



DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

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# Penwith Tourism Strategy

# Making tourism in Penwith sustainable

*“Sustainability is one of the central themes of the New Cornish Economy”*  
(In Pursuit of Excellence – Cornwall, p17, 2000)

ourism is an extremely **complex** activity and there is little in Penwith that is not affected by its economic, social and/or environmental impact.

Tourism is one of Penwith’s key industry sectors. Tourism expenditure in Penwith totals approximately £ 230 million per annum<sup>1</sup> and 34% of employment is directly supported by tourism revenue. Clearly tourism is extremely important to our economy both now and will be in the future, perhaps increasingly so. Indeed it is hard to see which other sector has the capacity to replicate or replace the revenue generated through tourism, should the industry ever face a significant downturn in trade. Therefore ensuring the viability and future prosperity of this industry is crucial to all within Penwith and ultimately Cornwall.

Whilst Penwith District Council, in-line with other district councils, does not have a statutory duty toward tourism development, where there is clearly so much at stake the Council’s role as an ‘honest broker’ is an essential one. For many years we have recognised this responsibility by providing a tourism and visitor management service, perhaps most familiarly recognised as being delivered via our Tourist Information Centres, the Go-West visitor guide and our involvement in managing events.

However in recognising tourism as such a dynamic and powerful activity, now more than ever, a long term plan is needed to guide its development. Developing a Sustainable Tourism Strategy will allow us to build on our past activity and to actively encourage and assist the wise growth of tourism within and throughout the unique landscape of Penwith.

**What does a sustainable approach to tourism entail?** In essence, sustainable tourism is about managing visitor impacts on the local destination’s economy, communities and environment to benefit all stakeholders both now and in the future. In 1999, the government published *Tomorrow’s Tourism*, which formally identified the pursuit of sustainable tourism as a priority. This was followed by the English Tourism Council (now Visit Britain) *Time for Action Strategy*, which identified three objectives for Sustainable Tourism, i.e. tourism should:

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<sup>1</sup>SWT 2000 report on tourism in Penwith

- §Benefit the economy of tourism destinations
- §Support local communities and culture
- §Protect and enhance the built and natural environment

The challenge is to find the optimum balance between these objectives, whereby no one objective is disproportionately favoured to the detriment of the others. If this can be achieved, the benefits will be significant, leading to an improved visitor experience, a higher quality tourism product and provide benefits for the local community in terms of an enhanced local economy, employment, amenity and environment.

**What is the merit of pursuing a sustainable approach to Tourism?** The value of pursuing a sustainable approach is illustrated through the findings of research conducted by the English Tourism Council on visitor *attitudes to sustainable tourism*. The results indicate that UK residents have a positive attitude and awareness of the issues. Almost two-thirds of consumers stated that a well-managed environment was an important feature in choosing the destination of their last holiday or short-break in England; 76% thought it important that their holidays in England should benefit local residents at the holiday destination. Crucially, respondents to the survey backed up their views by stating they would be willing to pay more for accommodation providers that followed sustainable tourism practices:

- Ø 63% of consumers said they would be willing to pay extra to stay with a provider that tries to buy local products.
- Ø 63% of consumers said they would be willing to pay extra to stay with a provider that tries to employ local staff and pays them good wages.
- Ø 65% of consumers said they would be willing to pay extra to stay with a provider that was committed to good environmental practices.

Additionally, a study conducted by Market & Opinion Research International (MORI) on behalf of the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) (2000), reported that

- Ø 85% of UK holidaymakers believed that it is important not to damage the environment,
- Ø 71% feel that tourism should benefit the people of the destination visited, through jobs and business opportunities.
- Ø 52% said they would be interested in finding out more about local issues (environmental and social) in their chosen resort before they booked their holiday.
- Ø The majority (64%) stated that they would be prepared to pay between £10 and £25 extra for environmental, social or charity guarantees, representing a 2-5% increase on a holiday of £500.

The responses to these surveys suggest that aside from reasons of ensuring the long-term viability of the industry, there is now an immediate marketing and economic need for the industry to strive for high environmental and social standards, which is being driven by visitors. Additionally the results provide reason for our communities and individuals to become more engaged with tourism and also suggest that a visitor payback scheme<sup>2</sup>, linked to the concept of promoting stewardship, is worth serious investigation by all within Penwith.

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<sup>2</sup> Visitor Payback – is a formal scheme to which visitors make voluntarily contributions, these are usually run on either an opt-in or opt-out basis.

Protection of the environment is fundamentally important to the tourism industry of Penwith. There are many issues facing the industry, seasonality, wages, staffing, quality standard schemes and loss of tourism accommodation, to name just a few, however the main issue for the industry is how to improve its performance while protecting the environmental quality of the district. The figures detailed in the two survey results earlier also indicate that a prosperous local economy will be increasingly dependant on ensuring high environmental and social standards.

**“My business is already making strides to be more sustainable”:** whilst it is clear that action is already being taken both by the public and private sectors to make tourism more sustainable, these actions seem to be developing in isolation rather than in unison. Therefore the two main themes of the strategy should be firstly, to formalise a sustainable approach to tourism and secondly, management through partnership. In pursuing these themes the strategy seeks to maximise local income and employment from tourism by providing a warm welcome and a high quality of planned facility and service for visitors. In exchange we want visitors to understand and adopt a sense of stewardship for the unique landscapes and the special way of life in Penwith and its host communities. Penwith boasts many attractions, spread throughout the length and breadth of the district; from St. Michaels Mount, to Trengwainton Gardens to Lands End, the Tate at St. Ives across to the Minack; all of which are framed by our coastline and criss-crossed by a network of footpaths and bridleways. **We are fortunate to boast much to offer the visitor and each component is unique in its own right, however perhaps the time is right to consider if all within Penwith would be better served working in closer union.**

**Is there a model for tourism development that can help make the industry more sustainable?** Yes, there is a model known as the VICE<sup>3</sup> model for tourism development and ties into proposals for strategies currently being investigated at Cornwall and South West regional levels. In essence VICE promotes objectives that:

- ∅ welcomes, involves and satisfies **Visitors**
- ∅ achieves a profitable and prosperous **Industry**
- ∅ engages and benefits host **Communities**
- ∅ protects and enhances the local **Environment**

Utilising the VICE model approach provides Penwith with the flexibility to tailor a strategy to suit our needs within an acknowledged best practice framework as well as allowing for a bottom-up approach to be taken from the outset.

Additionally this model can also be used to apply a simple check against the future viability (sustainability) of any tourism decision – i.e. how does the proposed activity, facility or strategy impact upon each VICE component. By adopting this approach it prompts questions such as, how will this issue/decision affect the visitor? What are the implications for the industry? What is the impact on the community and what is the environmental effect? If you cannot find a positive answer to all four questions, the proposition is likely to be unsustainable.

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<sup>3</sup> VICE stands for Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment

**Why we need to work together?** Creating customer confidence is one of the key elements of tourism development. Managing tourism through partnership must be at the core of our approach. It is clear that there are many actions that need to be taken by a wide range of 'actors' to make our industry more sustainable in the long-term. No single action, partner or organisation can deliver or lead the changes necessary. To make tourism work for the whole district, to a greater or lesser extent everybody has a part to play. The first action of this entire process must be centred on forming a Penwith Tourism Forum, which is truly representative of the industry today, i.e. food producers, beach managers, waste management companies, transport operators, Town and Parish Councils, Planners, Chambers of Commerce, Hotel Associations and Attraction Operators.

Ultimately, we operate in a highly competitive and increasingly sophisticated market place. **Visitors** wherever they stay or visit, expect to find a well maintained and quality destination that offers value for money. It is not unreasonable for visitors to Penwith (or indeed us as residents) to expect litter free beaches, pollution free water in which to swim and surf, accessible footpaths, cycle ways, toilets, maintained streets and attractions. Being able to fund and co-ordinate such activity though is another issue. Good local food and transport links, environmentally friendly and socially aware accommodation, attraction and transport providers, who deliver a good service through friendly, well trained staff are equally key.

We as a destination can communicate that we offer all these things via beaches that have been awarded Blue Flag status and businesses that participate in quality assurance and green business schemes for example.

Individually businesses may use local goods and services, encourage visitors to use public transport and offer a first rate service, but **this needs to be clearly recognised** by the consumer / visitor. **Collective participation** in and support for these schemes by the **Industry** is the most effective way of demonstrating to the consumer the value and quality provided by the tourism industry of Penwith, whether visitors chose to stay or visit.

**What should our tourism policy be based upon?** Ultimately the answer to this question will be resolved through the consultation process. As an aid it might be useful to start by examining where the industry is currently and where the industry might want to be in 2010.

### **Current position of tourism industry within Penwith**

It is clear that the tourism industry generates significant revenue for Penwith. However given that this has been achieved without the benefit of an over-arching strategy to date, it has resulted in a:

#### **Highly fragmented industry, with no way of engaging whole industry:**

The industry is viewed primarily as a series of separate sub-sectors, i.e. accommodation, attraction, transport and service providers operated by individual business and associations.

#### **Varying quality standards exist:**

Ranging from excellent to poor

### **An industry developing in isolation:**

Leading to internal competition for visitors within Penwith and duplication of marketing efforts

### **Perceived as a seasonal based industry, offering low wages and little long-term prospects:**

With too many businesses closing during the winter months, which offers little in the way of formal training.

Whilst there is a marketing consortium in place, which has produced an award winning guide, there is no over-arching vision, defined long-term objectives or strategic planning for the industry as a whole within Penwith. It is therefore hoped that through greater forward planning, co-operation and a universally (West Cornwall wide) accepted strategy, we can grow both the profitability of the industry whilst also delivering social and environmental benefits throughout Penwith.

### **Vision for Penwith Tourism Industry by 2010**

Be seen by consumers as an accessible, welcoming destination offering high quality, value for money diverse experiences.

Be operated as a primarily 'all year round' industry, with at least 70% of tourism businesses open 10 months or more a year and with professional career and training structures in place.

Be an industry which generates over £ 225,000,000 (in real terms) into the local economy, and with a reduction in 'leakage' from that economy from probably 50% to nearer 35%, and which supports 12500 full time jobs.

Be an industry, which is fully rooted, in the Penwith community, which is valued for reinforcing, maintaining / improving the environmental, natural, historical, cultural distinctiveness of Penwith.

That vision for example can be reached by pursuing the following steps;

1. **Instigate a Penwith Tourism Forum**, thereby providing for a true partnership approach to be established to drive and deliver a sustainable tourism strategy for Penwith.
2. **Identify the roles, actions and responsibilities of all Partners**, thereby helping the industry as a whole to understand where linkages can be maximised to benefit all.
3. **Audience Development**, identify who are visitors are (socio-economic profiling) and visitor needs, through yearly visitor attitude and satisfaction survey work. Leading to accurate reasoning for niche market development.

4. **Try to ensure tourism services throughout Penwith are welcoming and accessible to all**, via disability discrimination act (DDA) awareness, and industry wide participation in National Quality Assurance Scheme (NQAS) and Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS).
5. **Encourage visitors in actions that respect the culture and environmental distinctiveness of Penwith** , increase public transport via promotion of boat, bus and branch line guide. Encourage the industry and visitors to source local produce and services. Promotion of local walks and green guides. Identify visitor, community and environmental carrying capacities.
6. **Increase services / festivals / events out of peak season**, through the formation of a joint venture public/private destination and event management company, limited by guarantee. Aimed both at maximising opportunity for tourism gain and public amenity.