



English Riviera Tourism Company's Response to 2015/16 Tourism Budget Proposal

Response to Overview & Scrutiny Panel – September 2015

The private sector ERTC board members strongly oppose the mayor's proposal to remove the tourism budget from Torbay Council's annual revenue budget and to take this payment to zero from April 1st 2015.

From the research we have undertaken, we cannot find any evidence, of any other major UK holiday seaside resort, where the Local Authority (LA) is proposing a zero budget for tourism from April 2015. Torbay Councils zero budget plans have raised concerns nationally from VisitEngland, The National Tourism Alliance and The British Resorts and Destinations Association.

We believe that a zero annual revenue budget, if approved, for an industry worth £450 million per annum to the local economy, sends out all the wrong messages and could seriously harm the resorts reputation and slow down recent progress, with increased visitor volume and value recorded for three consecutive years in: 2011, 2012, 2013.

The fact is **41% of the local population** rely directly or indirectly on tourism and retail for employment,* with tourism's importance, also highlighted again in the recent Labour Force Survey which shows that tourism has been a major force in the UK's economic recovery. As such now is not the time to take Torbay's tourism budget to zero with 12,000+ jobs at stake and 41% of the local population to consider.

Considering the size and significance of tourism to Torbay we consider that Torbay Council has a 'duty of care' to the 700+ tourism and hospitality businesses that operate across the resort. Many of these businesses are privately run micro and SME businesses that need and rely on professional Destination Marketing support for which they are not in a position to arrange or afford independently.

In Great Yarmouth the LA have protected £300k per annum for tourism which is paid to the TBID Company to help deliver the Business Plan. We ask Torbay Council to commit to do the same.

The ERTC are fully committed to the development of the TBID, working in partnership with Torbay Council and the Town Centre Company to secure vital sustainable funds for the continued delivery of professional Destination Marketing activities and will work to support the delivery of the provisional ballot timetable which is September 2015.

To conclude the fact is, LA's in well-established destinations such as Torbay have a vital role to play in assisting with the funding of destination management and marketing and should see this as a duty on behalf of the hundreds of businesses they represent.

For Torbay Council to now be proposing in effect, that they are walking away from this joint responsibility is making little sense to us as private sector directors or the industry at large.

We are asking that Torbay Council members challenge the mayor's draft proposal and look to reinstate a revised annual tourism revenue budget of £300k from April 2015.

Thank you for your continued support
Carolyn Custerson on behalf of the ERTC private sector board members
14th August 2015

*Latest Sheffield Hallam University Report