

**Title - Tools for Sustainable Tourism at Level 3**

**Keywords** - Sustainable Development

**Name** - Dr Brian Garrod

**School / Department** - Institute of Rural Sciences

**Institution** - University of Wales, Aberystwyth

**Group** - Level 3 undergraduates on BSc (Hons) Tourism Management, BSc (Hons) Countryside Management and BSc (Hons) Sustainable Rural Development

**Activity** - Module that covers all aspects of sustainability in the tourism context.

**Aim** - This module critically examines the concept of sustainability and its application to the tourism industry. It investigates the costs and benefits of tourism development in terms of its impacts on host communities and environments.

**Context / Background** - This is a final-year module designed to stimulate student interest and understanding regarding sustainability related issues in tourism. Sustainable tourism has in recent years become a vital ingredient in the tourism management curriculum. Increasingly, there is a greater understanding that the activity of tourism can have major social and environmental as well as economic impacts, and that these tend to be both positive and negative. The sustainability issue is a very real one for the tourism industry, which needs to make a fuller contribution to the wider goal of sustainable development.

**Example**

The learning outcomes for the module require that, students should be able to:

1. Critically discuss a range of definitions of sustainability and sustainable tourism
2. Analyse the conceptual basis on which sustainable tourism is founded
3. Evaluate the principles of sustainable tourism in relation to tourism impacts
4. Assess the practical application of sustainable tourism principles
5. Evaluate good practice in sustainable tourism management
6. Discuss community involvement in tourism planning and development

***Taught elements***

The module begins with a comprehensive introduction and overview of

the definition and impacts of sustainable tourism and development. However, this is not categorically defined for students; rather students are introduced to a range of definitions and are then encouraged to explore the problems in defining and understanding what sustainable development means to its various stakeholders, as well as the implications of this for achieving sustainable development in the context of tourism.

A central focus of this module is the evaluation of a range of tools which are applicable within sustainable tourism policies, programmes and projects. The proposed tools of sustainable tourism are divided into micro-management tools (eg, area protection, the use of dispersion and honeypots, carrying capacity and the use of pricing), and macro-management tools, (eg, environmental footprinting, auditing and indicators, codes of conduct, and the use of eco-labels and certification schemes in the tourism context). There is also an in-depth discussion and workshop based on the application of environmental impact assessment methods to a real tourism development project. The use of these tools in the context, firstly of wildlife tourism and secondly of ecotourism, are then discussed in further lectures. The latter also considers the important issue of local participation in sustainable tourism development, planning and management.

Extensive use of international case studies is made throughout. This year's field visit – to the Centre for Alternative Technology, near Machynlleth - allows students not only to explore how a large tourism attraction attempts to achieve its sustainability goals, but also to investigate the application of green technologies (such as solar power or composting) to various tourism businesses and organisations. The use of field visits also ensures a wide appreciation of the local and global nature of issues relating to sustainability.

Outside speakers who have a close involvement with some aspect of sustainable tourism in practice are frequently used, which enables students to appreciate an insider's perspective on the subject.

The module leader has developed a comprehensive [website](#) to support the module and this includes links to a number of related sources and journals.

### **Assessment**

The module is assessed by a coursework essay (50%) and an examination (50%). In 2005, the coursework essay required students write an essay on one of the following titles:

1. Why is sustainable tourism proving so hard to achieve?
2. Evaluate the potential role of 'user fees' in making tourism in sensitive natural environments more sustainable.
3. To what extent do you consider 'ecological footprinting' to be a useful tool in pursuing the goals of sustainable tourism?

It is a further requirement that essays should be illustrated with up-to-date case-study examples and materials, thus ensuring that students familiarise themselves with current issues and contexts.

**Results / Feedback** - Student feedback on this module indicates the value of field visits and outside speakers, which enable students to appreciate the relevance of the subject first-hand, as well as to ask questions of a practical or applied nature. Practical workshops and exercises are also greatly valued in this respect.

**Further Information** - [bgg@aber.ac.uk](mailto:bgg@aber.ac.uk)