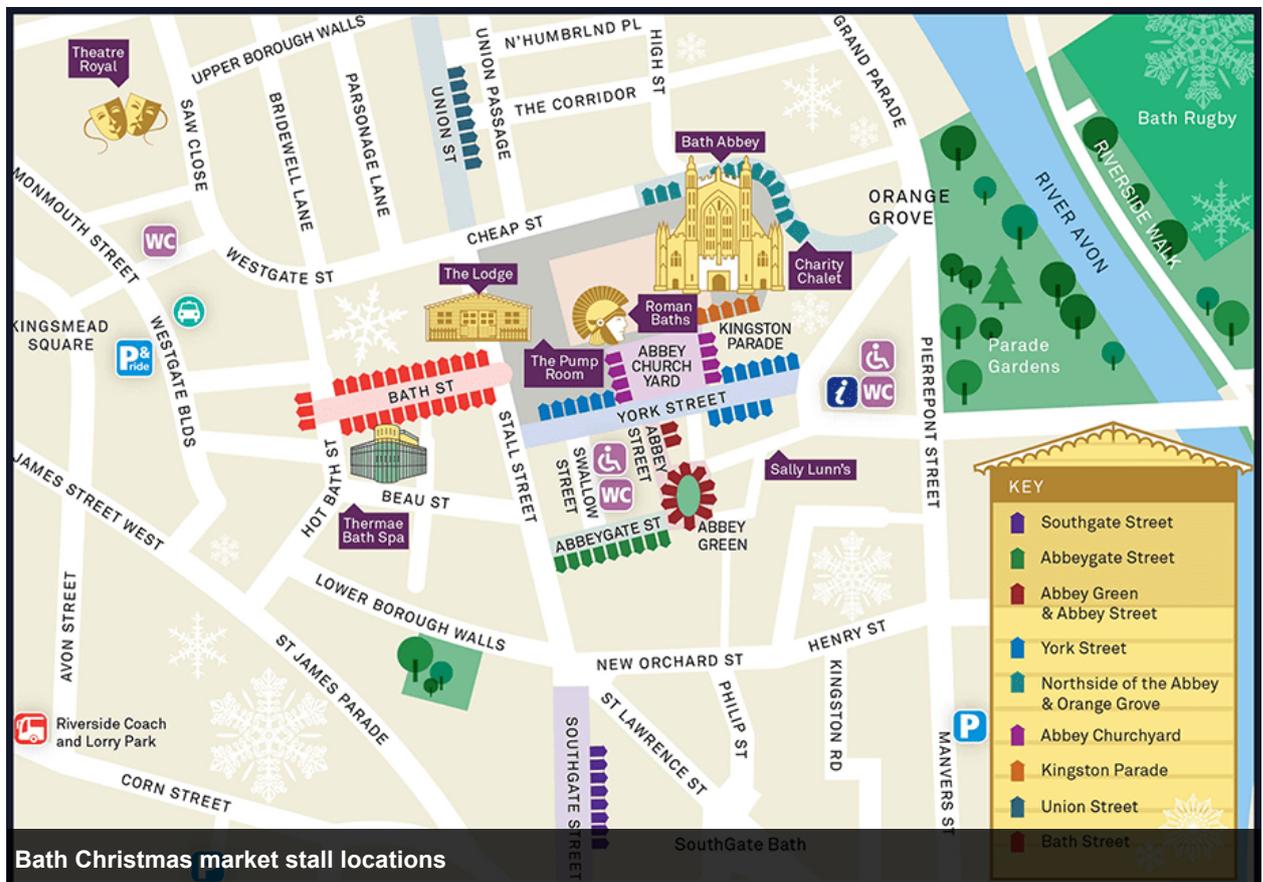
“The Bath BID supports the extension of the Bath Christmas market both in terms of its geographic footprint and the extended number of days. The market drives footfall and sales for Bath businesses and continues to build the city’s reputation as a destination of choice over the festive season.

The extended footprint and additional days will help to spread visitor footfall and encourage wider exploration of stores, hospitality venues and attractions in the city, while making it a more pleasurable experience for visitors and residents.”

**Louise Prynne, Chief Executive**

**Table 6: Economic impact of Bath Christmas market**

	2016
<b>Number of stalls</b>	200
<b>Estimated number of visitors</b>	429,000
<b>Economic impact</b>	£21 million
<b>Total spend at market</b>	£5 million
<b>Total spend in locale</b>	£16 million
<b>Average spend at market</b>	£11.65
<b>Average spend in locale</b>	£37.30



## Lincoln Christmas market

The Lincoln Christmas market is delivered and operated by the City of Lincoln Council's events and culture team. The market is normally a four day market (first week in December). However, in 2017, it became a three day event as Sunday was closed due to an adverse weather forecast. In Lincoln, the council estimated there were 180,000 visitors in the three days before closure on the Sunday, so estimates of over 250,000 people in four days would have been realistic.

The market is an established and popular Christmas market and was the first Christmas market in the UK. It started in 1982, inspired by the Neustadt Christmas market (Lincoln's twin town), and consisted of just 14 stalls. The market has grown in size and popularity, and in 2017 facilitates 186 stalls in a combination of alpine style chalets and marquees, plus a fun fair and Ferris wheel. The market is located in the grounds of the Cathedral Quarter in five zones, with an established one-way system to alleviate congestion.

The University of Lincoln undertook a survey in 2014 and the key findings were:

- 75 per cent of visitors came to Lincoln to visit the market
- the market receives over 300 pre-booked coach tour visits
- 56.2 per cent of the visitors to the market were non-resident/out of towners
- 200,000 visitors spent an estimated £10.6 million during their visit
- average spend was £53 per capita
- average spend elsewhere in the city resulting from the market visit was £27.

**Table 7: Economic impact of Lincoln Christmas market**

	2014
<b>Number of stalls</b>	180
<b>Estimated number of visitors</b>	200,000
<b>Economic impact</b>	£10.6 million
<b>Accommodation spend</b>	£8.00
<b>All other spend</b>	£45.00
<b>Average spend at market</b>	£26.00
<b>Average spend in locale</b>	£27.00

From its origins to now, Lincoln Christmas market has continued to prosper as a tourist destination in spite of the growing competition around the UK, and continues to attract visitors across a wide range of age and income levels. For instance, around 60 per cent of the visitors have an annual household income in line with the UK median household income bracket.



St Albans's Christmas market

## St Albans Christmas market

St Albans is home to one of the UK's oldest weekly markets, dating back to the ninth century. It is also home to the German themed Christmas market which takes place in the walled Vintry Garden, adjacent to the magnificent 11th-century St Albans Cathedral.

The pretty cathedral quarter sits right at the centre of a triangle of St Albans' 'oldest' treasures: the only working medieval clock tower; the oldest public school in the country; and the oldest pub in the UK, 'Ye Olde Fighting Cocks', just at the foot of the Abbey Orchard, a stone's throw from the cathedral. It is a three minute walk from the main retail shopping area and 10 minutes from the station.

In 2016, the Christmas market attracted the largest number of visitors since it was launched in 2013, with 118,000 people attending over 25 days. This was a 15 per cent increase on 2015.

The 2017 Christmas market operated between 25 November and 23 December, although it closed for two days due to adverse weather conditions including heavy snow fall. Operated by St Albans City and District Council, it is now in its fifth year. In 2017, the opening period was extended by four days to meet rising popular demand.

The Christmas market coincides with the switch on of the Christmas lights, with an

additional launch of the Christmas market the following day.

Around 56 Alpine style wooden chalets are set up in the walled garden offering a diverse range of products mainly local traders. The market also features a range of community based initiatives including:

- a 'community chalet' made available on a day-by-day basis to community groups and chalets, or the council's partner organisations, such as leisure providers
- a 'BID' chalet made available on a day-by-day basis to BID levy-payers which can also include charities, pop-up shops, and local gyms
- a chalet offered to the cathedral's enterprise arm; in the past, they have operated a stall for the full duration selling cards and decorations, but in 2017 they opted to use the chalet for their 'Cards for Good Causes' partner and operated it for one week only
- local performers, schools, and special needs groups, are offered the opportunity to perform in the dedicated entertainment teepee
- Santa's grotto
- snow globe
- a bar with a seating area; dwell time in 2017 was improved with the provision of additional seating, and the placing of the bar chalet next to a teepee with live music and other entertainment

- over 50 coach tours booked to visit the city in 2017 during the Christmas market demonstrate the role of the Christmas market as a major draw for visitors.

The annual marketing budget is circa £20,000, but is also used to promote the city's Charter market and as part of the wider tourism offer of St Albans during the Christmas market period. The marketing uses Facebook as its main social media focus, but also advertises on local buses, phone boxes, and temporary signage at a local level. The marketing is also designed to attract visitors from further afield, with advertising on bus shelters at a regional level, at London rail stations, in group travel publications, coach industry publications, and Travel Trade shows as part of the 'Visit Herts' initiative.

In 2016:

- 57 per cent of visitors surveyed cited the Christmas market as the purpose for their visit
- 67 per cent of visitors surveyed were from out of town (29 per cent elsewhere in Hertfordshire, 12 per cent Bedfordshire, 10 per cent London, and 51 per cent from elsewhere, revealing the broad appeal of the market).





'Victoria and Albert' on the Stratford-upon-Avon Christmas market carousel!

## Stratford-upon-Avon Christmas market

Set amongst the main streets of one of the UK's most historic towns, the Victorian Christmas market has been expanded in 2017 to alleviate some of the congestion issues of previous years, and also to extend its influence to other areas of the town centre.

Stratford-upon-Avon invested in a new three day traditional Victorian themed Christmas market for 2017 located in the main retail streets of Bridge Street, Henley Street and Meer Street; with stalls that are street food and drink related positioned on Wood Street within the historic town centre. The Victorian market is in addition to the Thursday Christmas market which runs for the five Thursdays prior to Christmas, to coincide with the town's late night shopping.

The 2017 market was officially opened by Stratford-upon-Avon's Mayor Councillor Victoria Alcock accompanied by Chairman of Stratford-on-Avon District Council George

Atkinson dressed as Queen Victoria and her consort Prince Albert (pictured above), with a supporting cast dressed in Victorian costume adding to the overall atmosphere.

The Christmas market is organised by the town and district councils together with the procured private market operator LSD which also operates the regular markets in the town.

For 2017, the market was scheduled to take place from 8 to 10 December 2017 but sadly the market had to be cancelled on the final day due to heavy snow. However, that did not stop people flooding into the town centre on the Friday and Saturday with the BID company saying that the footfall was up by 90 per cent on the same period the previous year.

The significant spike in visitor numbers indicated in Stratford on the first two days of the three day Christmas market may have been as a result of visitors choosing to visit the market before the well-publicised weather warning for the Sunday. As a consequence, all of the available parking in the town was full from 10am both days with other eateries

and cafes bursting. The experienced market operator said “I have never seen anything like this in Stratford. It was fantastic”.

The market hosted 207 stalls offering a variety of products including a section of local makers, an international area, gifts, crafts and an extensive choice of street food and beverages. The main focus is on local and regional traders selling a wide range of crafts, artisan products and local producer. This included opportunities for local businesses situated within the market area to take part by trading outside their premises promoting or selling their normal stock or service, as long as they complied with the Victorian theme (where possible) and registered their intention with the market operator.

A range of stage and street entertainment, including choirs, musical entertainers, dance displays, took place, as well as Victorian chimney sweeps, stilt walkers, a Victorian carousel, and vintage barrel organ music.

Early indications are that the inaugural Victorian Christmas market saw a 90 per cent increase in footfall in the town, the percentage increase is based on the equivalent Saturday last year when there wasn't a Victorian market in town and also shows a 64 per cent rise in visitor numbers according to Stratforward BID Ltd.

LSD also operates the town's weekly market on Rother Street and this year took the opportunity to relocate the town's Friday and Saturday markets to join the Sunday market along the Riverside as part of the Victorian Christmas market. This enabled Rother Street to be used as a site for a Victorian carousel and fun fair.

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**Local Government Association (LGA)**

The LGA is the national voice of local government, working with councils to support, promote and improve local government. We are a politically-led, cross-party membership organisation that works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

**NABMA (National Association of British Market Authorities) Market Place**

This report has been researched and published by NABMA Market Place for the LGA. NABMA Market Place is the consultancy service for the markets sector, providing expertise and support for the industry. The service combines the knowledge and experience of the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA), and over 100 years combined 'on the job' experience of industry leaders.



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