

## Mid Wales Regional Committee MWR 02-03 (p 1)

Friday 14 March 2003

**Date:**

**Time:** 10.30 am to 13.15 pm

**Venue:** The Royal Ship Hotel, Eldon Square Dolgellau

### **GREEN TOURISM**

#### **Introduction**

We are all organisms interacting with each other and the environment in which we live.

This is particularly true of the tourist on visiting a place for the first time. The sights, the sounds and the smells of a place engender a reaction in all of us. We either like it or we don't.

I remember arriving in Delhi for the very first time. A completely different world.

Whilst in India I visited The Taj Mahal. What a magnificent sight!

I love their culture and their simple outlook on life. Their land is a living thing, rich and diverse, and engenders a total experience.

The importance of landscape - Wales is the same. The Welsh historian O. M. Edwards famously said:-

"Our land is a living thing, not a grave of forgetfulness under our feet. Every hill has its history, every locality its romance, every part of its landscape wears its particular glory."

This feeling for the landscape is expressed in the legends, literature and place

names of Wales which evoke the scene and sometimes even the prevailing weather. The countryside illustrates the history of Wales from Neolithic tombs, Roman settlements, castles, mediaeval abbeys, churches. Small cottages are scattered around the hillsides. Agriculture and forestry are dominant, beaches and mountains and 3 National Parks, and landscapes carrying a myriad of other special designations.

The landscape is fundamental to the prosperity of Wales. In 1999 approx. £6 billion of Wales' GDP was directly dependent on the environment.

With the passage of time some land will cease to be used for the purpose it is currently put to.

**Good stewardship particularly of the countryside is required to benefit the economy as a whole, including tourism.**

## **Sustainable Development**

Development needs to be reconciled with conservation, the needs of the town with the interests of the country. We know how to make our cities more compact and attractive, but we also need a prosperous and varied countryside. These objectives are achievable. Enterprising local authorities, assisted by public spirited individuals and private companies are making headway and the public are responding with enthusiasm.

The coastal strip from Newport to the west has been redeveloped for modern industries;

a striking new landscape has been created within the Cardiff Bay Barrage;

contemporary hotels, offices and flats are to be joined by the Millennium Hall and a new building for the Welsh Assembly.

However, we cannot continue to exploit the physical resources of the earth without thinking of the lives of generations to come.

This is an integral part of a sustainable future and the guts of "green tourism".

Green tourism is not about satisfying the needs of vegetarian tourists. It is not about visiting the "Emerald Isle" and green certainly does not mean naivety.

## **GREEN TOURISM**

1. is socially and environmentally considerate,
2. draws on the character of the destination, its beauty, culture, history and wildlife;
3. respects the environment and is more often than not small in scale;
4. works through local control;
5. supports the local economy;
6. employs local people;
7. cares about quality of experience;
8. benefits conservation and recreation;
9. reuses existing buildings and derelict land;
10. favours public transport.

Within Wales the Wales Tourist Board and other tourism organisations are promoting and supporting sustainable tourism, and define the following set of sustainability criteria.

- Create a sense of place through social; industrial, religious and cultural history.
- Conserve and regenerate the landscape, environment, wildlife and heritage.
- Promote forms of transport other than the car.
- Use alternative forms of energy.

- Use locally produced foods and local services.
- Appreciate the environment.
- Share knowledge, skills or experience through guides, development briefs, interpretation, experience and demonstrations.

How do we achieve these objectives?

The Welsh Assembly and other national agencies need to take the lead and set clear objectives, policies and strategies for green tourism. Progress has been slow and tentative.

Tourist boards and their membership **must** consider carefully the role of green tourism.

The environment is special, and its value outweighs its value just as a tourism asset. Its long term survival must not be outweighed by short term considerations.

Tourism is a positive activity with the potential to benefit local communities as well as visitors.

Tourism and the environment have to be managed sustainably and responsibly in the long-term. Tourism must not be allowed to damage the resource, nor prejudice future enjoyment or bring unacceptable impacts.

Developments should respect the scale, nature and character of their locations.

Some change can often be beneficial. Engender harmonisation, respect, tolerance and understanding.

### *Caution*

Initially green tourism means higher prices and lower profits. Supply – led green tourism on a large scale is unlikely.

The majority of green tourism businesses are small with limited resources. They can find it difficult to bring their products into the market place effectively.

### *Conclusion*

In 1999 tourism spending associated with environment-motivated trips in Wales amounted to £821 million. An analysis of the economic benefits that can be ascribed to the environment has estimated that £6 billion of Wales' GDP is dependent on the environment. This represents one in six jobs in Wales with a wage bill of about £1.8 billion.

"Green tourism" depends on a plethora of bodies and agencies working together in harmony and integration, not disharmony and disintegration.

The environment is crucial. Don't mess it up.

**Mark Roberts, Area Manager**

**Planning and Economic Development Department, Gwynedd Council.**