

Sustaining the Visitor Economy and Environment in the Isles of Scilly

Vicky Smyth, Calum Harvey-Scholes
and Jane Wills

REPORT



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Contact

Professor Jane Wills: j.wills2@exeter.ac.uk



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Executive Summary and Introduction

The natural environment of the Isles of Scilly is currently one of the islands' most important selling points as a tourism destination. Visitor surveys consistently report that the natural environment and wildlife are their top reasons for visiting.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased demand for domestic holidays and greater numbers of visitors will potentially lead to increasing pressure on the environment.

This report documents the findings from a research project designed to explore the scope for fostering positive connections between people and place in the Isles of Scilly.

Funding from Research England's Strategic Priorities Fund, administered through the University of Exeter, allowed partners and researchers to conduct a short project (running between January and March 2021) to explore potential policy ideas that could be further developed in future.

Our task was to identify, evaluate, and test acceptance of locally relevant evidence-based ideas to:

1. Reduce any negative impact of tourism on nature in the Isles of Scilly; and
2. Generate understanding, funds and volunteer time to protect and restore nature in the Isles of Scilly.

This report is one of a pair, the other focusing on the situation in Cornwall, available [here](#).

Following a review of potential policy innovations, partners and additional stakeholders agreed to focus on the idea of a Visitor Pledge (hereafter described as a Scilly Pledge), and to further explore the need for a baseline assessment and monitoring programme to understand the 'state of nature' in Scilly.

This report outlines findings from investigation into these ideas, including a survey conducted with tourism businesses and residents, alongside recordings from a workshop and interviews with key stakeholders.

The Scilly Pledge comprises a concise, expressive text with accompanying video, to raise awareness of Scilly's environment and culture. Visitors sign up to the concept before arrival to indicate they will abide by the promise in the Pledge: to behave mindfully, tread lightly, and consider their actions in relation to the future.

The State of Nature report comprises a baseline of environmental conditions that can then be monitored regularly to provide evidence of change.

Notable findings from the survey indicated strong support for the Pledge and its use to promote deeper appreciation of the landscape, marine environment, and heritage of Scilly. Stakeholders wanted it to increase awareness about the damage caused by littering and ecosystem disturbance, but to do this in a positive rather than accusational tone. Most businesses were willing to promote the Pledge via their websites and only five were firmly opposed.

A third of businesses were willing to encourage charitable donations from visitors to help maintain Scilly's natural environment and only 10% were firmly against. The most popular method for this was to promote the Friends of Scilly Wildlife scheme developed by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust.

There was strong recognition of the need for a baseline assessment and ongoing monitoring of the state of nature on Scilly. This was argued to help identify the pressures on wildlife, raise awareness of these, and direct efforts to mitigate these pressures and help the environment and nature recover.

This research strengthens the case for further developing both the Scilly Pledge and a state of nature report in future.

The Natural Environment of Scilly

Consisting of over 200 islands and rocks, the Isles of Scilly are characterised by some of the finest white sand beaches in the United Kingdom, exposed granite headlands, rugged moorland, flat wetlands, and small square fields. The sea dominates the landscape and its influence sets each of the islands apart to create a unique diversity and complexity in a relatively small area (Farr and Rogers, 1994). The encircling sea also contributes to the islands' mild climate, enabling flowers to be grown outdoors through the winter, in small fields shielded from the Atlantic gales by tall hedges.

The Isles of Scilly in its entirety is a designated area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) and the islands' landscape and biodiversity are also identified as Heritage Coast. A number of other designations recognise and protect elements of the archipelago's beauty and rich biodiversity, including international Ramsar Sites, European Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and national Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The exceptional landscape and biodiversity of the Isles of Scilly are at risk from threats of internal and external origins. Global warming is the foremost external threat, given low-lying islands are especially vulnerable to rising sea levels and temperatures, increasingly powerful and extreme weather, and ocean acidification. These changes to the climate threaten local marine and terrestrial wildlife, landscapes, and local livelihoods.

The depletion of habitats such as wetlands and sand dunes on Scilly is a threat to an intrinsically valuable part of the islands. Wetlands provide protection from storm water, reduce flood risk through slowing down the flow of rainfall through the catchment, and mitigate the climate crisis by locking up carbon. The Higher and Lower Moors also provide flood defences to some key areas of habitation and industry. The increased growth of willow, bramble, and bracken reflect the extent to which wetlands have been drying out and, as a consequence, these areas are becoming less effective at water harvesting and defending against floods (Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, 2018).

Wildlife also faces direct threats resulting from human disturbance. For instance, the uninhabited island of Samson has in the recent past lost its nationally important breeding colony of common terns, partly due to disturbance from visitors walking over sensitive parts of the island (Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, 2021). Dogs are also a particular threat to ground-nesting birds.

Degradation and growing threats to Scilly's environment is a cause for concern, and it is attracting increasing public attention, as can be seen in a survey carried out by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust which found very high levels of concern about the state of nature on the islands, now and in the future (see Figures 1 and 2).

When asked about the causes of this concern, both visitors and residents identified 'climate change' as being the foremost pressure on the environment, but pollution, a lack of awareness, and wildlife disturbance from recreation also emerged as concerns (Figure 3).



Figure 1

The proportions of visitors and residents who expressed concern about the state of nature in Scilly.

Source: Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust survey, January to February 2021.

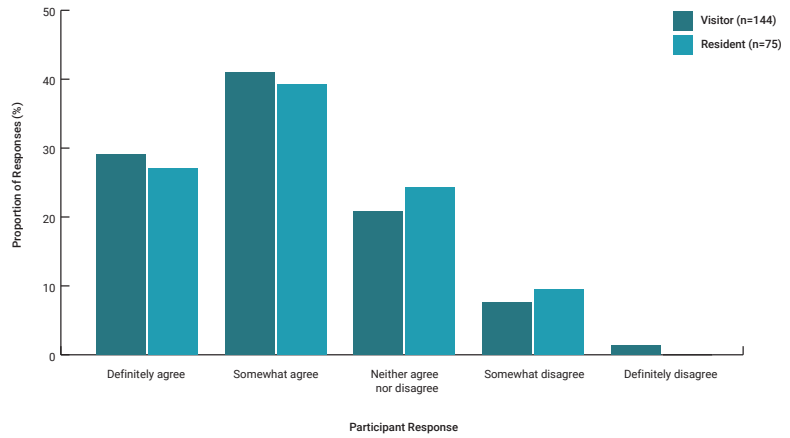


Figure 2

The proportions of visitors and residents who expressed concern about the future state of nature in Scilly.

Source: Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust survey, January to February 2021.

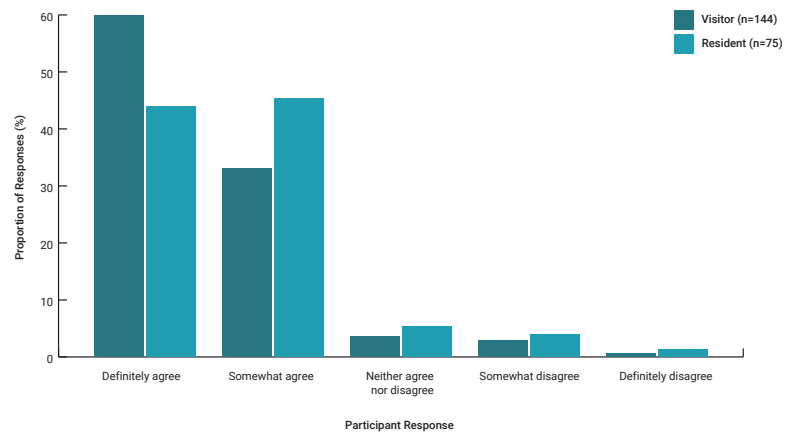
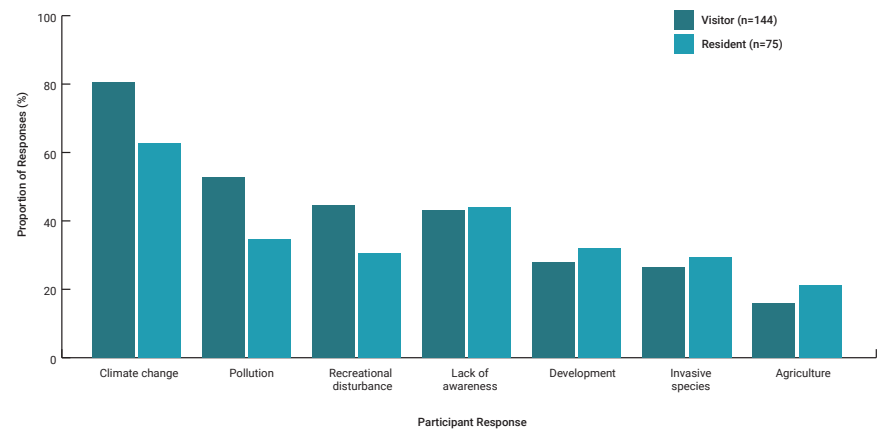


Figure 3

The proportions of visitors and residents who perceived different pressures as threats to the environment on the Isles of Scilly.

Source: Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust survey, January to February 2021.



Protecting this unique environment requires a detailed understanding of the habitats present, their distribution, quality, and vulnerability to change. A 1994 study considered the impact of the already well-established tourism industry on the natural, economic, and social environments of the Isles of Scilly, and recognised that the natural environment was the principal attraction for visitors. However, as Farr and Rogers (1994, p.15) remarked: *“while there are serious problems which result [from the impact of tourism], and which mirror on a small scale the broader environmental concerns expressed internationally, the study concludes that there are important areas of complementarity between tourism and the environment.”* There are potential synergies between the interest and income that comes from a successful visitor economy and the mission to manage, protect, and enhance the natural environment.

The Visitor Economy in Scilly



The Isles of Scilly offer a tranquil encounter with a different way of life from the rest of the UK. Located 45 km (28 miles) off Lands' End, visitors can stay on any of five inhabited islands (St. Mary's, Tresco, St. Martin's, St. Agnes, and Bryher). More than 80% of the local economy depends upon the influx of visitors who travel to the islands every year and the natural environment is lauded as a unique selling point by the sector. The strict seasonality of the archipelago is both a strength and weakness with regards to a sustainable visitor economy. Transport to the islands is via ferry (taking 2 hours and 45 mins from Penzance), plane, or a newly reinstated helicopter flight. The necessary restrictions on travel during the winter, as well as the limited supply of accommodation, limits tourist numbers, although there are efforts to extend the season, invite additional cruise ships to port, and increase the number of day trips from Cornwall.

The natural beauty of the Isles of Scilly has generated an inter-generational appreciation of the place, with many patrons being loyal visitors who holiday on Scilly every year. This time-honoured tradition is still alive amongst the majority of visitors to Scilly, although there are signs of a shift in the way in which tourists enjoy a destination. Trends in global visitor behaviour amongst the younger generation in particular indicate a determination to see a new location with each journey, implying less loyalty to place (Almeida-Santana and Moreno-Gil, 2018). Scilly's current dependence on older (55+) and repeat (70%) visitors means businesses need to retain their loyal visitors while also attracting younger visitors who might become future 'Scilly loyalists'. This challenge is recognised in the Destination Management Plan that has been developed by the Islands' Partnership (IP). The IP recognises the need to better understand the economic, social, and environmental implications of current developments in order to future-proof the islands in a globally competitive market.

In this regard, infrastructure systems and services such as electricity, drinking water supply, transport, and waste management facilities are limited on the Isles of Scilly. Almost the entire electricity supply to Scilly is imported from the mainland electricity network via a single 33kV cable. The natural freshwater supply in Scilly is supplemented with desalinated water, particularly during the summer tourist season, which results in an increased cost of water management. A particular problem is the seasonal increase in water demand and wastewater production, which can compromise the balance of ecosystems. Waste disposal, potable water supply, and accommodation are all limited on the islands and represent fundamental restrictions on tourist numbers. South West Water have recently committed to overhaul the wastewater management system in Scilly. The cost of this renovation cannot be covered by the island population alone and, as such, must be subsidised from elsewhere.

The Isles of Scilly have been part of the Duchy of Cornwall estate since its inception in the 14th century. Today, the Duchy still owns most of the land and nearly a third of the residential buildings on the islands (The Duchy of Cornwall, n.d.). The Duchy's Deputy Land Steward for the Isles of Scilly is based in St Mary's with a team of people in Cornwall further supporting their work. Most farmers and residents are tenants of the Duchy along with Tresco island, which is leased to the Dorrien-Smith family who have managed it since the 1830s. While an estimated 70% of the islands' population are employed in tourism today, flower farming dates back to the 1880s and makes a significant contribution to the economy, as well as shaping the landscape.

As this brief overview suggests, there are a number of organisations involved in managing the impact of the visitor economy on the environment, including the Council of the Isles of Scilly, the Duchy of Cornwall, the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership (CIOSLEP), and the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust. However, when it comes to considering the visitor economy, the Islands' Partnership (IP) is on the frontline in representing the interests of the sector in Scilly. The IP has approximately 300 business members but also works closely with key stakeholder organisations that impact the visitor economy. It is a non-profit company funded by its strategic partners and members, and is responsible for marketing the Isles of Scilly as a destination as well as managing the 'Visit Isles of Scilly' brand.

The IP published its first Destination Management Plan (DMP) to outline ideas for the further development of the visitor economy on Scilly in 2018. The DMP aims to provide a comprehensive strategy for a sustainable economic future for the Isles of Scilly, encompassing culture, transport, food and drink, retail, and infrastructure to support the sector. The 2018 Destination Management Plan concluded with a futuristic blog article, set in the year 2028, aiming to inspire a vision for sustainable tourism by declaring that:

"The islanders have shaped an offer for guests wanting to play an aware, active and engaged path in the drive for sustainable living and responsible tourism – supporting the preservation of natural assets and cultural inheritance whilst they do... Each of the markets share one thing in common – a delight for Scilly and a commitment to conserving their corner of it for future generations." (Islands' Partnership, 2018 p35)

As indicated in this text, the IP recognises the importance of preserving Scilly's natural and cultural assets and, in respect to the former, they work closely with the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust to achieve this. The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust is an independent locally-run charity that looks after both marine and terrestrial habitats across more than 60% of the islands (just under 2000 hectares), including all of the uninhabited islands and large parts of the inhabited islands, many of which are open and accessible for everyone to enjoy all year round. The land is leased from the Duchy of Cornwall on a 99-year tenancy at a rent of 'one daffodil per year'. At the time of writing, the trust receives time-limited grant funding from the Council of the Isles of Scilly through Defra's funding for the Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as well as small levels of income from donations, legacies, and membership subscriptions.

This means the ability to manage almost two-thirds of the scenic beauty and rich ecosystems that attract visitors relies on limited and often unreliable funds. Given the scale and importance of the work to be done, this poses a risk to the management of the environment, which has potential consequences for the visitor economy. It is also a risk in relation to conserving and enhancing internationally important environments, ecosystems, and wildlife.

The AONB's published objectives with regards to the tourism industry are to:

"Ensure that tourism, business and other economic activities conserve, enhance and promote the Islands' special qualities in a manner that protects the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites. [And to] conserve and enhance the AONB's natural and historic environment and ecosystem services as an economic, cultural and social resource bringing benefit to the Islands' communities" (Isles of Scilly AONB, 2015 p33).

Our research project was designed to find new ways to help maintain the rich environment of the Isles of Scilly, alongside the need to secure the visitor economy on which the Scillonian people depend.



Our Research Project

With approximately 100,000 visitors travelling to the Isles of Scilly each year, our project sought to explore approaches that could ensure visitors not only protect the nature around them but also contribute to its recovery, and restoration. The aim of the project was to lay the foundations for Scilly to act as an exemplar in combining tourism with environmental management. In this regard, as stated earlier, our objectives were to identify, evaluate, and test acceptance of locally relevant evidence-based ideas to:

1. Reduce any negative impact of tourism on nature in Scilly; and
2. Generate understanding, funds, and volunteer time to protect and restore nature in Scilly.

The project had four phases:

1. Scoping best practice from the literature and consulting the project partners about their understanding of what is happening in Scilly;
2. Holding a participatory workshop to produce a shortlist of ideas for further development;
3. Developing these ideas through related surveys and interviews with stakeholders; and
4. Making recommendations for policy and action that could be implemented in future.

The research methods used were designed to ensure that sufficient data were collected to develop concrete ideas for future action. The research followed University of Exeter ethical guidelines and all interviewees and workshop participants were fully informed about the project prior to participation. Once finalised, all data were stored securely in full compliance with the requirements of GDPR. The recordings were transcribed using Otter.ai and then re-edited, if required, for use in this report.

COVID-19 restrictions meant that all research was conducted remotely. The workshop and interviews were organised using Microsoft Teams. This research was carried out during the third UK national lockdown and the funding requirements meant that it had to be completed in just three months (January to March 2021). Due to this short timeframe and COVID-19 restrictions, there was no opportunity to carry out visitor surveys or test out the recommendations in practice. This report aims to identify ideas that can be further explored and developed by the project partners in future.

Phase 1: Scoping Best Practice

A broad review of sustainable tourism best practice in the academic literature, grey literature, and case studies formed the foundation of knowledge for this short-term investigation. A number of initiatives were evaluated in terms of their effectiveness and their potential applicability to Scilly, with a particular focus on small island states. In consultation with project partners through individual semi-structured interviews and collective discussion, five policy ideas were identified for testing with invited guests at the stakeholder workshop.



Phase 2: Stakeholder workshop

A stakeholder workshop was held on 18 February 2021. Project partners and researchers were joined by eight representatives from different interest groups, including tourism business owners and providers, transport and utility companies, land and ecosystem managers, and utilities and infrastructure managers (see Appendix A). After two hours of discussion and contemplation, the workshop attendees were invited to rank the concepts that they considered to be worthy of further investigation. Each participant was asked to rank their preferred idea first and move down the list to include as many as they thought valuable. The final list identified the Visitor Pledge as being most favoured, followed by the need for more baseline data to monitor the changing state of nature in Scilly. These two ideas were selected to be pursued for the remainder of the project (see the full list of ideas, in rank order, in Table 1).

Table 1: Ideas presented at the stakeholder workshop, final rankings.

Overall rank	Idea	Summary of proposition
1	Visitor Pledge	A concise, expressive text with accompanying video, to raise awareness of the environment and culture on Scilly. Visitors sign up to the concept before arrival to indicate they will abide by the promise in the pledge: to behave mindfully, tread lightly, and consider their actions in relation to the future. The Pledge is co-created by the community and it aims to ensure that visitors behave responsibly to protect and potentially enhance the natural environment. (Examples are included in Appendix B).
2	Tourism (and nature) Impact Audit	A baseline of environmental conditions and measurements are recorded and revisited regularly to provide evidence of change. Measured elements are better understood and managed. It is essential to ensure accurate, consistent data collection that garners public trust.
3	Scilly Standard	An accreditation scheme in which businesses are obliged to meet predefined targets by providing high quality, environmentally conscious, and globally competitive products and services. Businesses display their accreditation through various marketing outlets and use market pressures to help promote sustainable business behaviour norms.
4	Visitor Giving	A small, optional, amount is added to a service or product such as when booking accommodation, to be gifted as a charitable donation. Businesses can choose which charity or project to support. Small amounts quickly add up to a considerable sum. Visitors feel a sense of belonging by giving back. Project progress needs to be communicated as evidence that funds are being used effectively, and to ensure success of concept.
5	Live Nature Webcams	Cameras are installed at wildlife hotspots, live streaming online for audiences anywhere in the world. Promotional text and a link facilitating charitable donations for animal or habitat conservation is linked to the page. Footage also has potential use in scientific monitoring. However, there is a high capital cost compared to anticipated returns with the additional risk of encouraging new disturbance at the site.
6	Traveller Levy	A fixed fee, charged as part of transport ticket prices to provide income. This has advantages by being collected and organised centrally, providing a consistent income for conservation. Careful wording would be needed to manage the legal implications of the compulsory nature of a levy.

It is important to note that initially, the Visitor Pledge and Scilly Standard were presented as a joint commitment for both visitors and businesses. In the discussion, these were separated into a 'light-touch' pledge for visitors and an accreditation scheme for businesses, not least because the DMP already defined the 'Scilly Standard' as the latter with plans to further develop the idea. This moved the pre-defined Scilly Standard out of the scope of this investigation and allowed the Visitor Pledge to become the main focus of the project. It is important to note that the idea of a Visitor Pledge was also identified in the DMP but required further development, an objective that this project was able to fulfil.

The workshop and subsequent discussion also refined the idea of a Tourism Impact Audit as a more rigorous assessment of the state of nature on the Isles of Scilly. Whilst this may identify impacts on nature due to tourism, these would be secondary to analysis of the state of nature and how it changes over time. This idea was subsequently referred to as a 'state of nature' report.

Phase 3: Questionnaire survey

Given their endorsement at the stakeholder workshop, the project team focused on the ideas of the Visitor Pledge and Monitoring Report in more detail. A survey was drafted in Qualtrics and tested with partners before being distributed to the IP membership on Tuesday 9 March 2021, and via a private residents' Facebook group on Saturday 13 March 2021. The survey consisted of both closed- and open-ended questions and was primarily designed to capture perceptions of a Visitor Pledge for the Isles of Scilly. We were also able to include questions about perceptions of the state of nature, which were useful in developing the need for baseline data.

The survey invited all respondents to watch videos of three existing Visitor Pledges from New Zealand (Tiaki Promise, 2018), Finland (Pledge for sustainable travel in Finland, 2019), and Hawaii (Hawaii's Pono Pledge, 2018) and then provide feedback on how the concept could be applied to the Isles of Scilly. (For more information about these pledges, see Appendix B). Supplementary questions were asked of IP members and those respondents who identified themselves as 'business owners' about the potential promotion of the Visitor Pledge concept through their own marketing streams (specifically websites). This also presented an opportunity to ask if they would be willing to encourage charitable donations from patrons to support the protection and regeneration of nature on Scilly.

138 responses were received, although only responses that were over 85% complete were counted in the data analysis. This produced a final dataset of 105 cases (65 from the IP mailing list and 40 from the residents group). Further information about the nature of the businesses and age of residents covered in the sample are included in Appendix C.



Due to the modest population of Scilly, the categories of 'resident' or 'business owner' are obviously not mutually exclusive and the latter will also be residents on Scilly. For this project's purposes, the division has been made to draw out potential differences in perspectives between those whose livelihoods depend on visitor numbers compared with those who may generate their income by other means. This is in light of the fact that the Visitor Pledge concept would need entire community buy-in to be successful.

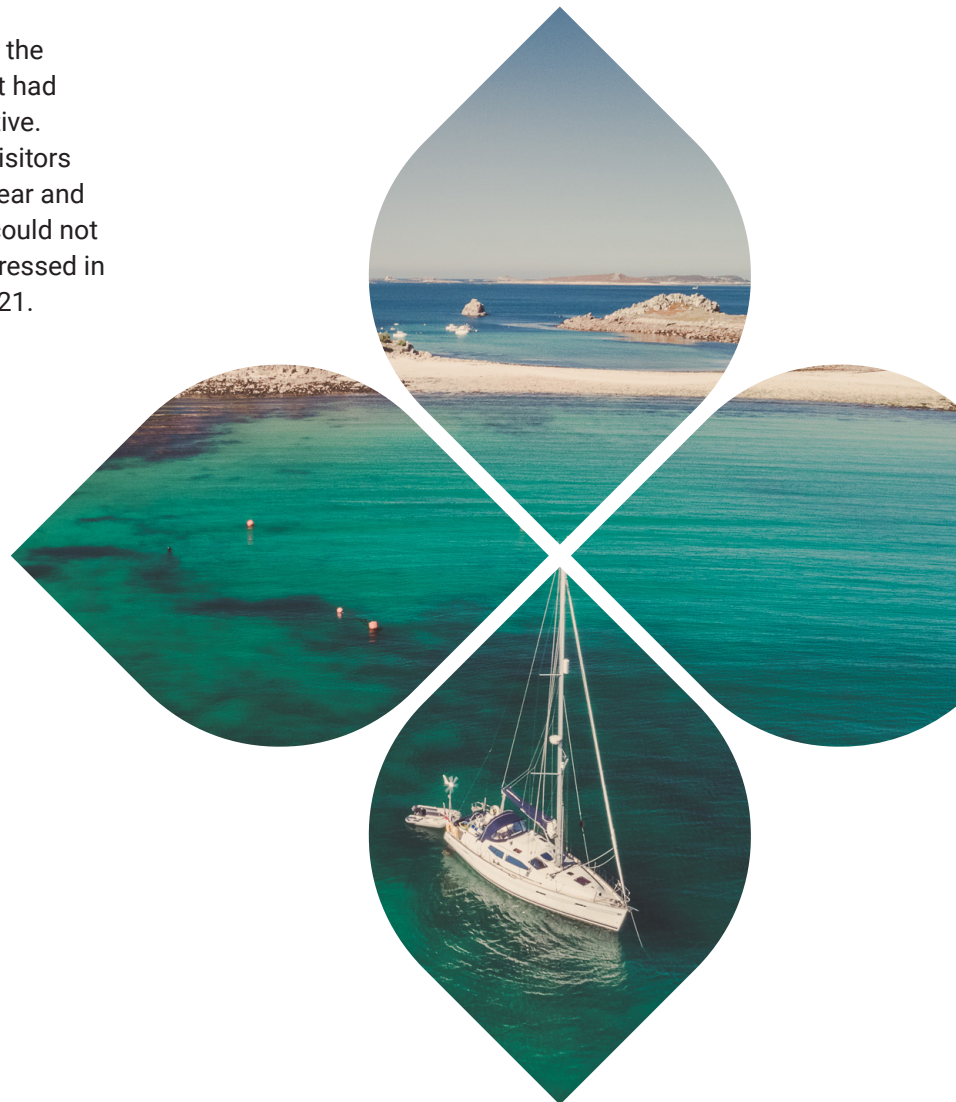
Most of the survey data were easy to analyse and present, although the open questions had to be recoded to ensure all information was captured. In these cases, new codes were devised by examining all responses and clustering the answers around common themes. As an example, there were 81 different responses to the question, 'What words capture why you think Scilly is special?' This required two rounds of recoding, first to identify broad themes and then to ensure that any categories that only had one or two responses were integrated into the next best category, resulting in 22 summary themes that could be presented or aggregated further.

Given the project's aim to explore the views of the business community, the fact that the data set had a stronger response from IP members is positive. However, a key limitation of the study is that visitors were not present on Scilly due to the time of year and national COVID-19 restrictions and therefore could not be consulted. This knowledge gap can be addressed in future work once visitors return in summer 2021.

Phase 4: Follow-up interviews

One-on-one interviews were subsequently requested of workshop invitees to explore the themes picked up in the debate, giving them the chance to raise any additional issues and ideas. Four people agreed to participate and interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai.

Additional semi-structured interviews were conducted with project partners, conservationists, business providers, researchers, and designers to identify the issues, challenges, and opportunities associated with the policy ideas. Six of these conversations were recorded and transcribed and a further six were summarised through notes. In this report, some interview notes and transcripts are quoted directly to illustrate key findings. They are attributed to the category of organisation each interviewee was representing: tourism business representative (#3, #7, #11), transport and utilities companies (#6, #8), land and ecosystem manager (#2, #4, #8, #9, #10), council representative (#1), designer (#14, #15), PR and marketing expert (#12).



Research Findings

The proposal for a Visitor Pledge

Overall, the combined response from all survey participants revealed that the majority of respondents (74% from 105 responses) were in favour of the idea of a Pledge, and only six were firmly against (see Table 2).

Table 2: Willingness of survey respondents to support a Visitor Pledge for Scilly

	Number	%
Yes	78	74
Maybe	21	20
No	6	6
Total	105	100

Respondents appeared to support the idea of the Pledge as a novel way to promote a better connection between people and place, and many highlighted the way that the Pledge could help visitors (and residents) recognise the value of the unique natural and cultural history of the Isles of Scilly:

"I don't think it should be an option, it should be a given. Our Islands will continue to be promoted as a "destination" and we should be very clear in what we expect from those who visit and [those who] make money from those who visit." IP Member

"I think it's a great idea. I wasn't sure until I saw the videos. I particularly liked the New Zealand approach. Most repeat visitors do respect Scilly but there are always exceptions. And it's a good way to get new visitors to think about Scilly's environment." IP Member

"Visitors would welcome the idea as it would provide a sense of ownership." Resident

Furthermore, there were 15 individuals (13 from the business community and two residents) who took the time to suggest the Pledge be extended as an obligation for residents too, as these indicative comments suggest:

"I love the idea but I disagree that it should be termed a 'visitor pledge' - this is something for everyone who loves Scilly to join. It is not for us to direct visitors to do it if we don't first pledge it ourselves." IP Member

"I think this should be extended to a 'Scilly Pledge', rather than just a visitor pledge. It should be for anyone who lives here or visits here; be inclusive, not exclusive." Resident

There were, however, some concerns about the pledge, and a number of people were either hostile to or unconvinced by the idea. Of the 21 respondents who voiced uncertainty, some raised concerns about how people would respond:

"...it plays into the sense of inclusiveness that many visitors crave when they come here [but] I'm equally sure it would put some people off." Resident

"I'm hesitant as I find asking people to sign up to a pledge could encourage some people to be more observant about others' behaviour than they need to be." IP Member

Trepidation about asking visitors to behave in a certain way in order to protect the environment often reflected uncertainty about Scilly having a particular problem, as one business respondent suggested: *"Do we have that many problems that we need to ask people to take care of everything?"*

There was also unease about the potential for a Scilly Pledge to seem accusational, pointing the finger of blame at visitors for being a problem, without any hard evidence to suggest this. As one resident explained:

"It is effectively accusing visitors of being part of the 'problem', without identifying that there is a problem. A Pledge is effectively appearing to them as: 'You're a problem for Scilly, but if you sign here, we might be more accepting of you'. Guilt-tripping your market is not a great way to promote business..."

In this regard, there was unanimous agreement at the stakeholder workshop that the wording of any Visitor Pledge was critical to its acceptance by visitors and its positive impact, and the project's survey offered an opportunity for qualitative investigation into formulating this language. Immediately after viewing the example videos, all respondents were invited to share the words they felt best captured why Scilly is special. As many as 81 responses were given, and these are summarised in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Words that respondents (n=81) thought best captured Scilly. Frequency of use is reflected in the size of the words.



We further analysed these responses by grouping them into thematic clusters in order to identify the most prominent themes. This process revealed five higher-level categories, summarised in Table 3, of which words relating to nature, the wild, and wildlife were most popular.

Table 3: Thematic clusters of words used to describe Scilly

% of responses (n=81)	Key words
60%	Wild, nature, unspoilt, wildlife
35%	Beautiful, breathtaking, mesmerising
34%	Unique, idyllic
33%	Tranquil, peaceful, calm
24%	Friendly, community

Whilst it may not be easy to disentangle exactly which elements are most attractive, nature is clearly a draw for visitors. Two interviewees, both land and ecosystem managers, described how nature is *"used as a marketing tool to promote the Isles of Scilly as a tourist destination (#2)"*, and it was suggested that *"the tourism industry trades on an image of environmental excellence" (#8)*. There was also an acknowledgement that this presents a risk if experiences of the Isles of Scilly are less than environmentally perfect when people arrive:

"...I think there are also some aspects of life on Scilly that aren't particularly environmentally friendly and could be improved." (#8)

Analysis of our survey data found that residents and business owners considered a range of natural and cultural features to be important in communicating to visitors when using the Pledge (see Table 4). While the data revealed that aspects relating to landscape and nature were most prominent in the minds of respondents, factors relating to Scillonian social life and history were also important. The importance of history, especially maritime history, as well as island life, are intrinsically linked to the seascape and landscape of Scilly, and in many ways, it is difficult to separate culture from the natural world. Unsurprisingly, both featured strongly in the results.

Table 4: Features of the Isles of Scilly which could be promoted through a visitor pledge

Ranking		Number	%
1	Landscape	89	91
2	Marine	87	89
3	Heritage	76	78
3	Island life	76	78
4	Birds	72	73
5	Plants	66	67
6	Dark skies	63	64
7	Mammals	48	49
8	Culture	41	42
9	Wellness	36	37
10	Food	32	33
11	Other	17	17
12	Mythology	17	17

NB: All survey respondents were prompted to select as many options as they wished from a list of features that might be promoted by a Scilly Pledge. There was also a free text option for suggestions that were not on the list. The results are ranked by the number of times they were selected by those who provided at least one answer (n=98).

As many as 17 people provided additional ideas in this section, and four of these respondents reiterated that history was an important aspect to include in any Visitor Pledge (answers that were subsequently added to the data endorsing ‘heritage’ in Table 4). The remaining comments that could not be integrated into the initial list were re-coded, and are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Additional comments made about the characteristics that could be featured in a Visitor Pledge for Scilly (re-coded)

Potential features for a Scilly Pledge
Outdoor activities/adventure e.g. watersports, seal snorkelling, boat rides
Seascapes/beaches
Uniqueness and beauty
Child friendly
Artists
The fact that each island is a working community, not a resort
Low carbon
Being pollution free
Horticulture

When asked about the most important pressures to address through an intervention with visitors, respondents identified littering (77%, n=98) and wildlife disturbance resulting from recreational activities (72%) as their top concerns. These were 10 percentage points ahead of the next cluster of issues that included water supplies, dog fouling, and the wider impact of climate change (see Table 6).

Table 6: The perceived negative impacts of people on nature

Rank	Risk	Number	%
1	Littering	75	77
2	Disturbance to wildlife from recreational activities	71	72
3	Limited natural drinking water supplies	61	62
4	Dog fouling	61	62
5	Climate change/sea level rise/storms	60	61
6	Excessive noise	48	49
7	Decline in rare species	42	43
8	Light pollution	39	40
9	Permissive paths requiring repair	38	39
10	Disregard for local culture	36	37
11	Other	20	20

NB: All respondents were asked to select as many options as they wished from a list of risks that could be highlighted by a Scilly Pledge. There was a free text option for suggestions not on the list. The results are ranked by the number of times they were selected by those who provided at least one answer (n=98).



Unscripted suggestions of additional risks, which could potentially be expressed in a Visitor Pledge, were re-coded and are displayed in Table 7. These included concerns about possible development, population growth, and threats associated with the limited infrastructure on Scilly.

Table 7: Further suggestions of risks that could be tackled via a Visitor Pledge

Additional Risks
Unsustainable tourism
Excessive development
Future resident population
Dog attacks on local animals
Inconsiderate cycling, driving, and horse riding
Respecting islanders' privacy
Excessive noise from planes & helicopters
Transport disruptions
Not straying from existing paths
Preservation through recognition of heritage
The vulnerabilities of island life, access to services, diseconomies of scale

The dual intention of both promoting the destination and encouraging the audience to take care whilst visiting was clearly understood by survey participants. Respondents (n=103) indicated that their priority for the outcomes of the Pledge would be to increase awareness of Scilly's environment, prevent pollution and littering, and discourage behaviour which might threaten or damage Scilly's landscape and wildlife (see Table 8).

Table 8: Desired outcomes from the Visitor Pledge for Scilly

Desired outcomes	Number	%
Increased awareness of Scilly's environment	91	88
Prevent pollution and littering	88	85
Discourage behaviour which might threaten or damage Scilly's landscape and wildlife	84	82
Raise charitable donations for the enhancement of the environment and wildlife	38	37
Boost interest in Scilly as a holiday destination	37	36
Increase repeat visits	33	32
Reach new markets	31	30
None of the above	2	2

NB: All respondents were asked to select as many options as they wished from a list of the desired outcomes of the Scilly Pledge. There was a free text option for suggestions not on the list. The results are ranked by the number of times they were selected by those who provided at least one answer (n=103).

When differences between the business and resident segments of the sample were examined, it was perhaps unsurprising that business participants were more likely to recognise the opportunity to use the pledge to 'Boost interest in Scilly as a holiday destination', 'Reach new markets' and 'Increase repeat visits'. However, residents were more in favour of 'Raising charitable donations for the enhancement of the environment and wildlife', which was selected by half of residents, but only about a third of business respondents.

Re-coding the additional unscripted comments made by respondents indicated a concern to include residents and reach out to the Duchy of Cornwall, as well as matching best practice developed in other destinations (Table 9).



Table 9: Additional suggestions of desired outcomes from the Visitor Pledge

Additional desired outcomes
Enlighten residents
Encourage the major landowner to do more for our unique islands
Keep Scilly unique
Bring Scilly up to speed with good practice from elsewhere
Raise charitable donations for the upkeep of public realm, and promotion of marine habitats
Foster tourist behaviour change
Better connect people to place
Stimulate responsible and sustainable travel and engagement
Recognition of the value of the unique natural and cultural history of Scilly
Not encouraging people with the wrong expectations

Insights into perceptions about the anticipated response of ‘regular visitors’ against ‘new visitors’ illustrated the extent to which business owners and residents are more confident about the likely response of their regular visitors than they are about any new ones (Table 10).

Table 10: Anticipated signing of the Scilly Pledge by regular and new visitors

	Regular Visitor		New Visitor	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	73	70	41	39
Maybe	24	23	60	57
No	8	8	4	4
Total	105	100	105	100

The close relationship between regular visitors and the local community was also evident in the open text responses made by respondents:

“Visitors to Scilly return year on year and respect both the place and people. Our guests support us and keep coming back, some for 30 years or more. 85% of our guests would support a pledge.” IP Member

“As a previous long-term visitor I’m sure that returning visitors are very protective of what we have here. New visitors may not at first realise just how special the islands are.” IP Member

A Public Relations and Marketing Director we interviewed also told us that: *“people do understand that Scilly is different so the message could work”* (#12).

Although they were expressing a minority view, some respondents felt that new visitors were actually more likely to support the Pledge, particularly as they had not been to the islands before. As these IP members reported:

“I think regular visitors already understand why Scilly is special, new visitors are always excited and open to new things.”

“Regular/repeat visitors [...] may struggle with it as an idea. I think new visitors will be encouraged by it as an idea and it will support why they want to visit the islands.”

A further question to business owners, asking them about their willingness to incorporate a link to a Scilly Pledge on their website, found that a majority (62%) would be willing to do this, with only five respondents being firmly against (Table 11).

Table 11: Willingness of business respondents to promote the Scilly Pledge by adding a link on their website

	Number	%
Yes	39	62
Maybe	19	30
No	5	8
Total	63	100

However, the desire to assess the wording and tone of the Scilly Pledge before promoting it was stressed a number of times in both the survey and interviews, as two IP members reported in the open text space on the survey:

“I would add a link to it if it was done well... done well it could boost Scilly’s special status - done badly, it could just be another tool for animosity between islanders and visitors.”

“Acceptance depends very much on the content of the pledge. It must not sound patronising, particularly to regular visitors... It is very important to have regular visitors’ support, I think.”

This question was occasionally accompanied by comments indicating a lack of readiness to use the internet to promote any Pledge and we were told: *"We haven't set up a website yet, but would link when we have"*. One person also reported that they were *"Not sure my ease of using computer technology is up to links to web sites!"* and further investigation into these technical barriers would be very worthwhile.

Funding for the concept of a Scilly Pledge, including a copywriter to create the final prose, could come from a variety of sources to spread the cost and signify its broad support from the project partners. An independent party (designer, #15) estimated initial costings for a high-quality video, digital marketing, public launch, campaign for national and international press, and tangible accessories, to be about £20,000. A high-quality video would be needed to share on the plane and ferry during passenger journeys, cementing the message made in the Pledge. Widgets and web development would likely comprise an additional £5,000 in expenses.

A physical touch point for the Pledge could also be provided at the main transport terminals via the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company (Penzance Harbour and Land's End Airport), Council of the Isles of Scilly (St Mary's Airport) and Penzance & Tresco Heliports and the Duchy of Cornwall (St Mary's Harbour). There is potential to incorporate theatrics and a certain amount of ceremony around the signing of the Pledge which would indicate to visitors that their actions are important. A decorative plinth, displaying the number of times an electronic button is pressed to confirm acceptance of the Pledge by a visitor, was installed in Reykjavik airport (Sigurjónsson, 2018) and a similar installation could be installed on the Scillonian III. A designer (#14) based in Cornwall quoted this equipment to cost at least £5,000.

Overall, the concept of a Scilly Pledge received widespread support from business owners and residents. Comments frequently mentioned the bond that regular visitors already have with the islands, warning that the relationship must not be jeopardised by a pledge that insinuates any past misdemeanours. The museum has a series of interactive stalls and touch points opening in summer 2021 that will be helpful in indicating how visitors to Scilly can be involved in environmental and community initiatives. Moreover, the 'stories' to be told through effective monitoring and dissemination of information regarding the anticipated behaviour changes are pivotal to the perceived success of this approach. While this research has exposed the potential of this idea, it would be important to assess visitor perceptions as soon as possible.



The proposal for a State of Nature Report

Our research revealed significant limits to public and scientific understanding about the state of nature on the Isles of Scilly, as well as the potential impact of visitors. There is an evident lack of information and public debate about the state of wildlife locally, and about the intensity or impacts of pressures from a variety of sources.

In this regard, it is important to note that the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust does monitor specific species and habitats on their own land holding, ensuring that the practical habitat management they do is working and identifying areas for corrective action. The Trust reports that this has been in place for three years but could be augmented by a larger scale effort. In addition, the Trust has also undertaken annual seabird surveillance and monitoring efforts for over 20 years, which feeds into national datasets. In combination, this activity has helped to identify the decline and some losses of flora and fauna, and seminal texts on Scilly's species such as *Lousley's Flora of the Isles of Scilly* (1972) list species which are no longer found.

A UK-wide 'State of Nature' report was initially introduced in 2013, with successive iterations every three years (Hayhow et al., 2019), and related work is now being developed in Cornwall. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the lack of evidence about the state of nature on Scilly was most keenly felt by those charged with managing and improving the environment, as one land and ecosystem manager explained:

"There's huge uncertainty, you know, complete lack of decent datasets, monitoring datasets, which really understand the socio-economics and the ecology of what's going on." (#4)

This lack of data was widely acknowledged, and another land and ecosystem manager described how *"we're all saying we just haven't got information about Scilly, it's the same across the board"* (#2). It is clear that data on the health or change in populations of different species is needed for a well-founded understanding of the condition of the natural environment, but it is also crucial for identifying pressures and prioritising conservation or recovery efforts. As two land and ecosystem managers explained:

"Recreational disturbance is another thing that's increasing a lot. Again, we haven't got a baseline, so it's really tricky to say that it's increasing because it's all anecdotal." (#2)

"My gut feeling is that recreational disturbance is certainly higher - certainly the most prevalent [marine] surface pressure in Scilly." (#4)

Two other land and ecosystem managers stressed that at least some wildlife disturbance was the result of ignorance, and that education was crucial, even if it may be a challenge to reach some audiences:

"Many of the issues with wildlife disturbances also come from [...] people who bring down a jet ski and don't need to hire, rent or use a business to be out on the water [...] The feeling is that most wildlife disturbances are through ignorance." (#10)

The lack of an evidence 'baseline' means that even experts can rely on 'gut feeling' in assessing the relative impacts of different pressures. At the stakeholder workshop, there was agreement among participants that any problems needed to be understood and communicated before solutions were proposed. A land and ecosystem manager speaking at the workshop summarised a general feeling among attendees that it would *"be useful to try and articulate the degradation of the environment - can we be more precise, is it being caused by visitors? And if so, where? And what? What are the problems and try and understand them before we sort of sculpt the solution around that?"* (#8)

Measures geared to educate the public and raise awareness of potential impacts on wildlife were preferred over more authoritative or punitive measures. A land and ecosystem manager emphasised that *"Police' is the wrong word...you want to encourage better behaviour."* (#4)

A tourism business representative similarly emphasised that, when raising awareness, it is important to *“do it well, so it’s a positive thing. Not so it’s like an enforcement and not sort of another stick to beat people with because there’s plenty of rules and regulations to come a cropper with.”* (#7)

Gathering existing data and collecting more data on the state of nature, in order to establish a baseline and monitor change over time, has already been identified as a key task by the AONB. Along with standardised ecological data collection methods, participants in our research suggested that citizen science approaches and testimonies from fishers might be used to raise the quantity of data and extend the historical perspective.

In this regard, there is scope for exploring the human resources available for doing this work and there are established specialists in Scilly (such as in relation to butterflies and moths, for example) that could be engaged in this work, preferably with a data sharing agreement in place. The Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS) already collates and manages data in the region and is eager to be involved in any new work on the Isles of Scilly. In addition, it may be possible to identify additional resources from Universities in the region. The University of Exeter is keen to involve students in data collection during regular trips already organised by the College of Life and Environmental Sciences (including students taking degrees in Environmental Science, Geography, Zoology, and Ecology). The Universities of Plymouth and Falmouth, and Plymouth’s Marine Laboratory, also have connections that could be further developed.

ERCCIS is also developing a new App with simple protocols for data collection that could be utilised by any monitoring groups. By working in partnership with visitor-facing businesses and income-generating activities such as wildlife safaris, bird watching tours, and voluntourism, it would also be possible to garner new data. Workshops are regularly run by ERCCIS on the mainland to improve the quality of data collected by volunteer groups and these could restart on Scilly once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. These workshops are largely aimed at conservation professionals and resident volunteer groups, although volunteers and visitors could also be engaged. However, the challenge will lie in developing sufficient local expertise and the necessary funding to sustain ongoing monitoring activities, as well as related activity to take remedial and restorative action.

Finding synergies between the visitor economy and the natural environment in Scilly

Responsibility for minimising tourist impacts on nature and its regeneration is distributed among different organisations on the Isles of Scilly, but our research found that roles exist in a moderately formalised way. These roles include expertise about nature and ecological best practice, coordination and representation of business interests, and communication with visitors and island residents. The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, and its CEO Sarah Mason, were regarded by a number of tourism business representatives as the islands’ authority on nature, with responsibility to protect the island’s wildlife and associated habitats, as these comments suggest:

“Sarah [CEO] ... will have some very clear evidence of how and where the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust’s ambitions can be better managed, in the interests of both the visitor experience and maintaining a sensitive but positive working relationship with the local community.” (#3)

“Sarah Mason made the point ... sometimes you’ve got to look over a longer period of time to see what the changes have been.” (#7)

In a similar vein, two interviewees (#6, #7), a business representative and a transport and utility provider, suggested that, given their expertise, the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust is already set up to co-ordinate nature’s regeneration and guide education efforts.

With regards to leading and facilitating business engagement with this agenda, one interviewee, a transport and utility provider, thought that, given the importance of nature to the visitor economy on the islands, the Council of the Isles of Scilly should play a central role, saying that *“the council certainly could lead on it”* (#5), although others argued that the IP could also take on more of this role.

In addition, it was recognised that the Duchy has close links to farmers on the islands and could facilitate dialogue and the exchange of best practice among them, particularly as they are now advocating more regenerative forms of agriculture as part of their natural capital approach (#7).

Our research identified widespread agreement that everyone on Scilly has a responsibility to protect the islands' wildlife and maintain the natural environment, as indicated by this survey comment from a business respondent:

"Personally, I feel islanders need to set an example and start clearing waste in fields and outside of their barns. The Duchy should contribute with tidying up the islands as this reflects badly on them."

An IP member raised a similar point saying that establishing high levels of environmentally sensitive behaviour on the islands would help establish positive norms for visitors:

"Maybe you/we shouldn't ask visitors to do something that is not universally practised by the locals or residents."

Our background research found that there are increasingly significant benefits for businesses that embrace sustainability, as visitors increasingly prioritise the environment. (For a fuller summary see Appendix D). Research conducted in 2020 found that 53% of global travellers wanted to travel more sustainably (Booking.com, 2020) and these changes were noted by one survey respondent who reported:

"Future visitors are likely to be climate and eco-savvy and will expect this approach from an island destination with a fragile environment, as can be seen around the world. You could ask 'why is Scilly not doing this already and capitalising on the growing responsible tourism market?' People who live here might think this approach off-putting, but do they really know their market?"



Funding directly from visitors

Work to conserve and regenerate nature is financially demanding. At present, there is no reliable funding stream established to regenerate the natural environment on the Isles of Scilly. Our investigation briefly explored the viability of a number of potential fundraising options; we raised the idea in the stakeholder workshop and later asked survey respondents about using the Pledge to encourage charitable donations to protect and enhance the natural environment. We also asked businesses some additional questions about their willingness to encourage charitable donations from their customers and, as indicated in Table 12, just over a third would be happy to do so, although a further half were unsure and only 10% of the sample were firmly against the idea.

Table 12: Willingness of business respondents to encourage charitable donations from visitors to maintain Scilly's natural environment

	Number	%
Yes	23	37
Maybe	34	54
No	6	10
Total	63	100

Those with reservations about encouraging donations provided a variety of reasons for this, including remarks about the relative expense of visiting Scilly and their reluctance to add to that cost. Others also thought that all charities should be included, not just those pertaining to nature. However, the overriding concern was caution about telling visitors what they should do, as these IP Members explained:

"Scilly is already a high priced product and the majority of us make our living from tourism. Any sort of donation should be absolutely discretionary and visitors should definitely not feel pressured into it."

"As an accommodation provider I don't feel it's my place to encourage donations, but I am happy to display supporting material so my guests can make their own choices."

One IP Member declined to promote donations on the basis that they were already encouraging donations, and there were three comments from business respondents warning against overtly associating the Pledge with financial contributions. One IP member felt that eliciting donations alongside a visitor pledge would undermine the effectiveness of the Pledge because *"I think then it just looks like a money-making exercise rather than a genuine movement for progress"*.

A follow-up question about the scope for encouraging charitable donations further explored the means by which such donations could be raised (Table 13).

Table 13: Business respondents' preferences for ways to facilitate charitable donations for the maintenance of the natural environment

Method	Number	%
Promoting Friends of Scilly Wildlife scheme	36	73
Hosting a physical donation point	20	41
Introducing the option to give a donation on booking	17	35
Including a donation in the price of a particular product	11	22
Other	1	2

NB: Only respondents who had indicated that they were or may be open to encourage donations from visitors were asked to select as many options as they wanted from a list of ways to facilitate donations. There was a free text option for suggestions not on the list. The results are ranked by the number of times they were selected by those who provided at least one answer (n=49). Respondents disinclined to encourage donations were presented with a free text option to expand on this view (n=5), as reported below.

The strong support for promoting the Friends of Scilly Wildlife (Friends) Scheme (73%) demonstrates the distinct role that the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust plays in protecting nature on Scilly. The Friends Scheme is an annual supporter scheme available for visitors only and there is a corresponding, cheaper, membership to the Trust for local residents. In interview, a tourism business owner said they would be willing to promote the Friends Scheme if appropriate flyers were available, and existing leaflets could be more widely distributed in future.

A physical donation point was selected by 41% of respondents. This is a concept that could be further explored, perhaps at transport terminals or the Tourist Information Centre that is run by the Islands' Partnership. A sizeable minority suggested some form of visitor

giving, either when booking (35%), or as part of the price of a product or service (22%). This bodes very well for channelling support for either the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust or alternative charitable activities in Scilly. One additional proposal was made for *"events that celebrate [the] environment - with opportunity for speakers or experts to share experience"* in order to raise funds, and again, this could be further explored.

The concept of Visitor Giving, which encompasses a donation option upon booking or including a donation in the price of a particular product, was also discussed during the stakeholder workshop. Evidence from previous visitor surveys (The South West Research Company, 2018) alongside case studies from other UK locations won support amongst participants. However, there was caution around the administration of these initiatives, as, depending on how the donations are implemented, businesses may need support in allocating donations from their takings. Both businesses and beneficiary organisations would need to be transparent about where funding was directed and how it was spent for any Visitor Giving scheme to be accepted (Merrell et al., 2019). Two representatives from transport and utility providers felt that donors would want to see where their money was going, perhaps even contributing to specific schemes:

"I think visitors would happily help out if they knew what they're helping, if there was a definite sort of aim" (#6)

"And maybe it is a case of, rather than have a central fund, all businesses can actually select who they would like the money to go to, based on certain campaigns." (#5)

In 2020, an option for customers to donate to the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust when buying a ferry or plane ticket through the Steamship Company was added to the process of booking a ticket. Over the past two years, this has raised funds to support the Trust's work to 'Keep Scilly Special'. The option to donate on booking may be difficult to integrate for some businesses on Scilly because some patrons are still required to book over the phone. Some business owners may also find raising the issue of charitable donations an awkward topic. Further investigation into technical barriers to anonymous donations via booking websites would be very worthwhile, building on the positive outcomes of the Steamship Company's work.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Developing a Scilly Pledge

There is solid local support for creating a Scilly Pledge. This would comprise a short text expressing an intention to tread lightly and behave mindfully. It would require a form of signature from the visitor as validation of their commitment. A Scilly Pledge would be a gentle reminder of island fragilities set alongside a celebration of the distinctive bio-cultural characteristics of Scilly. The wording needs to be carefully crafted in order to encourage and normalise positive, responsible behaviour, creating a culture of pride in the islands and personal responsibility whilst avoiding reprimand. There is no ambition nor need to police visitors, though there is clear support for increasing awareness of certain risks to the characteristics of Scilly on which local people depend.

An inclusive co-creation process, involving following IP's destination brand guidelines and development by a skilled copywriter, would maximise buy-in from the local community and visitors. Building on the long-list of prominent features identified by our research, further engagement with stakeholders, residents, and visitors is required to finalise the Pledge content and devise the precise final wording. These words would need to underpin associated visual material to enhance the messages being shared. In other locations, this has involved the production of a short video that is shared with visitors when travelling to the destination, an asset that could also be developed for Scilly.

Visitors would interact with the Pledge at various online and physical touch points. A plan would be needed to ensure that the Pledge is prominent online, before visitors arrive on or travel to Scilly, and during the travel experience from the mainland; this is likely to include a webpage, a widget for integration on third-party websites (e.g. accommodation providers), physical pledge stations at ports and airports, as well as a short video to show prior to departure or en-route.

A communications agency would need to be recruited to produce materials (branding and film) and a promotional campaign. Our conversations with stakeholders suggest that the 'Visit Scilly' brand, run by the Islands' Partnership, would be an appropriate co-ordinator for the Pledge, hosting the website and engaging the community, stakeholders, and visitors. The Visit Scilly brand is perceived as the collective face of the islands meaning the Pledge would be understood as coming from the whole of 'us' rather than any one institution.

For visitor touch-points, the Steamship Company, Duchy of Cornwall, Council of the Isles of Scilly, and Penzance Heliport could facilitate physical interactions. Co-operation with other island businesses would be needed to encourage the addition of a widget to their websites. More widely, businesses and the community would need to be involved and support the concept, using other opportunities to provide subtle reminders of its messages (e.g. stickers in shop windows).

The impact that the Scilly Pledge has on visitor attitudes towards the environment would need to be measured to better understand how it is shaping understanding and behaviour. In defining and monitoring success, one metric could be an aspirational number of signatures (e.g. 30,000 over two years).

Engaging the community to shape the Pledge concept is necessary to create a genuine promise for the future of Scilly. Testing acceptability of the Pledge with visitors has not yet been carried out and is recommended as an immediate step over the summer of 2021.

The Scilly Pledge could prove a valuable way of increasing understanding and appreciation of not only Scilly's rich and unique natural and cultural heritage, but also its fragility. By creating this sense of value and responsibility, visitor behaviour could become increasingly conscientious, leading to the protection and even enhancement of Scilly's natural environment.

Reporting on the 'State of Nature' on the Isles of Scilly

There is a clear need for a baseline assessment and regular monitoring of the state of nature on the Isles of Scilly. This needs to be based on a systematic analysis of the available data on as wide a range of taxa and species over as long a period as possible. The initial assessment, involving scoping, data identification, and analysis, will take longer than subsequent updates.

This activity would require support from a researcher or coordinator for a sufficient period of time, with access to existing resources and scope to develop new monitoring systems.

A coalition of organisations, including the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, the Duchy of Cornwall, the Council of the Isles of Scilly, the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, the University of Exeter, and other research institutes, could be convened to develop this work.

A holistic assessment of the state of nature would, first, guide the local nature recovery strategy and investment in policy and practice. Second, it would establish a baseline against which future interventions to recover nature or alleviate pressures can be evaluated. Third, the report would provide accessible information and graphics for education activities to raise public and policy-maker awareness. Fourth, the assessment could showcase successful conservation initiatives which have helped nature to flourish, justifying optimism and contributing to the case for further funding.

Raising charitable donations to support Scilly's natural environment

Though not a primary focus, the project uncovered evidence of willingness to raise charitable donations for the protection and development of the natural environment on the Isles of Scilly. The project survey found that a third of business respondents were willing to ask their visitors to make such donations, and only 10% were firmly opposed to the idea.

There was business support for promoting the Friends of Scilly Wildlife Scheme run by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, as well as for hosting a physical donation point, and including an option to donate when booking. Such voluntary giving has already been successfully implemented by the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company whereby visitors are asked to make a voluntary donation to the Wildlife Trust when they book to travel. This demonstrates that visitors are able and willing to make a voluntary donation, and this partnership already provides an invaluable source of funds for the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust.

While research respondents were reluctant to make a direct connection between the Scilly Pledge and fundraising, the Pledge could be developed to initiate conversations about raising resources for the natural environment. Otherwise, it might be decided to keep the Pledge separate from fundraising, and rather run a parallel campaign around raising resources for nature's protection and recovery. Additional research could identify models and methods of fundraising that would work for the community and environment in the Isles of Scilly.



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Appendices

Appendix A: Stakeholder workshop attendees

Name	Association
Nick Bond	Islands' Partnership (IP)
Jeremy Brown	Islands' Partnership (IP)
Mark Duddridge	CIOS Local Enterprise Partnership
Clifford Freeman	Scilly Self Catering, The Hall Hotel, The Beach Restaurant
Sam Hicks	Troytown Farm, St Agnes
Tom Hooper	Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (IFCA)
Luke Humphries	Deputy Land Steward, Isles of Scilly, Duchy of Cornwall
Sarah Mason	Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust
Diana Mompoloki	Tresco Estate
Joe Pender	St Mary's Boatsmen's Association
Stuart Reid	Isles of Scilly Steamship Group
Helen Richards	SW Water
Nicola Stinson	Council of the Isles of Scilly

Appendix B: Visitor pledges in other countries

Three examples were shared in the survey:

New Zealand: https://youtu.be/Um4xGiD_bLw

Finland: <https://youtu.be/9RALybxw1gs>

Hawaii: (video by Hill Balfour) <https://youtu.be/KLdlQycshWg>

Case study: Palau

The Palau Pledge is written as an oath to the children of Palau. The campaign includes a physical stamp in the passport of every tourist as they pass through customs, alongside brochures, passport booklets, a website, street signage, and a four-minute inflight video narrated by local children. Furthermore, the signed document is a legal form of immigration legislation.

"Children of Palau, I take this pledge as your guest, to preserve and protect your beautiful and unique island home. I vow to tread lightly, act kindly, and explore mindfully. I shall not take what is not given. I shall not harm what does not harm me. The only footprints I shall leave are those that will wash away."

Launched in December 2017, Palau was the first country in the world to implement a mandatory pledge for visitors. The participation of children in the Palau Pledge campaign not only added a deep human connection with visitors but also allowed the community to embrace the campaign as their own. As an official, personal item, the integration of the pledge with individual passports at customs added a profound layer of seriousness. In 2017 the Responsible Tourism Education Act turned the pledge into law and held corporations accountable.

The tremendous media attention from outlets around the world helped spread awareness of the island's brand. According to Havas (the creators of the Pledge), 96% of those visiting Palau said 'the pledge made them consider their actions more closely, and 65% said they used its principles during their stay to remind others about the right way to protect the delicate environment' (Havas PR, 2019).

Case study: Iceland

The Icelandic Pledge is a voluntary promise that travellers make to take a more active role in accepting responsibility for their actions.

Launched in June 2017, The Icelandic Pledge is part of a much larger responsible tourism development plan developed alongside the ‘Iceland Academy’, which was launched in 2016. Both encourage informed behaviour from visitors through inspirational, informative, and often playful video classes. Online signatories receive a shareable digital badge to demonstrate their support on social media.

An evaluation involving a visitor survey in 2017 found that very few had taken the “Icelandic Pledge to be a responsible tourist” (Bird and Gísladóttir, 2020). Bird and Gísladóttir suggested that officials consider incentivising commitment to entice adoption and compliance.

So while a Pledge can be a powerful tool for educating travellers to cultural nuances and pro-environmental behaviour, it is not a comprehensive means to guide and influence traveller behaviour.

Appendix C: Survey Results

Demographics of business respondents to the survey:

Size of business (number of employees)	Number	%
<5	50	86
<15	9	16
<50	2	3
>50	1	2
Total	58	100

Activity	Number	%
Accommodation	46	73
Food & drink	11	17
Other Hospitality	1	2
Retail	14	22
Tours	6	10
Transport	4	6
Sports	1	2
Other	2	3
Number of business responses to this question	63	100

Demographics of resident respondents to the survey:

Occupation	Number	%
Employed	29	74
Retired	7	18
Temporary resident	2	5
Other	1	3
Total	39	100

Age	Number	%
<18	0	0
18-34	7	18
35-64	26	65
>65	7	18
Total	40	100

Appendix D: The global tourism industry and sustainability

In 2016, tourism accounted for 10% of the global economy and was projected to grow 4% annually until 2030 (UNWTO, 2018). This growth has consequences for local communities and ecosystems, particularly where demand has been greatest (Wood et al., 2019). Over time, industry managers have tended to divide between those focused on expansion (Hall, 2008) and those who recognise the need for boundaries, aiming to manage tourism so that it is more responsible and sustainable (Bramwell et al., 2008). There is new evidence to suggest that even as tourist numbers increase, margins are falling and the industry is no longer supporting its local population as it did in the past (Wood et al., 2019). The demand for more sustainable models of tourism is thus likely to grow.

Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector, there is a risk that some industry specialists and policy makers will be calling for unparalleled efforts at revival and growth. The United Nations World Tourism Organization has estimated there was an 80% decline in international tourism in 2020, associated with US\$1.2 trillion loss in revenues, with a risk to 120 million tourism jobs (UNWTO, 2020). Given the importance of the tourism industry, and the severe impact of the global pandemic, there is a danger that the environmental burdens will be ignored in the push to recover.

As the tourism industry has grown over the past 50 years, the environmental pressures have become increasingly apparent. Budowski’s paper in 1976 was one of the first in the field to discuss how tourism relates to nature and the dangerous implications of a ‘laissez-faire’ approach. He highlighted the importance of the industry working with conservationists and the local community to ensure that tourism could be better planned and managed. Since that paper was published, a much larger body of literature has developed in the field of sustainable tourism and, more recently, regenerative tourism. Scholars differentiate between extractive, sustainable, and regenerative models of tourism (see Table D1).

Table D1: Models of tourism and their implications for nature

Tourism Model	Characteristics	Relationship to Nature
Extractive	The sale and consumption of local natural resources and culture.	Conflict
Sustainable	Efforts to manage the burdens of tourism with as little impact on nature and local culture as possible whilst generating employment.	Co-existence
Regenerative	Non-extractive tourism that exists in balance with the local community and provides resources to conserve and regenerate nature.	Symbiosis

Source: Sofronov (2017); Sheller (2020); Budowski (1976)

Although tourism is often framed as a non-extractive service industry, Sheller (2020) exposes the ‘extractive’ forms of tourism that depend on the commodification of places without regard for the negative impact this has on local communities and natural environments. These forms of tourism are often underpinned by a market-oriented view that tourism is ‘just another business’ with little recognition of its associated costs, impacts and potential conflict with nature, local infrastructure, communities, and culture (also known as the ‘externalities’ of the sector) (Marcouiller, 2007).

In 1980s Britain, heritage and associated tourist and leisure activities were often seen as an economic cure for economically deprived regions, such as Cornwall. There was a common argument that “anything that brings money into an area is an improvement” (Bulstrode, 1988, cited in Deacon et al., 1988: 1). While tourists have brought money and stimulated employment in many places, there is now much wider recognition of the need to reconsider the extractive qualities of tourism and take a more sustainable view in relation to the environment, as well as employment quality and the distribution of wealth (Zwegers, 2018).

Sustainable tourism is defined as tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities (UNWTO, 2019). This requires specific policies and strategies to make it happen (Boluk et al., 2019; Hall, 2019; Scheyvens and Hughes, 2019), with associated monitoring to understand local impacts and the capacity to deploy preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary (Sgroi, 2020). Even then, there is a significant challenge in ensuring that the promise of protecting assets for future generations can be delivered (Wood et al., 2019). As Noel Josephides, Chair of the Travel Foundation (cited in Wood et al., 2019: 5) recently put it:

“A few destinations are, commendably, seeking to take a different approach. Some are introducing tourism taxes, some are placing restrictions on certain types of tourism (such as AirBnB and cruises), some are adapting their marketing strategies and are becoming more concerned about residents’ views. But these responses are generally reacting to a specific issue that has reached a flash point and can no longer be ignored. What other issues may be simmering under the surface waiting to appear in years to come? My sense is that we are not getting to the root of the problem. And that not much, and not enough, is changing in the way we manage tourism.”

In this regard, recent efforts have focused on a more ambitious approach to reconciling tourism with the pressures it causes. There has been increased advocacy for regenerative tourism where “visitors and destinations are part of a living system embedded into the natural environment, and it [tourism] operates under nature’s rules and principles” (Hussain, 2021: 2). This approach recognises the interconnected nature of tourism and is designed to give back to people, place and nature. Some forms of regenerative tourism have also moved

away from a focus on raising money to include enterprise, exchange, labour, transactions, property, and other assets that can be mobilised to regenerate the local environment and its communities (Cave, 2020). You could imagine a tourist industry that works directly with local farmers to support their work, builds renewable energy micro-grids, and locally stimulates regenerative circular economies that also reduce waste (Sheller, 2020). Such practices would benefit the broader community, well beyond those directly involved in the visitor economy, widening support for an industry that has often been seen in a negative light.

Whilst looking at regenerative tourism in general, it is important to understand the different requirements for islands. The geographical isolation of islands makes them attractive destinations for vacation, but islands' scale and ecological sensitivity means their natural environments are amongst the world's most fragile. They provide a small-scale example of the wider global problems we are facing. Small island tourist destinations often face particular difficulties with poorly regulated coastal development, litter management, shortage of freshwater, overfishing, soil salination and sand mining. Many have not been successful at stabilizing these issues and may now be particularly hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated travel disruption. Reversing this situation is challenging, but global best practice highlights the need to start by working with the local community to develop a destination management plan that can meet their needs, while also sustaining the environment on which the economy has come to depend (Sheller, 2020). The restricted access to islands means local communities and their leaders often have greater control over how they want to welcome visitors, allowing them to 'set the tone' for a visit. This approach has been successfully developed in a number of island tourist destinations such as Bali, where all visitors must surrender plastics on arrival, and Palau, where the visitor pledge involves high fines for anyone who breaks it. Defining how the island wants to be treated from the inside can develop an external brand image, signaling a niche product to those who come and to adopt the standards set by the community (Vanhove, 2001).

With the COVID-19 pandemic impacting the international tourism market for the island of Aotearoa New Zealand, the industry has had a chance to look inwards, engage more deeply with indigenous wisdom on the island and discuss developing a domestic market that is rooted in regenerative travel. In 2018, 40% of New Zealanders surveyed were worried about the effect of the growing number of tourists upon infrastructure, way of life and the environment (Cropp, 2017, 2018). There has been a

campaign of public engagement around the challenges facing the sector, reflecting growing concern about the contradictions imposed when creating a better natural environment, only to continue exploiting it. Instead, they are advocating a necessary reassessment of what kind of tourism they would like to see in order to stem any further degeneration, allowing regeneration to occur (Matunga et al., 2020). In Maori culture, tourism cannot be separated from the health of people and place. It is therefore to be 'additive' as opposed to 'extractive'. This way of thinking is seeping into mainstream literature, discussion, and policy development. Tourism New Zealand is putting the need to give back more than we consume at the "heart of every single thing we do" (Tourism New Zealand CEO Stephen England-Hall, 2020).

VisitScotland provides an example of these developments closer to home. They were the first national tourist organisation to declare a climate emergency in 2020 and the organisation is providing advice for tourism businesses about how they can reduce emissions and become more responsible. They are aiming to protect communities and local environments and have been in the process of forming partnerships with environmental experts and bodies to raise the bar across the whole industry (VisitScotland, 2020).

As the global tourism industry recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, any additional growth is likely to add to the burdens faced in places that are already suffering the combined pressures of ecosystem degradation and climate change. As such, it is a critical moment to consider the future direction of the industry, and ways to ensure that recovery works in symbiosis with local ecosystems and communities, sustaining them for the long term. The draft industrial strategy for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly pledges to ensure that the visitor economy becomes a "global leader for low carbon experiences for visitors and residents, maximising links to the environment, heritage and culture" (CIOSLEP, 2020: 59). Visit Cornwall has been developing its post-pandemic strategy and is exploring how to put the regeneration of nature and tourism at the centre of its objectives. In order to achieve these goals collaboration will be required beyond traditional industry silos. A new way of thinking will be needed to prioritise the regeneration of the environment and local communities, working within the boundaries of the natural environment.

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