

## Press Release

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### Tourism students get to work on holiday-maker survey for Matlock Bath

Matlock Bath is planning to gain a bigger share of the £1.9 billion which tourists spend in Derbyshire each year thanks to a research project launched by University of Derby tourism students yesterday.

The popular resort in the Derbyshire Dales has asked the University for help in finding out who already comes to the area, what they spend – and which visitors it is missing out on.

Tourists, residents, businesses, accommodation providers and attractions will be surveyed in the project which will then draw up a report on which to base an action plan to help refresh its image and boost its economy

“If we want to be a market leader, we need to know what are the strengths and weaknesses, and what we could do differently,” Dr Sarah Rawlinson, Head of Department Hotel Resort and Spa Management told a packed meeting in The Fishpond Hotel, Matlock Bath.

Information like that would be vital in attracting grants for the project – but funders would have to be confident that everyone in Matlock Bath was pulling together.

Dr Rawlinson urged members of the public and businesses to co-operate with the student team: “They can’t do this work without your support. Students will want to talk to businesses. Getting a good response rate is going to be very important.”

She said the first step was to create an audit of Matlock Bath’s tourist assets: “You don’t want to throw the baby out with the bathwater, but you need to get people to come and spend money. If all you have to offer is fish and chips and facilities for day-trippers, then that’s what you’ll get. In order to attract different visitors, you need different facilities.

“In the end, it’s down to the village to decide.”

Lindsay Ray, of Visit Peak District and Derbyshire told the meeting: “In my opinion you are very lucky to have the University of Derby doing this on your behalf, and I applaud your vision and the fact that so many of you have turned out to be a part of this.”

Mr Andrew Pugh, of the Heights of Abraham which runs the resort’s iconic cable cars, said: “This is just the beginning of what we are trying to achieve, so please, will everybody contribute and play your part in responding to Sarah and her team.”

Matlock Bath’s setting on the River Derwent between limestone cliffs led it be known as Little Switzerland in its Victorian hey-day. The village has been celebrated by writers ranging from Lord Byron to former Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman, who dedicated an entire poem to its “romantic rocks.”

But changing leisure and travel trends have left the village with an identity problem, says Parish Council Chairman Peter Baranek, who is leading of the project for the community.

“At the moment it is still very much a day-tripper destination,” he said. “But the village has so much more to offer. Everybody is doing a little bit but until now there’s nobody looking at the big picture,” said Cllr Baranek.

Tourism Destination Management undergraduate Emma Pope: “It’s really exciting to be a part of a real-life project alongside my degree. It gives me a lot of additional experience, and will be really beneficial to me. I’m looking forward to being involved with the community and understanding their viewpoints.