Tourism trends quarterly bulletin
Visitor Statistics for Winter: January to pre Easter 2006 (Q1)

Introduction

This bulletin provides the key findings of the tourism monitor for the period January 1st to March 26th 2006. This is the quietest trading period for tourism and many establishments close for some of this time.

The findings in this bulletin are based upon research conducted on board the six ferry routes to the Island. Medina Valley Centre and Isle of Wight Tourism supply additional data.

Trend data since 2000 is included. The variations in the timing of Easter each year result in analysis periods of differing length hence the trend data is based on average numbers of visitors per week through the period to enable meaningful comparisons to be made.

Easter was from 14th to 17th April this year which was much later than last year (when it was 25th to 28th March). However school holidays were primarily before Easter hence the quarter is only one week longer than last year. Once again the whole quarter fell before the clocks changed to summertime.

Looking first at international travel, during January to March, the inbound international travel market* grew slightly (+2%) which is a change versus recent years when there have been substantial increases in overseas visitors to the UK. Trips abroad by UK residents were static which is a change from this time last year when this market grew by 10% but in line with 2004.

Total travel across the Solent (by all residents and all visitors) was at a similar level to last year but down slightly on the previous year.

Focussing on leisure visitors to the Isle of Wight, there were some positive changes this winter. These relate to domestic visitors as there are very few visitors from abroad at this time of year:

- In the important short breaks market (lasting 1-4 nights) a slight increase on last year's volume took the average weekly figure to 6,400 which is almost at the high of 6,500 recorded in 2003. This is 2% up on last year but 20% up on 2004.
- Longer stay leisure visits/holidays represent a small market at this time of year but did increase quite dramatically. These more than trebled to an average weekly number of 1,400 per week. These were also double the number seen in 2003 and 2004.
- Staying visitors in total were up versus last year and this is attributable to leisure travel; business travel was down slightly.
- Islandbreaks.co.uk performed extremely well in this quarter with visits up by 27% versus last year.
- An additional 28,000 visitor nights (estimated) were spent on the Island by those arriving by yacht.

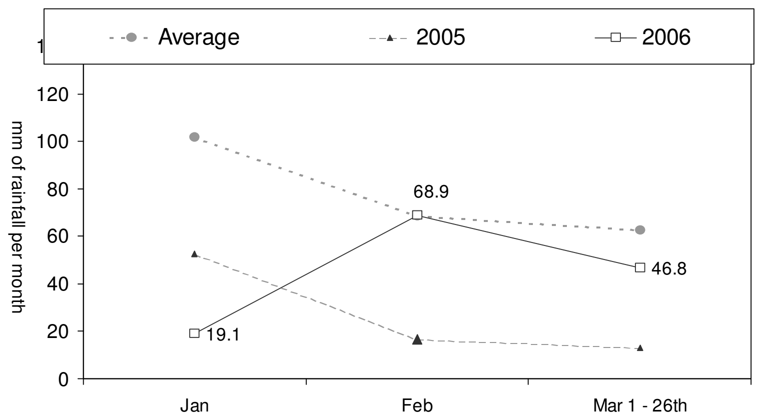
The value of tourism this quarter is estimated to be £36 million which is an increase of 5% on last year (excluding the effect of inflation). This does not include any spend by those arriving by yacht.

*International Passenger Survey data (seasonally adjusted)

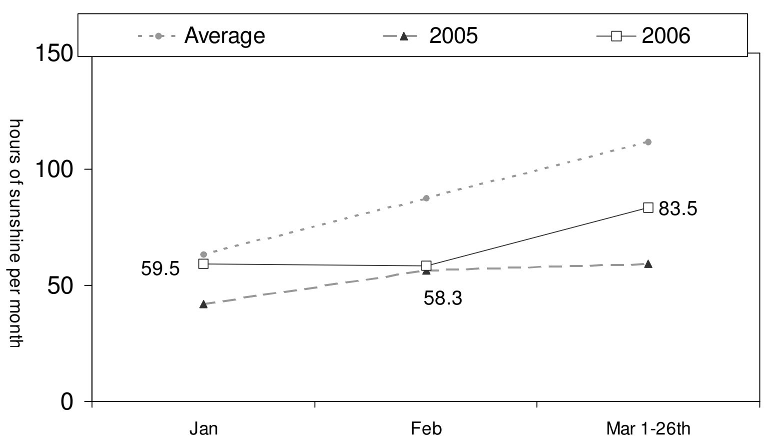
Weather

This winter was not as sunny as expected for the time of year, but it was better than last year. The lack of sunshine made for colder than average weather although it was much drier than usual, particularly in January.

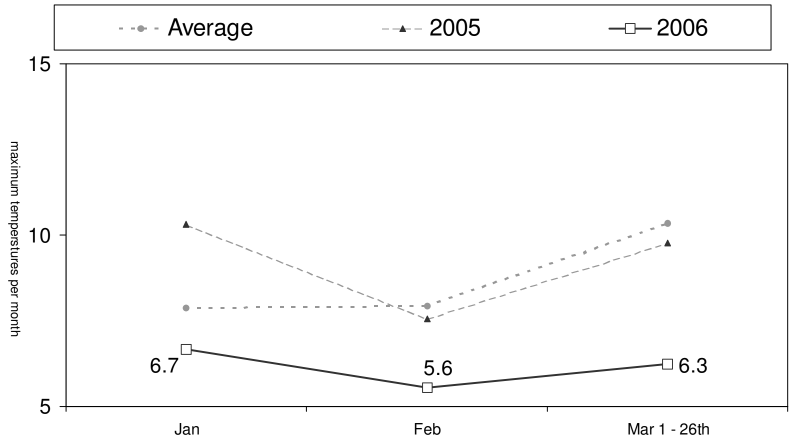
Rainfall on the Isle of Wight
Q1, 2006 vs. 2005 and long term average



Sunshine on the Isle of Wight
Q1, 2006 vs. 2005 and long term average



Maximum temperatures on the Isle of Wight
Q1, 2006 vs. 2005 and long term average

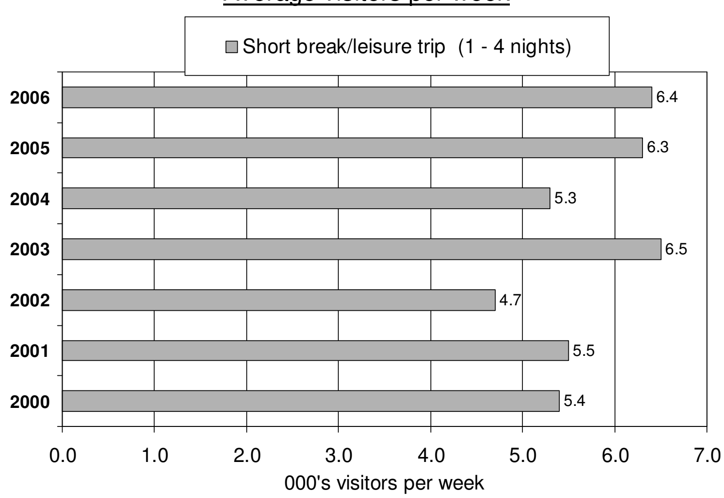


Estimated number of leisure short break visitors

There were an estimated 78,000 domestic leisure short break visitors in this winter period which is an average of 6,400 per week. This is at a similar level to the previous high levels recorded in 2003 and 2005 and is considerably higher than other years.

Estimated number of domestic short break leisure visitors
Q1 2006 vs. previous years

Average visitors per week

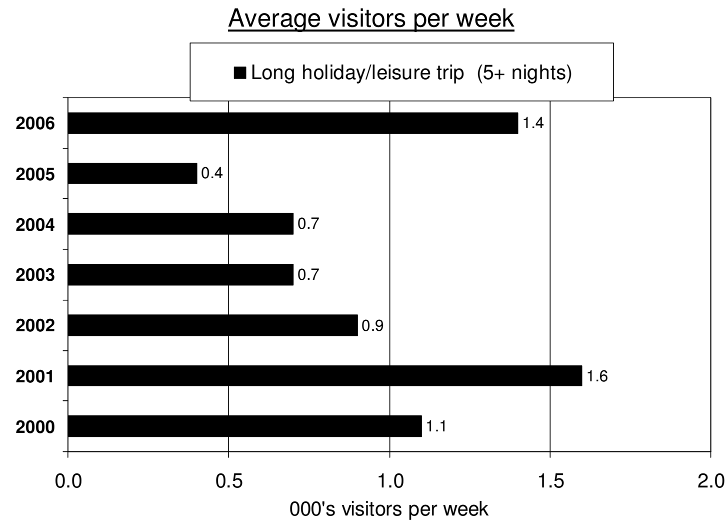


At this time of year there are hardly any short break visitors from overseas.

Estimated number of longer stay leisure visitors

In this low season there were relatively few longer stay (5+ night) holidays and leisure breaks. An estimated 18,000 such (domestic) visits were made which is 1,400 per week. Although this is a small market, this is the highest number in the last 5 years and more than treble the number seen last year.

Estimated number of domestic longer stay leisure visitors
Q1 2006 vs. previous years

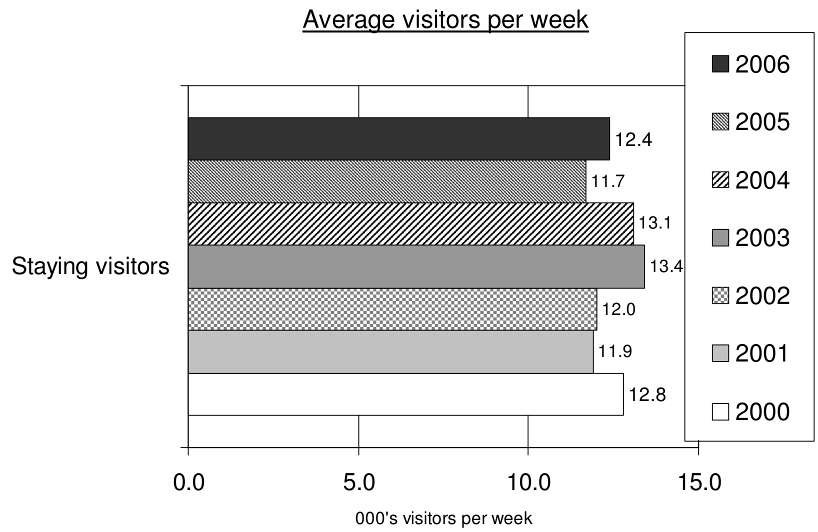


Again, as expected at this time of year, visitors from overseas were scarce.

Total number of staying visitors

Looking at the total number of staying visitors during the winter, it is estimated 155,000 visitors went to the Island on an overnight trip; 97% of whom were domestic visitors. Therefore an average of 12,400 domestic staying trips were made each week. This is a slight increase on last year and 2001/2002 but slightly below 2003 and 2004.

Estimated number of domestic staying visitors
Q1 2006 vs. previous years

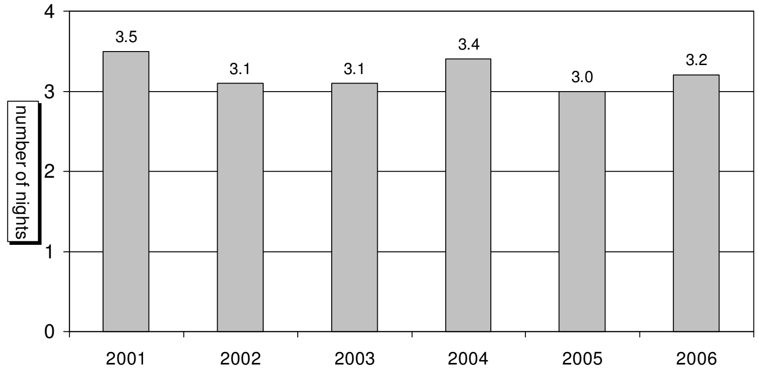


Much of this increase has already been shown to be due to staying leisure visits, VFR trips were up slightly versus last winter but down on 2004. Business associated visits were below last year but on a par with 2004.

Average length of stay

The average length of stay of all types of staying trips has increased slightly to 3.2 nights, showing the positive effect of more longer stay holidays. Over the long term there have been fairly small fluctuations in length of stay.

Average length of stay
Q1 2006 vs. previous years

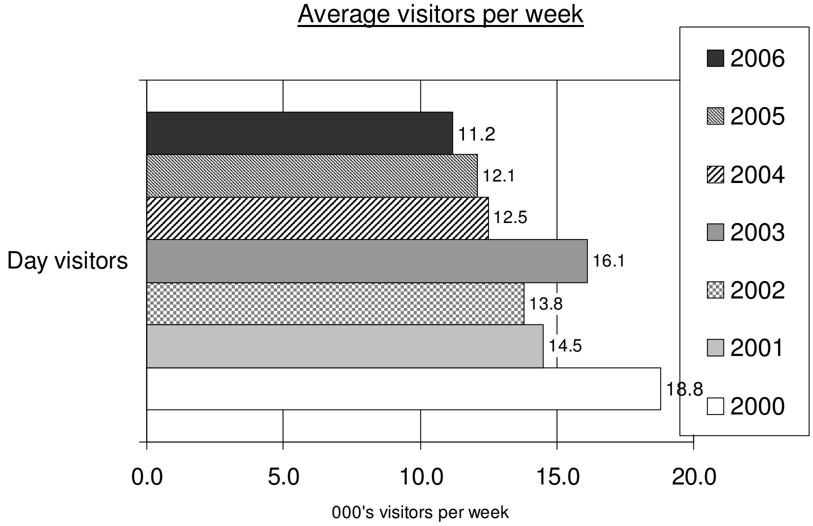


Numbers of day visitors

An estimated 141,000 day visits were made to the Island, the vast majority of which were domestic day visits (96%). This is an average of 11,200 domestic visits per week and continues the long term decline in day visits at this time of year. The decline is primarily due to fewer business trips. Leisure day trips and VFR day trips were up slightly versus last year.

Estimated number of domestic day visitors
Q1 2006 vs. previous years

Average visitors per week



New versus repeat visitors to the Island

Leisure visitors are asked when they last visited the Isle of Wight. The following data excludes those visiting friends and relatives as these are, by definition, likely to be frequent visitors. (96% of VFR visitors had visited the Island before.)

Approximately 70% of all leisure visitors had visited in the last 5 years showing a high propensity to re-visit the Island and indicating a high degree of satisfaction.

Day visitors: a fifth (22%) of leisure day visitors were on their first visit to the Island which is slightly higher than the previous two winters. In addition 5% were lapsed visitors (not been to the Island for the last 5 years) taking the total of new/lapsed visitors to 27%.

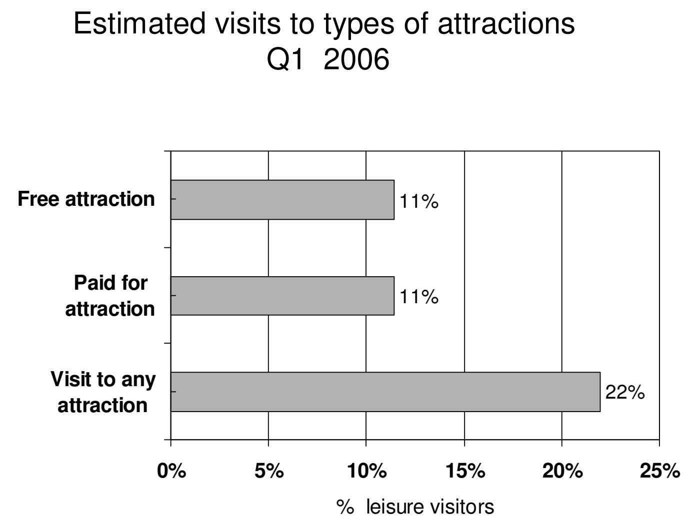
Staying visitors: 14% of those on a short break were visiting for the first time; this is slightly below last year but on a par with 2004. Another 16% were visiting for the first time in 5 years hence 30% were new or lapsed visitors.

	Leisure Day visitors (not VFR)	Short break/holiday visitors (not VFR)
First visit to Island	22%	14%
Visited before in last 12 months	51%	54%
Visited before 12 months to 5 years ago	23%	16%
Visited before but more than 5 years ago	5%	16%

Consequently, it is estimated that approximately 40,000 new or lapsed leisure visitors came to the Island on either a day trip or a short break or holiday in this quarter.

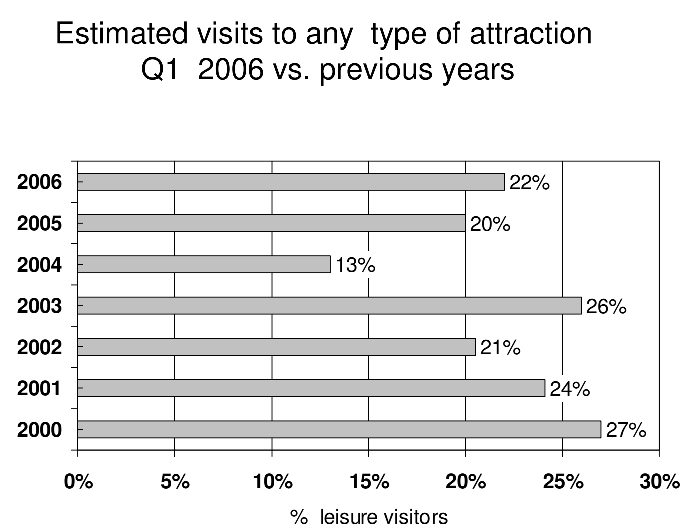
Visits to attractions

It is estimated that 22% of leisure visitors went to at least one of the Island's attractions; free* and paid for attractions were equally popular.



* N. B. Recall of visits to free attractions may be underestimated due to the reliance on respondent's recall.

This incidence of visiting is the second year that visits to attractions have increased since the drop recorded in 2004.



Mode of transport

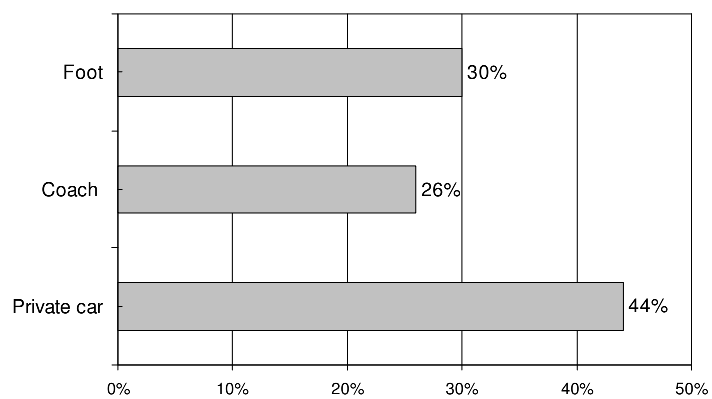
All visitors are asked how they travel to the mainland terminal and around the Island. Mode of travel on board the ferry is also recorded and used to estimate the overall split between visitors travelling as car, coach and foot passengers.

At present no historical data is available.

Mode of travel on board the ferry

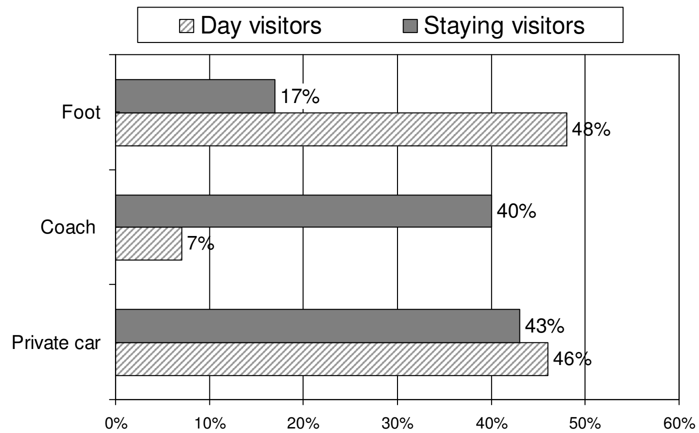
At this time of year it is estimated that 44% of visitors travelled by car with the remainder split fairly evenly between coach travel (26%) and on foot (30%). This high incidence of coach travel shows the importance of this market outside the peak season.

Mode of travel on board the ferry
Quarter 1, 2006



There are differences between staying and day visitors in that almost half the day visitors travelled on foot and 40% of staying visitors travelled by coach. This means that coach visitors were primarily the higher value staying visitors.

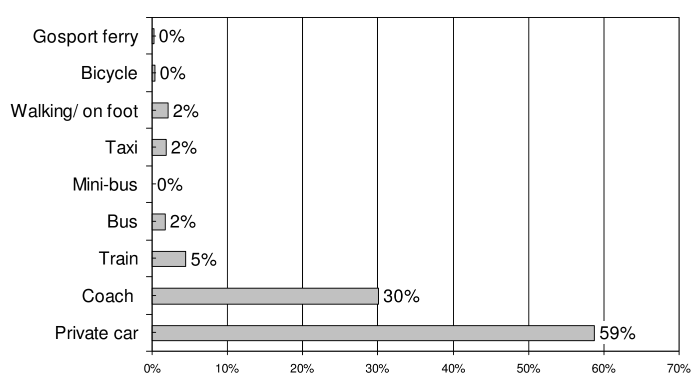
Mode of travel on board the ferry
Quarter 1, 2006



<u>Mode of transport to the mainland terminal</u>

At this time of year car and coach travel account for most of the journeys to the mainland port (59% and 30% respectively). A minority travelled by bus or train.

Transport used to travel to the mainland terminal
Quarter 1, 2006



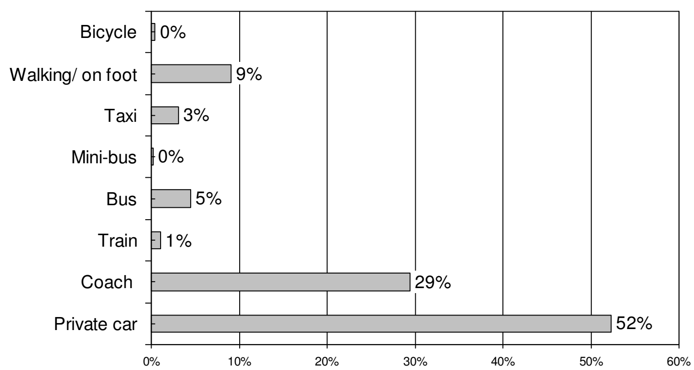
N.B. It is assumed that anyone travelling with their own car on the ferry uses that as their main mode of transport to the port. Likewise, those travelling with a coach on the ferry are assumed to travel by coach to the port.

Looking at the difference between day and staying visitors; use of coaches was higher amongst staying visitors whilst use of the car was higher amongst day visitors.

Mode of transport to travel around the Island

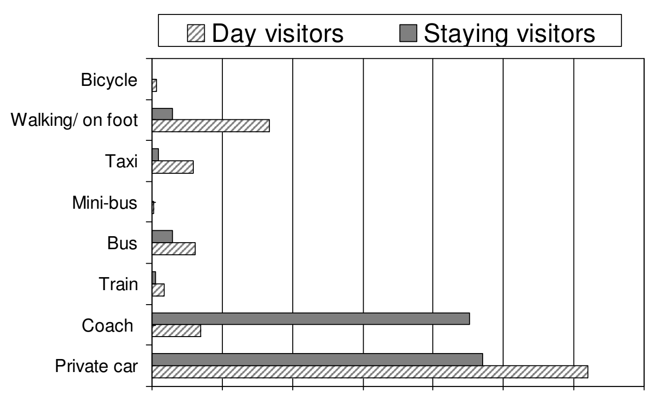
Once on the Island, the private car and coach continue to dominate travel. Just over half travelled by car (either their own or that of a relative) and 29% travelled by coach.

Transport used to travel around the Island
Quarter 1, 2006



Walking and use of the bus services is due primarily to use by day visitors. Day visitors were also more likely to use a private car than staying visitors. Most of those travelling by coach were staying visitors.

Transport used to travel around the Island
Quarter 1, 2006



N.B. It is assumed that anyone travelling with their own car on the ferry uses that as their main mode of transport around the Island. Likewise, those travelling with a coach on the ferry are assumed to travel by coach on the Island.

Value of tourism

The value of tourism is estimated at £36 million for winter 2006. After taking account of the quarter length, this is an increase of 5% (excluding inflation) on winter 2005. This is attributable to the increase in short breaks and longer stay holidays/leisure trips.

Staying trips are worth £32 million and day trips account for another £5 million.

Staying trips	
All domestic staying trips	£30 million
All overseas staying trips	£2 million
All staying trips	£32 million*
Day trips	
All day trips	£5 million*

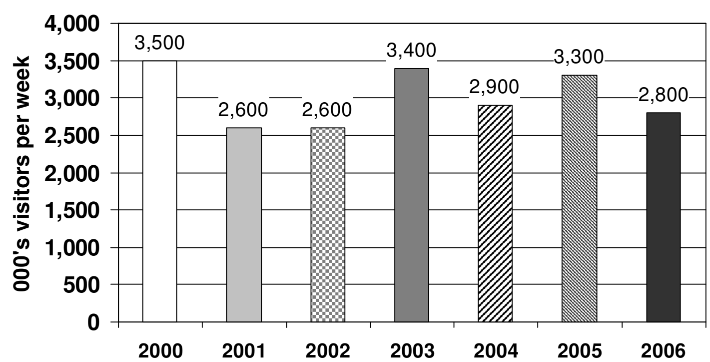
* Addition of individual figures exceeds £36 million due to rounding of figures.

Activity at Island Tourist Information Centres

Over 34,000 people visited the Island TIC's, an average of 2,800 per week. This is a drop versus last year but in line with 2004.

The average spend was £8.43 which is level with 2005.

Number of visitors to TIC offices
Q1 2006 vs. previous years



Island website activity

The Isle of Wight Tourism website has performed extremely well and attracted a significantly higher volume of visitors. There were 159,000 visits to the website in the 3 month period from January to March. This is an increase of 37% on the same period last year although the timing of Easter and the school holidays differs between the two years thus it is difficult to make direct comparisons.

Occupancy statistics

The Isle of Wight occupancy statistics for winter 2006 will be issued in a separate bulletin later in May.

Spring tourism bulletin (March 27th to 16th July, 2006)

Visitor statistics for the next trading period will be circulated in late August with the occupancy statistics following at the end of September.