

LIVING WITH THE ENEMY?

“This new Forest is a piece of property as much belonging to the public as the Custom House in London is. There is no man, however poor, who has not a right in it. Every man is owner of a part of the deer, the game and of the money that goes to the keepers.”

William Cobbet, 1830.

As one of the most popular tourism destinations, the New Forest and its surrounding District has coped with visitors for many years. The whole business of visitors can arouse strong views, there are those who feel tourism is not welcome at all. Because of the effect it has on the community and the environment.

On the other hand tourism contributes over £70m to the local economy every year, the equivalent of nearly £500 for every man, woman and child living in the District. The tourism industry also provides nearly 3,000 jobs and indirectly many more.

Through the operation of its tourism service, the District Council has learnt a great deal about the nature of local tourism and what we believe are the key issues. Far from being the enemy. We believe visitors and the industry that serves them are our allies, because if we are going to make tourism work for everyone's advantage, we need their help.

We now want to prepare a long term tourism strategy that will tackle these issues and safeguard both the tourism industry and the place in which it operates. Before developing the strategy we want to hear what people think. This document tells you about the basic questions that concern local tourism, how everybody responds to them will be crucial to the future of our District.

WE NEED YOUR VIEWS!

INTRODUCTION

IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER TOURISM AFFECTS EVERYBODY AND EVERYTHING, IT HAS A HUGE INFLUENCE.

As long ago as the late 1960s the very fabric of the New Forest was threatened with destruction by the increasing intrusion of motor cars. The right solution then was the construction of roadside ditches and ramparts and the provision of over 150 landscaped car parks, eliminating car access on to the open forest altogether. In intervening years as visitor numbers have multiplied so have pressures they create, suggesting far more radical management solutions are now needed.

New Forest District has always attracted visitors. The Coastal Towns and the Avon Valley are popular, but without doubt the main attraction is the New Forest itself, now defined as the New Forest Heritage Area. The Government has proposed giving the Heritage Area status and protection equivalent to a National Park. A management

strategy is currently being developed for this part of the District and it is hoped the Council's tourism strategy will also form the basis of tourism policies for this plan.

The announcement that the New Forest will become the equivalent of a national Park is naturally something we need to be alive to. Our view is that it is very important, it will not change the way we approach our work because the principles we work to will still be the same. It is important to remember that many organisations, agencies and individuals are involved with the various components of tourism. The tourism strategy will provide the means to bring these different interests together for the benefit of tourist and District as a whole.

MANAGING TOURISM

TOURISM IS NOT JUST ABOUT ACCESS, PLANNING OR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

It's also not just about countryside management or recreation. It is all these things and much more besides, which is why it is such an important thing to get right. If tourism is poorly managed or left to market demand, the District and its communities could become dominated by visitors and the industry that serves them. Visitor pressure could strangle otherwise peaceful communities and, in the case of sensitive landscapes and habitats the sheer weight of numbers could damage and even destroy the very things the visitors have come to enjoy. Nevertheless, these problems can be avoided by a positive approach to tourism management. What is good for tourism can also be good for the local community and the environment if managed wisely and positively by all concerned.

Until the Council established its tourism service a decade ago, no other organisation had taken an overview of tourism as a management issue. Since then, a lot has been done to establish the basic framework of services, activities and relationships that are needed for good tourism management. We have always tried to keep our policies simple. We want the tourism strategy to develop our existing policies and allow them to work more effectively. Our goal is to bring people together.

The Council's tourism service has been committed to a sustainable approach to tourism for some time. Put simply, this is tourism that does not prejudice the future quality of life or the natural and cultural resources of the District. Our task is to balance the needs of the visitor, the tourism industry, the community and, most important, the District's special environment.

Tourism should not take out more than it puts in. As the pace of life quickens, more people will be seeking the refreshment and renewal that a visit to our District can bring. We need to be aware of this and understand how best the District can accommodate the demand.

In this context, responsible management and working partnerships are the keys to creating a successful tourism strategy. There will be a need for co-operation between all

parties in accepting the positive role of tourism and using it responsibly for long term ecological and cultural care. Tourism should not be seen as an end in itself. It can also be a powerful tool in helping to maintain the services, amenities and vitality of the district.

LP6 general policy:

To encourage all parties to work together towards achieving a sustainable tourism industry through a harmonious relationship between our visitors, our environment and our communities.

Partnerships

Managing tourism through partnership is at the very core of our approach. To make tourism work for the whole District, to a greater or lesser extent everyone has a part to play. We have created many working partnerships and we aim to create many more. Perhaps one of the most important is with New Forest Tourism, the district's tourism trade association. The Council were instrumental in establishing the association over five years ago in recognition of the trade's crucial role. Without the co-operation of the local industry it is doubtful whether any long-term strategy will be successful. By working together, we all stand a greater chance of providing a consistent quality of service to the visitor and a sense of purpose and co-ordination to the industry.

NEW FOREST TOURISM

The local tourism trade association; its membership currently stands at nearly 200 and represents businesses from the following groups:

- *Hotels, Guest Houses and Inns*
- *Bed & Breakfast and Farmhouses*
- *Self Catering houses, Cottages and Flats*
- *Holiday parks*
- *Camping and Caravan sites*
- *Pubs, Restaurants, Coffee and Tea Shops*
- *Visitor Attractions*
- *Ferry, Bus and Transport Operations*
- *Retailers and Service Providers*

Another important relationship is with the New Forest Committee. As tourism managers of the District, we have good day-to-day involvement on all tourism matters with the Committee's New Forest office and staff. We have also developed good working partnerships with our town and parish councils, chambers of trade, business associations, community and local groups and individuals concerned with tourism, and we continue to foster their involvement in our proposed strategy. Externally, our aim is to improve the

neighbouring Local Authorities, the Southern Tourist board (STB), the English Tourist Board and the British Tourist Authority.

NEW FOREST COMMITTEE

The body that co-ordinates the management of the New Forest Heritage Area. The committee has an independent Chairman and comprises two representatives from each of the following organisations:

- *Countryside Commission*
- *English Nature*
- *Forestry commission*
- *Hampshire County Council*
- *New Forest District Council*
- *The Court of Verderers*

Research

Recent research has provided us with a lot of information and data about tourism which will give us much of the raw material needed to plan our strategy. However, there are still many things we need to know and it is important that the strategy contains a programme of research. This includes keeping information on tourism establishments up to date. We also need additional information about the different categories of visitors who come to the District and about their special needs e.g. the disabled, overseas visitors, or families with young children.

It is essential that we improve our understanding of the physical and social impact of all visitors on our countryside, coast and towns throughout the year. Tourism is an emotive subject and historically misunderstood by many. There is a continuing need to improve everyone's understanding and knowledge of tourism and how we can all have a role in making a success of it. Research is crucial on this.

KEY ISSUES

IN THIS CONSULTATION PAPER WE HAVE TRIED TO BRING OUT THE IMPORTANT BASIC ISSUES.

The following is a brief outline of local tourism activities and the key questions we believe we must all address if the Council's proposed strategy is to play its part in safeguarding the future of our District and our industry. For simplicity and to reinforce the importance as the cornerstones of tourism, the outline is divided into four sections:

Visitors, The Tourism Industry, The Local Community and The Environment. Key issues are identified '?' in the appropriate margins.

1: VISITORS

VISITORS ARE OUR GUESTS.

As the host authority we recognise that they are part both of the problem and the solution. We accept that people have the right to experience and enjoy our District. What we must do is create the circumstances and opportunities for our visitors to do this in ways that are acceptable to the local community, beneficial to our existing visitor industry and not prejudicial to the condition of our settlements, landscape, nature conservation and cultural heritage.

For visitors, tourism should be an interesting, good value, satisfying and high-quality holiday experience. The way we manage tourism must respect the intelligence of both local people and visitors. Host and holidaymaker should be on equal terms. Through successful tourism, the visitor will gain an in-depth understanding and knowledge of our area, its special way of life and unique landscapes. Welcomed visitors will become involved and, through their enjoyment, develop a sense of personal responsibility and stewardship for the District.

It is useful to categorise visitors in the following way: the day visitor, who travels from outside the District from home or from a holiday elsewhere returning the same day; the local visitor, who lives within the District but visits another part for recreation and leisure activity and the staying visitor. All bring varying benefits and needs, but all have the right to enjoy their visit.

? How can we improve the visitor's experience?

? How can we improve the welcome visitors receive?

DAY VISITORS

Visitors who come just for the day create one of the more difficult issues for local tourism. With the continued growth in car ownership and the new M3 link, it is this group of visitors whose future number might swamp the District. One solution would be to try to persuade visitors to go elsewhere or to locations away from sensitive parts of the District; the question is by what means, incentive or control. Day visitors seldom visit our tourist information centres.

LOCAL VISITORS

People who live in the District probably do not think of themselves as "local visitors". However, many local people are regular users and because of their local knowledge it does raise questions about how this can be managed. Can local visitor pressures be channelled away from sensitive areas, and should there be alternative countryside recreation area close to our towns and villages? A growing number of local visitors use our information services.

STAYING VISITORS

Research has shown that staying visitors in serviced accommodation (hotels, guest houses and bed and breakfast_ provide the largest income and number of jobs et the smallest numbers. However, the vast majority of staying visitors (85%) use self-serviced facilities where the proportion of income and jobs is much lower per guest. In general, staying visitors, having invested in their holiday, are much more likely to spend time and effort in getting to know the District and to behave responsibly. Staying visitors make up the majority of enquiries to our information services.

? Is one category of visitor more important than another?

? How can we control numbers of day visitors

? What categories and numbers of visitors are acceptable?

INFORMATION SERVICES

Good information services are an essential part of visitor management. We have a network of staffed information centres, supported by information points throughout the District. The aim of our service is to provide information to local people and all other visitors, enabling them to enjoy a high-quality experience during their visit or excursion. The service also seeks to gain everybody's understanding and support for the conservation of our District and its natural and cultural heritage. The staffed information service gives us the opportunity to get our messages across personally and to provide a warm welcome at the same time.

We constantly strive to improve the quality and effectiveness of information provided. We are currently renewing and increasing the number of our information points and the quality of the information they provide. We need to know whether current services are adequate and located in the right place. Given the need to stimulate out-of-season business for accommodation, should we consider all-year opening at locations other than Lyndhurst? To help manage visitors on entry, should we investigate gateway services to channel visitors on arrival? We are also part-funders of Rownhams Information Centre on the M27 and we want to find ways of getting more people to use the service before they arrive, especially for caravans at times when the forest sites are full.

One area of information and interpretation services work we want to develop much further is the New Forest Encounter idea. With the Encounter, people who have spent their working lives in the forest introduce visitors to its beauties and secrets. By doing this we not only create local jobs and enjoyment for visitors, we also make sure that there is a better understanding of how special the forest is and why we all need to look after it. This has also been of great benefit when working with journalists and broadcasters. By influencing how they report on the area we can encourage them to include the messages that we, and our partners, are working hard to establish.

We work in partnership with many interests to create the right flow and consistency of information and interpretation. One of the most important is the Information Working Group of the New Forest Committee. Through this group we recently published the Official New Forest guide in partnership with the Forestry Commission. We plan to publish a family of such publications which will complement our existing range of print and continue to develop this consistency of knowledge and understanding in our visitors.

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES			
<i>Visitor per year</i>			
<i>Lyndhurst</i>	<i>Open all year</i>	<i>350,000</i>	<i>NFDC funded and managed</i>
<i>Ringwood</i>	<i>Easter – Sept</i>	<i>70,000</i>	<i>NFDC funded and managed</i>
<i>Lymington</i>	<i>Easter – Sept</i>	<i>70,000</i>	<i>NFDC funded and managed</i>
<i>Fordingbridge</i>	<i>Easter- Sept</i>	<i>21,000</i>	<i>Parish/commercial funded, STB managed</i>

? Can we improve our local and visitor information services? If so How?

? How can we develop the New Forest Encounter on a wider scale?

? Can we develop other ways of communicating with visitors?

? How can we involve the visitor more in the conservation of the District?

2: THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

WE CONSIDER THAT A PROSPEROUS LOCAL ECONOMY SHOULD NOT BE INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE MAINTENANCE OF HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF LIFE.

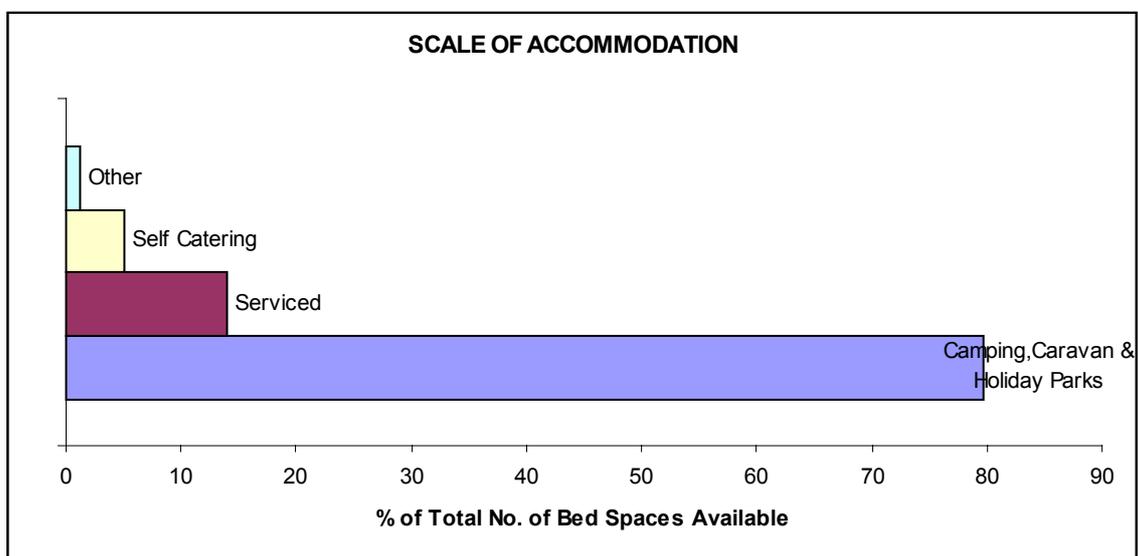
While not wishing to see a return of the development pressures of the late 1980s, the Council wishes to ensure that adequate opportunities exist for the creation of new jobs for local people. In this context it is essential we make the best use of tourism. Research has shown that it is not just the obvious types of business that can benefit from visitor spending.

We believe tourism has a major part to play in supporting the skills and economic activities that are traditional to our District. We want to help the industry to find ways of increasing this support by using employees, products and services from their locality. Tourism can bring valuable extra income the involvement of town and parish councils, chambers of trade, community groups and individuals in this process.

The main issue for the industry is how to provide support for it while protecting the quality of the District on which the industry depends and create the right balance between spending and numbers. There is a general assumption that, because there are so many visitors around, everyone in tourism is making a fortune. We are lucky that we have some very successful operators in the District. However, the vast majority of businesses have had to struggle to stay solvent in recent years. Businesses need the right infrastructure and conditions in which to operate successfully. New Forest Tourism (NFT) offers good mutual support to its members, but how can we develop a wider understanding of the industry's needs? Through our partnership with NFT we have been able to achieve a better mutual understanding of issues critical to the industry such as planning and highway matters. How can we take this relationship further?

We believe a New Forest holiday should be synonymous with quality. We want to develop ideas on how the quality standards and economic benefits of tourism can be improved throughout the tourism industry. We also want to suggest how we can better involve all visitor-related businesses in our overall goals. How can the industry play a greater role in helping channel visitors? Can trade help us more with interpretation and information? The way the industry operates has an enormous effect on visitor management. The New Forest is a special place, and we would like to see a special quality of industry serving it.

The local tourism industry is broadly made up of these groups: Accommodation providers; commercial visitor attractions and other visitor related businesses such as pubs, restaurants, retailers, transport etc.



? How can we develop more local jobs from tourism that make use of traditional skills and activities?

? How can we support the industry and protect the place on which it depends?

? How can we get the right balance between income and visitor numbers?

? How can we get a better balance between the type and location of accommodation and the total number of spaces?

Accommodation

We know that serviced accommodation earns by far the most income and creates the greatest number of jobs from the smallest number of visitors. Holiday Parks provide good numbers of both jobs and visitors. However, caravan and campsites produce the smallest income and number of jobs per visitor, but by far the greatest number of staying visits. If we want to reduce overall numbers without a loss of jobs and income, is there a case for trying to stimulate the provision of serviced accommodation and reduce the number of camping bed spaces, especially in the centre of the forest? Should these be reduced in total or simply moved away from the centre? In short, is there a better balance to be achieved between the type and location of accommodation and the total number of bed spaces?

VISITOR ATTRACTIONS					
	Open	Visits per year		Open	Visits per year
Beaulieu	All year	466618	Sammy Miller Motor Cycles	All year	15000
Paultons Park	March-Oct	400000	Breamore house	April-Sept	15000
Buckler's Hard	All year	175000	Eling Tide Mill	All year	15000
Exbury Gardens	March-Oct	147577	Rockbourne Roman Villa	April-Sept	10000
New Forest Butterfly Farm	April-Oct	100000	Longdown Dairy Farm	April-Oct	N/A
New Forest Museum	All year	63382	NewForest Show	3 days	100000
Hurst Castle	All year	26488	Lepe Country Park	All year	750000
Furzey Gardens	All year	17000			

Visitor Attractions

Commercial Attractions also create a large income and numbers of jobs. Just our two largest operators between them generate many millions of pounds in revenue and over 400 jobs. Some of our commercial attractions also have scope for deflecting visitors who might otherwise add to pressures in more sensitive areas. We want to address the benefits and potential roles of attractions in the strategy.

Other Visitor Businesses

Pubs, Restaurants, retailers and transport operators all benefit from both day and staying visitor spending. It is this group who are least represented in the membership of NFT and they are less likely to be involved in mainstream tourism. We want to find ways of involving this sector of the industry more closely in our efforts to achieve co-ordination within the trade, especially in marketing.

? How can we get the right balance between visitor numbers and visitor facilities?

? How can we develop the best quality of facilities and service throughout the industry?

Marketing

We recognise that, appealing and good as New Forest holidays are, gone are the days when they sold themselves. If we are to sustain a viable, prosperous tourism industry in the increasingly competitive world of tourism, we must have an effective marketing programme. We must market to stay in business, but we must do it in a way that is best for all long-term interests. We don't want to simply succumb to the demands of the marketplace.

For the last few years we have operated a joint "Little Acorns" Marketing Programme in partnership with New Forest Tourism. The aim is to sell the District to staying visitors, especially out of season. We have worked very hard to create the right images and messages to both appeal and inform. As a result, during the recession, occupancy levels have been maintained. Nevertheless, there is a lot of spare capacity. In the medium term our aim is to increase occupancy, which is crucial for serviced accommodation where it is low – particularly mid week. Our ultimate goal is an industry working at maximum effectiveness.

We publish a wide range of high-quality leaflets and brochures to support our work in marketing, again with the same consistency of images and messages. Emphasis is placed on selling the unique environmental and cultural qualities of the District. We aim our activities very carefully. By stressing this special nature in all our activities, we try to create a feeling of respect and stewardship before our visitors arrive. We willingly accept that the irresponsible visitor may well feel put off by our caring attitude.

It is a Mistake to believe that marketing will inevitably lead to more visitors. Our marketing programme seeks to achieve the right numbers and type of visitors, in the right place at the right time. By targeting those people we know will spend the most within our District, we can also increase the economic benefits per visitor. Similarly, by promoting appropriate towns and villages in conjunction with local trade organisations we can help to reduce pressure on the forest itself, bringing people into areas where they can spend money at the same time. Commercial attractions can have a similar function, diverting visitor pressure in an economically beneficial way.

We are also selective in our external partnerships and only work with those tour operators and travel companies who understand our position and are sympathetic to our goals. The strength of our relationship with New Forest Tourism enables us to act in a united and cohesive manner to protect this approach.

Marketing is an essential aspect of good management and, far from being a mere creator of volume, it helps us to attract the right sort of visitors and influence them to behave in the appropriate manner during their visit. Ours is an "evergreen" product rather than one

driven by fashionable themes in the market place. The industry realises the benefits of this approach to tourism marketing, which we will develop further in the strategy.

? Is our approach to marketing correct?

? How can we develop a greater support and involvement by all interests in marketing activities?

3: THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

IT IS LARGELY LOCAL PEOPLE WHO HAVE CREATED THE IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT.

Visitors are guests in the local community and contact with local people can make or mar the experience. Visitors who are treated to a warm welcome very rarely create problems and are more likely to develop a respect for the place and its people. We know this from the feedback we get through our information centres.

There is little point in developing a high-quality visitor industry if the local people are hostile to visitors. The main reasons for this are usually more about overcrowding and traffic congestion rather than simply the presence of visitors. If we can find ways to solve these issues, local people will be more likely to support our efforts and less likely to see visitors as the enemy.

The other main problem is that much of the local community is unaware of the benefits and opportunities tourism brings. Without visitor spending, the community would lose many of the services and small businesses that rely on visitor income for viability. This is especially the case in outlying parts of the District where post offices, shops and pubs could not be kept open by local use alone.

We are working with the Ninth Centenary Trust's Education Service to develop a programme of activities for local residents that promote debate and improve their understanding of the New Forest, its visitors and their needs. Wherever people live in the District, their understanding of tourism and its benefits will be essential in making the whole thing work. There are broadly four groups that make up our community:

The Resident

Local residents with no direct interest in tourism make up the majority of our community. Whatever their involvement, the interaction between local residents and visitors is very important. We want to develop ways of improving this relationship.

The Business Community

There are very few businesses in the District that don't directly or indirectly derive some benefit from visitors. Many people in this group recognise the value of visitors and are

generally supportive of their needs. We want to find ways of developing this support and making it work more effectively for the benefit of tourism as a whole.

The Political Community

Getting the needs of tourism incorporated into all relevant political decisions will be crucial to the success of any strategy. We will continue to promote those needs to all executive agencies and elected representatives.

The Commoning Community

For the New Forest itself, the small number of practising commoners are an essential component in maintaining its ancient traditions of free roaming animals. As an economic way of life commoning is under threat; this simple fact has drastic implications for the future life cycle of the forest. More and more commoners are turning to tourism to provide the essential extra income needed to keep the practice going. We want to develop ideas on how this support can be improved, especially for younger members of commoning families.

? How can we improve community involvement and ownership of tourism issues?

? How can tourism further support commoning?

4: The Environment

WITHOUT THE UNIQUE QUALITY OF THE NEW FOREST, AVON VALLY AND COAST, THERE WOULD BE LITTLE POINT IN VISITORS COMING.

Good environmental management is crucial in tourism as in anything else. The need for sustainability is well documented; existing plans stress the landscape, cultural and nature conservation value of the District and contain policies which aim to protect it.

The District is covered by structure plans and local plans, prepared by Hampshire County and New Forest District Councils respectively. The County Council has begun a review of the County Structure Plan extending the period covered to 2011. We are also revising our Local Plans to combine them into a single District Local Plan, which will be published for public comment in autumn this year. This new District Local Plan will reflect our Tourism Policies.

Countryside, Recreation and Open Space Management all play an essential role in the way we look after our environment. There are many agencies involved in these activities, most notably the Forestry Commission, the County council and the District Council. There are also many large landowners such as the National Trust and private estates. We want to develop ideas on the roles these elements can play in supporting good tourism management through the proposed strategy.

We recognise that some areas of the District are valued for being wild and remote and should remain so. Tourism activities and development should always respect the scale, nature and character of the place in which they are sited. Proposals for development should always be tempered by the suitability and capacity of the site and the surrounding areas to absorb visitors. Tourism can also assist conservation by bringing sympathetic new uses to historic buildings in our towns and countryside.

It maybe helpful to think of Tourism as a crop, something that has to be planned and planted at the right time in the right place. With proper cultivation and care it can then be harvested by the whole community for their benefit and that of the visitor and the place. In a dynamic world, some change is inevitable and can often be beneficial. The distinctive and highly valued character and landscapes of our district will continue to evolve through small scale changes. Major changes to the landscape are unacceptable.

We recognise that we still don't know much about the physical effect of visiting on our environment. Where are the sensitive areas? Are they just in the countryside? We will also investigate whether zoning visitor activities and controlling access have roles to play in helping to conserve the more sensitive parts of the District as well as improving enjoyment and general visitor management.

Visitors cannot spend money on open countryside. The strategy will include some ideas on how tourism can help the regeneration of some of our towns and larger villages such as Fordingbridge, and draw off pressure from sensitive areas at the same time.

- ? How can we know what tourism is right for which part of our District?
- ? How can visitor attractions, town and countryside facilities play a role in intercepting visitors that might otherwise visit more sensitive parts of the District
- ? How can planning and other management policies better support tourism without threatening the quality of the New Forest or Coast?

Access and Signposting

The way local people and visitors gain access to and get around the District and their effect on the road network is one of the very basic components of local tourism. We have worked with Hampshire County council and our partners on the New Forest Committee and Highway Strategy Group to implement 40mph speed limit. The highway Strategy Group has been reformed to review the District's road network and transport arrangements. We will continue to experiment with and develop our ideas for managing the way visitors move around our District within this forum.

We are currently working with South West Trains, Wilts and Dorset Buses and other local transport in an attempt to reduce car use by both staying and day visitors. We want to find ways of including the Encounter idea in this process. We are also working to create a network of cycle routes and long distance walks to create further alternatives to

car use and improve visitor management. There are many other more complex measures that now need to be investigated before further solutions can be adopted.

Traffic levels nationally are predicted to rise nearly 50% within the next 15-20 years. This is potentially the biggest threat to the New Forest as a natural habitat, a community and as a visitor destination. If we are to avoid strangulation of the District by traffic, we need to consider measures to divert through traffic and manage local vehicle movements. There is a wide range of measures that should be considered, relying on incentives and disincentives to drivers. These might include road closures within the forest but road upgrading for through traffic, remote parking with park and ride services, restrictions to vehicle access but improved public transport. The location of walks, rides, car parks, campsites and other visitor facilities could be planned to minimise traffic within the Forest, whilst also providing for increased visitor capacity in other appropriate locations.

However they travel, we recognise that visitors need well defined routes and points of access to find their way around and enjoy our District. In conjunction with the Highway Authority and other partners we will actively encourage good traffic management and signposting throughout the District.

? How can we reduce traffic pressures?

? What sort of traffic system do we want?

? Should we consider regulating visitor access to certain parts of the District and, if so, how?

? How can tourism help to improve public transport and pedestrian access?

SUMMARY

TOURISM IS A COMPLEX AND EMOPTIVE SUBJECT WITHIN OUR DISTRICT.

In this report we have tried to explain our role as the Districts tourism managers and identify what we believe are the very basic issues.

A prosperous tourism industry need not lead to greater visitor numbers. Effective and imaginative management might even reduce numbers. Successful tourism will be about being strategic and flexible in planning terms, working in partnership and co-ordinating action in its development. Most importantly it will be about adapting and evolving our approach to ensure the that needs and demands of the visitor, industry, community and environment are all kept in equilibrium.

One thing is clear – whatever we do, visitors will continue to want to come in their millions every year. Much has already been done to promote the idea that what is good for tourism can also be good for the local quality of life and vice-versa. The two are

inextricably linked and how we choose to manage this complex relationship will be a test of courage, foresight and co-operation.

The crucial issue is how to create the conditions in which the District can respond to any of the threats, yet also seize the opportunities and benefits that tourism may bring. How can we balance the needs of tourism with those of the District and its communities? Can we control numbers and movement? Can we improve visitor appreciation and participation? What roles does the industry play in helping to bring this about? There is no doubt that the forest and the District must come first; without it unique quality there would be little tourism. The area is accepted as being a very special place; we should not be afraid to develop the measures necessary to properly protect it and its characteristics way of life.