



Star Tips for Profit*

Summary

This project was run on behalf of the Animating Dark Skies Partnership** to help tourism businesses take advantage of North East England's dark skies.

The catalyst was the creation of the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park – Europe's biggest - in December 2013, comprising all of Northumberland National Park and 70% of Kielder Water & Forest Park. Additionally, the project area covered the North Pennines AONB.

Astro-tourism is a rapidly expanding sector for North East accommodation providers, many of whom have reported increasing numbers of visitors coming to enjoy stargazing breaks.

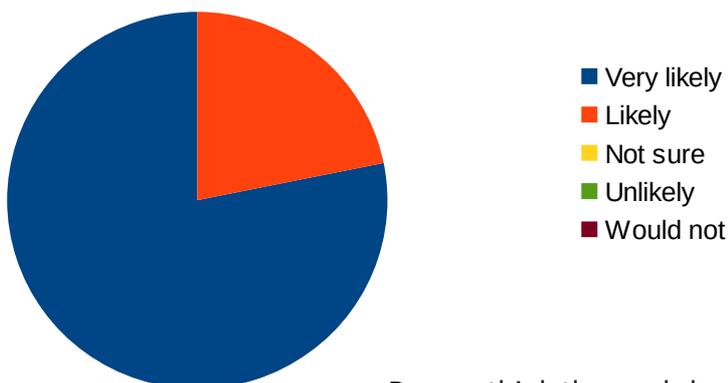
A total of 11 three hour workshops were staged between January and December 2014 with 103 unique businesses/organisations taking part and around 130 people.

They included bed and breakfasts, campsite and self-catering owners, inn and hotel managers and tour guides, TIC staff and representatives of the North Pennines AONB and business forums.

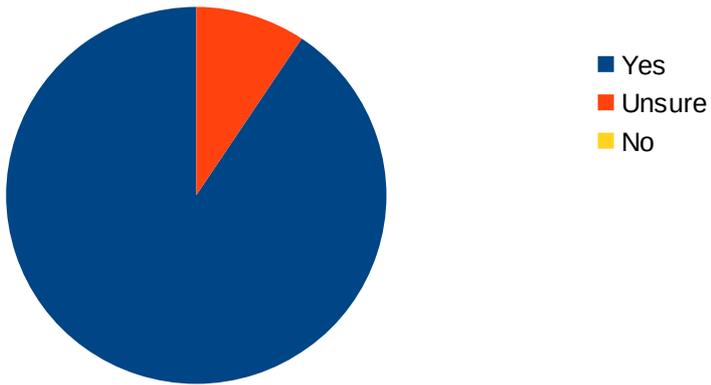
Content included designations and why dark skies are so important, evidence for the expanding astro tourism market and case studies, tips on marketing and key messages, making yourself dark sky friendly and advice on equipment and resources. We concluded with a crash course in basic astronomy and a mini star party if skies were clear. Participants also took home a folder containing a dark skies tourism toolkit covering the main points discussed during the sessions.

Results from feedback (110 respondents):

How likely are you to recommend the workshops to other businesses?



Do you think the workshop will help you attract more visitors?



A few comments from those attending:

"Excellent event."

"This was a really helpful workshop ... we will be more informed when helping visitors plan their breaks."

"Very informative and interesting session – I really enjoyed it."

"Fantastic event. Very informative. Would certainly recommend to others."

"I'm very impressed – focused on the business case and very enthusiastic."

*These events were supported by DEFRA and the tourism industry through the Animating Dark Skies project partnership, part of the Northern Lands Programme.

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Richard Darn