

## **Sustainable tourism on the Northumberland Coast**

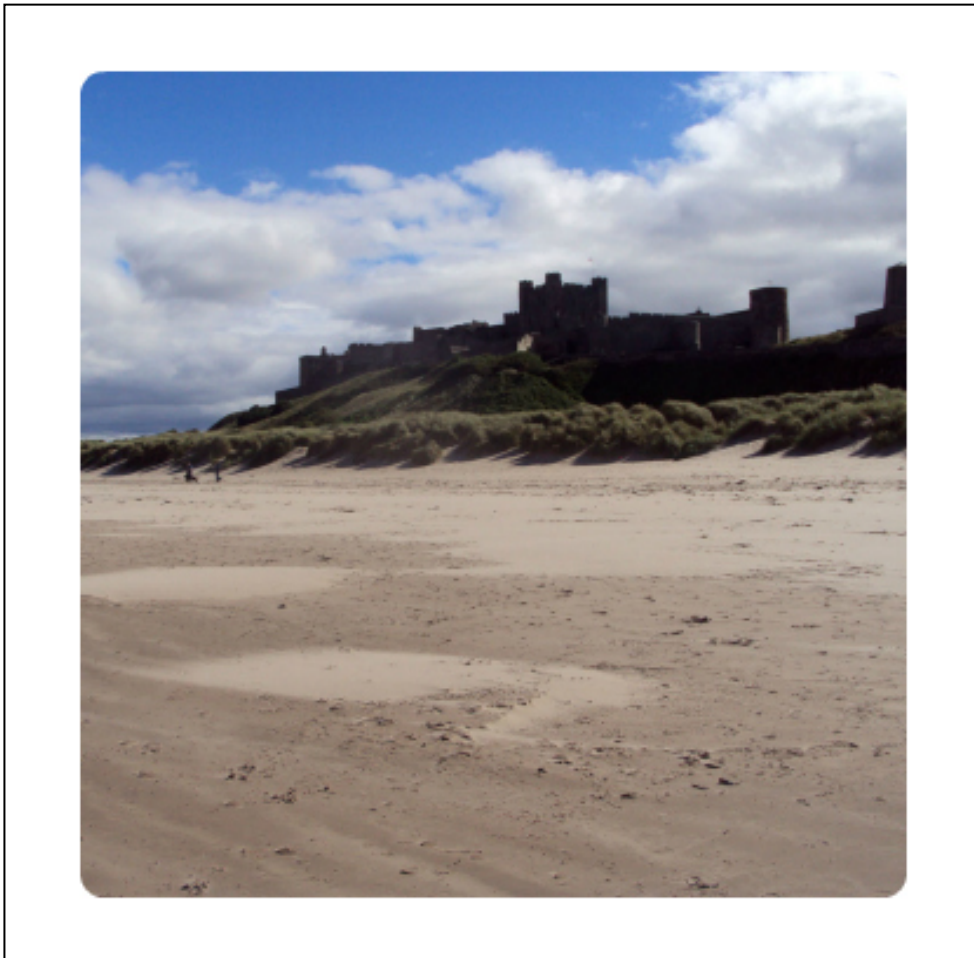
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- 4 What else is being done (to promote sustainable tourism)?
- 5 How can the Northumberland Coast be sustainably marketed?

### **TAB 1**

**QUESTION -Why is the Northumberland Coast area so appealing to visitors?**

**IMAGES –**





## **INFORMATION -**

Northumberland is in North East England. It is England's most northerly county.

The stretch of the Northumberland Coast that lie south of the town of Berwick upon Tweed and north of Amble was first designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1958.

The Northumberland Coast AONB has a beautiful landscape of long sandy beaches backed by dunes, rocky cliffs and islands and wide, sweeping river estuaries.

The area has two National Nature Reserves (Lindisfarne and the Farne Islands). The island of Lindisfarne is an internationally important site for birdlife and the Farne Islands are home to 4000 grey seals – one of the largest colonies of these animals in the UK.

Although there is a continuous coastal footpath along its full, 64km length, the AONB is narrow – never wider than 2.5km and only 50m across at its narrowest point. It has an area of 138 km<sup>2</sup>.

## **TAB 2**

**QUESTION –What are the problems (facing the Northumberland Coast)?**

**IMAGE –**



### **INFORMATION -**

Tourists love to visit AONB and so sustainable tourism is important if the natural beauty of these areas is not to be spoilt by visitors.

There are issues of visitor pressure, especially at 'honeypot' sites, such as the pretty villages of Bamburgh and Craster. Management of the AONB is designed to minimise the negative impacts of visitor pressure.

Tourist traffic in villages such as Bamburgh can be unsightly, can cause congestion and increased pollution and can lead to more road accidents. Keeping villages attractive for tourists and safe, sustainable places for local people to live and work means limiting the flow and speed of tourist traffic.

Until recently, the centre of Bamburgh village was badly congested on peak summer days such as August Bank Holiday. Local people and the local council wanted to rescue the village from being choked by traffic, while still wanting visitors to come, enjoy the village and spend their money in local businesses.

So the yellow no-waiting lines, which can spoil the look of a traditional village, are being removed. Instead, a simple, limited parking zone has been established in the centre of Bamburgh. The village green had become little more than a car-lined road junction. So, it is being restored to its role as an attractive focal point, making the village feel better to live in and to visit.

### **TAB 3**

**QUESTION –How can the impacts of tourism be managed?**

#### **1) NEST (Northumberland Encouraging Sustainable Tourism)**

### **INFORMATION –**

NEST includes local tourism business owners, AONB partnership members and individuals. It is a group of people who want to help more sustainable tourism development in the Northumberland Coast AONB.

NEST was formed in 2012. Iain Robson, from the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership has given an example of what the group wants to achieve, “If guest houses and hotels agree to buy their meat locally, that money stays in the local economy and supports local shops, farmers and all the businesses associated with the industry”. (Source: North East Life May 7, 2012).

NEST is inspired by the model of CoaST – a group set up in 2004 to encourage

sustainable tourism (ST) along Cornwall's (C) coast. Cornwall is the English county furthest away from Northumberland, but there are important similarities; both:

- coastlines have beautiful scenery that appeal to tourists
- economies depend largely on tourism now, though have a mining heritage
- are 450-500 km from London, offering the feeling of remote, culturally different destinations.

## ***2) Sustainable Tourism Ambassadors***

### **INFORMATION –**

A feature of CoaST's work that inspires NEST is the Ambassador programme. Ambassadors are tourism businesses who are developing sustainable tourism practices themselves and actively want to help others do the same.

Ambassador sustainable tourism businesses include accommodation providers including bed and breakfast guesthouse and caravan/camp-sites, hotels and pubs, cafes, visitor attractions and tour and transport operators.

Sustainable tourism practices that ambassador businesses promote include:

- reducing the use of water
- using less energy such as electricity and fuel for vehicles
- insulating materials to prevent energy loss
- recycling to reduce the volume of waste generated
- sourcing building materials locally
- buying supplies (such as food for restaurants) from other local businesses

## ***3) The Northumberland Coast AONB Awards***

### **INFORMATION –**

The Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership gives Awards for Excellence to those local businesses that have done most to help it achieve its aims. The Partnership is the body that guides the management of the AONB. It is made up of farmers and landowners, voluntary organisations, interest groups, parish councils, government agencies and Northumberland County Council. Members include representatives from English Heritage, the National Trust and Northumberland Tourism. The Awards celebrate and promote excellence in the care, management and development of the Northumberland Coast environment.



## **TAB 4**

**QUESTION –What else is being done (to promote sustainable tourism)?**

### **1) Hunting Hall Farm cottages**

**IMAGE –**



### **INFORMATION -**

Hunting Hall Farm won the 2011 Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership Award for Excellence in the Sustainable Tourism category.

Hunting Hall is a working farm. On the farm are two self-catering cottages: Newt Cottage and the Fuffins.

Owners Tom and Karen Burn have tried to make their tourism business at Hunting Hall as sustainable as it can be. However, they are still looking for ways to improve.

The AONB Award judges found that “A green ethos runs through the whole business, but for the visiting guests, it isn’t ‘in-your face’ it’s more a way of life. Hunting Hall demonstrates perfectly that being green and providing high-quality accommodation can go hand-in-hand.”

To run their tourism business sustainably, Tom and Karen:

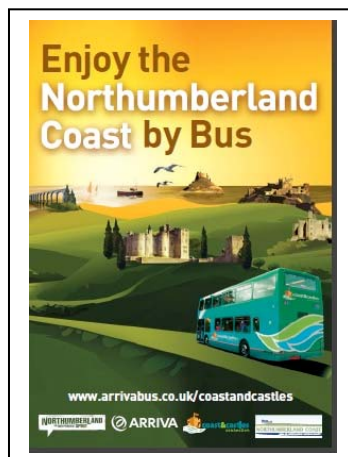
- use bedding in the cottages which is organic cotton with hand-made quilts
- make sure that materials used to furnish and decorate the cottages are natural and eco-friendly
- have installed environmentally-friendly heating, with an air source pump and ground source heat coils, as well as solar panels for hot water
- keep energy loss down with double-glazing and insulating materials that include sheep’s wool

- buy electricity from a supplier who uses wind-turbines
- put bins for recyclable waste in the kitchens and a compost-bin for guests' organic food waste in the garden
- keep a stock of local and fair trade produce to sell as well as homemade bread

Sustainable tourism businesses can only be sustainable if they succeed as businesses, as well as being environmentally friendly. The Award judges took note of Hunting Hall Farm's high repeat booking rate when they chose it to be their Sustainable Tourism winner, 2011.

## 2) The Northumberland Coast by Bus

IMAGE –



## **INFORMATION -**

The Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership wants to ensure that the area remains an attractive environment for future generations of tourists, and local people, to enjoy.

One way the Partnership does this is by encouraging more people to use public transport and leave their cars at home.

The AONB Partnership has developed itineraries to help tourists to enjoy the area by bus. One of these is called Birds by Bus. It centres on the birdlife of Low Newton-by-the-Sea, which offers bird watching opportunities throughout the year, including breeding seabirds in summer, autumn migrants and wintering waders.

The itinerary includes a map showing bus stops, the coastal path route and bird watching locations. There are walking directions, bus timetables, guidance on what to see, where and when and information about food and drink outlets such as the village pub in Low Newton, as well as the types of bus ticket that are available and links to useful websites.

Bus routes from Northumberland towns including nearby Alnwick, as well as from farther away Berwick upon Tweed and Newcastle upon Tyne, are included.

## **TAB 5**

**QUESTION - How can the Northumberland Coast be sustainably marketed?**

**IMAGE-**



## **INFORMATION -**

Sustainable tourism is all-year-round tourism. Tourism destinations, including the Northumberland Coast, often attract more tourists in the summer than in the winter. Tourism brings trade to local business and provides jobs for local people but it is not really sustainable if businesses are empty or closed and people are out of work in the winter.



As Iain Robson, from the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership says, “We don’t need to say ‘Come to the coast in summer’ because it’s full already.”

Too much tourism in the summer is not sustainable either. Large visitor numbers leads to congestion, more air and noise pollution from traffic and a real risk that the crowds of people spoil the very places they have come to see.

So, the Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership recognises the need to spread the load and attract more visitors out of season – in the spring, the autumn and the winter. There is also a need to encourage peak season tourists to visit places away from ‘honeypot’ sites such as Bamburgh.

Two ways in which the Northumberland Coast AONB markets more sustainable tourism that is not in the peak season and is away from honeypot sites are:

- the ‘Northumberland Coast by Bus’ campaign
- ‘Our Coast Our Sea’ – an educational programme jointly developed with several partners including English Heritage, the National Trust and Northumberland Wildlife Trust.

‘Our Coast Our Sea’ includes online learning resources designed to encourage school visits in term-time. Such visits spread tourism across the year. A calendar of events promotes the area at all time of year. The interactive calendar on the ‘Our Coast Our Sea’ website ([www.ourcoastoursea.org.uk](http://www.ourcoastoursea.org.uk)) - accessed via a link from the bus itineraries - includes dropdown menus showing general events and sustainable volunteering opportunities. Entries for December 2012, for instance, include the Bamburgh Castle Christmas Concert and opportunities to take part in a beach cleanup and survey.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION - *AONB and National Parks***

AONB are Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Northumberland Coast AONB is an example.

Northumberland also has a National Park. National Parks and AONB are both ways to conserve special landscapes but they are not the same as each other. The Northumberland Coast AONB and the Northumberland National Park are entirely separate and are in different parts of the county.

### ***The aims of AONB***

The main purpose of AONB is “to conserve and enhance natural beauty”. (Source: National Association for AONB website, 2012). AONB aim to:

- conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the UK’s AONB, for the future
- support local communities economically and socially in ways that contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
- promote public understanding and enjoyment of the special nature and culture of AONB
- encourage people act in ways that help conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of AONB
- value, sustain and promote the benefits that AONB provide for society, including clean air and water, food and carbon storage

Promoting tourism and recreation as such is not AONB main job, but managing tourism sustainably is important to AONB, including the Northumberland Coast AONB. This is because sustainable tourism helps to conserve natural beauty while supporting the needs of local people, including their need to make a living.

The UK has 15 National Parks. One of these is Northumberland National Park, which is separate and different from the Northumberland Coast AONB.

The UK’s National Parks were set up at different times during the years that have passed since Parliament passed the National Parks Act in 1949. This Act set out the purpose of National Parks, “to preserve and enhance their natural beauty and provide recreational opportunities for the public.” Northumberland National Park was designated in 1956. It covers an area of more than 1030 km<sup>2</sup> of the countryside of inland Northumberland.

National Parks, such as Northumberland National Park, are run by National Park Authorities. They employ staff, such as rangers, who look after the park on a daily basis.