



Living & Working
Tourism

5. Policy Framework - Tourism

5.10 Tourism

Background

5.10.1 Tourism is a major rural industry in Dorset, contributing over £600 million in visitor expenditure and supporting over 21,000 jobs directly and indirectly (Dorset Tourism Data Project, 2003). The quality of the AONB landscape in scale and variety, together with its rich culture, history and biodiversity, underpins this vigorous tourism industry.

5.10.2 The AONB offers a varied tourism product - coast, countryside, market towns, rural villages, quiet lanes, ample public rights of way, local produce and a rich cultural heritage. However, a larger proportion of visitors gravitate to the coastal areas and market towns with rural areas in north and north west Dorset experiencing far fewer visitors.



Tourism contributes over £600 million in visitor expenditure.

5.10.3 People who visit the AONB mostly come from the South East, other parts of the South West and the Midlands. The majority are young families and couples with no children at home. Over 75% of overnight visitors stay in caravans, tents, self catering cottages or with friends and relatives - less than 20% use serviced accommodation. Over 80% of visitors come by car.

5.10.4 The benefits of the industry are widespread. There is growing recognition that a sustainable tourism industry is important to the economic well being of rural areas. Tourism supports an ever greater percentage of the rural economy. Declining income from traditional rural employment and the ongoing reform of CAP and subsidies means that tourism is becoming an attractive option.

5.10.5 Likewise tourism and visitor spend also enables a wider range of shops and facilities to exist than the resident population could support. The Countryside Agency findings reveal that the highest proportion of spend during countryside trips from home is on eating and drinking (52%) with travel accounting for 21%, attractions 17% and shopping 10%. Spending by day visitors accounts for 77% of all spending in the countryside. In Dorset on average, staying visitors spend £31.50 per day and day visitors spend £12.12 per day (Dorset Tourism Data Project 2001).

Current Trends

5.10.6 Regional and local tourism partnerships both predict and influence change which will affect tourism in Dorset AONB. The regional tourism outlook is one of growth - particularly in towns and cities and an increase in overseas visitors. The popularity of short breaks and activity-focused trips will grow and there is likely to be a greater interest in art, culture, health and the environment.

5.10.7 There is also a trend towards extending the summer tourism season into the 'shoulder' months of late spring and early autumn. This should reduce seasonality and therefore extend the benefits of tourism to local people and business.



The AONB offers a varied tourism project.

5.10.8 With predicted growth in disposable income, visitors will be looking for greater quality of services and spending opportunities. This has implications for local business - they may need to invest time, money and training in upgrading their service. However, if they succeed there will be immediate payback of a better price paid to them for their services and potentially more demand for quality local products.

5.10.9 The decline in the traditional two week fixed location holiday is predicted, whilst short breaks are becoming more popular. Demand for special interest short breaks out of the main season is likely to increase.

5.10.10 Rising consumer expectations and increasing competition from inside and outside the UK.

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Key Issues

5.10.11 The key issues affecting tourism in the Dorset AONB include:

- The local economy could benefit more from tourism spend if more people who visited stayed in the area and bought goods and services produced locally.
- Voluntary visitor payback schemes that support the environment are limited and often misunderstood.
- Employment in tourism is often low paid, seasonal and lacks career structure.
- Seasonal peak in use of energy, water, roads and waste services. Lack of awareness of good practice in environmental sustainability amongst tourism businesses.
- There is a need for better information on visitor aspirations and attitudes to the countryside.
- Damage to sensitive sites through visitor pressure / tourism development.
- Some tourism development does not sit well in the landscape, especially along the coast.
- Poor transport infrastructure encourages visitor car use, increasing the impact on the environment.
- Lack of integration of tourism into other strategies.
- Local communities are often not sufficiently involved in tourism decision making.
- Promotion of the AONB to visitors is limited in some areas.



Tourism Development can have a visual impact on the AONB.

Sustainable tourism in the AONB

5.10.12 The importance of the tourism industry to rural areas together with predictions that the number of visitors to the area will continue to increase suggest that tourism in the AONB will continue to grow. However, for growth in tourism to be complementary to the AONB, the principles of sustainable tourism must become mainstream practice. That is to say, tourism must achieve:

- Economic prosperity – improving local employment and spreading of benefits to rural communities.
- Conservation of a quality local environment – supporting the character of the rural landscape, developing an awareness of what makes it special.
- Acceptability to local community - limiting negative impact, creating opportunities to be involved in decision making, celebrating local distinctiveness.

These three factors are embodied in the aims and policies for tourism in the AONB.



Dramatic heritage sites such as Corfe Castle attract many visitors.

Key Opportunities

5.10.13 Opportunities for tourism in the AONB include:

- Farm diversification could present tourism opportunities in rural area.
- Specialist activity breaks related to natural beauty of the AONB for example wildlife tourism, walking / riding breaks, access to the countryside for disabled people, rural skills training.
- Market towns within and on the edge of the AONB could develop their role as gateways to the AONB and centres for tourism facilities in conjunction with the World Heritage Site.
- World Heritage Site designation is likely to attract visitor numbers and presents the opportunity to develop activities to extend the season and increase understanding.

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- Links with adjoining AONBs to develop multi centre tourism breaks.
- Tourism could provide a lifeline for local services if promoted.
- Local Area Partnerships developed for Community Planning could provide a forum for better links between the tourism industry and local communities.
- Dorset's literary, natural and cultural heritage attract many visitors in addition to the traditional beachside attractions.
- Develop link between tourism, environmental education and interpretation to develop sustainable messages within tourism publications and centres.



The South West Coast Path provides access to dramatic scenery and attracts many visitors.

Current Activity

5.10.14 Tourism clearly has an important role in Dorset and there are many organisations and initiatives working both to attract the visitor and extend the benefits of the industry further into the local community:

- **Tourism Partnerships.** Each local authority has an active tourism team which work together to promote Dorset to the visitor. There are several tourism focused partnerships such as the Dorset and New Forest Tourism Partnership who supports local business and develops networking between tourism providers and seek to develop linkages between strategies and areas. Strong business partnerships also exist, which support members with advice and sharing resources. These are usually organised on a local basis.

- **Area Schemes.** Area focused initiatives such as Chalk & Cheese (LEADER+ funding), Rural Renaissance and the Market & Coastal Towns Initiative are working to spread benefits both to the local community as well as the local environment. Likewise the World Heritage Team is working hard to ensure that the new World Heritage Site designation for the Jurassic Coast both attracts and educates more visitors as well as fulfils its coastal conservation remit.
- **South West Tourism Research Projects.** South West Occupancy Survey and South West Tourism Business Barometer will provide valuable information to guide future policy and practice.
- **Long distance walking and cycling routes.** Both existing routes as outlined in the previous chapter and potential routes such as the former Somerset & Dorset Railway Line from Blandford to Shillingstone.
- **Cornwall Sustainable Tourism Project.** An example of good practice in sustainable tourism across protected landscapes.
- **Tourism Skills Project.** SWRDA-led initiative developing industry led strategy groups to increase business competitiveness through training and developing personnel.
- **Dorset Tourism Data Project.** Research into tourism trends, conducted through Bournemouth University.



Children enjoy rock-pooling at Kimmeridge Marine Nature Reserve.

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Related Policies and Strategies

5.10.15 There are many strategies and documents linked to tourism, including:

- *'Tomorrow's Tourism'* (Department of Culture, Media & Sport 1999)
- *'A sustainable future for the South West'* - Regional Sustainable Development Framework for the South West of England - Theme 14 - Tourism (South West Regional Assembly & Sustainability South West 2001)
- *'Towards 2020 - A Tourism Strategy for the South West'* (West Country Tourist Board, 1999)
- *'Working for the Countryside - A strategy for rural tourism in England 2001-2005'* (Countryside Agency & English Tourism Council, 2001)
- *'Green Audit Kit'* - Investing in your business and the environment (Countryside Agency & English Tourism Council, 2000)
- *'Dorset and the New Forest Tourism Partnership Strategy 2003-2006'* (Dorset & New Forest Tourism Partnership, 2003)
- *'Tourism Together - Our plan for tourism in West Dorset 2003-2008'* (West Dorset District Council, 2003)
- *'North Dorset Tourism Strategy 2000 - 2003'* (North Dorset District Council, 2000)
- *'Making Purbeck More Special'* (Purbeck Heritage Committee, 2002)
- *'Tourism Without Traffic – a good practice guide'* (DTLR, English Tourism & Transport 2000, 2001)
- *'Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site Framework for Action - draft'* (World Heritage Site Team, 2003)
- *'The Value of Tourism to the South West Economy in 2001'* (South West Regional Group in Association with The Dorset Tourism Data Project, 2003)
- *Dorset Visitor Survey 1999-2000'* (The Dorset Tourism Data Project, 2001)



Enjoying the view.

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5.10.16 Dorset AONB Policy Framework - Tourism

Policy Aims

- Promote the benefits of sustainable tourism and integrate into wider policies and strategies.
- Ensure that tourism supports and celebrates the natural beauty, character and distinctiveness of the Dorset AONB and contributes to sustainable development.
- Maximise the sustainable economic benefits of tourism to local people and ensure that local communities are involved in decision making.
- Ensure that a high quality visitor experience is available to everyone regardless of age, ability, culture and economic circumstance.

Policy Objectives

- T1. Integrate tourism with development, transport, community planning and land management.
- T2. Develop and support measures that reduce the car dependency of visitors to the AONB in order to alleviate congestion and environmental concerns.
- T3. Research and develop voluntary visitor payback mechanisms whereby additional income could be made available for the management of tourism generated pressures on the landscape and environment.
- T4. Support initiatives which seek to minimise the negative impacts of tourism on landscape and natural beauty.
- T5. Develop a tourism profile utilising natural beauty, landscape character, heritage, healthy environment, wildlife, World Heritage Site and the South West Coast Path.
- T6. Support and promote the provision of advice on tourism opportunities for landowners as part of an integrated 'whole farm' approach.
- T7. Develop the capacity of market towns to capitalise on tourism and provide a service gateway in conjunction with Local Area Partnerships and the World Heritage Site designation.
- T8. Develop and promote a sustainable and sensitive approach to increasing the attractiveness of rural

inland destinations and support development of niche tourism relating to the character and natural beauty of the AONB.

- T9. Assess cost benefit analysis of sustainable tourism and help local communities benefit from it.
- T10. Support and develop the role of local foods and products as part of the visitor experience.
- T11. Support and develop opportunities to reduce the seasonality of tourism to improve the employment base.
- T12. Ensure the provision of advice and training on environmental, landscape and heritage issues for tourism workers and develop links between those working in tourism and countryside management.
- T13. Increase accessibility of information and facilities for visitors in the AONB.