

Gosport Tourism

A way forward



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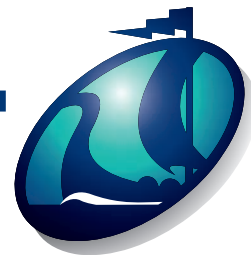
Towards - 2010

This document has been produced on behalf of the Gosport Tourism Forum

by Gosport Borough Council

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BOROUGH COUNCIL



CONTENTS

Section	Page
Gosport – The Location	
• <i>National Perspective</i>	1
• <i>Regional Perspective</i>	1
• <i>Local Perspective</i>	1
Strategic Context	
• <i>Gosport's Community Strategy</i>	2
• <i>Gosport Borough Local Plan</i>	2
• <i>Gosport's Cultural Strategy</i>	2
Role of Partnerships	
• <i>Gosport Tourism Forum</i>	3
• <i>Tourism Steering Group</i>	3
• <i>Attractions Sector Sub Group</i>	3
• <i>Research</i>	3
Views of the Tourism Industry	
• <i>Challenges and Opportunities</i>	4
Tourism in Gosport over the next 5 years	
• <i>Strengths and Improvement Opportunities</i>	4
Priority Areas	5
Achievements	
• <i>Tourism Marketing Activity</i>	6
• <i>Training for the Industry</i>	6
The Future	7

PREAMBLE

During 2004, the Tourism Forum agreed to produce a document that would assist the development of tourism in Gosport and enable all businesses and organisations involved in the industry to contribute to greater opportunity and a more prosperous level of activity.

This document presents the various issues identified through an integrated process with members and key partners that will help to inform and guide the subsequent actions through to 2010.

GOSPORT – the Location

Gosport enjoys a prime site on the coast in Southern Hampshire, with a location on the Solent adjacent to Portsmouth Harbour. The town has a history and heritage with a strong maritime flavour and has a small, but relatively well known range of visitor attractions, including 2 national award winning attractions – The Royal Navy Submarine Museum and Explosion! - Museum of Naval Firepower.

There has been significant improvement to the town over the last few years with the renaissance of Portsmouth Harbour Project, including the “Millennium promenade”, the re-development of Royal Clarence Yard and Priddy’s Hard and other major marina areas. Although well known across Hampshire and the immediate locality, Gosport is less well known outside the county and in the overseas market.

National Perspective

Tourism is the UK’s sixth largest industry. It is valued at £76 billion and employs 7.4% of the workforce, sustaining 2.1 million full time equivalent jobs. The Government recognised the importance of tourism in its first national tourism strategy ‘Tomorrow’s Tourism’, published in 1999. The message of the strategy is that tourism is important to the economy and needs to be attractive and competitive.



Regional Perspective

In July 2004 Tourism South East launched the new headline regional strategy setting out a broad vision for tourism over the next 5 years. The 6 sub regional tourism partnerships, of which Hampshire is one, have also been tasked with determining their own priorities and actions which will feed into the full version of the regional tourism strategy.

In turn it is important that the strategy for Gosport takes into account the work carried out at both sub regional and tourist board level. Hampshire’s statement of priorities identifies the following 3 tourism priorities:

- Effective Marketing
- Improving Product Development /Quality
- Developing Strong Partnerships.



Hampshire’s statement links Gosport’s local priorities to the specific challenges and opportunities for the county. A key opportunity will be available by taking part in the investment that the County Council is making in the Destination Management System to coordinate and enhance the effectiveness of partnership working.

Local Perspective

Gosport Borough Council has historically recognised the importance and significance of tourism to the Borough working closely for a number of years with the regional agency for tourism - Tourism South East (formerly the Southern Tourist Board), whom it appointed to deliver this function on its behalf.

This relationship dates back over 15 years, and has also included the joint Gosport & Fareham 3 year tourism initiative supported by Konver funding. It currently supports the management of the Tourist Information Centre and the provision of a tourism officer for Gosport for 2 1/2 days per week. The latter agreement was established to replace the Konver initiative in recognition of the key role that tourism plays in Gosport. The current 3-year agreement, which expires in March 2006, is reviewed annually in September. The agreement has recently been approved to its next review end date of March 2009.



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

In order to assist all tourism related organisations in Gosport to contribute towards the continued success of the industry, it is necessary to devise a strategic approach to how services, facilities and activities might develop. This Strategy document has been compiled through the Tourism Forum to reflect the views of the key players in the tourism industry and therefore allow all stakeholders to shape the future of this significant aspect of the local economy.

Gosport's Community Strategy

The Strategy includes the following Cultural objective:

"To provide, manage and facilitate a variety of leisure, recreation, cultural and tourism opportunities for residents of, and visitors to the Borough."

The growing importance of tourism to the Borough's economy is recognised in a number of Council documents. In particular, the Corporate Plan 2005-2008 identifies a number of strategic priorities, the delivery of which will improve infrastructure and opportunities that support tourism activity:

- A high quality waterfront
- Quality public areas and green spaces
- Improved promotion of tourism opportunities
- Better leisure facilities and increased usage
- Increased investment in Gosport's economy
- Improved access to the Gosport peninsula

Gosport Borough Local Plan

The Plan was revised in 2004 and makes reference to a number of areas relevant to the tourism industry. The Plan describes the views of the Council towards aspects such as development principles, transportation, employment and the economy, retail, leisure provision, heritage, open space and coastal issues.

A number of references are made to tourism related areas of activity and the need to achieve improved facilities and increased opportunities. Recognition is given to the existing benefits of maritime location, naval heritage and quality of attractions and accommodation, although limited in number.

The Plan looks to build upon these attributes in a sustainable way and to achieve continuing improvement and opportunity in the future.

Gosport's Cultural Strategy

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) defines culture as incorporating:

'Arts, sport, libraries, museums, heritage, archaeology, archives, architecture, crafts, children's play, parks, **tourism** and countryside recreation.'

Given the significance of tourism to the local economy and the varied range of service providers, it is considered important that a separate Strategic Document be written to provide greater focus on the specific issues affecting the industry and its future development.

This was emphasised in the report by the Audit Commission on the Economic Prosperity of Gosport (June 2005) which recommended the Council to

"Provide greater potential to increase economic activity and create local jobs by doing more to exploit the Borough's tourism potential"

ROLE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Gosport Tourism Forum

The purpose of the Forum is the creation of industry partnerships through the establishment of an organisational structure and network. The industry-led forum meets quarterly to update on topical issues, consult with partners and stakeholders on an interactive basis and promote the interests of Gosport as a tourist destination. The Forum has an important role in influencing and lobbying, and in setting key objectives for the future. It is chaired by the commercial sector.

Membership of the Forum comprises sector wide representation – accommodation (serviced and self-catering), visitor attractions and museums, retail, leisure, marina providers, transport operators, food / drink providers and Gosport Borough Council.



Steering Group

The establishment of a Steering Group is to guide and steer the Forum and to make recommendations as appropriate. The Steering Group meets quarterly in advance of the Forum meetings. It is made up of industry sector representatives including Gosport Borough Council and is also chaired by the commercial sector.



Attractions Sector Sub Group

An Attractions Sector Sub Group has been set up with membership including the Royal Navy Submarine Museum, Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower, Gosport Ferry, Oakleaf Brewery and Gosport Borough Council. This partnership offers valuable economies of scale and wide promotional opportunities targeting both the domestic travel trade and the consumer through shared advertising, PR and exhibition campaigns. The sub group is chaired by the Gosport Tourism Officer.

Research

Following a study by Tourism South East Research Unit in 2003 on the Economic Impact of Tourism within Gosport, this provided evidence to indicate a total spend of £40.2 million with a business turnover estimated at £57.5 million.

GBC commissioned Tourism South East to carry out an Economic Impact Study in Spring 2005. Gosport has also taken part in the county-wide Hampshire Tourism Trends Surveys which included accommodation occupancy, attractions and Tourist Information Centre figures.

In addition, Gosport took part in a regional study on leisure yachting commissioned by Tourism South East on behalf of the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA).



THE VIEWS OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Challenges and Opportunities

Gosport has limited accommodation stock comprising mainly bed & breakfast/self catering properties with a small number of hotels. To offer visitors good standards of accommodation, it has been the Council's policy to promote only 'quality assured / inspected' establishments and to encourage all accommodation providers to participate in the nationally recognised grading schemes. In this way, the aim is to achieve an increase in overall quality thus leading to increased usage.

The proximity to Portsmouth Harbour, the Isle of Wight, Gunwharf Quays and to the Solent offers significant opportunity and benefit. These location links, coupled with Gosport's well-established naval heritage attractions, can be marketed to afford the maximum benefit to the district in terms of visitor recognition and spend. However, there is potential to develop the range of attractions further and broaden the overall appeal to attract initial and repeat visits.

The Tourist Information Centre is well located and offers a highly professional and comprehensive service with knowledgeable and expert staff both for locals and visitors alike.



TOURISM IN GOSPORT OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS

The Tourism Forum undertook an analysis of the current 'state of play' of Gosport and identified the following issues.

Strengths

- Notable Attractions
- Market – diversity and popularity
- Museums & Local Naval History
- Waterfront / Water based excursions/trips
- Priddy's Hard & Royal Clarence Yard
- Caravan Park / Touring base
- 'Defence of the Realm' theme
- Cycle links/trail
- Local Events & Sporting features
- Beaches and good views
- Micro climate
- Proximity of rail connection / Gosport Ferry / access to other areas / Continental Ferries

Opportunities

- Priddy's Hard / Royal Clarence Yard
- Alver Valley Country Park
- The Spinnaker Tower
- Holbrook Recreation Centre
- Former HMS Daedalus site
- Waterbus & links to Attractions
- Tap into Portsmouth's Attractions
- Media links for events & PR
- More leisure activities, joint promotions / sport etc

Potential for Improvement

- Increase quality accommodation/hotels
- Improve road links
- Enhance retail environments
- Develop specialist shopping interest
- Develop street market
- Provide quality evening economy
- Communicate vision for future
- Improve historical information
- Provide quality infrastructure
- Develop employment opportunities
- Increase special events
- Create strong brand / image

Issues to Consider

- Need for continuous improvement
- Need for clear decision-making
- Commitment to transport investment
- Peninsular location
- Effect of neighbouring locations
- Improve quality of environment

Towards>2010

PRIORITY AREAS

There are four key areas where the Forum believes attention is best focused for the next 3 to 5 year period. These are

- Increase the provision of quality assured accommodation
- Improve and increase the tourism product through more facilities/attractions/services
- Improve the image of Gosport as a destination
- Develop support mechanisms for the industry/partners

The key areas can be expanded further into actions that will be progressed through an Annual Action Plan to be delivered by the industry and all its member organisations.

• Increase accommodation provision

The closure of some local hotels has led to a shortage of accommodation and there is an increasing reliance on the self catering and smaller bed and breakfast establishments. There is an urgent need to attract and encourage additional quality hotel providers to supplement this provision in key locations which offer easy access using the existing transport infrastructure.

• Improve the tourism product

There is a need to increase and develop the tourism product and improve its quality to achieve repeat visits and additional use through recommendation. Industry partners should seek to attract growth markets and encourage investment in new products/facilities/services. The Council can play a key role in this activity through its Tourism service and Economic Prosperity work.

• Improve the image of Gosport as a destination

Achieving effective access is an important target to improving the attraction of Gosport and Lee on the Solent to visitors. Together with increased accommodation provision, this will prove successful in extending the length of visitor stay.

• Developing support mechanisms for the industry

The development of the Forum is a key achievement in establishing a lead role for the commercial partners. This partnership needs to be consolidated and supported with further research, training and business advice. Direct access to support services of Tourism South East will play a vital role in this objective.



ACHIEVEMENTS

Tourism marketing activity

The Council provides base funding towards the marketing and promotion of Gosport and this is delivered through an annual marketing and promotional plan with additional support funding from the commercial sector. A copy of the annual marketing plan is attached to each year's Action Plan, identifying the advertising and exhibitions programme.

Activities include:

- commissioning of new photography and print design;
- annual visitor guide;
- targeted advertising;
- exhibition programme;
- destination graphics and posters;
- PR and promotion;
- website development;
- training support,
- research
- Waterfront Trail Guide.



Training for the industry

Support has been given to the commercial sector members of the Tourism Forum to address skills issues through a dedicated suite of one day workshops delivered by Tourism South East headed up "Making the most of your business through Business Excellence project". The aim of this programme has been to raise managerial entrepreneurial skills. The programme has included:

- Welcome to E business;
- Business Excellence model workshop;
- Welcome Management;
- Market Segmentation;

Business support/mentoring has also been provided on a one to one basis, culminating in several businesses being accredited to the 'Partners in Success' Scheme. In addition, a housekeeping course was delivered in response to demand from the industry.



National
Training Awards
2004
Highly Commended

THE FUTURE

Each of the key and detailed objectives is supported by a selection of proposed actions which can be found in the annual Action Plan.

However, as the strategy covers a five-year period it is impossible to predict the many opportunities which will present themselves and there is flexibility to adopt new actions as appropriate. This will also indicate what can be achieved within any one year's budget provision.

In the main, targets which can be directly influenced or achieved by Gosport Borough Council will be included in Action Plans, although it is hoped that tourism providers and other bodies will contribute to the delivery of strategic objectives through their own business planning processes.

GRATEFUL THANKS

This document has been generated through the close working partnership of the people listed below. The Council is sincerely grateful to the input of all those involved for their significant contribution to the future development of tourism in Gosport.

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Contributions were also provided from Tourism South East and all members of the Gosport Tourism Forum, membership of which is listed on the back page of this document.



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