

Geography essay – December 2003

The aim of this essay is to examine the way in which human activities **may** lead to conflict with reference to a located stretch of coastline. I have highlighted the above to show that the conflicts I will describe have not necessarily happened but are in a position to do so. I will give a brief description of my chosen area then attempt to answer the essay question by splitting the essay into sections and where necessary, giving examples.

I have chosen to examine the Dorset coastline. This is on the south coast of England and extends from Lyme Regis eastward to Hengistbury head. This stretch encompasses many popular holiday resorts and major ports such as Weymouth, Poole, Swanage, Lyme Regis and most notably, Bournemouth. I will concentrate mainly on these locations as well as a few others because these places will be the best examples of the points I'm making seeing as they are the most influential settlements in the Dorset coast area. Map (i) below shows my chosen area.

To answer the essay question I will divide my essay into the following human activity categories:

- Tourism conflict – how the tourists create conflict and what can it lead to?
- Environmental conflict - how do tourists use the environment and how will this create conflict?
- Management conflicts – how is conflict created when humans try to manage the above conflicts?



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Tourism conflicts

Tourism is Dorset's forerunning industry, providing 38,000 jobs and bringing in a total annual income of £830 million. In this industry the coast is arguably the county's principal attraction bringing in 3.5 million staying visitors a year and 13 million day visitors. This includes overnight visitors, business trips, educational visits, local residents and other specific groups in other areas such as sport, geology, history, literary and wildlife. There are varying levels of conflict caused by tourists as a result of human activities. This level will vary depending on the size and location of the settlement. One way of looking at this is to look at the Doxey scale, this measures the level of irritation caused by tourists.

1. Euphoria – Enthusiasm for tourists development. Mutual feeling of satisfaction. Opportunities for local participation. Flows of money and interesting contacts
2. Apathy – Industry expands. Tourists taken for granted. More interest in profit making. Personal contact becomes more formal
3. Irritation – industry nearing saturation point. Expansion of facilities required. Encroachment into local way of life
4. Antagonism – Irritation becomes more overt. The tourist is seen as a bringer of all that is bad. Mutual politeness gives way to antagonism
5. Final level – environment has changed irreversibly. The resource has changed and the type of tourist has changed. If destination is large enough to cope with mass tourism it will continue to thrive

The level found at the area of coast I am studying will usually range from 2 in smaller towns and villages to possibly 4 or 5 in the case of Bournemouth itself. Tourism in this area is predominantly seasonal from July to August usually. At this time of the year, tourists will be numerous and more conflict will appear. There are several ways in which human activities can cause conflict as far as tourism goes. The most obvious one is traffic disruption. The Southern and Western Tourist Board data shows that during off peak and on peak times nearly 80% of traveling is done by car. During the peak season there will be a huge increase in the number of cars present and this will block roads, pollute the air and cause annoyance to locals. Already we have a possible, and existing conflict between locals and tourists. This will be evident especially along the narrow roads that are typical of the south coast and in the larger towns such as Charmouth. Bournemouth is further along the Doxey scale than most other settlements in the area and so is more developed, it is also a major city...this means that it is developed with tourism in mind so traffic is not so much of a problem in Bournemouth's easily accessible centre. Being a tourist area, the Dorset coast will have a thriving nightlife, especially in the larger locations, a large number of tourists will spend their evenings in pubs and bars. As is the case in many tourist locations, over drinking is common in the evening and late night, This will lead to drunkenness and through many tourists unfortunate lack of respect for the places they visit, violence, theft, damage, threatening behavior and littering. This will leave them at odds with the police and conflict probably will ensue also with locals who don't approve of the disturbance. Another conflict may rise through the fact that when the peak season comes, hotels and other lodgings will increase prices as will popular attractions – e.g the BIC swimming pool. This will cause frustration for locals who can't afford to visit these places or who can't get in due to the sheer numbers of tourists. The aspect of tourists ties in with my second talking point. That is how tourists use the environment and for what purpose. There are many different types of recreation available

along the Dorset coast which tourists or locals can partake in. There level of popularity varies as does there damage to the environment, it is the latter point that friction is likely to be caused over. All activities that people do in this area have some effect on the landscape and at least a few will clash with each other. Conflict may arise between locals and tourists, tourists and tourists or between either of those two and planners. For the example I will use the activities available along the whole coastline to provide a larger picture of the problem.

Walking – Erosion

Swimming/beach recreation – congestion and noise

Climbing – conflicts with nesting birds and damage to vegetation and cliff structure

Cycling – Nuisance to walkers and damages coastal paths

Jet skiing – disturbs wildlife, safety concerns

Power boating – Noise and safety issues

Sailing – safety issues and sewage/pollution

Angling - affects inshore fish population and discarded tackle is a safety issue

Sub aqua diving – impacts wildlife and marine archaeology

Water skiing - noise and safety issues

Wind surfing – erodes shingle vegetation, noise and litter

	Walkers	Swimmers	Climbers	Cyclers	Jet ski	Power boat	Sailors	Anglers	Divers	Water ski	Wind surf.
Walkers		0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Swimmers	0		0	0	2	2	1	1	0	2	1
Climbers	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cyclers	1	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jet skiers	0	2	0	0		2	1	2	2	0	1
Power boaters	0	2	0	0	2		2	1	2	1	1
Sailors	0	1	0	0	1	2		1	1	1	0
Anglers	0	1	0	0	2	1	1		1	1	1
Divers	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	1		2	1
Water skiers	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	2		2
Wind surfers	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	

Above is a conflicts matrix. It shows the severity of conflicts between people doing different activities. It is on a scale of 0-2, 2 being a severe conflict. This is where my second point from page 1 becomes obvious. With all the different types of tourist doing different activities, friction is going to appear between those who partake in activities which are incompatible. The worst conflicts will occur between activities that can't be done together for safety reasons. In this example this is nearly all at sea. For example: swimmers may clash with jet skiers because it is too dangerous for jet ski's around people swimming. As swimming is vital for economy it is more likely to take precedence and prevent people from jet skiing, which is likely to cause anger. This is true of swimming and most activities involving motorised boats i.e jet skiing, power

boating and water skiing. So conflicts will arise between tourists this way. Another likelihood along this coast is that conservationists will conflict with people who do activities they consider to be damaging to the environment. Due to the amount of erosion caused by most land based activities, certain people will want to protect the coast or wildlife in the area. For example: A botanist may disagree with climbing because of the damage it does to the cliff vegetation. On the other hand a wildlife expert may disapprove of climbing because of the threat it poses to nesting birds. Some people may think that the huge amount of people walking around the coast are eroding the paths and damaging the environment but the walkers may clash with the bikers who cause nuisance. It is a very complex situation and it is very hard to satisfy all parties involved. It is likely however that the things that are most important to the economy are retained, such as walking and swimming and the other activities will take a back seat.

My last bullet point was about the conflicts created whilst people are trying to solve the existing ones. No doubt people will try and sort out the conflicts that are already affecting the area. In doing this they will spark off other problems between people who have different views on how to solve the problems. This is apparent when looking at a topic that humans do not directly cause but still have conflicting ideas about...that is what to do about the problem of erosion. The choices made about this are not made by the locals or tourists but by planners and conservationists. They evaluate the problems, work out possible solutions and their consequences. The problem is that there are often more solutions than needed and people having differing views, take sides or argue. A good example of this could be a planner wanting to protect cliffs by installing rip rap but another arguing that a sea wall would be more suited to the area. Another possible example could be of a cliff edge with several houses about 20m from the edge. Planners could want to leave the cliff to collapse and lose the houses so they could try to protect a different piece of coast...the people who own the houses however would be against this, their houses would be all they have and without them they would have nowhere to live. So conflicts develop when people are trying to decide what to do with the coast. These conflicts are usually neutralised in council meetings or SMP's when all options have been considered.

In conclusion I would say that none of the conflicts that arise are simple to resolve and usually lead to more friction. Nobody is ever happy as it is impossible to please everybody. As far as tourism is concerned the answer is to find the balance between sustaining the economy of the location but not letting development becoming too advanced so that tourists flood in and more arguments occur. The Dorset coast is always going to be strongly involved in tourism so there will inevitably be conflicts that develop as tourism advances and there will be opposing views but this is important in gaining experience into tackling these problems and conflicts in the future. As for the physical conflicts to do with coast protection decisions, the problem here is more immediate. Erosion will not wait for the coast to develop it will just go ahead and take it's course, therefore decisions need to be made faster and with more thought to the future. This is a challenge with so many different views involved and is one that will continue to pose itself as the coast and its residents decide what to do.

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