MEASURING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AT THE LOCAL LEVEL AN INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Guidance published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and prepared by an editorial group chaired by David James on behalf of the British Resorts Association.

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Audit Commission	National Parks
English Tourism Council	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
Environment Agency	Tourism & Environment Forum - Scotland
English Historic Towns Forum	Scottish Tourist Board/*VisitScotland*
Local Government Association	Wales Tourist Board
Local Government Data Unit - Wales	Welsh Local Government Association

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The relationships that exist between the host community, whether in the context of its environment, its economy, or its social fabric, and the visitor, are many, complex and constantly changing. Historically, tourism impacts on communities have been measured primarily in an economic context with little or no attention to its impacts on the environment or socially.

Sustainable tourism development is about the wise use of resources to ensure that present use of them not only serves the needs of today, but also is an investment in the future. During the last decade, there has been an accelerating awareness of the need for more pro-active policies, strategies and programmes to ensure that tourism is a net contributor economically, environmentally and socially, both globally and locally. Whether this is called sustainable or wise tourism development, it has created the need for neutral, balanced and integrated Local Sustainable Tourism Indicators (LSTI). Local communities, however defined, must measure their performance against their own set targets and also be able to make comparisons with others.

From the commencement of this project, all involved have been aware of the challenges and enormity of the required work and also the need to evolve with changing circumstances. Despite the commitment of government and the tourism sector, at all levels, to sustainable development, the body of knowledge, both theoretical and practical, is patchy, both globally and locally.

The effect on the Working Group has been a decision to change from the original aim of producing a "one-off" all encompassing Guidance Note to developing a multi-phased exercise, as set out below.

> **Phase One** to publish this document, the "Introduction and Background" guidance as soon as possible, via websites and hard copy
>
> **Phase Two** to distil an initial list of trial LSTI and test them on a controlled basis with a small but representative group of local destination partnerships, benefiting from shared experiences and expertise, to refine an array of recommended LSTI
>
> **Phase Three** to publish an array of LSTI, background guidance, and examples of best practice for use at the local level, e.g. local tourism forums, local authorities, regional tourist boards, etc.

Phases Two and Three will be supervised by a small steering committee supported by the Welsh Local Government Data Unit, Phase Two to be completed within twelve months of the conclusion of Phase One.

This Guidance Note is a contribution to the Development of Local Sustainable Tourism Indicators (LSTI). It is not intended to be prescriptive but, rather, catalytic in nature. At the local level, making tourism more sustainable will vary substantially from one area to another dependent on a multiplicity of factors, some of which being destination typology, tourist or non-tourist destination, tourist product – vibrancy or decay, political viewpoints, industry commitments, residents and, of course, the visitors.

The creation of LSTI is a new challenge for those with local responsibility for tourism. Although local actions may have global implications, the focus here is on the local and on what will work best for each locality. In this resource document the intention is to create sufficient background and information for local tourism practitioners to consider what type of LSTI may be appropriate for their needs. There is no intention to create a fixed menu of LSTI. This is because of the diversity of local needs and to allow for the dynamic evolution of them with the passage of time. On the other hand, there are good reasons why individual LSTI should each be formulated to a standard design. This should save duplication of effort and should spread good practice. It will also, of course, allow for comparability between areas where this is integral to the sustainable development strategy within a local area. The approach adopted in this document is, therefore, to develop an array of LSTI, from which a selection would be made according to local needs and circumstances.

Outlined in the pages which follow:

1) **BACKGROUND**
Considers the present value, opportunities and challenges of tourism and the need for policies to make tourism more sustainable, action and monitoring at the local level.

2) **THE WIDER CONTEXT**
Background information on sustainability indicators being adopted by governments in the UK and the EU Community.

3) **TOURISM: WHAT IS TO BE MEASURED?**
Some basic measures of tourism and indicators of tourism product, supply and demand.

4) **DEVELOPING LOCAL INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**
The consideration of function and needs to be considered when creating an array of appropriate LSTI; explores the key characteristics of good functional indicators. This section also provides some initial observations on using indicators and drawing policy and operational conclusions.

5) **LSTIs: A STARTING POINT**
The identification of various indicators that might provide a valuable context for the development of LSTI. Contains an initial set of potential LSTIs identified by the working group and a variety of other contributors. In Phase Two, these indicators will be tested in a number of areas across the United Kingdom.

6) **LOOKING AHEAD**
Considering the potential for the development, implementation and review of LSTI and the exchange of resulting knowledge

7) **REFERENCES AND SOURCES**

8) **APPENDICES**

It is vital that all involved in the process of ensuring greater sustainability in all aspects of tourism remember that the success of any project will require many and varying relationships between public and private organisations, communities, voluntary bodies and others. Unilateral action is not an option! *Appendix A* provides a basic matrix from which a number of potential relationships could be established contingent upon the specific local needs.