



TOOLKIT FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES OPERATING IN A UNESCO BIOSPHERE RESERVE

**THE
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COAST**

Brighton & Lewes Downs
UNESCO World Biosphere Region

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Introduction

The purpose of this toolkit

This toolkit was developed to provide useful tools and advice for tourism businesses located in UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. This one has been adapted for The Living Coast (Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere Reserve). It will help you understand what a Biosphere Reserve is, its concepts and values, and how you can do business in a way that supports these and benefits your business.

If you're an established tourism business, or you want to set up a new tourism-based business, this toolkit will help you identify how to make the most of your region's cultural and natural heritage without causing harm.



EUROPEAN UNION
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How and why the toolkit was developed

This toolkit was developed as part of the EU BioCultural Heritage Tourism (BCHT) Project which received funding from the ERDF, within the framework of the INTERREG V France Manche England programme. The project ran from 2018 to 2021.

The key collaborators in the project were four Biosphere Reserves in France and England. The BCHT Project aimed to encourage tourism companies to better understand the impact and opportunities of operating within a designated Biosphere Reserve, and to support such businesses in developing products and services that correspond to the biospheres' values.

About UNESCO Biosphere Reserves

A Biosphere Reserve is a special designation awarded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to an area that is recognised for its unique mix of biodiversity, culture and heritage, valued environment and sustainable way of life of the people who live and work there.

There are currently just over 700 Biosphere Reserves in 124 countries, including 21 cross-border sites. There are 14 in France and 7 in the UK.



Why they exist

The ultimate aim of Biosphere Reserves is to research and promote systems and solutions that help us learn how best to balance biodiversity and sustainable development – to balance and encourage the relationship between people and nature.

Biocultural heritage tourism is one such means. It encompasses celebrating and safeguarding our natural and cultural heritage while encouraging responsible tourism that connects people to nature.

We hope this toolkit will help you do that in your business, whether you provide accommodation, experiences or activities to visitors.

The Biosphere Reserves behind this toolkit

An important role of Biosphere Reserves is to support research and share learning that supports best practice. This guide grew from the shared experiences and research of four Biosphere Reserves in how best to encourage and support sustainable biocultural heritage tourism:

- Brighton & Lewes Down Biosphere Reserve - also called “The Living Coast”
- North Devon Biosphere Reserve
- La Réserve de biosphère du marais Audomarois
- La Réserve de biosphère des îles et de la mer d'Iroise

There are details of The Living Coast below, and you can learn more about the other Biosphere Reserves on their websites.

About The Living Coast Biosphere

The Living Coast is the name of the Brighton & Lewes Downs UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, which was designated in 2014. The Living Coast stretches between Newhaven and Shoreham-by-Sea in Sussex. From the grassy South Downs down to the chalk-and-shingle coast and city streets, it embraces everyone and everything that lives within this area and makes life here possible.

The Living Coast is the UK's only urban biosphere. Our unique natural environment is home to more than a third of a million people and provides our water, local food, open space for recreation, health, wellbeing and natural inspiration.

We share our biosphere with a wealth of wildlife, notably the species that live and grow in the rich chalk grassland habitats of the South Downs and amongst the intertidal and offshore chalk reef. These include rare species like the beautiful Adonis Blue butterfly and the Short-snouted Seahorse.

Our natural assets, combined with a strong cultural heritage, have helped to create a thriving visitor economy that forms a significant part of our local economy. If these assets are not protected appropriately, we run the risk of losing them for future generations to enjoy.

Our aim and objectives

The Living Coast aims to be a thriving environment for all. A place where people can connect with nature and live well together, enjoying, celebrating and reinvigorating the natural wonders of our shared home.

Our objectives are:

- Conserving and enhancing nature
- Supporting sustainable human development
- Promoting environmental awareness, knowledge, learning and engagement

If you run a tourism business in The Living Coast, we invite you to support our objectives and be a part of creating an environment that we can all enjoy now and in the future. We hope this toolkit will give you ideas and practical advice on how to make the most of the natural and cultural assets that make The Living Coast such a distinctive place to live and visit.



PART 1: Making the most of your biosphere's assets

A UNESCO Biosphere Reserve is designated as such because of its distinctive combination of biodiversity, cultural heritage and human activity. As a tourism business, there is plenty to draw on to develop products and services that appeal to a wide range of audiences who seek and appreciate natural and cultural experiences.

In this section, you'll find some ideas as to how you could evolve, launch or add value to a business by taking advantage of your biosphere's natural and cultural riches in a sustainable way.

Why local distinctiveness matters to visitors

Local distinctiveness is what makes one place different from another. It's the composite of a place's assets: the landmarks and sights, the landscape, wildlife, built heritage, traditions, food, festivals, myths and language.

Visitors increasingly want the 'local' experience. They want to really experience places, meet 'real' people, do as well as see and not just be tourists. They want to understand and appreciate the essential character of a place, learn something and, importantly, have something distinctive to share with others when they return home.

Using it to inspire and create new products or services for visitors

It's important to many of today's visitors to feel that they are truly immersed in a place or activity, and their experience consists of a combination of factors: the place, the products and services offered, the people they meet, and the stories they are told. One of the best ways to develop unique and memorable experiences is to use or reference the distinctive assets of your area in your activity.

These distinct assets could be:

- Historic sites, buildings, attractions and places of interest
- Events and festivals
- Local history, tradition, culture and legends
- Local wildlife and natural heritage
- Local products and producers
- Local or independent retailers
- Local food and drink

It goes without saying you should work with what is within your local area and focus on what you can effectively use as part of your business. What's important is to view local 'assets' from a visitor's perspective: what may seem every-day and mundane to you, but which could be the trigger for them to visit, stay longer or return.

By knowing the customers you're targeting, you can offer the right product to the right customer and at the right time. Developing a new service or product represents a significant investment of time, effort and investment, so it makes sense to evaluate each new idea before launching it.

Before you go ahead with an idea, ask yourself these questions:

Does my idea reflect an important aspect of my local area?

If it doesn't, could the idea be amended so that it does?

Will the activity or service significantly impact the asset?

If yes, then don't pursue this idea. In keeping with the values of biospheres you want to make sure your activity is sustainable and positive for local people and place.

Does it complement your existing business?

If not, remember you will have to work harder to help customers associate it with you.

Do you know if your current customers will see it as valuable?

If you don't, you may need to target a new audience or develop taster/pilots first.

Do you currently have the resources to put into developing it?

If no, then tread carefully and consider working with others or piloting it first.

Can you sustain it once implemented?

If not, consider if it's worthwhile and make sure you manage customer expectations.

Have you got the necessary channels and expertise to promote it?

If this is a new area, factor in time, cost and a dedicated plan to raise awareness of it.

Can you easily track how effective or useful it will be?

Knowing the impact it has is vital in future planning.

Below are a few areas that are often locally distinct and ideas of how you could bring aspects of them into your business.

Local flora and fauna

Wildlife can be a big draw for visitors, particularly with the interest generated by television programmes and the wider awareness of conservation. However, viewing wildlife generally requires specific guidance on where to look and how to recognise what you're looking at. It is also one of the most fragile elements of any landscape and requires careful handling and education of the visitor audience.

Getting started

As always, do your research to discover what is special about the plant and wildlife in your local area. It always pays to get in touch with experts in the field before starting. A good place to begin is The Living Coast website: <https://thelivingcoast.org.uk/nature-and-wildlife>

You could also speak to:

- [National Park teams](#)
- [Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#) (AONBs)
- [The Wildlife Trusts](#)
- [The RSPB](#) (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds)

Ideas to consider:

- Provide guided walks, safaris or wildlife experiences (Create experiences for different seasons and different times of day for greater impact e.g. spring wildflower walks or bat walks.)
- Provide identification guides on site for your guests
- Create dedicated on-site observation areas or build habitats to attract certain species
- Provide relevant conservation or education information for visitors
- Incorporate wildlife spotter updates into your marketing or newsletters
- Train yourself or your staff to be experts in the local wildlife
- Provide signposting to local experts providing flora and fauna experiences (e.g. guided walks, photography courses or talks)
- Set up or join a 'Visitor Giving' scheme to support local causes or on-site wildlife projects
- Sponsor or get involved with local wildlife causes.

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Local heritage

Understanding, learning and interacting with the past and seeing how it influences the culture and practices of the present is a core part of any local identity. Although it forms a key part of almost every experience a visitor has in your area, heritage is varied and can encompass many different things, depending on your location. Anything from historic sites and buildings to local traditions, festivals, crafts and economic activities.

Getting started

Do bear in mind that heritage may be fragile and could be impacted by excessive interest from visitors. If in doubt, get advice from an expert before embarking on any idea. A good place to begin is The Living Coast website: <https://thelivingcoast.org.uk/heritage-and-culture>

You could also speak to:

- [English Heritage](#)
- Your Local Authority planning, conservation or environment teams

Ideas to consider:

- Provide information/interpretation on heritage features within the local area
- Organise guided walks, talks and heritage-focused experiences on specific themes or topics
- Offer opportunities to learn or try traditional crafts, techniques or activities
- Arrange traditional or historical meals
- Facilitate volunteer opportunities for conservation or preservation activities
- Showcase local talent through organised events (poetry, dance, song, plays, etc.)
- Sell gifts, products, cookery books or how-to guides that reflect or tie-in with local heritage
- Provide advice and information for local genealogical research
- Document and collect local information and stories on particular subjects and present them to your customers (or encourage them to contribute)
- Create or contribute to a 'Visitor Giving' scheme to support local heritage conservation
- Sponsor local heritage causes to showcase your credibility on the subject
- Signpost local heritage experts and interest groups
- Use digital tools to provide heritage experiences (e.g. geo-locating old photos on Flickr)
- Support local events and festivals (and help your visitors to attend as well).

Local products

Help your customers uncover local specialities. Local products, in particular local food, have seen a massive rise in popularity recently, so much so that they can be the sole draw for a visit. Seasonal food, with low food miles, freshly picked and grown traditionally will attract visitors and enhance a business's offer.

But think wider than just food and drink: there are plenty of great examples of other local products, including arts and crafts, that contribute to the character of an area.

Getting started

Besides researching what's available in your area, it always pays to get in touch with experts in the field. A good place to begin is The Living Coast website:

<https://thelivingcoast.org.uk/local-produce-and-crafts>

You could also speak to:

- [Local Food Britain](#)
- [Farming UK](#)
- [Crafts Council](#)
- [Heritage Crafts](#)

Ideas to consider:

Source and buy local within your business and promote local products to your customers.

- Offer products from the local area to sale for visitors
- Provide local directories of producers and outlets
- List local markets and offer dedicated trips to visit them
- Offer tasting and try-before-you-buy evenings, events or festivals
- Use local materials and crafts on site and provide information about them
- Grow or cultivate your own products
- Showcase local crafts
- Create self-guided food trails for the local area
- Organise guided tours, walks and experiences for customers
- Offer volunteer opportunities to help grow and cultivate produce on site
- Develop courses and experiences around local production methods, e.g. bee keeping, brewing, coppicing or scything
- Offer bushcraft and foraging courses
- Consider local loyalty schemes to encourage visitors to buy local.



Using local distinctiveness to promote or add value to your business

The simplest use of information about what makes your area distinct is in your marketing and communications activity. By tying your business to the surroundings and what else is on offer, you can potentially attract a wider audience with more varied interests to your venture.

Use the information to:

- Inspire and entice visitors with copy on your website
- Provide subject matter for social media posts
- Form the basis of articles for newsletters and updates
- Create PR opportunities for articles in new and varied publications
- Add value to your visitors' experience by providing them with information in print or in-situ on site.

There are free marketing resources for businesses in The Living Coast, including videos, photographs and marketing copy, that you can use too. <https://thelivingcoast.org.uk/business-resources>

Another way to use this information is to proactively make connections with other local businesses to either:

- Consistently promote the wider offer, thereby shouting with a louder voice. For example, you could develop a consistent bank or image library to use.
- Develop joint services to make it easier for visitors to experience the special qualities of a place. For example, you could arrange transfer services, a series of related experiences, staggered opening times, etc.
- Develop joint promotions between you, such as discounts for referrals or 2-for-1 incentives.



PART 2: Practical business development

When you're considering developing a product or adding value to your business by drawing on the biocultural heritage of a location, it's important to gain a wider understanding of the environment you are – or will be – operating in or, if you're already trading, how you're doing.

Researching your market

The purpose of market research is to understand your operating environment and provide relevant data to help pre-empt problems or inform strategies within a business. It gives you important backdrop and context to all your decisions.

Secondary research

Using secondary research – information and data sourced from others – saves both time and money and offers a wider perspective. Check the following sources for insights and information about trends relevant to your tourism business.

- **VisitEngland**
- Localised tourism data held by Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs), Local Authorities or Protected Landscapes such as National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)
- Business groups (e.g. The Federation of Small Businesses)
- Trade associations in your specific sector
- Universities and other research

Be sure to look for the following kinds of information:

- Size and scale of the market
- Recent growth (or decline) in the market
- Specific barriers to entering the market
- Forthcoming opportunities that would help the market grow
- Issues and potential threats to the market

Competitor analysis

A key element of research for any business includes looking at the competitors operating in that specific market. The first step is to identify who your competitors actually are. They may not be those closest to you in terms of location.

Rather look for businesses who are:

- Offering a comparable product
- Operating at a similar price point
- Offering an experience of comparable quality
- Operating in a comparable location in terms of their customers.

Identify at least three businesses that fulfil the above criteria and assess them by considering the following:

Product details

- What core services and value-adding services/products are they offering?
- What capacity (rooms/covers/groups sizes, etc) do they cater for?
- When are they open (hours/days/seasonally)?

Price

- How much do they charge for a comparable product/service?
- How much do they charge for value-adding services?
- Do they offer discounts or other incentive offers?

Marketing

- Who are their customers?
- What channels do they use to communicate with them?
- How successful do each of these channels appear to be?

Reception

- What do their customers say about them?
- How loyal are their customers (do they get repeat business or recommendations)?
- Are they proactively interacting with them to promote loyalty?

Resources

- How many staff do they employ?
- Do they contract any external experts?
- Do they use any specific technology or innovation?

Where to find the information

You can obtain this information from numerous sources, but don't forget to include:

- Their own websites – for a wealth of information on what a business does and how it presents itself, including prices and how they market themselves.
- TripAdvisor – a useful resource for understanding who a business' customers are and their thoughts and feelings.
- Social media channels like Facebook and Twitter – these can give real insight into additional services, special offers, personnel and methods of communicating
- Personal visit – for a true experience of a business, go as a customer yourself!

A SWOT Analysis

'Strategic analysis' can seem daunting at first, but essentially it boils down to looking at your business or your idea objectively and drawing conclusions and recommendations from a comprehensive look at your operating environment.

Now you have some information about the market, your competitors and the opportunities that the local assets in your area may offer, a SWOT analysis is a good place to start assessing your business or idea. It is simply an organised list of your business' Strengths and Weaknesses, as well as the Opportunities and Threats it faces in the marketplace. The simplest and most useful method of compiling a SWOT is in a 2x2 table with a specific cell assigned to each element.

Simple tips to get the most from a SWOT

- ▶ Apply common sense and tailor the SWOT to your business, some things generally held as a weakness may actually be a strength for you.
- ▶ Be honest and critical, make sure to properly address your weaknesses as well as the external threats.
- ▶ Make it clear why you have included certain points – why they matter to your business and the evidence you're basing them on.
- ▶ Prioritise the elements within the SWOT with most important first (i.e. your greatest weakness should be first).
- ▶ Include as many people within your business as you can when creating the SWOT – different perspectives can contribute valuable insight.



Use the questions in the template below to refine your thoughts and complete a SWOT for your business:

STRENGTHS

Positive attributes (both tangible and intangible) within your control.

- Are you based in a prime location?
- Do you have a team with relevant skills, knowledge and experience?
- Do you have a well-established network of supplier, support and contacts?
- Do you have a well-established reputation?
- Do you have significant capital in the business?
- Do you have an established customer base?
- Do you have effective communication channels (e.g. a website)?
- What advantages do you have over your competition?

WEAKNESSES

Negative factors that detract from the value you offer or put you at a competitive disadvantage.

- What areas need improvement to accomplish your objectives or compete with your strongest competitor?
- Is your business in a poor location?
- Does your team lack essential expertise/skills?
- Does your business operate as efficiently as it could (think technology)?
- Does your business have limited resources?
- Does seasonality affect your business model?
- Is access to your business difficult without private transport?

OPPORTUNITIES

External positive factors that represent future reasons your business is likely to prosper.

- What opportunities exist in your market or the environment that you can benefit from?
- Is the perception of your business or market segment positive?
- Has there been any recent market growth or other changes that create opportunity?
- Has there been an effective marketing and/or development within your wider region?
- Have there been wider trends or interest in society or the media for your specific sector?
- Have there been any legislation changes that encourage favourable operating conditions?

THREATS

External negative factors beyond your control that could place your strategy, or the business itself, at risk.

- Who are your existing or potential competitors? Are there challenges created by an unfavourable trend or development?
- What situations might threaten your marketing efforts?
- Has there been a significant change in supplier prices?
- Could there be shifts in consumer behaviour, the economy, or legislations that would reduce sales? Could any new product, technology or trend make your products or services obsolete?
- Is your customer base sustainable?

Using your SWOT

Once you've completed the SWOT, you can use it to develop specific plans and strategies for your business that will maximise the positive factors and minimise or eliminate the negative ones. If you've ordered them according to importance, you'll know which ones to address first.

Understanding your customers

To develop an appealing product or service you need to know something about the audience you're trying to attract. If you're launching something new or want to expand your existing customer base, research can provide you with valuable insight into how to both develop and promote your new product or service. When it comes to deciding on what aspects of biocultural heritage to focus on, knowing your audience is critical. The first step is to understand who your audience is or who you want them to be.

Figure out who your customers are (or who you want them to be)

Profiling your existing customers

Your existing customers represent your current success. These are the people who understand your business and have chosen to spend their time and money with you. It's important to understand who they are in more depth. The following elements will help you to create profiles of your customers

Use the information you already have about them (factual or anecdotal) to answer the questions below for your current customers:

- How old are they?
- Male or female?
- Are they family groups, singles, retired people, groups of friends, etc?
- Do they live close by or are they coming from farther away?
- How much do they spend with you on average per visit?
- What do they do when they're in your area (visit friends and family, natural visits, just passing through, etc)?
- What do they say they like about your product or service?
- Do you get repeat business from them? If so, how often?

Identifying new potential customers

Knowing more about your existing customers is a great place to start, but you may want to grow and attract other audiences too. It may not be obvious who these customers could be though, so start by answering the key questions below to understand what you want to achieve:

1. What do I offer/What will I offer?

This should include your products and the benefits they provide to customers, e.g. We offer high quality, rural accommodation to customers looking to escape the hustle and bustle of modern life.

2. What am I looking to achieve?

This should be an honest distillation of your business objectives e.g. Encourage more out-of-season visitors or Increase the average spend of current visitors.

These criteria are the lens through which you should view all potential audiences, as you are looking for people who will respond to your offer and meet your objectives. (Bear in mind that unless you are fundamentally changing what your business offers, new customers are unlikely to be significantly different from your current customers.)

Researching potential audiences

Forearmed with your criteria, the next step is to research who the potential audiences could be. Below are some suggested sources and ideas to explore.

- Visit Local Authority or Destination Marketing Organisation websites for reports, statistics and insights. Make sure to look as local as you can rather than at national level.
- Contact your local business group, Chamber of Commerce or Tourism Association to see if they have research to share.
- Look into audience segmentation tools and models available concerning the visitor economy
- Review sites like **VisitBritain** and **VisitEngland** for larger trends.
- Go out and take a look at who's visiting your area. Do a simple footfall analysis to assess who is visiting, when, and what they are doing.
- Contact membership and interest groups like the **Ramblers Association**. They can help you understand more about their members' interests and profiles.
- Hold focus groups with people representative of potential customer groups.
- Design and send an online questionnaire asking for opinions from potential audiences.
- Conduct face-to-face interviews in your local high street or at local visitor attractions.

Prioritise who you will target

If you've got this far you probably have a good number of audiences (both existing and new) to choose from. However, unless you have huge budgets and lots of resources, you're unlikely to be able to focus on all of them simultaneously. The next task, therefore, is to prioritise the audiences and funnel your energies where you can make the most difference. Use these questions to help you prioritise a maximum of three or four target audiences.

1. Which audiences will be easiest to communicate with?

Can you get a contact database easily? Do they all have a shared interest (like walking or birdlife or crafts) that you could use to talk to them?

2. Who has the most money to spend?

You need to target groups that have the desire PLUS the cash to make your efforts worthwhile.

3. Who will be interested in your offers all year round?

Is there a group that will be keen to spend time and money irrespective of the season?

4. Who will be drawn to your area as well as your business?

When used as an integral part of your marketing, your location can make your offer even stronger.

5. Who will find your case studies and testimonials most relevant and appealing?

What other customers say about you is very powerful so who.

6. Who is already coming to businesses locally?

If people already visit your area you can develop referral opportunities, a cheaper way to source business.

7. Who is most likely to recommend you?

Some audiences will use review sites like TripAdvisor, others may prefer Instagram, so it never hurts to consider who will drive recommendations.



Build an audience map

Now you have an idea of who your priority audiences are, it's useful to keep all the information in one place for quick reference. It will help you make decisions on how you refine or develop your product or service and where and how you promote it.

For each audience, you need to be able to articulate their:

- **Key characteristics**
- **Most important wants and needs:** the things they want from a business like yours
- **Key triggers:** the tangible things that you have that make them respond to your offer
- **Emotional benefits you can offer them:** how they feel when spending time in your business. These are really powerful motivators in terms of decision-making beyond basic price and physical descriptions

See the examples of audience groups in Appendix 1. These were developed from a visitor survey as part of the BioCultural Heritage Tourism Project. You may want to use these if they're relevant.

Once you have developed your own and decided who you're going to target, you can create core messages that can be used in your marketing and conversations with the audiences to tie all of these points together.



Using your local distinctiveness to target your audiences

Once you're clear on who your audiences are, you'll have an idea of what interests them and will be able to combine that knowledge to help you take advantage of the local distinctiveness of your area to create new products or use in your marketing.

Understanding what makes your location distinct

You may already know what makes your area special and distinctive. But all too often we overlook what's right on our doorstep or focus on the obvious. This is missing a trick. Knowing your place intimately is vital to understanding local distinctiveness and using it effectively. As with everything, getting to this point starts with research.

1. Define your area

Define the area you intend to focus on. It may be your biosphere, but it could be bigger or smaller.

Look for a boundary that will make sense to your visitor such as:

- An administrative area – county/district/parish/town
- A landscape designation – National Park/Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- A geographical distinction – specific portion of coastline, a range of hills, etc
- A set distance – everything within 10 miles of your, for example.



2. Define the parameters of your research

It's entirely possible at this stage that you simply investigate everything of relevance in that area. However, to keep things focused, it's best to define some parameters. You could choose to focus on a few areas that could complement your business or be thorough and keep it wide if you're looking to develop a new idea.

Possible parameters could be:

- Activities – both organised and self-guided
- Attractions and places of interest – paying and free
- Events and festivals
- Courses and learning experiences
- History, tradition, culture and legends
- Local wildlife and natural heritage
- Local products and producers
- Local or independent retailers
- Local food and drink
- Unusual places to stay

3. Doing the research

With your area and your research parameters defined you can start doing the research. Before you do lots of original work it's always worth contacting local organisations and reviewing what they have already compiled:

- Local Authorities, Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs), National Parks and AONBs will all have information relevant to your area. They may also have itineraries or themed packages outlining experiences and be a fantastic point of contact for advice and networking.
- Trade bodies or sector-specific promotional or awareness-raising groups such as CAMRA – The Campaign for Real Ale or Sustrans for cycling. These organisations can put you in touch with members in a given area and may have specific guidance and information.
- Specific interest groups or organisations like The Ramblers, local historical societies, Wildlife Trusts, cycling groups or community partnerships are all experts in their fields and can advise you on unusual sites and opportunities.



4. Defining what's special within the area

Once you've spent time researching your designated area, you need to identify and define the distinctive local characteristics most relevant to your customers. The challenge of making sense of a place is one faced by plenty of organisations bigger than you. Therefore, before starting look and see what is already available from your Biosphere's website, National Parks, Destination Marketing Organisation, Local Authorities and other tourism organisations. They'll likely have guidance on what is special about a place and how this should be communicated and developed for visitors.

It may be that no work of this kind has been undertaken for your area or the specific angle you want to focus on, or that you are focusing very locally, or perhaps you overlap several areas and need to make sense of it. If so, this exercise can help you think from a visitor's perspective:

Set out the important attributes and assets your place.

TANGIBLE ASSETS PHYSICAL THINGS YOUR PLACE HAS

E.g. Built heritage
Retail offer
Landscape and wildlife
Events and Festivals
Food and Produce
Visitor Attractions
Activities

INTANGIBLE ASSETS EMOTIONAL OR NON- PHYSICAL ASSETS

E.g. Welcome and helpfulness
Safety
Ease and lack of stress
Source of inspiration
Peace and tranquillity
Sense of community
Sense of discovery and exploration
Cultural traditions

Be as specific as you can and apply the following criteria before you write them down:

- Would/could your target audiences be interested in this?
- Is it something visitors can actually experience?
- Is it realistic and practical to communicate and offer visitors?

Once you have written these out, group together similar assets. Then go back over them all and mark those that you believe will be the most important to your audiences. You should start to see certain key themes emerging. These will be generic, things such as 'opportunities for outdoor activities', or 'delicious local food and drink', but that's the point.

Ideally aim to whittle it down to a list of no more than four or five to keep things manageable.

5. Pulling it all together

At this point you have almost all the ingredients you need to create a succinct, easy-to-digest framework to communicate what's special about your local area. Now it's a case of putting everything together in a structured format under each theme. The simple format is:

Once you have this, write it down clearly and keep it to hand. This is the ultimate framework of what makes your place special.

THEME (DIGESTIBLE AND DISTILLED OVERVIEW)	DETAIL AND STORY OF THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE (ANNOTATION AND EVIDENCE THAT MAKES THE THEME RELEVANT TO THE PLACE)	BUSINESS WHERE EXPERIENCE TAKES PLACE (SPECIFIC DETAILS OF HOW THE THEME CAN BE EXPERIENCED)
Delicious local food and drink	23 local cheeses Some of the best orchards in the country	The White Horse Pub, Marsh Farm Cidery
Great outdoor activities for those of all abilities	150 miles of footpaths Extreme sport options	Northcoast Way Trail Mountain biking
Accessible history and heritage for all	Visible Roman remains Traditional dishes always on the menu	Vinorum Village Museum The White Horse Pub

PART 3: Making your business more sustainable

Today's visitors are more environmentally and socially aware, and how sustainable you are as a business can influence where they spend their money. You can gain competitive advantage by demonstrating your positive sustainability credentials, as well as doing all you can to create a positive future for people and nature in your biosphere.

Preserving biodiversity

Biodiversity is the living fabric of our planet. It covers all natural environments and forms of life (including plants, animals, fungi, bacteria and viruses), as well as all the relationships and interactions that exist, both between living organisms themselves, and between organisms and their living environments.

The scientific community estimates that half of all known living species could disappear within a century! Their main concerns are the destruction of natural environments, the overexploitation of wild species, pollution, and climate change driven by human activities.

An environment rich in biodiversity provides us with many beneficial 'ecosystem services', from producing oxygen and 'fixing' carbon dioxide, to purifying water sources, pollinating our crops, managing soil structures, producing food, preventing flooding and purifying our air. It is therefore in everyone's interest to act to preserve and promote biodiversity.

Ideas to consider

- Plant native species that are adapted to your local soil and climate.
- Create habitats and 'highways' for local wildlife – wildflower banks, bat boxes, ponds or hedgehog highways are just a few examples
- Try to limit the amount of concrete, tar or other non-permeable surfaces on your business premises
- Consider taking part in collective actions to maintain the natural environment
- Inform guests about the fragility of the landscapes and natural environments – you can do this in collaboration with other businesses
- Eliminate the use of chemicals such as insecticides, herbicides and harsh disinfectants.
- Use natural biodegradable products where you can – liquid manure, organic cleaning products, etc.
- Encourage your customers to respect nature: to leave animals alone, not to litter, to stay on marked paths and not to pick wildflowers, for example
- Help preserve heritage species and rarer local species by growing them in your garden and raising awareness about them with your visitors
- Promote nature walks and talks by local experts.

Saving water

There is a tremendous amount of pressure on our water supplies and even after a wet winter, we can still be in 'water deficit', where the available water is less than the region's demand. Implementing water conservation measures can encourage you to better manage how and when water is being used, ultimately leading to cost savings.

Ideas to consider

- Remind employees and visitors to save water (posters, pictures, signs above taps, etc)
- Regularly check for leaks and dripping taps and fix them immediately
- Fit water-saving devices such as flow restrictors, aerators or push taps, water-saving devices in your toilets, or low-flush version of waterless urinals
- Install a rainwater harvesting system to provide water for flushing toilets and irrigating plants
- Install an irrigation system which:
 - Uses treated wastewater
 - Has timing devices fitted to minimise operating times
 - Is fitted with moisture sensors to only water when necessary
 - Delivers water to plants below soil level.
- Use untreated bath or shower water for irrigation, but only if you're using eco-friendly soaps and detergents, and never use it on edible plants
- Consider a grey-water recycling systems which treats bath, shower or laundry water which can then be used to flush toilets, water the garden, etc
- If you dispose of wastewater into septic tanks, use eco-friendly household cleaning materials and detergents to improve efficiency
- Use water-efficient washing machines and dishwashers – A-rated or better.



Reducing the impact of energy use

Energy for heating, lighting, running electrical appliances and running vehicles is probably one of your greatest areas of expenditure and will account for a growing proportion of your overheads in the future. With energy prices rising and our increasing impact on the environment, we should all be doing what we can to reduce usage. As well as cutting your running costs there is the additional benefit of conserving resources and reducing carbon emissions.

Ideas to consider

- Don't leave appliances on standby – they'll still be using up to 85% of running energy.
- Switch off appliances and lights when not in use
- Use sensors or timers to control lighting
- Use a renewable energy supplier or install a renewable energy system, such as solar or wind
- Limit the use of tumble dryers – one of the biggest users of energy
- Use A-rated energy-efficient appliances and boilers
- Remind visitors that they must save energy (posters/instructions for the rational use of household appliances in the welcome booklet, etc)
- Replace all your lightbulbs with energy-saving bulbs
- When buying new equipment, chose the best rated on the energy label (from A to A+++)
- Install individual room heating (and cooling) controls
- Provide small rather than large kettles in bedrooms where visitors can make drinks for one or two people
- Use an energy monitor to analyse your power consumption and determine which devices are the most energy intensive
- Compare your bills year on year to see savings achieved through the seasons
- Don't place fridges or freezers near a heat source (an oven or sunny window for example)
- Don't put any hot food in fridges and freezers, dust the rear grids of these appliances, defrost as soon as the layer of frost exceeds 3mm, clean the door gaskets and change them if necessary
- Draught-proof doors and windows
- Install cavity-wall and loft insulation

Further help and advice

There's always more you can do, and fortunately there's plenty of advice available.

- Many Local Authorities provide advice on energy saving and also provide information on any grant schemes and other energy-saving initiatives.
- The Energy Savings Trust provides useful guidance on how you can change your energy-using habits room by room and busts a number of energy-saving myths.
- The Green Tourism Business Scheme has extensive energy-saving ideas which are part of the criteria for the scheme, and provides a really useful framework for implementing an energy-saving plan.

Renewable energy

Renewable energy systems can be installed to serve individual homes and businesses as well as community sites and districts (or 'clusters'). The UK Government has committed to providing financial support to decarbonising heat and buildings. Have a look on the Government website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-support-for-low-carbon-heat>) for the latest information.

Think carefully about which renewable energy system is most relevant to your site. Consider:

- Your budget and resources (grants may be available to help)
- The aspect and positioning of your premises
- Your landscape and surroundings.

Bear in mind that if you are located within a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, this may influence your choice of technology. For example, some protected landscapes have policies on wind turbines.



Cutting waste

Waste is a major concern, both in terms of cost and environmental impact. We need to take a life-cycle approach to managing waste which starts with how we source and buy products, from how they are made and distributed, to how are we use them and dispose of them.

Preventing waste will ultimately reduce the need for materials and limit the amount of greenhouse gases released throughout its lifecycle. Minimising the amount of waste that ends up in landfill sites will help reduce negative environmental impacts.

Sources of waste

Within the tourism industry the biggest areas of waste to consider are:

- Food waste – from preparation and spoilage through to plate waste
- Packaging – from food and drink, cleaning materials and other products
- Water – from cleaning and grey-water waste
- Expended resources – batteries, textiles and electrical/IT equipment.

Setting up a waste management system

We can only manage waste effectively if we know what we are producing and why, so putting an effective waste management system in place should involve:

- Measuring and monitoring the waste produced by your business operations
- Understanding and evaluating the costs attached to operating your venture
- Developing and implementing an action plan to deal with your waste and sharing it with your employees and suppliers
- Undertaking ongoing measurement and monitoring (e.g. each quarter or year on year).



Ideas to consider

- Sort recyclable waste (glass, plastic, paper, metal)
- Sort and recycle all your hazardous waste at local collection points (oils, batteries, light bulbs, ink cartridges, old electrical equipment, etc)
- Make compost using your green and or food waste (vegetable peelings, leftover meals, grass clipping, dead leaves, etc)
- Eliminate all individually packaged products, disposable tableware or single-use plastics (small shampoo bottles in hotels, for example)
- Limit the use of printed brochures and paper documents in favour of correspondence by phone for email and use digital marketing
- Use rechargeable batteries
- If you buy new equipment or appliances, give away, sell or recycle the old equipment rather than throwing it away
- Try and get broken devices repaired before you replace them
- Inform your customers about separating waste (poster, booklets, signs, etc).

Further help and advice

- Local Authorities will give you details of collections, recycling centres and schemes, including garden and business waste
- **WRAP** has produced a series of useful information sheets for the hospitality industry, which give a step-by-step guide on taking action on waste
- **Recycle Now** provides information on every type of waste you might produce and ideas on what to do with it
- **Environment Agency** provides details of the regulations concerning waste.



Encouraging low impact behaviour

For your business to be truly low impact, your customers must also be involved in the process. To this end, share information on the low impact attitudes they can adopt during their stay, both in their accommodation and in the surrounding area.

This can be done, for example, in an email when they book your services, on posters, stickers or in visitor guides.

Further resources to help you be a more sustainable business

- [VisitBritain – Make your business more sustainable](#)
- [VisitEngland – Green accreditation schemes](#)
- [Green Tourism](#)
- [Global Sustainable Tourism](#)



PART 4: Networking within your biosphere

If you're developing a sustainable tourism business, then networking within your biosphere with businesses that share your objectives to be sustainable can present many opportunities to learn and extend what you offer. Working together will allow you to learn from each other's experiences and develop your business through new opportunities.

The Living Coast Business Directory

Collaborating with local businesses is key to delivering our mission as a Biosphere Reserve to pioneer a positive future by building relationships and inspiring better ways of living. An important part of that is protecting and promoting the natural and cultural heritage of The Living Coast.

We have developed **The Living Coast Business Directory** to give local businesses a platform to share how they are playing an active role in protecting our environment, heritage and culture and how they put The Living Coast's objectives into action.

Why get involved?

By being a part of The Living Coast Business Directory and our online social media communities you can:

- Show your customers that you support the principles of UNESCO and the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals** – that you care about the future of our planet and are taking practical steps to work towards a positive future.
- Connect with other like-minded businesses and benefit from knowledge sharing and collaboration.
- Use **the biosphere's free marketing resources** to help showcase the uniqueness of the area.
- Actively contribute to the enhancement and protection of the area.
- Benefit from promotion via **The Living Coast** website and social media, wider links to other UNESCO projects and The World network of Biosphere Reserves.

How to get involved

We want you to share how you are being more sustainable and protecting and promoting our local environment, culture and heritage. Many of your actions as a business may be aligned with The Living Coast's objectives. You may not be active in all areas, but it is about finding the best fit and what's important for you.

The Living Coast Business Directory is not an accreditation scheme; it's a celebration of best practice. It's about identifying what is important and relevant to you, which also supports the values of the The Living Coast Biosphere Reserve.

Think about how you currently relate to the three main objectives of The Living Coast:

- Conserve and enhance nature and biocultural heritage
- Support sustainable human development
- Promote environmental awareness, knowledge, learning and engagement

Each business is different, so the actions that a guesthouse owner could take are different to those of a tour guide, or an attraction.

Conserve and enhance nature and biocultural heritage

- Do you take steps to reduce energy and water consumption; use renewable forms of energy; reduce waste and increase recycling?
- Do you implement wildlife enhancing land management practices, such as having bird/bat boxes or planting wildflowers?
- Do you offset any environmentally damaging activities?
- Do you provide opportunities and information for visitors to become involved in and understand local cultural practices?
- Do you promote sustainable forms of transport, for example giving discounts to people who do not bring their car, provide bus information, walking routes or details of local bike hire companies?

Support Sustainable Development

- Do you balance the need for economic growth whilst taking into account your social, cultural and environmental impact?
- Do you promote local products/services?
- Do you engage with/support businesses who have sustainable values?
- Do you support the local community in some way?
- Do you promote sustainable transport?

Promote environmental awareness, knowledge, learning and engagement

- Do your services connect people to nature or local heritage?
- Do you inform visitors of their potential impact on the local environment and how they can minimise it?
- Do you engage with and share best practice amongst other like-minded businesses?
- Do you help raise awareness of assets of The Living Coast and what it means to businesses, residents and visitors?

Once you have reflected on your own actions, we encourage you to share your story on the dedicated webpage: <https://thelivingcoast.org.uk/directory>. Here you will find examples from other businesses to inspire you.

How to include your business in the directory

Providing a focused overview of your business is an easy way to share your sustainable actions and achievements in an interesting and engaging way with customers.

Sustainable Accreditation schemes are incredibly helpful, as they show consumers that you're meeting a minimum standard in relation to your actions, however, they don't always give tangible examples customers can relate to. There are also lots of businesses that don't sign up to an accreditation scheme but are doing incredibly positive things which should be shared! This is why we set up **The Living Coast Business Directory** to inspire visitors, residents and other businesses alike.

To submit your business overview:

1. Go to <https://thelivingcoast.org.uk/business-form>
2. Make a list of all the sustainable actions you currently take and how you promote and protect local nature and heritage.
 - a. Provide tangible examples and achievements if you can
 - b. Make it relevant to potential visitors/customers as well as to other businesses
 - c. Try not to include too many details that will become out of date quickly
3. Once you've submitted it, share your business listing on social media using the hashtag **#wearethelivingcoast** and tag us using our social media handles.
4. Check back every so often to update your overview and share exciting developments in your business.

**THE
LIVING
COAST**



APPENDIX 1: Audience types most relevant to biocultural heritage tourism

Young cultural explorers

Who are they?

Students and early-career adults

Age: 18-25

Income: Fairly low incomes

Group composition: Travelling alone or with friends (usually one other friend), occasionally with a partner

Type of visitor: Short overnight stays in the area or day-visitors from outside the area

Place of residence: Cities

Their values and motivations

- Generally environmentally conscious
- Value 'authentic' culture
- Like to explore new and exciting places and cultures
- Want immersive experiences in nature and local culture, not merely to observe them
- Looking for fun experiences that will create memories, often with close friends
- Highly tech-literate, but appreciate a 'digital detox' while on holiday
- Often travel alone, but also travel in groups of friends or with a partner
- When they choose a destination, they tend to stay in that area and not travel throughout (maybe due to dependency on public transport)
- Most common length of stay if staying overnight: 3-4 nights
- Interested in visiting an area for the day
- Highly motivated to experience heritage, despite generally having a relatively low understanding
- Highly driven to experience new art and culture and generally have a fairly high level of understanding

Likes

- Creating memories with friends
- Experiencing authentic culture and heritage on a budget
- Food & drink and socialising
- Visiting the beach and attending cultural festivals

Dislikes

- Mass consumption
- Spending a lot on shopping
- Expensive accommodation
- Typical run-of-the-mill sightseeing

Their habits

- Find out about a destination using websites (local Destination Marketing Organisation and business websites) as well as word-of-mouth
- Spend considerable amount of time on social media
- Most likely to travel by public transport, either due to budget or eco-values
- Tend to keep accommodation costs to a minimum so more likely to stay with friends/relatives, camping, youth hostels or Airbnb
- High spend on food and drink

Their appetite for biocultural heritage tourism

HIGH – This group show a high motivation for biocultural heritage experiences. They are attracted to areas with plenty of culture which they demonstrate by frequently visiting cultural events, as well as eating out at local cafés and restaurants. They are conscious of the environmental impact of tourism and tend to stay for shorter durations.

Willingness to pay: Despite having less money to spend, this group are quite willing to pay for experiences. Wellbeing experiences, boat wildlife tour, food/drink tour and foraging are popular.

How can you welcome them better?

- Offer reduced ticket prices for students or people arriving via public transport
- Recommend locally owned and independent cafes/restaurants with lots of vegetarian and vegan options
- Provide greater public transport links to popular rural attractions and campsites
- Provide low-mid priced experiences for them to enjoy

Empty-nesters

Who are they?

Older adults whose children have gone to university or left home to work

Age: 55–60+

Income: Above average

Group composition: Couples, occasionally groups of friends

Type of visitor: Day-visitor or staying visitor

Place of residence: Suburbs

Their values and motivations

- Now their children have left home and they are earning more, this group seeks out luxury
- Like to relax and enjoy their time
- Fairly environmentally responsible
- Appreciate time to re-connect with old friends (who are also empty-nesters)
- Will visit places where friends live, or sometimes go away with small groups of friends
- Generally, the older they become, the less active they tend to be and their habits change
- Mainly travel with their partners, however larger groups of 3–5 people are fairly common
- Most common length of stay if staying overnight: 2 nights
- Tend to enjoy frequent mini-breaks each year, rather than one big holiday
- Will return to previously visited areas
- Nature is important to them, with high levels of understanding
- Culture and heritage are important to them, with varying levels of understanding
- Primary reasons for visiting are walking and sightseeing

Likes

- Luxury
- Nature
- Experiencing local cultures in a short space of time

Dislikes

- Camping
- Travelling in school holidays

Their habits

- Most likely group to use Visitor Information Services
- Most likely to travel by private vehicle, but will travel by train when they can
- Most likely to stay in hotels or with friends/family
- Spend considerably on food and drink, accommodation and shopping

Their appetite for biocultural heritage tourism

HIGH – They are driven to experience culture, heritage and nature, however, are not known to spend considerable amounts on pre-arranged activities. Their main driver for spending money is around food and drink. Despite staying a short amount of time, they spend proportionally more than other groups.

Willingness to pay: It appears that this group prefer to make their own itineraries, based around the sites that interest them the most. It also appears they prefer spending their money on shopping and in restaurants over BioCultural Heritage experiences. However, experiences around Food & Drink and nature will appeal to this group.

How can you welcome them better?

- Advertise events and experiences around food and drink, culture and heritage at accommodation providers
- Provide self-guided tours
- Find ways of advertising local nature-based experiences to those staying with friends or relatives.

Mini-breaking young adults

Who are they?

Young adults (pre-children)

Age: 26-35

Income: Lower-average income (early to mid-career)

Group composition: Travelling as couples or in friendship groups

Type of visitor: Day-visitor or staying visitor

Place of residence: Cities

Their values and motivations

- Desire to explore new places
- Enjoy creating memories and are less likely to travel alone
- Do not have children, so are not constrained to taking breaks during school holidays
- Mostly likely to travel as a couple or in friendship groups
- Most common length of stay if staying overnight: 1-2 nights
- Like to visit different places and less likely to return
- Most important factor when visiting the area is culture
- Second most important factor when visiting the area is nature

Likes

- Exploring new places
- Culture
- Walking
- Local food & drink
- Nightlife
- Luxury and convenience

Dislikes

- Returning to same destination
- Less interested in heritage
- Not so interested in tours or package holidays

Their habits

- Find out about a destination using websites (local destination management organisation and business websites) as well as word-of-mouth
- Most likely to travel by private vehicle or by train where possible
- Like exploring on foot
- Enjoy a range of accommodation – some prefer serviced hotel or Airbnb, others prefer being more rural in self-catered lodgings
- High spenders on activities, food and drink and shopping

Their appetite for biocultural heritage tourism

HIGH – Mini-breakers visiting areas rich in culture and heritage are driven to experience biocultural activities. They spend more on souvenirs and eating in restaurants, visit for less time and are more attracted to ticketed events/attractions. They see tourism as having a positive effect on the area as they contribute to the economy on their stay.

Willingness to pay: The set of experiences that appeals to them is narrower than younger adults, and on the whole are less likely to want to pay for things they don't want to do. However, when they relate to an experience and want to do it, they will be willing to spend more than other groups for the experience. A food and drink tour, wellbeing activity, arts and crafts and boat wildlife tour were all very popular.

How can you welcome them better?

- Recommend locally owned and independent cafés/restaurants to introduce them to a range of different options at the start of their break for them to explore further throughout their stay
- Provide good quality accommodation

Families

Who are they?

Families with children

Age: 35-54

Income: Average income

Group composition: Two adults with 1 to 2 children/teenagers. Rarely travel only as a couple

Type of visitor: Staying visitors inside the area or day visitor from outside the area

Place of residence: Suburbs

Their values and motivations

- Want to give their children a good upbringing by showing them new places, being in nature and visiting relatives
- When the children are younger, they are looking for comfort and convenience
- They are highly mobile and like to travel at weekends to different locations for family days out
- Sometimes they will travel for a day out with other relatives/friends
- Majority of this group are day visitors, but when they do stay, 3-4 nights is most popular duration
- Travel during school holidays/weekends
- Enjoy returning several times to the same area
- Being out in nature is a big motivator for visiting the area, giving younger children outdoor experiences
- Heritage and sightseeing is more important to families with older children

Likes

- Provide educational opportunities for their children
- Visiting different places for the day
- Comfort and convenience
- Mixture of attractions and events

Dislikes

- Expensive accommodation not geared up for families
- Staying for an extended period in the same location

Their habits

- Word-of-mouth and previous visits are two most popular forms of discovery of the area, although they also use traditional maps, travel guides and social media
- Most likely to travel by private vehicle
- Often stay with relatives/friends, but also stay in self-catering accommodation or enjoy camping
- High spend on activities or ticketed attractions (younger families spend slightly more on events/workshops/experiences)
- They also spend on souvenirs/shopping

Their appetite for biocultural heritage tourism

HIGH – They are highly motivated and have the disposable funds to pay for educational and fun experiences that will create memories. Children are old enough to find value in a range of experiences and activities – some of which could be done whilst the adults relax, sight-see or shop.

Willingness to pay: They are less likely to spend high amounts on experiences – possibly because they have to buy 3-4 tickets. The younger side of the group want hands-on experiences connected to nature. The older side are much more interested in heritage experiences.

How can you welcome them better?

- Provide a wide range of activities for different age groups and interests
- Provide more immersive experiences for children which will attract the whole family
- Ensure cafés and gift shops are onsite where the experiences are held
- Self-guided nature tours/trails which start or end at a visitor centre or café are popular

Residents and local day-visitors

Who are they?

Varied

Age: Varied

Income: Varied

Place of residence: Within an hour of the destination

Type of visitor: Day-visitor

Their values and motivations

- Attitudes to tourism vary – some see the benefits whilst others see the negative impacts on the local area
- The majority of this group enjoy the outdoors and experiencing nature
- Many 44–65 year olds are happy visiting alone
- Travelling in couples is the second most common way to travel
- Strongest motivation to visit is driven by nature, although their perceived levels of knowledge are lower than visitors from further away
- An older audience is driven more by heritage, younger audience is more driven by culture
- The beach and associated activities are a high motivator for younger people
- They often visit for exercise purposes

Their habits

- As they are local, they are more likely to use public transport, walk or cycle. (although private vehicles are still popular when visiting more rural locations)
- They like the convenience of their local nature areas and visit frequently
- They have pride in their local area
- They dislike having to pay high amounts to access their local nature, however if there is an activity then they are willing to pay for it

Their appetite for biocultural heritage tourism

MEDIUM – This group frequently consume their local nature by using it for exercise or for meeting friends. However, their understanding of the landscapes, heritage and culture of the area is generally quite low. There is an opportunity to teach residents more about their local area through immersive experiences.

Willingness to pay: Experiences that residents feel like they currently get for free aren't very popular, for example, guided wildlife tour and guided heritage experience. However, courses and workshops where they learnt a new skill or deeper understanding of rural environments were more popular, for example, rural skills workshops and land management courses, as well as experiences connected to health and wellbeing.

How can you welcome them better?

- Provide interpretation of local landscape/culture/heritage on boards which they can access for free
- Provide workshops/experiences that give them new skills and an understanding of their local area



THE LIVING COAST

Brighton & Lewes Downs
UNESCO World Biosphere Region

Contact Info:

www.thelivingcoast.org.uk

info@thelivingcoast.org.uk

 [thelivingcoastuk](https://www.facebook.com/thelivingcoastuk)

 [@livingcoastuk](https://twitter.com/livingcoastuk)

 [@livingcoastuk](https://www.instagram.com/livingcoastuk)

 [@the-living-coast](https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-living-coast)