



Dorset's coastal communities

In September 2017, the Social Market Foundation published a report that examined social and economic conditions in Britain's coastal communities. The report defined a coastal community as a local authority with coastal borders. It found that on average coastal communities are less productive economically than non-coastal communities, with lower levels of pay, higher rates of unemployment, have a population with lower skill levels and poorer health. Four of Dorset's district councils are coastal communities, along with Bournemouth and Poole. The socioeconomic picture across Dorset's coastal communities varies considerably.

Big Numbers

The number of coastal communities in Great Britain

98

£11,200

The difference in GVA per resident between Weymouth & Portland and Great Britain (p.a.)

£5.6m

Coastal Community funding awarded to Dorset

Top 20

GVA per head in West Dorset & Poole is amongst the highest in GB coastal communities

Weymouth & Portland has the 3rd lowest GVA per head of 98 coastal communities

3rd

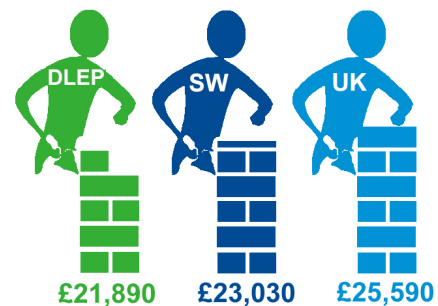
1 in 8

of all anti-social behaviour incidents in Dorset occur in Melcombe Regis in Weymouth

Box 1: Coastal Economies

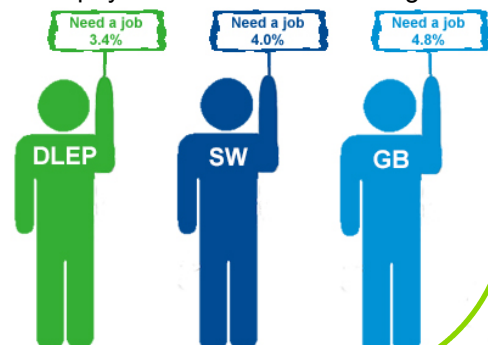
'The economic gap between coastal and non-coastal communities has widened over time' – in 1997, relative to the UK, both Poole and Purbeck recorded Gross Value Added (GVA) per resident head above the national average. By 2015, only Poole remained just above the UK average. Purbeck dropped considerably, falling below the UK level. With the exception of Christchurch, all other parts of Dorset saw a widening of the gap to the national average. At 57 where UK=100, Weymouth & Portland had low GVA per resident head continuing a downward trend¹.

GVA per resident head



'Reflecting this, low employee pay is pervasive across coastal communities' – but the picture in Dorset is mixed. Broadly, earnings in Dorset are below average. Whilst Weymouth and Portland residents are likely to receive low pay, residents of Poole are the second highest Dorset earners, after East Dorset. Firms in Purbeck, Bournemouth, East Dorset and Poole pay above the Dorset average².

'For the twelve months to March 2017, five of the top ten local authorities in Great Britain with the highest unemployment rate were coastal communities' – unemployment is generally below the average in Dorset, with the exception of Weymouth & Portland which, in March, was 7.0% compared to 4.8% in GB³. West Dorset was very close to the national average at 4.7%. No Dorset local authorities came in the highest ten.



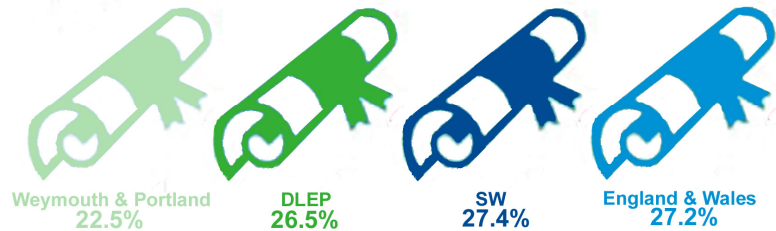
Note: Dorset refers to the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership area in this bulletin (DLEP: Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole)



Box 2: Coastal Society

'Health problems are more prevalent in coastal communities' – the percentage of residents saying they were in bad/very bad health was mostly below the 5.6% average for England & Wales, with the exception of Weymouth & Portland (5.9%), Christchurch (5.8%) and Bournemouth (5.7%)⁴. No Dorset local authorities came in the highest ten.

16+ population holding level 4 and above qualifications⁴



Why does it matter?

Whilst the findings in the Living on the Edge report are in some instances reflected in the Dorset LEP area, there are also instances that contradict its findings. It could be argued that defining any local authority area with a coastline as a coastal community is a little crude. For example, West Dorset is as much an inland community as it is a coastal community, extending as it does about 30 miles inland.

Nevertheless, Weymouth and Portland has many of the socioeconomic problems identified in the report with low income, poor economic growth, low skill levels and significant social deprivation. Early intervention and the provision of targeted services for Weymouth and Portland residents could help reduce demands on the council's services further down the line.

What are we doing about it?

Dorset County Council hosts the Dorset Coast Forum, an independent strategic coastal partnership which looks at the long-term broad scale issues facing the Dorset coast and its inshore waters. The Forum, via the Dorset Coastal Community Team, has been successful in securing a £5.6m grant from the government's Coastal Community Fund.

The County Council also hosts the Dorset and East Devon Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) which aims to deliver community-led local development in the area's fisheries, aquaculture and sea food sectors with a fund of £800k.

The Western Dorset Growth Corridor masterplan puts forward the economic case for investment in and around Dorchester and Weymouth and Portland. To date the project has attracted £600k of Local Growth Funding to develop the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan⁵.

By means of local procurement, local authorities can add to social and environmental wellbeing as well as economic value, for example through contracts with firms that ensure sustainable working practices and those offering quality Apprenticeships⁶.

Implementing policies to tackle social problems early and working to stimulate the economy in deprived areas could help to reduce any economic gap between coastal and other communities.

Sources:

¹ Regional Gross Value Added at current basic prices, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

² Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2016, median, FT pay, gross weekly, ONS – care: this is survey based data and subject to sample error

³ Annual Population Survey, 12 months to March 2017, ONS – care: this is survey based data and subject to sample error

⁴ Census of Population 2011, ONS

⁵ <http://dorsetlep.co.uk/the-western-growth-hub-weymouth-town-center/>

⁶ DCC Contract Procedure Rules (<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/394939>) [Accessed 26/09/17]