

**Strategic priority five**

**Maintain high awareness of Sussex by the Sea among key visitor target groups and promote it effectively as an attractive visitor destination in order to remain competitive.**

- Develop the Sussex by the Sea brand - including expansion to encompass other resorts where appropriate and trademark registration
- Adopt new techniques to research and segment the market according to VAL (values attitudes and lifestyles) criteria, then focus resources on as few key market segments as possible
- Identify features that could be developed into distinctive propositions with appeal to the key market segments
- Invest in e-marketing, including developing the e-business platform; improving customer relationship management and direct e-marketing; maximising web presence and e-distribution channels; and increasing industry participation in e-business and online bookability
- Develop targeted marketing plans to position the destination competitively, promote to selected market sectors and support by an appropriate level of funding
- Participate in regional and sub-regional partnership promotion directed at overseas visitors and at the domestic short break sector (including applying for Arundel to join the Southern Cities Consortium)
- Promote niche Activity Breaks through regional and sub regional partnerships, and directly where appropriate and affordable
- Work closely with the South Downs Visitor Forum and emerging National Park Authority to establish Arundel as the 'Gateway to the South Downs National Park'.
- Adopt a "healthy lifestyle" platform for promoting the destination
- Participate in Activities and Initiatives to raise the profile of Coastal Resorts undertaken by the British Resorts Association
- Develop a new partnership Press and Public Relations campaign, sustained over the life of the strategy

**Delivery framework**

**The need for partnership**

Tourism is, by its nature, fragmented. Over 80% of visitor businesses are small or micro businesses. The visitor experience is usually provided by many different businesses, plus the public sector which makes it difficult to deliver a uniformly high quality visitor experience without a strong partnership and its commitment to common goals.

The public sector - including town, district and county councils - plays a key role in this industry:

- as a 'supplier' and 'steward' of the visitor experience - e.g. providing and maintaining the seafronts and beaches, outdoor events, parks, highways, countryside, leisure venues, car parks, signs, lighting and public toilets
- as policy and decision makers on planning, development, conservation, transport, environmental health, trading standards and licensing
- Providing leadership and co-ordination to all the diverse aspects of the industry, and establishing a strategic framework for the destination
- through promoting the destination and providing help and advice for visitors

To make a real difference, stakeholders in Sussex by the Sea's visitor economy - public and private sector - need to work together, presenting visitors and potential visitors with consistent and positive messages and a seamless, high quality, enjoyable visitation experience.

Sussex by the Sea needs a delivery structure, involving public and private sector stakeholders, to implement the Visitor Strategy and Action Plan. The following delivery structure aims to build upon the enthusiasm and commitment of the local Focus Groups which were enthusiastic partners in the creation of the strategy.

- Three Local Visitor Strategy Groups - one each for Arundel, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton - comprising a mix of public and private sector stakeholders, (where a suitable partnership already exists this need not be duplicated). Each partnership would be facilitated by a member of the Council's Destination Management Team.
- An umbrella, Sussex by the Sea - wide group made up of representatives from each of the three groups.
- Each local partnership group will be expected to deliver components of the Action Plan as appropriate for the locality.
- The local groups should include the Town Councils, and representatives from the local Chambers of Commerce/Town Centre Management groups, as well as key tourism businesses. They may co-opt others for specific projects and discussions.



**Who are Sussex by the Sea's visitors and where do they come from?**

- 90% come for a holiday or leisure day out
- 8% are visiting friends or relations
- 1% are visiting on business
- 1% are visiting for other reasons.

Most visitors to Arundel and Littlehampton are day visitors (only 9% of visitors to Arundel and 13% of visitors to Littlehampton stay overnight).

More than half of Bognor Regis's visitors (56%) stay for at least 1 night

**Key facts about Tourism in Sussex by the Sea**

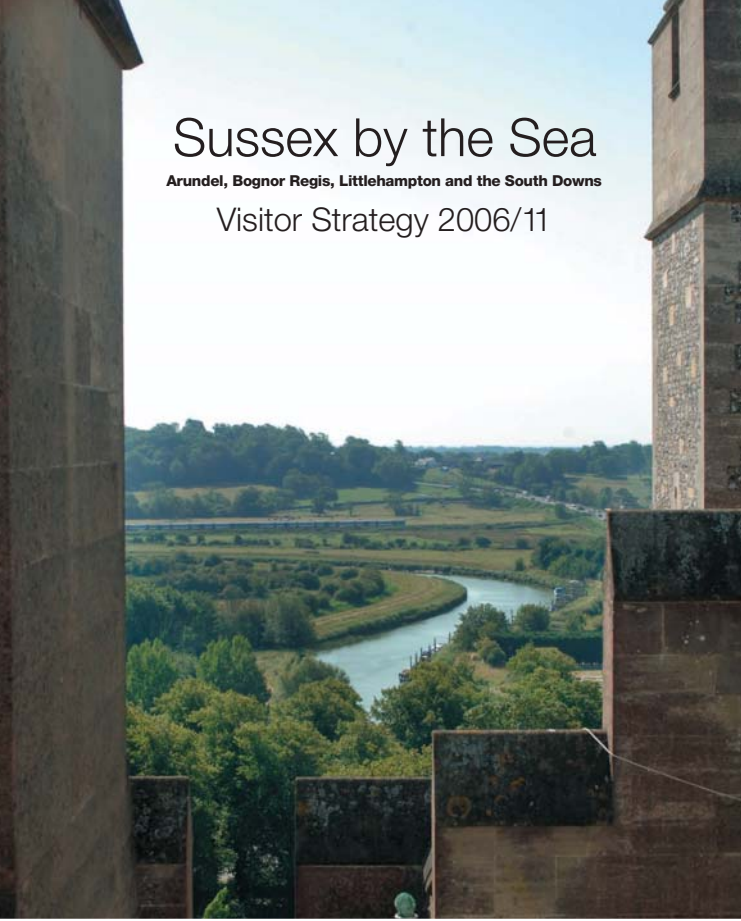
- Over 5 million visitors each year
- 90% are here for a holiday or leisure visit
- £187m spent by visitors in the local economy each year
- second largest visitor economy in West Sussex
- Over 90 visitor attractions
- 14.5 miles of coastline
- 120 Visitor Accommodation establishments including 13 caravan sites
- 3,316 rooms / pitches and 10,101 total bedspaces
- 2 nature reserves
- Bognor Regis has more hours of sunshine than any other part of the British mainland
- Butlin's Bognor Regis accounts for 30% of visitor nights
- Over 65% of visitors come from London and the South east

**In 2005 Sussex by the Sea attracted:**

2.2 million	Visitor nights
3.1 million	day visitors and
£187million	visitor expenditure



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# Sussex by the Sea

Arundel, Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and the South Downs

## Visitor Strategy 2006/11



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### Sussex by the Sea

Is the visitor destination brand for the Arun district. It encompasses the historic town of Arundel; the seaside resorts of Bognor Regis and Littlehampton; and the towns, villages and coast in between.

Sussex by the Sea is one of the 6 most recognised visitor destinations in the whole South East England region.

The brand attracts visitors through its timeless, nostalgic, quintessentially English appeal – and is even celebrated in a famous piece of music written in the early 1900's.

#### Why is a 'Visitor Strategy' needed?

Tourism is now the world's largest industry, with 700 million visitors spending over £400 billion each year. It is encouraged and promoted by governments and public sector agencies all over the world because of the enormous economic, social and environmental benefits which it brings to local communities, and because of the "halo" effect it provides for business investment and development. If a place is attractive to visitors it is also seen as a good place to live, work, and do business.

Competition for the inward investment which the expenditure of visitors represents has become intense. Quite apart from other UK destinations – many of which enjoy much higher levels of public sector funding – there is literally a world of choice now available thanks to cheap air travel, and highly competitive prices pushed down by competitive pressures.

Shaping places to make them more attractive for visitors; improving the quality of the visitor experience and promoting them effectively is, therefore, more important than ever before. But now there is another equally important challenge – ensuring that visitor destinations remain viable and attractive for future generations – or in other words making them sustainable.



#### What does it mean for the Arun District?

Arun has been attracting visitors since Roger de Montgomery, one of William the Conqueror's Norman barons came here in 1066 and built Arundel Castle – although its original purpose was quite the opposite!

220 years ago Sir Richard Holtam came to Holtshampton (now Bognor Regis) and decided to create a genteel and more refined seaside resort to rival the more brash and decadent attraction of Brighton. Since then many thousands of visitors through the generations, including many Royal ones, have been attracted by Arun's coast, its healthy climate and its glorious countryside.

Arun has the second largest visitor economy in West Sussex with 3.7 million visitors spending £187 million annually. This equates to £1,269 for every single resident. Tourism is the largest sector of Arun's economy and one of its most important sources of employment supporting over 3,000 jobs – 6% of the workforce\*

The pattern of Arun's tourism has changed substantially even in the last 10 years. Although many families still holiday for a week or two in a Seaside resort during July or August, there is now far more diversity. The long stay domestic holiday market has been in decline right across the UK for many years, but short breaks, activity holidays, Visiting Friends and Family (VFR) and visits by people from abroad have all increased. Cultural tourism, sports tourism and business tourism are all examples of other market sectors which have also expanded rapidly over the last decade.

Arun is fortunate in that its visitor attractions are many and varied. Bognor Regis, with new investment in Butlin's continues to attract the traditional family holiday market as well as short breaks and entertainment – related tourism. Arundel, with its unique qualities of location, heritage, wildlife and culture attracts visitors seeking such experiences and has strong appeal for visitors from abroad. Littlehampton, with its sandy beach, Harbour Park, and newly regenerated riverside is increasingly attracting attention as a re-visited destination which is "cool" to visit.

### The Strategy

This is a strategy for the whole of the Arun district - 'Sussex by the Sea' - not just for Arun District Council. The strategy has been prepared in consultation with key members of the local tourism industry and its success in making Sussex by the Sea a thriving and sustainable visitor destination will depend on it being supported and delivered by all stakeholders.

#### Strategic priority one

**Diversify the coastal tourism product to provide better quality infrastructure and more facilities to meet the specific needs of new target groups of visitors – e.g. water sports participants, attracting external funding wherever possible.**

- Ensure that the need for more, and better visitor attractions, resources and facilities is taken into account in the Masterplans for the regeneration of Bognor Regis and Littlehampton with particular emphasis to be placed on the development of all - weather facilities.
- Identify "core tourism areas" with special planning provisions
- Develop appropriate infrastructure and facilities to underpin a re-positioning in the market of Bognor Regis and Littlehampton as Watersports resorts.
- Continue to explore other opportunities for sector specific facilities and attractions including the viability of a new multi - purpose hall in Bognor Regis
- Identify the opportunities for the visitor economy of a new Marina in Bognor Regis, and how these can be maximised
- Participate in sub - regional initiatives to support year – round opening of visitor attractions and facilities
- Explore available sources of External Funding to facilitate the above

#### Strategic priority two

**Increase the value of the Visitor Economy by increasing the proportion of staying visitors; extending the length of stay; attracting more visitors from overseas; and stimulating the VFR sector.**

- Use marketing techniques to promote the destination as an attractive destination in which to stay for an additional night. Key targets will be people on short breaks, activity breaks, business visitors and overseas visitors.
- Develop a scheme to encourage VFR visitors and their hosts to use local attractions and businesses, increasing spend and retaining it within the destination.
- Improve visitor information collection and distribution, using new technology to make information easily accessible and tailored to the interests and motivation of the visitor and potential visitor - at planning stage as well as during the visit and after they return home
- Work in conjunction with local town centre and retailer groups and Chambers of Commerce to develop plans to encourage higher visitor spending
- Improve facilities for higher-spending niches such as day/staying watersports visitors - e.g. technical resources such as air supply and slipways, training centres, showers, appropriate standard and type of food and drink outlets
- Develop a more balanced evening economy focusing on attracting and encouraging businesses entertainment facilities and events which will appeal to visitors in the 45+ age group.
- Attract a higher proportion of visitors from overseas – with their greater spending power.
- Attract and support events that will appeal to the core visitor market segment(s) but that also enhance residents' lives



#### Strategic priority three

**Improve the Quality of the visitor experience so that it is consistently high and exceeds visitor expectations**

- Work in partnership with public agencies and businesses to work towards provision of a seamless, high quality visitor experience. Establish a new Local Industry Partnership with this as one of its primary objectives (Chapter 6)
- Encourage existing businesses to upgrade, invest and participate in National customer – focused quality initiatives ( e.g. National Quality Assurance Scheme; Green Tourism Business Scheme) where they are considered to be appropriate to local circumstances
- Maintain the highest standards of beach cleanliness and safety in order to qualify for and promote Clean Beach (European Blue Flag) status for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton
- Work with skills agencies and training providers to engage businesses in workforce development – particularly with People 1st (the new Hospitality Sector Skills Council)
- Initiate a Visitor Care training programme for people whose jobs bring them into regular contact with visitors
- Within Arun District Council Establish a Destination Management Group to integrate and co-ordinate the plans and activities of Council departments which have a visitor impact
- Use the resources and expertise of University College Chichester and work with them for mutual benefit.

#### Strategic priority four

**Develop Destination sustainability – so that Sussex by the Sea is recognised as a sustainable destination with a thriving industry where visitors are welcomed by the local community and the impact upon the local environment is a positive one.**

- Work to ensure that local residents, opinion formers and decision makers understand the value of visitors and the importance of sustainable tourism development
- Work to ensure that residents are aware of new developments and investments in the visitor economy and other regeneration projects, so that they feel pride of place.
- Arun District Council to adopt policies which are consistent with the need to protect existing visitor resources and facilities including visitor accommodation and attractions
- Support regional and sub – regional "Green Tourism" business schemes and provide facilities to educate and engage the local industry in sustainable tourism techniques
- Establish a Sustainability culture among local tourism operators and providers and encourage maximum take-up of the Green Tourism Business Scheme
- Work in partnership with transport operators (e.g. Southern Trains) to stimulate greater use of public transport to from and between the resorts.

