

Beacon Council Scheme Round Five **Promoting Sustainable Tourism Theme**

Evidence on Current Practice, Best Practice and User Satisfaction

Background

This paper presents key findings on current practice, best practice and user satisfaction in the selected theme. This information has been taken from the Round Five theme reports completed by the central government policy leads in each theme in late Spring 2003. The full theme reports can be found at:

www.local.odpm.gov.uk/research/beacon/beacon.htm

The user satisfaction data and analysis was completed by MORI in August 2003 and the full report on all themes is available at

www.local.odpm.gov.uk/research/beacon5.pdf

The evidence base on theme research and user satisfaction is designed to assist the Independent Advisory Panel in creating the selection criteria for the scheme. It is also designed to assist local authorities in applying for the scheme and in improving services generally. The research evidence base on the Beacon Council Scheme is crucial in identifying current and best practice in service provision whilst taking into account the satisfaction of those that receive the services. This evidence base also enables local authorities to identify areas for improvement as well as potential areas for innovation in attempting to achieve continuous improvement in service provision.

The research evidence base can also demonstrate whether the scheme is achieving its long-term objective of improving services. Warwick University Business School has commenced work on a three to five year ODPM / IDeA funded project entitled *An Impact Evaluation of the Beacon Council Scheme* and this will yield further evidence shortly and greatly contribute to the future evidence base on service improvement.

Section A – Current Practice in Promoting Sustainable Tourism

Central government does not oversee local authority tourism services, which are discretionary and required to address very different priorities in different localities. Given also the cross-cutting nature of the criteria, 'current practice' varies widely and covers a wide range of activities. There is no standardised approach. However, the Destination Manager's Handbook¹, recently published by the Tourism Management

¹ Destination Management Handbook – A sustainable approach. ETC/ TMI 2003. Can be downloaded at <http://www.tmi.org.uk/>. The handbook is designed to evolve over time.

Institute (TMI) together with the ETC, sets out guiding principles of a national framework, addressing the key areas of a destination manager's job.

An authority that works in a coordinated way will also ensure that those of its services which tangentially relate to tourism (like waste and cleanliness – important in their own right but whose imperfections are a regular cause of complaint of visitors to London, for example) are carried out efficiently and take into account the needs of the tourism industry. Tourism managers will also act as broker between the interests of visitors, tourism businesses and local communities, ensuring that the tourism industry is, therefore, sustainable socially and economically as well as environmentally.

Innovation, Pilots and Experiments – Obviously, there are very many innovations. Many of them are recorded in the case studies of high profile documents². The Stepping Stones schemes³ to bring accommodation up to NQAS standards have been successful in resorts such as Scarborough⁴, Blackpool (where the scheme is called 'HOAST') and North Devon. Pilots of the *Fitness for Purpose*⁵ initiative have just been launched by six Local Authorities around the country.

Section B - User Satisfaction in Promoting Sustainable Tourism

No quantitative user satisfaction surveys have been discovered that can be used as a baseline for councils applying for Beacons status on this theme.

However, we have identified national averages for the last three years from the user satisfaction and community attitude surveys recommended in the VisitBritain/Tourism Management Institute (TMI) "Destination Management Handbook" for local destination managers. This survey provides national aggregate data on local authority tourism

² See examples in, for example, Tomorrow's Tourism 1999, esp. Pg 26, 'Redcar & Cleveland';
and ETC strategy documents:

- "Sea Changes - Creating world-class resorts in England" ETC, 2001;
- "Action for Attractions", ETC, 2000;
- "Tourism and Transport - The Issues and Solutions", ETC, 2001;
- "Time for Action - England's sustainable tourism management strategy", ETC, 2001;
- "Working for the Countryside - a strategy for rural tourism 2001-2005"; **and**
- ETC document "Managing Micros - A practical guide for tourism advisors", ETC, 2001;
- Historic Town's Forum's strategy document, "Making the Connections - A Practical Guide To Tourism Management in Historic Towns", 1999;
- & many examples in "A Change of Scene, the Challenge of Tourism in Regeneration", LGA, 2000

³ See "Stepping Stones – A practical, stepped approach to achieving the National Quality Assurance Standards" ETC

⁴ See ETC/ VisitBritain website under 'Driving Up Quality'/ 'Stepping Stones for account: <http://www.english-tourism.org.uk/default.asp?id=2300> as well as 'Managing Micros' (above) Pg.19

⁵ See footnote above for info.

services and amenities, based on a rolling three year average of all participants that have taken part (over one hundred destinations in over three years) ⁶.

The tables below show overall attitudes to destination, as well as views on accommodation, attractions, places to eat and drink, shops, the local environment, safety and the local Tourist Information Centre from the perspective of visitors.

Overall Attitudes to Destination						
Q We are interested in your opinion of various aspects of City. On this scale, how would you rate each of the following:						
	<i>Base: All destinations</i>	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
		%	%	%	%	%
General atmosphere	(65)	40	49	9	1	0
Feeling of welcome	(65)	39	48	12	1	0
		Very high	High	Average	Low	Very low
		%	%	%	%	%
Overall enjoyment of visit	(68)	27	53	19	1	0
		Very likely	Likely	Neither/nor	Unlikely	Very unlikely
		%	%	%	%	%
Likelihood of recommending	(64)	51	34	12	2	1

Source: VisitBritain/Tourism Management Institute, (2000-2002).

⁶ Data kindly provided by Tourism South East, Southern and South East England Tourist Board.

Accommodation						
	<i>Base: All destinations</i>	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
		%	%	%	%	%
Quality of service	(64)	51	31	14	2	1
Value for money	(67)	46	32	17	4	1
		Very easy	Easy	Neither/nor	Quite difficult	Very difficult
		%	%	%	%	%
Ease of parking	(68)	41	39	7	9	4
		Very reasonable	Reasonable	Average	Quite expensive	Very expensive
		%	%	%	%	%
Cost of parking	(68)	23	32	23	14	9

Source: VisitBritain/Tourism Management Institute, (2000-2002).

Attractions						
Q We are interested in your opinion of various aspects of City. On this scale, how would you rate each of the following:						
	<i>Base: All destination</i>	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
		%	%	%	%	%
Range of attractions	(68)	33	44	18	4	1
Quality of service	(65)	30	49	18	2	1
Value for money	(65)	26	44	24	4	1

Source: VisitBritain/Tourism Management Institute, (2000-2002).

Places to Eat & Drink						
Q We are interested in your opinion of various aspects of City. On this scale, how would you rate each of the following:						
	<i>Base: All destinations</i>	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
		%	%	%	%	%
Range of places to eat and drink	(68)	36	45	15	4	1
Quality of service	(68)	29	50	18	2	1
Value for money	(65)	25	45	24	4	1

Source: VisitBritain/Tourism Management Institute, (2000-2002).

Shops

Q *We are interested in your opinion of various aspects of City. On this scale, how would you rate each of the following:*

	<i>Base: All destinations</i>	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
		%	%	%	%	%
Range of shops	(68)	39	40	16	4	1
Quality of shopping environment	(65)	34	45	17	3	1
Value for money	(68)	29	49	19	2	1

Source: VisitBritain/Tourism Management Institute, (2000-2002).

Local Environment

Q *We are interested in your opinion of various aspects of City. On this scale, how would you rate each of the following:*

	<i>Base: All destinations</i>	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
		%	%	%	%	%
Cleanliness of public toilets	(68)	24	37	22	11	7
Cleanliness of streets	(68)	29	46	19	5	1
Upkeep of parks and open spaces	(65)	41	44	12	2	1

Source: VisitBritain/Tourism Management Institute, (2000-2002).

Feelings of Safety

Q *Thinking about your visit to City, how far would you agree or disagree with the following statements on this scale:*

	<i>Base: All destinations</i>	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither/nor	Disagree	Disagree strongly
		%	%	%	%	%
I feel quite safe from crime	(66)	26	53	16	4	1
As a pedestrian, I feel safe from the traffic	(64)	25	55	12	6	1

Source: VisitBritain/Tourism Management Institute, (2000-2002).

Tourist Information Centre

Q *How would you rate the Tourist Information Centre against this scale?*

	<i>Base: All destinations</i>	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
		%	%	%	%	%
Ease of finding	(64)	40	43	10	5	2
Quality of service	(64)	50	41	7	2	1
Usefulness of information	(64)	52	40	6	2	1

Source: VisitBritain/Tourism Management Institute, (2000-2002).

Suggested further reading:

'The Sustainable Growth of Tourism in Britain' – British Tourist Authority (2002). This publication does not include baseline data but does outline the responsibilities of, and the strategy for, promoting sustainable tourism. See [www.visitbritain.com/corporate/Sustainable Growth of Tourism to GB Report.pdf](http://www.visitbritain.com/corporate/Sustainable_Growth_of_Tourism_to_GB_Report.pdf) for more details.

Ronan Smyth
Local and Regional Government Research Unit (ODPM)
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