



## **Towards 2015 - The Rural Dimension**

**The role of tourism in supporting and developing sustainable rural communities and a viable rural economy in the South West of England**

**South West England Logo**

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## Introduction

In 2004 the new Regional Tourism Strategy (Towards 2015) was produced by South West Tourism and approved by the South West Regional Development Agency, as well as being endorsed by many regional and sub regional partners, including the South West Regional Assembly

Towards 2015 aims to develop a quality tourism industry that maximises the benefits it provides to residents, businesses and the environment as well as to our visitors.

Following the adoption of Towards 2105 it become clear that further sub sector plans would be needed to ensure delivery and target specific actions as well as assisting the sub sectors to become more sustainable and competitive.

This report contains a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of a South West Tourism led review of Rural Tourism, undertaken in 2006.

This involved a review of all available research and studies, together with in-depth interviews with key players from both the private and public sector. This was followed with a series of consultation meetings with stakeholders and partners.

The main report can be found on the following web site address [www. ....](http://www. ....)

## Purpose of this Report

The purpose of the summary and the report is to aid a greater understanding of the issues facing rural tourism and to stimulate appropriate actions by a range of public and private sector bodies and individuals.

## Background

Over the last hundred years tourism in rural areas has evolved by meeting the needs of their customers responding to changes in the market and meeting the demand for higher quality accommodation and a wider range of experiences. Landowners, farmers and farm tenants have responded to tourism opportunities as means of supplementing their farming incomes and partially or completely diversifying into tourism.

In certain circumstances, the needs of the tourism businesses, combined with the pressure for economic and employment generation and the desires of visitors, have led to the situation where occasionally these developments have been at odds with the interests and values of the host community. Equally important the best interests of the environment, nature conservation, biodiversity and the historic environment have also, on occasions, been placed second to the needs of the tourism development in an area.

As we move forward, it is vital that **all tourism development** is acceptable to their host communities and that tourism helps to support the maintenance and the improvement of the natural, cultural and built environment.

**Rural tourism developed in a wise and sustainable manner can help to sustain local communities and the environment for future generations.**

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Rural Tourism can provide local employment and increase opportunities for other small and micro rural businesses, which, helps others in the rural community to be supported and provide **a working and living place**, rather than rural areas becoming solely commuter zones, or retirement areas, too often blighted by excessive numbers of second homes. A well balanced community, which includes young families, helps to sustain village schools and other community facilities such as doctor's surgeries etc

Equally important to the long term success of rural tourism is ensuring we continue to have happy and satisfied customers and that communities welcome and support tourism.

At its best, rural tourism delivers all of these objectives; however, at its worst it can help to fragment and even destroy local communities and damage the environment. It is therefore vital that "**wise tourism development**" is supported in our rural areas.

Sustainable tourism is about the interaction between the needs of the visitor, industry, community and environment. Because we want tourism to be a leading industry for the region for the long term, it is vital that we preserve our assets. This principle applies across the whole of the industry and the relationship between the key factors is expressed below:



## Conclusions of the Report

There are a number of conclusions relating to:

- Visitors
- Industry
- Communities
- Environment

## Overall Conclusions:

The overall conclusions are that we need to:

- Tackle seasonality;
- Increase and maximise the retention of visitor spend in the location of stay, particularly regarding local food and drink;
- Increase the value of visits, especially those out of season but within environmental and community acceptance limits;
- Assist rural tourism businesses to improve their competitiveness and sustainability;
- Any public sector funding/investment should be targeted at the activities, projects, and businesses that will have the maximum increase in overall visitor income retention in the location;
- Work more effectively together.

By:

- ❖ More targeted information and advice on what visitors can do in the location of stay;
- ❖ Develop more things for visitors to do;
- ❖ Increase the time visitors spend in the location of stay;
- ❖ More imaginative marketing and promotion to change rural image perceptions; and
- ❖ More collaboration and joint working where practical and possible.

## Visitor Related Conclusions:

- **Respond to Changing Markets**

Rural tourism will need to respond to changes, in the demographics of the population, holiday taking patterns, the competition, information gathering and booking patterns.

- **Visitors recognise “ Farm and Countryside” and not “Rural”**

There is no such term in the consumer’s mind as “rural tourism”, but they do recognise and respond to the words “farm” and “countryside”, everyone needs to use the language that our visitors will respond to.

- **Changing the dated Image**

City breaks and coastal active holidays have been far more successful in attracting new business from the growth in tourism over the last decade or so. There is an urgent need to reposition the image and perceptions of a rural short break or holiday in the countryside, to make the offering far more attractive to modern holiday takers.

- **Need to stimulating demand & tackle seasonality**

Overall accommodation and attraction supply is in balance with demand, but we need to stimulate demand if the region is not to move to an over supply situation in the next five years. This can be achieved by using targeted strong messages that will attract interest from those who will have the best match of values with our host communities, whilst also ensuring we target the visitors who appreciate and support environmental and landscape conservation.

There is further scope to develop activities and pursuits that are attractive or exciting especially those that are better out of the main holiday seasons and such developments should be the highest priority for development.

- **Increasing Dwell time and range of activities**

It is important that we retain the maximum amount of visitor spend in the location of stay and this can be achieved by increasing the time that visitors spend in the area of stay through increasing the information on, and the range and extent of activities in the local areas such as:

- ❖ Footpaths
- ❖ Woodland / forest trails and activities
- ❖ Equine, learning to ride, trekking etc
- ❖ Inland lakes, waterways and canals
- ❖ Local food and drink
- ❖ Local farm, craft, art, antique shops etc

- **Being more inclusive – Tackling Diversity and Equality**

It is important that the rural tourism offering is available to all within society and there is a need to increase the understanding of different groups and their values and needs, equally it is important to target marketing and promotion to the under represented visitor groups, but only after detailed market research into the “product – customer” fit has been undertaken. Tourism offers a good opportunity for rural communities to increase their understanding of our more diverse society, whilst increasing the understanding of all our visitors on the importance of supporting the environment and our rural communities.

- **Events & cultural tourism & London 2012**

One major tool for driving additional visits, as well as increasing community satisfaction, is through events and festivals, The addition of visitors can enable an event to be viable, if not profitable, whilst providing fulfilling activities and experiences for the host community and help maintain traditional events and festivals. This can be a very effective tool for tackling seasonality and mid week visitation slumps, but it is important that such events are valued by the host communities and they should be fully involved.

There is a growing interest in cultural tourism and rural areas have a real opportunity to benefit from this growth, interests can be, for example, craft tourism, genealogy, church tourism etc

The Olympics in 2012 will give the UK a unique opportunity to showcase Britain to the world and many overseas visitors have a view of the English countryside, quaint villages and village pubs. We need to ensure that rural scenes, activities and rural businesses are included in all the opportunities that the 2012 games will bring.

## Industry Related Conclusions:

- Recognising Personal Businesses Motivations

We must recognise that there are differing personal business needs and motivations and we must develop support arrangements that can meet them, whilst ensuring we increase the productivity and competitiveness of all rural tourism businesses. This mix of motivations and location constraints has an impact on the overall productivity and GVA contribution indicators, as wealth generation and profit maximisation is not always the primary driver and they can have significant, insurmountable, constraints to their growth.

There are three major business motivations identified in rural tourism sector but an individual business may have more than one motivation:

- ❖ **Location Maintainer Driver** - This type of business is normally characterized by being run by a family that have been located either in the area, or in the exact location, for a number of years and in some cases decades and even centuries. Succession planning and the need to create businesses or employment for children can be a major catalyst for such businesses to grow or change direction
- ❖ **Lifestyle Change Driver** - This type of business is very often operated by people who have chosen the rural way of life and value the quality of life, above pure career development or wealth generation. This does not mean that they do not take running a business seriously or that they are not interested in becoming more competitive but by becoming more productive and efficient, as simply increasing the number of hours worked might not be an option if it compromises the quality of life.
- ❖ **Profit Generator Driver** - These tend to be the largest scale businesses, but it is not restricted to large-scale operators.

- **Combating the lack and inconsistency of data and market intelligence**

Many business planning and development decisions are (often) made with inadequate and/or robust data, statistics and market research. We need to establish a three-year rural tourism market intelligence research programme, develop forecasting tools and an effective data collection exercise. This intelligence and knowledge can then be used by tourism organisations, private businesses and business advisers to help mentor and support the development of new markets and drive the quality of the product, increase its sustainability, its competitiveness and increase productivity.

- **Improving the competitiveness and productivity**

Due to the constraints in operating in rural areas, the individual GVA and profitability of rural businesses are often below the regional average, but this does not mean that the competitiveness and productivity of each business cannot be improved. However, there is a need to further develop and implement business performance benchmarking initiatives. This will allow effective comparative analysis to aid business development and performance improvement activity.

Given the widely variable nature of the businesses in this sector, it is important to develop targeted measures to work with businesses and help them to develop bespoke business development plans with profitability and productivity measures and then assist their implementation through ongoing mentoring support.

- **Targeted business support and advice**

Tourism businesses require good information and market intelligence on the changing markets and this information must be segmented into appropriate categories, in order that the relevance can be easily understood, by each sector of the industry.

Equally important, is the need for practical advice, mentoring and support to help businesses plan their business development and to help monitor and provide on-going support during the implementation of those business development projects.

The highest priority "target businesses" are those that have the greatest local economic impact (as a percentage of turnover) through local purchasing of supplies and services including those that have the highest level of community support, e.g. farm based tourism businesses, village pubs, smaller tourism businesses run by local residents etc

An urgent challenge is to respond to the 'online revolution' by advising and supporting small and micro rural businesses to develop effective web sites connected to effective booking and product distribution systems. Region wide workshops will be needed to inform, inspire and assist this sector to remain competitive in the online/ecommerce world.

In addition, an annual programme of workshops and an annual conference/forum, on market intelligence, business competitive issues and the changing visitor needs should be delivered to rural tourism business across the region,

### **Meeting the skills needs**

In rural locations many small business and employees have specific training and skills needs due to the varied needs of working in small businesses and on occasions for more than one business. Equally important is the "distance barrier" to training centres and colleges and it is important that there is a flexible approach to training, with "bite sized" training sessions/modules using flexible training approaches based on a skills audit of the needs of rural businesses and their employees.

It is important that the training funding bodies recognise this and develop a flexible approach to funding, output measurement and delivery.

- **Working more closely with the Food and Drink sector**

With a growing interest from visitors for local food and drink there has been a welcomed increase in the use of local produce and products by the tourism sector. Small businesses are often keen to use local suppliers and can be flexible in their supply arrangements and purchasing. It is important that the industry identifies and celebrates the use of local produce in its marketing materials and menus.

However, medium and larger businesses can have logistical and accounting constraints with the primary driver being reliability and consistency of supply, with cost effective purchasing, accounting and payment arrangements. Work is needed between the tourism and food and drink sector, assisted by the relevant industry/trade organisations, particularly, Taste of the West, to further increase the use of local food and drink.

- **Increasing activities for visitors to do**

There should be continued support and development for countryside pursuits and traditional activities such as shooting, fishing, equestrian and walking etc. In addition, it is important that new activities, which are compatible to the environment and the communities, are developed to meet the needs of visitors now and in the future. Such activities can include educational, alternative therapies, health and fitness, spas, sporting, adrenaline and extreme activities.

Therefore, one of the highest priorities for tourism development is to increase the range of sustainable activities and interests for visitors in the rural areas, this should not only include the traditional activities, but also new and emerging interests and sports including extreme and adrenalin pursuits.

## **Product Current Performance Development:**

During the review an overall "supply and demand assessment" was undertaken at regional level looking at each sub sector. However, it should be noted that this regional level assessment does not identify local variances and there could be a need for local reviews to be undertaken, especially when significant planning application are involved.

### **❖ Hotels**

This sector appears to be reasonably provided for, with some scope for carefully planned growth or development of quality hotels with good facilities. Existing operators will need to continue to improve quality, update facilities, and increase the activities available to visitors. They will also have to constantly improve their web-sites, on-line booking capabilities, marketing and sales techniques to meet the needs of ever more demanding customers.

### **❖ Self Catering**

There appears to be adequate provision, although quality will need to be maintained and improved to meet the changing needs of visitors. There is a need to increase facilities, especially if we are to further develop the out of season offering, e.g. small swimming pools, mini play barns etc

### **❖ B & B**

There appears to be a growing perception supported, by anecdotal evidence, of over supply and lack of customer demand in certain parts of the region, and in the off-season, due to changing needs and perceptions of the customers. However, those providers who have invested in quality, especially 4 star (and above) en-suite, and/or for targeted niche markets continue to perform well. Many existing B & B businesses will need to move to niche markets, invest in moving up in the quality grading, changing to self catering or even existing the market completely.

### **❖ Holiday Parks**

Holiday parks are a vital component of the bed stock and supply many customers to other sectors of the industry, such as attractions, restaurants, shops and public houses. They perform an important role in providing affordable holidays for those customers with restricted means. It is important that the holiday parks can operate for longer periods, but there are particular issues, regarding planning constraints, that can limit this desire and planning authorities will need to review restrictions where there is a clear evidence based case for all year round operation.

Equally importantly, there is a need to continually improve the offering and many holiday parks are looking to develop "lodge type" accommodation and to increase landscaping/screening, plus improving the range and extent of facilities such as health, sports and spas etc and these should be supported.

### **❖ Camping and Caravanning**

With the advent of a renewed interest in camping and the new "cool camping" trend, it is important that camping and caravanning sites are allowed to continue to develop with additional facilities such as electric hook ups, leisure and social facilities. Equally there are new innovations in the market with the creation of a fusion between wooden lodges and tents in woodland areas, which should be welcomed and supported.

#### ❖ Rural Pubs

With the changing market in serviced accommodation, there is potential within the rural pub sector to develop good quality 'distinct' rural pubs with quality accommodation as an attractive offer to the customer. The use of local foods and being sustainable accredited (GTBS) would underlay the best product. There are also opportunities to link/integrate rural pubs with tourism information centres etc.

Consideration should be given to the creation of a Rural Pub development initiative to help maintain the viability of these businesses, whilst improving quality the range of services and helping to maintain a key community asset.

#### ❖ Attractions

Overall there is no evidence for more attractions in the region, as a whole, with the only exception being the potential development of the wildlife/environmental market. However any such new development would have to be well researched with a detailed market assessment and feasibility study to validate viability. With the new designated natural World Heritage Sites there will be a need to look at opportunities to develop information and interpretation attractions/centre's to meet the needs of the increased visitation to these dispersed sites.

There is a need to support the further development, improvement and 'refreshment' of the existing attractions. It is important that attractions continue to improve the quality of the experience, particularly with regard to food and drink, by increasing local sourcing, local distinctiveness and quality overall.

#### ❖ Food and Drink

Over the last ten years there as been a rapid growth in the restaurant, bistro and café sector many using good local food and drink produce. To date, this growth has been matched with a growing demand from both local and visitor alike. We are now moving to a decade of slower, but continued growth and care will be needed to ensure that we do not move into an oversupply position based on the previous period of rapid growth. Improving the quality of food and equally importantly the quality of service must be the highest priority and care will be needed to ensure that "value for money/experience" is maintained and that over pricing does not occur on the back of popularity and media profile.

### Community Related Conclusions:

- **Match Value of Visitors to Host Communities**

The interaction between the visitor and the host community can greatly increase the experience for the visitor whilst enhancing the lives of the host community. But it is important that there is a considerable element of mutual respect and common ground and this is best achieved by ensuring there is a "match" between the core vales and interests of the visitor to those of the host community. With a common set of interests visitors can be seen as guests who respect, enjoy and wish to help maintain and improve the area.

- **Affordable Housing and labour supply issues**

The lack of affordable housing restricts the availability of local labour for tourism businesses. Tourism businesses and trade associations need to work closely and assist Local Authorities to develop appropriate plans to tackle the housing needs of the local community, local workers and staff. It is vital that high priority/preference is always given to local residents/local labour market needs.

- **Increasing & maximising retention of visitors spend**

It is important that the tourism businesses work with other local businesses to increase the retention of visitor spend in the local economies and that local supply chain development initiatives are undertaken to assist both the tourism and supply businesses.

- **Dual Use Option**

In order to remain competitive and continue to attract visitors there is a need to increase and improve facilities and activities for visitors. Innovative projects should be developed where these facilities are equally available for local residents – examples include sports facilities such as tennis courts, swimming pools etc.

## **Environment Related Conclusions**

- **Increasing Dwell Time & less travel**

Another high priority is to increase “dwell time” in the location of stay and this can be greatly assisted by increasing the information available to tourists on “things to do” in the locality of their accommodation. Where needed, there should be more activities developed for the visitors and this combination of effective information and increased activities will reduce travel and raise customer satisfaction, whilst increasing the retention of visitor spend in the locality.

- **Responding to the potential impact of changing landscapes**

It is the quality of the environment and the associated landscape that attracts our visitors and we must maintain this quality, if not improve it, or else we will feel the economic consequences. It is vital that decision-makers are acutely aware of the value of landscape and the impact of their decisions upon it. The development of alternative crops and wind farm technologies to produce renewable energies is to be welcomed, but at the same time, we have to be aware of the potential impact on the visual attractiveness of the landscape. We must ensure a professional approach to planning and development is undertaken that balances the urgent need to increase renewable energy production, whilst maintaining and supporting a viable high value tourism sector in rural areas. This will often mean that a tourism impact study or review may well be needed before planning applications are considered.

Initiatives will need to be further developed and delivered over the next five years to increase the targeting of support to those landowners/farmers that meet the needs of protecting the environment and maximizing the assets that attract our visitors.

- **Maintaining and improving protected landscapes, National Parks and National Trails**

We must protect, maintain and improve our environmental assets such as our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Sites, National Trails and National Parks. These are some of the region’s greatest tourism assets and we must use these areas to demonstrate sustainable tourism in action (such as payback schemes) and to inform and inspire others on how to increase tourism sustainability overall. In these precious areas we need to increase the close working relationship between those who manage these protected areas and the tourism industry that operate in them.

The South West Coast Path and Cotswold Way have real potential for further well-managed and sustainable development to increase the extent and range of visitor and local use. In particular, many of our coastal areas provide a unique visitor attraction being rural, remote, but also coastal and these areas need careful management and protection with many designated as heritage coast areas.

In certain areas, open access can adversely effect the environment, wildlife and commercial viability and it should be accepted that access restrictions will be needed in these locations.

- **Climate Change**

Climate change is a reality and the tourism sector must do all that is practical and possible to reduce and minimize carbon omissions, energy usage, water consumption and waste generation by its visitors and its business operations. Given the attractiveness of the environment it is a high priority for rural tourism businesses to be the early adopters of the Green Business Tourism Scheme and the leading advocates of the Future Footprints and the Action of Year initiatives.

Guidance will also be necessary on how climate change will affect the nature and pattern of tourism in the South West and the practical actions the operators will need to take as the climate and weather patterns change.

Detailed guidance materials and workshops will be needed to, firstly, alert businesses the impact of climate and weather pattern change and secondly, how they can help by becoming more sustainable.

- **Active Visitor Management**

Tourism management is critical to avoid unsustainable impacts, it is vital that active visitor management is adopted which takes into account visitor capacity issues, compatibility with host communities and sustainability. This requires Local Authorities, the emerging Destination Managements Organisations to work with the industry with input from the local communities to prepare and agree local/destination level tourism management and development plans.

### **Finally and most importantly working more effectively working together**

It is important to remember that a holiday or a short break comprises of a range of experiences delivered by a number of private sector businesses and the public sector authorities/organisations. It is therefore vital that high levels of communication and collaboration exist between both the industry and local authorities. There needs to be a determined effort by all parties to work more effectively together on specific, well planned activities with clear goals and targets to aid focus and improved partnership working.

## **Recommendations**

Taking into account the findings of the review, the conclusions and the areas identified for priority actions resulted in the following key recommendations

- 1 Attract and retain visitors in rural areas**
- 2 Increase our knowledge of the sector and the needs of our visitors**
- 3 Increase the competitiveness, skills and productivity of the sector**
- 4 Enhance the environment through developing the product and improving quality**
- 5 Use rural tourism to help sustain viable communities**
- 6 Work more effectively together**

## Priorities for Action & Next Steps

Annex One details the priorities for action, against each recommendation and detailed by its relationship with the VICE model i.e. Visitors, Industry, Communities and the Environment. The highlighted actions indicate those considered the highest priority, some should be able to be delivered by changes to existing activities, while others are will be reliant on access to new resources and will have to be delivered as and when the resources are available.

## Next Steps and Implementation

It is important that there should be a South West Rural Tourism Plan which, comprises of an outline three year indicative rolling plan with a detailed annual plan showing lead partners, supporting partners, resources, targets and outcome measures.

These plans will be negotiated annually and be published in March of each year.

The planning review and monitoring process will be coordinated by South West Tourism working closely with the South West Regional Development Agency utilising the skills and experience of the proposed SW Rural Tourism Network process.

All key partners will be included in the development of these plans most notably representatives from all sections of the rural tourism private sector and major tourism operators such as the National Trust etc as well as the SWRDA, SWCORE, SWRA, DMOs, National Parks, Trails and AONBs, NFU and CLA etc.

### What does this mean for:

#### ❖ The Private Sector:

- ⇒ Continue to invest in improving quality and increase the facilities and activities for visitors;
- ⇒ Ensure that employees receive good induction training; working conditions and that they are paid a fair wage according to their skills and contribution. Employees must have the opportunity to improve their skills and career prospects;
- ⇒ Increase engagement with the local community activities and organisations.
- ⇒ Increase local sourcing, including goods and services especially food and drink.
- ⇒ Become involved in the 'Action of the Year' initiative. Actively consider 'pay back' schemes and being assessed and accredited under the Green Tourism Business Scheme
- ⇒ Collaborate with other local businesses especially with those in the same sub sector and locality to improve the range of 'holiday experiences' for visitors.
- ⇒ Increase the information available to guests on what to do in the local area, which will in turn help to increase the retention of visitor spend.
- ⇒ Engage in effective well-planned collaborative, targeted marketing.
- ⇒ Ensure effective internet/website presence and investigate and where appropriate introduce modern bookability capacity.

#### ❖ South West Development Agency and other Funding/Support Bodies

- ⇒ Use the direct and indirect funding programmes/opportunities to assist with increasing the retention of visitor spend in the location of stay through:

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- Supporting quality improvement initiatives and product development projects, especially out of season activities;
  - Supply chain development – especially food and drink;
  - Etourism and Bookability capability development;
  - Support facilitation to ensure high quality rural development projects from concept to execution and monitoring.
  - Support the delivery of increased market intelligence and research activity
- ⇒ Assist influencing both training and business support services to tailor services to meet the needs of rural tourism businesses;
- ⇒ Assist in the changing of perception of a rural holiday/short break through regional image and brand and public relations etc;

### ❖ **South West Tourism**

- ⇒ Create and support the SW Rural Tourism Network, including the annual conference and themed workshops;
- ⇒ Assist in the changing of perception of a rural holiday through SWT marketing, promotion and, public relations activities etc;
- ⇒ Prepare and execute a detailed rural tourism market intelligence and research programme;
- ⇒ Drive the uptake of the GTBS and Action of the Year activities;
- ⇒ Further develop and implement the business performance benchmarking tool;
- ⇒ Work closely with Taste of the West and other organisations to increase the opportunity for greater collaboration between the tourism and food and drink sectors;
- ⇒ Undertake influencing and capacity building activities with appropriate partners to increase the understanding of rural issues and thereby support to this sector;
- ⇒ Undertake on going consultation with farmers, landowners and appropriate agencies.
- ⇒ Continued strategic work in the rural tourism sector regarding for example Cultural Tourism, Olympic 2012 etc

### ❖ **Destination Management Organisations and Local Authorities**

- ⇒ Assist in the changing of perception of a rural holiday through DMO and destination marketing, promotion and, public relations activities etc
- ⇒ Support quality improvement initiatives, product development projects especially out of season activities
- ⇒ Support local supply chain development activities and initiatives;
- ⇒ Consider supporting quality dual use facilities projects;

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- ⇒ Support well planned, coordinated festivals and events, which have a benefit to the local economy/community
- ⇒ Include specific work plans within the destination management plans for rural tourism;
- ⇒ Support the promotion and uptake of GTBS, Future Footprints and Action of the Year;
- ⇒ Planning – Support spatial plans in line with the priorities for the development of Rural Tourism

### **❖ Business Support Organisation**

- ⇒ Recognise and work with the specific rural 'personal business motivations';
- ⇒ Consider appointing/contracting specialist rural tourism business advisors/mentors;
- ⇒ Support the promotion and uptake of GTBS and Action of the Year
- ⇒ Support targeted workshops for rural tourism businesses;

### **❖ Training Providers and funding Organisations**

- ⇒ Support bite sized training initiatives.
- ⇒ Pilot a pick n mix approach to training delivery in rural areas;
- ⇒ Pilot innovate flexible delivery arrangements;

### **❖ Environmental Agencies and Bodies**

- ⇒ Assist in the changing of perception of a rural holiday through promotion and public relations activities including festivals and events.
- ⇒ Assist in developing and implementing 'payback' schemes
- ⇒ Collaborate with the private sector to improve the environment and access where needed
- ⇒ Consult and engage with the tourism sector with regard to any changes to the landscape
- ⇒ Assist with the development and execution of visitor impact and capacity studies.

### **❖ Community and Voluntary Sectors**

- ⇒ Engage with the private sector to identify joint areas of working for mutual benefit
- ⇒ Collaborate on festivals and events
- ⇒ Consider developing dual use facility projects
- ⇒ Investigate Social Enterprise opportunities within the tourism sector



## **Towards 2015 - The Rural Dimension**

**The role of tourism in supporting and developing sustainable rural communities and a viable rural economy in the South West of England**

# **Priority Actions**

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<b>Recommendation 1      Attract and retain visitors in rural areas</b>	
	<b>Priority and other Actions</b>
<b>Visitors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Develop strong farm and countryside brand</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Reposition rural as active as well as passive environment/experience</b></li> <li>● <b>Promote 'total rural experience' not just accommodation</b></li> <li>● <b>Introduce a 'Welcome to the Countryside' campaign</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ <b>Increase information for visitors on what to do and see locally</b></li> <li>○ Further develop city based school educational visits</li> <li>○ Effective out of season campaigns needed</li> <li>○ Review brand clusters to evaluate value for rural tourism sector</li> <li>○ Review public relations and press coverage for rural and countryside sectors</li> </ul>
<b>Industry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Collaborative marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>farm &amp; countryside</b></li> <li>● <b>Collaborative accommodation and activity/attraction promotion and packaging option</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ <b>Ensure bookability challenge is mastered (e.g. Evivo &amp; DMS)</b></li> <li>○ <b>Green Tourism Business Scheme</b></li> <li>○ Sustainable product development with increasing 'dwell time' in location</li> <li>○ Develop five year SWT/DMO/Industry marketing and PR strategy and plans</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>'Cultural' tourism promotion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Particularly with local/sub regional distinctiveness</b></li> <li>● <b>Events and festivals programme that meets needs of locals and visitors</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Promotion to support 'Pride in place' and culture messaging.</li> <li>○ Match values and benefits of visitors to local community</li> <li>○ Increase distribution and value of tourism spend to other business sectors</li> </ul>
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Strong environmental strand to image and brand work</b></li> <li>○ <b>Good environmental/visitor practice in PR, image, brand and promotional imaging (lead/show by example)</b></li> <li>○ Active/extreme/adrenalin activities that, are also environmentally responsible and sustainable.</li> <li>○ Marketing and PR activities to attract visitors that respect and want to see the environment maintained and improved</li> </ul>

**Recommendation 2**

	<b>Increase our Knowledge Indicative Actions</b>
<b>Visitors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Research of our existing visitors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Identify new or growing activities that are better out of main season</i></li> <li>○ <i>What does and what does not satisfy them</i></li> <li>○ <i>The perceptions of bed and breakfast in the future requirements in B&amp;B sector</i></li> <li>○ <i>Impact of changing landscapes on tourism</i></li> <li>○ <i>What will visitors want next</i></li> <li>○ <i>Find out GVA of rural tourism product</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Research of potential visitors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>BEM/Equality and Diversity issues – product match and market potential</i></li> <li>○ <i>What is the farm/role of animals – re visitor interest.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Brand and image research – key messages.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Industry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Business performance benchmark data needed by sector, motivation and location including GVA/GDP and benchmarking</i></li> <li>○ <i>Benchmark individual businesses</i></li> <li>○ <i>Encourage business performance information sharing and networking and annual market intelligence</i></li> <li>○ <i>B&amp;B performance and future</i></li> <li>○ <i>Skills and labour supply needs of each sector (TSN)</i></li> <li>○ <i>Increase understanding of motivational aspects of business culture</i></li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Evaluate host community acceptance of visitors and their impact</i></li> <li>○ <i>Research into the needs of local residents with regard to their leisure/recreational needs</i></li> </ul>
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Visitor management/ impact studies to establish visitor capacity data including tourist behaviour and impact ‘tagging’ exercises</i></li> <li>○ <i>Evaluation of potential for visitors to ‘pay back’ and direct support from visitors</i></li> </ul>

## Recommendation 3

	<b>Increased business competitiveness, skills and productivity Indicative Actions</b>
<b>Visitors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Understand visitor ever changing needs</li> </ul>
<b>Industry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b><i>Rural tourism skills and labour supply strategy needed</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Bite size training with some 'out reach' and short/one day courses</i></b></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ <b><i>Targeted Business Link and support programme linked/targeted to business drivers and constraint issues.</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Rural Tourism advice service working with Business Link</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Increased communications re business competitive issues and available support</i></b></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Web based tools to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business performance benchmark</li> <li>• Market intelligence by sector</li> <li>• Help sheets</li> <li>• Self diagnostics and prompt sheets</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Hearts and minds campaign re quality and sustainability</li> <li>○ Advise on succession planning issues</li> <li>○ Implications of climate change workshops and guidance sheets per sector</li> <li>○ Develop demonstration units</li> <li>○ Support to enhance website, on line bookability, greater information for visitors</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b><i>Increase local supply chains – food and drink, retail and accommodation etc</i></b></li> <li>○ <b><i>Increase use of local foods and local distinctiveness</i></b></li> <li>○ Increase arts/crafts production and retail where appropriate</li> <li>○ Increase joining up at accommodation and other rural businesses i.e. activities</li> </ul>
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b><i>Realise the benefit/impact of the environment on businesses and exploit/develop/add value</i></b></li> <li>○ <b><i>Green Tourism Business Scheme and Action of the Year</i></b></li> <li>○ Payback schemes</li> <li>○ Targeted environmental enhancement schemes</li> </ul>

Recommendation 4	Enhance the environment through developing the product and improving quality Indicative Actions
<b>Visitors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Realise potential relating to World Heritage Sites and South West Coast Path, Cotswold National Trail, and Icon attractions etc</i></li> <li>○ Understand visitor ever changing needs</li> <li>○ Develop dynamic visitor feedback systems to drive “customers quality development”</li> <li>○ Match increasing/growing markets for active/sports/adrenalin segments including educational market</li> <li>○ Development of “two centre” holidays concepts rural experience and coastal/beach</li> </ul>
<b>Industry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Practical workshops and mentoring programmes</i></li> <li>○ <i>Encourage increasing “dwell time” in rural areas through both traditional (shooting equine fishing etc) and new (Adrenaline, cultural etc)</i></li> <li>○ <i>Positive planning considerations to enable sustainable development especially Holiday parks re developments to improve quality, environmental conservation and landscaping</i></li> <li>○ <i>Development of Rural Public Houses sector</i></li> <li>○ Increase “dwell time” creating facilities e.g. swimming pools, trails etc.</li> <li>○ B&amp;B development action planning materials and mentoring</li> <li>○ Increase “income growth” rather than asset growth</li> <li>○ Increase quality in both service and facilities of existing businesses.</li> <li>○ Fishing product development</li> <li>○ Inspire and enthuse programme to encourage industry to invest</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Promote and ensure ‘sense and pride of place’ where practical e.g Costwolds, Dorset etc</i></li> <li>○ Use LAA, rural renaissance, Big, Heritage Lottery, MCT etc, to develop community/visitor facilities – integrating both local and visitor needs.</li> <li>○ Continue regeneration of market towns and villages</li> <li>○ Development of dual use host community/visitor facilities – swimming pools, tennis courts, gyms, community facilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Work with key agencies and organizations to develop “Environmental Asset/Tourism Product” development plan (N.T., Wildlife Trust, RSPB etc.)</i></li> <li>○ <i>Reduce use of car during stay – i.e. reduce visitor mileage</i></li> <li>○ <i>Woodland/Forestry/waterways/equine development opportunities re active leisure and sport</i></li> <li>○ Reduce need to “have car” at all</li> <li>○ Continue and even expand environmental improvement/development access initiatives.</li> </ul>

Recommendation 5	Sustaining viable communities Indicative Actions
<b>Visitors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Encourage effective and compatible visitor/local community engagement</i></li> <li>○ <i>Increase information to visitors on what to do locally, local events etc</i></li> <li>○ <i>Help visitors to understand and respect community/cultural issues</i></li> <li>○ Increase community involvement in tourism promotions to increase greater visitor understanding</li> </ul>
<b>Industry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Develop local community engagement</li> <li>○ <i>Increase local supply chains</i></li> <li>○ <i>Increase joining up at accommodation and other rural business sectors</i></li> <li>○ <b>Develop dual use facilities for use by community and</b></li> <li>○ Agree compromises for community visitors i.e. no dogs on beach, set footpath up behind for locals</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Understand benefits of visitors – sustaining families and facilities i.e. schools etc.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Resolve the issue of affordable housing for local people and tourism employees.</i></li> <li>○ Improve ratio of employment – local versus non local</li> <li>○ Increase payback schemes for local facilities</li> </ul>
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Future Footprints initiative support</i></li> <li>○ <i>Increase local participation in environmental improvement initiatives</i></li> <li>○ Increase local involvement in footpath/cycle paths and other environmental based facilities</li> <li>○ Encourage further development of community volunteer/support for environmental management and improvement</li> <li>○ Payback schemes</li> </ul>

Recommendation 6	Work more effectively together Indicative Actions
<b>Visitors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evaluate confusion caused to customers through existing structures</li> <li>○ Research and establish what would be the best approach regarding overall promotion, fulfillment and booking for both existing and potential customers</li> </ul>
<b>Industry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Establish a SW Rural Tourism Network and annual forum</b></li> <li>○ <b>DMO's to develop Rural Tourism and Attractions and Activities strategies and action plans</b></li> <li>○ <b>Reinforce and support farmstay UK &amp; county farm tourism and other existing groups</b></li> <li>○ Establish DMO level rural tourism groups involving existing groups</li> <li>○ Retail and tourism sectors to work more closely together</li> <li>○ Establish/engage with European network re overseas visitor/marketing development, joint research etc</li> <li>○ Improve and or establish effective local/sub regional supply chains</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Payback schemes for local facilities</b></li> <li>○ <b>Local foods</b></li> <li>○ Tourism sector and associations engage in affordable housing issues</li> <li>○ Local community to be involved in shaping tourism planning and development strategies</li> <li>○ Industry to increase information on the impact of tourism on local communities</li> </ul>
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Establish Regional Group between key the Farming Sector, and agencies in SW re environment and tourism</b></li> <li>○ <b>Consultation event needed on 'changing landscapes' issues</b></li> <li>○ <b>Greater collaborative working together between SWT, SWCORE, SWRDA, SWF&amp;D,</b></li> <li>○ NFU. Taste of the West, SWREG and Culture SW</li> </ul>