

STAMFORD VISITOR SURVEY

NOVEMBER 2010

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1. BACKGROUND

There has been a more or less regular annual Stamford Visitor Survey conducted by the Stamford Town Partnership for the last three years. The data has been captured via a questionnaire, but the questions on this questionnaire have up to now been framed by the Market Towns organisation and the results uploaded on to the Market Towns website.

Regrettably, the way the Market Towns organisation analyse the data supplied has not been useful, so this year STP had agreed to amend the questionnaire and analysis in order to extract more value from the research.

Wilson, Lee & Partners has been commissioned to amend the questionnaire, carry out the fieldwork, analyse the results and provide a report.

2. METHODOLOGY

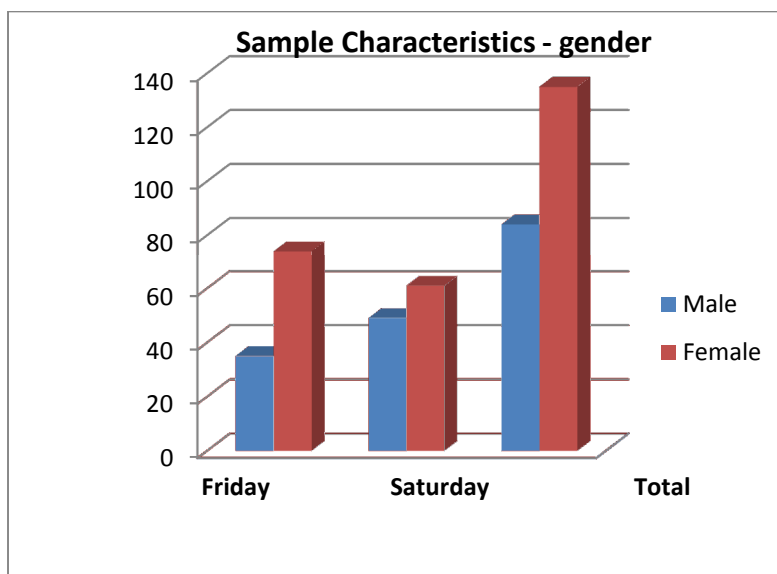
The survey was conducted on Friday 5th and Saturday 6th November 2010. A team of three fieldworkers, working in different town centre locations, interviewed a random sample of visitors to the town, using a one-page questionnaire (see Appendix 1).

A total of 220 interviews were conducted, equally split between the two days. It should be noted that the term 'visitor' includes anyone visiting the town centre, regardless of whether they are a Stamford resident or a visitor from another area. Thus opinions recorded are those of people who know the town well and those who may only come a few times a year.

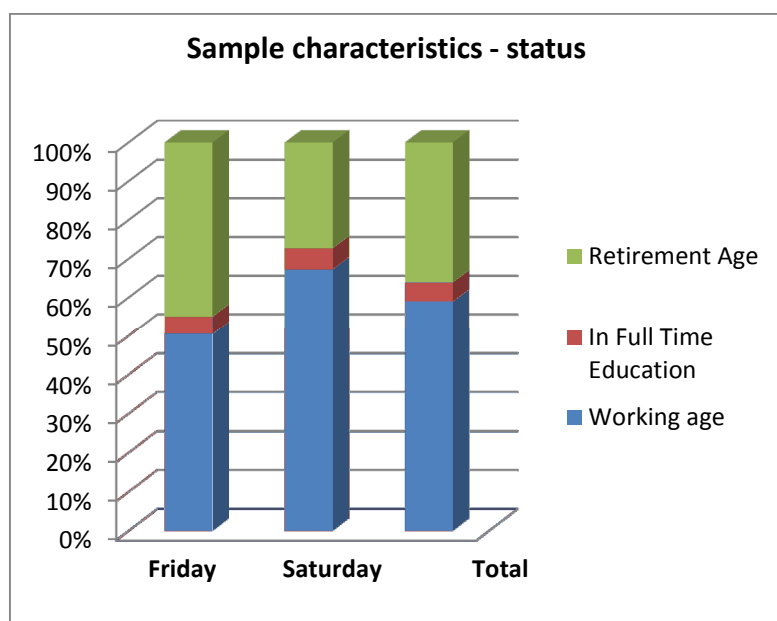
The information captured has been analysed and the two days separated, in order to highlight any significant differences between Friday and Saturday visitors.

3. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

More women than men were interviewed, particularly on Friday. On Saturday more men were evident, a reflection of their employment status.

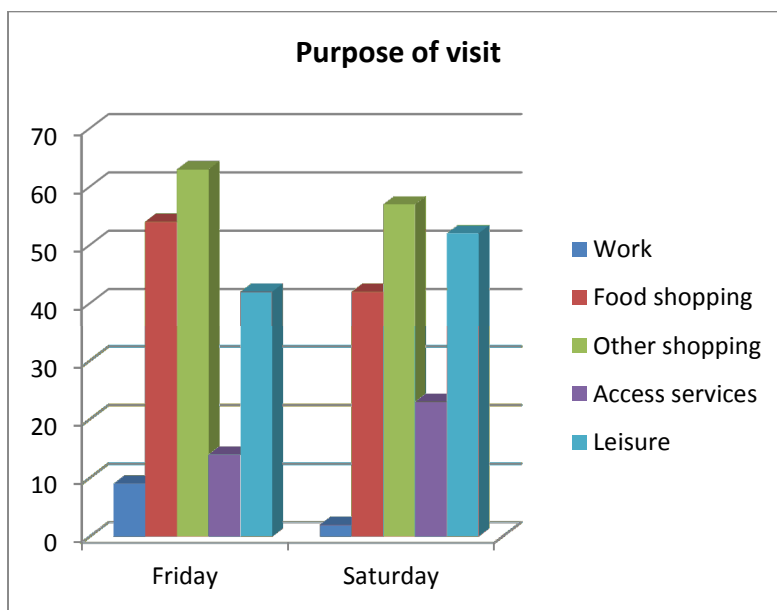


The effect of employment status is confirmed by the chart below, which indicates a high level of retirees on Friday but a strong representation of working age people on Saturday. Not many people in full time education were interviewed, since, hopefully, the majority would have been at their studies on Friday and sleeping in on Saturday!



4. PURPOSE OF VISIT

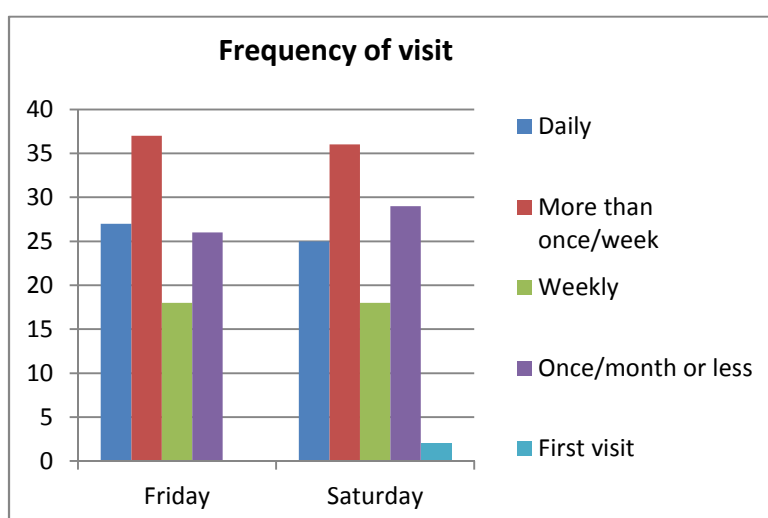
Not surprisingly, on market day the main purpose of the visit was to buy food, or 'other shopping', as many regard this as the main shopping day of the week as far as fresh vegetables etc. are concerned, but also carry out other household purchases as well.



On Saturday, when more time is available, 'leisure' featured more prominently as a purpose, as did 'access services' (this includes e.g. the library, the cleaners, post office etc.).

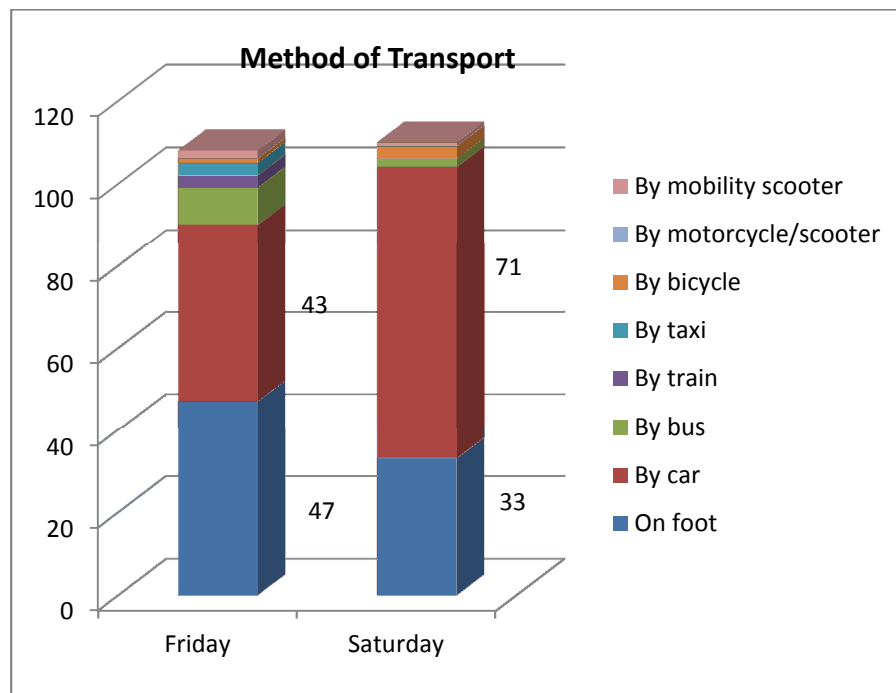
5. FREQUENCY OF VISIT

Although there were fewer frequent visitors recorded on Saturday than Friday, the difference between the days was not large. This is probably because at this time of the year there are relatively few genuine tourists, as indicated by the fact that only 2 first time visitors were encountered.



6. METHOD OF TRANSPORT

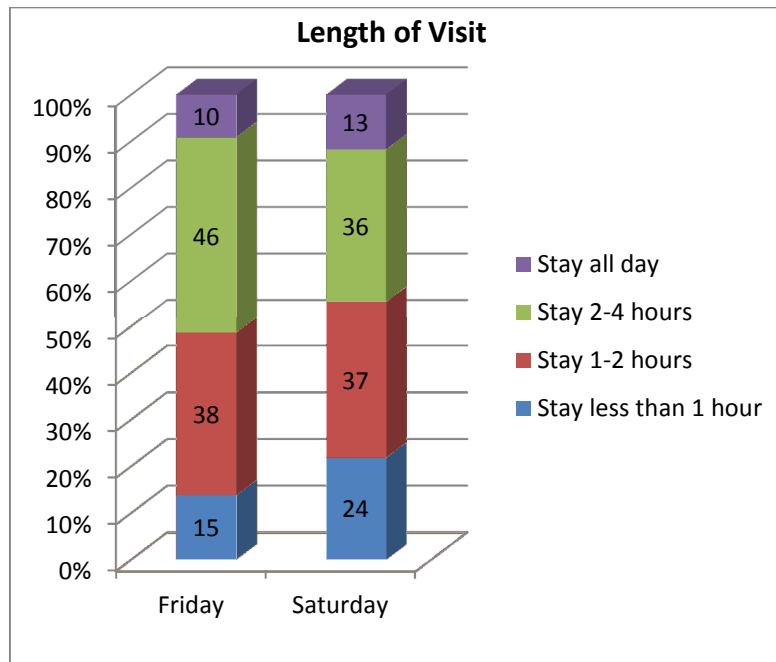
Many people had walked into town on Friday, even though they had shopping to do, reflecting the high proportion of ‘locals’ in the sample on that day. On Saturday, visits by car increased, reflecting the ‘out of town’ element. Transport by bus and train was more noticeable on Friday.



7. DURATION OF VISIT

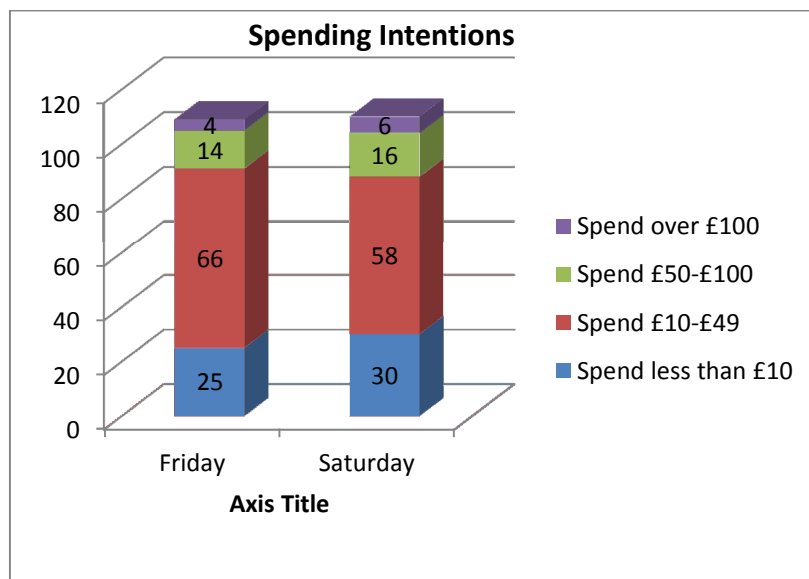
Unexpectedly, or at least counter-intuitively, length of stay on Saturday was shorter than on Friday. In particular, those staying ‘less than 1 hour’ increased and those staying ‘2-4 hours’ decreased. There was a small increase in those staying ‘all day’, principally wedding guests and hen/stag party activists.

The probable explanation for this is that a significant number of local shoppers who carried out their main shopping business on Friday also visit the town centre on Saturday, but only to carry out some minor chore like buying a newspaper, pint of milk, or collecting/dropping off cleaning etc.



8. SPENDING INTENTIONS

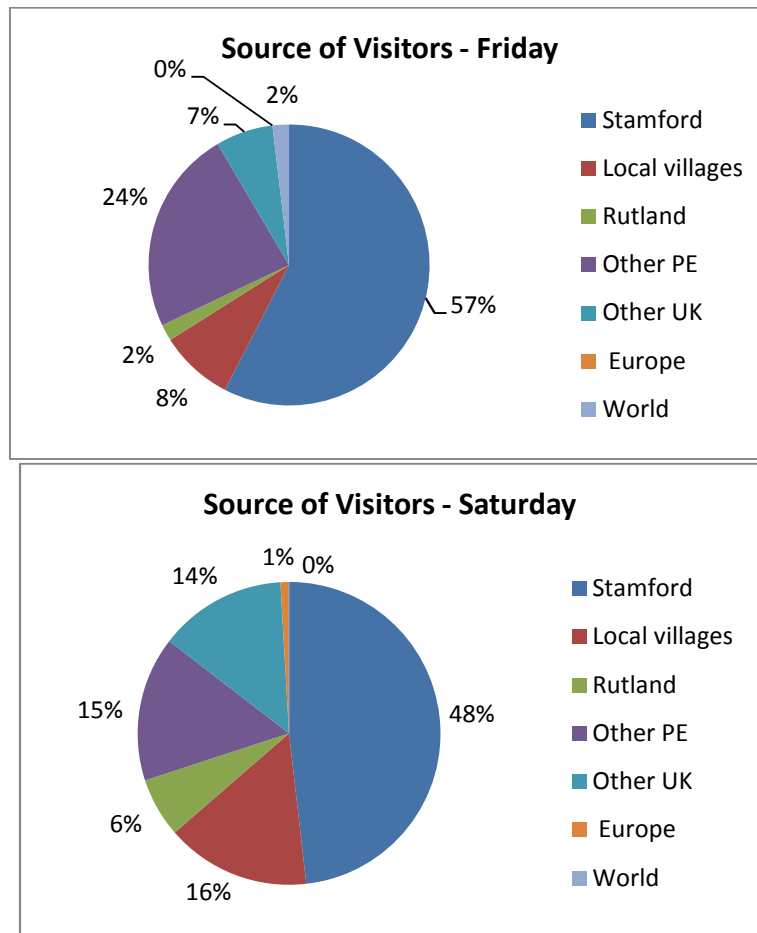
There are not huge differences in spending intentions between Friday visitors and Saturday visitors



There is a modest increase in those expecting to spend over £50, i.e. those in Stamford at the weekend on a specific mission. There is a corresponding decrease in the £10-£49 bracket (major food/weekly shop done on Friday) and an increase in those spending very little (just popping into town/walking the dog/buying a newspaper).

9. SOURCE OF VISITORS

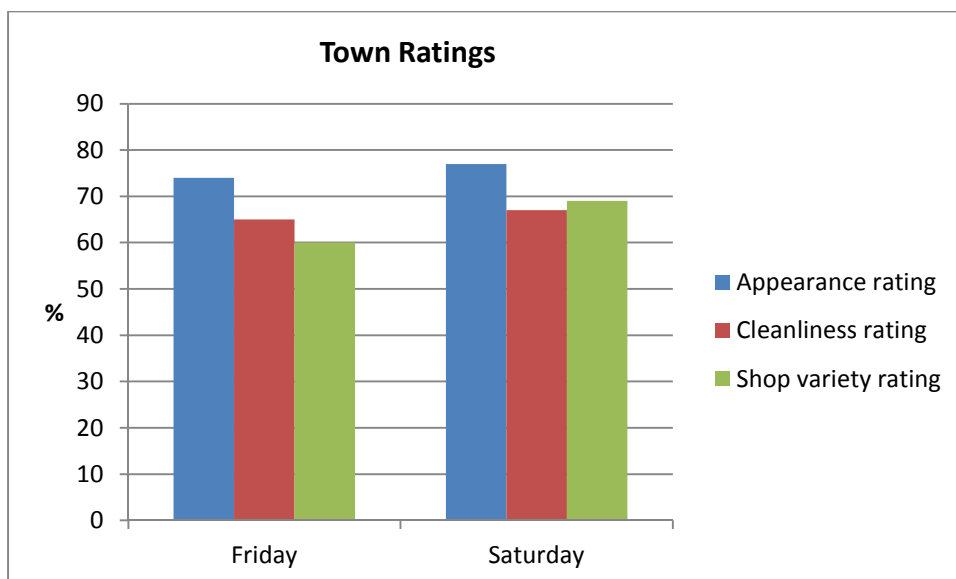
There was a noticeable difference between the two days in where people came from. On Saturday there was a significant decrease in ‘locals’ and a corresponding increase in visitors from nearby villages, Rutland and other UK destinations



The home addresses of visitors has a bearing on how people rate Stamford – see **10. Town Ratings** below.

10. TOWN RATINGS

People were asked to give a rating on a scale of 1-10 on three aspects of Stamford. Visitors from outside the town were distinctly more flattering in their assessments than local townspeople!



The aspect that attracted most negative ratings was the variety of shops, although visitors on Saturday were more complimentary, because some of them were visiting Stamford because they like the retail offer. The issue of shop variety is explored more deeply under section **12. Suggestions for Improvement**.

11. STAMFORD'S BEST FEATURES

Interviewees were asked to confirm what they considered to be Stamford's best features, choosing from a menu. In order of frequency of mention, the best features were:

Feature	Friday	Saturday	Total	%
Physical appearance/atmosphere	71	87	158	76
Ease of walking around the centre	62	75	137	66
Feeling safe	59	59	118	56
Range of eating and drinking	53	53	106	51
Range of shopping	28	41	69	33
Accessibility by car/other transport	19	15	34	16

Over three quarters mentioned Stamford's appearance as one of its best aspects, followed by the ease of walking around the town centre. 'Feeling safe' was given quite a high rating, while the range of eating and drinking outlets was considered much better than the range of shopping (see **Section 12**). Very few think that accessibility by car etc. is a strong point –

this probably reflects concerns around parking availability and cost (see **Section 12**).

12.SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

We recorded a total of 278 suggestions for improvement, ranging from the constructive to the bizarre to the barking. However, there were several consistent themes:

TOPIC	NO. OF SUGGESTIONS
SHOPS	93
CLEANLINESS	51
PARKING	41
PEDESTRIAN PRECINCT/HIGH STREET	27
ROADS AND PAVEMENTS	23
POLICE	7
PUBLIC CONVENIENCES	7

12.1. Shops

Comments on shops could be sub-classified as follows:

- More children's shops (24)
- Greater variety needed (20)
- More specialist shops (20)
- More lower-cost shops (11), particularly shoe shops
- Too many phone shops/charity shops/cafes (6)

12.2. Cleanliness

- Needs to be improved – general (30)
- More litter/ash bins needed (7)

12.3. Parking

- More availability of parking needed (12)
- Cost of parking too high (7)
- Stop illegal parking (7)
- More free parking (4)
- Residents parking scheme needed (3)

12.4. Pedestrian Precinct/High Street

- More benches required (10)
- Get rid of vehicles using the precinct (5)
- More décor/flowers/foilage (5)

12.5. Roads and Pavements

- Need improvements generally (6)
- Need better wheelchair/pushchair access (3)
- No speed-bumps (2)
- Need one-way system

12.6 Police

- Greater police presence needed (7)

12.7 Public Conveniences

- More/better loos required (6)
- Better baby changing facilities

13.COMPARISONS WITH PREVIOUS SURVEYS

The main themes remain the same – shops, parking, cleanliness. On the cleanliness issue, visitors have different perceptions than residents, seeing Stamford as relatively clean and often being complimentary.

In previous years, visitors' postcodes have been more widely dispersed. For instance, last year 60% of those questioned were from PE9 postcodes, and 28% were from postcodes more than 30 miles away. This year, 68% are local and only 22% are from far away. The main factor influencing this is probably that previous surveys have been carried out in the summer, when more tourists are visiting, whereas the current survey has been carried out in late Autumn, outside the main tourist season. It is recommended that next year the survey should revert to summer time.

14.RECOMMENDATIONS

What can STP/STC/SCOTC do about the findings in this survey?

14.1. Variety of shops

There isn't much that we can do to determine the future retail mix. This is down to entrepreneurs and retail corporations who may fancy their chances of doing good business in Stamford. We could choose to oppose planning applications for change of use from retail to catering, but who is to judge whether Stamford has too many cafes? Our visitors rate the range of eating and drinking offers above the retail offer.

We could consider making it known that the people of Stamford and our visitors regret the absence of any children's clothing retailers, this might encourage budding entrepreneurs to 'have a go'.

14.2 Cleanliness

We are all well aware of issues around weekend litter problems in the town centre. Visitors are suggesting more litter bins – we could act on this at little expense. It would be good PR to show that we have listened to what people say.

14.3. Parking

This survey confirms our parking problems. We could and should use this data to continue to press SKDC for a more sensible strategy in Stamford, to include a residents' parking scheme, increased parking provision and a more logical pricing regime that encourages visitors who want to spend a short time but are put off by the cost. The introduction of CPE will hopefully have a major impact on illegal parking.

14.4. Pedestrian Precinct

More benches - a good project for us to pursue.

14.5. Roads and Pavements

We should continue to pursue the re-direction of defunct 20mph zone funds towards projects more needed, including the Civic Society's degraded pavements repair proposals