

Appendix 7

Mid Devon Tourism Study 2014 November 2014

Strand 5: Catching Passing Tourists / Major Tourist Facility

Mid Devon has an excellent strategic location, particularly with the mainline railway and the motorway (M5) running through the east of the District. It is also accessible from the regional airports at Exeter and Bristol. Given the volume of tourists who pass through Mid Devon on route to other destinations, such as North and South Devon and Cornwall, and as recognised by stakeholders, more could be done to encourage these tourists to stop en-route and increase the length of time (and money) tourist spend in Mid Devon.

Based on the analysis set out, there could be opportunity for the development of new tourism infrastructure or facilities to increase visitor numbers and spend. Based on the evidence set out, the opportunity here could be quite varied, but could include:

- Delivery of a new man-made tourism attraction, such as an amusement park or a major climbing/ high ropes course to cater for families and/ or the adventure market; and/or
- Development of a tourism facility which showcased local food and produce, linked to the slow tourism agenda and the strong agricultural economy in Devon.

A major facility or attraction would also be likely provide a number of associated services, such as a visitor attraction or activity, retail space, accommodation and café/restaurant floorspace; with a critical mass of 'things to do or stop for' being important in attracting visitors and maximising economic benefit. The precise nature of the facility is difficult to precisely predict, and any proposal would need to be supported by bespoke market research, but it could also link to Strand 2: Developing the Accommodation Offer.

Proposals for any major facility would need to be considered carefully in terms of any impacts (economic impact or trade) on other parts of the district, and particularly the market towns, and potentially on other adjoining areas, depending on the scale or focus of any major investment, in view of the Duty to Cooperate required of local authorities by the 2011 Localism Act.

Strand 6: Fun for the Kids

The final area of activity where there appears to be growth potential is in providing interactive, child-friendly activities to attract the family trips which are currently not happening in Mid Devon. This requires a combination of:

- An appropriate offer with a variety of activities, which are priced competitively; and
- Innovative marketing and discounts to attract trade.

Whilst the landscape and natural environment is a key driver for a number of visitors to Mid Devon and could be a driver for sustainable rural tourism, the unpredictability of the British weather poses a constraint. Developing an “all weather” offer and facilities in Mid Devon with an appeal across a range of visitor groups is an area where there could be future growth.

Strand 2: Developing the Accommodation Offer

The stakeholder discussions and analysis undertaken suggest that the selective development of the accommodation offer could help to increase overnight stays in the District, and capitalise on its location astride key transport routes. The opportunity appears to be to capture growth potential in: Enhancing the offer of more good quality budget hotel accommodation in the District;

There would seem to be a particular opportunity to encourage visitors travelling through the area to stop, through provision of accommodation close to the M5 and A361 gateways to Devon.