
REPORT TO:	DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 7
DATE OF MEETING:	16 AUGUST 2001	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN PARAGRAPH NO: N/A
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	KEVIN MASON (EXT. 5739)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	RESPONSES TO DRAFT TOURISM STRATEGY	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: CE10

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- i). Endorse the proposed changes; and
- ii). Adopt the amended document

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To report representations on the Draft South Derbyshire Tourism Strategy and seek member approval of proposed amendments and adoption of the Strategy by the Authority.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Members will recall that the draft Strategy was approved for public consultation at Planning and Economic Development Committee on 26 October 2000 (minute PED/36). The Strategy was made available for comment with almost 160 copies sent out, to all parish councils, neighbouring local authorities, tourism businesses and service providers, and other stakeholder organisations. It was publicised with a press release and made available for inspection in local libraries and the Council offices. A Questionnaire was also sent out with the Strategy (attached at Annexe A) in order to simplify consideration of the issues, and provide a framework for suggested measures.
- 3.2 Interested parties were also invited to a Tourism Awareness Day held at Swadlincote Ski Centre on 16th February, which provided an opportunity for discussion of the Strategy and other issues participants wished to raise. Staff from the Heart of England Tourist Board chaired the day and took notes, in order that this was done by an impartial third party.

- 3.3 In addition to the comments reported from the Tourism Open Day, a total of 46 representations were received, giving a response rate of almost 30% (which the Heart of England Tourist Board regard as exceptional). These are summarised at Annexe B alongside officer responses and consequent proposed changes to the document. The preparation of this report has been delayed by the onset of Foot & Mouth which meant that consultees such as the Tourist Board were unable to reply within the original consultation period; by the additional workload arising from the Foot & Mouth crisis locally; due to the increasing tourism-generated workload (enquiries dealt with in the first seven months of 2001 already total almost 4400 compared to 1856 in the whole of 2000); and due to the amount of work involved in dealing with almost 1800 comments received in response to the draft strategy.
- 3.4 Generally the response to the draft Strategy was positive, and there have been no major changes to that document, but rather a series of minor alterations which increase clarity of intention. The Questionnaire sought not only to elicit comment on the content of the draft Strategy, but also to gather information as to how prepared respondents are to get involved in the actions the Strategy proposes, and to provide an indication to the industry as to the services currently provided by the District Council.
- 3.5 The Questionnaire is reproduced in Annexe A, and detailed comments made are set out in full in Annexe B in tabular form together with officer responses and proposed changes to the Strategy. The results of the consultation exercise can be summarised briefly as follows:
- The Strategy has the support of all the main partners who are likely to be involved in its implementation (Heart of England Tourist Board, emda, the National Forest Company, the Southern Derbyshire Chamber, the Small Business Service, and neighbouring local authorities). The high response rate from the local tourism industry, parish councils and other local organisations should also mean that a representative cross-section of views has been received and incorporated into the revised Strategy.
 - There was no disagreement with the main Aim of the draft, only minor change to the five objectives, and again only minor change to the SWOT analysis.
 - Research proposals – most respondents felt improved data would be useful, and indicated they would be prepared to work collaboratively with the District Council on data collection.
 - Promotion and marketing – encouragingly the current “Discover South Derbyshire” identity drew a majority of support, with The National Forest a distant but creditable second, and an acceptance that future branding will move towards the latter. Some 2/3 of respondents are satisfied with the current range of literature, the main concern being the Business Tourism market; it is proposed to investigate this further with Conference Derbyshire which is operated by the Southern Derbyshire Chamber which already has expertise in this market. Other suggestions included Industrial Heritage and more walking/cycling leaflets. Media Advertising drew agreement that more of this needs to be undertaken to increase public awareness of what South Derbyshire has to offer, with most indicating it should be funded jointly by the District Council and the private sector. Support for increased PR work was even greater, with half of respondents prepared to work with the Council in providing material.

- There is strong support for increasing local residents' awareness of tourism opportunities and benefits, and for increasing the Visiting Friends & Relations market.
- The emphasis on Product Development over the lifetime of the Strategy won almost unanimous support, as did the proposal to set up partnership/s to take forward proposals, giving a clear steer for concentrating on this process. The Key Strengths of 'Historic towns and villages and their associations' and 'Green tourism such as walking, cycling and other outdoor pursuits' were also supported by most respondents. Cycling emerged as a particular priority, indicating that more work needs to be done to establish routes and promote opportunities. Development of 'themed tourism' such as Historic Gardens, Churches and Industrial Heritage gained much support, and could add value to existing activities.
- Increasing the awareness of the broader business community of the importance of tourism, and of the impact they can make on visitors was also regarded as important.
- In terms of the District Council's services impacting on the industry and visitors, particular concerns were raised about the need to ensure co-ordination with Planners and ensuring tourism is adequately taken account of in planning policies; concerns were raised about the adequacy of litter collection at the peak Summer tourism period; the recent closure of public conveniences drew a number of comments in terms of the effect on visitors; and issues of tourism 'brown' signing were raised (though this is a County Council service).
- The implications of the Disability Discrimination Act are a particular concern of the industry and assistance in understanding requirements, and getting financial assistance were raised. (This can be tackled jointly with the tourist board).
- While there is a general acceptance that Customer Satisfaction Surveys need to be carried out to ascertain the consumers' attitude towards tourism in the area, there was a disappointing level of preparedness to share data.
- In terms of the need for improved tourist information, while a number of respondents called for the establishment of a Tourist Information Centre, there was also acceptance that this high cost option is unlikely, and widespread support for increasing the number of tourist information points together with increased placing of tourism literature in shops, filling stations etc, as the Strategy proposes. ITC solutions are also requested.
- There is general support for the introduction of Interpretative material.
- Sustainability measures gained both support and criticism, the latter due to concerns that car drivers would be penalised to the detriment of growing tourism, and to widespread concerns about the inadequacy of public transport to meet the needs of tourists.

3.6 Since the draft Strategy was prepared, the English Tourism Council has published three major new national Strategies:

- 'Perspectives on English Tourism'

- 'Time for Action – The national strategy for sustainable tourism' and the associated 'National Sustainable Tourism Indicator Set'
 - 'Working for the Countryside – A strategy for rural tourism in England 2001-2005'
- Where appropriate, alterations to the South Derbyshire Tourism Strategy are suggested to take account of this recent guidance, and set out in Annexe C.

3.7 The next stage will be to draw up an Action Plan for 2002/03, drawing out key milestones, against which progress on delivering the strategy can be measured. This will be reported to a future meeting of the committee.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The Strategy will seek to maximise the use of external funding and resources wherever possible. Implementation will take place over a long period, which will provide the opportunity to assess new funding and partnership arrangements should they emerge, including any change in the Council's financial situation.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 Although the Strategy will be implemented in partnership with a wide range of organisations, substantial input will be required from Council staff from Economic Development, Central Support Services, and to a lesser extent in Planning, and Leisure.

6.0 Community Implications

6.1 Tourism is important to the local economy, in terms of aiding diversification; creating and sustaining jobs; as a creative force in conserving the heritage, biodiversity and landscapes / townscapes on which it depends; and in making a positive contribution to the overall quality of life of the local community. Through these it can help to enhance the quality of life in, and image of South Derbyshire.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 It is considered that none of the recommended changes will materially alter the principles established in the draft Strategy, and therefore there it is not necessary to re-consult.

7.2 An action plan for the next financial year will now be prepared.

8.0 Background Papers

8.1 South Derbyshire Tourism Strategy 2000-2005 (Draft)

Perspectives on English Tourism (English Tourism Council)

Time for Action – a strategy for sustainable tourism in England (English Tourism Council)

National Sustainable Tourism Indicators (English Tourism Council)

Working for the Countryside – a strategy for rural tourism in England 2001-2005
(English Tourism Council)

