Aligning Values for Rural Tourism: Tourism on the Solway Coast

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Original Title of the work: Living on the Edge
Edges

• Sea
• Cumbria
• England
• Lake District
• Unfortunately for us, you have to drive through one of the most beautiful places in the world to actually get here.
• Holiday trends
• Tourism viability
Dialectical Approach
Which assumes:

• Every entity is created and maintained by processes

• Entities are assumed to be internally heterogeneous, ie contradictory and there are no irreducible ‘building blocks’, “so it is legitimate to investigate each level of organisation without having to search for fundamental units”

• “Parts and wholes are mutually constitutive of each other” which means they are simultaneously subjects and objects, causes and effects.

• Change is a characteristic of all systems, entities are in a permanent state of ‘becoming’

Basically:

Local tourism is subject to many forces both internal and external and is in a state of constant change.

The forces include:

• Accessibility
• Economy
• Politics
• Fashions
• What competitors do
Different timescales:

• “... the area is slowly rising in response to isostatic uplift” (Halcrow, 2011, cited in Coastal Engineering, 2013, p. 60)

• “The Romans, Vikings, Reivers and eventually ourselves have shaped the Solway Coast into what it is today” (Solway Coast AONB, 2011)

• “The dune systems within the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are proactively managed to enhance their coastal defence, wildlife habitat, and leisure amenity value.” (Allerdale Borough Council, 2014).
Research

• Tourist providers in area
  • AONB
  • Wetlands project
  • RSPB
  • Local entrepreneurs
  • Caravan site manager
  • Britain’s Energy Coast
  • Community Engagement Officer
Interviews:

• Face to face or telephone
• Semi-structured
• Recorded and transcribed

http://www.hardwickresearch.com/services-offered/in-depth-interviews/
Other Material

• Brochures
• Management plans
• Websites
• Town Council newsletter, etc.
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Literature Review

Peripheral places
Peripheral Areas Appeal

• Less developed
• Less crowded
• Natural habitats
• Wild, can appreciate nature
• Edge of sea
• Edginess?
• Contrast with urban, industrialised centres
Downside of peripherality

- Vulnerability
- Lack of power
- Lack of connections
- Lack of hinterland to support attractions
Solway’s attractions:

coast and countryside
Coast

• “juxtaposition between land and sea”  (Fiske, 1989)
• Sunsets
  • Edges of sea, land and sky
  • Day and night
  • Power of natural forces
  • Romantic view (Turner)
• nostalgia  (Jarratt 2013)

“... glorious sea views and sunsets fine enough to be recorded for posterity by Turner, the famous landscape artist”  (Visit Cumbria, 2014)

glorious sea views and sunsets fine enough to be recorded for posterity by Turner, the famous landscape artist

these beautiful sunsets, wow, there is nothing like it, that view across the Criffel and a really lovely sunset, it’s just amazing really.
... as the sun is going down and the sunsets over to the West, ..., when the tide is just on its way out and there’s an expanse of sand. All of the tube worms are still under... and you just look across,

if you get down level, sitting on the edge of the Marsh you get these little spurts of water and it’s absolutely amazing to watch and they're all just spurting out the salt water having fed and it’s just, it always amazes me to watch that.
Countryside: 
Three Interpretations
Visual Amenity

Preserving the ‘look’
- Putting electricity cables underground
- Resisting unsightly development:
  - Wind turbines
  - Solar panels
  - Anaerobic digesters
- Preserving facets of previous practices
  - Walls
  - Gate stoops
  - Cast iron road signs

Linked to:
- contrast with urban
- harmony of humans and nature
- visual consumption
- passive activities
- tourists who will quietly appreciate
Tourism has got to fit in with, I suppose, bringing people to the landscape and understanding of the landscape and why it should be enhanced and enjoying the landscape that they are reading, whether it is: walking, cycling, birdwatching.

The sort of tourism people are going to get here is passive, it is not going to be skateboarding and things like that.
Habitat

Preserving nature and other species

Managing the land as a habitat

Sequestering carbon

Linked to engaging and recruiting future guardians, especially children and young people
I certainly see the need for involving people and raising awareness of the importance of nature and wildlife. Until people take the problems on board, then they are not going to feel any empathy in helping us to protect wildlife. ... we are only going to protect them if we get other people feeling the same about them as we do.
Economic Asset

Prioritises economic function (eg employment)
Sees countryside as benefit to humans (not stewardship)
Allows countryside to be evaluated against other assets

More utilitarian view
Local tourism only one of possible employers

Measuring the unmeasurable?
Countryside as Economic Asset

The level of investment that West Cumbria would have to make a significant transformational change in the tourism sector, ... would cost more in terms of hotel developments

Tourism is probably a much more slower, incremental curve as to how we benefit from that and would happen probably much more organically then say how we can capitalise on the nuclear industry.

... we are looking at around an increase of about 3,000 jobs.
Reasons for wanting tourism
AONB
• Help the local economy
• Maintain interest in scenery
• Share the delights

Solway Wetlands Project
• Enhance local environment
• Encourage local pride
• Increase opportunities for local people

RSPB
• Maintain habitat and species
• Explain reasons for habitat preservation
• Recruit new guardians
• Sequester carbon

Britain’s Energy Coast
• Jobs for whole area
• Keep landscape attractive
• Entrepreneurs
  • Make more money
  • Lengthen season

• Tourism Providers
  • More attractive,
  • more services,
  • more tourists (new and repeat visitors)

• Residents
  • Keep employment in area, esp for younger people
  • Keep local services viable
  • Maintain vibrancy
However:

Although there are good reasons to work together, there are tensions:

- Collective action and entrepreneurship
- Conservation and tourism
- Political objectives
- Different areas in Borough
- Priorities
Evidence of disharmony

• *STAG* (Silloth Tourism Action Group) *members were not talking to AONB staff*

• *STAG feel it is very important to work with the Council, however, I have not witnessed much trust or harmony between the two.*

• *It would also be useful if more businesses got involved in sustaining tourism and if warring businesses could understand the benefits of working together for the benefit of the Town.*
The public sector is diminished and demoralised

• I had an incredible network of senior officers across the county that I could draw on their expertise, get things done ... That is completely gone, my network has disappeared overnight through staff redundancies across the public sector. (3)

• It’s a shame that the Hadrian’s Wall people have run out of government funding, the second biggest attraction in the country and the Government has just said ‘no’.

• I can remember when I used to take work home, work in the evenings or at weekends. I just don't do it now.... the passion is drained from you
The tourist offer is reducing:

*Allerdale Council have just cut the funding for the toilets in Bowness*

Or not being improved:

*We've got an indoor pool, we’ve got a farm, but it's not enough probably for like older teenagers*

The lack of shops, pubs, things like that in the area. Some of them don’t open on lunchtimes in the winter, some of them are only open at lunchtimes at weekends.
But ....

We eat, we drink, we bathe, we walk, we sleep; and then we eat and drink and bathe and walk and sleep again. Only for variety's sake sometimes we bathe before we walk, and sometimes we walk before we bathe.

(Silloth Gazette, 1860, cited in Walton, 1979, p. 205)
Conclusions

• Local tourism is constantly changing, redefining itself
• It is subject to a number of forces most of which it cannot control
• There are multiple reasons for wanting tourism in an area
• For it to thrive, some of those values need to be aligned to common goals
Thank you for listening

Any Questions?