

ENGLAND ATTRACTIONS MONITOR

2007 QUARTER 1 REPORT – JANUARY TO MARCH 2007

1. Introduction

In January 2006, VisitBritain commissioned BDRC to launch and manage the England Attractions Monitor, an online panel to help provide the attractions industry with rapid feedback on current trends in visits to attractions in England. Following a successful first year, the survey has been enhanced in 2007 to incorporate not only recent visit trends but also questions relating to business confidence for the forthcoming quarter:

- Visit expectations for own attraction;
- Opinion of business prospects for attractions industry generally;
- Opinion of business prospects for own attraction;
- Reasons for own attraction's business prospects.

2. Method

The objective for 2007 was to create a committed panel of **c.500 attractions** comprising:

- c.200 individual attractions recruited by telephone (c.20-25 per England region);
- c.300 English Heritage/National Trust properties (with visit data provided centrally).

Regional tourism organisations also have the opportunity to boost sample sizes within their region to enable them to analyse their own results in greater detail. To date, both East of England and North West have taken up this opportunity. There is also the facility for regions to add bespoke questions.

Individual attractions were primarily recruited to the panel by telephone, with data collection subsequently taking place online (some recruitment was conducted solely by email). 2006 England Attractions Monitor participants were invited initially followed by those expressing an interest in taking part via the annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions questionnaire. A cross-section of attractions was recruited according to type, size and free/paid admission.

During the first 2007 quarterly period - January to March 2007 - **551 attractions** provided data (English Heritage/National Trust properties provide visit numbers only). The intention is that the consistency in the attractions taking part in the panel will be greater than in 2006, although inevitably across the year some attractions will join, whilst others drop out. Comparisons will always be made among constant samples where appropriate.

3. Summary of findings for 2007 Quarter 1 (January to March 2007)

This is a summary report of the findings for the Quarter 1 (January to March 2007) period.

By way of context, the weather during Quarter 1 was generally significantly warmer than average. Indeed, it was the warmest January since 1916 and above average temperatures in both February and March. There were correspondingly high levels of sunshine during the quarter, with March being the 5th sunniest since 1914. Rainfall was more mixed, being above average in both January and February but slightly below average in March.

Findings from Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2007 were highly encouraging, with 56% of attractions recording an increase in visitor numbers compared with Q1 2006. Overall, visitor numbers across the 551 participating attractions increased by 13%. March was a particularly positive month, with visits up 20% year-on-year. Opinion of overall business performance of attractions mirrored this, with 51% of attractions feeling that business performance was better than in Q1 2006 compared with only 11% feeling that performance was worse.

Nevertheless, there remained a quarter (25%) of attractions that recorded a decline in visits.

Business confidence can be described as cautiously optimistic overall. Over half (55%) of attractions expect visitor admissions to be higher in Quarter 2 (April to June) in 2007 than they were in the equivalent quarter of 2006. Similarly, 57% feel more optimistic about their business prospects for the quarter than they did last year.

However, attractions tend to feel that visitor admissions will be 'a little better' (45%) rather than 'much better' (10%) and feel 'a little more optimistic' (46%) rather than 'much more optimistic' (11%) about business prospects.

Rural attractions have both performed well in Quarter 1 and have the most positive outlook towards Quarter 2. Similarly, the West Midlands stands out as the region both performing well in terms of visitor admissions and registering the most positive outlook.

Although recording increases in visitor admissions at similar levels to smaller attractions, larger attractions with over 100,000 visitors per annum stand out as reporting the highest levels of business confidence.

4. 2007 Quarter 1 (January to March) Visit Trends 2006-2007

The chart below illustrates the percentage increase in visitor admissions between Q1 2006 and Q1 2007 among the 551 attractions taking part in the survey. It also identifies the proportion of attractions recording an overall increase and decrease in admissions.



Q1 (January, February and March) has been a highly positive period for the attractions industry, with visitor admissions among the 551 attractions taking part in the survey increasing by 13% compared with the equivalent quarter of 2006.

Visitor admissions increased in each of the three months of Q1, with greater percentage increases as the quarter progressed - 5% increase in January, 12% in February and 20% in March.

56% of attractions recorded visitor admissions that were higher than in Q1 2006 compared with only 25% recording lower figures. Again, this situation improved as the quarter progressed, with 58% of attractions recording an increase in visitors in March compared with 32% January.

The following charts illustrate how visitor admissions trends for Q1 vary by region, attraction category, size of attraction, location of attraction (coastal, rural or urban) and whether the attraction is paid or free entry.

Quarter I Visit Trends 2006-2007 (Jan-Mar) – By Region				
Region	Total Qtr 1 Change (%)	Jan Change (%)	Feb Change (%)	Mar Change (%)
TOTAL ENGLAND (551)	13	5	12	20
North East (42)	13	2	6	29
North West (71)	9	8	3	15
Yorkshire & The Humber (33)	17	15	9	26
East Midlands (50)	27	11	20	45
West Midlands (54)	26	4	31	35
East (75)	6	8	5	4
London (25)	15	8	16	20
South East (93)	9	-2	6	19
South West (108)	-1	-14	-2	9

Quarter I Visit Trends 2006-2007 (Jan-Mar) – By Attraction Category				
Attraction Category	Total Qtr 1 Change (%)	Jan Change (%)	Feb Change (%)	Mar Change (%)
TOTAL ENGLAND (551)	13	5	12	20
Historic Houses/Castles (233)	16	-	12	26
Other historic properties (45)	6	-12	17	10
Museums/art galleries (115)	14	8	13	20
Gardens (35)	22	2	24	34
Visitor/heritage centres (22)	13	25	11	7
Wildlife attractions/zoos (25)	9	-9	11	23
Others (76)	9	6	7	14

Quarter I Visit Trends 2006-2007 (Jan-Mar) – By Other Segments

	Total Qtr 1 Change (%)	Jan Change (%)	Feb Change (%)	Mar Change (%)
TOTAL ENGLAND (551)	13	5	12	20
Visits Per Annum				
Over 200,000 (40)	13	4	13	19
100,001 – 200,000 (73)	14	4	13	22
50,001 – 100,000 (100)	13	9	4	21
20,001 – 50,000 (125)	13	16	7	18
20,000 or less (208)	21	8	23	27
Free/Paid				
Paid (429)	9	1	5	17
Free (122)	17	8	18	24
Location				
Coastal (68)	7	-6	7	15
Rural (293)	21	2	20	34
Urban (190)	11	7	10	16

In Q1 2007, the East Midlands (+27%), West Midlands (+26%), Yorkshire & The Humber (+17%) and London (+15%) each recorded percentage increases in visitor admissions which were above the England average of +13%. March reported some particularly high increases in the Midlands, with visitor admissions increasing by 45% in the East Midlands and 35% in the West Midlands.

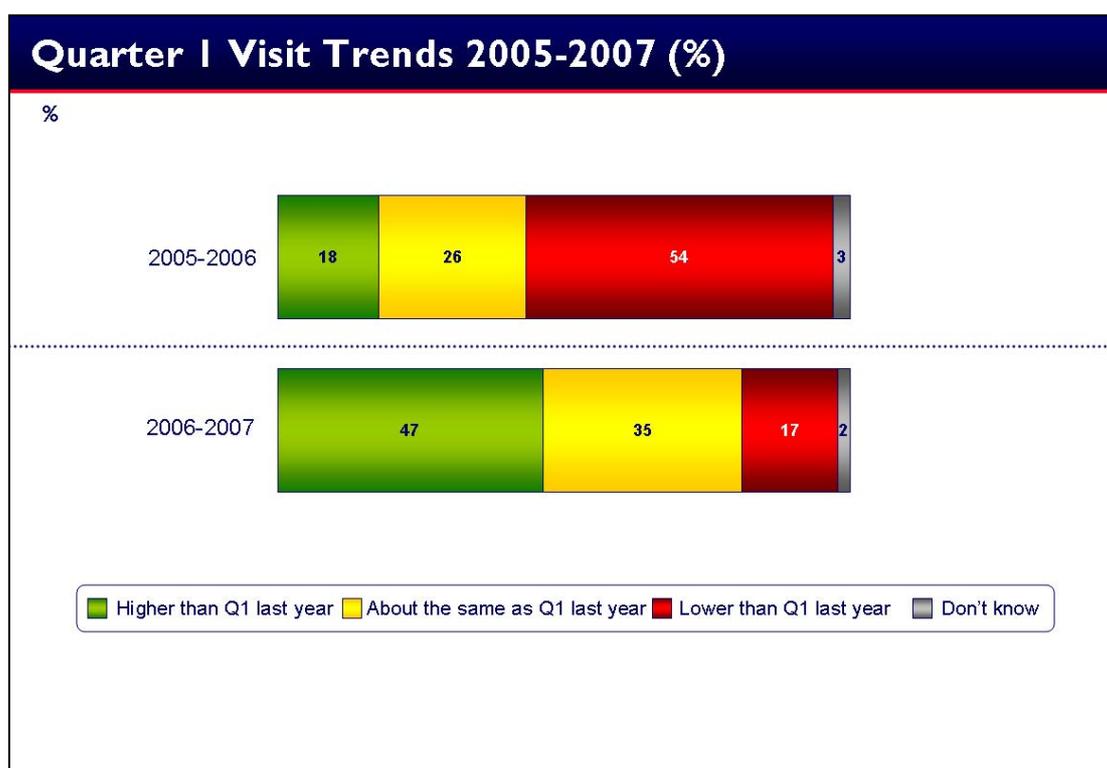
The South West (-1%) was the only region to record a decline in visitor admissions for Q1, driven by a 14% decrease in January. Visitor admissions for the region were up by 9% in March 2007.

Increases in admissions across Q1 were fairly similar by attraction category, ranging from +22% for gardens (driven by a +34% increase in March) down to +6% for other historic properties (which declined by -12% in January).

There was also little difference in visitor admission increases by the size of attraction. Attractions with fewer than 20,000 visitors per annum recorded a slightly higher increase during the quarter (+21%) than attractions with more than 20,000 visitors (+13%).

Free attractions (+17%) recorded a greater increase in visitor admissions than those charging for admission (+9%). Similarly, rural attractions (+21%) recorded greater increases than either urban (+11%) or coastal (+7%) attractions.

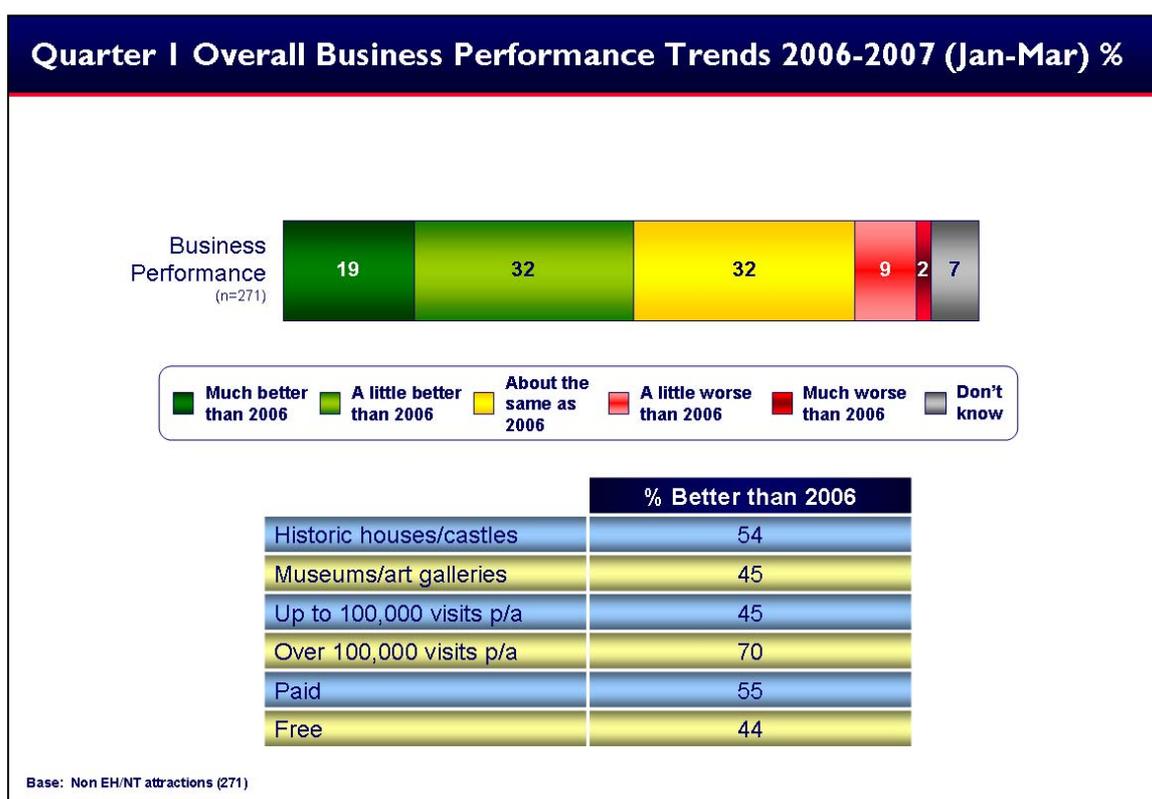
To provide consistency between the 2006 and 2007 surveys, attractions were also asked to provide an overall assessment of whether their visitor admissions had increased, remained the same or decreased compared with the equivalent quarter of the previous year. The chart below compares the findings of Q1 2007 with the findings from Q1 2006.



Almost half (47%) of the 551 attractions taking part in the survey in Q1 2007 felt that visitor admissions had increased compared with Q1 2006. This compares with just 18% who felt that admissions had increased between Q1 2005 and Q1 2006. However, it should be noted that the falling of Easter within Q1 in 2005 but in Q2 in 2006 had a significant negative impact upon these figures – 54% reported a decline in admissions for this quarter between 2005 and 2006.

5. 2007 Quarter 1 (January to March) Business Performance Trends 2006-2007

In addition to being asked about visitor admissions, attractions were also asked to state how they felt that their business had performed overall in Q1 2007 compared with during Q1 2006. The chart below illustrates the proportions of the 271 attractions (excluding English Heritage/National Trust properties) taking part in the survey in Q1 2007 who felt that their business had performed better or worse.

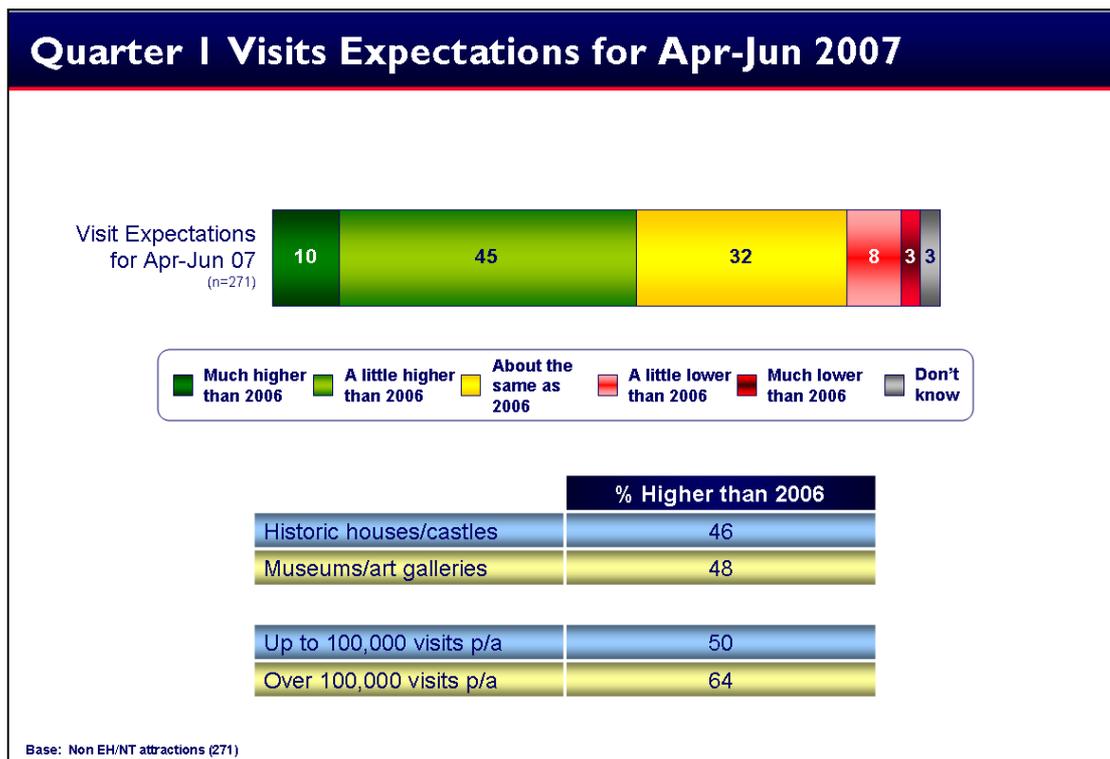


Half (51%) of attractions taking part in the survey felt that their business performance was either much better (19%) or a little better (32%) than in Q1 2006. This is similar to the 47% of attractions who felt that their admissions were higher in Q1 2007 than in Q1 2006.

Opinion of business performance was more positive among larger attractions, with 70% of attractions with over 100,000 visits per annum feeling that business performance was better in Q1 2007 compared with 45% of attractions with less than 100,000 visitors per annum.

6. Business Confidence for Quarter 2 2007 (April to June)

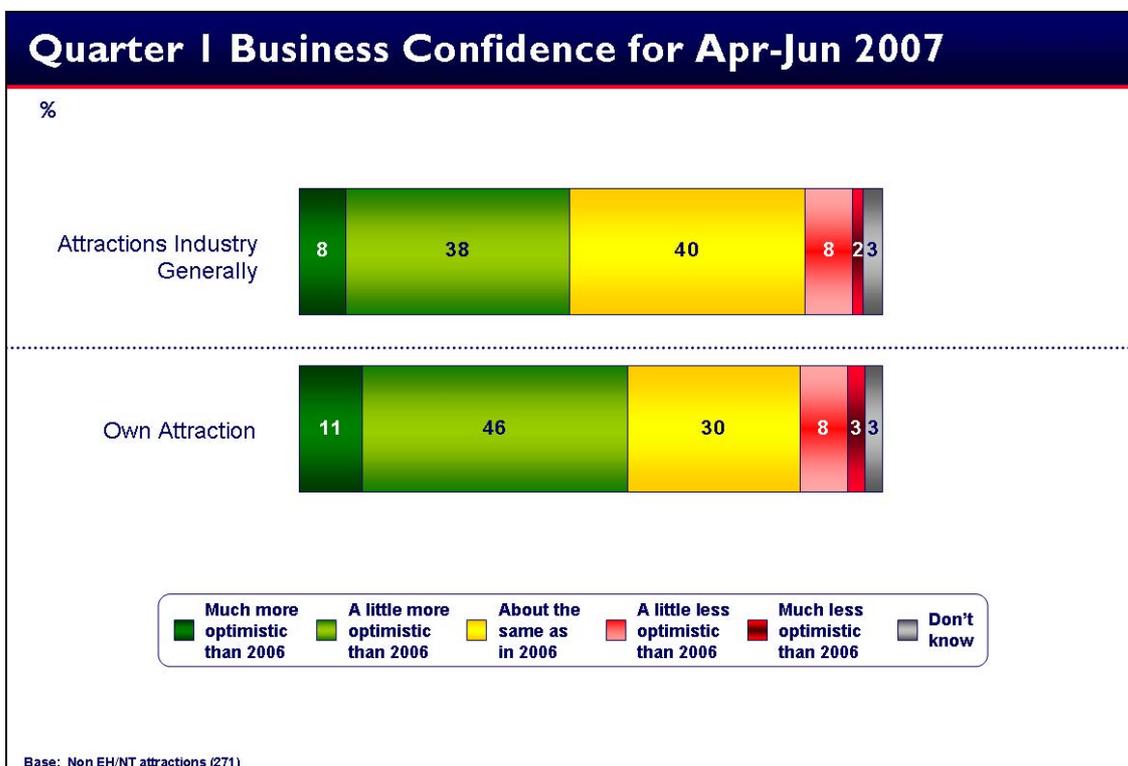
The chart below examines attractions' **expectations for visitor admissions** in Q2 2007 compared with actual visitor admissions recorded in Q2 2006.



The outlook for the attractions industry in terms of visitor admissions also looks highly positive, with 55% of attractions expecting their visitor admissions to increase between Q2 2006 and Q2 2007. However, the majority of these feel that increases will be modest, with 10% expecting visitor admissions to be 'much higher' and 45% expecting them to be 'a little higher' than in 2006.

Attractions with over 100,000 visitors per annum are more likely to be bullish, with 64% expecting visitor numbers to increase compared with 50% of attractions with fewer than 100,000 visitors.

The following chart examines **business confidence among attractions** in Q2 2007, among the 271 non-English Heritage/National Trust attractions taking part in the survey in Q1 2007.



Business confidence is currently high, with 57% of attractions feeling more optimistic about their own attraction's business prospects in the Q2 (Apr-Jun) period than they were about the same period in 2006. As with visit expectations, attractions were more likely to feel 'a little more optimistic' (46%) than 'much more optimistic' (11%).

Only 11% of attractions felt less optimistic about their own attraction's business prospects, 8% feeling 'a little less optimistic' and 3% feeling 'much less optimistic'.

Attractions were also asked their opinion of business prospects for the attractions industry generally during the forthcoming Q2 period. Confidence was slightly lower, with 46% of attractions feeling more optimistic than during the equivalent period of 2006. However, this slightly lower optimism was driven by a lack of knowledge about other attractions, with 40% feeling 'about the same' as in 2006.

The charts below illustrate how business confidence for Q2 varies by region, attraction category, size of attraction, location of attraction (coastal, rural or urban) and whether the attraction is paid or free entry. N.B. sample base sizes for some sub-groups are low.

Quarter 1 Business Confidence for Apr – Jun 2007 (Own Attraction) – by Region		
Region	% More optimistic than 2006	% Less optimistic than 2006
TOTAL ENGLAND (271)	56	11
North East (20)	56	6
North West (52)	56	16
Yorkshire & The Humber (15)	33	33
East Midlands (32)	60	-
West Midlands (27)	72	8
East (47)	67	4
London (12)	74	11
South East (31)	52	6
South West (35)	43	20

Quarter 1 Business Confidence for Apr-Jun 2007 (Own Attraction) – By Attraction Category		
Attraction Category	% More optimistic than 2006	% Less optimistic than 2006
TOTAL ENGLAND (271)	56	11
Historic Houses/Castles (40)	62	5
Museums/art galleries (105)	53	12
Visitor/heritage centres (20)	61	17
Wildlife attractions/zoos (22)	68	11
Others (84)	55	13

Quarter 1 Business Confidence for Apr-Jun 2007 (Own Attraction) – by Subgroup		
	% More optimistic than in 2006	% Less optimistic than in 2006
TOTAL ENGLAND (271)	56	11
Visits Per Annum		
Over 200,000 (34)	70	15
100,001 – 200,000 (31)	61	7
50,001 – 100,000 (43)	50	24
20,001 – 50,000 (55)	57	10
20,000 or less (104)	52	10
Free/Paid		
Paid (156)	58	12
Free (115)	54	11
Location		
Coastal (39)	49	14
Rural (114)	59	7
Urban (118)	56	14

Business confidence was higher among attractions within the London (74% more optimistic than in 2006), West Midlands (72%) and East (67%) regions. Business confidence was lower within the South West and Yorkshire & The Humber regions, where 20% and 33% of attractions respectively were less optimistic than in 2006.

Although similar in terms of visitor admissions for Q1 2007, business confidence for Q2 was higher among larger attractions than smaller attractions. 70% of attractions with over 200,000 visitors and 61% of attractions with 100,001 to 200,000 visitors felt more optimistic about their business prospects than they did during the equivalent period in 2006. Conversely, only 53% of attractions with fewer than 100,000 visitors felt more optimistic.

Confidence was again highest among rural attractions, with 59% feeling more optimistic than in 2006 compared with 56% among urban attractions and 49% among coastal attractions.

Business confidence was similar across attraction types and among free and charging attractions.

Attractions were asked to state the reasons for their level of optimism for Q2 2007. The charts below illustrate the positive and negative aspects that drove optimism during this quarter.

Quarter 1 Reasons for Business Confidence Apr-Jun 07 (Own Attraction) - Positives	
	Quarter 1 % (n=271)
ANY POSITIVE	67
Events/exhibitions improvement	17
Visitor number trends improving	13
Weather	12
Facility improvement/refurbishment/investment	11
Other site improvement	11
Publicity/PR	10
Advertising/marketing	7
Better known/interested/area improving	6
Tourism/economic market changes	4

Quarter 1 Reasons for Business Confidence Apr-Jun 07 (Own Attraction) - Negatives	
	Quarter 1 % (n = 271)
ANY NEGATIVE	28
Facility decline/refurbishment/investment	8
Visitor decline/competition/area declining	7
Other site decline	5
Tourism/economic market changes	4
Weather	3
Events/exhibitions decline	3
Visitor trends declining	3
Advertising/marketing/PR	1

Two-thirds (67%) of all attractions mentioned a positive factor influencing their optimism for Q2 2007. The principal mentions centred upon improvements to the attractions' events or exhibitions (17%), favourable weather forecasts (12%), general facilities improvement or investment (11%), other site improvements (11%) and improved publicity/PR (10%). 13% were influenced by recent positive visitor trends at their attraction.

Only 28% of attractions mentioned a negative factor influencing their optimism. The principal mentions were a general decline in the facilities at the site/refurbishment (8%) and a decline in the local area/competition (7%).