

Tendring Life

Transforming Tourism

Our Tourism Strategy 2010 - 2016

Dovercourt beach



Tourism is worth more than £276 million to Tendring, with the industry responsible for over 6,000 jobs, equivalent to 13% of the District's employment. It is an essential part of life in Tendring and a central element in transforming life in Tendring for the better.

We have much to be proud about, but bringing about this transformation means realising the potential of Tendring's brilliant location. We are less than 50 miles from 7.5 million people in Greater London, 35 miles from Stansted Airport, have links with Europe via Harwich and sit surrounded by Constable Country and some of Suffolk and Essex's most attractive countryside.

This strategy is the first part in the process of transforming tourism in Tendring, the cumulative result of consultation with Councillors, regional tourism experts, local operators and members of the community who have all contributed to its formulation. I am particularly excited about their ideas of working with local operators to harness the power of the digital revolution and building on the District's natural assets to increase and broaden its appeal.

With 36 miles of coastline, a rich and entertaining history, beautiful countryside and award winning local restaurants, there's much to be discovered in Tendring.

Neil Stock
Executive Leader



Clacton-on-Sea beach



Ramsay Windmill

Beach huts at Dovercourt



Transforming Tourism in Tendring

Tourism-led regeneration can improve the quality of life of our residents, communities and create more jobs and wealth.

This Tourism Strategy, combined with key aspects of the Regeneration Strategy, provides the platform to achieve this potential.

Prior to preparing this strategy, it has been crucial to review the existing tourism product in Tendring and ensure an understanding of the constraints and opportunities for the future. This has been achieved by undertaking a baseline study and a range of consultations with key tourism providers in the District, County and Region. The full baseline study, the responses to the consultation and some of the key statistics can be found on our website: www.tendringdc.gov.uk.

Following evaluation of the extensive baseline research and consultation, we have identified four core objectives to develop tourism in Tendring:

- Increase the amount of money visitors spend in Tendring.
- Extend the length of time visitors stay in the District.
- Attract higher spending visitors.
- Improve the perception of Tendring as a tourism destination.

To achieve these four core objectives, five priority areas to be focussed on have been identified, again informed by extensive baseline research and stakeholder consultation:

- Priority 1 - Marketing, PR and E-tourism.
- Priority 2 - Thematic Product Development.
- Priority 3 - Visitor Economy and Experience.
- Priority 4 - Responsible Tourism.
- Priority 5 - Business Support and Community Engagement.

Achieving the four core objectives will enable Tendring to:

- Reposition itself as a major tourism destination, benefiting particularly from its excellent geographical location close to London.
- Reduce seasonality.
- Grow the local economy through increasing employment in tourism and visitor spend.

Low Lighthouse at Harwich



Tendring sunset



Mistley High Street





Priority 1 - Marketing, PR and E-tourism

There has been a dramatic shift in the way holidays and short breaks are researched and bought by consumers. The digital revolution, with home and office access to the internet, mobile phones and other personal electronic equipment enables prospective visitors to instantly investigate, identify, organise and book their itineraries.

It has never been easier or cheaper for destinations, hotels, restaurants and other tourism providers to market themselves in the digital world allowing consumers to purchase direct.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that local businesses who have actively marketed themselves in this way have seen positive increases in their business. Despite this, the percentage of Tendring tourism businesses taking advantage of new technology is low.

Looking forward to 2016, this strategy will see the Council and other tourism stakeholders playing a major role in helping:

- Local tourism businesses unlock the potential of the digital world.
- Communicate a consistent high quality marketing message about Tendring.
- Deliver effective communication of new products to the marketplace.
- Promote events and festivals.

What will have changed by 2016:

- The fully integrated tourism portal provides a one-stop-shop for all on-line visitors.
- New joint marketing campaigns developed with a number of partners, include e-newsletters, search engine optimisation, web banner advertising, London tube and rail station adverts which all help reach new markets, and capitalise on our proximity to London.
- The holiday guide was switched to e-brochure format in 2011, helping to attract new target markets.
- The Tourist Information Centre in Clacton has been moved to a town centre/seafront location and a network of Visitor Information Points have been developed throughout the District.
- Electronic information kiosks installed at strategic points throughout the District are capable of dispensing discount vouchers to visitors.
- Electronic short breaks publications have been produced to promote the new themes.
- A PR agency has been engaged for the last 5 years and a record number of PR and journalist familiarisation visits have resulted in the profile of the District being raised, while the perception is changing to that of a quality destination.
- Two major TV series have been filmed in the District through our partnership with ScreenEast.

What will success look like?

- Higher profile of the District as a destination of choice for discerning visitors.
- More cost effective marketing campaigns with a high rate of conversion for visitors receiving guides or visiting the website.



“We started with a basic website, then bolted on a transactional site which allowed people to book and pay for our rooms online. 25% of our business is now booked this way, with visitors coming from all over the world.”

Sherri Singleton, The Thorn, Mistley



Priority 2 - Thematic Product Development

By grouping tourism products and experiences into themed products, based on an area's particular strengths, it is possible to add value and increase appeal to new visitors. These themed products can be further shaped to target higher spending visitors, create new business opportunities, extend the existing day and stay markets and provide an 'all year round' experience.

We will group together existing watersports provision, walking and cycling routes and a range of other country pursuits under the banner of 'Active Coast and Countryside' to attract new specialist markets.

Other themed products include:

- History and Heritage.
- Countryside and Nature.
- Food and Drink.
- Myths and Folklore.
- Family Fun.

What will have changed by 2016:

- The watersports training facility at Martello Bay has been a catalyst for making Clacton the watersports capital of East Anglia.
- The Crag Walk project, which received funding during the earlier stages of this strategy, has now obtained European funding to develop an Environmental and Educational Centre on the site.
- The Witchfinder Trail, launched as part of the heritage trail family, has received national and international PR.
- The focus the District has put on developing a high quality food and drink experience and celebrating local produce has encouraged a celebrity chef to open a restaurant here.
- An international conference recently took place at the Clacton and Coastal Conference Centre.
- The development of an online group travel manual has encouraged local restaurants and attractions to develop group packages.
- Following the successful promotion of Harwich as a Gateway to the Olympics in 2012, the cruise programme has been expanded, with increases in the pre and post-cruise stay market.
- The Piers at Clacton and Walton have undergone extensive refurbishment and now offer year-round and evening entertainment.

What will success look like?

- Visitors are now staying longer and spending more.
- The thematic approach has reduced seasonality and offered a year-round experience.
- Increased overseas visitors.
- Michelin starred restaurant.

“There are a great choice of sailing centres between Brightlingsea and Harwich and I have found the perfect place to learn how to sail.”

Brodie Estell-Gibson, London



A cruise ship at Harwich



Wrabness





The Pier Hotel at Harwich



“Warm memories and friendships made over the years, as well as an inviting area rich with history will assure my return to Harwich in 2010.”

Juell Buckwold, Harwich, Massachusetts

Priority 3 - Visitor Economy and Experience

For the District to become a destination of choice for the discerning visitor, we need to make sure it stands out from the crowd.

This will mean developing:

- New and exciting products and experiences appealing to existing and new visitor markets.
- Easy access to information about services and attractions for visitors before and during their stay.
- Local pride in our area and a warm welcome to visitors.

What will have changed by 2016:

- New marinas have been developed in Clacton and Harwich.
- The area between Harwich and Brightlingsea is being developed in line with the Active Coast concept and new all-weather facilities have been built.
- New heritage attractions have been developed in Harwich.
- New tourism attractions and leisure facilities, restaurants, cafes, small retail units and other visitor facilities have been developed along Clacton seafront.
- The District has seen a range of investments, particularly up-market self-catering in the rural areas, a boutique hotel in Walton and new hotel and conference facilities in Clacton and Harwich.
- The Resorts' Streetscene team has been active for several seasons and the proactive enforcement regime has made a significant impact on 'grot spots'.
- Interactive visitor information facilities are available at all gateway rail stations.
- Comprehensive pedestrian and road user signage schemes have been developed which include 'Welcome to the District' signs on the A120 and the A137 and new town centre signage.
- High quality, innovative and inspiring public realm and green spaces have been developed in all key visitor areas.
- Resort parking initiatives have been introduced across the key resorts.

What will success look like?

- The new products have attracted higher spending visitors to the area and its reputation is shown to have improved considerably.
- Quality hotels with high levels of occupancy.
- Significant investment in town centres due to increased visitor numbers.
- A customer service champion's accreditation scheme.



Priority 4 - Responsible Tourism

Although much of Tendring's 36 mile fragile and changing coastline is threatened by erosion and flooding, there are wonderful opportunities for coastal activities including walking, cycling, sailing and bird and seal watching.

Other opportunities include:

- Green and eco tourism.
- A shop-local campaign for visitors, residents and businesses.
- Alternative energy.
- Visitors with special needs.

What will have changed by 2016:

- A joint partnership with Natural England is opening up a chain of coastal paths in association with the 'Tendring Way' multi-user trails.
- Boat trips to the wind farms have proved popular and an eco visitor centre has been developed.
- The Tourism Partnership has worked closely with a number of businesses to review issues and opportunities associated with flooding or coastal erosion.
- The Naze has been designated as a centre of excellence for wildlife protection.
- The shop-local card has been promoted to visitors and has been particularly successful in extending the spend of visitors staying on holiday parks.
- A closer relationship with the railway operators has led to a series of improvements to the key gateway stations.
- A local cycle hire initiative has been rolled out to rural Tendring.
- The Tourism Partnership has developed a green tourism business pack which helps businesses reduce their energy usage and carbon footprint.
- Record numbers of accommodation providers have developed rooms not only suited to visitors with mobility problems but also for the hard of hearing and visually impaired.
- The South shore of the River Stour has been designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

What will success look like?

- More visitors are arriving by train and staying later in the day or overnight, possibly attracted by the popular shop-local offers.
- Increased numbers of visitors exploring the area by rail, bike and on foot.
- Increased numbers of visitors with special needs.



“We had a lovely picnic and walk along the marshes at Landermere which was the inspiration for Arthur Ransome's Secret Water. Then back on the bikes to Thorpe where we got the train back to London. It really cleared our heads.”

Helen Smith, Enfield

Walton-on-the-Naze



Presentation at retail summit



“Over 74% of our customers visit local attractions, with families spending over £30 per visit, this added to their spend in local bars and restaurant's bring in over £3.55 million to the area.”

Andy Edge, Marketing Director, Park Resorts

Business summit



Clacton Factory Outlet



Priority 5 - Business Support and Community Engagement

The creation of a Tourism Partnership is key to many of the developments and initiatives that will drive the transformation of tourism in the District.

Business support and the ability to attract, retain and train staff and improved links with education and training providers are key issues for the hospitality and service industries.

Closer cooperation, better networking and timely business support will help develop best practice, encourage sustainability and provide a better experience for the customer.

One of the untapped opportunities for Tendring is to promote to residents the wealth of attractions on their doorstep that they could take visiting friends and relatives to.

What will have changed by 2016:

- Working with the Haven Gateway Partnership and Essex County Council, the 'Big Day Out' programme, where residents gain free access to Tendring's key attractions has been extended to a record number of sites.
- Through working with key businesses, the Tourism Partnership has helped to identify and unlock some key development sites.
- The new supportive planning policy regime has facilitated the development of new experiences in town centres, urban and rural areas.
- The Local Strategic Partnership has spearheaded a local recruitment drive which has support from all partner hotels, holiday parks and restaurants to recruit "local first".
- A tourism and hospitality apprenticeship scheme has been launched in association with the local universities and colleges.
- The Tourism Partnership has commissioned an annual research programme that has helped to shape its future development and direction.
- The Tourism Partnership has developed a staff training programme in association with the Federation of Small Businesses and Business Link East.
- The small schemes tourism budget has been used to pump-prime some of the Tourism Partnership's training and marketing initiatives.
- 95% of all tourism providers now have their own website.

What will success look like?

- The Tourism Partnership has a private sector chair and multi-disciplinary Board.
- The District has record numbers of businesses participating in quality assurance programmes.
- There is effective communication and improved links between the tourism and hospitality industries, key business support agencies and education and skills providers.
- Training has been delivered to all partner businesses in the Tourism Partnership.
- An increase in the 'visiting friends and relatives' market.

Seals at Walton-on-the-Naze



Firs Caravan Park at Little Clacton



Summary and Next Steps

This strategy, along with the Corporate Plan and Regeneration Strategies sets out our aspirations to place tourism at the heart of Tendring's regeneration.

Our aim is that this District will be the destination of choice for discerning visitors with high quality beaches, open spaces and public realm, improved transport to and throughout the District, good access to services, attractive and vibrant town centres and attractions.

To deliver on the aspirations contained within this strategy and create real improvements we need to:

- Develop a public/private tourism partnership to deliver the strategy's objectives.
- Take a partnership approach to delivering change.



- Develop task groups, initially for heritage and watersports, to create new experiences, attract higher spending visitors and extend the season.
- Have a quality and proactive approach to

planning, particularly if we want to make our town centres, which in many instances are core visitor areas, vibrant and entertaining places to visit.

- Consider opportunities for funding – particularly with partners such as Essex County Council and the Haven Gateway Partnership.

- Provide enhanced experiences for residents and visitors, not limited to the attractions within the District, but looking further afield to neighbouring Regions (e.g. Dedham Vale, Shotley Peninsular and Colchester).
- Foster strong partnerships with agencies such as the Environment Agency to ensure we don't 'bubble wrap' coastal strips, but rather find creative ways to work with our delicate coastline to bring about positive changes that appeal to new visitors.
- Use new technology to get our message out in more creative ways to appeal to both new and existing visitors.
- Facilitate new developments and public realm improvements to the local environment for visitors and residents alike.

The next step is the creation of a delivery plan and accompanying annual action plan in consultation with the partners listed below:

British Resorts and Destinations Association, Business Link East, Chambers of Trade, Coastal Communities Alliance, COLBEA, Colchester Institute, Destination Performance UK, East of England Tourism, East of England Development Agency, Environment Agency, Essex County Council, Essex Tourism, Federation of Small Businesses, Haven Gateway Partnership, INTend, Invest Essex, Local Authority neighbours, Local Strategic Partnership, Local tourism providers, Natural England, Tourism Alliance and University of Essex.

Images supplied by Tendring District Council, Firs Caravan Park and Clacton Factory Outlet.

Barge at Brightlingsea



“Nice places to live and work, particularly by the sea, are inevitably nice places to visit.”

Peter Hampson, British Resorts and Destinations Association

Naze Tower at Walton-on-the-Naze

