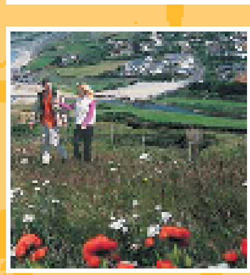
Evidence Base

West Dorset District
Local Development Framework

Tourism in West Dorset






September 2008

Working for West Dorset

Tourism in West Dorset: Information for the Local Development Framework

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Tourism in West Dorset: Information for the Local Development Framework

Introduction

The Government defines tourism[1] as comprising the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. "Tourism" refers to all activities of visitors including both overnight visitors and same-day visitors. This includes travel and visits for business purposes as well as for holidays and recreation.

Tourism in West Dorset is a diverse and important industry, bringing considerable benefits to local communities, creating wealth and supporting jobs. Tourism also helps to support the availability of general leisure and transport services, and can contribute towards environmental enhancements.

This report provides background information related to tourism in West Dorset, which can be taken into account as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework.

The report covers:

1. Visitors to West Dorset (where they come from and reasons for visiting)
2. Visitor spend and the contribution to the local economy
3. Holiday accommodation – current stock and occupancy
4. Visitor attractions – variety and number of visitors
5. Other visitor facilities
6. Conclusions

It has been prepared mainly from existing available information. It includes data from:

- The West Dorset Destination Management System
- Dorset New Forest Tourism Data Project Visitor Surveys 2005, 2006 and 2007
- "The Value of Tourism to the South West Economy in 2006", South West Tourism, published 2008
- "The Value of Tourism to the South West Economy in 2005", South West Tourism, published 2007
- "Visitor Attractions in Dorset 2005", Dorset New Forest Data Project, 2006
- Jurassic Coast Visitor Survey, 2004
- Various web sites
- Direct contact with holiday accommodation agencies
- Monitoring of planning applications
- Liaison with West Dorset District Council officers

[1] In The Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism, DCLG, 2006

1. Visitors to West Dorset

The principal sources of information on visitors to West Dorset are the Visitor Surveys of West Dorset carried out by the Dorset and New Forest Tourism Data Project in 2006 and 2007. These annual surveys are based on face-to-face interviews between July and September with interviewees selected using a technique whereby each member of the target population has an equal chance of being approached for interview. The sites selected were Bridport, Cerne Abbas, Charmouth, Dorchester, Lyme Regis, Seatown, Sherborne and West Bay. Reference is also made to a similar survey carried out in 2005.

Some information is from "The Value of Tourism" 2005, a study undertaken in the south west region by South West Tourism based on a range of 2003 data sources.

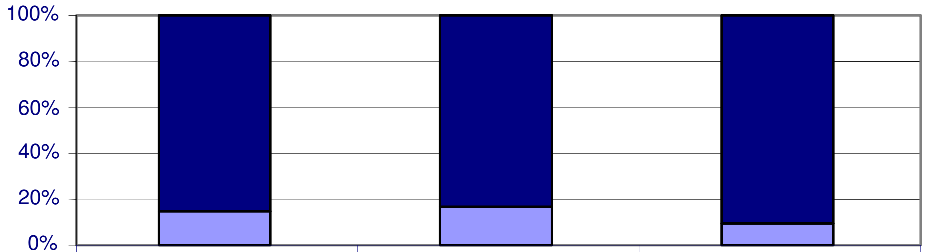
Some supplementary information is from the Jurassic Coast Visitor Survey, 2004. This was based on face-to-face interviews in August, September and October 2004 using a technique whereby each member of the target population has an equal chance of being approached for interview. Note, however, that only three of the thirteen locations for interviews were in West Dorset: Lyme Regis, Charmouth and West Bay.

The following information is from the Tourism Data Project unless otherwise indicated.

1.1 Where visitors come from

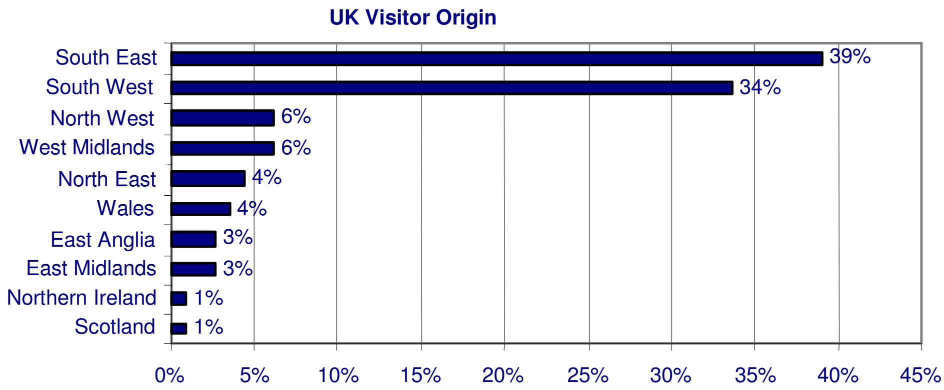
In 2007, the vast majority (83%) of visitors to West Dorset originated from the UK; and 17% from overseas. These numbers are very similar to those for 2006 as shown in the table below.

Origin of respondents



	2006	2007	Dorset (2007)
UK	85%	83%	91%
Overseas	15%	17%	9%

Most UK visitors to West Dorset in 2007 were from the South East (39%) and South West (34%). The figures for 2006 were 44% and 31% respectively. "Dorset" in this document refers to the county of Dorset excluding the Borough of Poole and Bournemouth Borough.

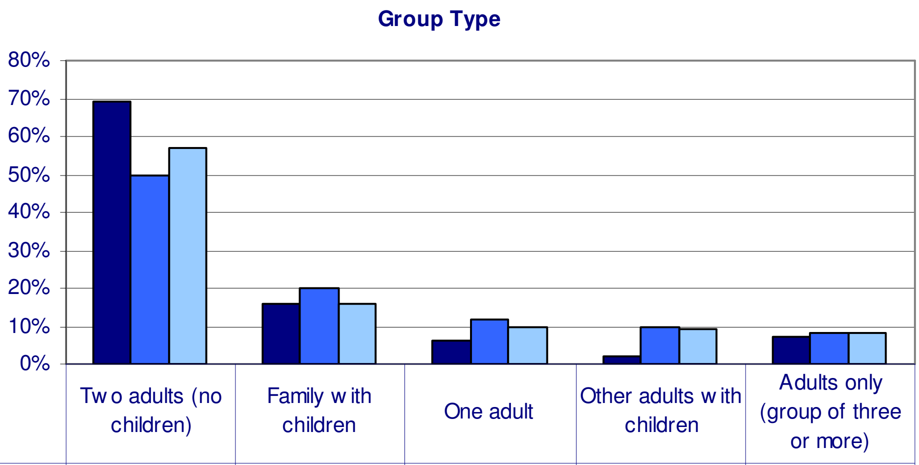


About half of the visitors to West Dorset from overseas for both years were from Germany and the Netherlands

In the Jurassic Coast Survey, 42% of all visitors were from the South West region, including Dorset. 20% of visitors were from London and the South East, with a further 15% coming from the Midlands, and 12% from the North of England.

1.2 Group type

In 2007 adult couples accounted for 50% of visitors to West Dorset, with family groups accounting for 20%. This compares with 69% of visitors in 2006 being adult couples and 16% being family groups. 75% could be defined as being within the A, B or C1 socio-economic groups. [2]



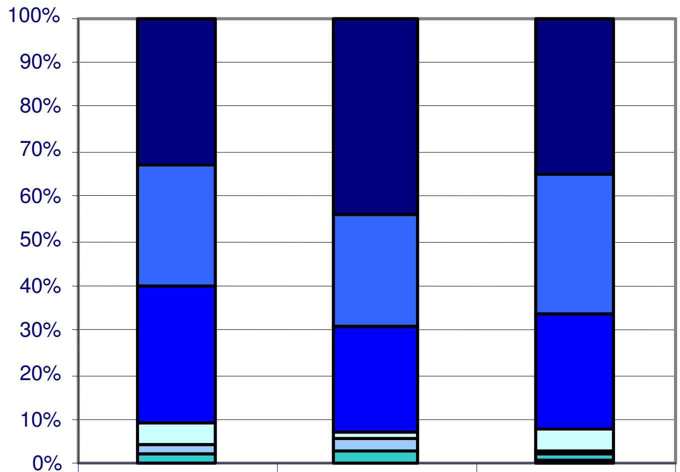
	Two adults (no children)	Family with children	One adult	Other adults with children	Adults only (group of three or more)
2006	69%	16%	6%	2%	7%
2007	50%	20%	12%	10%	8%
Dorset	57%	16%	10%	9%	8%

2 Non manual occupations

1.3 Holiday type (Staying visitors)

Most visitors stay in West Dorset as part of their main holiday, a short break or an additional holiday. There has been an increase since 2006 in the proportion of respondents visiting on their main holiday (33% in 2006 to 45% in 2007). Visitors are more likely to visit West Dorset on their main holiday (45%) than the average for Dorset as a whole (31%).

Holiday type



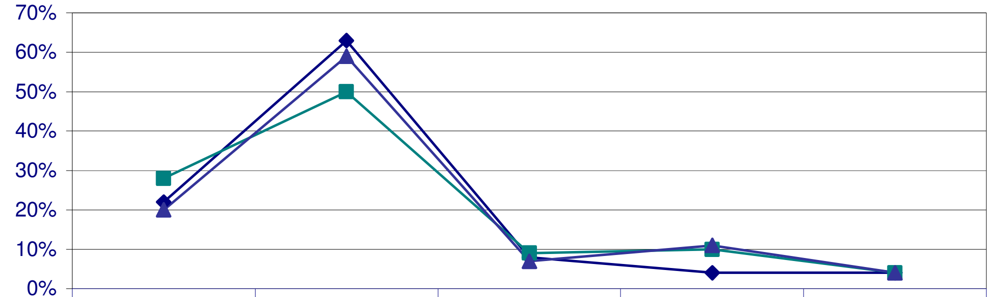
	2006	2007	Dorset
On a main holiday	33%	45%	35%
On an additional holiday	27%	25%	31%
On a short break	31%	24%	26%
Visiting friends and relatives	4%	1%	5%
Other	3%	3%	1%
Business/attending a conference	2%	3%	1%
Study trip (short term only)	0%	0%	1%

In the Jurassic Coast Survey, 44% of visitors were on an additional holiday - i.e. a full-length break taken in addition, and secondary to, a main holiday during the year. 34% of visitors were on their main annual holiday, and 18% of visitors were on a short break. Few visitors were on business (2%) or visiting friends or relatives (1%).

1.4 Length of stay

Respondents in 2007 spent an average of 6.9 nights in the area which was marginally fewer than reported over Dorset as a whole (7.3 nights) but was a slight increase on 2006 (6.4 nights). Respondents most frequently spent between 4 and 7 nights in the area (50%).

Length of Stay



	1 to 3 nights	4 to 7 nights	8 to 10 nights	11 to 14 nights	Over 14 nights
2006	22%	63%	8%	4%	4%
2007	28%	50%	9%	10%	4%
Dorset	20%	59%	7%	11%	4%

In the Jurassic Coast Survey, the majority of visitors (78%) spent 7 nights or fewer in the area. A further 8% spent between 8 and 10 nights in the area, 11% spent 11 - 14 nights, and 3% stayed for more than 15 nights.

1.5 Accommodation type

Touring caravan/tent is the type of accommodation with the highest proportion of visitors in 2007 (27%). This was a slight increase from 2006 and was also higher than the results for Dorset as a whole. A larger proportion of visitors stayed in self-catering accommodation (21%) than in Dorset as a whole (10%).

The figures for the proportions of respondents staying in self-catering accommodation and guest house/ bed and breakfast stayed the same for 2006 and 2007 (21% and 13% respectively). However, the proportion of those staying in hotels changed from 17% in 2006 to 8% in 2007. Once the potential for sampling error is considered, there is still likely to have been a decline in the proportion of respondents staying in hotels. It will be interesting to see from future surveys whether this is a trend. There have been some historical fluctuations in the hotels figures and 8% was also recorded in the main survey in 2000.

The definition of categories in the 2007 survey changed to include ‘camper van/ mobile home’ instead of ‘motorised caravan’, with 11% of visitors staying in such accommodation in 2007. (NB ‘mobile home’ in the survey means ‘motor home’.) The proportions of those staying in caravans, tents, camper vans, chalets and at holiday parks changed from 31% in 2006 to 43% in 2007.

Tables from the 2006 visitor survey:

What sort of accommodation are you staying in?				
	Dorset		West Dorset	
Base: Staying visitors	*f*	Valid %	*f*	Valid %
Touring caravan / tent	131	32.0	25	24.5
Self catering house, flat, cottage	56	13.7	21	20.6
Home of friend or relative	46	11.2	8	7.8
Static caravan / chalet	44	10.7	7	6.9
Hotel	40	9.8	17	16.7
Guest House / B&B	35	8.5	13	12.7
Second home	15	3.7	1	1.0
Motorised Caravan	6	1.5	0	0.0
Holiday park	3	0.7	1	1.0
Other (please specify)	34	8.3	9	8.8
Total (Valid: Single Code)	410	**100.0**	102	**100.0**
(0) Missing Values	4	N/A	23	N/A
Total (Base)	414	**N/A**	125	**N/A**

Accommodation Type

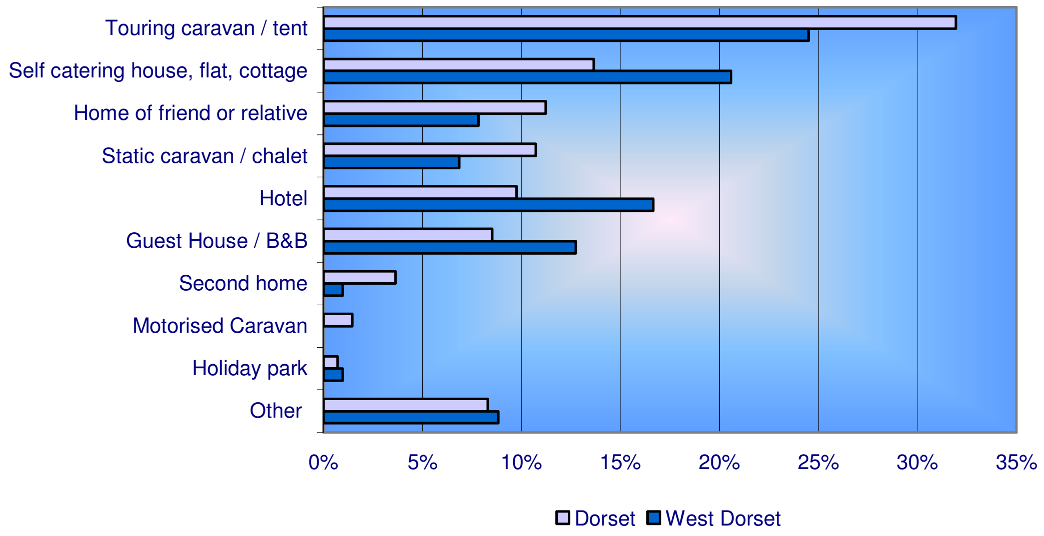
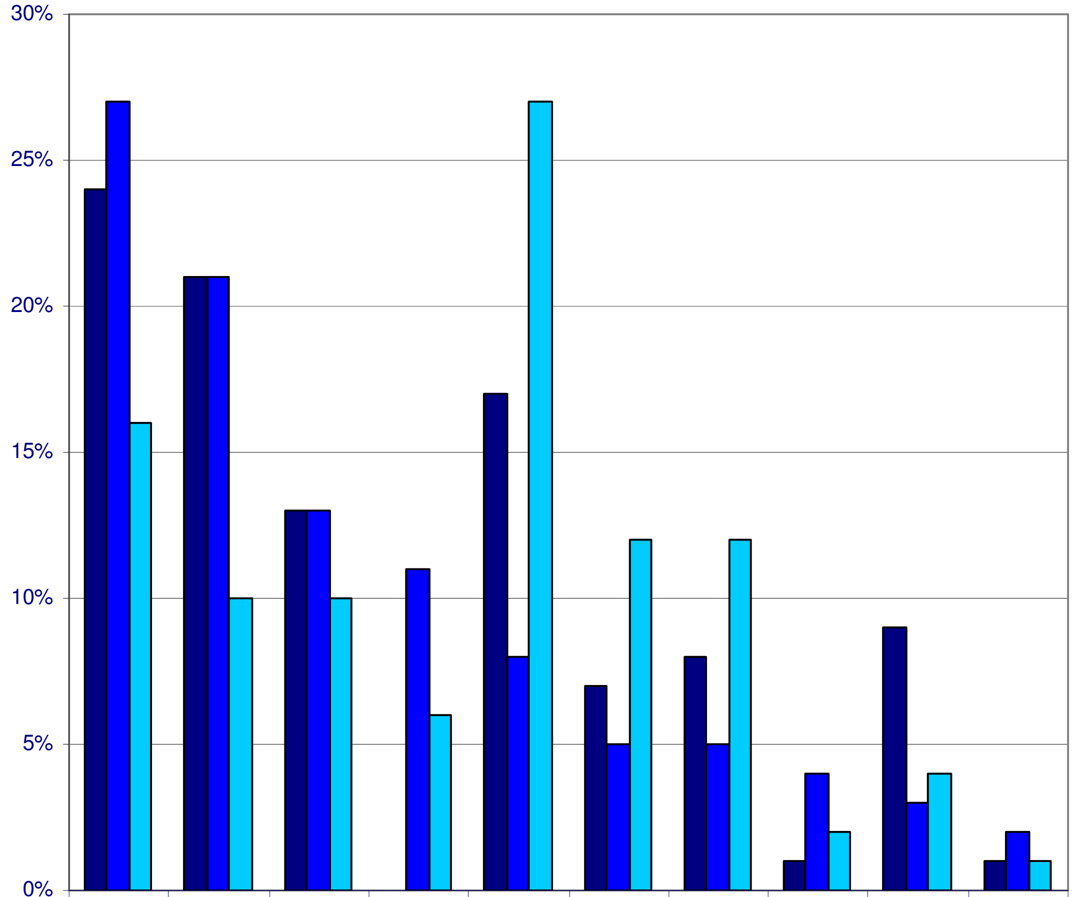


Table from the 2007 visitor survey:

Accommodation Type



	Touring caravan / tent	Self catering house,	Guest House / B&B	Campervan / mobile	Hotel	Static caravan / Chalet	Home of a friend or	Second home	Other	Holiday park
2006	24%	21%	13%	0%	17%	7%	8%	1%	9%	1%
2007	27%	21%	13%	11%	8%	5%	5%	4%	3%	2%
Dorset	16%	10%	10%	6%	27%	12%	12%	2%	4%	1%

In the Jurassic Coast Survey, staying visitors tended to stay in non-serviced accommodation, including self-catering houses, flats or cottages (19%), static caravans or chalets (19%), and touring caravans or camping parks (11%). 35% of visitors stayed in serviced accommodation, including hotels (23%) and guest houses / B&Bs (12%).

Further information regarding accommodation is at section five of this report.

1.6 Reasons for visiting

In the surveys, respondents were asked about their reasons for choosing West Dorset in preference to alternative locations, about their main reason for visiting West Dorset, and other more general reasons for visiting.

Respondents most frequently chose West Dorset over an alternative destination in 2006 because they were either touring the area (32%) or they particularly liked the area (21%).

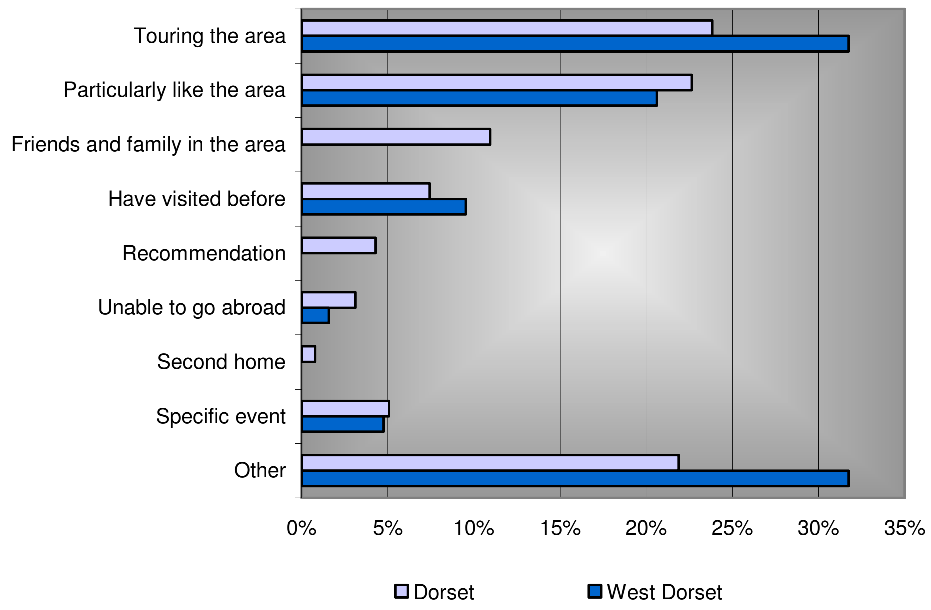
The most frequently quoted main reason for visiting was having enjoyed a previous experience in the area. 19% of respondents cited the seaside, beaches and coast as their main reason for visiting, with a further 13% citing friends and relatives.

Most respondents were attracted to visit the area by the countryside (79%) and the coast (60%). Other frequently cited reasons included West Dorset being easy to get to (50%), the peace and quiet (36%) and previous experience of the area (36%).

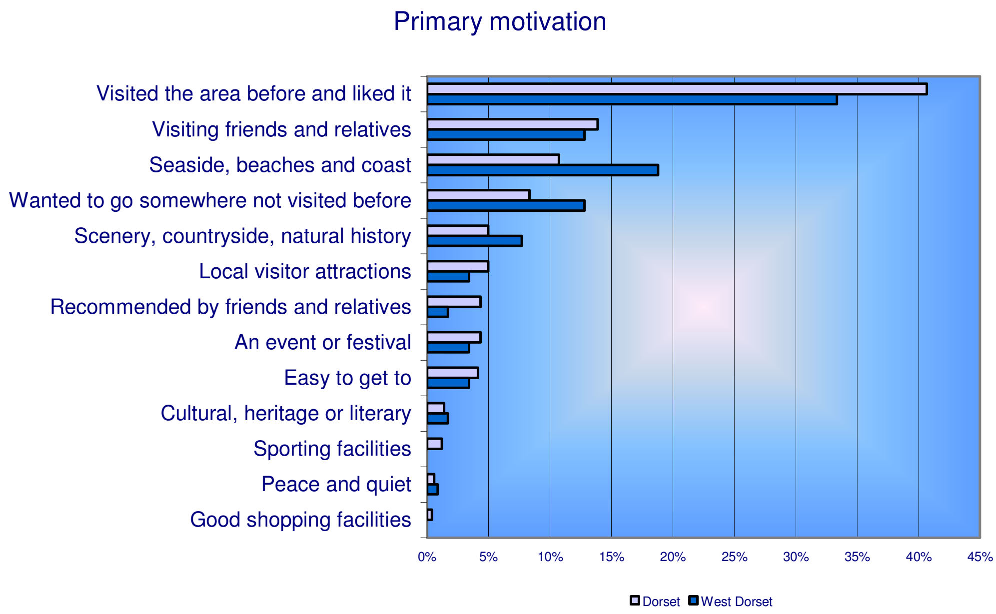
Tables from the 2006 survey:

Why did you choose this area instead of these alternative destinations				
	Dorset		West Dorset	
Base: All	*f*	Valid %	*f*	Valid %
Touring the area	61	23.8	20	31.7
Particularly like the area	58	22.7	13	20.6
Friends and family in the area	28	10.9	0	0.0
Have visited before	19	7.4	6	9.5
Recommendation	11	4.3	0	0.0
Unable to go abroad	8	3.1	1	1.6
Second home	2	0.8	0	0.0
Specific event	13	5.1	3	4.8
Other	56	21.9	20	31.7
Total (Valid: Single Code)	256	**100.0**	63	**100.0**
(0) Missing Values	271	N/A	62	N/A
Total (Base)	527	**N/A**	125	**N/A**

Reason for destination choice

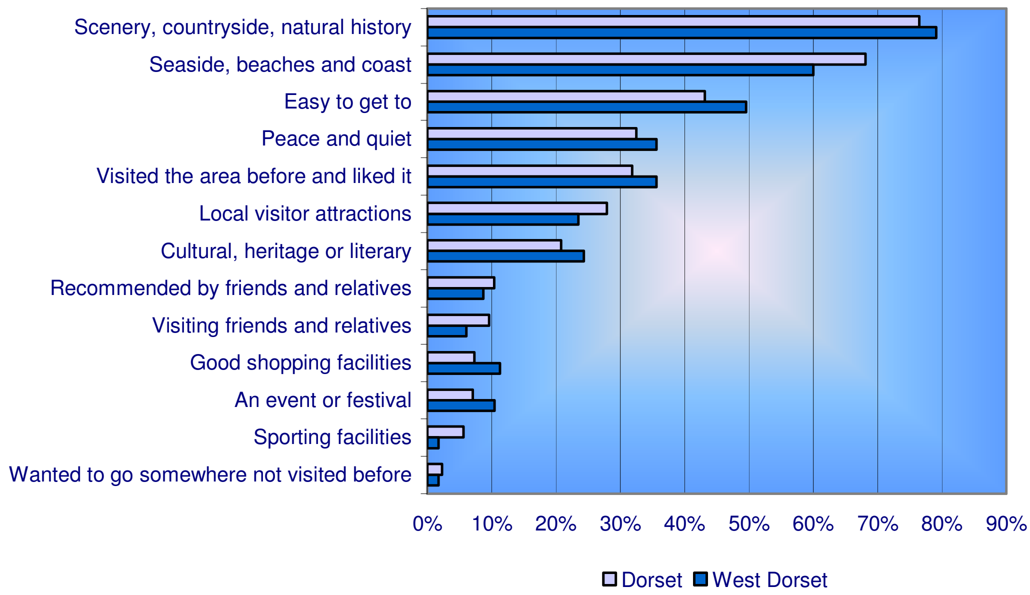


Main reason for visiting the area				
	Dorset		West Dorset	
Base: All (527)	*f*	Valid %	*f*	Valid %
Visited the area before and liked it	205	40.7	39	33.3
Visiting friends and relatives	70	13.9	15	12.8
Seaside, beaches and coast	54	10.7	22	18.8
Wanted to go somewhere not visited before	42	8.3	15	12.8
Scenery, countryside, natural history	25	5.0	9	7.7
Local visitor attractions	25	5.0	4	3.4
Recommended by friends and relatives	22	4.4	2	1.7
An event or festival	22	4.4	4	3.4
Easy to get to	21	4.2	4	3.4
Cultural, heritage or literary	7	1.4	2	1.7
Sporting facilities	6	1.2	0	0.0
Peace and quiet	3	0.6	1	0.9
Good shopping facilities	2	0.4	0	0.0
Total (Valid: Multi Code)	504	**100**	117	**100**
(0) Missing Values	23	N/A	8	N/A
Total (Base)	527	**N/A**	125	**N/A**



General motivators				
	Dorset		West Dorset	
Base: All (527)	*ƒ*	Valid %	*ƒ*	Valid %
Scenery, countryside, natural history	367	76.5	91	79.1
Seaside, beaches and coast	327	68.1	69	60.0
Easy to get to	207	43.1	57	49.6
Peace and quiet	156	32.5	41	35.7
Visited the area before and liked it	153	31.9	41	35.7
Local visitor attractions	134	27.9	27	23.5
Cultural, heritage or literary	100	20.8	28	24.3
Recommended by friends and relatives	50	10.4	10	8.7
Visiting friends and relatives	46	9.6	7	6.1
Good shopping facilities	35	7.3	13	11.3
An event or festival	34	7.1	12	10.4
Sporting facilities	27	5.6	2	1.7
Wanted to go somewhere not visited before	11	2.3	2	1.7
Total (Valid: Multi Code)	480	**N/A**	115	**N/A**
(0) Missing Values	47	N/A	10	N/A
Total (Base)	527	**N/A**	125	**N/A**

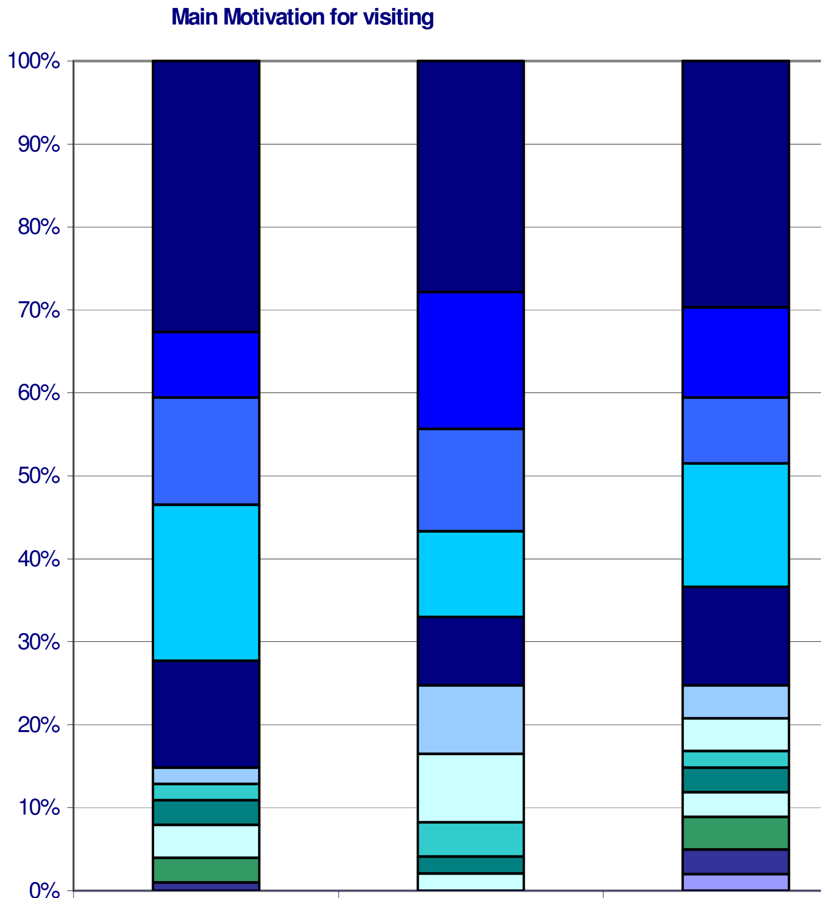
General motivators



In 2007, as in 2006, visitors' main reasons for choosing to visit West Dorset instead of an alternative destination were because they had either visited the area before (27%), for the scenery/countryside or natural history (16%) or to go somewhere new (12%). There were some variances between the motivations for visiting West Dorset and for visiting Dorset in general; these include a higher proportion of visitors to West Dorset who were motivated to visit by the countryside and wanting to go somewhere new.

The most frequently-quoted main reasons for visiting West Dorset were the scenery, countryside and natural history (72%), the seaside, beaches and coast (60%), and the ease of access. The proportion of respondents who were motivated to visit the area by cultural, heritage or literary motivators has increased from 24% in 2006 to 33% in 2007. Staying visitors are more attracted to the area by the scenery or countryside (77%) than day visitors (50%).

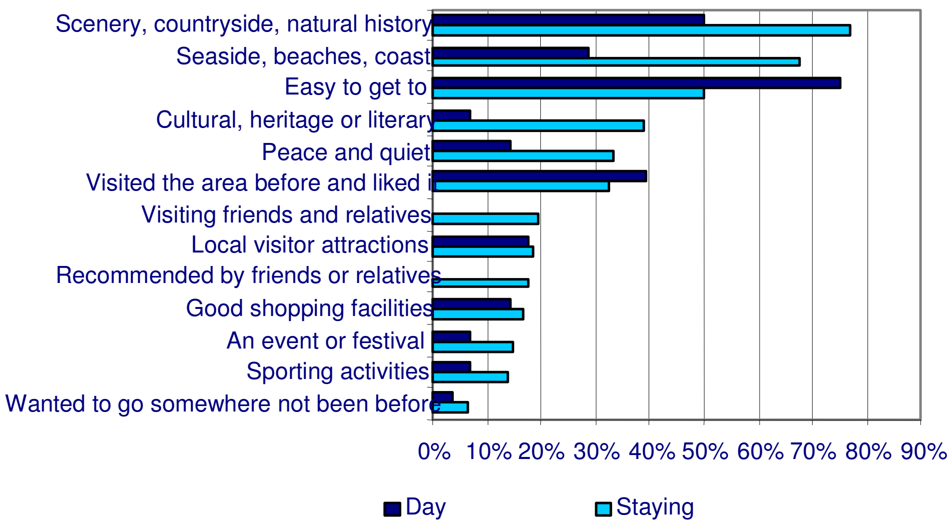
Tables from the 2007 survey:



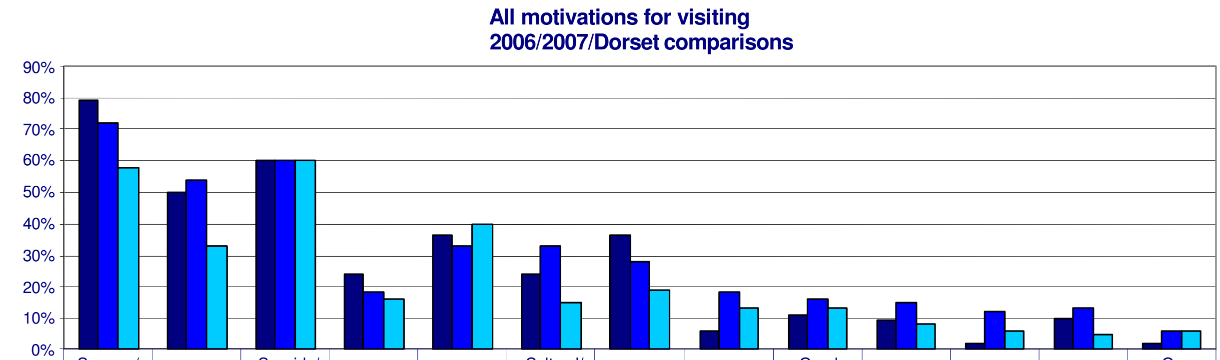
	2006	2007	Dorset (2007)
Visited the area before and liked it	33%	27%	30%
Scenery/Countryside/Natural history	8%	16%	11%
Wanted to go somewhere new	13%	12%	8%
Seaside, Beaches, Coast	19%	10%	15%
Visiting friends and relatives	13%	8%	12%
Recommended by friends/relatives	2%	8%	4%
Sporting activities	0%	8%	4%
Cultural, heritage or literary	2%	4%	2%
Local visitor attractions	3%	2%	3%
Easy to get to	4%	2%	3%
An event or festival	3%	0%	4%
Peace and quiet	1%	0%	3%
Good shopping facilities	0%	0%	2%

2007 survey: Motivations for Visiting the Area

2007 survey: All Motivations for visiting
Day / Staying comparisons



The table below compares all motivations for visiting in 2006/2007



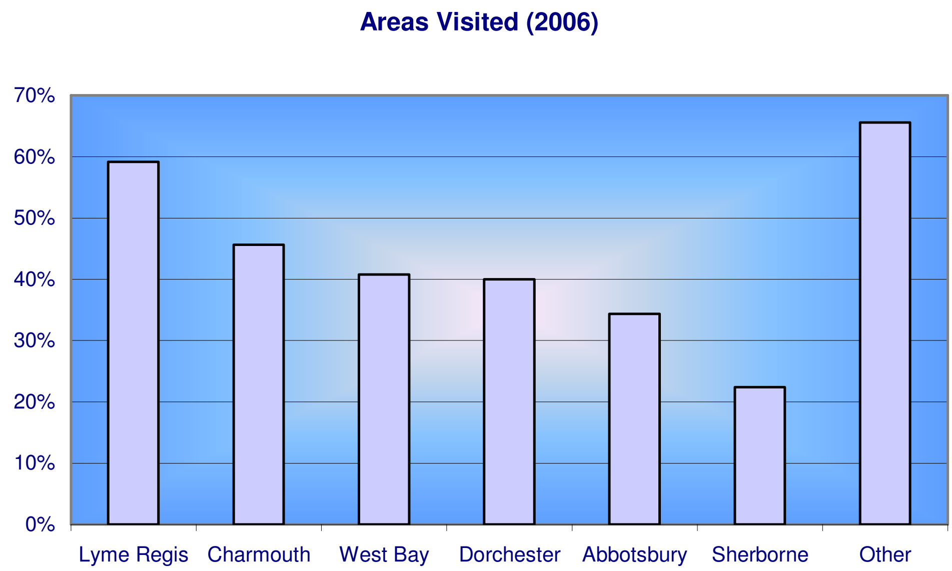
	Scenery/ countryside/ natural	Easy to get to	Seaside/ beaches/ coast	Local visitor attractions	Visited before	Cultural/ heritage/ literary	Peace and quiet	Friends and relatives	Good shopping facilities	Recom-mended	Sporting activities	An event or festival	Go somewhere new
2006	79%	50%	60%	24%	36%	24%	36%	6%	11%	9%	2%	10%	2%
2007	72%	54%	60%	18%	33%	33%	28%	18%	16%	15%	12%	13%	6%
Dorse	58%	33%	60%	16%	40%	15%	19%	13%	13%	8%	6%	5%	6%

In the Jurassic Coast Survey, 51% of respondents were primarily motivated to visit the area because they had enjoyed a previous visit. A further 16% were attracted by seaside, beaches and coast, and 12% wanted to go somewhere they haven't been before.

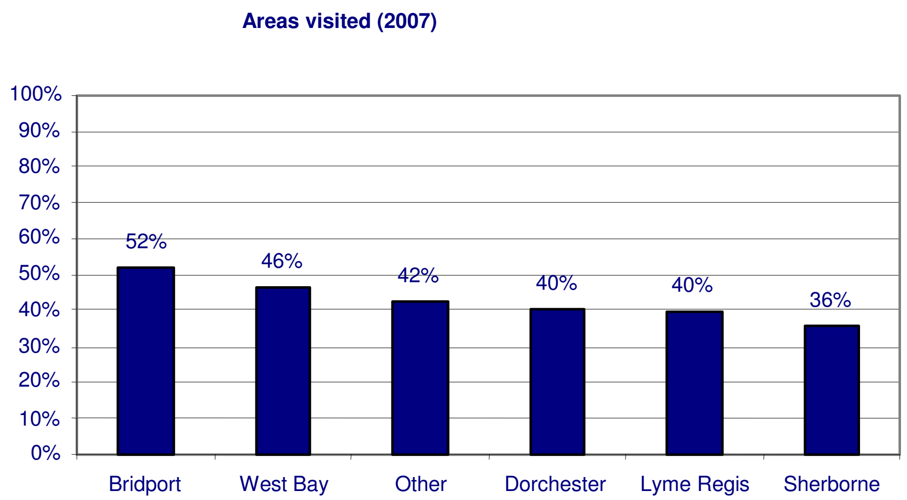
1.6 Areas Visited

In 2006 most visitors to West Dorset went to the Lyme Regis area during their stay (59% of survey respondents). A large proportion of visitors also visited Charmouth (46%), West Bay (41%) and Dorchester (40%).

Areas Visited		
Base: All	***f***	**Valid %**
Lyme Regis	74	59.2
Charmouth	57	45.6
West Bay	51	40.8
Dorchester	50	40.0
Abbotsbury	43	34.4
Sherborne	28	22.4
Other (please specify)	82	65.6
Total (Valid: Single Code)	125	**N/A**
(0) Missing Values	0	N/A
Total (Base)	125	**N/A**



Most respondents in 2007 visited Bridport and West Bay whilst in the area.



Information regarding attractions visited is included in Section 4 of this report.

1.7 Staying and Day Visits

Key statistics on the number of visitors on staying and day visits from South West Tourism's studies are:

	2006	2005	2003
Number of day visits	2,758,000	2,649,000	3,310,780
Number of trips by staying visitors	668,200	712,200	671,967
Number of staying visitor nights	3,133,9000	3,129,200	3,155,891

1.8 Market Profiles

The information from the 2005 Visitor Survey has been used to develop a series of market profiles for typical holidays in Dorset. [3] The three market profiles applying in West Dorset were Countryside Towns, Dorset Countryside and Coastal Resorts

Countryside Towns:

- The key domestic market for countryside towns is London and the south east and Dorset and Hampshire
- Visitors stay on average 7 nights in countryside towns
- Adult couples account for 55% of visitors to countryside towns. Family groups accounted for 25% of visitors
- 85% of visitors are motivated to come to the area by the scenery, countryside and natural history
- 51% of visitors were on their main holiday

Dorset Countryside:

- The key domestic market for the Dorset countryside is Dorset and Hampshire
- Visitors stay on average 6 nights in the Dorset Countryside
- Adult couples account for 33% of visitors to the Dorset countryside. Family groups accounted for 38% of visitors
- 74% of visitors are motivated to come to the area by the scenery, countryside and natural history
- 47% of visitors were on their main holiday, 27% were on a short break

Coastal Resorts:

- The key domestic market for coastal resorts is Dorset and Hampshire and London and the south east

[3] West Dorset District Summary report, Market Research Group, Bournemouth University on behalf of the Dorset & New Forest Tourism Data Project, March 2006

- Visitors stay on average 7 nights in coastal resorts
- Adult couples account for 47% of visitors to coastal resorts. Family groups accounted for 27% of visitors
- 84% of visitors are motivated to come to the area by the scenery, countryside and natural history, 75% by the seaside, beaches and coast
- 39% of visitors were on their main holiday, 34% of visitors were on a short break

1.9 Trends and changes

Accommodation type:
Comparisons are not straightforward as the surveys were not identical. However, there is some indication of an increase in the proportion of visitors staying at caravan/camping/chalet sites.

Accommodation type	1999 / 2000	2006	2007
	%	%	%
Guest house, B&B	14.1	12.7	13
Holiday park	1.0	1.0	2
Home of friend or relative	15.9	7.8	5
Hotel	14.1	16.7	8
Other (Please specify)	1.5	8.8	3
Second home	2.0	1.0	4
Self catering house, flat, cottage	16.8	20.6	21
Static caravan, chalet	17.1	6.9	5
Touring caravan or tent	17.6	24.5	27
Camper van/ mobile home			11
	100.1%	100.0%	99%

Length of stay:
Visitors in 2007 spent an average of 6.9 nights in the area which was marginally fewer than reported over Dorset as a whole (7.3 nights) but was a slight increase on 2006 (6.4 nights). Half of the respondents spent between 4 and 7 nights in the area.

The proportions for 2007 are on the whole more similar to those for 1999/2000 than for 2006.

Length of stay	1999 / 2000	2006	2007
	%	%	%
1-3 nights	26.1	21.6	28
4-7 nights	51.5	62.7	50
8-10 nights	8.3	7.8	9
11-14 nights	9.3	3.9	10
15+ nights	4.9	3.9	4

2. Contribution to the Local Economy

2.1 Visitor spend

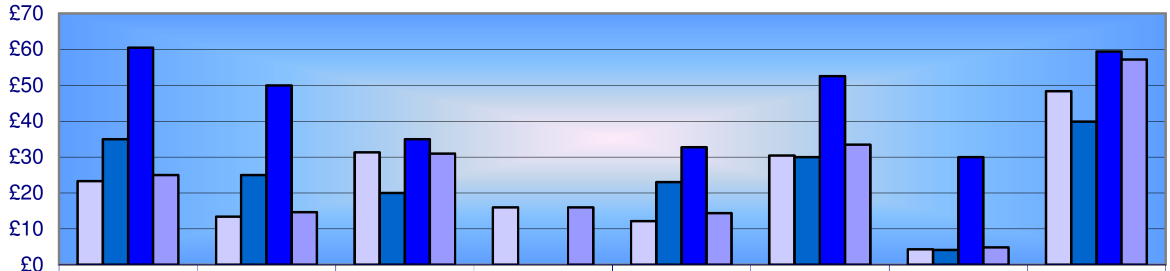
Visitor spend on accommodation, travelling around the district while on holiday, attractions, entertainment and refreshments forms a significant contribution to the West Dorset economy. The Visitor Survey for West Dorset (Dorset & New Forest Tourism Data Project) 2006 showed that respondents spent on average £48.33 per day on all costs (excluding accommodation) in West Dorset per day. This is less than the average visitor spend for the UK as a whole (£59.40) and more than that for the wider Dorset area (£39.90).

Respondents reported spending the most on fares and petrol (£30.44) and durable goods (£31.33) in West Dorset.

In addition to the above expenditure, staying visitors spent an average of £23.07 per person per night on accommodation, which is significantly more than the Dorset average of £18.00.

Tables from 2006 Visitor Survey:

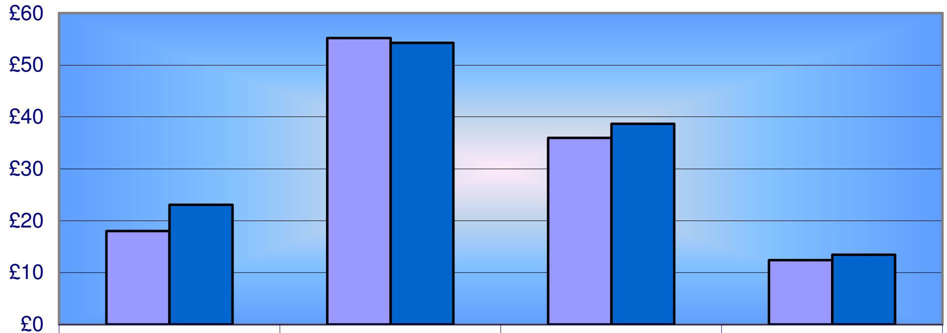
Expenditure



	Food and Drink	Convenience goods	Durable Goods	Entertainment and Leisure	Visitor attractions	Fares and Petrol	Other Costs	All Costs
West Dorset	£23.31	£13.48	£31.33	£16.00	£12.14	£30.44	£4.31	£48.33
Dorset	£35.00	£25.00	£20.00	£0.00	£23.00	£30.00	£4.20	£39.92
UK	£60.50	£50.00	£35.00	£0.00	£32.67	£52.50	£30.00	£59.40
All	£24.95	£14.63	£31.00	£16.00	£14.41	£33.45	£4.83	£57.13

(NB where a zero spend is indicated, this is due to lack of comparable information rather than implying visitors in these areas did not spend anything in these categories)

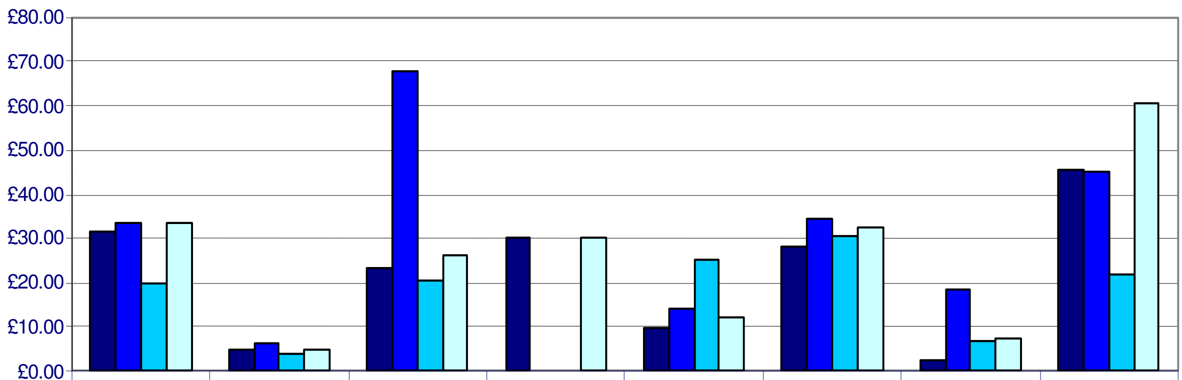
Accommodation: Average Cost.
Per person per night



	All	Half board	Bed and breakfast	Accommodation only
Dorset	£18.00	£55.20	£35.94	£12.42
West Dorset	£23.07	£54.29	£38.69	£13.41

The figure below shows the average expenditure of all respondents in the 2007 visitor survey. The total spend per respondent on all costs (excluding accommodation) is slightly less than in 2006 and the distribution of spend is different; for example, less was spent in 2007 on convenience goods, durable goods and visitor attractions and more spent on food and drink, and entertainment and leisure.

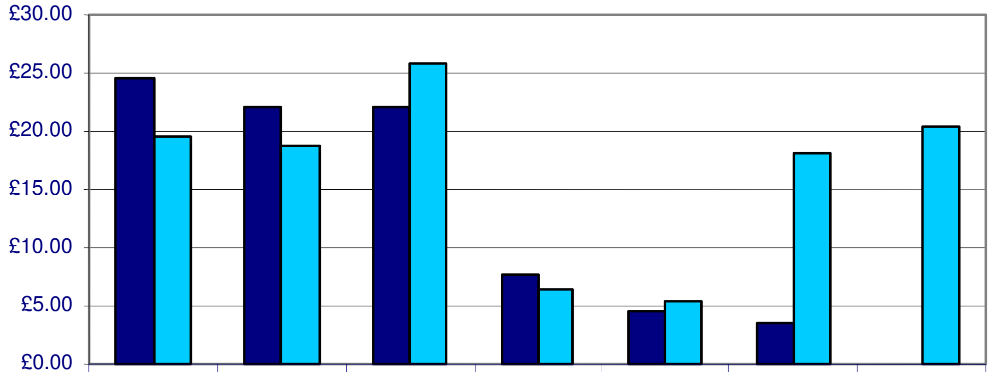
2007 Survey: Average Expenditure



	Food and drink	Convenience Goods	Durable goods	Entertainment and Leisure	Visitor Attractions	Fares and Petrol	Other Costs	All Costs
Locally	£31.75	£4.96	£23.33	£30.00	£9.73	£28.16	£2.25	£45.75
Dorset	£33.15	£6.62	£67.50	£0.00	£14.23	£34.40	£18.44	£45.07
UK	£20.00	£4.00	£20.67	£0.00	£25.00	£30.67	£6.96	£22.07
All Locations	£33.18	£5.21	£26.34	£30.00	£12.54	£32.61	£7.17	£60.81

Day visitors reported spending 30% of their average daily expenditure on fares and petrol. Expenditure over all type of goods was reasonably consistent with Dorset with the exception of visitor attractions and entertainment and leisure.

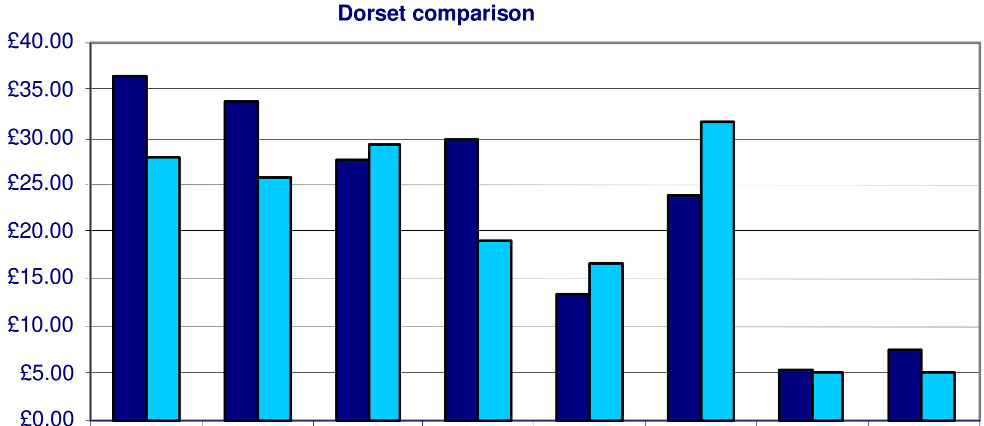
**2007 Day visitor group expenditure.
Dorset comparison**



	Fares and Petrol	Food and drink	Durable goods	Other Costs	Conven-ience Goods	Visitor Attractions	Entertain-ment and Leisure
West Dorset	£24.60	£22.19	£22.11	£7.59	£4.61	£3.50	£0.00
Dorset	£19.59	£18.64	£25.81	£6.44	£5.39	£18.11	£20.46

Staying visitors reported spending the most per group on food and drink (20%) and fares and petrol (19%). The average amount spent on accommodation was £23.93 per person per night, (figure 6.4). Similar to day visitors, staying visitors in West Dorset spent substantially more on food and drink (£36.47/group) than staying visitors over Dorset as a whole (£25.80/group), (figure 6.5).

**2007 Staying visitor group expenditure.
Dorset comparison**



	Food and drink	Fares and Petrol	Durable goods	Entertain-ment and Leisure	Visitor Attraction	Accommo-dation	Conven-ience Goods	Other Costs
West Dorset	£36.47	£33.76	£27.81	£30.00	£13.40	£23.93	£5.41	£7.50
Dorset	£28.05	£25.80	£29.14	£19.07	£16.64	£31.68	£4.90	£5.04

Staying visitors in the 2007 survey spent an average of £23.93 per night in accommodation, just slightly more than for 2006.

“The Value of Tourism to the South West Economy in 2006”, the study undertaken by South West Tourism shows that in 2006 there was

- £121,725,000 spend by staying visitors
- £109,732,000 spend by day visitors
- £231,457,000 total spend by visitors
- £ 8,927,000 other tourism-related spend

= **£240,384,000** total spend to the District.

2.2 Visitor spend by different types of accommodation

South West Tourism’s study “The Value of Tourism to the South West Economy in 2006” shows how much was spent by domestic tourists in West Dorset staying in different types of accommodation. It shows that a quarter was spent by those staying in serviced accommodation; almost 30% by those in self catering accommodation, and 28% by those staying in tents/ caravans/ holiday centres.

2.3 Changes in visitor spend and other tourist-related spend

“The Value of Tourism to the South West Economy in 2005”, South West Tourism, shows that in **2005** there was:

- £150,032,000 spend by staying visitors in West Dorset
- £102,574,000 spend by day visitors
- £252,606,000 total spend by visitors
- £ 8,040,000 other tourism-related spend

= **£260,646,000** total spend.

The Dorset New Forest Tourism Data Project 2005 summary for West Dorset, which was based on data in “The Value of Tourism to the South West Economy in 2003” by South West Tourism, shows that in **2003** there was:

- £119,881,371 spend by staying visitors in West Dorset
- £ 82,312,447 spend by day visitors
- £202,193,810 total spend by visitors
- £ 10,904,987 other tourist related spend

= **£ 213,098,805** total spend.

An earlier study, published in 2002[4], showed that in **1999** there was

- £129,201,000 spend by staying visitors in West Dorset
- £80,635,000 spend by day visitors
- £209,835,000 total spend by visitors

The South West Tourism figures indicate an increase in spend from 2003 to 2005 then a slight reduction in 2006. However, the figures show that tourism is consistently extremely important to the local economy.

[4] Prepared by Geoff Broome Associates on the Dorset Tourism Data Project using the Cambridge Economic Impact Model

2.4 Employment in tourism

The South West Tourism study 2006 states there are 5,217 jobs related to tourism spending in West Dorset District and that 11% of employment is supported by tourism.

The South West Tourism study 2005 states that there were 6,031 jobs related to tourism spending in West Dorset. Some of these were part time jobs and they are estimated to equate to 4,304 full time jobs. 14% of the District's employment was supported by tourism in 2005.

The 2005 District Summary (2003 data) states there were 5,650 jobs in the District related to tourism spending.

3. Holiday Accommodation

3.1 Existing stock

West Dorset has a range of different holiday accommodation types, including hotels, guest houses, self catering accommodation and holiday parks.

Appendix 1 lists holiday accommodation premises in West Dorset, by type of accommodation, as at 2006. These are the premises that currently hold National Quality Assessment gradings from VisitBritain. [5] The data are from West Dorset District Council's Destination Management System and were originally collated by South West Tourism. This is not a fully comprehensive list as not all premises will have applied for such grading; some for example may offer bed-and-breakfast accommodation only for a few weeks of the year.

The section below sets out definitions of the categories of holiday accommodation (as used by VisitBritain) and describes the provision of such accommodation in the District.

Hotels
Hotel - formal accommodation with full service. Minimum of six bedrooms but likely to have in excess of twenty guest bedrooms.

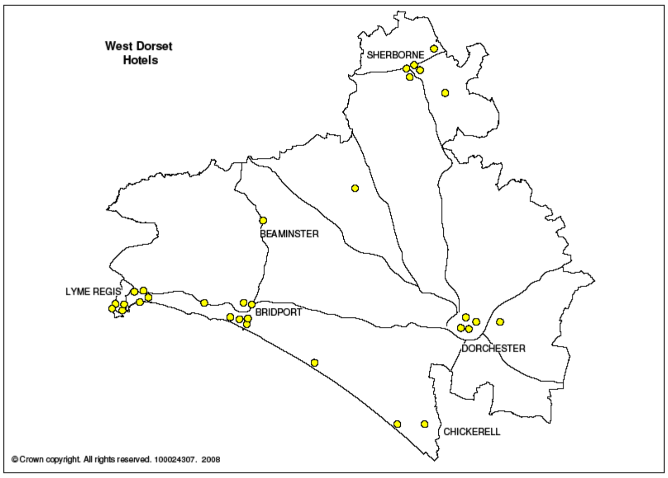
Country house hotel - a country house with ample grounds or gardens, in a rural or semi-rural situation. Emphasis on peace and quiet.

Small hotel - hotel with a maximum of twenty guest bedrooms. Personally run by the proprietor and likely to have limited function business.

Town house hotel - high quality town/city centre properties of individual and distinctive style with a maximum of fifty guest bedrooms. High staff-to-guest ratio. Public areas may be limited. Possibly no restaurant but room service available instead.

There are 31 hotels in the District that hold National Quality assessment gradings. 17 of these are at the towns, 4 at the seaside resort village of Charmouth, 7 in other coastal locations and 3 in rural inland locations.

[5] 'Quality in Tourism' administers the assessments on behalf of VisitBritain. Further details of the gradings and designators are explained on the website www.qualityintourism.com



Inns

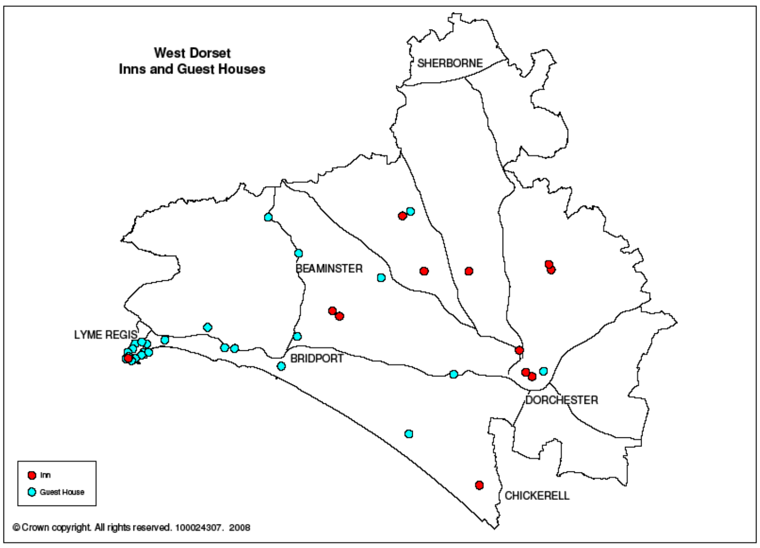
Accommodation provided in a fully licensed establishment. The bar will be open to non-residents and provide food in the evenings.

Four of the 12 inns listed are in the towns (two in Dorchester, one in Lyme Regis and one in Chickerell). The others are in village locations. Only one of the inns listed is on the coast. Eight are within or to the north of Dorchester.

Guest houses

Accommodation provided for more than six paying guests and run on a more commercial basis than a B&B. Usually more services, for example dinner, provided by staff as well as the owner.

Half the 26 guest houses listed are in Lyme Regis; most of the others are in villages in the west and south of the district.



Farm house accommodation
B&B or guest house accommodation provided on a working farm or smallholding.

15 premises are listed as farm accommodation; however, there is more accommodation at farms listed under other categories. The 15 farms are spread throughout the District.

Bed and Breakfast accommodation
Accommodation provided in a private house, run by the owner and with no more than six paying guests.

127 premises are listed as offering bed and breakfast accommodation. 51 (40%) of these are in the towns, with the remainder being fairy evenly spread throughout the district at the villages and very small settlements.

Hostels
Informal & friendly low cost travellers' accommodation. Supervised, clean and well run. Many hostels are self-catering only but meals are available at some establishments at all star levels.

Three premises are listed; these are all in the west of the District: at Litton Cheney, Lyme Regis and Charmouth. The hostel at Litton Cheney, is run by the Youth Hostels Association.

Self Catering
This long list contains properties of a wide range of different sizes and varied qualities. Visit Britain assesses the properties and gives Star ratings so that the visitor can choose a property that meets their requirements.

544 premises are listed. Some of these contain more than one unit of accommodation, eg there are 18 at Greenwood Grange Farm Cottages, Higher Bockhampton and one entry on the list at Langton Herring covers seven cottages for rent. The accommodation varies greatly in respect of size and type of location.

The listed premises comprise:
- some buildings that have been converted to holiday accommodation with a condition on the planning consent restricting their use to holiday accommodation; and
- other dwellings that could be used as a main residence but the owner chooses to let them for holiday purposes.

In addition, there are many 'second homes' in the District that are not let out, and therefore not on this list. The owners' main residences are elsewhere and they, and possibly friends and family, use the properties for holidays.

The most significant points regarding the self-catering properties listed are that
- 193 (35.5 %) of the premises listed are within Lyme Regis; and
- 80 (15 %) are within Charmouth.
- A high proportion of the district's self catering accommodation is therefore located at these two seaside settlements.

Of the remaining premises

- a further 151 (28%) are within the west area of the district ie Bridport including West Bay, Beaminster and surrounding villages and countryside
- none is within Dorchester
- 93 (17%) are in the villages and countryside around Dorchester and Chickerell
- 21 (4%) are in the Sherborne area.

Discussions with two letting agencies have highlighted the popularity of properties with a coastal location (generally 20 minutes maximum drive, and preferably 10 minutes, or walking distance from the coast or beach). Their clients mainly seek an attractive property of a high standard, not on a main road, within walking distance of a pub and preferably a shop. There is significantly less demand through the agencies for accommodation in locations where there are no facilities. It was pointed out that average length of stay has declined with fewer 2-week holidays and more short breaks (often booked at short notice).

There are approximately 2,500 second homes in the district, which is about 5.3% of the total housing stock; and this proportion is much higher in some villages. Whilst second home owners do contribute to the local economy during their visits, the use of homes for this purpose reduces the number for full time occupation, and the demand adds pressure to house prices. In villages with a very high proportion of second homes there can also be other adverse effects on local communities, for example if many properties are empty over the winter months.

Holiday Parks

Visit Britain divides holiday parks into three categories; Holiday Parks, Touring Parks and Camping Parks. Some sites may meet the characteristics of more than one category, for example as both Holiday and Touring Park.

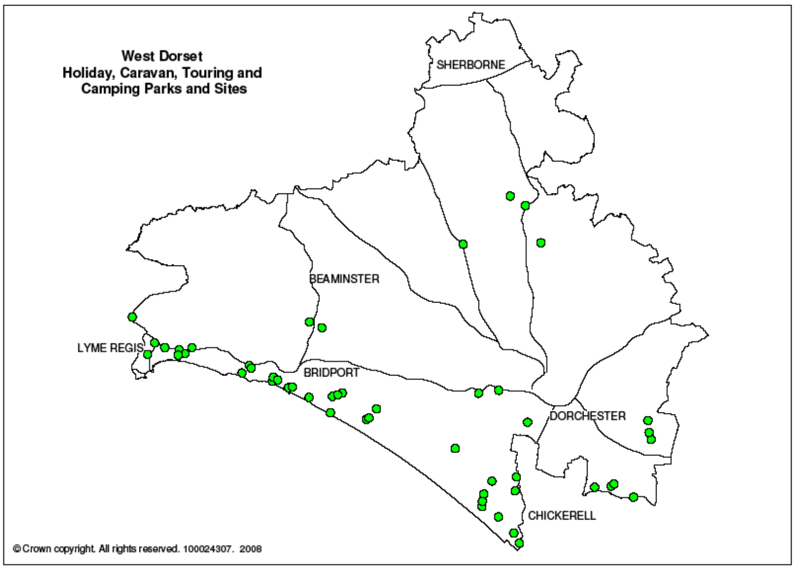
The lists of sites at Appendix 1 also include information from the Valuation Office's web site.

The sites include holiday parks with bungalows/chalets, static and touring caravan sites, and camping sites. Some sites provide one type of accommodation, others more than one. Some have many on-site facilities, others are low-key. The list also includes the PGL holiday centre at Osmington Mills which provides for adventure holidays for young people.

There is a wide range of types and sizes of sites from the very large sites (generally located in coastal areas) to small certificated sites. Many caravans on some sites are privately owned, whereas others are hired out directly by the site operator. An example of a large site is Littlesea Holiday Park, which provides sites for 95 tourers/motorhomes, 135 tents, and 700 statics, 350 of which are for hire. It also has outdoor and indoor facilities and provides evening entertainment. Appendix 2 shows 37 of the holiday park sites in the District with approximate figures of the breakdown of number of pitches for tents, touring caravans/ motor homes, static caravans, and chalets/ log cabins/ bungalows.

- There are approximately 4,072 pitches available for tents and touring caravans/ motor homes.
- There are approximately 2,481 static caravans; 38% of these are available for hire from the site operators and 62% are privately owned.

- There are about 312 chalets/ log cabins/ bungalows; two thirds of these are at Warmwell Leisure Resort.
- The largest sites and the vast majority of the pitches are on or near the coast.



Definition of a caravan

A caravan is defined by caravan sites legislation. It is a structure designed or adapted for human habitation which is capable of being moved lawfully by road. The definition includes twin-unit caravans with maximum dimensions of 20 metres length, 6.8 metres width and 3.05 metres height.

The definition is not confined to structures that look like caravans in the everyday sense of the word. Caravan and mobile home are legally the same terms. Mobile homes may remain in position on concrete bases, attached to water, electricity and other services, for substantial periods of time. Yet the intention will generally be that they should remain movable, so as to permit improvements to and rearrangements of the site, and agreements for stationing a caravan (pitch agreements) usually provide for this.

Chalets, log cabins and bungalows all come under the definition of a caravan, subject to meeting the size dimensions and capability of being moved by road. The word ‘chalet’ used in the context of the policies in the Adopted Local Plan, and ‘log cabin’ and ‘bungalow’ as applied to holiday park accommodation, are descriptions used for different types of mobile homes to distinguish them from ‘traditional’ caravans.

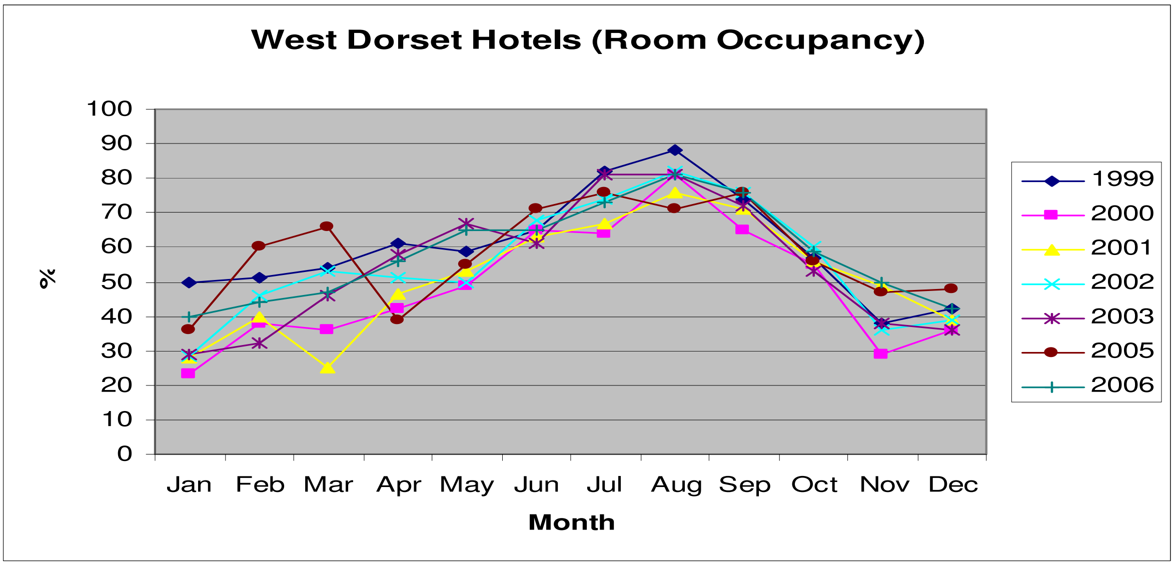
3.2 Occupancy rates of holiday accommodation

Hotels

The occupancy rate of hotel rooms in the District is greatest in the summer months: August is the peak month, followed closely by July and September. There remains some spare capacity throughout the year.

The following table shows hotel room occupancy in West Dorset between 1999 and 2005: the information is from the Dorset New Forest Tourism Data Project, 2005/2006.

West Dorset Hotels - Room Occupancy													
%	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
1999	50	51	54	61	59	65	82	88	74	57	38	42	**60**
2000	23	38	36	42	49	65	64	81	65	55	29	36	**49**
2001	28	40	25	47	53	63	67	76	71	56	49	39	**51**
2002	29	46	53	51	50	68	74	82	76	60	36	39	**55**
2003	29	32	46	58	67	61	81	81	72	53	38	36	**56**
2004	36	60	66	39	55	71	76	71	76	56	47	48	**58**
2005	40	44	47	56	65	65	73	81	76	59	50	42	**58**
Mean	**33.5**	**44.4**	**46.7**	**50.5**	**56.9**	**65.4**	**73.9**	**80.0**	**72.9**	**56.6**	**41.0**	**40.3**	**55.3**



Self catering accommodation

Up to date information regarding occupancy rates in self-catering accommodation is not available from the Market Research Group. There is not an accurate means of recording this information but anecdotal information has been provided by two local letting agencies and some information is available from web sites.

The agency properties are fully booked at the peak seasons (school holidays), with high occupancy April/May and September/October and lower occupancy pre Easter and Christmas. One web site of seven properties on the Heritage Coast near Chickerell shows 50% occupancy in the 13 weeks January to March 2007 and all properties were fully booked for the 26 weeks April – September 2007 (apart from one week not booked at one property). The occupancy rates of 15 of the high quality cottages at Higher Bockhampton range from 33 to 49 weeks per year. The property with the highest occupancy is a one-bedroomed property that sleeps two people.

Holiday Parks and camping/caravan sites

In terms of self catering holiday hire caravans and chalets, in 2001 the average unit occupancy was 71% with a maximum occupancy of 96% in August and a minimum of 36% in March (West Dorset 2002 – Tourism Facts, Figures and Information and Economic Impact of Tourism, STB, 2001). It is understood that there is high demand for the purchase of static caravans.

More recent occupancy rates at these sites and for camping sites are not readily available.

Section 1 of this report, Visitors to West Dorset, indicates the proportion of visitors staying in each type of holiday accommodation.

3.3 Accommodation quality and availability

The Dorset & New Forest Tourism Data Project 2006 visitor survey suggests that the majority of visitors considered that the quality and availability of accommodation in West Dorset was very good. 53% of respondents ranked quality as very good and 64% ranked availability as very good. None considered either quality or availability to be poor or very poor.

Accommodation				
	Quality of accommodation		Availability of Accommodation	
Base: All (#)	*f*	Valid %	*f*	Valid %
Very Good	61	53.0	73	63.5
Good	26	22.6	14	12.2
Neither good nor poor	2	1.7	2	1.7
Poor	0	0.0	0	0.0
Very poor	0	0.0	0	0.0
Don't know	26	22.6	26	22.6
Total (Valid: Single Code)	**115**	**100.0**	**115**	**100.0**
(0) Missing Values	10	N/A	10	N/A
Total (Base)	**125**	**N/A**	**125**	**N/A**
Average	**4.66**		**4.80**	

3.4 Planning Issues: planning applications for holiday development

The following information relates to planning applications determined from 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2008.

<u>New built holiday accommodation</u>

There have been 5 planning applications for new built holiday accommodation. These comprise

- the demolition of the night club at the Clay Pigeon Tourist Park at Wardon Hill and the erection of a new country club including hotel accommodation approved in March 2005;
- demolition of a single storey building and replacement with a two storey building comprising an education study facility and sustainable holiday accommodation about 1 km outside of the village of Frampton. This was refused in November 2007 as it did not meet the locational requirement of Policy ET9 in addition to being contrary to conservation and design policies;
- alterations to Frampton Gallery and erect first floor extension to form 1No unit of holiday accommodation within Frampton village. This was refused in April 2007 as the applicant did not demonstrate that the development would be economically viable; it was therefore considered that the proposal would not be a bona fide sustainable form of development, and would therefore be contrary to Policies SS3 and ET9. In addition, it would detract from the quality of visual character of this part of the conservation area and detract from the setting of The Lodge which is recognised as a key unlisted building in the Conservation Area.
- two new-build self catering holiday let dwelling units within the villages of Langton Herring Osmington. They were refused consent in 2007.

The application at Langton Herring was refused because it was considered the proposed building would neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and because the business plan submitted with the application failed to demonstrate that the development would be viable on the basis of reasonable assumptions of revenue.

There is no longer a Defined Development Boundary at Langton Herring – the former one was deleted in accordance with the recommendation of the Local Plan Inquiry Inspector as this is one of several villages that are considered unsustainable locations for additional housing development. Local Plan Policy ET9 allows in principle new built holiday accommodation at these villages in order to support the local economy, but they must be demonstrated to be economically viable as holiday lets so that there is not the pressure to change their use to permanent accommodation in a location where permanent accommodation would not be allowed.

The bungalow at Osmington was refused for the same reason regarding sustainable development and because it was considered that it would harm the visual amenities of the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the designated Heritage Coast and would neither preserve nor enhance the setting of the adjacent Conservation Area. An appeal against the refusal was allowed: the Inspector considered that the appellant's financial estimates were not unreasonable and that the development would not harm the environmental qualities.

<u>Change of use of buildings to serviced accommodation</u>
One application, to convert redundant farm buildings into 9 units of serviced holiday accommodation plus dining, bar and kitchen areas was approved in principle by the Council in 2007 subject to further matters being resolved. This is in the hamlet of Lower Wraxall and is a farm diversification proposal. A range of policy issues needed to be balanced in its determination.

Change of use of hotels and guest houses

Seven planning applications have been determined since 1 April 2004 that relate to this type of change of use. One of the three applications in 2004 for the change of use of hotels to flats was approved and the other two were refused. Two other applications have resulted in the loss of serviced accommodation – one was to change the use of a residential property in Dorchester from residential/ B & B back to solely residential; the other was the change of use of a hotel and restaurant in Chideock to a dwelling with B and B. Both were approved in November 2007. Two other applications were approved for a change to self catering accommodation.

The change of use from hotels in Lyme Regis has been raised as an issue through the consultation on the Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper, with concern that there is no policy that seeks to retain hotels, unlike other policies that seek to retain employment land, recreational land and local facilities.

An application currently being considered is to convert the Antelope Hotel in Sherborne to eight flats.

Adaptations to, and change of use of, buildings to self catering accommodation

This category includes commercially-run properties where properties are rented out for holiday use, and properties in private ownership that are not rented out. Where applications relating to buildings that are outside Defined Development Boundaries (DDBs) are approved, a holiday occupancy condition is included with the planning consent (or a Section 106 agreement may apply to some). The condition restricts the use to holiday use so that the properties are only used by visitors and cannot lawfully be used as a main residence.

The Government's Good Practice Guide for Tourism, 2006 states that there are three main reasons why an occupancy condition might be applied:

- in order that national or local policies on development of the countryside are not compromised. Often the conversion of redundant rural buildings to holiday accommodation provides a means to retain those buildings without introducing a level of activity that would occur with permanent households;
- to avoid occupation by permanent households which would in turn put pressure upon local services. Permanent households may place demands for local schools and social and health services that would not normally arise from visitors. Moreover, in remote locations the cost of providing these services is greater. It may therefore be reasonable for the planning authority to place an occupancy condition when properties are being built or converted for residential use; and
- to strengthen tourism in a particular area by ensuring that there is a wide range of properties available to encourage visitors to come there on holiday.

The creation of new open-market housing outside the Defined Development Boundaries is contrary to the District Council's aim to achieve a more sustainable settlement pattern by permitting such housing only within the larger and more self-contained settlements shown on the proposals map with DDBs. However, allowing conversions to holiday use is considered appropriate, subject to the proposals meeting several criteria, because such use can contribute to the local economy whilst not placing demands on local services.

There have been a total of 108 planning applications for the conversion of buildings to self catering holiday accommodation determined from 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2008. Seventy-six of these were approved for a total of 136 new units of accommodation.

There is a significant difference in the Local Plan policies regarding adaptations and change of use of buildings outside DDBs for holiday accommodation in the 1998 and 2006 Adopted Local Plan. The 1998 policy allowed conversions in principle in any location outside the DDBs, subject to criteria regarding the actual building. The 2006 policy is more restrictive regarding the location of such new development. The policy requires that the building/s are located on the edge of towns or villages with DDBs, or in or on the edge of a list of other villages where there are some more limited facilities. If the proposal forms part of a farm diversification plan in order to make the farming viable, the buildings need to adjoin (an) existing building(s) or be close to the local highway network. Proposals also need to meet several other criteria in order to be acceptable. The changes to the policies were made following the Local Plan Inspector's recommendation that the locations for such new development should be restricted to the more sustainable settlements and not be dispersed whilst still allowing some development that would support the local economy.

The new policy stance came into effect from April 2006. the table below shows that about half the applications for holiday accommodation were refused 2006 – 2007 as the policy took effect, a much higher proportion than in previous years. The proportion appears to be reducing now; this could be a combination of fewer applications being submitted that are contrary to policy and possibly a reduction in the number of available buildings. The implementation of this policy is being monitored.

Planning applications determined from 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2008

Type of accommodation	Number of applications approved	Number of applications refused	Number of appeals allowed	Number of appeals dismissed
New-build serviced accommodation (hotels and guest houses)	1	0	0	0
Change of use of buildings to serviced accommodation	1 (subject to other matters)	0	0	0
Change of use of hotels and guest houses to non-holiday uses (private dwellings)	2 NB 3 other applications were approved for change of use to self catering.	2	0	0
New-build self catering	0	4	1	0
Change of use of buildings to self catering accommodation (see also the table below with more details)	76	29	3	0

Planning applications for the change of use of buildings to self catering accommodation

Year of decision	No. of approvals	No. of refusals	No. allowed on appeal	No. dismissed on appeal	No. of new units
1/04/2004 – 31/03/2005	27	3	0	0	40
1/04/2005 – 31/03/2006	20	4	0	0	37
1/04/2006 – 31/03/2007	19	18	2	0	27
1/04/2007 – 31/03/2008	10	4	1	0	32*
Totals	76	29	3	0	136*

Holiday parks, caravan and camping sites

Planning applications relating to holiday parks, caravan and camping sites

Type of application	No. of applications approved	No. of applications refused	No. of appeals allowed	No. of appeals dismissed
New holiday parks/ camping sites	1	0	0	0
Additional pitches/replacement chalets/ reorganisation at existing sites	10	2	0	1
Facilities, new access roads at holiday parks	15	1	1 (part)	0
Extension of season	2	0	0	0
Storage of caravans	2	0	0	0

Only three of the 33 applications were refused.

Almost half of the applications were for new facilities such as additional toilets, showers, laundry, reception/ sales areas, tennis courts, club house.

The application for a new site relates to a small site of 14 touring caravans.

The applications for additional pitches cover a range from one to twenty pitches.

The planning policies relating to holiday parks, caravan and camping sites were thoroughly considered at the Local Plan Inquiry 2005. The resultant policies in the 2006 adopted Local Plan are less stringent than in the 1998 adopted Local Plan and the 2004 Revised Deposit Plan. Policies allow for new sites, extension of existing sites, change of use from tourers to statics, new site facilities, new facilities and intensification of existing sites – all subject to meeting criteria and other Local Plan policies. Applications will need monitoring to see if proposals strike a balance between supporting the tourism economy but not detracting from the high quality of the natural environment or increasing sustainable development.

There is a demand for enhanced facilities on holiday parks in order to provide better entertainment and indoor facilities on site so as to encourage use through a longer season.

* includes 16 units at Catherston Manor Farm, Charmouth

This can attract visitors for a longer part of the year, providing an economic benefit to the District, but involves a greater amount of built development, the visual impact of which needs to be carefully considered, particularly in coastal and AONB locations. In addition, where holiday parks are in locations not served well by public transport, the scale of proposals should relate to the capacity and needs of the holiday park itself so that there will not be the need to draw in customers who are not staying at the park to in order to maintain the viability of the facilities. More appropriate locations for facilities for the District's residents are within the larger settlements.

4. Visitor Attractions

4.1 Range of attractions

Appendix 3 contains details of the main visitor attractions in the District compiled from the West Dorset Tourism website.

A visitor attraction is defined by South West Tourism as "*a permanent established excursion destination, a primary purpose of which is to allow public access for entertainment, interest or education; rather than being a primary retail outlet or a venue for sporting, theatrical or film performances*".

The list shows the extensive range of different types of attractions within the District. There are attractions within the towns and also in coastal and countryside locations. They include outdoor and indoor attractions at a range of prices, and some for which there is no charge. Those at the larger settlements can be reached by public transport, whereas visits to others located in the countryside, such as historic houses, are more dependant on the private car.

Visitors staying in West Dorset may also visit a range of attractions outside the District, such as those in Weymouth and the Tank Museum and Monkey World in Purbeck.

In addition to these attractions, the District provides the opportunity to participate in activities such as sailing, diving, swimming, horse riding, golf, fishing, cycling and walking. The quality of the coastal and countryside scenery, historic towns and villages and other attractive features of the built environment are also significant attractions for visitors: 10% of respondents in the Visitor Survey 2007 (19% in the 2006 survey) cited the seaside, beaches and coast as their main reason for visiting, while a further 16% (8% in 2006) cited 'scenery, countryside and natural history' and 4% (2% in 2006) 'cultural, heritage or literary'.

4.2 Number of visitors to attractions

The Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions is conducted annually by the national tourist boards of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to monitor visitor and other trends. The purpose of the survey is to monitor trends regarding attractions and to improve wider understanding of the dynamics of the sector. The findings contribute to regional and national estimates of the economic impact of tourism and inform regional development and planning work. The results of the survey enable operators to benchmark their operation both within their category, within their region and across the sector as a whole.

Appendix 4 shows the number of visitors to some key attractions in West Dorset from 2000 to 2007 [6] Of those on this list, the greatest attractor in the District is the Abbotsbury Swannery with over 100,000 visitors each year. More than 100,000 visit the Abbotsbury Sub-Tropical Gardens and Tithe Barn Children's Farm (combined total). These are significant numbers for such a small village. Other attractions known to have high numbers of visitors, but for which recent information is not available, include the Tutankhamum exhibition and the Dinosaur Museum in Dorchester.

[6] Information from the South West Tourism web site

4.3 Key facts on Dorset attractions

A research report: “Visitor Attractions in Dorset 2005” was produced in March 2006 by the Market Research Group on behalf of the Dorset New Forest Tourism Data Project. The questionnaire was mailed to all known attractions: 48 completed questionnaires were received representing a response rate of 24%.

The Executive Summary states that

- 71% of attractions had admission charges, and 29% were free of charge.
- The average attraction in Dorset charged around £7.30 for an adult admission during peak season 2005, and £3.83 for a child.
- 55% of attractions were open all year round, and 45% operated seasonal opening.
- Approximately 26% of visitors to Dorset attractions are children, and around 8% of visitors are from overseas.
- An estimated 46% of all visits to Dorset attractions take place in the summer months (June, July and August), and 40% in the ‘shoulder’ months.
- 45% of Dorset attractions reported an upturn in visitors in 2005, 33% reported a downturn, and 23% reported no change.
- 45% of attractions made capital improvements to their establishment during 2005, amounting to a total investment of around £2.5m across the county.
- 55% of attractions reported in upturn in gross revenue in 2005, 25% reported a downturn, and 20% reported no change.
- The average attraction comprises 5 full time staff, 5 part time staff, 8 seasonal staff and 12 volunteers.

4.4 New attractions

New attractions since 1 April 2004 are the Terracotta Warriors Museum within Dorchester and Zorbing at Bockhampton to the east of Dorchester.

Zorbing is an adventure pursuit: the zorb is an inflatable sphere, about three metres in diameter, which contains another smaller sphere that is suspended into position. Users are harnessed inside the zorb before being sent rolling head over heels downhill. This type of new attraction has widened the range of attractions available in the District.

The village of Abbotsbury has developed as a location with art and craft galleries and shops. An information leaflet gives brief details of the 17 premises in the village where items can be viewed and bought.

4.5 Planning Issues

Section 7.7 of the Adopted Local Plan relates to tourism attractions. The location of major new attractions needs to comply with the sequential search approach by which town centres are the preferred location, followed by adjoining sites. This is because there is greater opportunity for more people to access these locations other than by car.

The Local Plan acknowledges that some attractions will inevitably be in countryside locations, such as historic houses. Policy ET7 relates to new tourism attractions/ facilities within Defined Development Boundaries (DDBs), and Policy ET8 relates to those outside DDBs. The scale of the proposed development, the effect on the landscape character or rural amenity of the countryside and residents, and the traffic implications are considerations for applications outside DDBs.

There have been refusals of three planning applications relating to visitor attractions since 1 April 2004. Two related to using land as a frisbee golf course and using additional land for a car park and recreation associated with the existing seasonal Maize Maze at Rodden (near Langton Herring). Both applications were refused consent because they would be visually intrusive in the open countryside/rural setting within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and because the proposed expansion of activities would detract from the existing peaceful countryside/ rural surroundings as well as the amenity of the occupiers of nearby residential properties by reason of noise and general disturbance.

An application for the change of use of land in the countryside near Tolpuddle from agricultural to use in connection with crossbows/archery, quad biking, off road buggy racing, clay pigeon shooting, 4X4 driving and blind driving was refused in November 2007. The reason was that the proposed use would generate a significant level of noise in this tranquil rural area, which would have an adverse and unacceptable impact on the residential amenity of residents in the nearby residential properties and villages.

5. Other Visitor Facilities

The most recent visitor survey 2007 (Dorset & New Forest Tourism Data Project) also sought visitors' views on the quality of a range of other facilities used by visitors during their stay in the District.

Respondents rated all visitor facilities on average as good or better. 60% respondents considered the availability of accommodation to be excellent; a further 12% considered it good. 73% considered the quality of accommodation to be good or very good.

Visitor Facilities							
Base: All (158)	Very Good (5)	Good (4)	Neither good nor poor (3)	Poor (2)	Very poor (1)	Don't know (0)	Average
Availability of accommodation	60%	12%	3%	1%	0%	24%	4.7
Quality of accommodation	33%	38%	4%	0%	0%	25%	4.4
The standard of facilities at your accommodation	32%	39%	5%	0%	0%	24%	4.4
Customer service received at your accommodation	39%	32%	2%	1%	0%	27%	4.5
Staff friendliness at the TIC	33%	27%	0%	0%	0%	39%	4.6
Range of information at the TIC	50%	13%	0%	0%	0%	37%	4.8
Provision of tourist information boards	36%	47%	1%	0%	0%	16%	4.4
Signposting to towns and villages	17%	69%	8%	0%	0%	5%	4.1
Signposting to visitor attractions	38%	40%	4%	0%	0%	18%	4.4
Pedestrian signposting within towns	26%	65%	2%	0%	0%	8%	4.3

West Dorset saw a decrease in ratings in respect to the quality of accommodation (96% in 2006 to 88% in 2007) and the signposting to towns and villages. There has been an increase in the average ratings received in respect to Tourist Information Boards (84% in 2006 to 88% in 2007).

Table 7.2: Average ratings						
	2006		2007		Difference	
	Average	%	Average	%	Average	%
Accommodation - Availability	4.66	93%	4.7	95%	0.1	2%
Accommodation - Quality	4.8	96%	4.4	88%	-0.4	-8%
Accommodation - Standard of facilities	N/A	N/A	4.4	87%	N/A	N/A
Accommodation - Customer service	N/A	N/A	4.5	90%	N/A	N/A
TIC - Staff Friendliness	4.66	93%	4.6	91%	-0.1	-2%
TIC - Range of Information	4.66	93%	4.8	96%	0.1	3%
Tourist Information Board	4.22	84%	4.4	88%	0.2	4%
Signposting to towns and villages	4.42	88%	4.1	82%	-0.3	-6%
Signposting to visitor attractions	4.49	90%	4.4	88%	-0.1	-2%
Pedestrian signposting within towns	4.25	85%	4.3	85%	0.0	0%

Most respondents did not use public transport or cycle routes during their stay. The majority of those who used public transport rated it as good, and all those who used cycle routes rated them as good or very good. The provision of public footpaths was rated as good or very good by 87% of respondents, and 71% considered that the provision of public toilets was good or very good.

Work in progress on the development of a Coastal Path Corridor Plan (Dorset County Council) has included looking at the visitor experience of using the coastal path, including the use of public transport to access the coast, the accessibility of facilities from the path, and signposting and information. This indicates that there are sections of the path with poor access to facilities such as public toilets, and others where signposting to these facilities could be improved. The X53 coastal bus service is highly rated by users, but better information provision (such as inclusion of location names on bus stops, which would help visitors identify which timetable stop they were at) would assist its use by visitors.

6. Conclusions

Tourism is clearly very important for the District. It is a primary sector of its economy, with 11% of the District's employment supported by tourism in 2006.

West Dorset attracts visitors from within Dorset county, from all regions within England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and overseas. Three-quarters of UK visitors are from the south of England which reflects West Dorset's attractiveness for holidays/ visits relatively close to where people live. There has been an increase in recent years in the proportion of holidays of 4 – 7 nights duration.

The District has a wealth of different types of attractions and a wide range of accommodation. A significant proportion of visitors are attracted by the high environmental quality of the area.

Guiding principles of "Tourism Together", the District Council's current tourism strategy 2003 – 2008 are:

1. Meet the challenge of changing demand;
2. Create economic benefit for the community;
3. Recognise our strengths and build on them;
4. Ensure that tourism doesn't spoil what people come here to enjoy; and
5. Promote quality as an essential ingredient of the visitor's experience.

It is important that the tourism sector is supported to invest in new infrastructure, modern facilities and visual improvements, so as to continue to be vibrant and competitive. The challenge facing planning policy is to encourage and support the tourism economy while protecting the environment that is such an important attractor of visitors. The planning policies need to be reassessed as the Local Development Framework is prepared in order that they continue to meet the tourism strategy principles.

A significant challenge also is the encouragement of 'green tourism' with a reduced impact on the global environment. Taking holidays closer to home rather than flying abroad is one means of achieving holidays with a lower environmental impact, which could benefit tourism in West Dorset. Initiatives such as high standards of sustainable construction in new tourism developments, the location of accommodation and attractions where there is some choice of transport mode (though this obviously has some limitations in such a rural area), and the encouragement of public transport, walking and cycling as part of people's holiday activities, can also help to make tourism in the District more environmentally sustainable.