

Tourism in North Devon

An online survey was launched to North Devon residents on Monday 4th May at 5pm and the 1031 submissions up to 3pm on Thursday 7th May analysed.

The data shows clear concerns about tourists returning to North Devon this year, even with social distancing measures in place.

Would you welcome tourists back to North Devon this year if they were allowed?

Totals	regardless of social distancing		with social distancing measures in place	
	absolute	%	absolute	%
Yes, now	31	3.0	40	3.9
Yes, in June	113	11.0	131	12.7
Yes, in July	197	19.1	240	23.3
Not sure	245	23.8	255	24.7
No, not at all	445	43.2	365	35.4
Total Responses	1031		1031	

The top three reasons stated for this were the size of our hospital, concern about the virus being brought from outside the area and concern about the local economy.

The survey asked what order residents would like to see tourism sectors reopen and there is a significant interest in opening up our waters again and hope that the RNLI will resume their services rapidly, as this may also be the start of a “day tripper” opening to our tourism sector. Zoos would also fit into the either a regional opening of the tourism sector or just day trippers.

In what order would you safely reopen tourism and hospitality businesses if allowed from 1-10? 1 being the first type of business that should open 10 being the last type of business to open.

Type of Business	Total Score	Rank	Mean	Rank
Watersports	4297	1	4.17	1
Zoos	4435	2	4.30	2
Self catering homes	4823	3	4.68	3
Second home owners	5227	4	5.07	4
Restaurants	5956	5	5.78	5
Campsites	6043	6	5.91	6
B&Bs	6202	7	6.02	7
Hotels	6667	8	6.47	8
Pubs	6808	9	6.60	9
Holiday parks	7216	10	7.00	10

It is interesting to note that the holiday parks, who are the sector most keen to reopen, is the least popular with residents. There is concern locally about food supplies as our supermarkets are still not fully re-stocked, and historically there have been food supply issues when surges in tourism. This is

particularly interesting as residents believe holiday parks of greatest importance to our local economy.

On a scale of one to ten, one being the most important, ten being least important. How important do you think each of the following tourism and hospitality industries are to North Devon?

Type of Business	Total Score	Rank	Mean	Rank
Holiday parks	3615	1	3.51	1
Campsites	3750	2	3.68	2
Hotels	3926	3	3.81	3
Restaurants	3933	4	3.81	4
Pubs	4156	5	4.03	5
Self catering homes	4251	6	4.12	6
B&Bs	4271	7	4.14	7
Watersports	4743	8	4.60	8
Zoos	5397	9	5.23	9
Second home owners	6952	10	6.74	10

How we balance the needs of the tourism sector as we unlock and the fears of the resident population is not to be underestimated. To date I have not seen any model which explains how tourism can now open, how R behaves if people move from areas of high infection to low infection. Social distancing if seen as a partial solution will need to be robustly explained to residents as to why it is effective.

How we open up our area to tourism will of course be in line with national recommendations, which will of course greatly depend on the science and data around the number of new cases, the level of R and our hospital capacity. As and when the Government decides we can open up tourism I am sure that public opinion and support will be a factor. What this survey does highlight is that while the largest number of people are either unsure or do not want tourism to open up this year, they do understand that there are some obvious parts of the industry that could be opened up earlier than others. Water sports or outdoor activities can be easily managed with social distancing and as a nation we already understand how to do this. Zoos can be carefully managed attractions with limited numbers of visitors and the public are acutely aware of the support that they need to not only survive but to support and care for the animals. The same rationale could be attributed to galleries and museums as attractions that do not involve any contact with the exhibits. Self-catering homes also showed a strong support in areas that could be safely opened. People can safely stay home away from home and while we are concerned about an influx of visitors this seems a way of easing our tourism economy back on track.

Whatever the proposed exit from lockdown, it is clear that our tourism industry needs extensive and ongoing support in the coming 12 months and I would be delighted to be a part of working through this wherever possible locally and nationally.

Selaine Saxby
MP for North Devon