

# ENGLAND ATTRACTIONS MONITOR

## 2007 QUARTER 2 REPORT – APRIL TO JUNE 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 second 2007 quarterly period – April to June 2007 - **574 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 2 (April to June 2007)**

By way of context, the weather during Quarter 2 varied significantly by month. April 2007 set records for high temperatures and levels of sunshine, with low rainfall. Conversely, both May and June recorded rainfall levels significantly above average, again often setting records. June was noted for extensive flooding across several areas of England including Yorkshire, The Midlands, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. Furthermore, whereas May 2006 was also characterised by wet weather, June 2006 was an exceptionally warm, dry and sunny month – significantly different to the situation in June 2007.

Findings from Quarter 2 (Apr to Jun) 2007 were encouraging, with 56% of attractions recording an increase in visitor numbers compared with Q2 2006. Overall, visitor numbers across the 574 participating attractions increased by 5%. April and May were similar, both reporting a year-on-year increase in visits of 8%. June was less positive, with visits increasing by less than 0.5%. The record high rainfall and flooding in June 2007 compared with the record dry and sunny June of 2006 is likely to have had an overall negative impact upon relative visitor admissions between the two years.

Opinion of overall business performance of attractions mirrored this, with 50% of attractions feeling that business performance was better than in Q2 2006 compared with 23% feeling that performance was worse.

However, there were indications that business performance was less positive in Q2 than during Q1. Q1 reported increases of 13% in visitor admissions (5% in Q2) and only 11% felt that business performance was worse than 2006 (23% in Q2)

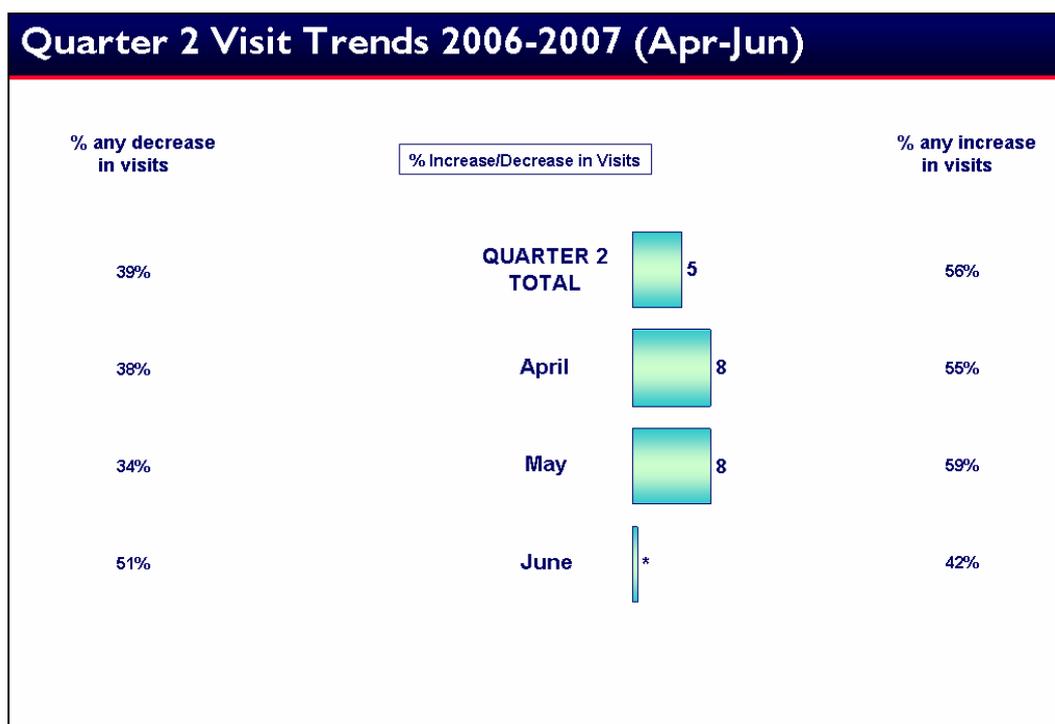
Business confidence remains cautiously optimistic overall, although as with business performance, the outlook looks less positive during Q2 than during Q1. Half (49%) of attractions expect visitor admissions to be higher in Quarter 3 (Jul to Sep) 2007 than they were in the equivalent quarter of 2006 compared with just 18% who expect them to be lower. However, only 11% felt that they would be lower when asked about Q2 during the last quarterly survey.

Attractions in London and museums/art galleries tended to both perform positively during Q2 and have a positive outlook towards Q3 of 2007.

The weather was comfortably the most frequently mentioned negative factor explaining business confidence towards Q3 2007.

#### 4. 2007 Quarter 2 (April to June) Visit Trends 2006-2007

The chart below illustrates the percentage increase in visitor admissions between Q2 2006 and Q2 2007 among the 574 attractions taking part in the survey. It also identifies the proportion of attractions recording an overall increase and decrease in admissions.



Q2 (April, May and June) has been a positive period for the attractions industry, with visitor admissions among the 574 attractions taking part in the survey increasing by 5% compared with the equivalent quarter of 2006. However, the period was less positive than Q1 (January, February and March), which reported an overall increase in visitor admissions of 13%.

Visitor admissions increased by 8% in both April and May, perhaps a little disappointing following the 20% increase reported for March. Visitor admissions for the June period increased by less than 0.5% year-on-year, the lowest monthly percentage increase to date recorded in 2007.

56% of attractions recorded visitor admissions that were higher than in Q2 2006 compared with only 39% recording lower figures. Again, results were positive and similar for both April and May, although in June a higher proportion of attractions reported a visitor admissions decrease (51%) than an increase (42%).

The following charts illustrate how visitor admissions trends for Q2 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 (Apr-Jun) – By Region

Region	Total Qtr 2 Change (%)	Apr Change (%)	May Change (%)	Jun Change (%)
<b>TOTAL ENGLAND (574)</b>	5	8	8	*
North East (46)	4	9	10	-6
North West (85)	12	9	15	13
Yorkshire & The Humber (32)	6	15	18	-10
East Midlands (50)	9	32	-*	-11
West Midlands (54)	2	7	-*	-1
East (72)	5	9	10	-4
London (26)	10	5	14	11
South East (99)	-1	8	1	-13
South West (110)	-*	1	-1	-1

### Quarter I Visit Trends 2006-2007 (Apr-Jun) – By Attraction Category

Attraction Category	Total Qtr 2 Change (%)	Apr Change (%)	May Change (%)	Jun Change (%)
<b>TOTAL ENGLAND (574)</b>	5	8	8	*
Historic Houses/Castles (237)	5	11	7	-4
Other historic properties (41)	1	6	7	-6
Museums/art galleries (127)	8	-3	16	14
Gardens (38)	1	23	-4	-15
Visitor/heritage centres (26)	-1	-5	-5	7
Wildlife attractions/zoos (19)	19	41	13	1
Others (86)	*	14	-1	-12

### Quarter I Visit Trends 2006-2007 (Apr-Jun) – By Other Segments

	Total Qtr 2 Change (%)	Apr Change (%)	May Change (%)	Jun Change (%)
<b>TOTAL ENGLAND (574)</b>	5	8	8	*
<b>Visits Per Annum</b>				
Over 200,000 (36)	6	6	10	3
100,001 – 200,000 (79)	3	13	4	-7
50,001 – 100,000 (95)	4	7	7	-3
20,001 – 50,000 (147)	7	6	11	4
20,000 or less (215)	6	9	3	8
<b>Free/Paid</b>				
Paid (436)	4	10	6	-3
Free (138)	7	5	11	6
<b>Location</b>				
Coastal (72)	-1	-*	6	-6
Rural (299)	5	17	3	-8
Urban (203)	7	3	12	8

In Q2 2007, the North West (+12%), London (+10%) and East Midlands (+9%) each recorded percentage increases in visitor admissions which were notably above the England average of +5%. The North West and London reported higher than average increases overall as a result of their ability to generate strong increases in visits in June (+13% and +11% respectively) in a month when all other regions reported a decline in visits. The increase in the East Midlands was driven by a particularly strong April period.

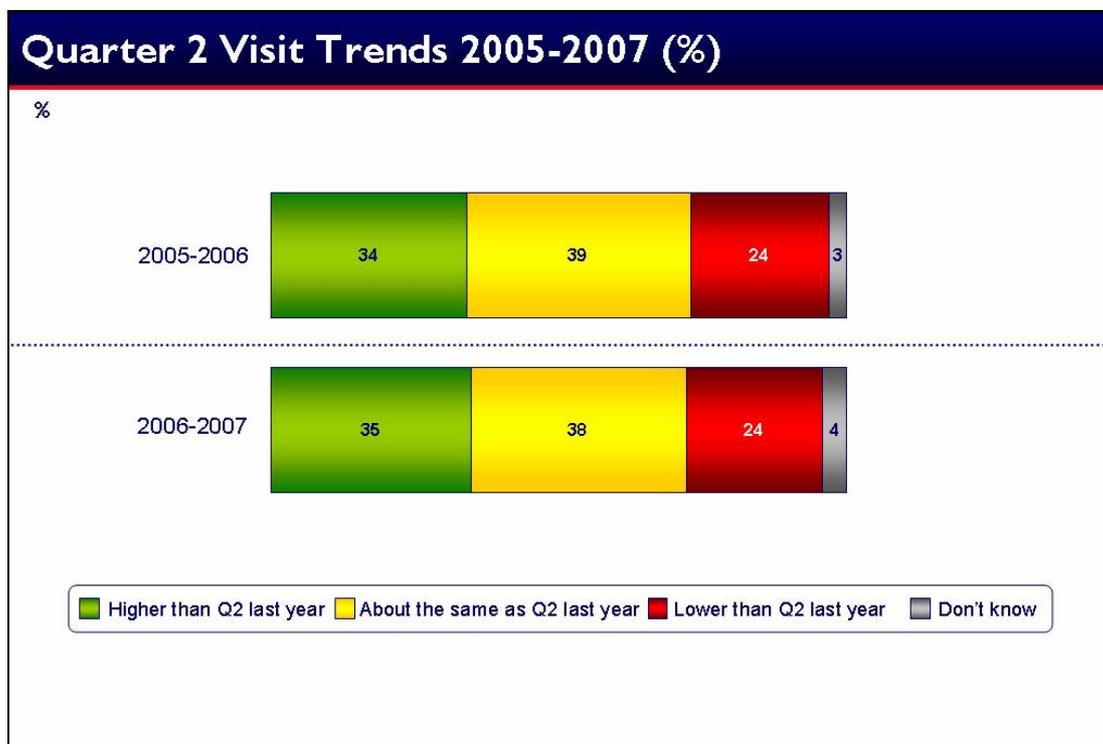
Yorkshire (-10%) and the East Midlands (-11%) both reported notable declines in visitor admissions during June, two of the regions most heavily impacted by the flooding during the month. The South East (-1%) and South West (-\*%) both reported declines in visitor admissions for Q2 overall.

Increases in admissions across Q2 varied by attraction category, ranging from +19% for wildlife attractions/zoos (driven by a very strong April) and +8% for museums/art galleries (driven by a strong May and June) to increases of only +1% at other historic properties and gardens and a decline of -1% at visitor/heritage centres. Gardens suffered particularly in June, with visitor admissions declining by -15%.

The extremes of weather appear to have had a marked impact upon visitor admissions, with outdoor attractions benefiting heavily during the warm and dry April and indoor attractions during the very wet months of May and June.

There was very little difference in visitor admission increases by the size of attraction. As in Q1, free attractions (+7%) recorded a greater increase in visitor admissions than those charging for admission (+4%). Urban (+7%) and rural (+5%) attractions performed more positively during Q2 than coastal attractions (-1%) in terms of visitor admissions. Urban attractions benefited particularly during May and June – the two wet months. Rural attractions benefited from the warmer, drier April more than coastal 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 Q2 2007 with the findings from Q2 2006.

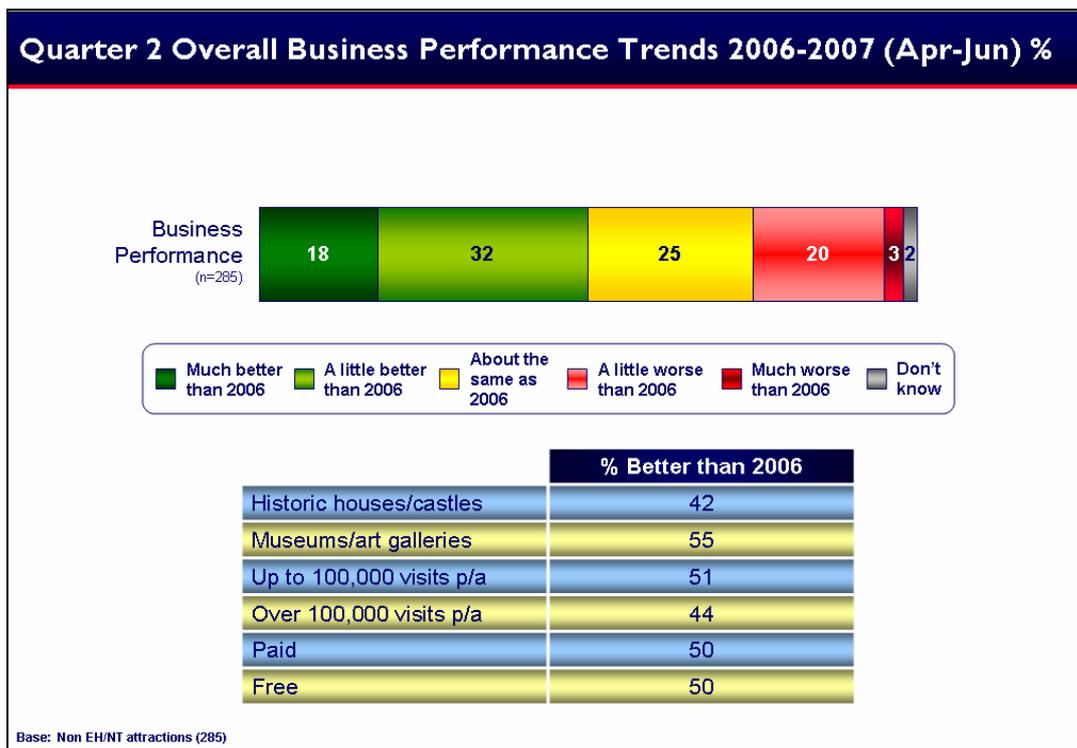


A third (35%) of attractions felt that visitor admissions had increased compared with Q2 2006, with only a quarter (24%) feeling that visitor admissions had declined. These proportions were similar to those observed when comparing Q2 2005 and Q2 2006.

However, the proportion feeling that Q2 visitor admissions were higher (35%) was significantly lower than the proportion feeling that Q1 2007 admissions were higher (47%), reflecting the lower increase in actual visits.

### **5. 2007 Quarter 2 (April to June) 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 Q2 2007 compared with during Q2 2006. The chart below illustrates the proportions of the 285 attractions (excluding English Heritage/National Trust properties) taking part in the survey in Q2 2007 who felt that their business had performed better or worse.

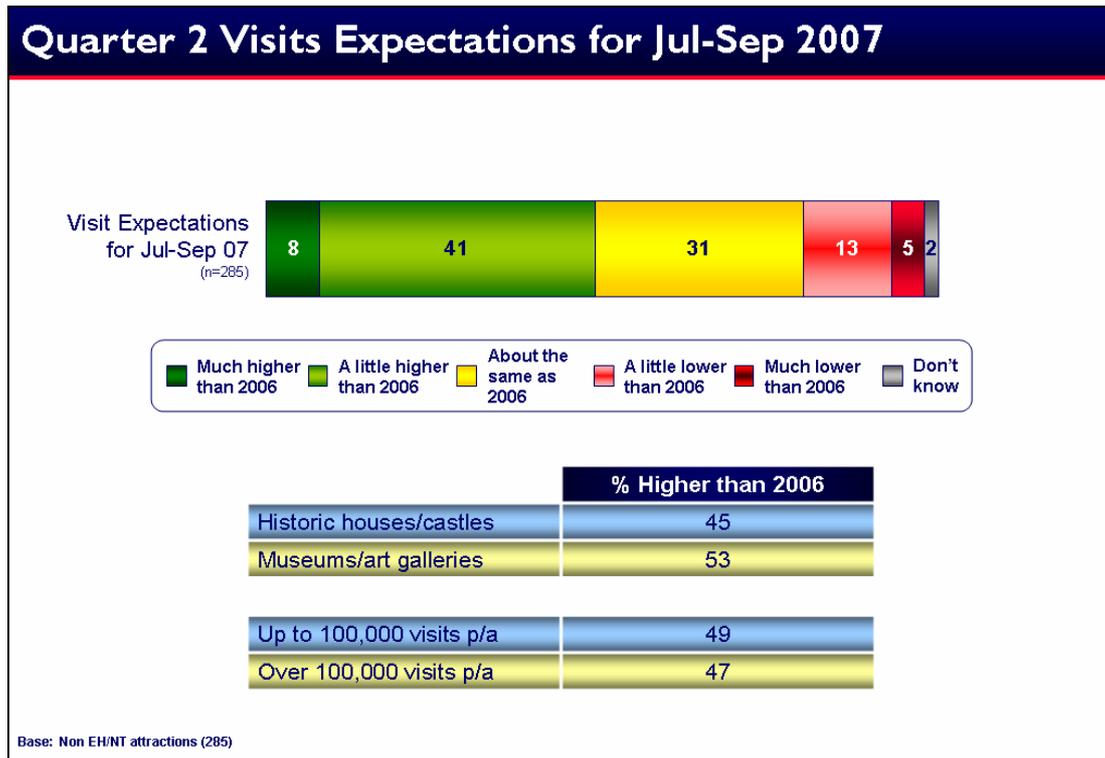


Half (50%) of attractions taking part in the survey felt that their business performance was either much better (18%) or a little better (32%) than in Q2 2006. This is similar to the proportion observed for Q1 2007. However, 23% of attractions felt that their business performance was either a little worse (20%) or much worse (3%) than during Q2 2006. This is significantly higher than the equivalent proportion observed for Q1 (11%).

The positive business performance of museums/art galleries was notable at Q2.

**6. Business Confidence for Quarter 3 2007 (July to September)**

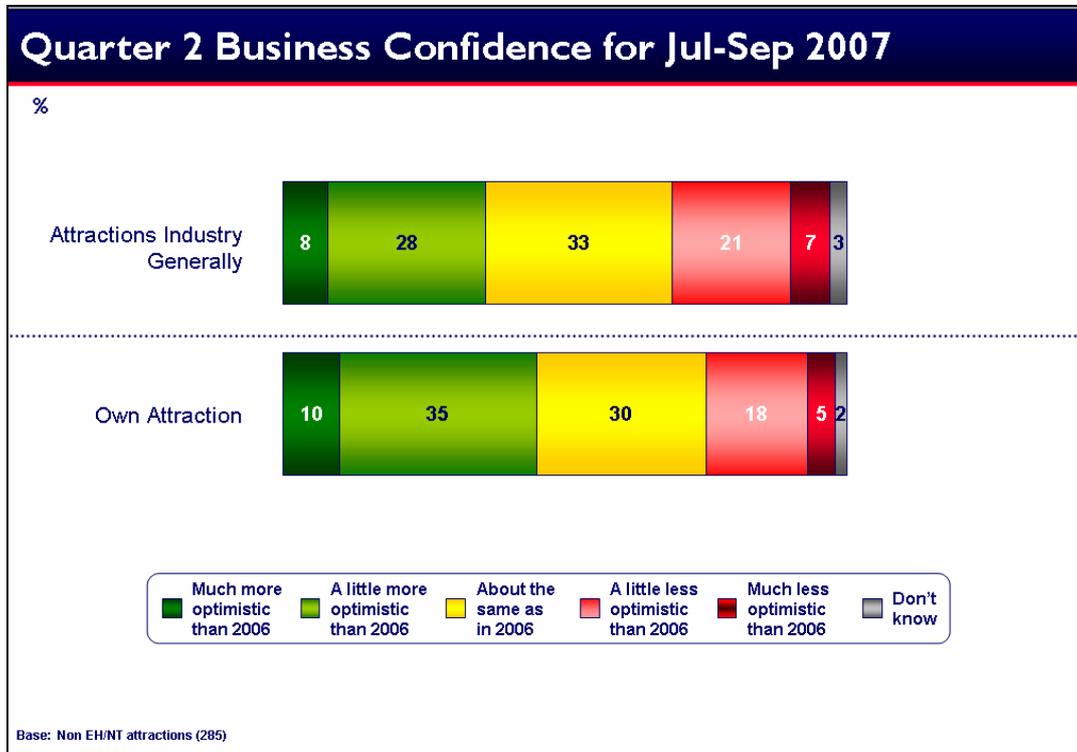
The chart below examines attractions' **expectations for visitor admissions** in Q3 2007 compared with actual visitor admissions recorded in Q3 2006.



The outlook for the attractions industry in terms of visitor admissions remains positive, although slightly less so than observed in the previous quarter of 2007. 49% of attractions expected their visitor admissions to increase between Q3 2006 and Q3 2007 compared with only 18% expecting a decrease. However, this compares with 55% who expected an increase for the equivalent Q2 period and just 11% who expected a decrease.

Among those expecting an increase, the majority again felt that these increases would be modest or 'a little higher than 2006' (41%) rather than significant or 'much higher than 2006' (8%).

The following chart examines **business confidence among attractions** in Q3 2007, among the 285 non-English Heritage/National Trust attractions taking part in the survey in Q2 2007.



Business confidence remains fairly high, although confidence is markedly lower than reported during the previous quarter of 2007. 45% of attractions felt more optimistic about their own attraction's business prospects for the Q3 (Jul-Sep) 2007 period than they were about the same period in 2006. However, 57% of attractions were feeling more optimistic when asked about the Q2 period during the last survey quarter.

A quarter (23%) of attractions felt less optimistic about their own attraction's business prospects, 18% feeling 'a little less optimistic' and 5% feeling 'much less optimistic'. This is also a marked increase on the 11% reported during the previous quarter.

Attractions were also asked their opinion of business prospects for the attractions industry generally during the forthcoming Q3 period. As noted during the previous quarter, confidence tended to be slightly lower than for respondent's own attraction. For Q3, 36% of attractions felt more optimistic than during the equivalent period of 2006 (46% for Q2) and 28% felt less optimistic (10%). Again, confidence has dropped markedly.

The charts below illustrate how business confidence for Q3 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 2 Business Confidence for Jul-Sep 2007 (Own Attraction) – by Region

Region	% More optimistic than 2006	% Less optimistic than 2006
<b>TOTAL ENGLAND (285)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>23</b>
North East (22)	45	27
North West (65)	40	17
Yorkshire & The Humber (16)	62	32
East Midlands (32)	59	16
West Midlands (25)	36	12
East (42)	41	26
London (13)	54	8
South East (35)	49	28
South West (35)	17	32

### Quarter 2 Business Confidence for Jul-Sep 2007 (Own Attraction) – By Attraction Category

Attraction Category	% More optimistic than 2006	% Less optimistic than 2006
<b>TOTAL ENGLAND (285)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>23</b>
Historic Houses/Castles (36)	52	10
Museums/art galleries (116)	47	17
Visitor/heritage centres (26)	50	25
Wildlife attractions/zoo (16)	36	25
Others (91)	38	36

### Quarter 2 Business Confidence for Jul-Sep 2007 (Own Attraction) – by Subgroup

	% More optimistic than in 2006	% Less optimistic than in 2006
<b>TOTAL ENGLAND (285)</b>	45	23
<b>Visits Per Annum</b>		
Over 200,000 (29)	50	17
100,001 – 200,000 (30)	32	42
50,001 – 100,000 (38)	40	21
20,001 – 50,000 (75)	44	20
20,000 or less (112)	48	22
<b>Free/Paid</b>		
Paid (155)	51	22
Free (130)	37	23
<b>Location</b>		
Coastal (40)	49	21
Rural (116)	41	25
Urban (129)	48	21

Business confidence was higher among attractions within the East Midlands (59% more optimistic than in 2006) and London (54%) regions. These two regions also reported the lowest proportion of attractions feeling less optimistic (26% and 8% respectively).

Business confidence was highly polarised in Yorkshire and The Humber, with 62% feeling more optimistic than in 2006 (higher than in any other region), but 32% feeling less optimistic (also the highest of all regions).

Business confidence was again low within the South West, as it had been during the past quarter. Only 17% were more optimistic than they were at the same point in 2006 compared with 32% who felt less optimistic. This was the only region where pessimism exceeded optimism.

As reported during the previous quarter, business confidence for Q3 was higher among larger attractions than smaller attractions. 50% of attractions with over 200,000 visitors felt more optimistic about their business prospects than they did during the equivalent period in 2006 compared with 45% of attractions overall.

Confidence looking forward to Q3 was higher among paid attractions, with 51% feeling more optimistic than in 2006 compared with 37% among free attractions.

Despite a less positive performance for the Q2 period compared with rural and urban attractions, business confidence among coastal attractions was relatively positive. 49% of coastal attractions were feeling more optimistic about the Q3 than in 2006 compared with 48% of urban attractions and 41% of rural attractions.

Attractions were asked to state the reasons for their level of optimism for Q3 2007. The charts below and overleaf illustrate the positive and negative aspects that drove optimism during this quarter.

<b>Quarter 2 Reasons for Business Confidence Jul-Sep 07 (Own Attraction) - Positives</b>	
	<b>Quarter 2 % (n=285)</b>
<b>ANY POSITIVE</b>	44
Events/exhibitions improvement	15
Visitor number trends improving	11
Advertising/marketing	9
Facility improvement/refurbishment/investment	6
Other site improvement	11
Better known/interested/area improving	7
Weather	5
Publicity/PR	4
Tourism/economic market changes	1

<b>Quarter 2 Reasons for Business Confidence Jul-Sep 07 (Own Attraction) - Negatives</b>	
	<b>Quarter 2 % (n = 285)</b>
ANY NEGATIVE	42
Weather	27
Facility decline/refurbishment/investment	8
Other site decline	5
Tourism/economic market changes	5
Visitor trends declining	4
Visitor decline/competition/area declining	2
Events/exhibitions decline	1
Advertising/marketing/PR	1

The lower level of business confidence reported at Q2 relative to Q1 is reflected by the respective proportions mentioning positive and negative factors. At Q2, only 44% of attractions mentioned a positive factor as a reason for their level of confidence compared with 67% at Q1.

Positive factors declined in three areas between Q1 and Q2 2007:

- The weather – 12% mentioned at Q1 compared with just 5% at Q2;
- Publicity/PR – 10% mentioned at Q1 compared with 4% at Q2;
- Facility improvement/refurbishment/investment – 11% mentioned at Q1 compared with 6% at Q2.

Similarly, negative mentions were higher at Q2 with 44% mentioning any negative factor compared with just 28% at Q1. This increase was driven almost entirely by mentions of the weather, which increased from 3% at Q1 to 27% at Q2.