

## An Investigation into the impact of tourism on Betws-y-Coed

Having compiled my knowledge and research into this piece of coursework, I hope to have addressed the following questions regarding Betws-y-Coed:

How has tourism impacted on the economy?

What visitor management is currently in place?

What are the drawbacks to tourism?

In my work, I hope to discover what exactly are the positive and negative aspects of tourism in the honeypot Betws-y-Coed by relating to Snowdonia National Park. It is important to contemplate the features the region has to offer, and why they are so appealing. I also have to take into account the transport routes to the town, and how these might affect the number of visitors from each region.

Betws-y-Coed is one of the smaller towns in the Snowdonia National Park, North Wales, with a population of approximately 615 people. Located on the upper end of the Conway valley where the Afon Llugwy joins the Afon Conway, the village is cut in half by the important A5 road which is one of the transcontinental routes from Ireland to the European mainland. The development of the A5 means that Betws-y-Coed is simply accessed from the Midlands and Southern England, examples being Birmingham and Stoke-On-Trent. The town today attracts tourists to the area throughout the year with the greatest number of people visiting in the summer months. The number visiting has increased with the completion of the new A55 Expressway, which reduced the travelling time from Liverpool to Betws-y-Coed to less than one hour, thus meaning an increase in day visitors who are looking for a tranquil break from their bustling urban lives. The A55 Expressway road along North Wales means fast and easy access from the main UK motorway network, with much of North West England, for example, being little over an hour away.

The areas in and around Snowdonia National Parks are naturally

picturesque, and visitors can enjoy tranquil walks, admiring anything from glaciated scenery to lush green valleys. (see below) The idyllic surroundings present a change from an arduous urban lifestyle, and this is one of the many reasons people flock from cities such as Manchester and Liverpool. The excess visitors boost the economy, as they purchase souvenirs and make use of the surplus accommodation. Hotels and B&B's contribute to a rise in employment, which again enhances the economy. However, mass tourists present a problem for Betws-y-Coed, including litter and traffic congestion, and it will be intriguing to discover how the honeypot manages these issues. I intend to investigate these factors in detail, and successfully answer the questions stated at the beginning.

[IMAGE][IMAGE]

Both photographs illustrate "Crib Goch" at different times of the day, the one on the right at dawn and the picture on the left at sunset. Visitors can admire the stunning scenery, taking photos, while the more adventurous groups can participate in activities such as climbing, mountain biking, cycling and even hand gliding. To support such activities, towns such as Betws-y-Coed offer the opportunities to rent bikes. Money brought in from recreational activities and equipment for these has a positive impact on the economy. The danger is that too many walkers can erode footpaths, as they remove large pieces of mud from the surface, thus causing harm to the scenery. Water sports such as canoeing can be pursued in calm lakes (see picture below), while experiencing the natural beauty. Other interests than can be pursued around Snowdonia are bird-watching, painting, and golfing on the specially designed courses.

[IMAGE]

Tourists can experience the unique traditions surrounding Betws-y-Coed, as the sense of community is very strong and Snowdonia's appeal springs from its unique heritage, culture and language, which touches on everyday life, giving this area a truly distinctive character. Linking in with my basic questions, we need to look at how this exclusive culture is sustained, and how tourists are "managed".

How has tourism impacted on the economy? This question is investigating how exactly the presence of tourists has impacted on the local economy of Betws-y-Coed. We will be looking at the buildings in the honeypot, and what services and pleasures they offer to visitors. For example, a busy souvenir shops tells us that tourism has had a positive impact on the economy, as we assume that many people will be purchasing the items on offer. We also have to consider that numerous shops would bring employment to the area, another positive impact on the economy.

What visitor management is currently in place? This question is investigating how Betws-y-Coed copes with excess tourists, and whether the managing system is effective. We need to look at the car parks in place, and how successful they are at preventing road congestion. In my particular initiative, I will be asking visitors whether they feel the village is dealing with the problems that tourists inevitably bring. We need to pay attention to litter bins, yellow lines, and other methods of visitor management.

What are the drawbacks to tourism? This question is investigating the exact problems that tourists bring to the area. To answer this, we will conduct litter, noise, traffic, pedestrian and car park surveys. If we discover excess litter at a particular site on the High Street for example, we can conclude that litter is a major drawback to tourism. This question links closely with the previous one, as we can investigate how the honeypot combats difficult issues.

Methods Table for Coursework

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Data Collected

Purpose of Data

How was the data collected?

Evaluation

Building

Survey

So we can identify shops in relation to tourist needs and demands, and discover what impact tourists have on the economy.

We followed the main streets of Betws-y-Coed, identifying each building on a sketched road. To do this, we employed a key, which categorised different types of buildings including tourist accommodation and tourist food.

Despite our relatively straight forward key, on many occasions we had to make a subjective choice when deciding which category a building fitted under. Frequently, we discovered a shop that sold both souvenirs and clothes for outdoor activities, and it was up to the individual to come to a conclusion. This presented problems, as it became a matter of opinion, and adaptation of the key. Another problem was that many of the buildings were presumably marked down as residential. There was a limitation to our method, as we had little idea as to whether these buildings were inhabited permanently or were rented out to tourists.

Litter

Survey

To assess whether Betws-y-Coed is successful at managing litter that visitors inevitably bring, and to investigate whether such waste is a serious drawback to tourism. We can also discover if there is any correlation between the number of people recorded in the pedestrian survey and the severity of the litter.

An individual was sent to a particular site in Betws-y-Coed, and marked out an approximate five metre radius. A scale of -3 to +3 was employed to measure the severity of the litter, with -3 being a

serious problem and +3 being very clean. Three categories were used: presence of large litter, presence of plastics, and general impression of amount of litter present. The numbers given to each section were totalled to give an overall reflection of litter in the close vicinity.

This survey ultimately revolved around the opinion of the individual, despite there being three categories to consider. This meant that we did not have a constant interpretation to work with, meaning slightly unreliable results. The five metre radius could also have been inaccurate, and one could have missed pieces of litter. The time we conducted the survey was relatively early in the day, and a road sweeper could easily have removed rubbish only a few hours ago. This would mean an unfair representation of the entire day. Finally, litter that was recorded could have blown from another site into the radius, presenting an inaccurate interpretation.

#### Pedestrian Survey at a particular time

To investigate how popular the site is, and why x number of people walk round this location. We can relate our results to our building survey, and see whether popular shops influence the number of people in a particular location.

One person was sent to an allocated site, and with the use of an "imaginary line", counted the number of pedestrians that passed in a 30 second time period.

Despite the short, 30 second time period, it is still possible that pedestrians were counted twice if they passed two sites. Due to Betws-y-Coed's small nature this problem was unavoidable. There is also an issue that applies to the traffic, litter, car park and noise survey, which we need to consider. By visiting only once, we are only investigating one peak holiday time, and gathering simply one set of data. Although we have to assume that the data collected for the pedestrian survey represented reality on a busy bank holiday, to get more accurate data we would have to visit in the summer months.

## Traffic Survey

To determine the number of vehicles that pass, so we can decide if people are going further in to explore Snowdonia National Park, or are returning elsewhere. Also, we can assess the issue of congestion, and identify any correlation between time and number of vehicles.

Couples were sent to a fixed site on the High Street at various times and again employed an "imaginary line". One person counted the number of cars travelling west into Snowdonia National Park, and the other recorded the cars travelling east away from the park.

This method had only one major problem, and that was the assumption that vehicles were heading in or out of Snowdonia National Park. We have to accept that vehicles could have passed through the honeypot on their way to a different part along the coastline. Vehicles heading away from Snowdonia National Park could be returning shortly, and vehicles heading deeper into the park could have been on a longer route out of the region. Also, the survey is not actually telling us how many people use Betws-y-Coed, simply the interest.

## Car Park Survey

To view the managing traffic system in place, and the importance of the car park. We needed to assess whether the car parks provided an adequate solution for excess traffic, and whether they had the capacity to deal with a busy bank holiday.

At a particular time, after a couple had done the traffic survey, they made their way to the two main car parks off the High Street. The total number of spaces were recorded, and then the amount taken by vehicles, so we could obtain a percentage of spaces filled.

Again, this survey was based on assumption. We do not know that people parking actually intend to use the services and shop in Betws-y-Coed, we can only safely conclude that they have an interest. Another problem is that as we were counting the vehicles, some were just leaving or arriving, meaning we had to use our own judgement on

whether to include them.

### Noise Survey

To investigate the potential problem of too much traffic, and to come to a conclusion as to whether noise is a significant drawback of tourism.

Two selected people held a noise detection device at various sites, and recorded the given reading.

Despite using a highly advanced piece of equipment, the survey did not give a fair reflection of the entire day. We were at various sites at different times, and thus not accounting for the natural rise in sound level as the day progressed.

### Questionnaire

To see how the visitors attracted to Bewts-y-Coed relate to the building survey and services offered by the honeypot. Also, we can distinguish how successful the village is at attracting visitors from various parts of Britain.

We addressed random people in various sites around Betws-y-Coed and asked them several questions, recording answers in specific boxes.

This survey was based on opinion, meaning evaluation is not really possible. The only dilemmas that arose were when pedestrians gave ambiguous answers, for perhaps what they had bought, and the individual was left to make a subjective choice.

### Data collected

### Purpose of Data

How was it collected?

### Evaluation

Initiative-questions to visitors concerning Betws-y-Coed

To determine visitor opinion on the drawbacks of tourism in Betws-y-Coed, and also how successful the honeypot is at controlling tourism.

I asked five visitors the following two questions, "What problems do you feel tourism brings to the area?" and, "Is Betws-y-Coed successful at managing excess visitors?" I listened to their opinions, and noted them down.

Again, since my entire initiative was based on visitor opinion, then there were no significant problems with my method. The purpose was to record opinions, and link them with my key questions of the drawbacks of tourism, and the visitor management in place. However, I have to remember that visitors who have come several times to the honeypot will no doubt provide different answers than new comers, as they have experienced the village many times.