

Torbay Tourism Strategy  
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1995 - 2005

# **TORBAY TOURISM STRATEGY 1995 - 2005**

## **SUMMARY**

The 10 year strategy sets a direction for Torbay's tourism and associated organisations for the next decade to ensure a continued viable and valuable contribution to the Bay's economy and employment.

An identified strategy for tourism is needed due to the current dominance of the industry in the local economy that needs particular focus in the changing world. Potential exists for sustaining and perhaps increasing the contribution to the Bay's economy by new initiatives and specific action programmes.

## **TORBAY'S TOURISM**

The tourism business in Torbay is projected to earn the resort approaching £300m per annum and employs both 16,000 people directly, both full and part time. Indirectly there are numerous others who are dependent upon the tourism industry. Its impact is substantial and there is hardly a business in the resort which does not have some relation to the tourism industry.

There are over 54,000 bedspaces (1993) and through the year, 9 million bednights are recorded with an anticipated 1.5 million staying visitors and over 2 million day visitors. In terms of resorts in Great Britain it is the No. 1 staying resort (DoE figures 1994).

## **STRATEGY BASIS**

This strategy recognises the importance of tourism, the changes in the market place and the severe competition from overseas holiday destinations. It is recognised that the aspirations of the population of the United Kingdom have changed during this past decade and there is a clear decline in demand for the traditional holiday aspect for which Torbay has been highly successful over the past. It is however recognised that there is a continuing demand for the traditional holiday but this is likely to see increasing competition and ongoing decline.

## **TOURISM AND THE ECONOMY OF TORBAY**

This Tourism Strategy recognises that the dominance of tourism in the resort may well be affected by the market changes but from the point of view of sustaining our local economy it is imperative the level of tourism is maintained and that new initiatives are developed to help expand its economic and employment impact over the next decade.

## **KEY OBJECTIVES**

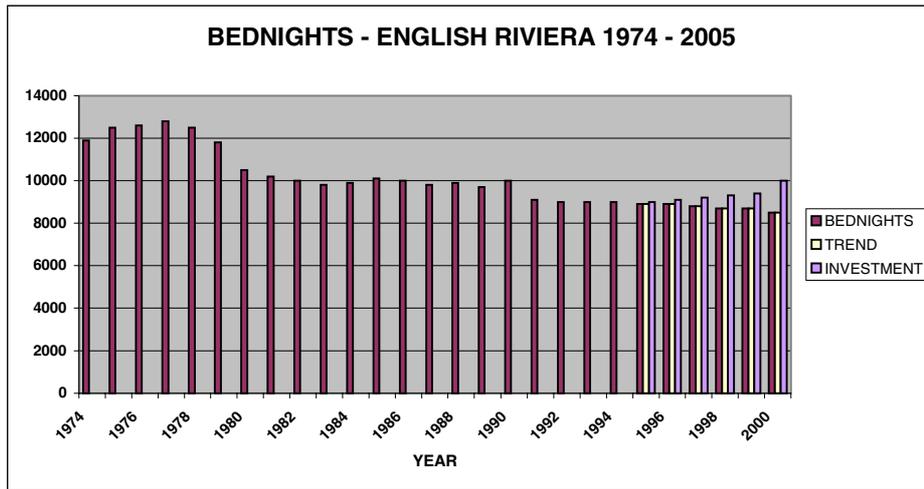
To maintain and, where practical, increase the economic contribution (income and employment) to the local economy of tourism. A growth of 10% by the year 2005.

## **BACKGROUND**

Torbay has traditionally attracted the summer main holiday visitors in recent decades, particularly focused on the family market. The Senior Citizen market, conference business and the coaching trade have also featured as the key to the Bay's tourism success. Recent trends and social changes have however forced the resort to consider new options.

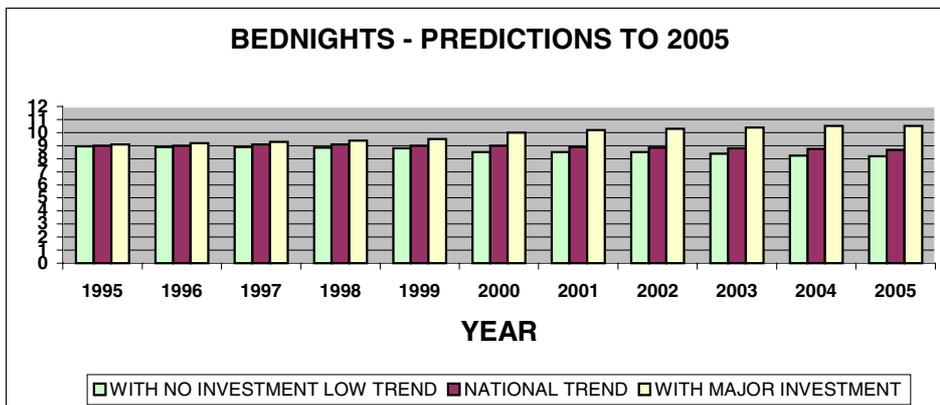
There is a recognition that much has positively occurred in Torbay in recent years to improve and modernise the resort product and the resort is recognised as one of, if not, the premier resort in Great Britain. The English Riviera marketing campaign, now in its 12<sup>th</sup> year, has been highly successful in creating an image and awareness in promoting the resort. However, it is also recognised that tourism development and marketing is under-resourced to achieve what is needed to protect and/or develop the tourism economy and to market appropriately in a highly competitive tourism world.

An analysis of strengths/weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) was carried out and reference to local, regional and national research applied. Research amongst current visitors has been positive, highlighting the value of our scenery, climate, accommodation and many things to do and see. However, our current traditional 'market' is facing decline, as are all traditional seaside holidays. While this will still remain a very important market, and one that we must protect, expansion into new areas of tourism will be required to counter any decline or to encourage growth.



The above graph illustrates the bednight decline, which mainly took place over a decade ago and the relatively sustained bednights during the late 1980's. The indication now is that if we continue as at present there will be a decline by the year 2000, and this could accelerate even more on the grounds that other competitive products will be available by the year 2000 (the Millennium).

However, the graph below also illustrates a growth path across 10 years to cancel out the ongoing decline and ensure that approaching 1.8 million additional bednights are sustained over the trend by the implementation of an Action Programme.



This action requires both determination, initiative and financial resources. However, incremental investment in marketing and product development should with the right co-ordination produce very significant rewards to the resort both from private and public sectors and ultimately leading to improving the economic benefits.

To achieve a sustained tourism business in the resort against the national, declining market of seaside holidays and to progress to 10% growth by the year 2005 would mean the following initiatives will need to be implemented. In general these are:

- ★ Increase marketing activity
- ★ Improvement of the tourism product and new product development
- ★ Improving standards and service
- ★ A focused tourism organisation co-ordinating all efforts
- ★ Additional funding

### **Marketing**

- ★ To sustain existing marketing activities, Guide, etc.
- ★ To develop new marketing schemes particularly aimed at:
  - (a) attracting additional holidays at any time of the year
  - (b) increasing the rate and frequency of repeat visits by a 'loyalty' scheme
  - (c) increase the level of expenditure by our existing visitors
  - (d) increase the number of day visitors to the resort

### **Product Development**

- ★ Revive the 'honeypot' core areas of the resort to match the needs of the next century. These areas include:
  - (a) Harbourside areas – currently recognised as under exploited
  - (b) Beach facilities – recognised as perhaps needing modern investment also support 'Clean Sweep' programme
- ★ Develop new 'magnet' tourist attraction – to bring visitors for new reasons – (possibly 1 million visits per year including ¼ 'new' staying visitors)
- ★ Develop environmental attractions in the resort
- ★ Improve transport services – i.e. Kingskerswell
- ★ Upgrade existing facilities to meet market demands

## **Quality & Service Improvements**

To achieve a resort of excellence efforts must be made:

- (a) to ensure the facilities and operations within tourism be it retail, accommodation, attractions or transport, are operated to the highest of standards
- (b) to improve the professional standards of staff in all aspects of the tourist industry
- (c) to ensure that the resort has a Customer Care (Welcome Host) approach to the tourism industry
- (d) to ensure the residents recognise the value and support tourism
- (e) that quality regulatory and grading schemes are introduced
- (f) that new technology is used to maximise the efficiency and service provided
- (g) to encourage more flexible attitudes and minimise restrictive regulations (e.g. drinks licenses/extensions, EC rules, etc.) and to encourage schemes to help quality standards and service provision to satisfy the market requirements for the next decade

## **Organisation**

To develop effective organisation and procedures for the furtherance of tourism in Torbay and to ensure a close working relationship [between public and private sectors relating to tourism. It is essential that:

- ★ tourism is recognised for its primary importance to the Bay's economy
- ★ the Council fully supports tourism
- ★ the private sector supports and contributes to tourism
- ★ the population accepts and recognises the needs to sustain our tourism industry

*and*

- ★ a single body for tourism is created to implement the 10 year plan with set objectives and to carry out the marketing and development activities and that tourism should not be diffused or subsumed to other areas
- ★ this tourism organisation should be adequately resourced in both manpower and finances

The key focus for the future must hinge around investment and resources. It is therefore important that the appropriate environment is developed to:

- ★ attract inward investment in tourism projects
- ★ encourage local commercial support to the marketing initiatives
- ★ develop a commercial approach to providing tourism services

### **Other policies**

A range of other important policies and issues have been proposed to give direct guidance on a range of subjects from sustainable tourism to planning policies and accommodation to transport. An Action Plan will be documented to give a timetable to the long term strategy so that the organisations and existing bodies can progress the strategy with determination.

### **Conclusion**

The Working Party of the Torbay Tourism Forum believes Torbay has a very positive future with the right approach and initiatives.

That an approach must be included to:

- ★ strive for a resort of excellence
- ★ be an effective and well resourced organisation
- ★ develop new, imaginative and marketing and develop initiatives including a very major national magnet attraction

### **Additional Funding**

Key to achieving the programme is the need to double the existing marketing budget (an additional £250,000). Correctly targeted, it could generate an additional 100,000 visitors to the resort with an average length of stay of 5 nights. The expenditure could easily exceed £10 million per annum directly with a high chance of some 50% returning as repeat visitors in later years. This would equate to a 2.5% investment rate to gain a return.

£20,000 per annum needs to be generated into grading, inspections and other quality initiatives, if all accommodation, attractions and facilities are included.

Up to £20,000 per annum over the next 5 years is needed to sustain and develop the various training initiatives suggested.

£50,000 per annum over the next 5 years is required to create a programme of honeypot enhancement schemes including the feasibility for developing the new major “magnet” attraction.

- ★ Capital investment is also needed and it is anticipated that a new magnet attraction would require an investment of anything in excess of £50 million. Done on the right scale it could win both 5(b) European Funding as well as Millennium Funding under the National Lottery scheme. The private sector would obviously be an important partner into such a major scheme.
- ★ It is recognised that additional funding may not be easily available and an incremental approach for marketing, of say an extra £50,000 per annum over 5 years would still have a significant benefit. Therefore it should become an objective of the trade and other organisations to develop a mechanism to achieve this.