

“Your Future, Your Say” Draft Tourism Strategy: Response of the Sustainability Commission

Overall in sustainability terms, the document does not address sustainability in any depth or look at actions to resolve conflicts between growth of tourism and use of natural resources, environmental protection, and social justice and inclusion of local residents.

Whilst it is important in sustainability terms that the city continues to prosper economically, of which tourism is undoubtedly a large contributor to, these needs have to be balanced with other factors. These include the needs of the local community who not only benefit from the opportunities available (both for work and for their own leisure time) of a growth in tourism, but are also those who suffer from negative effects such as crowds, litter and anti-social behaviour.

As well as the negative aspects mentioned, there are also opportunities in tourism in relation to sustainability. Climate change has not been mentioned in the document. Whilst the impact of tourism would be in levels of greenhouse gas emission from different activities and the obvious increase with increased levels of activity unless this is addressed, there is also the other side which regards adaptation. There are opportunities for tourism in climate change which need to be addressed in a long term plan, which although we are unclear as to what the exact effects will be, need to be considered. Any Strategy will need to be flexible around this, allowing for factors such as longer, hotter summers, wetter winters, changes to infrastructure such as roads and buildings.

The British Tourist Authority's four key principles to evaluate their campaigns against are useful in this context: visitor satisfaction; industry profitability; community acceptance; environmental protection.

This summarises the concept of sustainability: it looks to balance economic needs with social and environmental ones. There is a need for a holistic view of tourism and a greater understanding of these links.

What follows are comments and suggestions about each section of the Strategy.

Section 1

The concept of sustainable tourism needs to be introduced at this stage, noting primarily: a) the needs of the local community and our obligations to them; b) our special natural environment (the sea and the Downs) and our need to conserve it especially, in this context, as it is such a large draw for tourists to the area; c) the links that are made to transport issues in the second last paragraph are important, but also added to this should be the major impact on natural resources, and community safety; d) the additional burden placed on our infrastructure by thousands of people adding to our numbers (e.g. waste, pollution etc.) and the need to address this with the tourism industry.

Action in this area (rather than words) is obviously extremely important, but there is also merit in labelling what we are doing “sustainable tourism” to embed the concept of thinking sustainably into everyone who is involved in tourism.

Section 2

Key 1 Quality

Quality is an important issue, and the need to address a range of facilities which are not exclusive is welcomed. With the issue of keeping a city clean with huge numbers of tourists should be the amount of waste produced and the need for this to be recycled. This should be the responsibility of businesses and events organisers. This ties in with BIDs and the need for judgement on the types of projects approved, considering their environmental impact. Also in this is the whole question of disposable items because of non-local visitors, and the need of businesses to address this.

It is recognised that improved water quality is an important issue, and such issues are ones which need to be discussed by the tourism industry both in what is needed and what they can contribute towards water quality.

Information to the tourist industry of how to be more sustainable in their practices, become involved in sustainable business partnerships, work towards sustainable business awards etc. would improve the quality of their service.

Key 2 Competitiveness

It is important to address the independent, small business sector, and encourage local, locally sourced, businesses. The impact of large brands would be greater than smaller businesses in terms of size as well as product miles of national and international companies. Whilst smaller independent businesses have a personal investment and interest in the well being of the area because their livelihood depends on this, the same is not the case for large brands who have stakes in many towns and cities.

The emphasis on the seafront development needs to be on access to transport and local consultation on these large developments.

Agree with the emphasis on the tourism industry trying to get local people to accept tourism, although the emphasis on them being negative to visitors gives the wrong impression. It is the problems of tourism (such as those addressed in this response) that some people may disagree with rather than visitors themselves, and this is what needs to be addressed by this Strategy.

Key 3 Safety on the Streets

Acknowledgement is needed that local residents, as well as visitors, enjoying a night out can feel intimidated.

It is good to see that the balance between encouraging the evening economy and avoiding anti-social behaviour is going to be explored.

Key 4 Cultural Investment

It should be stated that culture should be developed and available for all, not just for “high-spending” visitors. This does not tie in with the Community Strategy aim of Brighton and Hove being an “inclusive city”. However, it is appreciated that to maintain the economy there may be a need to target certain sectors to increase spending and allow free events such as Party in the Park and Pride to continue and be enjoyed by all. Perhaps this “high-spending” strategy should be targeted at the business tourism sector, allowing leisure tourism to be for everyone.

This links with seasonality, and encouraging visitors over the whole year. When discussing events, consideration should be given to the large amount of energy used at these events, and the large amount of waste that will be produced. Ways of tackling this need to be identified. Organisers should be encouraged and given guidance on reducing waste, and recycling facilities need to be provided for events. Especially as we grow to host “really big events”, this needs to be factored in as part of this process.

Key 5 Transport

Suggesting that visitors could come by car if they “wish” contradicts the council’s aim of reducing journeys by car and encouraging people to use public transport – this applies for those coming into the city as well as residents.

The emphasis is not necessarily on removing options for people who need to use different modes of transport, but encouraging and providing facilities for those who use sustainable forms of transport.

The reference to car use should have the emphasis on those such as the registered disabled and delivery drivers, who need to use private transport.

The reference to better public transport for different needs is welcome e.g. evening services, cross country services and coach facilities.

It would also be useful to mention the journeys that can be enjoyed by bus (e.g. Devil’s Dyke bus), and the cycling opportunities to places like Stanmer Park.

The fact that the city is also easily accessible on foot should be recognised and encouraged.

The question on congestion charging is welcome as this is an important issue that needs to be discussed. The complexity with tourism is that it does bring in extra traffic to the city through visitors, but also through those providing the service.

The runway issue at Gatwick needs to take into account sustainability issues not only in Brighton and Hove, but quality of life of those nearby weighed up against any additional business we may receive. This ties in with sustainability objectives of “think global, act local”.

The siting of events and the capacity of the public transport system in the area of these events need to be considered – events and new developments need to be considered in terms of their accessibility to those travelling by public transport, both within and from outside the city.

Key 6 Promotion

The reference to encouraging high earners for the least environmental damage does not make sense in sustainability terms. This excludes those who are less

fortunate and are not “high earners” from enjoying the same cultural rights as others. This also contradicts the suggestions in Key 1 on not being exclusive. Question 4 asks how important it is that tourism development has no or minimal negative impact on the environment – the Commission would of course feel that this is extremely important, but I am not sure that this document addresses how this would be overcome in any meaningful, targeted way. Some of the issues raised above would minimise negative environmental impact e.g. water efficiency, energy efficiency, waste minimisation, recycling. Guidance to the tourism industry on their impact on the environment could be given e.g. renewable energy, ecolabelling, the hotel industries impact etc.