

STC Tourism & Economy TAFF

Activity Based Tourism and Ethical and Responsible Tourism

Submission by the Vision Group for Sidmouth
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- > Sidmouth is **uniquely charming**, with all the traditional attractions still on offer: [Sidmouth, a classic west country seaside resort: “this quintessential Victorian seaside resort is beginning to buck the trend”](#)
 - > However, the main problem for Sidmouth is that it will continue to attract an **elderly demographic**: [Young people ‘struggle to envisage a future living by the sea’](#) and [Sidmouth is singled out as one of the towns facing the biggest increase in the elderly](#)
- Nevertheless, looking to other seaside towns, it could well be possible to balance the old and the new: [The secret behind Scarborough’s success > “the perfect balance between traditional seaside charm and up-to-date attractions that appeal to people of all ages”](#)
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Activity Based Tourism

- > A very positive contribution to this increase in diversity and variety is the incremental, organic creation of a '**Festival Town**': [2017 Making Sidmouth a Festival town](#)
 - > Visitors clearly see Sidmouth's **built heritage** as an asset: [The importance of heritage >>> "95% of adults agree that it is important to them that heritage buildings and places are well looked after"](#)
- Sidmouth has more listed buildings than anywhere else in Devon, apart from Exeter: [East Devon's local heritage list](#)
- The SVA's latest heritage guide and their regular guided tours from the Museum continue to prove very attractive to visitors: [More historic blue plaques for Sidmouth > SVA launches 'blue book'](#)
- There is great potential for exploiting this interest in heritage – through festivals and academic courses: [Celebrating Sidmouth’s heritage](#)
- The latest example of this is a new museum for the town: [Church building to be kept in public use > toy museum to come to Sidmouth](#)
- > The **maritime heritage** is on display everyday down on the seafront, from the Lifeboat Station to the Fish Shop. This comes to a head during the [Sidmouth Regatta](#) and the Sea Fest: [Working the Sea: the story of Sidmouth’s fishing heritage](#)
- The newly-refurbished Drill Hall should further regenerate the Port Royal area: [Regional fish restaurant chain Rockfish to take on Drill Hall](#)
- Generally, there is a huge amount of enthusiasm for this authentic side to the seaside experience: [The maritime heritage of Sidmouth and Devon](#)
- > This has a wider impact, with the government promoting the wider value of **heritage and well-being**: [It finds that historic places, assets – and associated activities and interventions – can have a wide range of beneficial impacts on the physical, mental and social wellbeing of individuals and communities.](#)
- Perhaps there is some scope for building on the town's Regency heritage: [Should Sidmouth have a Spa?](#)
- And of course, our parks are good for the health of both residents and visitors: [Look after](#)

[your parks and green spaces: they save the NHS £millions](#)

> Our **natural heritage** is a vital component of what makes the Sid Valley so attractive and, as with parks, can offer places for quieter 'activity'.

There are several **nature reserves** in the Valley, offering something different to the seaside, for example: [Knapp Nature Reserve to go to SVA](#)

And there are other **nature projects** with a difference, such as the latest from Sidmouth in Bloom: [A sensory garden for Sidmouth >>> official opening](#)

> The **Sidmouth Arboretum** has a busy calendar of activities: [Tree Week – Meet the Trees](#) and several projects to help us enjoy trees: [Sidmouth footpaths and tree trails](#) and [Sidmouth Arboretum labelling trees with QR codes](#)

The Vision Group itself envisaged the greening of the valley: [2012: a vision for Sidmouth as 'the greenest town in England'](#)

> Sidmouth has the most number of **footpaths** of any Devon parish: [Volunteers step up to maintain Sidmouth footpaths](#)

There are several events celebrating **walking**, with the Arboretum is heading a new collaborative project: [The Sid Valley Ring > a new footpath around Sidmouth and its environs](#)

“Walking is by far the most popular activity amongst visitors to the South West, according to figures from South West Tourism. Thirty-seven per cent of tourists to the region cite walking as the prime activity of their holiday, with beaches and shopping trailing well behind with 16 per cent and 14 per cent respectively.” [Stepping out around town with Sidmouth Arboretum](#)

> For more active ways through the valley, there is **cycling**, with a suggestion coming out of the SVNP for a 'Siddy Bike' hiring scheme: [Cycling in the Sid Valley >>> focus group survey results: better cycling provision would benefit everyone in the valley](#)

The bike shops currently rent out bicycles, but we need to progress on providing safe cycling in the Valley for all users: [Sid Valley links, safe cycling and walking networks](#)

> The **Donkey Sanctuary** is the Valley's main employer and key tourist destination, and it plans to attract substantially more visitors following its success: [Donkey Sanctuary wins gold at Devon Tourism Awards](#)

And this year's Chelsea Flower Show winning garden has been brought to Sidmouth as a further attraction: [Donkey Sanctuary's winning Chelsea Flower Show garden comes to Sidmouth](#)

> The well-established and venerated nationally-recognised **NLO** can attract youngsters too: [Sidmouth astroscouts are over the moon that works can start on observatory extension – as the SVA supports the Norman Lockyer Observatory with a £20k grant to build a new classroom](#)

> Finally, **business and the environment** can have a positive impact generally: [Coastal entrepreneurs >>> thriving by promoting a heathy environment](#)

And the Esplanade has a very successful example, attracting youngsters in particular: [Jurassic Paddle Sports](#)

Ethical and Responsible Tourism

The following is a summary of the extended piece “*STC ECONOMY AND TOURISM TAFF - VGS EVIDENCE - JULY 2019 - ethical and responsible tourism*”:

- > There is growing interest in the '**experience economy**' and its importance as part of the tourist industry: “*While 78% of millennials choose to spend money on a desirable experience over something material, the trend extends beyond just young people, to every age bracket and socioeconomic class.*” [The Experience Economy comes to Sidmouth](#)
- > We must guard against '**overtourism**', or large-scale tourism, which kills the golden goose both for locals and visitors: [Overtourism](#) This is very much a problem in our part of the world: [The West country struggling to cope with tourists](#)
- > Sidmouth is clearly a very attractive place to spend a holiday and has been so for a long time: **getting the balance right** is going to be tricky: [The tourist industry in Sidmouth: 'we can't be complacent'](#)
Besides, many tourists actually like the coffee shops and charity shops: [Do charity shops benefit the local economy?](#)
- > '**Eco-tourism**' is becoming much more viable in East Devon: [On the River Otter: beavers, nature tourism and rewilding](#) And there is further potential for the Sid Valley: [Rewilding Britain > restoring intensive farmland back to it's natural and uncultivated state - and becoming financially sustainable](#)
- > Coastal communities in general are having a hard time [Seaside towns: “old-fashioned, “closed off” in winter, difficult to get to](#) However, many are managing to '**reinvent themselves**': [Helping the visitor economy to thrive in Britain's coastal communities](#)
New projects can help, as demonstrated nationally by the NEF's Blue New Deal but also locally, with the Sea Fest working with both Hastings fisherfolk and the Greenwich Maritime Centre: [Sea Fest: Inshore fishing traditions gather in Sidmouth](#)
- > The Sea Fest has also been involved in promoting '**sustainable**' or '**responsible**' **tourism**: ["Responsible Tourism and Blue Economic Growth"](#) This has to be the future of the tourist industry: [Sustainable Tourism](#)
Again, it's a question of balance: ["Struggling to adapt to the challenges posed by a booming tourist sector: money comes in from outside, pushing prices up, forcing the locals out, second homes proliferate and the traditional activities that define a place become little more than window-dressing."](#)
- > However, not everything on offer from the new, web-based economy is necessarily attractive – in particular, the '**gig**' or '**sharing economy**': [Airbnb and irresponsible tourism](#) This is also an issue in the Sid Valley: [Sidmouth voices concerns over AirBnB](#)
- > Finally, we might be looking to an '**entrepreneur-led revitalisation of seaside towns**': 'growth' is going to come from initiatives from local businesses and communities: [“Belligerence and creativity” >>> entrepreneur-led revitalisation of seaside towns >>> “People aren't interested in that old seaside ice cream cone and walk along the beach any more. They're looking for more."](#)

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on behalf of the Vision Group for Sidmouth