

Round table on the future of social tourism in the UK

Summary report

*London Marriot Hotel, County Hall
19 April 2016*

Based on shorthand notes of W B Gurney & Sons LLP



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Host

- Family Holiday Association

Chair

- Paul Maynard – MP for Blackpool North and Cleveleys

Attendees

- Lesley Allan - Corporate Reputation Adviser - TUI Group
- Malcolm Bell - Chief Executive - Visit Cornwall
- Elizabeth Buchanan - Regional Director (West of Scotland) - VisitScotland
- Ross Calladine - Head of Business Support – VisitEngland
- Helen Carvell - Policy and Communications Manager - British Holiday & Home Parks Association
- Felicity Clarkson - Trustee - Family Holiday Association
- Fiona Cook - Tourism Team Leader - Scottish Government
- John De Vial - Head of Financial Protection - ABTA
- Steve Double - MP for St Austell and Newquay - House of Commons
- Joe Graham - Business Assurance Director - Great Western Railway
- Sharon Hodgson - MP for Washington and Sunderland West - House of Commons (Shadow Children's Minister)
- Kurt Janson - Director - Tourism Alliance
- Ruth Kemplen - Sales Manager Partnerships - Bourne Leisure
- John Kinnear - Programme Manager - Family Holiday Association
- Joelle Leader - Trustee - Family Holiday Association
- Craig Leviton - Managing Partner - Oakhill Communications
- Peter Long - Supervisory Board, TUI Group - President, Family Holiday Association
- Joe Lynch - Director Marketing - YHA (England & Wales)
- Sandra Matthews-Marsh MBE - Chief Executive - Visit Kent
- Prof Scott McCabe - Professor - University of Nottingham
- John McDonald - Director - Family Holiday Association
- Lee McDonald - International Partnerships Manager - VisitScotland
- Lucy Peaks - Chief Executive - Grandparents Plus
- Tom Pilgrim - Account Director - Oakhill Communications
- Alison Rice - Chair of Trustees - Family Holiday Association
- Marianne Schapmans - Director, Tourism Participation Centre - Tourism Flanders
- Rebecca Veitch - Head of Evaluation and Policy - Home-Start UK
- Karen White - Principal - Delce Academy, Rochester
- Don Williamson - Chief Executive - Shared Care Scotland
- Corri Wilson - MP for Ayr, Carrick & Cumnock - House of Commons

Running Order

- 9 am – *Arrivals*
- **9.30 – JOHN MCDONALD – DIRECTOR, THE FAMILY HOLIDAY ASSOCIATION – Welcoming remarks**
- **9.35 – THE CHAIR, PAUL MAYNARD MP – Introductory comments**
- **9.40 – Session 1: Why is social tourism important?**
Presentation from KAREN WHITE – PRINCIPAL, DELCE ACADEMY, ROCHESTER and LUCY PEAKE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, GRANDPARENTS PLUS
- **10.05 – Session 2: What is being done in other countries?**
Presentation from MARIANNE SCHAPMANS – DIRECTOR, TOURISM PARTICIPATION CENTRE, FLANDERS
- 10.30 – Short break
- **10.45 – Session 3 Part 1 – What is being done in England?**
Presentation from SANDRA MATTHEWS-MARSH – CHIEF EXECUTIVE, VISIT KENT
- **11 – Session 3 Part 2 – What is being done in Scotland?**
Presentation from LEE MCRONALD, INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER VISITSCOTLAND
- **11.15 – Session 4 – What do policymakers think?**
Panel discussion with STEVE DOUBLE MP (CON), CORRI WILSON MP (SNP) AND SHARON HODGSON MP (LAB), led by the CHAIR.
- **11.50 – Session 5 – What contribution can businesses make?**
PETER LONG, TUI GROUP – Contributing remarks
- 11.40 – Short break
- **12.15 pm – Session 6 – Open discussion**
Summary discussion led by the CHAIR. Exploration of ideas on how to advance social tourism agenda.
- 12.35 – JOHN MCDONALD – *Concluding remarks and thanks*
- 12.40 – *Meeting ended*

Introductions

John McDonald – Director, Family Holiday Association

- For the past 40 years the charity has been helping provide short holidays for families around the UK.
- In this past year it has helped nearly 4,000 families.
- The Family Holiday Association is just one of a wealth of organisations in this country working in the field of social tourism, improving access to breaks for those who cannot normally afford them, for a multitude of reasons.
- For many years the Family Holiday Association has acted as a champion of social tourism, supporting research, working with partners and trying to explain both the social and economic value of social tourism.
- It helped with the APPG's Social Tourism report that was put together back in 2011 under the auspices of the Chairman, Paul Maynard.
- We believe it is time to do a further push on social tourism. This morning we will hear from a number of different groups who since 2011 have come on board and done some amazing work.
- I would like to thank and pay tribute to Paul Maynard, the MP for Blackpool North & Cleveleys, who has been a champion of social tourism in Parliament and a great supporter of our work.



Paul Maynard – MP for Blackpool North and Cleveleys

- I have been an MP since 2010. One of the most stressful periods of being an MP is those first few weeks when you do not know what you are doing or why you are there.
- You come in in the morning and you have a stack of mail literally this high in green pouches and you have to go through it yourself and work it out.
- In came the Family Holiday Association. Seaside tourism is clearly important so maybe I ought to meet with them.
- I rapidly realised that this was not about filling empty bed spaces in the off-shoulder season; it was about something much more than that.
- That is why I agreed to do the All-Party Parliamentary Group inquiry session which led to the report.
- What struck me as an ordinary constituency MP was not just the number of families who benefit from what the Family Holiday Association do, but the sheer scale of social tourism in this country.
- I think Professor McCabe came up with around 800 different organisations somewhere in some way, shape or form which provide some form of social tourism. I started writing a list of those in my own constituency and I got to about 15 without really trying very hard. Very few people realise the scale of what goes on, especially policy-makers.
- The most important comment I have heard as an MP, is the insight that there are people in my constituency who probably are not able to organise a day out for their children.



- As someone who represents a particularly deprived part of the North West, it really does bring it home to me this is not about filling bed spaces but about life chances. It is about equipping both families and children with the wherewithal to engage in the world around them.
- To me that was a fundamental insight that social tourism is not just about filling hotel rooms, it is what that rationing of spare capacity could do to allow people to benefit.
- We went to see the tourism department for Flanders. What they have been able to do with a very small outlay of financial expense, is draw all the social tourism activity in their area together, with an IT system and computer system to make it functional and accessible.
- On the train coming back from Brussels, I said, “You just need to get people in a room talking to each other to make it happen”.
- That is what I want today to be about: to look at where we have got to, what has been achieved so far; what the success stories are and universalise the best and extend best practice, because if it can work in one part of the country it can certainly work in another.

Session 1: Why is social tourism important?

Presentation from Karen White – Principal, Delce Academy, Rochester

The school experience

- I am the chief executive of a multi-academy trust now. We are a growing trust and we do a lot of work and we are expanding our passion for education across Kent and Sussex.
- We have had a long association with the Family Holiday Association and over the years we have really developed the relationship.
- So why do we believe in the Family Holiday Association? It creates opportunities for our families.
- We have had a range of opportunities, from day trips, through to holidays, through to a wonderful trip to Lapland.



Supporting families

- We have changed what we have done over the years, so we have done holidays but we also do a lot of work on day trips, because we found that people were not prepared and could not cope with going away.
- We had to work with them on working out how they were going to get somewhere. They had to come in and work with us and our family liaison workers, to work out how they were going to get from Medway to the coast, how much it was going to cost, what was the best way to get there, what were they going to do, how they were going to manage their budget, what they were going to take with them.
- I had one single dad with lots of child protection issues to do with mum. He took his family on a week's holiday and when he arrived he had three suitcases with him. He took saucepans, frying pans and tinned food because he did not know what was going to be there when he went.
- That was the first time he had ever been on holiday and he had never been to a self-catering type of accommodation before.
- It allows us opportunities to work collaboratively in a really positive way with our most challenging families and it helps us create a really trusting bond, that here we are offering them something.
- We were working very collaboratively with them and when they came back - and we had to have some quite hard conversations about some things - it helped overcome barriers that the children and parents had about education and life.

Barriers to learning

- Barriers to learning are family life and their history. It is about parents not liking education or not being successful in education themselves so they are not there positively encouraging their children to be part of school life.
- Housing can be an issue. Lots of these families live in very poor housing. Very often there is illness because people do not eat well or look after themselves particularly well so are more likely to be ill. There will be trauma in a family.

- Parenting is an issue as well. People are often challenged by being parents and they struggle with boundaries at times. Often their children will have inclusion issues, so they could be somewhere on the spectrum, and emotional attachment disorder is very common for these children.
- The adventures we have been on so far: Lapland, Colchester Zoo, Brighton, Flanders, Clacton, Camber Sands, Combe Haven, the hop farm, Hever Castle, Chatham Dockyard, Allhallows, Knole Park and Chartwell. That is over a period of five years. A lot of children have had opportunities to access where we have been so far.

Organisational challenges

- How do we justify absence from school? When children go off on this holiday, we set them a project. They have to do a scrapbook, they have to go on what we would consider an educational visit, and they have to work on it as a family. As a result of that, I say that the child has been educated off-site.
- As much as the Government is absolutely right to say that every child should be accessing education as much possible, if a child is physically but not mentally in the building because they are too busy worrying about what is going on at home: is their little brother safe; is their mother going to turn up; is dad drunk tonight; are the police going to kick the door in in the morning, then they are in school but they are not necessarily accessing education.
- We need to ensure that children feel safe, that their well-being is solid and their relationships are good within the school.

Proof of success

- I can prove progress for our most vulnerable children. I can show evidence of where parents have engaged much more effectively with the school and we have been able to take children off the child protection register, and that families have become more structured and resilient and more able to cope with their issues in life, saving the state money.
- A key thing for the children is positive memories. When you have a very challenging child in school, you need to be able to talk to them about something positive and to be able to create a set of memories that you can recall.
- It creates opportunities to really develop trust with them and it creates opportunities for emotional resilience as well. It helps to create personal well-being and head space for children to learn and grow in. You cannot learn if you are not in the right place.

Looking ahead

- It also helps children to be confident learners. It is experiences that develop aspiration. I am really proud of my children now talking about being architects, engineers and nurses. It is about the whole child.
- We need to stop talking about holidays, because that comes with a whole set of baggage for people, and start talking about how can this organisation can support pupil well-being.
- We want children who are brilliant learners, who are prepared to take risks and who want to contribution to our society in the future. There a real opportunity now to be able to shift the agenda in with well-being and to stop talking about it being free holidays.

Presentation from Lucy Peake – Chief Executive, Grandparents Plus



Working with the Family Holiday Association

- Grandparents Plus is working with some of the most vulnerable families in the country, particularly grandparents who are raising their grandchildren when something terrible has happened in the family.
- We have worked with Family Holiday Association for a long time now and universally the feedback from the families is positive.

Kinship care

- Kinship carers are those relatives who are bringing up children when their own parents are unable to. Usually this is because something has happened in the family: mum might be in prison, there might have been a parental death, mental health issues, and domestic violence.
- That means those children in kinship care are very similar to children in the care system but very few are looked after so they do not get the financial and practical support they do in the care system.
- The numbers of children in kinship care are rising. We think there are 150,000 (or 1 in 74) children in England at the moment. More than half of those children are being brought up by their grandparents.
- More than three-quarters of children in kinship care are being brought up in deprived households. There are pockets where there is more kinship care. In places such as Blackpool, there is a high prevalence of kinship care. We are working in the north-east of England and South Wales.
- What we find is that half of kinship carers stop working. They think that is the right thing to do because of the needs of children; they need to be around for them. Most kinship carers are older working-age women so when they step out of the labour market that causes particular issues for them. One-third of them are lone carers and many of them are on welfare benefits.

Grandparents Plus support

- We have an advice service which is really a gateway into many of the other supports we can offer. We have a support network. We have 7,000 kinship carers involved in that and we have projects, particularly in the North East of England, where we are working in family homes with carers, and thinking of their needs.
- What we find is often they are stressed and they are struggling and they need support. We help them with a range of support - financially, emotional, practical advice.
- These people are so stressed and so close to giving up, they need some time out of the situation they are in. That is when we start to talk to them about a break.
- It shocks me always that the cut-off for these breaks is you must not have had a break as a family for four years, as a minimum. When that is established, then our workers will start to think about where it is appropriate for these people to go. We liaise with the Family Holiday Association and work really closely with Haven as well.
- It involves lots of phone calls with that family to make sure they are ready to go. If they have any questions, they can come to us so they feel supported on their journey towards their break. There were 61 of them last year alone.

Benefits of a break

- Being a kinship carer is really challenging. A lot of the children have been abused and neglected and they have issues that need to be addressed.
- Many kinship carers are suffering themselves. They might have mental health issues or disabilities. Often they are older people and suddenly they are looking after children. It is just exhausting.
- What that break means for them is they can step out of that stressful situation at home as a family and start to rebuild themselves. It is positive memories. It is recharging your battery time and then you can draw on that in the future.
- For the children, it is about new experiences and positive memories. So many of these children have not been to the beach or they have not been to the countryside. They do not really go far out of where they live, their own locality.

Cases studies

- Sally is a grandparent who has been raising her granddaughter, Molly. Molly's mum suddenly appeared back on the scene and started to say to Molly, "You can come and live with me". Molly was really stable with her grandmother and this caused her lots of emotional stress. Sally phoned our helpline our advice workers thought they needed to get out of their home town and be away from the situation with mum. Molly was pulling out her hair, eyelashes and eyebrows. She had never been on holiday before. The family played on the beach, they collected shells, they climbed on sand dunes and they had a really lovely time.
- Kate was a nurse. She took in her granddaughters and because of that she had to give up working as she could not juggle her nursing and looking after them. That created financial pressures and then relationship issues with her husband. They went away and I think what is really interesting about this case study is the planning of the holiday itself was quite an enjoyable experience, so the children and Kate were working together on this plan of what they would eat. The family came together, but also the grandparents' relationship was stronger.
- Mary is raising two granddaughters who are six and seven. She lives with her two teenage sons and an adult son and daughter. There are seven of them in a three-bedroomed property. Mary and her family have just been on holiday and what she told us was how lovely it was for the children to have their own beds and to see the children hanging their clothes up in a wardrobe, having their own space to put their clothes. These are experiences which in that family are not happening. Mary describes the family being rejuvenated mentally and spiritually and feeling refreshed. It is about getting away from it all, having fun, and coming back with those amazing memories that then enable you to keep going.

Session 2: What is being done in other countries?

Presentation from Marianne Schapmans – Director, Tourism Participation Centre, Flanders

*Two short films were shown



The Holiday Participation Centre in Flanders

- Belgium is regionally organised and there is no Visit Belgium in existence, so tourism policy is organised by Visit Flanders. We have a strong tradition in social tourism.
- For years the focus was on accessibility, so there was a lot of infrastructure investment to make our destinations more accessible. We invested a lot in youth infrastructure so youth movements and youth associations can go to holiday camps. In every local village there is the possibility for a youth holiday.
- Our focus over the last ten years was on poverty. We try to make holidays possible for all people who do not have the financial means. We do this in a holiday participation centre with a shared effort system.
- We do not have big funds or a lot of money to make the holidays free, so we believe if all the tourism partners do a little bit, we can offer a holiday for 150,000 people a year in Flanders.
- We strongly believe there is an impact on the person who goes on holiday but also for wider society.

Developing for the future

- One and a half years ago we thought it was time for reflection and to look closely at what is going on and to see the effects on us as a partnership and how we can make sure that we can still realise holidays for people who need them.
- We still believe that holidays matter, but the changing environment and context made us bring everyone together, all stakeholders in the room. We organised task forces, round tables, focus groups, and co-operative sessions. We decided to look at what is going well and how can we make the good things stronger.
- We came up with a new ambition. Social tourism now has the ambition of eliminating all barriers in the holiday participation process. Collaboration between all partners who work in this social network is very important.
- We had a long discussion on whether Ryanair, for instance, could be a partner in social tourism because they had lowered their prices and made flights accessible. Is this social tourism? We decided no.
- We believe that in all the partnerships the initial start has to be a social responsibility point of view and corporate social responsibility, and we did not find that in Ryanair's policies.
- We want to make the evolution from a single sector to a multi-player network so other companies and public transport can also be partners in social tourism. We want it to move from supply-driven to demand-led.
- It does not work if you can go to very nice accommodation for a very cheap price but you cannot get there because the transport does not exist or is too expensive.

- We have done it for 15 years now and we want to make a shift now to providing guidance and promotion. We have to move to a new legislative framework. There is a lot of work to do.
- As planners are in the middle of this network and a connecting platform and when it comes together we are trying to make it stronger so then it can work in network.

Delivery

- Today we have more than 600 partnerships and we work in combination with more than 1,500 local social organisations. We connect the core business of every partner together.
- The reductions go from 30% to 75% or 80% depending on how big the tourism partner is.
- There is a variety of social member organisations targeting under-privileged target groups, so refugees, elderly people, single mums, and all people who will benefit from a break.
- There are different kinds of holidays: day trips, group accommodation, trips for individuals or families or couples. They are holidays completely organised by member organisations.
- In 2015 we reached 143,000 people who went on a day trip or a holiday.
- What is very important for our partners is us being available. We have an office, staff, a website visitor platform and stories are shared in social media. As we are the intermediary platform, we connect the dots. Every year we organise a very big event, a holiday participation forum, to bring everyone together in a room

Benefits for tourism industry

- Why does the tourism industry want to be in this network? There is the social approach and there is also the economic side of course, especially now that Flanders has been hit very hard.
- Hotels are empty and now it's better, especially for Brussels, to provide social rates for a target group that normally does not participate, instead of lowering the price for people who will come back again in a few months. It is a possibility to reach a target group that normally will not participate without this social rate.
- The Vlerik Business School did some research and found that corporate social responsibility is moving up everywhere in all kinds of industries. We notice that the longer we work together with our partners, the more involved they get, and because they really notice that their efforts make a difference in people's lives.

Session 3 Part 1 – What is being done in England?

Presentation from Sandra Matthews-Marsh – Chief Executive, Visit Kent

*A short film was shown



Developing the Big Weekend

- In 2012, during the Olympic Games, Visit Kent identified a massive opportunity around Kent for its 1.8 million residents to support the organisation.
- Visit Kent does not have a large budget or intervention from any public sector authority. It is a destination management organisation with a very entrepreneurial spirit and commercial view.
- It created a five-year strategy (now stretched to ten) leading up to 2012 to empower Kent residents to become much more powerful word spreaders.
- The Big Weekend was all about encouraging local people to enjoy and explore their very own doorstep.
- In that decade since 2006 Kent residents feel much more engaged in the visiting friends and relatives market. 65% of all our staying visits in the county.
- The centrepiece of the campaign was a big ticket give away. In the early stages, we only had about 500 tickets to give away. In its tenth anniversary we had 26,000 tickets, and 125,000 ballot entries for those tickets.
- About 200 small and large tourist enterprises across the county that have got on board.
- Visit Hertfordshire have set up a new destination management organisation. This year Visit Kent ran their first Big Weekend of 2,000 tickets and 50 participating places.

Working with the Family Holiday Association

- I did not really like the badge “social tourism” but I love the idea of it being about well-being and making people’s lives better. That is how Visit Kent positioned it within its business community.
- We decided to embed our Family Holiday Association partnership into the Big Weekend. It was important for us because we did not want a separate social tourism strand. We wanted our families to participate amongst other families enjoying that weekend.
- We went out to all the businesses and they responded incredibly positively. The role of the destination management organisation - acting as the glue.

Analysing the benefits

- We have been on a huge learning curve on this. We did not really understand that people did not know how to go on a day out.
- Our plan is to continue to embed this in our mainstream campaigning.
- The economic benefits are huge. We surveyed all the families and lots of them spend secondarily.

Next steps

- The ambition is that through the destination management organisation network, we create a digital bridge that connects the generosity of the businesses to the need. We want to unlock further private sector engagement, not only to understand the market better but make it easy for them to donate tickets
- It is not just about social responsibility aims; it is about the economic opportunities too, to get to new audiences. We want to share our learning on a wider platform.
- We have tried to inspire lots of other destinations to get on board, but we have hit lots of barriers because to roll out the Kent project on an individual basis is very expensive. Creating a national platform is too hard at the minute.
- We have made a bid to the Discover England fund. We want to put the visiting friends and relatives market into the international inbound theme of that fund.
- We want to make a bid to the fund for the first year of the fund which will support the roll-out of the Big Weekend for those destinations that want to get involved as a pilot, so two or three.
- Then we will look to having embedded in that campaign a big slug of tickets that we can distribute through the Family Holiday Association and other agencies.
- The pilot will then lead to a big bid, which we hope will generate more resources and then enable us to create additional platforms, similar to the one that we had in Flanders.
- That would enable not just a focus on the Big Weekend but to create year-round opportunity for drawing those down. It gives flexibility to the referring agencies and it gives the businesses a really easy way to donate.

Session 3 Part 2 – What is being done in Scotland?

Presentation from Lee McDonald, International Partnerships Manager VisitScotland

Social tourism in Scotland

- We are still at very early steps with what we are doing on social tourism.
- The reason we are exploring social tourism is through being inspired by Visit Kent and the Big Day Out.
- In 2009, there were 250,000 Scottish families who wanted to but were unable to take holidays. In the current economic climate these figures might have not improved.
- As a national tourism organisation we also have a remit to help develop tourism, what is the opportunity for the 250,000 families to enjoy the benefit of a break in Scotland?
- What are the secondary benefits this could have for local tourism economies, or seasonality for local businesses, for employment of staff and staff retention and staff motivation? We are very keen to explore what is possible on this front.



Developing strategies and learning

- The two pillars of the Government's economic strategy are competitiveness and tackling inequality.
- All our tourism strategies are aligned with the Government's economic strategy. We have a very strong partnership with government colleagues and social tourism and our commitment to exploring its potential is now within our corporate plan.
- VisitScotland has a memorandum of understanding with Visit Flanders in which we engage in best practice exchange

Spirit of Scotland campaign

- In February 2016, we launched our new global marketing campaign called the "Spirit of Scotland".
- As part of that campaign there are seven spirits, one of which is generosity.
- We thought we would let VisitScotland, which has a reach of 6,000 to 7,000 tourism businesses, go out there and ask them to demonstrate that generosity.
- In partnership with the Family Holiday Association, we have secured 93 two-night breaks for families of four in the summer.
- It is not just accommodation. They have got dinner and rail and bus companies make sure there is transport to get there.

Regional pilots

- In autumn 2016, again with the Family Holiday Association, we have regional pilots in Glasgow. 100 families will enjoy day trips.
- It is very similar to the Kent Big Weekend. Families from Glasgow city centre enjoying days out in Glasgow and the local and neighbouring communities.

- Why Glasgow? 33% of children in Glasgow live in relative poverty. Glasgow council is a member of Holidays Matter.
- We are quite keen to link the pilot in with the 2014 Commonwealth Games legacy.
- Objectives include:
 - Testing a regional model for social tourism to see if it is possible that that could be rolled out across Scotland.
 - Evaluate the benefits to the families who are going to be enjoying them.
 - Develop ambassadors on the ground.

Next steps

- VisitScotland is considering how to take its activities beyond two pilots and make something that is sustainable and embed it – to develop it across the industry, develop a regional case study and evaluate the attitudes of our industry partners for ongoing involvement and advocacy.
- We want to demonstrate the need and potential for social tourism for Scotland and develop the economic and social case.
- We would like to develop strategic partners who can help us facilitate and enable change.
- It is not VisitScotland delivering social tourism. It is not extra funding for us to do this. It is very much about how do we work in partnership to energise and enable the industry and other partners?

Session 4 – What do policymakers think?

Panel discussion with Steve Double MP (Con), Corri Wilson MP (SNP) And Sharon Hodgson MP (Lab), led by the Chair.

Question: What is your personal perspective on why you think social tourism matters and is worth while pursuing?

Corri Wilson MP:

- I have personal experience of social tourism, although I did not realise that is what it was at the time.
- I used to work for a charity organisation that dealt with families who were in danger of losing their tenancies.
- A lot of them had very complex needs and twice a year we got access to caravan holidays through the Family Holiday Association.
- The difference that holiday made for these families was just incredible.
- I totally support this concept of holidays for people who need them. I have seen first-hand the difference it makes to their lives.



Sharon Hodgson MP:

- I became an MP because I wanted to do something about social justice and making life fairer.
- I thought I knew poverty However, you come to realise that your poverty is not somebody else's poverty.
- One of my earliest visits to a school in my constituency was in an area called Old Fold.
- The head said, "You know Sharon, these kids never get across their doors on holiday... They never get off the estate". It was like a bolt of lightning.
- I thought, "Oh my goodness, this is 2005".



Steve Double MP:

- I was from a working-class background but we lived outdoors and I grew up on the beach.
- I got involved in helping a little lad who grew up in a single-parent family. I remember at ten years old taking him to the beach. He just sat there and did not know what to do. He had never actually gone to the beach.
- I am passionate about getting family policy and the place of family really at the heart of government.
- If we can get some joined-up thinking across government to really value and support families having holidays. The huge benefits that brings in terms of life experiences, health and mental well-being I think in terms of value for money the payback would be huge.
- I have been campaigning on term-time holiday restriction because it is so counter-productive.
- I was involved in setting up a charity called Cornwall Lone Parent Support which focuses on supporting lone parents. They used to take 40 single-parent families away on holiday during September every year. They now cannot do that because the schools will not release the children to go during term time.



Question: What do you think government support should look like? How should that be shaped, given the context we are in now?

Steve Double MP:

- The answer often is not more government, the answer does not lie with the state; the answer lies in families and communities.

- We have the family test. Let's get some real teeth behind that and say we need to actively support families.
- For me it is asking the right question. When the answer is the family; let us make that the answer and support that as being the answer.

Sharon Hodgson MP:

- I think we need to support social capital.
- Sometimes facilities are there on people's doorsteps that are totally free, but if they have not got the social capital to understand or use all of those things.
- There is a cycle here of maybe people who have not got those happy memories, who were not perhaps parented as well as they could.
- You cannot state-intervene to encourage people to do use local attractions or parks. Charities and organisations can do some of that, but it is working with those families.
- Some days do involve money. I think what you are trying to achieve does need some sort of charitable or perhaps government support to enable that to happen.

Corri Wilson MP:

- From a Scottish Government point of view we are trying to take the holistic approach.
- From the announcement of a baby box for every baby born, which has come from the Finnish model, through to free childcare places, through to the Curriculum for Excellence.
- We are going away from exam-based stuff. Your learning could be out of the classroom and studying subjects that are of interest to you.
- I think social tourism fits into that holistic approach as well. It is about levelling the playing field. Everybody has the same kinds of opportunities and the same start.

Question: why have successive governments in the UK have not shown any willingness to be involved in social tourism in the past?

Sharon Hodgson MP:

- It is not really understanding the scale of the issue. As someone from what I call a poor background, I did not understand the scale of it.
- I think that is what is so important about the research. One in three families do not have a week's holiday and a million children do not even have a day out.
- When you are presented as politicians or as local authorities with those facts, you cannot just assume everyone has some sort of recreational holiday or days out.
- Perhaps there is an element of feeling that the welfare state is about supporting people when they need that help and ensuring people are housed and fed, but is it about giving people a holiday?
- A lot of people, taxpayers, will have various opinions on that and about what taxpayers' money should be spent on.
- It is a balance and it is very difficult for governments sometimes, even when they recognise there is an issue, to decide how you do that.

Corri Wilson MP:

- I think a lot of it is lack of understanding of the scale of it.
- Different governments prioritise different things but tourism itself is never really seen, I do not think, as a huge priority, never mind social tourism.
- I do not think governments see the bigger picture about what part they play in that.
- I think it is our job to make sure it goes further up that priority list.

Lucy Peake:

- Volunteering is important to the Life Chances agenda.
- Grandparents plus uses trained volunteers, who are peer supporters, who go into families and work with them on all kinds of issues.
- It is not a government intervention that requires lots and lots of money.
- The voluntary sector can support people to get a break or at least a trip out.

The Chair:

- When the impetus needs to come from the DCMS but the benefits accrue to DWP and DfE, you are immediately falling down the crevice in Whitehall.
- That is far harder to overcome in a country like England, social tourism is part of our culture in the way it has been in other countries in Europe that have seen it evolve over decades.
- The values are there, but the third sector structure has not grown in a cohesive way over the decades.
- I think Scotland has more potential and is the right size and scope to show us the way.
- What might start to make a difference is to broaden the narrative. To me it is about social justice and the secondary benefits are for tourism.
- I think pushing that with more Ministers has to be the way forward, but it is overcoming Whitehall first.

Steve Double MP:

- You have tourism sitting in DCMS but we are talking about benefits that are much wider than that, and it is for the Education Department and DWP.
- I think changing the language would help so that it is not focused on tourism but it is this concept of every family deserves a break and the incredible benefits that brings
- If we can get that on the Government's radar then maybe we can start to move the agenda on.
- The Life Chances agenda is the place it can sit.

Question: What contribution can businesses make?

Sandra Matthews-Marsh:

- I agree with broadening the narrative, but we must also remember that we are trying to galvanise the tourism sector to be generous.
- We need two narratives: one for Whitehall, which is all about family in terms of the social well-being benefits in all this and we also need to keep that narrative with the tourism sector as well.
- I would make a plea to start with days out. 'Holiday' has a certain connotation. A day out is a really simple concept.

Steve Double MP:

- When you get tourist attractions to give a day out, families then think, "That was great, maybe we will save a bit of money so we can take our kids out for another day".
- It is almost like investing for the benefits that come, because people then start to think the benefit of taking the kids out for the day is so start to save to enable them to do that.

Sharon Hodgson MP:

- I chair an All-Party Group for School Food and we set up the Holiday Hunger Task Group. You will have to factor that element in.
- Families in the six-week summer holiday, are really struggling. Families need at least an extra £30 a week.
- We have a position paper about the need to have structured activities, because we recognise as well that it is not just about feeding kids; it is giving them something to do.
- Schools are some of the best facilities we have, with playgrounds and halls, and if they are shut during the six-week holiday we are not using them.

The Chair:

- The demand for food banks doubles during the summer holidays. I do not think people realise that. The spike in usage is incredible.

Corri Wilson MP:

- In Scotland, we have a hugely successful Doors Open Day. The first Sunday in September there is free entry to buildings. I think that will have the result of people seeing what is in the area and think, "Maybe we could do something on our own".

Session 5 – What contribution can businesses make?

Contributing remarks from Peter Long, TUI Group

Shaping the social tourism narrative

- For me this whole theme around the importance of the family as a unit is the key to it all.
- I think the statistics are very stark, five million children, which is three million families, cannot afford a week's holiday.
- 2.8 million children, just under two million families, cannot have a day out. This is the size of the challenge, if we ever wanted to achieve that objective.
- We have built a narrative around holidays enabling stronger, healthier and happier families, which results in a healthier, happier society.
- I do not like the phrase "social tourism" because it demeans what we are trying to achieve. There is a much broader narrative to say that every family should have a break and, if they have a break, it is good for them.
- People point out that using the term "social tourism" seems as if you want to give free holidays to people. If we start with a day out, we have started tackling this problem.
- There is a feeling that we are just giving things to people who do not deserve it. We do not believe that because the referral process is very selective in terms of making sure that these are hardship cases.

Scaling up activities

- It is not for us to go cap-in-hand to government asking for vast sums of money, but hopefully we could get access to some money.
- If we want to bring together the referral agencies and the providers of experiences, we need a technology platform and we need to be able to scale it – the opportunity to create one platform.
- Social tourism has been embraced in Scotland but we are banging our heads against a brick wall here in England, we need to make more of a noise.
- We have the referral agencies to enable us to offer those holidays, particularly with the DMO structure and the Family Holiday Association, to be able to scale this up quite significantly.
- When we get that right, we can think about how we raise more funding. TUI has been investing in the Family Holiday Association now for the last nearly 30 years. We probably need to broaden that.
- We have this hugely decentralised structure of charities and we cannot change that overnight, that is our heritage. However, I think there are huge amounts of enthusiasm to work with.
- If we can get the help and start delivering this message more forcefully, then I think this would help us make that step change.
- We need to be thinking about working with all our friends so that we go in as one voice. We cannot just go as one charity. We need to all go together and get the collective narrative right.

Conclusions and next steps

The morning's round table concluded with an open discussion on what collective steps could be taken to push forward the social tourism agenda.

All parties were in agreement that progress could only be made through the united efforts of all interested stakeholders – charities, welfare agencies, destinations and the tourism industry.

Some key issues and actions were raised:

- *Developing a technology platform*

This was conceived along the same principles of the tourism participation centre at Visit Flanders. It would provide an easy to use platform where professionals working with families can access offers uploaded by tourism and attraction businesses. The challenges facing this proposition relate to reach and resource – whether a national platform could be created and how much funding this would need.

Action: Research to be undertaken into the cost and potential of developing a UK social tourism platform to unite and facilitate the work of all stakeholders.

- *Creating a unifying narrative*

It was noted that various stakeholders were promoting different aspects or benefits of the social tourism concept. Contributors agreed that a single narrative was needed to unite all parties behind clear messages to take to policy-makers. These could be supported by complementary messaging and information. Of the political issues discussed, the importance of family welfare, children's life chances and strengthening social justice, were identified as important narrative themes. Such a narrative also needs to be shaped with the interests of tourism businesses in mind, and must be appealing to their commercial considerations.

Action: Work to begin on shaping a new narrative and messages to promote social tourism with key policymakers.

- *Accessing funding*

Whilst it was agreed that social tourism champions were not seeking considerable sums of money, it was acknowledged that some seed funding would be needed to kick-start more pilot scheme and technology platform initiatives. Visit Kent outlined to the round table its efforts to apply for funding from the Discover England Fund. Whilst this process is ongoing it was agreed that other sources of support may need to be explored. The resources of university research departments were cited as potential sources of support.

Action: Support Visit Kent's Discover England Fund whilst exploring other funding sources, such as university research departments and government funding schemes.

- *Communicating with government*

Despite the wide-ranging support for social tourism initiatives and evidence of its benefits, it was acknowledged that more progress needed to be made in getting the concept on the radar of the Government in Westminster. It was noted that complications arose from social tourism activities and benefits coming under the remit of a range of departments – Education, Culture, Media and Sport and Work and Pensions. Contributors agreed that a compelling social and economic case needed to be presented to ministers along with a strong narrative and messaging. The inter-ministerial group for tourism and the Cabinet Committee on social justice were identified as important gatherings of ministers to approach.

Action: Initial steps to be taken to contact the Department for Work and Pensions Secretary of State to explore his potential interest in social tourism.

