

TOURISM AGAINST THE CULL.

The Badger Cull: The Need for an Impact on Tourism Survey.

" Tourism is big business in Wales. It contributes around £3.5 billion a year to the economy and employs up to 100,000 people at the peak of the season."

Alun Ffred Jones (WAG website, August 6th 2010)

The Intensive Action Area where a badger cull will take place straddles three counties – Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire - all of which are popular tourist destinations. West Wales is a rural area visited by tourists who wish to enjoy its dramatic coastline, unspoilt countryside and abundant wildlife. It is an area which is increasingly being promoted as a clean, green, nature-friendly destination for those interested in eco-tourism and sustainable living. It boasts excellent visitor attractions; a National Park; a Coastal Path; wildlife reserves; traditional market towns; a high proportion of organic farms supplying a thriving specialist food industry which in turn supplies top quality pubs and restaurants; internationally recognised art galleries, artists and craftspeople; and excellent formal and informal music venues and festivals.

Tourism in West Wales is rural tourism. In 2001 the Wales Tourist Board noted in their annual report: "Farm tourism is a particularly well represented type of rural tourist activity, contributing significantly to Wales' image as a holiday destination. It currently contributes at least £10 million per annum to the incomes of some 1600 farming families in Wales, typically representing between 15 and 50 per cent of their annual incomes."¹

In the document 'Pembrokeshire's Facts of Tourism'² available through Pembrokeshire County Council's website, the contribution of tourism as a whole to the economy of Pembrokeshire in 2008 is shown as follows:

£521 million total visitor spend, of which £384 million is direct spend.

4.2 million visitors, of which 1.9 million are day visitors.

14,108 full time equivalent jobs are directly supported by tourism.

TOURISM AGAINST THE CULL.

Tourism in West Wales is closely interlinked with farming. What happens within farming impacts on tourism, as demonstrated by the Foot and Mouth outbreak of 2001. The cost to Welsh tourism of the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001 was put at £120million in a survey carried out by the BBC. The Wales Tourist Board put the figure at £280million³. According to Institute of Rural Studies, Aberystwyth, this figure could have been as high as £596 million⁴. The Wales Tourist Board estimated that 75% of businesses in Wales lost 60% of their sales revenue in that year⁵.

Yet the Welsh Assembly Government did not undertake an Impact on Tourism Survey before proposing to carry out a badger cull in a tourist area.

Of the 97 visitor attractions in Pembrokeshire (more than any other county in Wales), most are small "with fewer than 10,000 visitors per annum."⁶ The tourist economy in West Wales is made up of small businesses – restaurants, pubs, cafes, hotels, Bed and Breakfast accommodation, self-catering accommodation, visitor attractions, shops and suppliers. The Tourism Satellite Account for Wales, compiled by Cardiff Business School for Visit Wales using 2007 figures, found that "whilst just over 40% of visitors' spending was on accommodation and food, some 36% was on goods and services outside of identified tourist industries, demonstrating the wide range of services demanded by visitors and hence the breadth of economic impact."⁷

If a badger cull caused just 5% of expected visitors to choose to holiday elsewhere, the loss to Pembrokeshire's economy would be £26million a year, impacting directly on these small businesses. Tourists would not merely avoid the cull area itself but the whole of West Wales.

TOURISM AGAINST THE CULL.

The Value of the Badger to Welsh Tourism

The badger is perceived to add value to tourism in West Wales.

The badger is used as a symbol representing wildlife in general (The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales), and as a positive image for tourists, such as the 'please click on the badger for more holiday information' of the Coast and Country Cottages website. Badgers are also used as a marketing tool by businesses at the 'top end' of the tourist market. The opportunity to see badgers in the wild is commonly given as a reason to visit specific places and stay in specific accommodation.

Two of West Wales' best known and most popular tourist developments are **Bluestone** and **Fforest**, both highly acclaimed high-end eco tourism destinations bringing tourist revenue into the area. These companies have used badgers in their marketing and publicity material. For instance, the BBC News website on 8th June 2009 stated:

'Management at Wales' first five-star holiday village say it has attracted 40,000 visitors to Pembrokeshire.

... Mr McNamara was encouraged that Bluestone was already making a net contribution to Welsh tourism. He said most of holidaymakers said they would come back to Pembrokeshire within a year. "We knew that this was an opportunity at the top end of the market and that's what we have gone for and that's the result. We are very pleased because we are bringing a lot of high quality visitors who have never been to Pembrokeshire.'

The article goes on to say:

'Restaurants and shops on site are careful to source their produce from local suppliers wherever possible....The longer term aim is to increase biodiversity, encouraging as much wildlife as possible. There are ducklings on the man-made lake and red kites and badgers have been spotted.'⁸

The **Bluestone** website says:

TOURISM AGAINST THE CULL.

'If you stroll along our woodland nature trail in the late afternoon, you are quite likely to see a squirrel, fox or badger, while the hedges provide a perfect habitat for many birds, mammals and flora.'⁹

Fforest, near Cardigan, stated in their 2008 brochure:

'To the north and west lies the Teifi Marshes nature reserve. The reserve mainly consists of the salt marshes and reed beds of the Teifi flood plain, hosting thriving populations of otter, badger, deer and hugely diverse birdlife.'¹⁰

In an article in the Western Mail in August 2010 it was noted that: "More than a quarter of visitors to Wales actively sought environmentally friendly accommodation when booking to come here, according to last year's Wales Visitor Survey. A further 33% of people said choosing a destination that managed carbon emissions was very important."¹¹

In 2000, the *Valuing our Environment Study* "concluded that the natural environment supports 117,000 full time equivalent jobs in Wales that in turn help support 1 in 6 of the Welsh workforce."¹²

This report goes on to say:

"Other benefits that could be generated by an increase in wildlife tourism would include an increase in the levels of diversification into tourism related activities within the agricultural sector and within the rural economy in general (category 3). Such developments would obviously be beneficial from a rural economic development perspective. A review of wildlife tourism in Scotland concluded that wildlife tourism does bring jobs to rural areas and is therefore a significant boost to fragile local economies. It also noted that wildlife tourism provides added value to the tourism infrastructure of Scotland, including its remote areas. Such developments could also be beneficial in Wales."¹³

A quick search on the internet for holiday accommodation in West Wales gives the following examples of quality accommodation offering the badger as a marketing advantage:

Quality Cottages offers information about Llys y Fran Country Park as an attraction "with lots of wild and bird life – badgers, foxes, otters, sparrowhawk, buzzard and woodpeckers as well as little gulls and black tern on the lake."¹⁴

TOURISM AGAINST THE CULL.

Premier Cottages lists no less than five cottages, some of them award winning, which offer the opportunity to see badgers from the cottage.¹⁵

Many other, smaller, ventures have seized the advantage:

"We are surrounded by country life with foxes, badgers, buzzards, bats, owls and many other interesting wild birds regularly seen. Many guests enjoy badger watching as there is a badger set close by."

"There is also an abundance of bird and wildlife on the farm, which we encourage....Foxes and badgers have their sets in the wooded areas of the farm."

"Pembrokeshire also offers a huge range of activities to suit the needs and interests of all the family; from horse riding on the beach to a boat trip around an off shore Island, a fishing trip to watching wildlife such as badgers and bats, we can point you in the right direction."

"Rabbits, foxes and badgers are often seen on this delightful country walk."

" An integral part of a 60-acre working sheep and horse farm, the detached building forms an outcrop off a ten acre wood that we maintain as a nature reserve and is home to buzzards, kites and badgers."

The Image of Tourism in Wales

"Wales must compete with every other location for our share of the world's commercial, political, social and cultural transactions. The markets in which we compete are increasingly global and very crowded – we need a distinctive competitive identity." Economic Renewal: A New Direction, July 2010. (WAG)

£15.8million has recently been allocated from the European Regional Development Fund to "develop centres of excellence with the highest standards of facilities that will act as a hub for encouraging more sustainable tourism centred on Wales' natural environment."¹⁶ This is excellent news for tourism in West Wales which is already recognised as an eco tourism destination.

The Economic Renewal document goes on to state: "A nation's competitive identity is made up of a complex mix of experiences, perceptions and associations often created over a long period. Nations with a positive

TOURISM AGAINST THE CULL.

reputation and image can add value to the goods, products, services and companies associated with that country – the so-called 'identity premium.'¹⁷

On the 18th May 2010 national television news broadcast coverage of numbers of police escorting masked Welsh Assembly Government representatives on to private land near Newport, Pembrokeshire, in order to carry out a survey of badger setts without the owner's permission. It was a publicity disaster for tourism in West Wales. Holidaymakers visiting West Wales for the Whitsun bank holiday soon after the television coverage were keen to express their dismay. Wildlife Trusts around the UK publicised the cull, and several web-based campaigns were organised to discourage people from visiting Wales or buying Welsh dairy produce.¹⁸

The 'identity premium' of West Wales as an eco-friendly, clean, green, tourist destination would be irrevocably damaged by a badger cull.

To eliminate the badger population entirely from an area of West Wales will impact severely on tourism. It will undermine the work that local West Wales tourism businesses have undertaken over the past 30 years or more to strengthen the image of West Wales as a top quality tourism destination. As was shown in 2001, many of these businesses are farming businesses who have diversified into tourism.

West Wales has succeeded in attracting the type of tourist who will bring the most economic benefit and the least environmental impact. These tourists bring prosperity to the specialist food industry, the many art and craft businesses in West Wales, support local cultural, food, art and music festivals, and give great support to wildlife businesses and charities in the area. These tourists are exactly the type of prosperous, educated, professional people who are informed on wildlife matters. They are unlikely to choose to holiday in an area where a badger cull is going to take place, is taking place, or has taken place.

Wales has recently won a reputation as a cutting-edge centre for media and the Arts. The building of the Millennium Centre, the making of television programmes such as Dr Who, Torchwood and Casualty, and the use of West Wales for film locations in Robin Hood and Harry Potter have all added to Wales' international image as a forward looking, go-getting culture. A

TOURISM AGAINST THE CULL.

badger cull does not fit well with this image. It is not a cutting-edge response to the problem of bovine TB.

The Western Mail recently reported that: "A WAG spokesman said tourism was of growing importance with recent research by Cardiff University showing the industry contributes around 4.3% of Gross Value Added to the whole Welsh economy compared with 3.7% in 2000. "Tourism is very much integrated into the Assembly Government's wider multi-million economic regeneration programmes throughout Wales."¹⁹

Before any decision can be made on a badger cull anywhere in Wales, it is imperative that a full Impact on Tourism Survey be undertaken.

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On behalf of, **Tourism Against the Cull**, a group of West Wales residents who rely on a healthy tourist trade to ensure an economically viable community.

North Pembrokeshire. September 2010.

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