



Joint Biosecurity Centre

Explainer: Tourism in the South West

5 August 2020 JBC/020/036 Data cut-off: 3 August 2020 0900 hrs

KEY JUDGMENTS

- The SW is one of the most popular regions in England for domestic tourism and is likely to see similar amounts of tourism footfall during this summer as it has done in previous years. Google mobility data suggest movements due to the holiday seasons have already started. However, most visitors will be from regions with low COVID-19 prevalence.
- Provided that already-symptomatic individuals elect not to travel, it is unlikely that tourists will require medical attention or Critical Care Beds for COVID-19 whilst in the SW due to the time factors of incubation being over that of most trips into the region. But symptomatic tourists might book a test locally.
- However, it is likely that there will be an increase of COVID-19 transmission between tourists and those working in the tourism industry. There is a realistic possibility that locals in the tourism industry will inadvertently pass the virus onto older/vulnerable locals who they interact with, such as family members.
- Given the holiday season has started already we would expect to see the initial impact of tourism on incident rates in the coming weeks. We will continue to monitor mobility and other data sets and keep close ties with regional groups to monitor any potential trends. This note draws together a summary pack of information that could be turned to if we see an effect.

Background

1. This report looks to understand the impact of domestic tourism within the South West (SW) region over the summer period and how this could affect COVID-19 transmission in the region. This includes looking at what additional stress could be placed on the limited NHS critical care capability in the region.

2. The South West (SW) region is the largest region in England by area, covering 23,837.36 Km² and with a population of 5.6 million¹. 22% of the South West population (c. 1.2 million people) is of state pension age and above (as defined in 2008), the largest proportion of any UK region, and it has the second highest amount of care homes regionally in England. The SW covers the counties of Gloucestershire, Bristol, Somerset, Cornwall, The Isles of Scilly, Devon, Dorset and Wiltshire. These areas are managed by three County councils, 12 Unitary Authorities and 18 Non-Metropolitan Districts.

3. As of 3 August, the SW have observed the lowest number of cases (13,397 total confirmed cases and a current seven day incidence rate of 3.8 per 100,000) and the lowest number of deaths (1,276) in England. This contrasts with some nearby regions: the West Midlands (WM) have a total confirmed cases of 27,186, a seven day total per 100,000 of 9.0 and a total deaths sit at 3,592; and the South East (SE) have total cases of 34,660, a seven day total per 100,000 of 4.9 and total deaths in the region sit at 3,528.

Tourism in the South West

4. The SW has consistently been one of the most popular regions in England for domestic tourism. In 2019, 147.8 million day trips were made to the region, accounting for 11% of all English day trips (in 2015 136 million day

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trips were made, equating to 10% of all day trips).² A quarter (25%) of all day trips made to the SW in 2015 were to visit friends and family, with other reasons including a general day (11%), outdoor activity (10%) and visitor attractions (6%).³ Stonehenge, Longleat, the Eden Project and the Roman Baths in Bath are all in the top 20 most visited paid attractions in the UK.⁴ Figures 1 and 2 in Annex B highlight that Devon has the most attractions paid and free that tourists visit the most. Wiltshire and the Bristol area have the next highest amount of attractions with three each. Whilst this is a useful indicator of footfall in the region on low level activities, it does not indicate use of areas such as beaches or parks.

5. The SW is also the most popular region in England for overnight trips. In 2019, 18.9 million overnight trips were made to the SW (19% of all domestic overnight trips in England)⁵. These were primarily to seaside areas and used self-catering rented accommodation.

6. The pandemic has impacted people's confidence in going on holiday in the UK. A survey from mid-July found that only a third of UK adults (33%) felt confident that they would be able to take a domestic short break or holiday in August.⁶ Despite this the SW region will still attract large numbers of visitors for day trips and overnight stays over the summer period. Villages and seaside towns are the most popular destinations for planned trips, with many wanting to camp/caravan.⁶ Using Google Mobility reports to help assess busyness in the SW region there has already been a significant increase in retail, grocery and parks which is highly likely due to an increase of people visiting the areas since the 20 July where most schools would have started their summer holidays. There are notable increases in groceries and retail for areas such as Cornwall and Dorset where most measure indicators are above the baseline (five week median pre pandemic) compared to the rest of the SW region and England⁷. Parks in the SW have seen the greatest increase of busyness with a range of 96% above the baseline for Wiltshire on the 28 July to 416% above the baseline for Cornwall on the same day.

The impact of tourism on COVID-19 transmission in the region

7. It is likely that there will be an increase of COVID-19 transmission and cases in the SW region over the next two months as a result of tourists visiting the region who are asymptomatic or have the virus but it is in the incubation period.

- **Local regions and population:**

8. A large proportion of visitors to the SW region are from other parts of the region where COVID-19 case rates are relatively low⁸. But the region is also popular with visitors from the South East and the West Midlands (accounting for 18% and 14% of day trips respectively) where COVID-19 case rates are higher. The North West, which has the highest cases of COVID-19 (total cases of 46,503 and a 7 day total per 100,00 of 16.7⁹), also accounted for 6% of visitors in 2015.

9. There is currently little evidence to indicate a direct causal link between recent large gatherings, such as that seen on Durdle Door in Dorset, and the spread of the virus across the UK. As a result it is likely that the public perception of the risk of COVID-19 transmission from mass gatherings has reduced. There is a realistic possibility that this, coupled with people having 'pandemic fatigue' will result in some tourists, locals and businesses not following social distancing measures. As measures are relaxed, there will be an increase in the flouting of remaining restrictions and public attitudes will become increasingly ambivalent to the virus. It is probable that the boundaries of lockdown policies will be tested by the public, and non-adherence to NPI will almost certainly increase the risk of viral transmission in large gatherings. This can make the local populations worry about prevalence of COVID-19 in their community such as Cornwall with its large popularity and small villages and towns creating tourist dense areas making it difficult for compliance measures such as social distancing to be adhered to.

10. The most at risk of infection are those working in the tourism industry. It is highly likely that most elderly locals, who are used to the increase in tourism during the summer, will, conduct all their activity in the early mornings, to avoid large queues and busyness later on in the day. This will limit their interaction with tourists and potential symptomatic and asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19. There is a realistic possibility that locals in the tourism industry will inadvertently pass the virus onto older/vulnerable locals who they interact with, such as family members

- **Care homes:**

11. The SW has a large population of vulnerable care home residents and has the second highest number of care homes of any region of England (2,041 Care Quality Commission registered care homes which represents 13% of all care homes in England).¹⁰ A large proportion of these are close to popular tourist areas, with a particularly high density of care homes located in Bristol, Bournemouth, Torquay and Plymouth.

12. The SW has reported just 8.8% of suspected or confirmed care home outbreaks of COVID-19 from 1st March to 2nd August.¹¹ But it is likely that an increase in community COVID-19 infection in the South West will lead to an increase in care home outbreaks in the area. It is unlikely that there is significant direct contact between care home residents and tourists, but care home staff and visitors are likely to act as a vector between residents and the community, including tourists.

- **Hospitals:**

13. The South West has the lowest number of critical care beds per capita of any region in England¹². Capacity has also been bolstered with Nightingale Hospitals in Exeter (116 beds) and Bristol (300 beds). These have largely remained unused and in comparison to the London NHS Nightingale of 4,000 a very small capacity. As of 21 July, the South West had 357 beds with mechanical ventilation. Cornwall has one of the highest population totals in the SW (569,578)¹³ and only had critical care beds pre-pandemic. This has now risen to 42 mechanical ventilator beds and 5 non-invasive ventilator beds.

14. Most tourists who visit the region for day trips will be highly unlikely to be in the area long enough to require hospital treatment for COVID-19, either from contracting it locally or travelling to the SW before symptoms have developed. Tourists who stay longer and test positive for COVID-19 during their stay are likely to return home and self-isolate, as per government guidelines.

- **Specific Areas of Risk**

15. The SW has large concentrations of care homes in coastal towns such as Bristol, Bournemouth, Plymouth and Torquay. Bristol has three of the most visited attractions in the SW, Devon has the most attractions in the region with four. It is likely that there will be an increase in transmission in these areas where there is a large amount of attractions and beaches, where it is likely that there will be an increase of transmission between tourists and the local tourism staff who will either directly pass the transmission to elderly locals or via contact with social contacts, relatives, carers and adult social care staff.

16. Cornwall is likely at high risk compared to other areas due to the amount of tourism that it receives, and the amount of critical care capacity it has in the NHS Kernow CCG. Most residents of Cornwall live in small coastal and rural villages and towns, it is likely that during the summer months the population increases with tourists entering these small towns. There is an increased likelihood of transmission due to a higher density of people in these small towns.

17. Somerset & Dorset are at equal risk due to capacity and capability issues and having the highest percentage of over 75's in the SW region (figure four, annex B). Somerset has a high population (562,255) compared to its Critical Care Bed capacity of 28 mechanically ventilated beds between two hospitals as of 21 July. Dorset has a relatively smaller population (378,508) and a slightly better capacity of 31 beds across three hospitals.

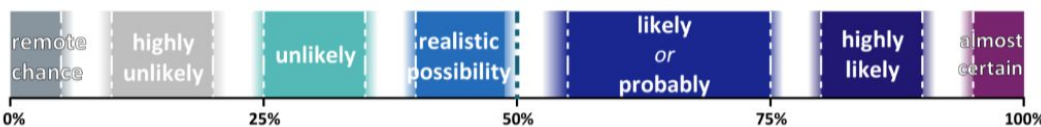
- **Next steps**

18. We will look to routinely monitor and assess available mobility data (i.e. google and Apple) alongside case data, outbreak reports, close liaison with regional response teams and local resilience forum / public health protection boards to identify any future rise in COVID transmission that could be associated with the tourism season.

SOURCES

- 1 ONS 2019 Mid Year population Estimates (Released April 2020)
2. https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/england_all_trips_2019.pdf
3. https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-document/s/south_west_2015.pdf
4. <https://www.visitbritain.org/annual-survey-visits-visitor-attractions-latest-results>
5. https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/england_all_trip_purposes_2019.pdf
6. https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/2_-_covid-19_consumer_tracker_gb_report_week
7. https://www.gstatic.com/covid19/mobility/2020-08-02_GB_Mobility_Report_en-GB.pdf
8. https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-document/s/south_west_2015.pdf
9. PHE surveillance Report dated 3 Aug 20
10. PHE Daily Care Home Report dated 3 Aug 20
11. PHE Centre Daily Report Dated 3 Aug 20
12. PHE Centre Daily Report Dated 3 Aug 20
12. Edge Health report 16 Mar 20
13. ONS 2020 population estimates
14. Foundry - Strategic dashboard

We have medium confidence in our assessment that tourism will be similar to that of previous years from the data provided.	MEDIUM
We have medium confidence in our baseline and plausible scenarios of how and what would happen with transmissions and tourism.	MEDIUM
We have low confidence that a strain of COVID-19 would mutate to create more aggressive symptoms and require hospital treatment	LOW



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This product contains PHE cases data

Annex A - Supporting regional tables and graphs.

	Total	Ownership			Level of Care	
	Care Homes	Local Authority	Non Profit	Private	Care Home Only	Nursing Provided
Gloucestershire	227	5	56	166	158	69
South Gloucestershire	78	1	26	51	57	21
Bristol	109	3	40	66	67	42
Somerset	221	1	69	151	164	57
North Somerset	101	0	18	83	68	33
Bath & NE Somerset	55	0	22	33	37	18
Wiltshire	226	6	64	156	169	57
Dorset	275	0	38	237	199	76
Devon	509	6	61	442	409	100
Cornwall	221	3	47	171	172	49
IoS	1	1	0	0	1	0
Totals	2023	26	441	1556	1501	522

Figure 1 - Table showing numbers of Care homes in the SW by type. Care Quality Commission.

UTLA	ONS Population estimate 2020
Bath and North East Somerset	193,282
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	395,331
Bristol, City of	463,377
Cornwall	569,578
Devon	802,375
Dorset	378,508
Isle Of Scilly	2,224
Gloucestershire	637,070
North Somerset	215,052
Plymouth	262,100
Somerset	562,225
South Gloucestershire	285,093
Swindon	222,193
Wiltshire	500,024

Figure 2 - Breakdown of ONS Population estimates 2020 for the SW.

Annex B - Supporting Mapping of the SW region.

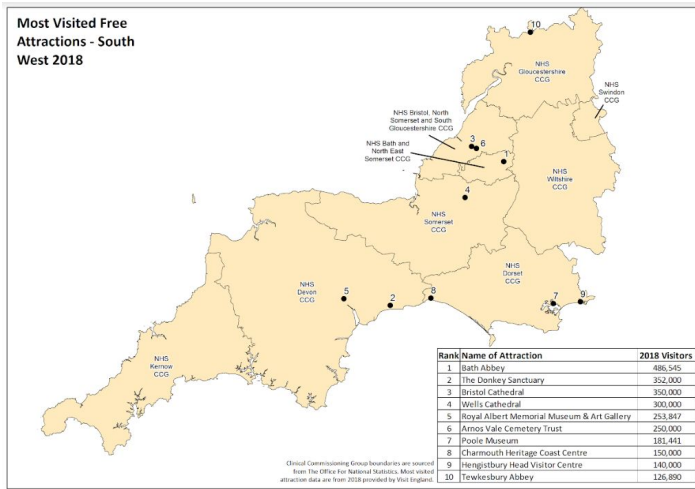


Figure 1 - Spot Map of most visited free attractions in the SW Region.

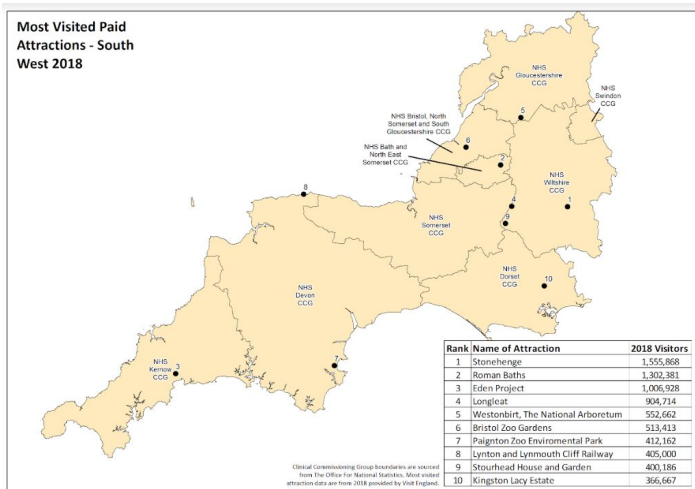


Figure 2 - Spot Map of most visited paid attractions in the SW Region.

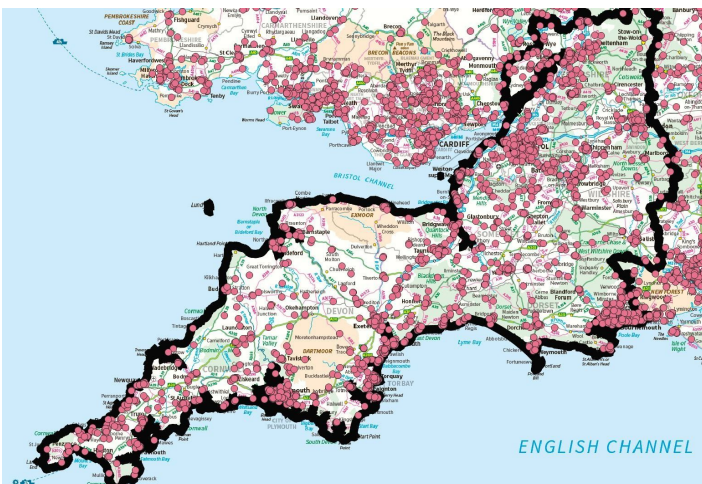


Figure 3 - Spot Map of Carehome locations in the SW Region

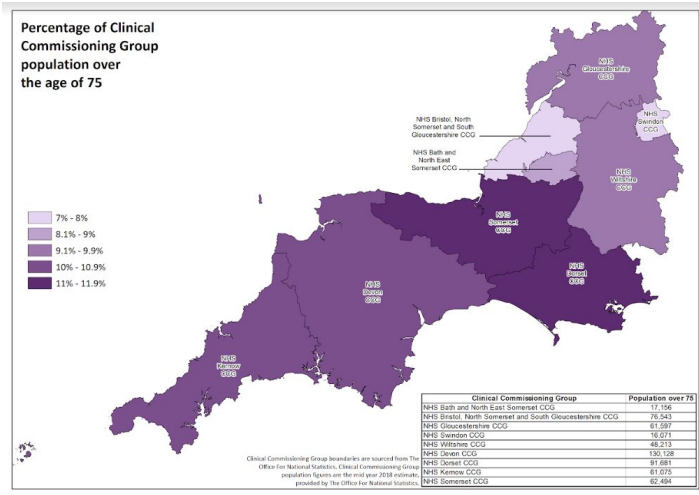


Figure 4 -Choropleth of Over 75 population per CCG SW

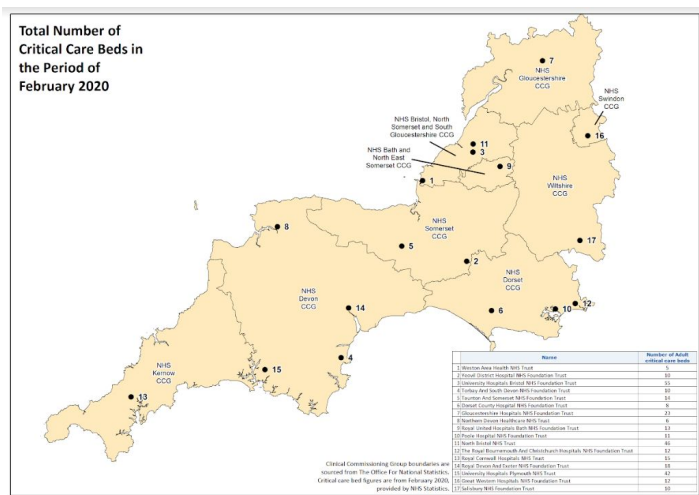


Figure 5 - Showing number of critical care beds per SW CCG