



SOUTH WEST TOURISM, UK

DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP AWARD

FINALIST 2009

CASE STUDY

South West Tourism (SWT) is the tourism board for 9,200 square miles of diverse country and coast in southwest England – a region that attracts 22 million visitors a year. In 2004, it launched its ‘Toward 2015’ initiative. This included increasing the value of visitors, not simply the volume of visitation; creating careers, not simply jobs; marketing initiatives that embraced information technology; including locals in key decisions; preserving and protecting natural heritage; and providing unity and focus in a very diverse area and industry.

SWT has adopted the Green Tourism Board Scheme (GTBS), a UK-based sustainable tourism certification developed in 1997, deciding to take a leadership role by becoming Gold certified in 2008, and offering training and workshops on sustainability and GTBS to businesses throughout the region.



SWT has been a catalyst for change-giving direction and leadership. It practises what it advocates, gives guidance, shares its experiences honestly and openly, and it is a trusted partner, as well as the voice in “developing regional coherence in a fractured diverse tourism landscape”. It recognises that there is much to do, that its sustainable journey has just begun, and that sustainability must be embedded in everything it does.

Specific examples of how SWT has created tangible benefits include:

- Supporting the Jurassic Coast Heritage Site with marketing expertise and physical, virtual, and experimental interpretive materials and services for the site, all of which were sustainably sourced. The site became GTBS Silver certified and Dorset’s first ‘green’ information centre’.
- Providing recycled materials for information dissemination in the region – overall, it provided 35,000 room cards with messages about saving energy, and fielded 1,000 requests from the businesses themselves for training CDs.

CASE STUDY



Partnership is very much at the heart of how SWT works. Its participation and advice are actively sought and guidance readily adopted. For example, the National Trust cares for more than half of 640 miles of coastline that have been severely affected by climate change. The South West Climate Change Impact Partnership (SWCCIP), of which SWT is seen as a key member, aims to look at regional adaptation strategies. With flood-risk training and assessment tools, the area is preparing for sudden climate change impacts, which will also affect tourism.



To engage visitors, South West Tourism created the Future Footprints Programme, in partnership with other NGOs, to promote three themes: buy local, car-free tourism, and GTBS. An excellent example of this programme is the Beach Café in Blackpool Sands, a Gold GTBS business, which sources all the food it sells locally and, where possible, organically. And if it is not local, it is Fairtrade or sustainably sourced. It promotes local walks, guides visitors on rock-pool rambles, is working with the local community to provide a community facility for their recreational use, and provides training opportunities. Examples such as this are evident throughout the region: menus feature locally caught fish, Devon cream teas, Cornish pasties and Somerset cider – all served by local people with pride. This promotion of ‘local’ is also promoted as good for the environment, reducing food and car miles in a challenged road infrastructure.

The vitality of the partnerships that South West Tourism has forged to support sustainable tourism practices and priorities, and the sense of community it has sought to engender across the entire region of South West England – politically, socially, economically, privately and publicly – to develop and build a sustainable tourism destination is its key strength. SWT has taken a bold leadership position to build sustainability into an area of such size and scope. SWT is nurturing a change in thinking that keeps local business flexible and helps preserve assets for the future, based on sustainable standards and priorities. Local government leaders, NGOs, entrepreneurs, local businesses and local people are all involved in a dynamic and evolving destination level sustainable tourism programme that is changing the tourism landscape in England.

