

2 Seas Magazine

SPECIAL FOCUS

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A proximity cluster initiative:

Why travel further?

How do we encourage visitors on our doorstep to holiday closer to home?

2 Mers Seas Zeeën

INTERREG IV A

FRANCE - ENGLAND - VLAANDEREN - NEDERLAND



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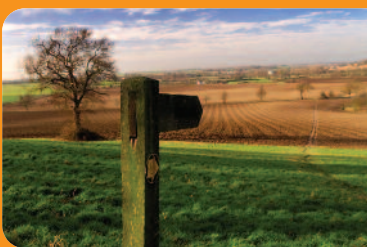
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Justin Francis
Responsible Travel.com

"Why Travel Further?" Yes, why indeed? The Proximity Cluster brings together four countries and nine partners who address this question directly. The answers offer an exciting vision for the future of tourism in Europe, encouraging us to holiday closer to home and to value the special and distinctive landscapes that lie on or near our own doorstep; to recognise that all of us can travel responsibly to reach these places on foot, by cycle or public transport. Indeed, that there is no better way to explore and experience the culture and heritage of our countryside, coast and towns and to meet local people and really make contact with a place.

Europe is the world's number one tourist destination, with the highest density and diversity of tourist attractions, and has become a key sector of the European economy, generating over 10% of EU GDP (directly or indirectly) and employing 9.7million citizens in 1.8million businesses. The 2 Seas Region has a lot to offer and needs more innovative marketing to capitalise on the comprehensive benefits that tourism can bring to its economy.

Key EU policies on tourism emphasise the need to stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector, to promote the development of sustainable, responsible, and high-quality tourism, and to consolidate Europe's image as a collection of sustainable, high-quality destinations. I have seen that the Proximity Cluster partners are working towards these goals with an innovative package of work that has sustainable and nearby tourism at its heart.

Nearby tourism is a local celebration of sustainable tourism. Responsibletravel.com believes in the authentic local experience and as the world's largest company of our kind, we are delighted to support Proximity partners and the 2 Seas Region's efforts to promote locally distinctive and environmentally responsible tourism. **Local distinctiveness is the future of tourism.**

Proximity offers a way to celebrate local distinctiveness and to turn new perspectives on local products and places into business profits and an enriched visitor experience. And the timing is right as we know that due to the economic climate visitors are now looking to holiday closer to home.

I am delighted to endorse this Interreg supported initiative. We should all be working more closely together to share our knowledge and expertise. To find new and innovative ways to support Europe's economy and provide opportunities for people of all walks of life and backgrounds to enjoy and appreciate the great outdoors and the varied cultural heritage of our regions. Proximity shows how growth and a strong and vibrant economy can be combined with protecting our common inheritance.

Justin Francis – Responsibletravel.com

Introduction

Tourism is an important economic sector for the 2 Seas Region. In Europe the coastal and maritime tourism sector alone employs over 3.2 million people generating 183 billion euros in gross value. With a local and long supply chain, tourism is recognised as supporting other sectors such as culture, heritage, retail, and food and drink, thus multiplying its economic impact and generating wider benefits. In the recent recession, tourism in many European countries is the only sector to have witnessed job growth and is particularly supportive of employing young people, with 45% of tourism workers aged between 16 and 35 years old.

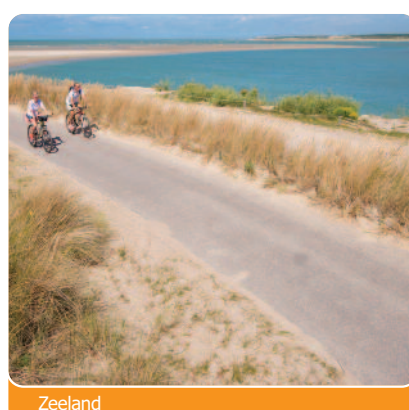
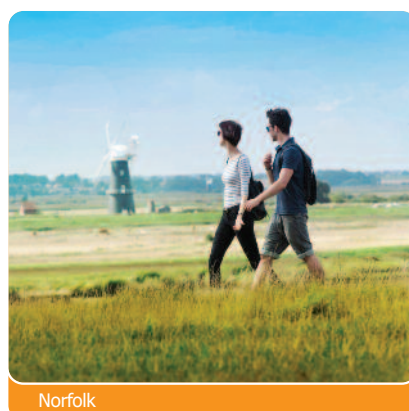
The European Commission Strategy for Blue Growth recognizes tourism as one of the five focus areas for delivering sustainable growth and jobs in the future and all the member states in the 2 Seas Region forecast at least a 3% year-on-year increase in visitors and spend. It is important therefore that we all work together to maximise this potential in a way that is sustainable.

In the current economic climate, where people have had less disposable income, we are seeing a trend for local residents in the 2 Seas Region to holiday closer to home. Called the "Staycation" phenomena in the UK, this new trend provides a unique opportunity to encourage both the domestic and nearby overseas markets to rediscover and reconnect with the 2 Seas area. As visitors look for deeper and more meaningful experiences, the 2 Seas Region needs to celebrate its local distinctiveness to attract nearby visitors.

Recognising this opportunity, partners across the 2 Seas Region, have formed a cluster called Proximity. The partners in this cluster are: Visit Kent, Kent County Council, Responsible Travel, ARDT Nord, ARDT Pas-de-Calais, Comité Régional de Tourisme Nord-Pas de Calais, Westtoer, HZ University of Applied Sciences and Norfolk County Council. In addition there are two associate partners: N.V. Economische Impuls Zeeland and Dedham Vale (AONB), and Stour Valley Project and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB (Suffolk County Council). The aim of this cluster is to increase and enhance the nearby tourism market in the 2 Seas Region building on the findings and experience of four Interreg Projects: Sustainable Tourism Research and Intelligence Partnership (SusTrip), Greet The World, Coastal Actions for Sustainable Tourism (CAST) and Balance.

From the cluster partners' previous research, knowledge and experience we will explore how, by working cross-border, we can encourage more visitors to holiday closer to home. This publication will identify who these nearby markets are and the different ways in which we can target them. We will also demonstrate how the role of technology is key to attracting these nearby visitors and providing them with experiences that encourage further exploration of the region. However, we will also show how the 'personal touch' is still important and discuss the increasingly valuable role that local residents play in welcoming and encouraging nearby visitors by becoming ambassadors for their region and inviting friends and relatives to visit. Finally, we will explore ways to support tourism businesses enabling them to be more innovative in attracting nearby markets.

By encouraging 2 Seas residents to holiday closer to home we hope to keep visitor spend and economic benefit within the region, thus enabling sustainable growth. It will help reduce air miles, encourage sustainable travel and develop a greater interest, concern and passion for the local area. In turn, this will create a more unique and personal visitor experience increasing satisfaction, recommendation and likelihood to revisit, time and again. Indeed, a key factor from the Interreg Projects, and an underlying theme throughout this publication, is the importance of local distinctiveness to attract nearby markets.



2 Seas Interreg Project Zooms

BALANCE Zoom

- Six organizations in three countries are working together to find a BALANCE between recreation and nature.
- **Project value:** € 6.7m
- **Partners:** Cyclopark Trust, Kent County Council, Suffolk Coast and Heaths Areas AONB, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Provincie Zuid-Holland, Vlaamse Landmaatschappij, Belgium
- **Outputs:** 'Explorer' walking guides; 'Explore Suffolk' app; 54 information boards; Flanders greenway management plan and route planner; cycle park with new woodland and grassland habitats; nest protection scheme totally managed by volunteers; and Dutch tidal habitats with recreational possibilities.
- **Impact:** Engaged local people in conservation work and nature promotion. Tourism products improved by local knowledge and providing economic and environmental benefits.
- **Website:** <http://www.balance-2seas.eu>

SusTRIP Zoom

- Three year Interreg 1VA project to deliver tourism research to support business growth
- **Project value:** €3.2m
- **Partners:** Kent County Council, Visit Kent, Comité Régional de Tourisme, Westtoer, HZ University of Applied Sciences and NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences
- **Outputs:** Economic impact; visitor surveys; perception studies; joint events impact toolkit; self-catering research; shared databank
- **Impact:** Knowledge of volume and value of tourism in 2 Seas Region; new tools for tourism businesses to be able to monitor their performance; better understanding of nearby visitors, their profile, motivation and satisfaction
- **Website:** www.sustainabletourismresearch.eu

CAST Zoom

- Three year Interreg 1VA project to deliver a project of transforming the coastal areas through marketing, development and training.
- **Project value:** €2.9m
- **Partners:** KCC, Visit Kent, Pas-de-Calais, Westtoer
- **Outputs:** Quality project support for tourism businesses; Coastal product and signage audits; Coastal tourism Investment opportunities; joint Water sport development and marketing; Joint Lonely Planet Guide; study trips.
- **Impact:** Improved quality tourism offer on the coast, visitor experience and perception of the coastal regions as well as the identification of future investment opportunities for entrepreneurs.

GREET Zoom

- GREET harnessed the significant opportunities presented by a range of new signature cultural and sporting developments in the Cross-Channel region over three years.
- **Project value:** €4.5m
- **Partners:** Lead Partner: Comité Régional de Tourisme Nord-Pas de Calais, Comité Départemental du Tourisme du Nord, Comité Départemental de Tourisme du Pas-de-Calais, Kent County Council, Visit Kent.
- **Outputs:** Joint marketing activity, business support and training, and resident engagement.
- **Impact:** A legacy to the Olympic Games with a high profile, improved quality and welcoming destination and increased visitor satisfaction.

SWOT analysis of sustainable tourism in the 2 Seas Region

Building on the knowledge they gained from working together on tourism Interreg Projects and on the results of the European Commission Consultation on the Challenges and Opportunities for Maritime and Coastal Tourism (2012), the Proximity Cluster partners created a SWOT analysis to develop their project and identify areas for future co-operation.

Strengths

Great nature, cultural and recreation offer, good access, and strong tourism policies.

The area has a good mix of coast and countryside, creating a special natural environment. And despite being one of Europe's busiest economic areas and hosting the world's busiest shipping lane, **the 2 Seas Region is exceptionally rich in natural heritage.** With many internationally and nationally designated protected areas the region offers stunning countryside, blue flag beaches, and internationally famous coastal landmarks such as the White Cliffs and the Deux Caps.

Encircled by some of the world's most significant cities, **the 2 Seas Region has a strong cultural and heritage offer.** There are many events, festivals and attractions. Also, as a gateway

between the UK and the European continent, the area is exceptionally rich in historic defences and structures as well as historic buildings and churches. There is a strong maritime history complemented by a powerful and poignant wartime heritage.

With the major cities of London, Paris and Brussels in such close proximity the area is exceptionally well serviced by transport connections. The area is also rich in off-road walking access and cycle routes.

Tourism is nationally recognised in the region as a major economic driver and so local authority and private sector involvement in tourism promotion is

strong. The sector is recognised as being fundamental to helping in deliver Europe's growth agenda and job opportunities. Tourism is also uniquely suited to employing young people and helping them secure a first foot on the career ladder.

With a strong natural and cultural heritage to protect there is a widespread interest and support for sustainable tourism development. Recent trends in tourism for a 'local and distinctive' experience have strengthened interest in nearby tourism and there is a growing request from visitors for more customized and unique experiences.



Rich Heritage

Weaknesses

Consumer perceptions of the destinations, product offer, seasonality and sustainability in a globally competitive marketplace

There is general agreement for a need to strengthen the image and profile of the 2 Seas Region's tourism offer, particularly in the face of growing international competition from other overseas and non-EU destinations. Many of the coastal areas suffer from negative perceptions and there is little awareness of the richness and diversity that the region has to offer. Although the quality of the product and experience continues to improve, if we are to remain competitive we need to ensure this continues.

Innovation challenges in the tourism sector hinder Europe's competitiveness, product development and diversification. A fragmented and uncoordinated industry, dominated by SME's and a lack of skilled professionals in the sector, necessitates the need for support and training in order to encourage product development for nearby markets. The average length of stay is, for some coastal regions, rather low and there is consequently a lack of innovative accommodation while some areas lack good conference facilities.

The transition process of a traditional seasonal destination for longer holidays to a contemporary destination for short breaks is still a challenge, particularly for the coastal areas. The climate is considered unfavourable and seasonality is a common tourism weakness. The region is very busy during peak times with lots of traffic and frequent congestion while during off-peak periods places can lack atmosphere.

Recruiting seasonal staff can also be difficult leading to poor service and staff training. Businesses in the hospitality sector have a recognised skills gap, general recruitment and retention challenges and a strong desire to simplify paths of entry to its many and varied job opportunities. There is a need therefore to promote and support sustainable career development and professionalise the sector.

Opportunities

Capitalise on key strengths identified by the consumer market

Significant strengths identified by the consumer market are: scenery, unspoilt coastal areas, quaint seaside towns and villages, and good beaches and countryside. Heritage and culture also feature as visitor motivators.

The region is relatively accessible by nearby countries and the effect of the economic crisis means that near destinations where good value can be offered are favoured.

Ongoing transport improvements offer the area connectivity to new nearby markets. Train networks are good and these could be promoted more actively and innovatively. The terrain is also relatively easy for the development of walking & cycling trails.

To be prepared for sea levels rising, the regions are investing in coastal defence infrastructure that also provide opportunities for new forms of beach and nature recreation which are a major attraction for tourism in the area.

Information and communication technologies offer tourism in the 2 Seas Region a range of opportunities including the ability to: gather data and understand visitors; promote the area to new markets; grow relationships with potential visitors; develop commerce platforms; and support business and employees through e-learning.

The opportunity to promote local distinctiveness and a local experience is strong. There is an increased interest in local food and having a 'local experience'. This is an important opportunity for the development of special offers that celebrate the diverse and unique identities of the 2 Seas Region.

Threats

Sustainability and innovation

Sustainability, including growing carbon footprint, water scarcity and pressure on natural resources and habitats, has been identified as the main threat for coastal tourism in Europe. Therefore, resource efficiency is a major concern; and the need to encourage responsible practices by European tourism businesses and by tourists themselves is a priority.

The 2 Seas Region's main competition is cheap medium-haul holidays in warmer climates. The 2 Seas tourism stakeholders therefore need to collaborate to attract residents to holiday closer to home rather than outside the region. Lack of innovation and development in the sector, poor business and employee skills and fragmented marketing threaten the region's future competitiveness. Negative perceptions of some of the region also remain a threat.

The effect of the economic crisis is that holiday budgets have decreased and value for money is a major driver for visitors while, at the same time, expectation for quality continues to rise. Commercial models and the tourism offer should be reviewed to ensure we continue to meet customer needs and generate economic benefit.



Local Produce

Who are our nearby visitors?



If we are going to encourage visitors to holiday closer to home rather than travel further afield we need to understand not only who they are but also their motivations and behaviour.

Research from the Sustainable Tourism Research and Intelligence Partnership (SusTRIP) forms a good foundation for us to understand who our current visitors are. However, we need to be aware that comparing data and benchmarking across the four partner countries of SusTRIP has been a challenging activity as each partner collects similar data but in a different format and through different methodology. Despite some progress in identifying a small number of datasets that could be benchmarked there is still a need to identify and address data gaps to improve understanding, planning and destination management for the region.

All partners have a **strong day trip market** and this means that the largest number of visitors are domestic and/or within a 2-3 hour drive from the area. In addition, research in the SusTRIP project uncovered that the visiting friends and relatives market was more important than first considered. For example, in Kent this comprises 50% of overnight stays in the region while in Nord-Pas de Calais it was 66% of overnight stays. This nearby market is important because they make more trips to the area, stay longer and visit throughout the year.

In regard to the overnight market, self-catering, camping and second homes

were particularly important for France, Belgium and the Netherlands in comparison to the UK. In SusTRIP, partners explored the opportunities and challenges this accommodation stock brought to the 2 Seas Region in terms of attracting nearby markets, particularly examining the economic significance and impact of second home owners and renting agencies.

The inbound market reflects the **importance of nearby tourism** with all regions attracting visitors from the UK, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany but volume varies according to how close and accessible each region is

to the market. This is also reflected in the awareness of the different area, with a study conducted by Westtoer and Kent County Council on perception of the 2 Seas Region coastal destinations, showing that neighbouring markets are more familiar with the coast closest to them. This is important to consider when thinking of which potential geographic markets to target and strategy to implement.

Although all regions attract a range of visitors the strongest market is in the older age group. Demographically in Europe the number of older people is set to rise, signalling a need to take a second look at the facilities and experiences tourism providers offer, such as accessibility.

The link with an **ageing society** is crucial as grandparents become increasingly active in family life and we see a rise in the number of intergenerational family holidays.

Over the past 15 years there has also been a sustained rise in the birth rates causing a mini baby boom which means **families** will also be an important nearby market in the future.

The product and services, however, need to be adapted in order to entice young families to stay in our area instead of travelling to well equipped holiday resorts in southern regions.

The main motivation of our visitors to the region is **coast, beaches, countryside and heritage** with visitors enjoying eating out, cultural experiences and outdoor activities. Surveys conducted in SusTRIP showed that value for money was a key factor in consumer holiday decisions and forecasts say the new bargain hunting and last minute booking habit is likely to stay beyond the economic downturn. As consumers turn their backs on ostentatious spending, increasingly they desire curated, bespoke activities for their leisure time; a way to relax with friends and family and have enriching local experiences.

CHAPTER 1.1

Tourism facts and figures from partner regions*

Snapshot from Kent

- 57 million visitors per year
- 9% overnight and 91% day trip
- 20% overseas and 80% domestic
- 48% of overnight visits are with friends and family
- 10% are under 30 years old and 59% are over 50 years old
- 38% are first time visitors and 62% are repeat visitors

Snapshot from Norfolk

- Approximately 33.4million day and staying trip visitors with a total related spend of £2.1 billion
- 94% domestic and 6% overseas
- Day visitor activity accounted for 63% of all direct visitor spend
- Staying visitors average 4.56 nights per trip accounting for 37% of all direct visitor expenditure
- 55% day visits were to urban locations. Countryside visits accounted for 30% whilst coastal visits accounted for 5%

Snapshot from Suffolk

- 3 million visitors
- 36% overnight and 64% day trip
- 1.6% overseas and 98.4% domestic
- 8.4% of overnight visits are to friends & family
- 58% occupancy for hotels, self-catering accommodation and camping and caravan sites
- 24% are under 34 years old and 63% over 54 years old
- 18% are first time visitors and 82% are repeat visitors

Snapshot from Zeeland

Domestic tourism

- 1.4 million arrivals (75% tourists and 25% second residents) and 7.9 million nights spent
- Accommodation type: self-catering (53% of nights) and campsites (38% of nights)
- 38% families with children and 21% senior travellers over 65 years old
- Expenditure per person per day is €25

Inbound tourism

- 888,000 arrivals (excl. second residents)
- 3.9 million nights spent
- Countries of origin: Germany (62% of guests), Belgium (31% of guests), UK (1% of guests), France (1% of guests)
- Accommodation type: self-catering (48% of nights) and campsites (34% of nights)

*Source SusTRIP Research, Cambridge Model and National Statistics

Snapshot from Nord-Pas de Calais

- 13 million visitors to cultural and leisure attractions: 12% overseas and 40% groups
- Hotel: 5.7 million nights. Business nights 54% and campsite 776, 500 nights (21% tourist pitches)
- 73% domestic and 27% overseas
- Domestic visitors: 27.6 million nights; 6.5 million from Nord-Pas de Calais
 - 69% short stays; average duration: 3.7 nights
 - 66.1% overnight are Visit Friends and Relatives
 - 30% are under 35 years old and 44% are over 50 years old

Snapshot from the Belgium Coast

- 17 million day trips:
- 87% Belgians, 11% French, 2% Dutch
- 36% over 50 years old and 17% 18- 34 years old
- Overnight Tourists in commercial accommodation – 2.7 million arrivals and 14.2 million nights
- 81% Belgians, 4% French, 6% Dutch, 2% UK
- 40% over 50 years old and 12% 18-31 years old
- Second Residents in holiday homes – 2.9 million arrivals and 16.8 million overnights
- 94% Belgians, 2% French, 2% Dutch, 1% UK
- 36% over 50 years old and 21% 18-34 years old

CHAPTER 1.2

How will we understand our nearby visitors in the future?

Technology is changing rapidly and understanding who our nearby visitors are will be key to the success of promoting nearby and locally distinctive tourism.

In the SusTRIP project we piloted the use of mobile technology to conduct surveys in attractions and museums as an effective and easy way to capture visitor information and learn more about our nearby visitors. However, with the rapid increase in smart technology this is only the beginning. New technology is rapidly transforming the way we, in the tourist industry, can learn more about our nearby visitors. Four out of 10 Europeans have a smart phone and tourists search increasingly for information online before and during their travels, sharing holiday feedback with friends and relatives, especially on public forums such as Trip Advisor.

Tourists using these technologies leave digital traces. The resulting data is vast and in the industry is referred to as 'big data'. For tourism research, 'big data' offers a new mechanism to understand behaviours, preferences, and perceptions of our current and potential visitors (Gretzel, 2013A).

Cutting-edge tourism research will increasingly focus on analysing this secondary data. At the 2012 Global Forum on Tourism Statistics in Reykjavik, NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences presented tourism benchmarking research as part of the SusTRIP project. This showed the pitfalls of traditional tourism statistics, which are often incompatible for benchmarking at a regional level. Other speakers presented results of state-of-the-art research, such as positioning data from mobile networks to generate tourism statistics. This stimulated SusTRIP partners to examine the role of new technology in tourism research.

Westtoer (Belgium) is now preparing a pilot project using positioning data from mobile networks at the Flemish coast, and likewise the Dutch Research Centre for Coastal Tourism at HZ University of Applied Sciences in Zeeland, the Netherlands. Also in Zeeland, the Research Centre for Coastal Tourism is collecting data from a visitor pass that leaves digital traces about tourist activities. Analysis of this data could generate insight into tourism preferences thus enabling smart marketing activities for destinations and businesses.

Research Zoom Economic Impact Model

Understanding the volume and value of tourism is vital for destination management and the economic impact of tourism is an important research topic. SusTRIP partners were looking for an approach that could be used throughout the 2 Seas Region for evaluating the economic impact of tourism and specific tourism developments. A PhD study was hosted at NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences researching the measurement of the economic impact of tourism at a regional level.

Initial conclusions showed that input-output models offered the best opportunities for regional tourism research. A comprehensive manual for the use of the input-output model in tourism research was compiled. The manual is appropriate for professional companies or research bodies that are skilled in working with complex economic data.

The manual is available free of charge at www.sustainabletourismresearch.eu

However, it is an as yet untapped resource due to the challenges of storage, access, information governance and commercial value.

At the same time, there is a vast difference in technology competence within the tourism industry with many businesses having very little expertise and others being very advanced. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for tourism partners in the 2 Seas Region; a challenge that can only be met through joint working between public, private and the academic sectors.

How can we reach nearby markets?



Through research we can understand who our nearby visitors are and how to target them with the right communication channels and messages. The Proximity partners have explored a range of innovative methods - market and product led - for reaching nearby visitors. Westtoer have taken an event led approach on the Belgium Coast; Pas-de-Calais piloted a specific gender campaign; Kent used geocaching technology; and Responsible Travel developed a new special landscape focus.

These best practice case studies will enable us to learn what methods are most effective in reaching nearby markets and how together we could develop these approaches in the future to attract more visitors. Indeed, the joint cross-border marketing activity undertaken in the GREET Interreg project shows that although shared marketing can have its challenges it can also deliver great results.



Beach huts in Zeeland

CHAPTER 2.1

How can our coast attract more nearby visitors all year-round?

With more than 1600 km of coastline Proximity partners have a resource worth promoting to nearby visitors, and through CAST the partners explored shared opportunities and challenges.

Case: Belgian Coast

The Opportunity – a strong coastal tourism offer. The Belgian coast comprises 67 km of coastline taking in 10 communities, two nature reserves and a variety of accommodation, activity and eating and drinking offers.

The Challenge - seasonality. Traditionally, the tourism year used to be dependent on a good July-August with economic activity subsequently falling to a level, including hotels and restaurants being closed for the remainder of the year.

The Market - The main market is nearby visitors, the majority of whom are repeat visitors, mostly Flemish speaking Belgians. Some 20% are French speaking Belgians and the remaining 20% are from Germany, Holland, France and the UK.

A Solution - Position the Belgian coast as a lively all year round coast, encouraging older visitors to return and younger visitors to reconsider it as a fun, modern destination.

The Tool - Events. Through the CAST Interreg project, Westtoer took an event led approach and developed a programme of activity for the whole year including springtime announcements involving a "wake-up call" as part of a Coastal Weekend. The Coastal Weekend involved a variety of promotions including fare reductions for overnight stays such as '2+1' and 'kids for free', extra welcome drink, reductions for return restaurant visits and combining accommodation with well-being or activity offers.

The Results – Recent turnover figures for the Belgian coast show 2.8 billion euros per year of which one-third is generated in July-August and two-thirds generated in the remaining months.

As the 2 Seas Region cannot compete with sunshine destinations we need to look at other ways of attracting nearby visitors all year round and the Belgium successful events programme is a good example of how this can be achieved.



'Belgium Coast' magazine

"I'M HEAD-OVER-HEELS FOR THE OPAL COAST. WHERE I RELAX FOR MY BREAK WITH MY MAM AND CHILDREN. NO STRESS OF THINGS."

An afternoon at Berck Beach

A family walk at Cap Blanc Nez

2 Seas Zone
EUROPEAN UNION
"Investing in your future!"
Chamber cooperation programme
2007-2013 Part-financed by the European Union
(European Regional Development Fund)

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www.opalcoast-girls.com

Opal Coast poster

EVER-HEELS FOR L COAST

I GO TO
A WEEKEND
WITH FRIENDS
OR MY
...
S AND LOTS
S TO DO.”



www.coastgirls.com Credits: F. Desautels, Photos de l'Opale Coast, Getty Images

EXCLUSIVE
FROM 27 OCTOBER
TO 4 NOVEMBER 2012
THE OPAL COAST
CELEBRATES WOMEN
1 WEEK OF
PRIVILEGES



Sunbathing in the solarium

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Pas de Calais
www.pas-de-calais.com

CHAPTER 2.2 Can a targeted marketing campaign generate more nearby visitors?

Destination marketing requires overall brand awareness but Proximity Partners know that targeted marketing achieves better results than general campaigns. Kent has experienced success with golf tourism marketing, Suffolk has targeted walkers and cyclists, Belgium has targeted watersports, and Holland has targeted other themed interests.

The following case study details the Pas de Calais 'Opale Women's Week' from the Greet Interreg project that proved to be an internationally successful cross-border demographic campaign.

The Opportunity - Research shows that 64% of women from nearby markets choose the holiday or weekend destination and 45% independently choose holiday accommodation for couples.

The Campaign - Pas de Calais targeted women in France, Kent and Belgium with the three main objectives of strengthening the Côte d'Opale image, promoting the region's tourism assets and reinforcing its reputation as a short and medium stay destination.

The Results - The campaign commenced with the flagship "Opale Women's Week," seven days of special offers and promotions specifically for women. Working with business, tourism, government and cross-border partners, achievements included more than 120 special offers, dozens of press releases, six interviews on television and regional radio and more than 4000 followers on Facebook.

Testament to the benefits of cross-border working, the campaign was a great success and won the highly coveted National Women in Tourism Award for the most original advertising campaign. It is exactly this kind of innovative action that can invigorate tourism in the 2 Seas Region and develop a strong 2 Seas nearby market.

CHAPTER 2.3 Geocaching. Can new technology engage nearby visitors?

The Opportunity - As new and more IT literate markets develop, it is vital that tourism businesses understand not only existing communication technologies and their users, but also future trends in communication technology so they can grow their business and reach nearby visitors.

The Tool - In CAST Interreg Project Geocaching was developed as a tool not only to attract nearby visitors but also to encourage them to explore more of the region.

Geocaching is an exciting outdoor treasure hunt for the whole family. A Geocache or 'cache' is a small waterproof container hidden outdoors. Geocachers seek out these hidden treasures armed with only a GPS, some clues and coordinates downloaded from:
www.opencaching.com or
www.geocaching.com.

The Project - Partners worked together in the CAST project to develop a series of new caches along the coasts of Kent, Pas de Calais and Westtoer showcasing the best coastal locations with prizes for early finders. The project aimed to raise awareness both of geocaching as an activity and of the partners' areas as coastal geocaching locations.

Four cache locations, based on cultural, wildlife and heritage themes. Three caches are 'traditional' caches in which the coordinates and description are published on geocaching.com. The final cache in each country is a 'mystery cache'; the coordinates for which had to be assembled from each of that country's other three caches.

The Results - The project resulted in more than 340 visits to the Transmanche Treasures during the short campaign period and many more visits since.

Also, this project helped establish a lasting cross-border tourism experience that can be capitalised upon and incorporated into future promotions; and being trilingual it also incentivised participants to travel to each partner's area to pursue this increasingly popular hobby. It is certainly an area of technology use that 2 Seas partners can develop in future joint working.



Oast houses are a distinctive local feature of the Kent countryside.

CHAPTER 2.4

Why can our special landscapes appeal to nearby visitors?

The Opportunity - The 2 Seas Region is exceptionally rich in natural heritage and offers a very real opportunity to drive local nearby tourism. For many Protected Landscapes, tourism is their most important economic driver, more so than farming and forestry.

The Challenge - It is critical that in order to ensure we conserve and enhance the natural beauty of these landscapes, tourism is developed in a sensitive way to generate local economic benefit while integrating sustainable tourism activity into daily business practice.

A Solution - The 'Our Land' Project funded by DEFRA shows how local tourism can protect the natural heritage that is attracting tourism in the 2 Seas Region.

Our Land aims to make a collective stand against short haul international markets by reminding people, both businesses and visitors, of the distinctive cultural and natural experiences on our doorstep, and that by experiencing them visitors help conserve them.

Our Land is the collaboration between protected landscapes and the private sector, providing a national platform for marketing and for protected landscapes to contribute, share best practice, and come together on responsible tourism issues. At its heart are locally-led development initiatives that help businesses discover and celebrate the distinctiveness of their visitor experience.

The Results - The project has generated in the region of 30,000 bed nights since inception and in excess of 800 booking enquiries directly to businesses per month.

This private/public partnership from Proximity's new partner is a cutting-edge model of nearby tourism promotion that is a real learning opportunity for the 2 Seas Region.



Kent Downs

CHAPTER 2.5

How can cross-border marketing help us reach nearby visitors?

Being the closest point between the UK and mainland Europe, Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais are European gateways. With the 2012 London Olympic Games, significant initiatives such as the Turner Contemporary in Margate, the Louvre in Lens, and a year-long programme of sports and cultural activities, the regions had a major opportunity to jointly raise the profile and cross promote their destinations to nearby markets.

In the Greet the World Interreg project, Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais for the first time delivered joint marketing to target the same proximity markets. By working together we were able to increase awareness of our tourism offer, change perceptions of our destinations and attract more visitors in a cost-effective way – something we could not have achieved on our own. Together we pooled our marketing expertise and learnt from each other.

The first part of the process was to agree the same target markets. Geographically, we saw London, Paris and Brussels as key hubs with a focus on UK, French, Belgium and Dutch markets. We also identified some niche markets: cultural tourists, golfers and visitors to the London 2012 Games. The next step was to agree on communication channels that included exhibitions, press activity, joint brochures, advertising and digital marketing.

Taking this cross-border approach meant that we were able to use the knowledge and contacts of the in-destination marketers to target each other's residents - a major target audience. It also meant that we could package similar products, such as cultural events and festivals, and encourage common interest groups to explore their interests just a hop across the channel. This helped break down some of the perceived barriers to travelling to different countries and made crossing the channel appear more accessible.

There were challenges in communication, understanding, translation and integrating different systems and approaches. However, a key lesson learnt from this campaign is that working together needs

to be carried out intelligently. For instance, partners realised that a joint bilingual brochure would not work for individual target markets in France and the UK. Partners therefore worked together to advise on each other's markets and produced two brochures: one for the UK and one for France. The brochures were a joint production but worked much better than the traditional bilingual brochure.

We learnt that joint marketing only works if it is demand-led and meets the needs of the target markets. The real benefit is that each partner knows their own domestic market and can therefore significantly help other destinations to target these nearby markets more effectively.



Conclusion

These case studies demonstrate the range of different approaches that can be taken to successfully reach nearby markets. Although all different, the element they have in common is a research based approach targeted towards specific markets and their interests. Partners could use this method to target any number of relevant demographics in relation to nearby visitors in the future - from families to grandparents from food lovers to cultural enthusiasts. There are many benefits to be gained from joint cross-border marketing campaigns as this can help strengthen the message and cross promote our destinations. In this way we are encouraging potential visitors to question why they travel further when there is so much on their doorstep to explore.

We have learnt that new technology will play a vital role in the future marketing to nearby visitors. However determining which technology will be useful is really dependent on the needs and resources of the business using them. Location based technology such as Geocaching is useful to those businesses wishing to expand clientele and reward loyalty as well as Tourist Boards wishing to encourage new exploration within their destination. Web applications can greatly enhance a company's web presence and data monitoring, while distribution technology can improve communication between businesses and nearby visitors and facilitate efficient data collection.

As with all new and emerging technologies it is almost impossible to tell which ones will be successful and which ones will disappear within a year. With increasing numbers using the Internet each year and more and more people using new technology as a way of accessing information, it is vital that businesses adapt and embrace the new technology. Consumers are looking for more local recommendations, unique experiences and bespoke activities; businesses will need to be smarter at highlighting online what is special and distinctive about their local offer and become adept at building a two-way digital relationship with nearby visitors to ensure they holiday closer to home.

Why is engaging with residents important to attracting nearby visitors?



A successful sustainable tourism destination needs to consider the principles of: People (social capacity), Planet (ecological capacity) and Profit (economic return).

This chapter will cover a key aspect of the People element by exploring how to engage residents in developing and marketing the 2 Seas Region as a sustainable destination with the use of regional 'Greeters'.

It is important that destination management organisations work with residents to maximise the positive and minimise the negative impacts of tourism. **By working together we can ensure tourism plays a positive role in helping to preserve a sense of place, enhance local residents' quality of life and generate local economic opportunities for jobs and growth.**

This in turn creates a sense of ownership and pride, enabling local people to promote 2 Seas Regions as attractive tourism destinations. Indeed, the Visiting Friends and Relatives nearby market, which is important for the 2 Seas Region, is stimulated by local peoples recommendations.

Visitor satisfaction is greatly affected by the welcome they receive from local people and we are seeing an increasing desire among visitors to meet locals and gain a more authentic experience. A supportive and engaged local community means visitors enjoy an enhanced and unique holiday. By experiencing a deeper relationship with

the destination they are more likely to respect the place when they return in the future and to recommend the area to others.



French and English Greeters

CHAPTER 3.1

Can local residents improve the welcome to our nearby visitors?

Research shows that visitor welcome is an important factor in holiday decisions and is vital if people are to recommend a particular destination. **Destinations need to consider this if they wish to attract more nearby visitors. As well as working with tourism businesses through customer care training the Greet the World Interreg project took an innovative approach of engaging residents in the welcome through the Greeters network.** This case study is useful in exploring the wider possibilities of how to engage the 2 Seas Region local residents in the nearby visitor experience.

Destination partners in the Greet the World Interreg project knew they were an important gateway to the Olympic Games in 2012 and getting the welcome right would be important.

A significant way in which this was achieved was by engaging residents as volunteers and introducing, for the first time, the concept of the Greeter to Europe. Originally started in New York, a Greeter is a local person who is passionate about where they live and keen to share the love of their area with visitors – not as a professional guide but as a newly met friend. By booking a greeter, visitors get a warm welcome and a unique local experience with an opportunity to discover hidden and unusual places off the tourist track.

Starting in Kent, the concept was shared with Nord-Pas de Calais, who developed their own Greeters Network with a current total of 229 greeters recruited for both regions. The scheme was so successful that Westtoer and Kent then developed Coastal and Outdoor Greeters within the CAST Interreg project.

As a new concept it has been challenging to raise visitor awareness of the scheme and keeping volunteers engaged is a constant process. However, linking Greeters across the 2 Seas Region has meant they have been able to support each other and promote each other's regions. Overall the scheme has improved the perception of the 2 Seas Region as a welcoming destination for nearby visitors, enhancing the experience and engaging residents more in tourism.



The Big Day Out, Visit Kent

CHAPTER 3.2

How can we engage residents in the 2 Seas Region with tourism?

Research conducted by the SusTRIP Interreg project showed that the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market is one of the largest tourism markets in the 2 Seas region. VFR generated an average of 51% of all overnight trips to Kent during the period 2006-9 compared to holiday trips that accounted for 31% and business trips 14%. Research also showed that over 31% based their decision of where to visit on personal recommendations from friends and family.

This demonstrates the key role local residents play in tourism and how, if we can get them to be ambassadors for their area, we could increase visitor numbers, spend and satisfaction. It is for this reason that in the Greet the World Interreg Project, Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais developed the Big Day Out which encouraged local people to explore what was available on their doorstep. By offering a number of free tickets to a range of attractions across the area residents discovered new places in their locality. A range of marketing channels were used, including leaflets, digital, press and local partnerships.

In 2012 we organised a transmanche Big Weekend that invited residents from Kent to visit Nord-Pas de Calais and vice versa. This was a great way of demonstrating how close the two regions are and how easy it is to travel between them. Research showed that following this trip 91% of residents would visit the region again and 81% would recommend it to their friends and family, demonstrating its success as a mechanism for encouraging more nearby visitors.

Follow-up research for the Big Weekend shows the event had a significant impact with 81% of participants saying they would visit the attraction again and 92% would recommend the attraction to family and friends.

The campaign also helped local residents appreciate the role of the visitor economy in preserving the area's natural and heritage assets and in enhancing their quality of life.



La Grande Sortie, Nord-Pas de Calais

CHAPTER 3.3

How can we engage young people to be ambassadors for the 2 Seas Region?

Stimulating pride in local residents and bringing people together has always been important for Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais European projects. We share a strong belief that the more people know about each other the more willing they will be to cross the waters and explore.

Research has shown that speaking foreign languages is a barrier and together partners in the Greet the World project identified how important it was to overcome this at an early stage by working with young people. One of the key initiatives involved bringing young people from both sides of the channel together on a challenge to sail from Poole in Dorset to Boulogne-sur-Mer and Dover.

Whilst onboard they were taught to sail and given specific responsibilities in running the ship. The youngsters also worked with French and British artists to prepare an artistic representation for show on arrival in Dover at the end of the seven-day trip as part of the Olympic Torch Relay.

By the end of the experience the young people had increased in confidence, were speaking in each other's languages and had become a strong team. New cross-border relationships were forged and twelve months on many have kept in touch with each other.

We would like to see this further developed with more formal links between young people established through schools and universities. This will lay the foundations for closer links across the 2 Seas Region, will benefit tourism and generate nearby visitors now and in the future.



Dover Torch Relay



Tall Ships Race off Dover

Conclusion

Visitors want an authentic 'meet the local' experience and want to understand what local people appreciate about their area. This chapter demonstrates the different ways in which to achieve this through volunteering, events, and cross border projects.

All partners recognize the importance of the Visiting Friends and Relatives market and the invaluable role local people play in generating nearby visitors. The most powerful marketing message a destination can have is for host communities to say to their friends and family: why travel further when you could come and stay with us?

Through the Proximity Cluster, partners have come to appreciate how important it is to have local people as ambassadors for the area and are keen to explore how this can be developed further. Above all, creating links between local people in the four member states helps develop better understanding of the 2 Seas Region, creates a sense of pride and encourages an appreciation of what is special about where they live. Further cross-border cooperation of this type of activity would be beneficial.

How can we support tourism businesses to attract nearby visitors?



Tourism is predominantly made up of SMEs and, as a consequence, can often be fragmented, with businesses feeling isolated. However research shows that many businesses are facing the same issues regarding access to marketing intelligence, support with funding, guidance on development and help with coordinated marketing.

Many would like training in the use of the current technology and are keen to learn about the latest trends in tourism. They also want to understand how they can reach nearby markets and develop more experiential, high quality offers that meet the demands of today's consumers.

There is therefore a need to develop business networks and to provide business support and training. By working together businesses can often achieve far more and stand out in a globally competitive marketplace. Cross-

border exchange is vital therefore in helping to identify opportunities, share best practice and inspire innovation. It also helps businesses understand what is special about their own location and the unique local experience they can offer visitors.

Through joint promotions and by capitalising on developing the nearby tourism market, the Cluster partners realise that working together benefits their regions and businesses. Partners are not in competition with each other as they recognise that the real

competitor is the long haul and 'European sunshine' destinations and by encouraging businesses to offer more locally distinctive products or services they can work together to make the 2 Seas Region stand out.

CHAPTER 4.1

How can we help tourism businesses capitalise on major events?

Major events attract many visitors and present a real opportunity for businesses to sell their tourism offer to new markets. The London Olympics 2012 attracted over 685,000 visitors and with more than 100,000 coming from nearby Europe, the 2 Seas Region had the perfect opportunity to benefit. However, businesses required help to understand the opportunities available and the specific needs and interests of Olympic visitors and delegations. Kent and Pas de Calais worked with over 1000 businesses to prepare for the Games and ensure there was a lasting legacy beyond the event.

Through the GREET project, the Pas de Calais department worked with Kent partners to help tourism businesses get the most out of the Olympic Games.

Three years prior to the Games we gave businesses information about: the Games, the opportunities for the region, and the specific needs of sport delegations and visitors. For instance, hotels and restaurants would need to provide different mealtimes, special diets, and access to extra facilities such as saunas. We created a special sports activities guide for the Pas de Calais area and worked out which attractions would appeal to which nationalities.

To link all these activities together the partner created a business network with a transfrontier logo "Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais welcome the world". More than 700 businesses used this to provide a branded welcome to foreign sport federations and visitors.

This campaign ensured that businesses were ready for the Games and understood the needs of the specific markets. Working with UK and French businesses was mutually helpful and the lessons learnt meant that all concerned were better able to capitalise on two other major events: the opening of the Louvre at Lens in December 2012 and the Great War commemorations of 2014. The training and support delivered for the Games are still useful tools for businesses today, helping them welcome international visitors; creating a legacy for the 2 Seas Region.



CHAPTER 4.2

Why does quality matter to nearby visitors?

Perception research, conducted by the SusTRIP project, showed that the 2 Seas Region has a challenge regarding how potential visitors perceive it in relation to value for money and quality visitor experience. In a competitive marketplace visitor expectations are higher than ever before regarding product quality and customer care. Destination management organisations and tourist boards need to work with tourism businesses to ensure that expectation is met and one key way of achieving this is through quality labels and schemes which guarantee the visitor a certain standard.

In CAST project, Westtoer developed the project "De Vlaamse kust: een zee van kwaliteit" (The Flemish Coast: a sea full of quality) to support tourism businesses to raise the quality of their service. In 2008, Guidea carried out research on what consumers find important in services delivered at the Belgian coast and based on these results, a quality program was developed for tourism businesses.

As soon as businesses finish the training they complete a dossier, receive a 'secret visit' and if positively assessed earn a Q-label (a unique quality label). The first Q-labels were issued in 2010. Currently 150 organisations have obtained the Q-label in four categories: lodging, attractions, tourist offices/events and restaurants. The Q-label is issued for a period of three years. After

that, 'follow-up training' is required for businesses to obtain an extension of their Q-label. In this way, organisations are encouraged to invest in quality on a continual basis. Westtoer annually recruits about 40 participants to Q-label training.

Due to the success of the scheme, it was decided to extend the Q-label from the coast to the entire Province of West-Vlaanderen, with the aim of helping to raise awareness of the label amongst visitors and encourage more businesses to participate.



CHAPTER 4.3

What research is needed to support tourism businesses?

A key objective of the SusTRIP project was to support businesses by providing up-to-date market intelligence and research. This included the development and piloting of a range of tools from barometers to impact models.

The SusTRIP barometers and dashboards provided tourism professionals and businesses with data, monthly or annually, to allow them to monitor their own performance and also enable them to position themselves in relation to the market. However, partners often faced problems with collection and reliability of data. Challenges included: getting businesses to input data and supply information; collecting data quickly as well as processing and communicating it effectively; having robust and usable data at the level of sub-regional territories; and having data comparable to other territories of the 2 Seas area.

The barometers, as well as the event impact model and the museum impact model, developed in SusTRIP showed how important yet challenging it was to involve businesses in research. However the output of these tools gave tourism providers invaluable data to enable them be more effective in their marketing to nearby visitors.

Proximity partners have identified that it is important to continue to develop the following support in order to remain competitive: the establishment of an online system to gather live and consistent information from professionals as well as customers; the use of latest technology to monitor visitor volume and flow, namely mobile phone data; and the development of new models for impact analysis on specific nearby markets, such as those related to second homes, camping or the Visiting Friends and Relatives.

CHAPTER 4.4

How can we help support tourism businesses to market their local distinctiveness more effectively?

The 2 Seas Region has strong locally distinctive offers that would encourage nearby tourists to travel more within the region. However, businesses need the expertise to promote this new trend in tourism. Responsibletravel.com explains how it supported businesses in protected landscapes to promote their locally distinctive offer through the Our Land project.

An important element of businesses being part of the Our Land project is writing a promise in which they describe how they sustain their environment, support their community and share their knowledge of the local landscape. Every answer they give is carefully checked by Our Land's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Park Unit and if it is felt that the experience doesn't guarantee visitors an interaction with the landscapes' food, buildings, history, people or wildlife, Our Land's local consultants work alongside the businesses to help them develop landscape initiatives so they can complete the Promise and offer a locally distinctive experience.

Training and development events are also offered, covering a range of topics from how to take better photos and videos to market their business, and creating wildlife walks to

discover how unique the local landscape is, through to copywriting for a website, and celebrating and promoting local produce. In addition, Our Land developed an online training and business resource - Landscape Awareness Tool - enabling all participating businesses to complete an interactive quiz, tailored specifically to their local environment. The online quiz tests their knowledge of local sustainable tourism issues, including wildlife and habitat, local community and landscape.

Proximity partners are keen to learn from this approach in order to encourage more businesses to celebrate their local distinctiveness and provide visitors with tangible reasons for holidaying closer to home.



'Our Land' website

Conclusion

Business support is crucial to developing nearby tourism; we need businesses to be telling visitors why they don't need to travel further. Therefore, partners are keen to strengthen business awareness of local distinctiveness as well the importance of product quality, market intelligence and innovation to achieve this.

Businesses are often local experts but do not realise that tourists are increasingly interested in the 'local story', be it history, landscape or even interesting anecdotes attached to the businesses themselves. The partners, together with both businesses and public sector partners, now face the challenge of translating these local identities into tourism development. Without doubt, if we are going to encourage visitors to holiday closer to home – in the 2 Seas Region – the focus for future partner initiatives must be investment and innovation in local experiences, trends, history and the local story.



Proximity Cluster Business Conference, Kent

CHAPTER 5

What did we learn from the Cluster Conferences?

As part of the Proximity Cluster the 2 Seas Interreg project funded two conferences - one for businesses in Kent on 3rd April and one for Greeters in Calais on 16th June.

At the events the research and best practice delivered by the four Interreg projects – SusTRIP, CAST, Greet the World and Balance and the experience of new partners Responsible Travel - were shared.

The aim was to help tourism businesses and volunteers understand who the nearby visitors are and what they are looking for, how, as professionals, they need to develop their services and products and what marketing is needed to attract nearby visitors. The events also encouraged an understanding of what is special about the 2 Seas Region, its landscape and people and the importance of local distinctiveness in attracting nearby markets.

Crucial to the event was to engage businesses and greeters in discussions about how in the future we could work cross-border to target more nearby visitors and encourage them to stay longer and spend more.

There was also strong recognition of the importance of cross-border co-operation in developing tourism in the 2 Seas Region.

Both the tourism business and volunteer sector saw the nearby markets as offering potential for growth in the 2 Seas Region. The challenges for both were resources and the knowledge to target this market, affirming that research and sharing knowledge in the future continues to be a priority. Businesses would like support in understanding this market and felt workshops, training and conferences are a good way to achieve this while greeters were particularly keen on more coordinated marketing, cross-border promotion and network exchanges.

A strong message coming out of both conferences was the importance of local passion and local knowledge in attracting nearby visitors and that this should be at the heart of developing tourism services and products for this market in the future.



Proximity Cluster Greeter's Conference, Calais



Proximity Cluster Business Conference

CHAPTER 6

What are the next steps?

The European Commission Strategy for Blue Growth recognises tourism as one of the five focus areas for delivering sustainable growth and jobs in the future. The aim of the Proximity Cluster is to contribute to this growth by improving the competitiveness of tourism providers in the 2 Seas Region by helping them attract more nearby visitors.

By encouraging 2 Seas residents to holiday closer to home we will keep visitor spend and monetary benefit within the region thus enabling sustainable growth and more resource efficiency, paving the way to a circular economy. It will encourage short haul travel and help reduce air miles, lowering visitor carbon footprint in the long term. Beyond economical and environmental benefits it will help strengthen social cohesion by involving local communities and developing deeper interest, concern and passion for the 2 Seas area.

This publication demonstrates the breadth and depth of the subject of nearby tourism, the insights gained from previous Interreg projects and the many areas to consider in the future for the 2 Seas Region if we are going to be successful in encouraging more nearby visitors to holiday closer to home. It is

important we continue to invest in research to understand the changing needs and motivations of visitors; we need to develop new technologies to improve communication and visitor satisfaction; and we need to increase the skills level of the sector and look at ways of extending the season. There is no doubt that we must not be complacent if we are going to maximise the jobs and growth this sector can provide for the region.

The Cluster has helped tourism providers understand the opportunity presented by nearby visitors, who they are and how to attract them to our region. And we have learnt that nearby tourists are looking for more authentic and unique experiences and that in order to be competitive we need to develop a more locally distinctive tourism offer for our 2 Seas area. The challenge is for destinations and tourism providers to innovate their product and services to achieve this.

The recent European Commission consultation on the "Challenges and Opportunities for Maritime and Coastal Tourism in the EU" identified that innovation challenges in the tourism sector hinder Europe's competitiveness, product development and diversification. A fragmented and uncoordinated industry, dominated by SME's and a lack of skilled professionals in the sector, necessitates the need for proactive intervention. It is hoped that tourism partners working together in the 2 Seas Region in this Cluster, and beyond, will contribute to finding solutions to these challenges.

Cross border working will be key. By the public, private and academic sector working together to deliver co-ordinated knowledge transfer we can stimulate and support sustainable innovation in the sector. The sharing of cross border best practice and expertise will help

raise the professionalism and competitiveness of the industry in a way that could not be done if we worked on our own.

Tourism like all our industries needs to modernise, to change its outlook and grow to meet the current and future needs of society, making full use of new technologies and new skills. And it needs to utilise nature and culture, as our unique selling point, to help expose and promote the value of local distinctiveness for delivering stronger growth and to support more sustainable communities. Most specifically it recognises the need to link tourism with more responsible travel and to encourage visitors to holiday closer to home.

The world's efforts to move towards a lower carbon economy need to gain momentum. The Brundtland Commission in 1987 right through to Rio 20 makes clear that more progress is needed in dealing with the sustainability of economic growth, resource efficiency, environmental protection and social equality. These aims are echoed in the priorities and objectives of the draft Interreg 2 Sea's Cross-Border Cooperation Project 2014 – 2020. This new project is ambitious in its aspirations and lays down the challenge of finding economic opportunity in greener and more innovative growth.

The famous American philosopher, designer and entrepreneur Buckminster Fuller was driven by the philosophy of "more for less" and coined the immortal words: "the only way to predict the future is to invent it". The Proximity Cluster looks to build on this philosophy and seeks to invent a new resource-efficient future for tourism.

For further information on the 2 Seas Project,
please visit our website:

www.interreg4a-2mers.eu

INTERREG IV A 2 Mers Seas Zeeën

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The Interreg 2 Seas Project is an EU funding project which promotes crossborder cooperation between partners from France, England, Belgium (Flanders) and The Netherlands. It aims to develop the competitiveness and the sustainable growth potential of maritime and non-maritime issues through the establishment and development of cross border partnerships.