

3RD TOURISM SUMMIT: 5 MARCH 2002

KEY CONCLUSIONS AND ACTION POINTS TO DRIVE FORWARD THE MODERNISING AGENDA FOR TOURISM

The focus for the 3rd Annual Tourism Summit of pan-Government Ministers and other key players in the tourism industry (attendee list at annex) was progress on taking forward the challenging modernisation and reform agenda set for the industry at the Hartwell House seminar in October 2001, following the impact of foot and mouth disease and the events of 11 September. Tessa Jowell recorded her and Kim Howells' appreciation and gratitude to the British Tourist Authority (BTA), the English Tourism Council (ETC), and the wider tourism and hospitality industry, for their engagement in driving forward that program.

IMPROVING TRAINING AND SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

Training and Skills: The Summit agreed that hospitality and tourism was a very significant sector in terms of the economy and employment. It had to be a career of choice, not something that people just fell into. The sector already employed 1 in 10 people, and another 170,000 jobs would be created in the sector by 2005. In order to remain competitive it was vital that a strategic approach was taken to education, recruitment, retention and professional development in the industry. The skills issue was essential to address the problems with image, technology development, service levels and changing demand that the industry faced.

John Healey said that key developments had been the advent of vocational A levels in hospitality and catering, of foundational degrees, and of a hospitality and tourism GCSE from September. The recently published 14-19 Green Paper encouraged the development of higher quality vocational options, and clearer progression routes for non-academic subjects. DfES would be working closely with DCMS in developing the framework set out in the Green Paper to ensure that it met the needs of the tourism industry.

John Healey also said that a numeracy and literacy toolkit for employers would be launched later in March, which should also be beneficial to the tourism and hospitality industry. A target had also been set for half of colleges to be designated by 2004 as centres of vocational excellence.

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) would have an important role to play in taking forward the skills agenda, as they had a responsibility for, and interest in, the regional skills base. The new Sectors Skills Councils (SSCs) could also tie much of the agenda together. They had to be employer-led, with strong evidence of industry backing. DCMS were actively supporting the Hospitality Training Foundation's bid to be an SSC, and DfES had appointed a business advisor for that. A departmental meeting on 14 March would assess progress on development, and an employer steering committee meeting on 19 March would assess industry support. The Sector Skills Development Agency would run from April and from the Autumn would cover any sectors that were unrepresented by a specific SSC.

Further work was needed to mitigate the risk of industry getting out of the habit of providing funding in the period between national training organisations being wound-up on 31 March, and the setting up of a SSC.

Bob Cotton said that the industry accepted that it was its job, rather than Government's, to take the lead in ensuring that the SSC being developed for the hospitality and travel sectors was a success.

The Summit noted Bob Cotton's concern that there was too much theoretical, and not enough practical, tourism training. What was needed was the development of practical, on the job, skills learning.

Employment: Clare Dodgson said that there was a commitment through the New Deal program to get inactive people back into the labour market - tourism and hospitality was an important industry to enable that. Work in this area had to be employer connected and driven, and had to be connected to the training and skills agenda, including work on improving adult basic skills.

Action point: DCMS officials would engage with DfES and the industry about the shape and scope of the SSC, and about what they could do to bring visitor attractions and caravans into it.

CREATION OF A SINGLE VOICE FOR TOURISM

Tessa Jowell recorded her gratitude to Digby Jones for his chairmanship of the new Tourism Alliance. It was agreed that the industry had learnt from the aftermath of the foot and mouth disease outbreak last year the benefits of speaking with a single voice, and of enhanced dialogue and partnership between Government and industry.

Digby Jones said that the executive group of the Alliance had worked up a submission in time for the Budget with specific requests which linked into SR2002. They were asking for VAT relief on accommodation, marketing money for England, and tax credits for training and investors in people accreditation in tourism.

The real work of the of the Tourism Alliance would be 3-5 years hence. Their strategy for that period involved (a) more liaison with RDAs and local authorities to get tourism understood by everyone as a tool for economic development and social inclusion, (b) working with those bodies to promote investment in quality, (c) getting investment and branding right in London and (c) training. They sought more leadership from the top on reducing regulation and red-tape.

The Tourism Alliance would not prevent its members from independently representing their specific sectors. It was about moving everything to a higher strategic level to make sure tourism had a high profile. The CBI were paying for the secretariat.

PROMOTING THE UK AT HOME AND ABROAD

Marketing Abroad: Tessa Jowell said that the sum of up to £20 million that the Government had announced in the previous week that they were making available for promoting Britain in key markets abroad had been timed to fit in with the Golden Jubilee and the summer of sport, including the Commonwealth Games in Manchester. It would bring high value visitors from the USA and Europe back to the UK - USA tourists were likely to spend £6 per head for every £1 per head that a domestic tourist would spend.

Tessa Jowell very much welcomed the public/private coalition under which the Government would match £1 for £1 all money made available by industry. She also welcomed the news that the BTA had that day launched a map celebrating aspects of Britain's royal heritage. The map would be sent to Britain's key tourism markets as part of the Government and industry's campaign to win back an extra million visitors to Britain.

David Quarmby said that currently just over 50 per cent of visitors to the UK and their spend came to London - it was the BTA's mission to grow inbound tourism across the countries and regions of the UK and to promote regional points of entry such as Birmingham and Manchester. Kim Howells said that it was not up to the Government to determine how the money given to the BTA for marketing was distributed regionally across the devolved administrations.

Domestic Marketing: Alan Britten tabled four charts making the case for strategic marketing of England at a national level. He said that the future of English tourism by the domestic customer was the short break. The ETC suggested an England marketing partnership involving the RDAs and local authorities, to develop a coherent, research-based, strategy.

Rural Tourism: Alun Michael said that the foot and mouth outbreak had increased understanding about, and the profile of, the English countryside. It had highlighted the great contribution made to the economy by tourism. He set out details of the

"Your Countryside, You're Welcome" movement with which some 150 organisations were engaged. A week of events and special offers to relaunch the countryside would commence on 10 March, and there would be a build-up of events throughout the summer. He paid tribute to the way officials in DEFRA, DCMS, Countryside Agency and the English Tourism Council had cooperated to carry the work forward.

Tessa Jowell welcomed the fact that DCMS and DEFRA and others were working together for the benefit of rural tourism, and said that they must continue to do so. She asked Alun Michael to think about how we could cross-engage more formally across departments to link the modernisation agenda (eg. the boost to quality and training and skills) into the work to relaunch the countryside and to benefit rural tourism.

Transport: Sally Keeble said that DTLR were committed to looking at tourism as part of the 10 Year Transport Plan review. In Summer 2002, DTLR would publish consultation on transport and regeneration - DCMS would be consulted. There would also shortly be consultation on runway capacity in the South East. Money had been pumped into regeneration - some resorts had qualified for urban renewal funding, and some former ports had received part of £5.5 million made available for diversification. DTLR recognised the importance of open spaces and public parks in attracting people to different regions. Both Digby Jones and David Quarmby said that they wanted to see a push for regional airports around Britain to facilitate a wider regional spread of the tourism spend.

Regional structures: Tessa Jowell said that binding the RDAs into the fragmented tourism industry was very important, as was the spend on tourism by RDAs - every region should exploit to the maximum its tourism potential. Sir Michael Lickiss said that tourism was important to all regions and vital to some - this year, RDA economic strategies were being reviewed and revised. Quality, skills, marketing and RDA funding were all challenges that needed to be addressed. The importance that the RDAs imbued on tourism was demonstrated by it being one of four items brought up at a meeting in the previous week by the RDA Chairmen at a meeting

with the Prime Minister. RDAs would be the strategic coordinator for tourism in the regions, and Regional Tourist Boards the strategic delivery arm.

RAISING QUALITY

Best Practice Forum: Alan Johnson said that the launch of the Industry Forum, supported by the Department of Trade and Industry, had been extremely successful. It is about the transfer of best practice and is building on a great deal of collaborative work had already taken place between the Best Practice Forum, the DTI, the Small Business Service and the University of Surrey.

Tessa Jowell said that it was important that the Best Practice Forum, with DCMS support, should fully explore the possibility of Investors in People involvement in a new accreditation scheme for the tourism and hospitality sector.

Planning: Sally Keeble said that the Planning Green Paper would benefit both the business community and the public. Defence of the paper by the industry would help. Simon Ward thought the Green Paper also had a place in raising quality standards.

Action Point: Tessa Jowell said that collaboration between departments was very important on the Planning Green Paper, but that we had to ensure that collaboration had value and did not allow duplication of effort.

Fitness for Purpose: Tessa Jowell said that she saw the Fitness for Purpose initiative as a critical part of building standards. The Government wanted to target those dreadful hotels used by visitors unwittingly before worrying about maintenance of standards beyond that. DCMS needed full engagement from the Local Government Association (LGA) to take forward the work.

Sir Ron Watson said that existing fire, food and health and safety regulation was about protecting the public, not quality. But the overall aim of marrying-up inspection and quality was well worth aiming for. What was needed was a risk-based approach to inspection, single inspectors, and shared best practice. A balance needed to be struck between a lighter and harder touch. Local authorities might

think there was no problem, but people on the ground did not see that. David Quarmby said that the BTA had examples of complaint letters from foreign visitors highlighting problems of establishments breaking the law which were the sorts of problems that needed to be addressed by Fitness for Purpose.

Sir Ron said that the timescale for introducing improvements depended on how far the initiative was taken - to ensure quick timescales, he would encourage tweaks to what there was rather than legislative changes, in the first instance.

Action point: Sir Ron Watson said that the Local Government Association (LGA) would present DCMS with firm recommendations about what could be done to implement Fitness for Purpose by early Summer 2002.

Better Regulation Task Force (BRTF): Simon Ward said that there had been some progress on implementing the recommendations that the BRTF had made in their report on the regulation of hotels and restaurants in June 2000 eg. there had been progress on the Planning Green Paper and the Fire Regulatory Reform Order. However, a major disappointment had been the failure to secure Parliamentary time for the Liquor Licensing Reform Bill.

Tessa Jowell acknowledged that, but emphasised that DCMS's thrust was deregulatory. Where new regulation was introduced, that would be to protect tourists and give them what they had a right to expect. In the meantime, among other things, Kim Howells had that day signed a new deregulation order (the Restaurant Licensing Hours Order 2002) which cleared away a particularly unhelpful piece of red tape, and which provided easier means for restaurants to serve alcohol for an extra hour after the end of normal licensing hours

Alan Johnson said that, building on work started by Customs & Excise, the Small Business Service would be publishing, in the Spring, a revised and expanded guide to regulations affecting businesses in the catering and hospitality sectors, which would be in accordance with BRTF recommendations about better regulatory guidance for the sector.

Action Point: On the wider BRTF recommendations, Tessa Jowell said that DCMS would be undertaking a thorough review shortly with other departments to pull together what had been done to implement them, and to flush out the reasons why if not enough had been done. DCMS would report their findings to the BRTF in the Summer.

BETTER DATA AND E-TOURISM

Tessa Jowell said that the foot and mouth disease outbreak had also led the industry to realise the importance of a greater capacity for data, and of better technology to support it. Alan Britten said that there were currently gaps in data and poor timeliness. There was a problem linking to RTBs by telephone and paper, although £3.8 million made available during the foot and mouth crisis had allowed that problem to be overcome briefly.

The answer to those problems was e-tourism. England did not need a huge new tourism system, but a national, on-line, ITC network that would link with all existing tourism ITC systems. The Government-funded ENTICE network should, by mid-Summer, link all of the 500 tourist information centres which were currently completely unlinked. An Invest to Save bid had been made to the Treasury for a major project. Enhanced ITC facilities would lead to better and more timely data and to better business planning.

Tessa Jowell said that DCMS intended to set up a small public/private sector Tourism Research Forum, with a life of some nine months, whose remit would be to identify ways of improving the quality and raising the profile of tourism data both in the short and medium term. DCMS were also producing an Action Pack (including a video and CD-ROM) for tourism businesses, giving advice about how to make the most of online opportunities. Finally, they would also shortly be tendering for a major new study of the impact of e-commerce on tourism.

MONITORING AND ENSURING CONTINUED PROGRESS

Action point: Tessa Jowell said that DCMS would time the next Hartwell seminar to coincide with the LGA having some specific progress to report on Fitness For Purpose in Summer 2002.

Action Point: Tessa Jowell said that a 4th Tourism Summit would be held in October 2002 and would be used to take stock on progress on Fitness for Purpose; on the SSCs; and on making sense of the RDA role and identifying where coordination was not in place. The next Summit would also assess the impact of the marketing investment made over the Summer.

ANNEX

Tourism Summit Attendees

Department for Culture, Media and Sport	Tessa Jowell Kim Howells
HM Treasury	Paul Boateng
Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions	Sally Keeble
Department of Trade and Industry	Alan Johnson
Department for Employment and Skills	John Healey
Department of Environment and Rural Affairs	Alun Michael
Department for Work and Pensions (Employment Service)	Clare Dodgson
National Assembly for Wales	John Griffiths
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	Malcolm Briant
Better Regulations Task Force	Simon Ward
English Tourism Council	Alan Britten
British Tourist Authority	David Quarmby
Local Government Association	Sir Ron Watson
British Hospitality Association	Bob Cotton
Regional Development Agencies	Sir Michael Lickiss
Tourism Alliance	Digby Jones