

Project: Marketing the Natural Environment

Client: Northwest Development Agency and English Nature

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The environment and the natural assets of the Northwest are among the best of any region in England. An appreciation of the importance of these natural assets to the economic well-being of the region has emerged over the last few years and in 2003 a Natural Economy Steering Group was established to maximise the economic contribution of the region's natural assets. This project emerged from the work of this group and TEAM was appointed to help develop the contribution of the natural environment to the Northwest's economy in general, and tourism in particular.

The specific aims of this piece of work were to:

- Identify the regionally significant natural assets of the Northwest
- Recommend new marketing opportunities for these assets to enhance regional tourism marketing and the image of the region
- Recommend new opportunities for effective ways of working among owners and managers of these environmental assets and tourism bodies.

It involved the following stages:

1. An audit of regionally significant natural assets; where they are; what they offer to visitors; how they are promoted
2. Mapping of the assets by different categories which could easily be transferred onto the web providing a user-friendly searchable database for visitors
3. Discussion and consultation with key players from tourism and owners of these sites to understand what is currently happening and gather views through individual meetings and two workshop sessions
4. A review of how the natural environment is currently marketed
5. An appraisal of market trends and opportunities
6. Identification of those target markets with most potential using Arkenford segmentation
7. Recommendations for marketing the natural assets
8. Recommendations for product development
9. Recommendations for more effective collaboration and joint working at strategic and site level.

These recommendations were accepted by NWDA and English Nature, and by early 2006 they had already begun to implement both marketing recommendations and putting in place mechanisms for collaboration and investing in product development.