

Tourism in Moray

Compiled by the Stevens View Partnership

Tourism in Moray – Current Situation: An Initial Overview and Commentary

1. The most recent data available (2002 / 2003) show an industry that, from an economic perspective, is underperforming in terms of (i) the spend per overnight tourist compared to national / regional averages and the spend per day visitor and (ii) an accommodation base which has a high level of bedspaces in the lower priced end of the service sector.
2. The key facts about this 2002 / 2003 picture of the value and nature of tourism in Moray reveal:
 - o Moray hosted 908,150 visitor overnight stays, resulting in a total expenditure of £51.6 million;
 - o One third of all overnight stays were in B&B / guest houses, yielding £56.42 per capita per trip;
 - o Hotels accounted for 18% of demand and produced 30% of visitor expenditure at an average yield of £93.84;
 - o Overall the average expenditure from overnight stays in Moray was £56.79 or £54.48 in the commercial sector (excluding the SFR markets whose average spend was £30.71);
 - o The total number of day trips was 294,000, producing £4.29 million for the Moray economy with an average spend of £14.60;
 - o The main sources of visitors to Moray were:

Domestic - Scotland	39%
- UK (rest of)	38%
- Total	77%
Overseas -	23%
 - o Moray attracts higher numbers of overseas visitors than the rest of the Highlands. This needs to be converted to increased numbers of nights stay in Moray;

- The majority of overnight trip taking is as a main holiday (37%), with 63% being a second or further holiday;
 - The average length of stay in Moray is 3.3 nights which is less than for both the Highlands and for Scotland.
3. Of particular concern has to be the low levels of spend by both day and staying visitors given the opportunities for visitors to (a) participate in activities which require relatively high levels of spend (especially golf), (b) visit attractors which include quality retail with international brand companies and visiting whisky distilleries and (c) being able to access quality food and drink produce.
 4. The dominance of a low value accommodation base clearly suppresses spend. It is also a market that services a low spend, business market (individuals attending meetings, blue collar works involved in defence or manufacturing activities) rather than the more lucrative corporate / incentive / conference markets that generally drive up yields from business tourism.
 5. The low levels of secondary spending, especially in the leisure tourism and day trip markets is equally concerning and puzzling. The data suggest a tourist market that is inherently low spending, staying for only a short time in the area or in transit and probably over represented by the coach tour markets. There is also a heavy representation of tourists using self-catering accommodation (316,000 bednights or 35% of demand). Much of this may well be Scottish domestic tourists who have had a long traditional relationship with the area (i.e. family ownership of a static caravan or second home) for whom a visit to Moray may be a purposeful 'cheap holiday at home'.
 6. The tourism asset base of Moray deserves to be more productive from an economic perspective. High quality countryside and coast, together with a rich cultural landscape, is a prized asset. In addition, the existence of strong brands in the retail, food and drink sectors is complemented by those in other sectors (such as Findhorn for spiritual and ecological interests and major estates such as Glenlivet).
 7. Clearly a potential issue associated with the presence of some of the major brands is that a proportion of the economic activity will be exported from the area as part of the 'downstream value chain'. This issue is highlighted in the Brief and needs to be evaluated.
 8. This could include (i) the development of corporate business tourism that is developed on the back of the environment and cultural landscape; (ii) the

interpretation and celebration of the area's cultural landscape; (iii) the development of an arts and cultural product; (iv) the development of a dining out experience linked to investment in accommodation; and (v) investment in the leisure product such as:

- Sailing and marine tourism;
- Wildlife tourism;
- Gastronomy tourism;
- Country sports;
- Festival and events.

9. Importantly, it is clear that there is an urgent need for robust, reliable up to date data about tourism in Moray. It is unacceptable to consider developing a strategy without an agreed baseline. As a result, the audit process has to deliver this core data.