



MAY 2013

MORECAMBE BAY VISITOR SURVEY

Visitor attitudes and aspirations around Morecambe Bay

Key Findings

“

We love the Bay area as it is peaceful and not too many people know about it.

Survey respondent, Sept 2012

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Visitor Profiles

40% of visitors are on a day trip from home.

36% were staying overnight around Morecambe Bay.

85% are very likely to visit again.

46% were on a return visit.

57% were visiting from parts of Lancashire and Cumbria, with a further 13% visiting from other parts of the North West region. 1% of visitors were from overseas.

53% were over 55 years old.

52% visited the area with their partner or spouse.

Almost 80% of people use their own motor vehicle to travel to the area.

Activities and areas of interest

The most popular reasons people gave for visiting the area was for its beautiful scenery and its peace, quiet and tranquility (68% and 57% of visitors respectively).

The most popular activities people did whilst in the area was sightseeing/looking at the scenery (64%), eating out (63%) and walking more than 2 miles (55%).

Just over 70% said they would like to explore the area using all accessible routes and car free routes. 85% said they would like to explore the area using self guided walking itineraries.

88% of visitors agreed that the area was good for walking and cycling and 86% agreed it was good for outdoor activities

Nature Tourism

More than half the people visited, or planned to visit, places that they considered to be a nature attraction/area (55%). The most common reason for visiting these was for the beautiful scenery and landscape.

83% agreed that the area was good for wildlife watching.

94% agreed that Morecambe Bay was good for nature and scenery (with 73% strongly agreeing).

Almost 90% of respondents are interested in visiting places where they can see and/or experience wildlife. However only 55% visited a nature attraction or nature rich place on their visit.

Red deer, birds and otters are the most popular wildlife that people would like to see. More than 80% said they'd like to visit places where they could see them.

77% of visitors were aware of Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and 71% had visited.

Cultural/historic Tourism

Just over 40% of people visited, or planned to visit a cultural or historic attraction.

The main reason for visiting such attractions was to learn about the area's history. Over half the people visiting them went there due to their lovely landscape setting and to walk in their gardens and grounds also.

70% of visitors agreed that the area was good for culture and heritage (with 30% strongly agreeing).

Expenditure

The average visitor spend was £72 per day. The average day tripper spend was £33 per day. The average overnight stay spent £107 per day. For overnight stays, the average cost of accommodation was £57 and the average spend on other goods/services was £50 per day.

The highest single area of spend for all visitors was for food and drink. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents spent on this activity with an average spend of £19 per day. In addition to this, 72% of people agreed that the area had excellent places to eat and drink.

Of those surveyed 70% agreed that Morecambe Bay offers good value for money.

Perceptions and attitudes to Morecambe Bay

90% of visitors rated their overall experience as good or very good.

95% of visitors were likely or very likely to visit the area again.

85% agreed that they had had a warm welcome at places around the area.

Accommodation choice

Most people chose to stay in serviced accommodation, including hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs (34%) with just over 20% staying in self catering accommodation.

The average length of stay for overnight trips was 4.6 nights.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

Visitors value the Morecambe Bay area for its scenic beauty, the opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the landscape, its nature and wildlife, and its cultural and historic interest. These qualities strongly underpin its attraction as a visitor destination.

There is a loyal market with a strong interest in outdoor activities.

Visitors to Morecambe Bay add value to the local economy. The largest area of spend, excluding accommodation, is on food and drink with a significant proportion of visitors eating and drinking out whilst visiting the area.

All types of visitors support the local economy whilst here. Visitors who stay the longest and spend the most are interested in activities linked to both the natural and cultural/historic interest of the area. Nature providers should connect with businesses, historic/cultural providers and tourism bodies to promote the nature interest alongside these.

Promoting the area's nature attractions and nature rich areas along with the range of other things to do, places to explore and enjoy, eat and stay will help visitors plan for longer breaks and stays in the area and increase the value of the visitor economy.

Visitors need inspiration and information on what's great about the Morecambe Bay area to help them choose to visit the area, and to plan their visit both before and during their stay.

A bay wide Sense of Place Programme and support network for businesses interested in marketing the nature of the bay could help promote the area as a wildlife rich destination.

The Bay area as a nature destination should be promoted to the loyal independent and active over 55's group as well as potential growth markets which include families, younger active couples and groups and national and international visitors.

Special interest groups could be a growth area if the area is to be marketed as a leading English wildlife destination.

The Bay area is well placed to encourage low carbon tourism with its network of rail stations, bus hubs and walking and cycling routes.

“ *We enjoy watching the channel, the sea breeze and the space to clear our minds.* ”
Survey respondent, Oct 2012

The survey was undertaken in Autumn 2012 to support the development of a Nature Tourism Business Network as part of the Morecambe Bay Limestones and Wetlands Nature Improvement Area (NIA), and the RSPB Morecambe Bay Futurescape. The survey was carried out on behalf of the Morecambe Bay Wildlife Network (which is now part of the Morecambe Bay Local Nature Partnership).

The survey was carried out in 16 locations around Morecambe Bay. These represented rural, village/town, coastal and inland locations. Several key attractions were also included. In total, 361 face to face interviews were carried out and 47 online surveys were completed.

The survey work, analysis and report were managed by the RSPB with guidance from the NIA Nature Tourism Steering Group. This comprises representatives from Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Bay Tourism and the RSPB.

For more information and a copy of the full report contact

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