Foreword

The visitor economy is the fourth largest industry employing 4.6 million people in the UK, and produces 10% of the UK’s GDP equivalent to £143 billion GVA. Hospitality and tourism is particularly important in coastal communities as it often provides a significant business presence in areas which have seen the decline of their once traditional industries. However, coastal regions face challenges and persisting issues that threaten the visitor economy’s capacity for growth.

The UK is home to some of the best beaches in the world and no one in Britain lives more than 70 miles from the coast. The British coastline is a national asset with great potential and with the right investment, can drive regeneration, economic growth and job creation.

We have heard from a variety of businesses, local government officials and residents about the potential the coast has to offer if the government put the UK’s seaside economy at the forefront of the government agenda for regional growth. Hospitality and tourism is a key part of this job creation story and since 2010 has been responsible for creating 17% of new jobs.

The inquiry discussed the seasonal nature of coastal communities which contributed to a number of problems, such as a lack of business diversity and job opportunity. The inquiry also examined how limitations presented by digital and transport infrastructure can lead to a ‘hinterland problem’ and discussed what the best methods for funding coastal communities are. The APPG also heard that more needs to be done to improve the marketing of the UK’s coastal tourism offer to enable a year-long tourism offer. An improved re-branding effort would help counter the perceived negative connotations of coastal areas as old fashioned holiday destinations.

As an MP that represents a coastal community in Cornwall I urge the government to give serious consideration to the recommendations in this report. Together we can turn the tide and bring a smile back to the British coast. We would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who took part in this inquiry.

Steve Double MP for Newquay and St Austell
Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Visitor Economy
Introduction

The UK is home to 6,000 kilometres of coastline, ranging from blue flag beaches in Wales, rugged coastline in Northern Ireland to vast coastal expanses in Scotland. 250 million visits are made to the UK’s coast each year, generating £17 billion to the economy. One in ten people in coastal areas are employed in hospitality, which is more people than the steel, pharmaceutical and aerospace industries combined, making it clear that no other industry is better placed to deliver the social and economic regeneration that these towns need.

Coastal communities and their economies face distinctive challenges. They are towns and communities on the geographical periphery, at the end of the country’s travel infrastructure, and must balance retaining their traditional tourist markets alongside embracing new economic and technological trends.

Some coastal areas suffer from social and economic deprivation, experiencing high levels of unemployment and a high proportion of poor quality housing. In September 2015, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published its annual Indices of Deprivation for England. The seaside village of Jaywick near Clacton-on-Sea, was found to be the country’s most deprived area and a common feature of half of the top 20 districts in the index is that they have a coastline. In addition, a recent report by Moore Stephens found that bankruptcy in British seaside towns has become an epidemic.¹

There are examples of successful and economically diverse coastal towns. Cities such as Brighton, with its buoyant and diverse economy, that enjoy year-round tourism with established and permanent populations. This report includes recommendations to the government and the industry on how together we can build on the strengths found in coastal communities and promote growth and social mobility in all areas of the UK.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) received 59 written submissions and heard oral evidence from Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), SMEs, and pressure groups.

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Chapter 1: Infrastructure

Limited public transport coverage is a significant barrier to businesses, visitors and residents in coastal communities. The APPG heard that many coastal communities are often only accessible by a single A-road or train line due to their geographical isolation. High quality public and private transport connections are vital for ensuring a conducive environment to promote business growth, inward investment and visitors to coastal areas.

Investment in infrastructure is key to unlocking future tourism opportunities. Many visitors choose destinations based on ease of accessibility so it is vitally important to keep travel times at a minimum to avoid this disruption.

Rail

A number of submissions highlighted that coastal communities are not accessible by rail and existing lines require significant improvements. The cost of transport has increased in recent years, with trains now 60% more expensive in real terms than cars which is placing pressure on already strained A-roads such as the A351 or the A285. The government and the rail industry must work together to create more incentives like the 2FOR1 offer for London to encourage people to visit the coast year round.

The Campaign for Better Transport and Eastbourne Borough Council said that scheduling of rail services and engineering works in coastal areas rarely takes into account that most people visit these areas at the weekend. The traditional model of scheduling engineering works at the weekend to lessen disruption may not apply to coastal communities and should be taken into consideration.

Road

Car ownership in coastal communities, where public transport is either non-existent or inconvenient for people accessing work, can be expensive for people on low wages. Southend-on-Sea Council, Bexhill Coastal Group and Torbay Development Agency highlighted that the limited number of bus services and trains act as a limiting barrier to growth, in particular for the night-time economy. It also limits the accessibility of jobs for people who cannot drive which has manifested into pubs, restaurants and hotel owners facing difficulties in hiring staff that have their own transport. In addition, the inquiry heard how long journey times hinder worker productivity.

With more visitors driving to the coast investment is needed to improve and expand destination infrastructure. Simple improvements such as increasing the number of car parking facilities, as suggested by Eastbourne Hoteliers Association, would help improve the accessibility of town centres.

Cycling and Walking

The inquiry also found that cycling and walking facilities need to be improved to develop the infrastructure in coastal communities and promote active holidays. The Cyclists’ Tourists Club estimates that the funds available for both walking and cycling work out at just £1.38 per person in England outside London. Chris Todd from the Better Campaign for Transport highlighted the success

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2 Torbay Council, Written Evidence
4 Cornwall Council, Written Evidence
5 West Somerset Council, Written Evidence
6 Solent LEP, Written Evidence
of the Camel Trail in Cornwall, which in 2003 welcomed 3 million visitors but highlighted that much of the National Cycling Network is linked up ineffectively or with sites and town centres, meaning that often people had to drive to the start and circle back to their cars.\(^7\)

Overall the inquiry found that there was a need for greater consultation between the Department for Transport and Local Authorities as well as with the local communities to decide where infrastructure is best built, when it should be built and for what purpose.

The APPG agrees with the New Economics Foundation that the National Infrastructure Commission should make recommendations to assess and set out a plan to deliver a rapid improvement in the infrastructure of coastal areas. This would benefit residents and tourists alike.

**Recommendations**
1. Greater consultation with local communities to decide where and when infrastructure is best built
2. Better scheduling of repairs and engineering works in coastal areas
3. More travel incentives to encourage people to visit the coast year round
4. Extend bus timetables
5. Better destination infrastructure for cycling and walking
6. National Infrastructure Commission should make recommendations to access and set out a plan to deliver a rapid improvement in the infrastructure of coastal areas.

**Chapter 2: Funding**

The majority of submissions to the inquiry called for appropriate and additional funding for coastal communities to rebalance the UK’s economy.

**Coastal Community Fund**

Since 2012 coastal communities have been able to receive funding through the Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) which to date has provided 277 organisations with £170 million in total.\(^8\) The government has confirmed that the CCF will be extended to 2021 with an additional £90 million made available. The CCF received a mixed response as although it was regarded as a good basis for coastal community funding it is not holistic and often ‘short-term’.

A number of submissions highlighted issues and recommendations for the CCF. West Somerset Council said that the funding should be distributed to successful applicants over a longer term and North Devon+ said that the CCF needs to have more scope to fund private sector projects which would benefit the wider area. Eastbourne Hoteliers Association said that the CCF was targeted at local councils rather than businesses and therefore did not address the problems on the ground.

**European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF)**

Coastal communities have also benefited from European funding through the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF), which runs to 2020. The ESIF has provided funding opportunities for the voluntary sector, social enterprises, Further Education colleges and training providers, and Local Authorities, to assist in the development of capacity building, training and workforce skills initiatives and projects. Many of these initiatives and projects have benefited hard to reach groups and disadvantaged communities in coastal areas, thereby providing a pathway to help ensure they can benefit from many of the regeneration and job opportunities in their localities. Submissions called for continued access to ESIF to be maintained for as long as possible and that national funding is identified to continue programmes post Brexit.

**Public/Private partnerships**

Of particular interest to the inquiry was innovative private/public partnerships. Philip Welsh, Head of Blackpool Visitor Economy highlighted the success of the introduction of Merlin Entertainments as an attractions operator on a large scale as well as refocusing of the Blackpool Pleasure Beach towards a paid, theme park-style entry and higher level of customer service. This has significantly increased visitor satisfaction and with public realm regeneration along the seafront has created a more enticing environment for visitors. Merlin now operates eight attractions in the town – the highest concentration of attractions in any one location around the world. Together Blackpool Council and Merlin are working to together “communicate that the much-loved seaside town has the potential, and the vision, to once again become one of Europe’s leading family holiday destinations” with the aim of re-engaging families that used to visit the resort who are now put off by negative perceptions and stimulate visits from families and younger couples for whom Blackpool hasn’t been a consideration for in the past.

**Tourism VAT**

A number of written and oral submissions said that reducing Tourism VAT on visitor accommodations and attractions from 20 to 5% would be the most beneficial, sustainable, long-term financial policy change for coastal communities. Unlike “an isolated injection of funding” such as the CCF, reducing

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\(^8\) “Coastal Communities Fund: Promoting sustainable economic growth and jobs in coastal communities”, [https://www.big lotteryfund.org.uk/ccf](https://www.big lotteryfund.org.uk/ccf)
Tourism VAT would enable businesses to take control of improving their community as it would filter through to all parts of the UK’s economy providing a rebalancing of economic wealth.

The inquiry heard from the Campaign to Cut Tourism VAT Economic Advisor Graham Wason about how a reduction could be implemented instantly by the Treasury and he argued that it would have a more immediate effect on coastal communities than government managed investment initiatives such as the CCF. He further argued that unlike a reduction in Air Passenger Duty, a reduction in Tourism VAT would benefit domestic tourists in the UK, rather than encouraging Brits to leave the UK for holidays.

Mark Williams, Ceredigion MP 2015-17, requested that the Campaign undertake economic research to establish to what extent a reduction in Tourism VAT to 5% would benefit coastal communities in terms of economic contribution and job creation.

Tourism Tax
The APPG also discussed the possibility of the UK government introducing a tourist bed tax. The notion was dismissed by MPs as it would place additional tax on the consumer which is already paying one of the highest rates of Tourism VAT in Europe. Southend Borough Council and Caister-on-Sea Holiday Park highlighted they have a light touch voluntary contributions scheme which provides additional funding to the local beach.

Foreign Direct Investment
Hospitality and Tourism in coastal communities would benefit from higher levels of foreign direct investment (FDI), but this is only likely to occur if the underlying issues identified in this report are addressed.

The UK is viewed positively by potential foreign investors, ranking number 7 in the World Bank ‘Ease of doing business’ Index (behind New Zealand, Singapore, Denmark, Hong Kong, Korea and Norway). Anecdotal evidence suggests that investors are interested in investment outside of London, as returns on investment in the Capital are getting squeezed, and see UK regions as a potential area for investment – and coastal regions could be included in this. However, the UK competes globally for FDI, and must actively encourage investment to increase its share.

There is the opportunity to create an attractive environment for FDI in coastal communities, and the APPG heard about the concerns for potential investors:

Demand – while domestic demand is important, and can be boosted by a change in perception of coastal communities, investor confidence in the UK would be further boosted with a commitment to increasing inbound tourism – with a need for improved links into the UK, as well as an overhaul of the visa regime

Infrastructure – while London remains an important global hub, there is a lack of transport links from London to UK regions / coastal areas. There is also a need for improved digital infrastructure

Financial incentives – this could be created through a reduction in tourism VAT (20% VAT in Clacton versus 10% in Barcelona), coastal enterprise zones, reduced business rates, subsidies through Government partnerships / expansion of the Coastal Communities Fund etc.

Labour supply – there is concern that, following Brexit, there will be a shortage of labour – without a supply of labour, companies will be unwilling to invest
Coastal Enterprise Zones (CEZ)

Coastal Enterprise Zones received a mixed review from witnesses and members. Solent LEP spoke in favour of CEZ and argued that they have increased investment in the area, whereas Sir Roger Gale MP highlighted the issues faced in his constituency of North Thanet as a result of the CEZ. The Solent CEZ transformed an old military airport into a thriving hub, creating 1,000 jobs in an area where job density is the second lowest in the country. Anne-Marie Mountifield, CEO of Solent LEP, said CEZ’s focus both central government attention on key priority areas and local government in a way that creates private sector investor confidence by reducing the risk from the investment. She wanted to explore a CEZ initiative further afield as a way of helping coastal communities nationwide. In contrast, Sir Roger explained that many businesses in North Thanet merely relocated to the CEZ for tax benefits from other areas, so the net benefit of the CEZ in creating jobs and improving the local economy was minimal as ‘it robbed Peter to pay Paul’.

Urban seagull study

Peter Aldous MP raised concerns about the impact of aggressive seagulls on coastal communities. All gull species currently enjoy protected status in the UK, but some people have called for a cull to remove gulls in problem areas.

In the Treasury’s 2015 March budget, Chancellor George Osborne announced a £250,000 fund to study the life cycles of urban seagulls and find ways to curb their increasingly aggressive behaviour however this was subsequently dropped.

During a debate in February 2017, former member of the APPG Oliver Colvile MP proposed several ways both the public and government can take to reduce aggressive seagull behaviour. He highlighted the importance of keeping streets clean and ensuring that food is disposed of properly and securely., Increasing bin collection rounds during seasonal months and putting infrastructure in place to prevent gulls from perching and nesting in city centres. The APPG believes these recommendations should be taken forward by the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs.

Recommendations:
1. Longer funding timeframe for CCF
2. Reduce Tourism VAT on visitor accommodation and attractions to five per cent
3. Not implement a tourist tax on hotel accommodation
4. Create more coastal enterprise zones
5. Incentivise public-private partnerships, use Merlin/Blackpool model as best practice
6. Implement new ways, with small funding, to reduce aggressive seagull behaviour

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9 Torbay Development Agency, Written Evidence
Chapter 3: Housing

In coastal communities, house prices are on average 12 times the average wage. Submissions highlighted a range of housing issues facing communities; select licensing scheme, abundance of second homes and limitations with the planning laws.

Second homes
Second homes have pushed the prices of housing stock up to a level that local residents in coastal communities cannot afford. Residents and local councils are already taking steps to limit the impact of second homes but more needs to be done.

One option highlighted was increasing the number of permanent residency homes permitted by councils. In May 2016, following Lynton and Lynmouth in Devon, residents of St Ives and Carbis Bay in Cornwall approved a proposal to allow only full-time residents to purchase new-build properties. Under the plan new-build housing projects would only be given planning permission if they were reserved for people who live in St Ives and surrounding areas full-time.

Saving money
One suggestion to save money on the provision of services for second homes is applying the Danish model which develops ‘leisure areas’ in towns where local services are less intense out of season - for instance, rubbish collection only occurs every other week in winter.

Rules classifying the definition of self-catering and holiday lets vary between the nations and provide business owners with the benefit of paying less tax. In England and Scotland, a self-catering and holiday let must be available to let for 140 days or more per year. Whereas, in Wales it must be both available to let for 140 days or more per year and actually let for 70 days. The APPG heard that empty houses lead to a sense of alienation and impact local businesses. As a result, the group recommends that English and Scottish law is changed to align with stricter Welsh law.

Selective licensing scheme
The UK suffers from a chronic coastal housing failure. It has an unbalanced housing market, characterised by an oversupply of poor quality one-person dwellings in central areas, often as a result of the conversion of holiday accommodation into Houses in Multiple Occupation, (HMOs), as well as limited family housing in inner areas and high quality affordable housing. The inability to address poor quality Houses in Multiple Occupation remains one of the single biggest issues for most coastal destinations.

To ensure a high level of quality of housing stock for accommodation many coastal communities have enacted selective licensing schemes which require private landlords to comply with a range of licencing conditions to ensure good property management.

Blackpool Council stated in their submission of written evidence that “the dominance of poor quality privately rented housing has led to intense concentrations of deprivation, and an environment fostering poor health, crime, welfare dependency and lack of opportunity.” As a response to issues around HMOs and associated problems that may arise from their presence, Blackpool Council and

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11 Blackpool Council, Written Evidence
Thanet Council have implemented selective licensing across a number of areas to improve management.

In Blackpool there is the desire to secure local control of the operation of housing benefit via a devolution deal for Lancashire. This shift would particularly benefit the local area in its management of low quality HMO stock, and the unique request was made recently to government by the shadow Lancashire Combined Authority.\(^\text{12}\)

**Planning laws**

Tourist accommodation is not accorded sufficient consideration and weight in the planning system. Despite paragraph 28 of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), the majority of local planning policies are unduly restrictive, preventing expansion of holiday parks outside their established boundaries or otherwise preventing any increase in the number of accommodation units.

The British Home and Park Association highlighted that current tourism planning guidance, which is hosted on the VisitEngland website, is extremely difficult to find and easily overlooked.\(^\text{13}\) It was suggested that the guidance is incorporated into the rural or coastal planning section of the NPPG so that it is properly considered by planning policy and decision makers.

For businesses in coastal communities, coastal erosion makes it difficult to acquire both land and planning permission to allow for the roll-back of sites. At the same time, as the parks are non-residential, they are not considered ‘worthy’ of protection through the renewal of sea defences that are left to collapse along with the parks behind.

Flexibility should be built into planning law for coastal communities, to ensure that businesses can adapt and thrive. For example, the APPG heard how it is sometimes difficult to secure planning permission to create disabled access ramps on the front of Victorian properties due to being considered an ‘eye-sore’. The Bournemouth Accommodation and Hotel Association ‘Hotel A’ has been campaigning for more than 10 years to make it easier to redevelop or change the use of old, failing properties. To date this has not been successful in spite of the council giving planning permission to build hotels’ rooms in new investments.

**Regulatory unfairness**

Hotels face a plethora of regulations; health and safety, fire safety and food safety to name a few. These regulations are sensible and necessary to running a professional business and being a good employer. However, home sharing platforms, such as Airbnb, do not have to abide by the same standards. Sensible regulation should apply to both hotels and the sharing economy to protect consumers and businesses and ensure high standards are adhered to across the board.

**Recommendations:**

- Flexible planning permission to reflect coastal erosion, disabled access and change of use
- Restrict the number of permitted second homes
- England to move to a welsh definition of self-catering or catering let
- Amend restrictive planning policies preventing new investment
- Incorporate rural and coastal planning into the NPPG rather than hosted on VisitBritain or England website
- Regulations to be applied to the sharing economy

\(^{12}\) Blackpool Council, Written Evidence

\(^{13}\) British Home and Park Association, Written Evidence
Chapter 4: Education

Education is crucial to providing young people with the skills and tools later in life. The Social Mobility Index highlights variations in prospects of disadvantaged young people across England, in particular it shows that coastal areas, such as Blackpool and Great Yarmouth, are becoming social mobility ‘cold spots’ providing young people from less advantaged backgrounds with limited opportunities to get on in life.14

Funding

Education is one of the measures in DCLG’s indices of deprivation. According to Wells Coastal Community Team the Income Deprivation Area Child Index (IDACI), which is used to identify the likelihood of children in any given postcode area coming from a family that is suffering income deprivation, is unfairly biased in coastal communities.15 The IDACI is separated into six postcode bands. The government publishes average national amounts allocated by LAs (Minimum Funding Levels) per band, which increase as the percentage chance of deprivation increases and which should be paid to schools for the percentage of pupils in each band. However, the IDACI does not pick up low concentrations of deprivation, for instance in coastal areas where children come from scattered farms or an affluent housing estate (or second homes nearby) which disrupts the funding formula.

Due to the geographical isolation of coastal communities many suffer from a lack of educational institutions. In poorer areas this is compounded by a lack of quality teachers and a reduced catchment areas due to their proximity to the sea. There also tends to be a lack of Higher Education facilities, for example in Wyre the nearest University is in North Devon 45 miles away. As highlighted in Chapter 1 transport in coastal communities tends to be not as frequent or regular which also increases the time is takes to travel to school.

To combat these problems Dymchurch Parish Council has set up voluntary working groups to help underperforming schools in the area.16 However, the government cannot rely on voluntary support to provide sustainable solutions to combat inequality in coastal communities.

East Lindsey District Council suggested developing a national skills council for the visitor economy which would enable young people from coastal communities to learn skills and stay in the local area.17

Recommendations:

- Develop a national skills council for the visitor economy
- Promote teachers to teach in coastal communities
- Funding should not be based on IDACI or drill down further into post codes

16 Dymchurch Parish Council, Written Evidence
17 East Lindsey District Council, Written Evidence
Chapter 5: Perception & Marketing

The APPG heard how old fashioned perceptions are a main barrier to encouraging visitors to coastal communities. The APPG believe that the British coast is an asset which needs to be celebrated and the government needs to make it part of the nation’s growth story.  

A survey carried out summer 2016 by Butlins found that four in five people view the coast as offering “beautiful, unspoilt beaches and coastline with lots of natural beauty” and over two thirds recognise the fun atmosphere at UK beaches. However, less than 50% of people have visited the seaside in the last 3 years with 62% viewing coastal visits as an expensive journey to areas that are in need of investment.

In order to tackle the negative perception of coastal communities and the idea that they are just ‘bucket and spade holidays’ there needs to be better marketing and better infrastructure. At a local level written submissions highlighted that a number of local tourist centres are out-of-date and are in need of investment.

The idea that coastal tourism is limited to beach holidays needs to be addressed. Over the past 10 years the tourism offer has expanded rapidly, visitors can now experience ‘green tourism’, ‘aviation tourism’, festivals and conferences as well as action holidays. Submissions said that VisitEngland is too London-centric and there is a need to focus on the smaller coastal destinations as well as the larger, well known areas. A coherent strategy for all strands of the visitor economy across the UK should be developed to ensure that the tourist season is extended from the perceived normal ‘summer period’.

MPs heard how communities need to work together to offer package deals as people now no longer stay in the same place. Dr Philippa Whitford MP highlighted the success of such deals in Scotland and the importance of catering to a modern consumer with changing needs and tastes. Tim Loughton MP said that these package deals not only need to focus on coastal communities but also link with inland areas to promote growth and reach. These destination wide plans are even more important in lieu of the Destination Management Organisations.

Recommendations:
- Use social media and webcams to promote local coastal areas
- VisitEngland to have a broader focus
- Better marketing and infrastructure
- Promote UK package holidays
- View of hospitality and tourism in government needs to change to reflect the importance of the UK’s fourth largest industry
- Create a coherent year-long strategy for coastal communities
- Tourist information centres need to be up to date

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18 Solent LEP, Oral Evidence
20 Guton Hall Coastal Village, Written Evidence
21 Harbour Park & Norton Grange Coastal Resort, Written Evidence
22 Butlins Skengess, Written Evidence
Chapter 6: Digital Connectivity

The digital world is now synonymous with tourism – online travel agents, home sharing platforms, short lead times to booking and review sites are the norm. A tourism business in coastal community, or indeed anywhere in the UK, would suffer without adequate digital connectivity.

Good digital connectivity is essential for businesses that engage with markets from a distance, which is necessity for the majority of businesses in coastal communities. Digital infrastructure is an area of recognised market failure, where interventions are essential to enable access for all. Since the start of the inquiry the government has announced a £200 million fund for rural businesses and broadband project\(^ {23}\).

To support a coastal community renaissance, local areas need strategic hubs of next generation connectivity to catalyse growth opportunities within the area.\(^ {24}\) The provision and availability of broadband has now become one of the top reasons for choosing a destination or accommodation provider.

TOP FIVE MOST DESIRED HOLIDAY ‘COMFORTS’ (Pixmania.com) \(^ {25}\)

1. A nice view
2. Wifi
3. Clean accommodation
4. Good Mattress
5. Great hotel restaurant

Although the cost and speed of a connection is important, coastal communities need the skills and capabilities of individuals and businesses to capitalise on the opportunities. SMEs with a strong web presence create more than twice as many jobs and are 50% more likely to sell outside their immediate region. The skills gap is more acute in coastal communities, which suffer from underinvestment and a lack of access to skills training, with up to 20% of people in some communities having never been online.\(^ {26}\)

In March 2017, Google launched a digital skills programme with the aim of boosting British seaside tourism. Partnering with the BHA, National Coastal Tourism Academy and UKinbound, the Digital Garage training programme provided small businesses, tourist centres and resident’s free training and face to face mentorship from Google experts. This signals a real opportunity for hospitality businesses and tourist centres to use the power of online tools to find new visitors, take advantage in the recent boost in ‘staycations’ and even think about how to encourage more overseas visitors.

Turnout at the Digital Garage programme was high in both Hastings and Brighton, with sessions reaching over 330 people. They found that:

- 68% of participants have seen some positive results - in sales, bookings, traffic or followers
- 49% had seen an increase in website visitor numbers
- 32% had seen an increase in customer numbers
- 9% had hired additional staff to manage their digital workload

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\(^ {24}\) North Devon & Totteridge council, Written Evidence

\(^ {25}\) Seaton Sands, Written Evidence

Porthcawl Surf School in South Wales took part in the programme and owner Hugh Murray has been using online advertising tools to reach out to surfers and expand his business.

“It is harder for people who are keen to learn how to surf to know where to start. People who know nothing about surfing start with Google, which means if they’re in the Porthcawl area, they have a great chance of finding me and getting in touch,” says Hugh.

North Devon Council highlighted social media campaigns, such as using webcam technology, to promote areas year round and suggested more should be done to help coastal communities utilise social media channels.

Recommendations:
- Better skills training for coastal communities for all ages
- Partnerships with private companies such as Google
Chapter 7: Seasonality and employment

The evidence presented, both in written and oral form, highlighted the dependence of coastal areas on the summer season and the challenges this seasonality presents, particularly in terms of employment. The National Coastal Tourism Agency stated that 36% of all trips to the coast take place in July and August, a figure that has been consistent since 2008, creating large fluctuations between the season and the off season.

The seasonality of the coast makes it challenging to hire staff for long term jobs and offer career opportunities, reducing the attractiveness of the job offer. The perception that the coast is closed during the off season causes particular issues for staff retention. The lack of long term jobs contributes to a low wage and often itinerant workforce and discourages inbound migration of professionals.

The seasonality of coastal areas, a lack of career opportunities and low business diversity leads to local young people moving away to find long term employment, creating a skills shortage and a skewing of local demographics. One submission stated that in the local area for the most part there are only three job opportunities, tourism, self-employment and caring for the elderly. The departure of young people is exacerbated by the lack of further education opportunities nearby.

MPs heard that while there are ideas to increase the coastal offer outside the normal season, often they are not possible due to a lack of funding. Other evidence stated that challenging the perception that the coast is closed out of the season is needed to reduce seasonality. To do this more focus was needed on the activities that can be enjoyed at the coast year-round. These include development of better facilities for walking and biking holidays. Submissions said that festivals were also an idea being explored to lengthen the season. Others added that a focus on creative industries and cultural and heritage assets could also help create year-round appeal. Further suggested ways of extending the season were a focus on Green Tourism and increasing the conference offer to move away from ‘bucket and spade’ tourism.

Submissions mentioned the benefits that have come from the Coastal Communities Fund, and argued for its expansion as many applicants are turned down. They argued that the fund has the opportunity to focus on tackling seasonality of the coast. They also recommended national and local government tailored apprenticeships to better suit seasonal businesses. Other suggestions for increasing skills was to have shared apprenticeships so smaller businesses could share the burden.

27 Ilfracombe Town Council, Written Evidence
29 Blackpool Council, Written Evidence
30 Butlins Skegness, Written Evidence
35 Butlins Skegness, Written Evidence
36 Coastal West Sussex Partnership, Written Evidence
37 North Devon Council and Torridge District Council, Written Evidence
While submissions mentioned that they supported Coastal Enterprise Zones they argued that more needed to be done to encourage business diversity. Others suggested targeted funding for businesses that would diversify the coastal economy. However, some stated that while business diversity was desirable the reality was that the visitor economy was the only sustainable industry for their area.

**Recommendations**

- Expansion of the Coastal Communities Fund (CCF)
- Target the CCF to fund projects that extend the season
- Targeted government funding to encourage business diversity
- Increase the out of season offer through festivals, green tourism, wildlife promotion, activity holidays and conferences.
- Creating better career and education opportunities to prevent loss of working age people
- Creating apprenticeships that work around the shape of the coastal season and businesses

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38 British Holiday and Home Parks Association, Written Evidence
39 Ramsgate Coastal Community Team, Written Evidence
40 Butlin’s Skegness, Written Evidence
Full list of recommendations

Infrastructure
1. Greater consultation with local communities to decide where and when infrastructure is best built
2. Better scheduling of repairs and engineering works in coastal areas
3. More travel incentives to encourage people to visit the coast year round
4. Extend bus timetables
5. Better destination infrastructure for cycling and walking
6. National Infrastructure Commission should make recommendations to access and set out a plan to deliver a rapid improvement in the infrastructure of coastal areas

Funding
7. Longer funding application for CCF
8. Reduce Tourism VAT on visitor accommodation and attractions to five per cent
9. Not implement a tourist tax on hotel accommodation
10. Create more coastal enterprise zones
11. Incentivise public-private partnerships, use Merlin/Blackpool model as best practice
12. Implement new ways, with small funding, to reduce aggressive seagull behaviour

Housing
13. Flexible planning permission to reflect coastal erosion, disabled access and change of use
14. Restrict the number of permitted second homes
15. England to move to a welsh definition of self-catering or catering let
16. Amend restrictive planning policies preventing new investment
17. Incorporate rural and coastal planning into the NPPG rather than hosted on VisitBritain or England website
18. Regulations to be applied to the sharing economy

Education
19. Develop a national skills council for the visitor economy
20. Promote teachers to teach in coastal communities
21. Funding should not be based on IDACI or drill down further into post codes

Perception and marketing
22. Use social media and webcams to promote local coastal areas
23. VisitEngland to have a broader focus
24. Better marketing and infrastructure
25. Promote UK package holidays
26. View of hospitality and tourism in government needs to change to reflect the importance of the UK’s fourth largest industry
27. Create a coherent year-long strategy for coastal communities
28. Tourist information centres need to be up to date

Digital connectivity
29. Better skills training for coastal communities for all ages
30. Partnerships with private companies such as Google
Seasonality and Employment

31. Expansion of the Coastal Communities Fund (CCF)
32. Target the CCF to fund projects that extend the season
33. Targeted government funding to encourage business diversity
34. Increase the out of season offer through festivals, green tourism, wildlife promotion, activity holidays and conferences.
35. Creating better career and education opportunities to prevent loss of working age people
36. Creating apprenticeships that work around the shape of the coastal season and businesses
Appendix A: List of submissions

Bembridge Coast Hotel
Bexhill-on-Sea Coastal Community Team
Blackpool Council
Bodelwyddan Castle
British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions
British Destinations
British Holiday & Home Parks Association
Butlin’s, Skegness
Caister-on-Sea Holiday Park
Campaign for Better Transport
Church Farm, West Sussex
Coastal West Sussex Partnership
Cornwall Council
Corton Coastal Village
Craig Tara, Ayr
Devon Cliffs Holiday Park
Dymchurch Parish Council
East Devon District Council
East Lindsey District Council
Eastbourne Borough Council
Eastbourne Hospitality Association
Elgin Hotel
England’s Inclusive Tourism Action Group
Gunton Hall Coastal Village
Hafan Y Mor
Haggerston Castle Holiday Park
Harbour Park
Hastings Borough Council
Haven Seashore Holiday Park
Historic England
Hopton Holiday Village
Ilfrawcombe Town Council
LGA Coastal Special Interests Group
Manhood Peninsula Partnership
North Devon Council
North Devon+ (North Devon Council and Torridge District Council)
Norton Grange Coastal Resort
Presthaven Beach Resort
Primrose Valley, North Yorkshire
Ramsgate Coastal Community Team
Reighton Sands
Rockley Park in Poole, Dorset
Seton Sands
Shepway District Council
Sinah Warren Hotel, Hayling Island
Solent LEP
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
The Sankey Canal Coastal Community Team
The Wynding, Beadnell
Thornwick Bay Holiday Park
Tiki International
Torbay Development Agency
Warner Lakeside Coastal Resort
Watchet Coastal Communities Team
Wells Coastal Communities Team
West Somerset Council
Weymouth Bay Holiday Park
Wyre Borough Council
York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP