

## **8 KNOWLEDGE COORDINATION AND ACCESS**

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For the purposes of maximising access to and benefits from current and future tourism research and intelligence activity, we propose two related initiatives – a tourism knowledge base and a tourism intelligence system. These are outlined below.

### **8.1 The SW Tourism Knowledge Base**

#### ***The objective***

To enable SWT, its members and its partners to have ready access to research and intelligence relevant to their strategic and operational requirements, with the ability to search for and present information according to their requirements and to manipulate data through forecasting and impact models.

#### ***The proposition***

That SWT should provide a searchable online repository of research information relating to the South West, for access by SWT staff and its members and by developers, consultants, students, etc. on a free or chargeable basis (as appropriate)

The wide range of material gathered for this study will provide excellent content to establish such a system. On a continuing basis, SWT and SWERDA should develop and implement systems to ensure that their future research and intelligence output is designed for user-friendly access through the repository.

In addition, the repository should provide access to all relevant research and intelligence reports produced by ETC/BTA (including BTA's overseas market profile data), the European Travel Commission, World Tourism Organisation, etc, subject to whatever limits of confidentiality and cost are required. Standardised arrangements for such access should be worked out at the national level. In some cases, external parties may not wish to provide copies of their reports for the repository, in which case links to the relevant Web sites or e-mail addresses would be provided.

There should be a reasonably sophisticated search engine, using appropriate tagging of content. The search engine would enable users to identify sources relevant to their requirements and the tools that are available to extract and present the data. The terms for accessing the data would then be shown.

Much of the research and intelligence output from this and future studies will be in the form of written reports and pre-formatted tables of data. In addition, the repository should also provide the facility for users to specify their own analyses of market and product data records, most importantly:

- Secondary analysis of market survey data relating to the South West, where this is possible. IPS and UKTS are examples of national sources where this may be

possible. This would require access to the raw data from completed questionnaires (without personal identifiers) and online tools (such as SPSS or SNAP) for cross-tabulation (using all the variables of the survey in question), graphical presentation and statistical analysis of such data.

Future quantitative survey research commissioned locally or regionally should be made available automatically on this basis. The facility to analyse market survey data to meet specific needs (e.g. detailed analysis of specific market segments) would potentially be a powerful service to offer to members on a preferential basis.

- Analysis of the future EnglandNet product database for the South West in aggregate (i.e. not individual business details). This facility could provide, for example:
  - Data for reports on specific aspects of tourism products and services (e.g. trends in levels of participation and awards granted in QA schemes; amount and type of provision for disabled people; businesses with their own Web sites). Such data could be analysed for any geographical area.
  - Information required by potential investors and developers – e.g. the facility to map supply of specific types of products and their relationship to, for example, public transport infrastructure or visitor attractions.
- Analysis of data from the tourism industry survey undertaken as part of this project and any future surveys of tourism businesses that may be undertaken for SWT or SWERDA.
- Analysis of aggregate data from the tourism intelligence system – see below.

Access might be given also to the tourism forecasting model prepared for this study (or an adapted version of it), to enable users to prepare forecasts based on their own assumptions. This model is in the form of an Excel spreadsheet, which could be adapted for use online with relative ease.

Similarly, it might be possible for simple models for impact analysis, whether for particular developments or events, or for geographical areas, to be developed for use online. Development of such a model has not been part of this study but the work undertaken separately for SWT on economic impact using the Cambridge model may lend itself for development in this way.

## **8.2 A tourism industry intelligence system**

### ***The objective***

- To provide SWT and its partner organisations with up-to-the minute information about the performance of the industry, regionally and sub-regionally – essentially, daily or weekly sales figures, forward bookings and measures of change, together with a means of assessing business confidence and obtaining views on specific issues relating to the industry
- To provide monthly and annual performance information for strategic review of the performance of the South West tourism industry – replacing the current occupancy and business barometer projects

- To provide tourism businesses with timely information to benchmark their own performance
- To provide short to medium term forecasts for use by SWT and the industry.

### ***The proposition***

The development and implementation of Internet based systems to enable tourism businesses to record their basic sales information online on a regular, preferably daily, basis. Individual businesses would then be able to obtain sales reports for their own business at any time, and make comparisons with the mean performance of similar businesses. There should be the facility for businesses to share some data, by mutual agreement. The data would be analysed in aggregate to meet SWT requirements, whether short or longer term.

E-mails would be sent to the participating businesses regularly to remind them to update their performance data and to ask for additional information, as and when required, to assess business confidence and obtain views on specific issues. The members would be asked to provide the information online or by e-mail response. Further e-mails would be sent when the businesses have not submitted their data as agreed.

The scheme would need to be well promoted and explained to SWT members, who would sign up and agree a reporting period for performance data – daily or weekly.

Once time series data are available over (say) a two year period, an econometric model could be produced to provide forecasts of sales on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, subject to various assumptions. This would be a valuable area for inter-regional co-operation. It may be possible to link such forecasting to the macro forecasting model prepared for this study (Chapter 2).

In the first instance, when participation is still limited, the value will be primarily for the individual businesses, by giving them access to useful sales report and benchmark comparisons. Once they are aware of the benefits, other businesses should join in and numbers will build to the point where the sample of participants starts to become representative of the industry – or at least, specific segments of it. When sufficiently representative samples of each product sector are participating, then the outputs from the system can replace the current occupancy and business barometer surveys.

At this point, the facility to analyse the data in aggregate could become part of the Knowledge Base service. However, the policy decision might be taken to restrict wider access to preformatted tables of summary results.

For this proposition to succeed, the industry must be involved and take ownership of the concept. We suggest that, for each of the main sectors, a group of members should be invited to assist in designing both the data input and the various forms of analytical output for that sector.