



## 'East Devon' just doesn't do it for visitors *if you have an interest in the visitor industry, read on...*

If you're involved with the visitor industry in East Devon, you may be aware that consensus out there amongst the visitor based business community is that East Devon's the forgotten region of Devon when it comes to marketing initiatives, either from local government or tourism bodies within the region.

No doubt someone out there will dismiss the above statement and point to something or other to justify themselves, but the fact does remain that with local councils under the increasing burden of housing and care for the elderly, and with the coastal towns having large retired populations, etc, there just isn't the money in the coffers to invest into tourism from locally based sources - it's understandably not seen as a major priority, when more pressing needs remain. You only have to mention English Riviera to understand the value of good marketing - they've been at the front of the queue for years in terms of funding assistance for marketing.

There are also several other major factors where East Devon is at a disadvantage:

**a) Lack of capacity** - so many hotels have been converted into care/nursing homes that there's a shortage, and self-catering is also fairly heavily booked in the summer months. The solution

would be to ensure out-of-season capacity is fully utilised - but we need good reasons for visitors to book out-of-season and equally, highly targeted marketing to get the message out there effectively.

**b) Regional naming/branding** - You have to understand that East Devon doesn't exactly sound inviting, the word "East" being the problem. A warmer sounding solution is needed. But there's a deeper problem that surrounds the "East Devon" regional name - that of internet search semantics:

**c) Internet keyword mis-match** - Over the last 10 years, the internet has transformed to now being a daily part of life, accessible on so many different devices and nearly everywhere. How does this relate to the term "East Devon" you may ask? Well (*and this is the crux of the matter*), visitors considering a visit, generally gravitate towards the coastlines, either North Devon or South Devon, with 'South Devon' being the most heavily searched term. Consequently, South Devon gets the bulk of the visitor traffic for visitors performing internet searches in order to stay on the south coast of Devon. Visitors don't understand that East Devon is on the south coast of Devon, they certainly don't recognise it as a part of the south Devon coastline or even,

as a unique region. In reality, East Devon is a council defined region and never was going to be a coherent destination name. So, if we've established here that 'East Devon' doesn't fit this region in terms of being a suitable destination name, then what would, you may ask? I would suggest to you - and this isn't ground-breaking, in fact I'm almost embarrassed to suggest this, but it's logical, coherent and simple:

### South East Devon!

The first consideration, which is a major one, is that visitors searching for 'South Devon' will now receive results that include: '**South East Devon**', so our previous 'East Devon' based website pages would start to become found in search results (*and not automatically excluded*) - OK, it's not as hot as 'South Devon' for search results, but it's a really good start to the process.

Additionally, 'South East Devon' sounds a bit warmer than East Devon. Some of you may think we need something on a par with 'English Riviera' for this region - well, I don't know whether it's feasible because long-term, the money's just not there to implement the sort of big budget, high-level marketing required to get over a totally new destination branding name for

the East Devon region. Also, it's much easier for the visitor to understand that "South East Devon" is on the south coast of Devon. So we have to start with something that as I said before is logical in terms of the internet (*which these days has to be factored in above all else*). That's not to say we can't have a branding strapline such as:

### South East Devon

*Devon's Natural Region (or suchlike?)*

What's certain is that the East Devon region (*and apparently Mid Devon also*) needs to have a coherent, long-term marketing strategy, and also that it would need to be fairly heavily weighted towards the internet (*although paper marketing needs factoring into the equation*).

If you'd like to add your opinion to the discussion, why not complete the easy online survey form (*takes only a few minutes to complete*). Just email to receive the link to the survey: [charlotte@devonshiremagazine.co.uk](mailto:charlotte@devonshiremagazine.co.uk)

The more constructive intelligence that's collected, the easier it will be for East Devon (South East Devon?) to move forwards rapidly in the near future!

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