

From: Local Plan Review
Subject: FW: Junc 27 development

From: Rhys Roberts
Sent: 07 February 2017 12:17
To: Local Plan Review
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Sir,

As a hotelier of some 20 years who has owned and operated a business in the Mid Devon area, you could rightly conclude I'm bound to be in favour of a tourism development at junc 27 M5 motorway. Personally speaking of course, we would welcome this development but I would like to offer a wider perspective in addition to the benefits I believe this development will bring to the tourism, retail and attraction businesses in Tiverton

As chairman of Visit Devon, the region's tourism organisation charged with promoting tourism for the whole county, I am only too aware that for years Mid Devon has fallen well behind other areas in the county in respect not only of numbers of visitors but also spend. Currently Mid Devon has the lowest number of day and overnight visitors when compared to other areas in the county but also the lowest spend and the gap is significant. (source Visit England).

Furthermore, in my view without this development it is inconceivable that the situation will change anytime soon resulting in significant disadvantages for tourism businesses in this area in attracting and retaining good quality local staff who simply look further afield and we struggle to compete when operating with less occupancy and tighter margins than our competitors. We have an excellent local catering college facility available in Tiverton but they struggle, firstly to attract and then retain good students by the influenced by the size of Exeter College. At present I can only advise staff who want to advance their careers to go to Exeter and beyond as few opportunities exist in Mid Devon despite their desire to live and work in this area.

If we are to change this situation, we need to attract visitors from across the country and to do that we need an attraction which can compete with other venue's in the Southwest, Eden Westwood gives us that national opportunity and in my view the benefits if the development goes ahead, will be felt across the region and particularly in Mid Devon.

Rhys Roberts
Director
BW Tiverton Hotel
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www.bw-tivertonhotel.co.uk



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