

9 TOURISM

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Tourism Facts

- o 4,812 people were unemployed on the Island in October 1996.
- o 2.5 million visitors per annum
- o Estimated visitor spend is £186 million
- o Tourism accounts for 20% of employment on the Island
- o 60% of visitors travel to the Island by car
- o 32% of staying visitors use hotel accommodation
- o 32% of staying visitors use holiday park accommodation
- o 46% of visitor spend relates to accommodation
- o Average length of stay for main holidays is 8.3 nights

Introduction

9.1 Tourism is an essential part of the Island's economy. The Island attracts around 2.3 million visitors each year, half of whom are staying visitors. They spend in excess of £175 million per annum, and provide employment for 20% of the Island's population. The expenditure by visitors, together with the indirect employment arising from visitor spend, benefit the Island by helping to sustain and support essential services such as public transport, shops, leisure facilities and many more social benefits for Island residents. The continued success of tourism is vital for the Island's future, but the industry is under pressure. In

common with many other British seaside resorts, there has been a decline in the number of visitors since the early 1970s, which has been a reflection of the increasing popularity of overseas holidays, as aspirations and standards of living have risen. This trend was however reversed during 1995, which saw a 10% increase in the number of tourists visiting the Island. Over one third stayed for four or more nights. There was also a 25% increase in the number of foreign tourists visiting. The Island will now be concentrating on extending the length of the tourism season and developing the lucrative conference and business markets.

9.2 Historically, the main urban areas of the Island have been developed as tourist resorts, particularly Sandown and Shanklin. This historical development occurred as a result of royal patronage, during Victorian times and continued throughout the period when the railways were developed. As a result, the tourism industry on the Island grew around the traditional seaside holiday, with the tourist season running from May to October.

9.3 The lack of diversification from the traditional holiday season continues to give

the Island a relatively short season, which, together with increased competition from UK and overseas markets, has squeezed the whole industry. As a result, there has been a lack of investment, with little top quality accommodation available. There is however, a substantial amount of accommodation available on the Island, offering more than 50,000 bed spaces in around 2,000 establishments of all types. It is essential that the Council seeks to encourage investment in the tourist industry, and providing land allocations for achieving this is a positive approach.

Tourism Strategy

The Isle of Wight Tourism Strategy for the 1990's and beyond was adopted on 1 April 1994, by IW Tourism and the Southern Tourist Board in consultation with the Isle of Wight County Council, Medina Borough Council, South Wight Borough Council, Wight Training and Enterprise and the Rural Development Commission. It is intended to be a catalyst for collaborative action to support and influence tourism on the Island. The strategy sets out guiding principles for co-ordinated action and is currently undergoing monitoring and review.

Island Attractions

9.4 Much of the Island's appeal lies in the coastline and countryside, and its general environment can make a lasting impression on visitors. 50% of the Island is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and there are 43.5km (27 miles) of Heritage Coast. There are also an additional 523 miles (830km) of bridleways, footpaths and green lanes. Green tourism is a growth area of the industry and tourism and recreation will continue to make an important contribution to the economy of rural areas. The encouragement of rural tourism is something which the Island will develop. The Unitary Development Plan has an important part to play in developing a pro-active approach to new investment and employment opportunities in rural areas, yet at the same time encouraging rural tourism to develop in such a way so as not to destroy the very asset on which it depends.

9.5 There is an extensive range of man-made attractions throughout the Island. These, however, compete for a limited and relatively captive market of holiday makers already on the Island. Generally, visitors do not come to the Island specifically to visit a particular attraction, but rather incorporate it as part of a longer holiday.

9.6 While the Island's fixed attractions are themselves unlikely to generate

additional tourists, specific events of national importance draw their own visitors. Cowes Week and the International Power Boat race are perhaps the best known, and highlight the important role that yachting has in promoting tourism throughout the Island, and in particular in the Cowes, Yarmouth and Bembridge areas. The Island also holds many other events such as the Garlic Festival, windsurfing and other sporting events. Events such as these generate visitors who may return for more traditional holidays in future years and a properly organised and integrated programme of additional events of national or international importance could help promote the extension of the season.

Future Development

9.7 From a planning point of view, it is vitally important to encourage and guide the regeneration and revitalisation of resort areas, in order to strengthen their appeal to potential tourists. But there is an obvious balancing act necessary to be able to reap the potential benefits of tourism development with the need to protect and retain environmental quality.

9.8 Government policy set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 21 Tourism (PPG21), states that we should allow the tourist industry to flourish in response to the market, by facilitating and encouraging the

development of and improvements to tourism provision, whilst respecting the environment. The objective is to achieve sustainable development that serves the interests of both economic growth and conservation of the environment. The Council recognises the important and continuing role that tourism will play during the plan period and, in line with PPG21, it seeks to support and promote developments that will allow the tourist industry to grow, by protecting existing tourism assets, allocating sites considered suitable for development, improving local amenities and access to facilities and the promotion of rural tourism, yet at the same time ensuring that environmental assets are

not destroyed. Implementation of the policies should allow for effective land-use planning that both maximises the potential economic benefits to tourism, whilst minimising potential environmental damage.

9.9 The Tourism Strategy can develop the land-use policies contained within the UDP, to provide a more broad strategy for tourism, encompassing all fields of interest within the industry, including, marketing; development; investment; training; information provision; image and environmental matters.

9.10 Government policy set out in PPG21 (Planning Policy Guidance on Tourism and

Objectives:

The objectives of this section of the plan are:

- o to promote tourism as a growth industry;
- o to protect existing tourism assets;
- o to improve local amenities and access to wider facilities;
- o to promote rural tourism;
- o to develop the Council's enabling and co-ordinating role;
- o to promote the regeneration and revitalisation of resort areas.

The Promotion of Tourism and the Extension of the Season

T1 Planning proposals which promote and support tourism and/or seek to extend the tourist season will be acceptable in principle provided they minimise any detrimental or adverse impact.

Planning) is that the tourist industry should flourish in response to the market, whilst respecting the environment. The objective is to achieve sustainable development that serves the interest of both economic growth and conservation of the environment. Sustainable tourism can be defined as 'Tourism which meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future (World Tourism Organisation).

9.11 The Council recognises the importance and continuing role that tourism will play during the plan period and will seek to support facilities which will promote or

allow the tourist season to be extended. Extending the season is considered more desirable than encouraging more visitors during the peak period, which could cause pressure on services, infrastructure and the environment. The tourist season, which really only lasts from May to October means that unemployment is a particular problem over the winter period. Extending the tourist season would provide economic benefits not only to the tourist industry but also for the entire Island economy.

Tourism-Related Development (other than accommodation)

T2 Planning applications for tourism/recreational/sporting facilities, entertainments and, if necessary, related coach and car parking will be approved, provided that design, access, parking and landscaping are satisfactory. Applications involving the loss of tourism-related uses to uses unrelated to tourism will only be approved where these are easily accessible from existing centres of population and are acceptable within the local environment.

9.12 Uses associated with tourism, such as entertainments and associated car or coach parking, are complementary to the provision of holiday accommodation. They are mutually supportive, as people do not go on holiday without expecting entertainments and facilities to be available. Such facilities could include wet weather facilities which could also be of benefit to the local community. Most visitors now come to the Island either by car or coach and it is essential that their parking needs are catered for. However, at the same time, it is important to ensure that when considering coach and car parking, full consideration is given to

PPG13, which encourages the promotion of new development within or near to existing population centres, where they can easily be accessed by all forms of transport - not just coach or private car.

9.13 During the mid 1980s, when investment in tourism attractions and accommodation reached new heights on the mainland, relatively little took place on the Island. If the Island is to be competitive, it is vital that investment is encouraged and that the planning system works to ensure that this happens in the right way and in the right place.

Criteria for the Development of Holiday Accommodation

T3 Planning proposals for the development of holiday accommodation will only be acceptable in principle where:

- a they are associated with an existing permanent accommodation site; or*
- b a new hotel, similar serviced accommodation or self-catering accommodation is provided; or*
- c existing accommodation is upgraded; or*
- d the extension of the tourist season is promoted; or*
- e they are small scale and ancillary to an existing agricultural enterprise; or*
- f an existing touring caravan and camping site is upgraded, without detriment to the visual amenity and rural character of the area and does not become permanent holiday accommodation; and*
- g it does not involve the loss of bed spaces considered to be important to the tourist industry unless required by development to upgrade accommodation at a lower density; and*
- h the Council is satisfied the development will be retained for holiday use.*

9.14 The Island contains a large amount of holiday accommodation. There is a range of types and quality, ranging from serviced hotel accommodation, bed and breakfast establishments and chalet and static caravan camps, through to touring caravan and tented camping sites. The Council acknowledges the important role of this range of facilities and the policy seeks to encourage the retention, upgrading, improvement and

development of all types of accommodation. More detailed policies relating to the specific types of holiday accommodation mentioned above are included later in this section. The term permanent holiday accommodation refers specifically to areas which contain permanent or built accommodation, ie. chalet parks and caravan parks. It does not refer to areas for tented or touring caravans.

Designation of Hotel Areas

T4 *In the hotel areas defined on the proposals map, proposals for hotel accommodation will be acceptable in principle. Applications involving the loss of hotel accommodation will only be approved where they involve the upgrading or improvement of existing hotels. Proposals involving the loss of other forms of tourist accommodation, facilities, entertainments and parking to uses unrelated to tourism will not be approved.*

9.15 The two hotel areas in Sandown and Shanklin defined on the proposals map, include areas which are almost exclusively in hotel accommodation use and provide an important accommodation source. The hotels that are concentrated in the areas of Sandown and Shanklin all maximise services and facilities and provide areas that will

attract visitors on return trips. It is important that the hotel use in these areas is protected as any elements of alternative uses, such as residential, could have a detrimental effect on the overall character of the area. The protection, expansion and upgrading of hotels outside of hotel areas are discussed in a later policy.

Existing Hotel Policy

Current local plans have different approaches to the protection of existing holiday accommodation. In the major urban areas of the former Medina Borough Council, eg. Ryde, Cowes and Newport, allocating specific hotel areas was not possible as hotel sites were not concentrated in easily definable areas. In the former South Wight Borough it was possible to define areas, although the policy was complex and related specifically to the number of bedrooms a hotel had. In 1982, hotel areas were defined in Sandown and Shanklin, with the aim of preventing undermining of the main concentrations of tourism accommodation by the introduction of other uses. In each case the areas concerned covered the esplanades and a substantial area adjacent to the town centre. In the hotel areas, proposals for accommodation, tourism/recreation facilities, entertainments and coach/car parking were favourably considered. Loss of accommodation of 10 or more bedrooms was not considered favourably and restrictions were placed on the loss of tourism uses.

Hotels Outside of Defined Hotel Areas

T5 *Outside the defined hotel areas, development resulting in the loss of hotel accommodation will only be approved where:*

- a there is a change of use to another form of holiday accommodation;*
- b existing accommodation is upgraded or improved; or*
- c the proposal involves a change of use of premises of less than ten lettable bedrooms.*

9.16 Hotels outside of defined hotel areas are just as important to the overall health of the tourist industry, but areas are more difficult to define. They may not be concentrated in specific areas, but they are an important element of accommodation and as such should be protected and retained, where this is practicable. The urban areas such as Ryde and Cowes are outside the defined hotel areas, but are important tourist resorts in their own right and provide good hotel accommodation. Also important are the country hotels, often converted country houses, which provide higher grade facilities

for a specific type of visitor.

9.17 Roughly 60% of hotel type accommodation is in smaller establishments (hotels and guest houses) with less than 10 rooms. But in the main, these are bed and breakfast establishments and it is anticipated that these will move in and out of serviced accommodation depending upon market influences. It is anticipated that new hotel development will generally be within the defined settlement boundaries.

9.18 The continued provision of seasonal

Touring Caravan and Tented Camping Sites

T5A New touring caravan and tented camping site will be permitted provided the sites are located in visually unobtrusive locations and the caravans and tents are removed from the site outside of the holiday season.

sites for touring caravans and tents plays an important role in the overall provision of tourist accommodation in the Island and caters for a particular market sector. Whilst such sites should be served by good quality basic facilities it is not considered appropriate that they should become permanent sites for

all year static caravans, nor generally provide permanent hardstanding facilities or tent bases and should be capable of reverting to agricultural use outside the summer tourist season or if the tourist use ceases.

9.19 The impact on the landscape of

Loss of Touring Caravan and Tented Camping

T5B Development which will result in the loss of touring caravan and tented camping sites, including changes to permanent holiday accommodation, will not be approved if the visual or other impact of permanent development of the site detract from its rural character.

touring caravan and tented camping sites located in the countryside is minimised as they only function for a limited period during summer months when trees, shrubs, foliage and other vegetation reduces any visual intrusion. Any proposal to replace touring and tented sites with permanent structures or facilities has the potential to have a significant and detrimental long-term impact

on the visual integrity of the open countryside. It is considered important to ensure that the wider countryside is protected from any unacceptable long-term adverse impact of permanent development of such sites whether for holiday accommodation or other uses.

9.20 Permanent holiday centres are those

Permanent Accommodation Sites (other than hotels)

T6 Planning applications for the expansion of existing permanent accommodation sites, as defined on the proposals map, will be approved where the following criteria can be met:

- a they adjoin or are directly related to the existing built facilities;*
- b they do not detract from their surroundings;*
- c they enhance the environment, or improve the visual appearance of the site;*
- d new or replacement units are appropriate in design and appearance and the resulting density of the site does not adversely affect the rural character of the area.*

which contain chalets or static caravans, which are on site all year round, with holiday villages such as Haven Warner in Shanklin, Yarmouth and St Helens or the Savoy Country Club at Yarmouth being the largest examples. Although some sites simply contain holiday units, many have other facilities available, such as small shops, restaurant or leisure facilities. Many of the sites listed above are in the AONB, where further expansion into the countryside is not generally desirable, and would detract from the landscape. The term permanent accommodation has already been discussed under policy T3 and a more concise definition appears in the glossary of terms. Upgrading is defined as development which provides an enhanced layout and improves the overall

visual appearance of the site, providing a better environment for visitors to enjoy.

9.21 The principle of development within permanent accommodation sites is established within policy T3. This policy builds on T3 and although the boundaries of the sites have been drawn tightly around the areas of permanent accommodation, the policy enables sites to retain the flexibility to undertake appropriate expansion and upgrading.

9.22 The permanent accommodation sites provide for a different type of holiday. They can be more flexible, as very often they are self-catering and are also often a cheaper alternative to hotels. It is anticipated that

upgrading will occur because of the changing demands of the visitor population, with tourist markets constantly changing, in response to differing requirements

9.23 The sites listed above and detailed in Appendix H, are key sites within which the Council aims to encourage tourism development and the promotion of tourism

Sites Suitable for Tourism Related Development

T7 Planning proposals for tourism uses in the areas specified below, and defined on the proposals map, will be acceptable in principle:

- a Shanklin Esplanade;*
- b Battery Gardens, Sandown Bay Leisure Centre, Old Reservoir and Los Altos Park (part);*
- c Culver Parade and land at Yaverland, Sandown;*
- d Westridge, Ryde;*
- e Upper Chine (former school site);*
- f Ryde Sea Front;*
- g Woodside, Wootton;*
- h St Georges Park and adjoining land to the east, Newport.*

The Council will formulate development briefs, where necessary, in order to further encourage and guide development.

facilities. Many have been brought forward as allocations in existing local plans. These are areas which may or may not have the benefit of planning approval and as yet have not been fully developed but it is thought essential that they are still available for tourism development. The land ownerships of

the sites vary, some are privately owned and some are owned by the Council.

9.24 Ancillary development can cover a variety of uses, eg small on-site shops, shower and toilet blocks, or security. This policy deals with development other than

Ancillary Development Associated with Tourism Uses

T8 Planning applications for development ancillary to an approved tourism use will only be approved where it is essential to its operation and is not detrimental to the environment and surrounding landscape.

residential accommodation. The provision of ancillary development can add to overall quality of environment of a site.

9.25 Many farmers and landowners are now looking to supplement their incomes by diversifying their operations. This includes the development of tourism and leisure

Small-Scale Rural Tourism Development

T9 Planning proposals for small-scale rural tourism, or developments ancillary to an existing farming operation, will be acceptable in principle provided that they comply with other policies of the plan and involve:

- a the limited expansion of existing hotel, guest house, and farmhouse accommodation; or*
- b the provision of ancillary accommodation for tourists within an existing establishment; or*
- c the change of use of suitable residential properties in the countryside to hotel, restaurants or hostels; or*
- d the conversion of suitable farm or rural buildings that are directly related to existing heritage and landscape qualities of the area and do not detrimentally affect areas of acknowledged importance; or*
- e small-scale touring caravans and tented camping sites ancillary to an existing farming operation.*

facilities. Such developments not only provide additional income, but can also make use of existing buildings. The policy allows for such developments, with the proviso that they should be small-scale and situated so as not to detract from the character of the countryside.

9.26 There are a large number of touring caravan and camping sites on the Island. Many of these small sites operate only during the summer months and do not require planning permission. The GPDO (General Permitted Development Order) allows for

areas to be used for a specific number of days without the need for planning permission. Certain small sites are licensed by the Caravan Club and also do not need planning permission. Large numbers of caravans and tents can have a detrimental effect on the appearance of the countryside and it is essential that consideration is given to the visual impact of such development.

9.27 The retention of holiday accommodation for the holiday maker is critical for the whole tourist industry. Many tourism use sites have been approved in

The Use of New Tourist Accommodation for Permanent Residential Use

T10 Planning applications for new tourist accommodation, development or conversions to use as holiday flats, will only be approved where the permission is subject to conditions or agreements appropriate to secure the approved holiday related use, and prevent its permanent use for residential purposes.

areas where permanent residential development would not be acceptable and the Council will resist pressure to change these to permanent residential accommodation.

9.28 Many tourist accommodation areas would not be of a standard suitable to allow their conversion to residential development. The type of use is also significantly different because of access, parking, design, construction, density etc. Use of the site for short holiday periods is considerably different

from permanent use as a residential unit. In granting approval for tourist accommodation, the Council would therefore seek conditions and agreements to ensure it is retained for holiday use only. Conditions and agreements could also be used in the development of timeshare accommodation.

9.29 The Council recognises that the Island requires a site or venue to host both major and minor outdoor, sporting, recreational and leisure events or festivals. The intention of this policy is to allow for the

Special Events or Festival Sites

T11 Planning applications involving the use of land for recreational, sports and festival events will be approved where:

- a they are of appropriate scale;*
- b they are not detrimental to areas of nature or landscape conservation as designated elsewhere in this plan;*
- c they do not have significant impact on any nearby residential properties by way of noise generation;*
- d they have adequate road access and car parking;*
- e they minimise the impact of traffic generation and are easily accessible by public transport, bicycle and on foot.*

consideration of the use of land for various events at venues throughout the Island. The Draft Structure Plan stated that a site would be identified for a major festival type event. The Council is now of the view that smaller-scale venues for a variety of events may be more appropriate. In considering whether an area is suitable to host an event, full consideration will be given to environmental

matters and the criteria above will help divert pressure away from more sensitive locations.

9.30 Currently, sites at various locations are used for many different events. Examples of these are Northwood Agricultural Show Ground, Smallbrook Stadium and Havenstreet Steam Railway site. Details of the suitability and further development of

some of these sites are included in Appendix H. Where necessary, the Council will formulate development briefs to encourage and guide the future development of these sites. Whilst the Island has experienced problems from major events, there is no doubt that properly planned and organised functions can be a major boost to tourism.

