

# TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## CASE STUDY: SEVEN SISTERS COUNTRY PARK, EAST SUSSEX

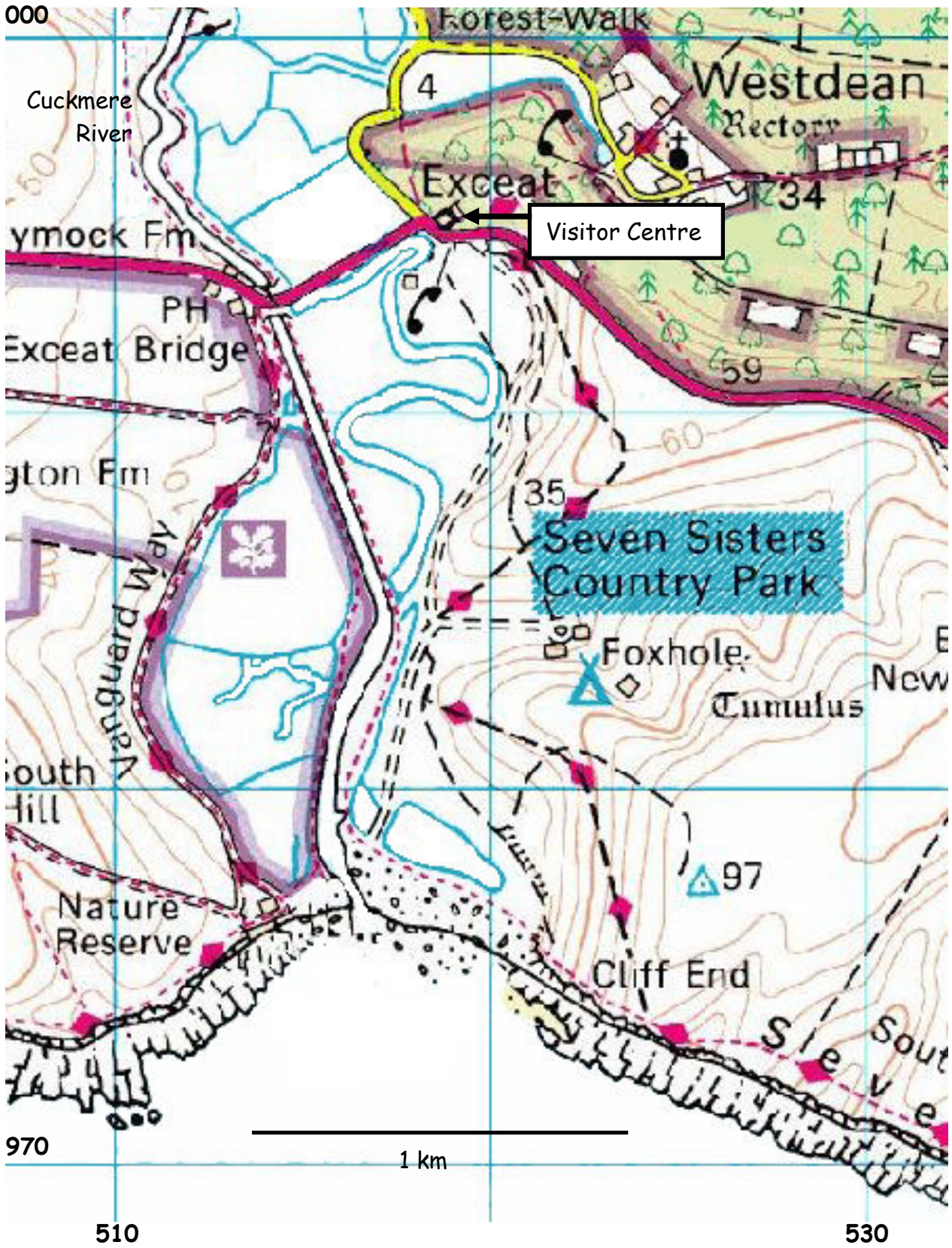
Visit: [www.sevensisters.org.uk](http://www.sevensisters.org.uk)

Seven Sisters Country Park is situated in the lower Cuckmere valley in East Sussex, between Seaford and Eastbourne, just off the A259. It covers an area of 280 hectares, or 692 acres, within the Sussex Heritage Coast, and is one of the few remaining unspoilt stretches of coast in South East England. It is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), comprising the beautiful river valley and estuary of the River Cuckmere, as well as part of the famous Seven Sisters Cliffs. The area includes a large number of habitats: chalk downland and cliffs, valley floor, river, lagoons, shingle beach, saltmarsh, shore platform (which is a Voluntary Marine Conservation Area). It is an SSSI (a Site of Special Scientific interest) because of its high ecological and geological value.

There is a visitor centre with exhibitions about the area, a restaurant, toilets, car parks, as well as a camping barn in a more remote part of the Park



Map showing part of Seven Sisters Country Park



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**Beaches At Risk - KS3 Resource pack**

This project is part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).



**1. On the map:**

a) Colour the river and sea in blue and colour the coastal lagoon (the lake at the south end of the valley, at 518977) in purple. This was dug especially for waders and other birds.

b) Give the grid reference of the Visitor Centre at Exceat:

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c) What is the name for the S shaped bends that the Cuckmere created south of Exceat?

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d) Why is the rest of the river very straight?

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e) Taking a walk from the Visitor Centre to the sea, in which compass direction would you walk?

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f) What is the straight line distance from the Visitor Centre to the sea?

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g) On a separate sheet of paper describe the physical features you would see on the walk, noting the shapes of the slopes, the river and other channels, the estuary and the beach.

**2. TOURIST SURVEYS IN THE PARK**

Staff at the Seven Sisters Country Park have made surveys of the visitors to assess their needs and their impact on the Park. In order to assess visitor numbers, cars are counted electronically as they enter the visitors' car parks. To obtain a good estimate of total visitors to the Park (since it is too expensive and more difficult to count actual people) the Park staff calculated the approximate numbers of people from the numbers of cars entering the Park.

a) Looking at the figures overleaf can you work out how many people the Park staff estimated were in each car?



b) Does their estimate of the average numbers of visitors per car coincide with the average number you might estimate for people in your class? If not, why might the class estimate be different from the Park staff's estimate?

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**VISITORS AT SEVEN SISTERS COUNTRY PARK, 2005**

These are the weekly figures for January:

| WEEK          | CARS | PEOPLE |
|---------------|------|--------|
| First         | 1894 | 5491   |
| Second        | 1523 | 4415   |
| Third         | 1561 | 4527   |
| Fourth        | 1281 | 3715   |
| January total |      |        |

c) Calculate the total number of people and cars visiting the Park in January. Enter these figures in the bottom line of the table above. Repeat the figure for the number of people in the top line of the table below:

**Visitors to Seven Sisters Country Park in 2005: Monthly totals**

| MONTH      | PEOPLE  |
|------------|---------|
| January    |         |
| February   | 19,224  |
| March      | 37,373  |
| April      | 26,746  |
| May        | 25,273  |
| June       | 34,612  |
| July       | 51,865  |
| August     | 36,793  |
| September  | 31,688  |
| October    | 12,201  |
| November   | 14,646  |
| December   | 342,663 |
| Year total |         |

d) Draw a suitable graph to the right of the table, to show how visitor numbers to the Park vary through the year.

e) Write a report on the reasons for the seasonal variations in the graph.



f) What problems might the seasonal variations in visitor numbers create for Park staff? Use the idea of **CARRYING CAPACITY**. This is the maximum number of people that a place can absorb before the environment begins to suffer:

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**3. WHERE DO ALL THE VISITORS COME FROM?**

According to the 1995 survey, 71% of visitors make day trips from their homes, and can be called 'day from home' tourists. The other 29% of visitors do not travel from home on the day of their visit because they are on holiday and are visiting the Park from wherever they happen to be staying. They can be called 'day from away' tourists.

a) Draw a Divided Bar to show this division.

As the table shows, about three quarters of the 'day from home' visitors spend an hour or less travelling to the Park. Many, it can be assumed, come from nearby urban areas, such as Eastbourne, Brighton and Lewes. On average, the 'day from away' visitors spend less time travelling to reach the Park, over half taking under half an hour.

| TRAVEL TIME TO PARK | DAY FROM HOME VISITORS | DAY FROM AWAY VISITORS |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Under half an hour  | 34%                    | 55%                    |
| Half to one hour    | 39%                    | 32%                    |
| 1-2 hours           | 21%                    | 10%                    |
| 2-3 hours           | 5%                     | 2%                     |
| Over 3 hours        | 1%                     | 1%                     |

b) Draw two pie charts to show the differences in travel times between the two groups.



**4. WHICH ACTIVITIES DID THE VISITORS CHOOSE?**

The people questioned were shown a card listing possible activities at the Park, and were asked what they would be doing on their particular trip:

| ACTIVITY   | % VISITORS |
|--|------------|
| Walk to beach through valley   | 37%        |
| Picnic   | 38%        |
| Watch birds  | 34%        |
| Short walk (under 2 miles)   | 17%        |
| Longer walk (over 2 miles)   | 33%        |
| Walk the South Downs Way (a long distance path crossing the park)      | 9%         |
| Walk dog   | 10%        |
| Consume a meal or drink at restaurant                                  | 10%        |
| Ride bike  | 9%         |
| Other (including feeding ducks, picking blackberries, and photography) | 5%         |

a) On a separate sheet of paper, draw a suitable graph to show these results.

b) How would you describe most of these activities?

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c) Are they roughly what you expected, or does anything surprise you about them?

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d) How could the questions have been improved?

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## 5. DEMAND FOR NEW FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

When asked to suggest new facilities and activities, these were the answers:

| IMPROVEMENT             | PERCENTAGE |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Nothing - fine as it is | 52%        |
| Better road crossing    | 8%         |
| More litter bins        | 6%         |
| More seating            | 5%         |
| Better parking          | 5%         |
| More toilets            | 4%         |
| Better signposts        | 2%         |
| Better paths            | 2%         |
| Other                   | 7%         |

"Other" included hire of horses, children's crèche, fishing, better public transport, guided bike rides, but no suggestion was mentioned by more than 1% of the respondents.

a) Do these responses suggest that the visitors were satisfied or dissatisfied with what the Park has to offer?

## REACTION TO SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

Visitors were shown a card with this list of ideas for the Country Park, and asked how likely they would be to use them:

| IMPROVEMENT                   | PERCENTAGE |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Craft workshops               | 59%        |
| Guided walk                   | 54%        |
| Farmyard/Pets corner          | 48%        |
| Horse drawn carriage to beach | 47%        |
| Adventure playground          | 46%        |
| Soft play area for children   | 43%        |
| Plant shop/nursery            | 32%        |
| Fast food café                | 8%         |

Note that almost all these suggested new activities relate to the area around the Visitor Centre, the **HONEYPOT** area where most people congregate.



b) Can you suggest any other facilities/ activities that might improve the Park?

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**6. MANAGING THE PARK**

The Managers had a choice in how they developed the park. They could have allowed much more development of a commercial and noisy kind, but they decided instead to keep the area of coast as unspoilt as possible.

Their aim is to keep the area near the sea as a **REMOTE ZONE**, a quiet, tranquil area, to encourage wildlife and peaceful enjoyment of the countryside.

This is in contrast with the **HONEYPOT ZONE** round the visitor centre and car park, with the restaurant, ice cream van and a rather more commercial focus.

Between the two is a **BUFFER ZONE** with intermediate levels of noise.

a) Explain why you agree or do not agree with this management plan:

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**WHAT IS NOT ALLOWED IN THE PARK?**

To achieve these aims some noisy activities have had to be banned from the Park, including:

- Driving vehicles through the Park.
- Caravanning. (When the Park was set up in the 1970s a caravan site near the sea was cleared and the owners compensated. Lightweight camping is allowed, however, at Foxhole Farm, in a side valley.)
- Flying model aircraft.
- Riding motorbikes or quad bikes.
- Using power boats. (Canoeing is encouraged, however.)





The Park is also a working farm. The grazing sheep and cattle do valuable work, keeping the pasture short to allow the growth of a wide variety of wildflowers. This means that all dogs must be kept closely under control, and between February and May, the lambing season, must be on leads at all times. (Simple leads are supplied at the entrance to the Park)

b) Can you think of any other possible conflicts of interest between the farmer's interests and those of other users of the Park?

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c) The area is also an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and a Local Nature Reserve. What rules would you suggest to protect the flora and fauna?

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**THE SEVEN SISTERS VOLUNTARY MARINE CONSERVATION AREA**

This is a voluntary scheme protecting the cliffs, shore platform and marine area of this outstanding coastline.

The magnificent chalk cliffs of Seaford Head and the Seven Sisters are matched by an underwater world of chalk ridges and gullies. These support a rich and diverse marine ecosystem of seaweeds, shellfish, anemones, sponges, crabs and fish.

See also [www.ssvmca.org.uk](http://www.ssvmca.org.uk)

