



## Tourism Visitor Economy Workshop – Summary Report

Held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026, Island Hall – 17.30

Attendees:

- Committee: Natalie Tighe, Helen Plummer, Jenni Robinson (CSO)
- Participants: Sark visitor economy stakeholders (tourism businesses, activity providers, accommodation operators, transport representatives)

### Workshop Overview

Participants were seated in three discussion groups to share their experiences, challenges and suggestions for improving Sark's visitor economy. Each group reported their key points back to the room. This document summarises all themes arising from the workshop.

### 1. Visitor Trends & Forward Bookings

- Booking Patterns & Visitor Demand
  - Overall visitor demand is similar to last year.
  - Increasing trend toward very last-minute bookings, often leaving visitors unable to secure accommodation.
  - Visitors from France are increasing.
  - The traditional tourism season feels shorter than in the past.
- Travel & Transport Issues
  - Travel between islands is difficult and not well coordinated.
  - Information on ferry services can be hard to find and sometimes out of date.
  - Long waiting times for boarding, especially from Jersey.
  - Dog-travel restrictions affect some visitors.
  - Some travellers from Europe reported multiple travel cancellations.
- Accommodation Trends
  - Strengthening preference for self-catering over B&B stays.
  - Visitors often struggle to book one-night stays.
  - Some perceive Sark as expensive, although when compared to other destinations it can be good value.
- Visitor Behaviour
  - Carriage ride numbers continue to fall; repeat visitors often skip this activity.
  - Rising demand for electric bike hire.
  - Interest in growing younger visitors - freedom, outdoor activities and low-cost experiences could be appealing.
- Events & Promotion
  - Some 2025 events had low attendance.
  - Concern that Sark is promoted mainly as a day-trip rather than an overnight destination.



- Sometimes events clash with those on other islands.

## Tourism Committee Updates (presented by NT)

- Increased social media and digital advertising planned.
- Dark Skies campaigns being prioritised.
- Efforts underway to improve information access and coherence.
- Good ferry connections from France; poorer connections from the UK.
- Potential for cheaper air travel to Guernsey this year with BA direct from Heathrow.
- Stronger focus on attracting repeat visitors.
- Raising awareness of moorings.
- More proactive event coordination, starting with Easter activities.

## 2. Capacity & Infrastructure

- Harbour & First Impressions
  - Maseline Harbour described as ‘tired’, potentially affecting visitor perceptions.
  - Cargo operations sometimes coincide with peak visitor arrival times.
  - Creux Harbour is under-utilised and seldom promoted.
- Public Facilities
  - Shortage of public toilets; harbour facilities described as inadequate.
  - Public toilets can be difficult to locate on a first visit.
  - One pub will open its toilets to the public this year.
- Accommodation
  - Perception of reduced overall accommodation capacity.
  - Perception of accommodation being expensive.
  - Perception of lack of mid-range options; most offerings are believed to be budget/basic or high-end.
  - Peak periods often leave the island effectively full.
- Visitor Experience & Business Capacity
  - Need for clear accessibility information before visitors arrive.
  - Visitors need better information on wet-weather activities.
  - Some eateries have closed due to inconsistent footfall; more visitors would help sustain them.
  - Many businesses are stuck at a ‘tipping point’: too busy to manage easily, but not busy enough to hire staff.
  - More visitors needed during the shoulder months (April–June and September–October).
  - Events are plentiful but lack coordination; multiple organisers but no central liaison.
  - Venue sizes can limit event options.
  - Some suggested longer-term parking at Guernsey Harbour for travellers heading to Sark.



### 3. New Markets & Opportunities

Participants identified promising market segments and new offerings:

- Potential New Markets
  - Wellness retreats (yoga, nature, escapism)
  - Dark Skies tourism
  - Women aged 40–60 travelling solo
  - Younger travellers
  - Families
  - Corporate away days
  - Yacht regattas
  - French visitors, perhaps leveraging the Victor Hugo connection
  
- Ideas for Attractions & Activities
  - Promote free outdoor activities more strongly.
  - Re-opening of The Dairy noted as a strong potential visitor draw.
  - Suggestion to list Sark on larger international booking platforms.
  - Children’s activity trail with stamps and a downloadable certificate (QR code idea praised; aligns with projects already in development).

### 4. Product Development & Visitor Experience

- Data & Feedback
  - Sark Tourism currently holds limited visitor data.
  - A new exit survey will be introduced (digital and at the Visitor Centre), with incentives offered.
  - Aim to collect accommodation occupancy data from 2026 onward.
  
- Event Support

Sark Tourism to take a more proactive role. Organisers are encouraged to:

  - Submit event dates to the Visitor Centre as early as possible
  - Provide details for press releases
  - Coordinate with IOSS for logistical support

### 5. Sustainability & Events

- Sustainability remains a key priority for future planning.
- Competition between events (across islands or within Sark) needs careful management.
- Upcoming: Toilers of the Sea event and several Year of the Normans activities.
- More events in June and September would strengthen the annual event calendar.

### Conclusion

The Sark Tourism Committee thanked everyone for attending and welcomed any follow-up ideas or information to help shape the year ahead.