

# Conservation and Tourism

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Leisure and tourism are now part of world culture and international economy being second only to the oil industry in financial terms. Tourism is dynamic but if developed too quickly can be destructive to the host community. If over developed it destroys the resources and values which were what attracted visitors in the first instance. With good planning the capacity of the site and supporting infrastructure should not be exceeded. The basis of this planning is to make research into the tourist's origin, socio economic background, reason for travel, length of stay, experience of the country and satisfaction with the visit.

It is essential that a code of practice be agreed to guide the development of tourism and conservation of cultural heritage to ensure co-ordination of efforts for their mutual benefit. The Director General of the National Trust of England, Mr. A. Stirling, has suggested seven points to be included in this code.

Stirling's first principle is: *Comprehensive tourist development plans are essential as the pre-condition for developing any tourist potential. It should be a fundamental principle of any tourist development plan that both conservation, in its widest sense, and tourism benefit from it. This principle should be part of the constitutional purpose of all trust agencies, and of local authority tourism and recreation departments.*

National agencies have a great responsibility in promoting their tourist plan. One fundamental problem is that the tourist industry, so called, is difficult to identify having many disparate parts.

Heritage Sites form important economic and cultural assets and it is inevitable that they will be given

publicity, advertised, and promoted by those whose daily duty or interest this is. The site management will not normally have the expertise to do this cost-effectively but it should influence the way it is done so as to gain the greatest advantage and least disadvantage for conservation.

For publicity purposes the Heritage Site is a product in the world market place which has to be described correctly in glowing terms in order to attract custom, including repeat visits. The facilities available, scale and character should be absolutely clear. Journalistic coverage is more cost effective than advertisements and hence press visitors should be given every facility, and assistance. The design of all publicity material and advertisements should be of high standard so as not to discredit the Site and its managers. Before any expenditure on publicity is incurred the target audience should be carefully defined and what they are likely to be interested in should be identified. This applies equally if the publicity is being done by someone else on behalf of the national agency.

Promotion of the Cultural Heritage Site to the public and tour operators can be done in a way which helps visitor management. Attention can be drawn to features which are not likely to be congested, or the preferred times of day can be indicated. Advertisements can be confined to certain seasons or to certain media in order to influence the type of people who come.

Long queues for admission are not desirable. They reduce visitor satisfaction and congest the Site and car parks. It is sometimes suggested that each Heritage Site has a maximum capacity at a given time for visitors which should not be exceeded. This has

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been proven by observation and whilst no-one disputes that peak numbers may have a natural limit, the feeling of over crowding can be greatly reduced by limiting access to comfortable levels. Research into the average length of stay can provide the basis for calculating the optimum number of people on the site at any one time. In many cases there is a conflict of policy between Heritage Site managers who want visitor numbers restricted so that the Sites are not damaged, and tourist boards or commercial interests who want to use the Sites to attract visitors to the area. Some problems will not be resolved until this conflict is sorted out, but those agencies owning or managing the site are in the best position to exercise control.

#### Needs of visitors

Visiting a Heritage Site is an intellectual adventure for which the visitor needs preparation, if he is to obtain the greatest benefit. Most visitors to a Cultural Heritage Site come for a day out, a change of scene, or so that they can tell their folks back home. Some come because they are interested in their cultural heritage, archaeology or architecture. Part of the managers task is to make the visit enjoyable and interesting for everyone so that the political support for conservation is increased, foreign currency is gained, jobs are created, and income is obtained. Perhaps some people will go away more interested in their culture than when they came.

All visitors will need the following:

- A friendly welcome and help with any problems or accidents,
- A clean litter free and well maintained site,
- Presentation of the story of the monument/site and its treasures in a way they can understand,
- Guidance on local taboos and religious or cultural attitudes,
- Security and protection for themselves and their possessions.

By international agreement visitors who spend the night away from home are called tourists. These people will need hotels, hostels, camp-sites, restaurants, and several types of transport. They may want shops to meet their specific needs. Providing all of these is important for Heritage Sites for without them their culture will be inaccessible for many. It is not the normal function of the Site managers but requires co-operation between public authorities and the private sector.

The needs of national visitors must be considered first as the site is their Heritage and often they far outnumber the "tourists".

#### Visitor Management

If the numbers of visitors are so great as to spoil the enjoyment of people, prevent a proper appreciation of the Heritage Site, or cause physical harm to historic remains and objects, it will be necessary to use techniques of visitor management. In any event these techniques can often reduce maintenance costs or increase income. Only in extreme cases should it be necessary to close the Site or introduce penal levels of entry charges.

Excessive visitor pressure will be reduced if there are counter attractions nearby. The most vulnerable Heritage Sites are those which are well known and promoted, and no counter attraction nearby. Tourist boards should be discouraged from publishing vulnerable Heritage Sites and be asked to help develop counter attractions or to divert attention to lesser known Heritage Sites with spare capacity.

Peak loadings can be reduced if there is a booking system for coach parties and a limit to the number admitted at any one time. Small changes in the times of arrival can greatly ease the pressures. It is useful if there are alternative routes for visiting parties so that if several arrive at once they can be separated, or one can be taken a slightly longer way.

Wear on floors can be reduced by putting down strip coverings of carpet, canvas, rubber etc. Stone or brick floors can be replaced from time to time without destroying their quality. Grass can be revived by removing the line of footsteps a meter or so from one side to the other. It is not so easy to repair damage from touching from thousands of hands, or from human breath. Controls to keep people away may be needed in some cases. Inside buildings crowds can raise the relative humidity to damaging levels.

Visitors should be allowed to view Heritage Sites at their own speed as they may find organized parties move too fast or too slowly, or are led by guides speaking a language they do not understand. Where for security reasons or lack of space individual viewing is not possible the speed of circulation of guided parties should be varied and visitors should be given a choice between a quick or slower more detailed tour.

Visitor routes should allow for the natural tendency for people to turn left on entering any space. Shops should be located so that people leaving the site must enter them and therefore consider spending some money. Where visitor management is being organized or reviewed a plan should be prepared, and expert advice upon management should be sought.

The brochures printed by the tour operators are most attractive often listing the principle monuments in a country but omitting to state how much viewing time is allowed. In Paris tour operators allow 18 minutes for visitors to get into and absorb the wonder of Notre Dame and do not stop the engines of their buses so adding to atmospheric pollution. This is an extreme case produced by cut-throat competition among tour operators but the pressures have to be recognised in order to protect both the tourist, the sites and the local culture.

*A significant proportion of revenue earned from tourism should be applied for the benefit of conservation, both nationally and regionally.*

It may over simplify a dilemma to say that of the takings from world tourism only a small proportion filters down to the host community who provide site staff, guides, shops, food and local transport, and even less is allocated to the conservation of the monuments, ensembles and sites. The profits extracted from sightseeing by international tour operators and large hotel chains, although subject to taxes, cannot be related to the benefits they obtain from individual sites and can be manipulated by clever accountancy. Government has a difficult problem in solving this dilemma – it might introduce fiscal measures which would possibly be evaded or a tourist tax could be incorporated in Visa charges.

Entry charges should be made in order that services for visitors can be improved without the reduction of the funds available for conservation work. They can be varied from day to day to encourage a spread of peak loadings. They are the best means for establishing how interesting and enjoyable is the Site. If people are paying they will demand value for money and soon make known their criticisms. Raising of funds through catering or sales of literature, photos, drawings, guides, souvenirs, etc., can be used to develop the Site and benefit the visitors. There will be some complaint when charges are first introduced and it may be necessary to give local people free passes, and allow free entry on one (quiet) day a week, or after a certain hour. The charge may be non-compulsory with an arrangement that those not paying still have to go past the turnstile and staff, and hence free entry is not too easy.

Wherever possible there should be a single charge for the whole Heritage Site as this produces the most income and least staff cost. If there are different buildings to be entered a single ticket may be marked at each entry point. If the number of attractions charges is great some choices may be offered to keep the overall ticket price reasonable. In each case it must be made very clear which are the options available.

Generally, visitor management should be achieved by physical arrangements and persuasion. Regulations and prohibition signs, and policing should be as sparse as possible.

*The best long term interests of the people working in any host community should be the primary determining factor in selecting options for tourist development.*

The long term interests of the local communities faced with the impact of world tourism is the critical question for developing countries. It will be all too easy for the cultural balance in remote and beautiful valleys to be degraded by insensitive tourism.

When the economic gap between the local community and tourists becomes too real, then the community begins to reject tourism and harass their guests. This also happens in world centres of tourism such as Rome where the tourist is the prime target for robberies.

The answer may be in gradual planned development so that the gap between tourists and the local community is not too great. Tourist operators will not understand this point even though they might think that they comply with the Manilla Convention.

World tourism tends to cater for the fickle five-star package travel clientele. They are the least sensitive to the local community as they wish to impose their own cultural standards. Five-star hotels depend on international finance so give little benefit to the local community. In contrast to the luxury tourist trade one has the youth adventurers with the knapsack and bedding rolls. They do not bring much money and their brash attitudes can shock the local population. The middle ground of tourism, which will include many nationals, needs to be encouraged. Modest hotels, small in size, can cater for small groups who are much more likely to appreciate local culture. Such hotels can be financed and run by local people for their own profit. Government should encourage such initiatives.

*Educational programmes should assist and invite tourists to respect and understand the local way of life, culture, history and religion. Tourist policy should take these factors into account.*

School children's visits to Heritage Sites should be keyed to class-room studies such as national history, art or social studies. If school children do not enjoy their visit they may avoid all Cultural Heritage Sites for many years and not introduce their own children to them. They are a difficult group to keep interested but it is not in the long term interest of conservation for them to come and then to be disappointed. Better for them not to come at all. Making visits enjoyable and interesting is achieved by thinking about the visitors interests and attitudes, not the resource of which one is proud, and this can be difficult for Heritage Site managers who normally think first of the resource. Experts in tourism, visitor management, and presentation and marketing will be useful.

All World Heritage Sites have more than one story of importance to tell about their history, the way they were constructed and/or destroyed, the people who lived there, the various activities there and the happenings, the previous uses of the Site, and perhaps the stories of the notable treasures which have been assembled there. In presenting the Heritage Site it is necessary to be selective and decide which story will be of the most interest to the kind of people who will come. Human interest stories are always most popular. The objectives of the presentation of the Heritage Site should be clearly stated and agreed before work starts and should be reviewed in the light of experience and changing fashion.

The media of presentation must be chosen so that they are as effective as possible for all kinds of visitor and do not harm the appearance or ambience of the Heritage Site. For instance the equipment for *son et lumiere* may harm ancient walls or the overall setting during day-light hours. Signs explaining

things may spoil views or cause damage by their fixings. The media which may be used for presentation include:

- Human guides, teachers
- Notices, plaques, plans, leaflets, guidebooks, souvenir books, reference books
- Several different languages may be used if demand justifies this. Lettering should be large enough to be legible.
- Museums, exhibitions, models, samples of building materials, copies of art objects, pictures or coins
- Dioramas, listening posts, portable tape players
- Films, television, video, tape/slide shows, plays, music, son et lumiere, lighting to accent features

Mistakes are easily made in the use of media. The principle to be followed is to work out first what it is that is intended to convey and to whom. Do not necessarily copy what other Heritage Sites have done, for it may not be effective even where it looks good. However, it is equally wrong to do too little about presentation. A substantial budget and skilled advice on this is likely to be needed on all Heritage Sites of world significance.

Lengthly audio-visual presentations have to be very good indeed and normally about 10-15 minutes will be the maximum length acceptable. "Son et lumiere" will be much longer but the script needs to be dramatic and historically accurate. It will be profitable on relatively few Heritage Sites as the costs are high. Sometimes attitudes can creep into the text which cause offence to some visitors from other countries.

Archaeological digs are especially interesting and should be explained by notices and a person so that those digging are not interrupted. Provision needs to be made for easy viewing. Information should be up-dated daily. Discoveries should be announced in the press at times when they will not add to visitor

management problems. People will understand the story of a Heritage Site better if they can talk to actors playing historic roles, watch or even take part in re-enactments of great events, listen to ballads, or see "son et lumiere" with real actors. The actors need to be present on the right occasions and to be heavily publicised. The show must suit the specific audience. Whilst no wrong information should be given there will be need for some artistic licence.

*The design of new buildings, sites and transport systems should minimise the potential harmful visual effects of tourism. Pollution controls should be built into all forms of infrastructure. Where sites of great natural beauty are concerned the intrusion of man-made structures should be avoided if possible.*

Again we have the problem of a clash of cultures; the five-star international values against a weak local culture which is trying to survive and needs protection.

There are a few international hotels which by skillful architectural design sensitive to the vernacular, have managed to fit into the locality, but these are all too rare. By constructing low two storey domestic scale pavillion complexes new development has the possibility of fitting into a rural environment.

Modern transport plans which cater only for the motor vehicle are incredibly destructive to historic areas and intrusive in the landscape. Above all this can and should be carefully planned with the help of landscape architects. Motorways are much more intrusive than railways and can reduce the scale of the landscape by their width and engineering works such as cuttings and viaducts and bridges although these, if well designed, can have some dramatic value.

In developing countries the bullock, buffalo, donkey, horse, camel and elephant still have a vital role to play and are more sympathetic to the local inhabitants, their children, pets and livestock than the modern juggernaut.

*Good management should define the level of acceptable tourism development and provide controls to maintain that level.*

The management plan for the Heritage Site should state the visitor service objectives. The objectives will need to be discussed with Government, local authorities, and tourist boards to ensure that there is no conflict. They may include efforts to increase income from entry charges etc., efforts to increase numbers from the benefit of tourist businesses; reduction of visitors to reduce damage to the heritage, or disappointed visitors, or congestion; reduction of visitors at peak times; or a change in the mix of visitors. Useful distinctions can be made between people on tour, vacationers coming from the beaches, day visitors from the cities, school parties, conference delegates, and visiting experts. In the plan there may be different objectives for each.

#### **Welcoming the Visitors**

The attitude of staff to visitors is the single most important factor in making their visit enjoyable. Each visitor should be welcomed as personally as possible and there should be an obvious and well signed source of help in case of accident or difficulty. Any specific dangers should be pointed out, including dangerous animals, plants, theft etc. Nothing spoils a visitor's experience more than being robbed, especially of passport, camera, and exposed films which are irreplaceable. Custodial staff should appear to treat visitors as guests to be welcomed and helped, even while they have an eye for theft or damage. It is important for all staff to be polite at all times, however annoying the visitor is.

Signs and notice-board sized plans showing the layout of the Heritage Site should be erected at the car and coach parks and be placed wherever strangers could lose their way. They should be fixed where they will not cause damage to ancient structures or spoil views. Close observation of visitor behaviour is helpful.

The notices and diagrams which explain the site should be well designed, of durable material with attractive lettering and carefully chosen colours. They should all follow the same house style which should be different from that used for direction or warning signs.

Human guides must be of good standard and accurate. They should either be licenced or employed by the Heritage Site management. Training them properly should be a management responsibility.

School parties should be assembled but briefed about the Site in an area set aside for the purpose, preferably indoors. Teachers should be employed to help the children's own teachers explain the Heritage Site. Visiting teachers should come to see the Site and be briefed in advance of the parties they are bringing.

Well illustrated souvenir books which remind people of their visit can be a profitable line, as also picture post-cards, in addition to guidebooks on various subjects.

#### **Vandalism and Damage**

Vandalism comes from boredom and the better the presentation and the welcome the less likely it is to occur. Many of the other security problems can be resolved by good management with occasional police backing. Unfortunately tourism can cause excessive wear and tear, although there are no well documented studies on damage by visitors, circumstantial evidence indicates that it is considerable so increasing the cost of conservation. Visitors should be quiet and reverend in holy places so as not to disturb worshippers with flash light photography or noise. They should not smoke, not drop chewing gum, litter or trash; they should keep to paths and not pick wild flowers nor scrawl graffiti.

#### **Site Maintenance**

The best way to discourage litter is for staff to immediately pick up any which is dropped. Litter bins should be emptied before they are full. In some countries

less litter is dropped if there are no litter bins at all. Where part of a Heritage Site is used for entertainment or special events it is best if the organizers are required to remove all litter, special equipment, stands, etc., immediately the event is over.

Special uses of a Heritage Site for making films can be both profitable and bring good publicity. However, film makers and television crews need firm control to prevent them from damaging the resource by thoughtless acts. The heat generated by their lighting can damage cultural material and is a fire hazard.

Car parks should be kept clean. Warnings against theft should be erected where necessary, and puddles or mud should be filled in. Large car parks spoil the appearance of Heritage Sites and should be broken up by mounds, planting and landscaping, or avoided altogether by careful siting. They should not be so close to the site as to be visually intrusive but provision may have to be made for special transport for the elderly or invalid.

The site manager must appoint a senior staff member as Fire Officer. The Fire Officer is responsible for regular inspections and removal of potential hazards. There should be a fire practice involving the public every six months. Fire fighting and salvage operations should be rehearsed. The response time of the Fire Brigade and local supply of water are important considerations. The Fire Officer must educate the public about the dangers from smouldering cigarettes and picnic fires; in a wooden

building the public should leave their cigarettes and matches before being allowed entry.

### Conclusion

To sum up the seven principles proposed by Angus Stirling are repeated below:

1. Comprehensive tourist development plans are essential as the pre-condition for developing any tourist potential.

2. It should be a fundamental principle of any tourist development plan that both conservation, in its widest sense, and tourism benefit from it.

3. A significant proportion of revenue from tourism should be applied for the benefit of conservation, both nationally and regionally.

4. The best long-term interests of the people living and working in any host community should be the primary determining factor in selecting options for tourist development.

5. Educational programmes should assist and invite tourists to respect and understand the local way of life, culture, history and religion. Tourism policy should take these factors into account.

6. The design of new buildings, sites and transport systems should minimize the potential harmful visual effects of tourism. Pollution controls should be built into all forms of infrastructure. Where sites of great natural beauty are concerned the intrusion of man-made structures should be avoided if possible.

7. Good management should define the level of acceptable tourism development and provide controls to maintain that level.