

## “Save Bimini”: is the battle won?

Following years of campaigning by Tourism Concern and local and international pressure groups, the mega-resort development on the Bahamian island of North Bimini has been rescaled to half its original size. Plans for a golf course have halted and at least 50 per cent of the remaining mangroves have been spared from bulldozing.

Local sources report: “The scale-backs have been commanded by the folks in Nassau [central government], but are essentially completely resulted from the local and international outcry over the last several years.”

However, dredging for 90 holiday homes is continuing along with large-scale clearance of



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mangroves on the western North Sound. Furthermore, the Marine Protected Area announced by the government in 2009 is yet to be implemented along with other promised environmental mitigation measures. “There is zero enforcement and the exact boundaries and rules have never been made public - most likely because they don’t yet exist,” reports a local campaigner.

### About the campaign

In 2005, Tourism Concern began campaigning with local groups against the development of Bimini Bay Resort on North Bimini Island. Local Livelihoods were severely threatened, as fish breeding grounds were destroyed. Water was reportedly diverted for the development. Promised jobs were given to cheaper labour drafted in from Mexico, for whom working conditions were reportedly extremely poor.

The Marine Protected Area should limit the Bimini Bay Resort development and protect the remaining mangroves. These are vital to the island’s ecosystem, local fisheries, and coastal protection.

Overall, local campaigners feel cautiously optimistic about the future of Bimini. “Things are much better but we are not out of the woods yet.” ■

## YOUR NEW CONTACT

We are happy to welcome Jassi Sandhar as our new membership officer. Contact [Jassi@tourismconcern.org.uk](mailto:Jassi@tourismconcern.org.uk) if you have any questions related to membership and events

# members' corner

## News and events

Big news this summer! Our director, Tricia Barnett, is moving to a new role within Tourism Concern. After 20 years she has decided to use her experience and knowledge in a different capacity for us. A new director should be appointed in the autumn.

In talking about the imminent change in her role and her involvement with Tourism Concern to date, Tricia said: “I am leaving my role as director, not because I have lost the passion for the causes for which we campaign, but because

it is time for the organisation to be refreshed. I have felt very privileged in this job, being able to support people who would otherwise never have had a voice in this massive, greedy and all-powerful industry. I have valued not only the people I have met and the support we have received, but the influence that we, as a tiny organisation, have had on people’s thinking about sustainable tourism and tourism as a human rights and development issue.

“When we began there was very little consciousness about responsible or ethical tourism

from holidaymakers. This has now changed. What has always been extraordinary is that those in need of support have always found a way of communicating their needs to us. Standing up for human rights is a huge challenge, but so rewarding when you win the good fight. There is, of course, still much to be done and I do hope our work will bring about the changes that are necessary.”

Watch this space in our next issue to learn about our new director, or visit our website or Facebook page for updates. ■

# tourism in focus

Extended versions of these articles are available online

## Welcome to the new *In Focus*

Things change. Our job at Tourism Concern is to make sure that, in tourism, change means improvement, greater respect for human rights, better understanding of tourism issues, and more efficient solutions. To those who have been supporting us since 1989, this is the third version of *Tourism In Focus*. Like our campaigns, our publication follows the demands of our world.

These past two years, our campaigns have become more urgent and more visible, due to the increased awareness among travellers of global issues and, I dare say, to the “trendiness” of responsible tourism. In just a few months we have launched an entirely new campaign on Water Equity in Tourism (WET, see inside for details), a global standard for international volunteering (GIVS), a strong campaign in Southern India (Empowering Coastal Communities) and an overarching

human rights campaign: Putting Tourism to Rights. Our partners are Progressio, End Water Poverty, The Travel Foundation, ABTA and Kabani, among others.

In the last two years, the UK has also fallen into its worst economic downturn in decades. Non-profit organisations like ours have felt this crisis tenfold. But thanks to our supporters, we have survived and thrived.

The new *In Focus* reflects all of this. The lighter version enables us to keep you updated on our work as well as on changes within the ethical tourism industry. As always, every issue boasts an article by a partner – a first-hand account of what’s happening on the ground. It also enables us to spend adequate time on the research necessary for our campaigns. Over the next few months you will see a full report on water equity; you will receive a copy of GIVS - our Gap year and International Volunteering



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Standard; and you will be invited to view a documentary film on the current state of tourism in Southern India.

So yes, things can change. What doesn’t is our dedication to transforming tourism so it benefits local people in destinations. We hope you’ll embrace this new version of *In Focus* as a small part of helping to make this happen. ■

TRICIA BARNETT  
Director, Tourism Concern

## TAKE ACTION! STOP TOURISM LAND GRABS IN SRI LANKA

The Sri Lankan government and large tourism developers are displacing communities on the 14 islands of Kalpitiya, destroying livelihoods, threatening food security and damaging the environment. Some 1000 poor fisher families, farmers and small tourism enterprises claim they have not been sufficiently consulted about the Kalpitiya mega-resort project. Please support the people of Kalpitiya in their efforts to protect their land and livelihoods from tourism land grabs.

Write to Sri Lanka’s Minister for Economic Development, Basil Rajapaksa, urging for the project to be halted and a full review to be conducted, as recommended by the Independent Fact Finding Mission. Further details and a sample letter are available on our website: [www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk).

Please email [campaigns@tourismconcern.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@tourismconcern.org.uk) to let us know you have taken part. We would be interested to see any replies received.

## Tourism Concern

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# campaigns

## WET campaign starts with a splash



The world's golf courses guzzle some 2.5 billion gallons of water per day, equivalent to the daily water needs of 80% of the global population

It's been a packed six months for Tourism Concern's new Water Equity in Tourism (WET) campaign.

WET is seeking greater protection of the water rights of poor communities living in tourism destinations. Research has been undertaken in Bali and Kerala, south India. In both locations, poorly regulated tourism development combined with weak water governance, is impacting negatively on water supplies, affecting both livelihoods and the environment.

In Bali, growing numbers of hotels and villas are digging ever deeper to access the declining water table. Local people's supplies are being depleted while surface water is becoming increasingly polluted – with waste from the tourism industry being a contributor. Sewage is leaking into paddy fields, which many farmers must clear with their hands.

Further research is being undertaken by partners in Goa, Zanzibar and Gambia. The aims are to evidence the scale of the problem, support local solutions and campaign on recommendations

for governments and industry. Our WET Steering Group meets regularly to help guide and analyse the research. Members include water, human rights and tourism experts from campaigning groups, think-tanks, academia and industry.

Tourism Concern campaigned with the global End Water Poverty coalition on World Water Day on 22 March.

**Sewage is leaking into paddy fields, which many farmers must clear with their hands**

We called on decision-makers to ensure "water for all, not only tourists". We would like to extend our thanks to all those who took part. We also contributed to a joint NGO briefing for MPs on water and climate change. This helped draw crucial attention to the role tourism plays in exacerbating water scarcity. In addition, Tourism Concern has supported the establishment of the Network for the Pooling of Tourism, Equity and Water Knowledge (NePTEWN). This online information repository was created by the University of the West of England.

For further information visit: <http://neptewn.uwe.ac.uk>. ■

RACHEL NOBLE  
Campaigns manager

## Incredible India



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"Incredible India – this is the place where you leave your excess baggage!"

This was the poster greeting me on my visit to London. I had come to meet Tourism Concern and share the experiences of my organisation, Kabani – stories that people might think incredible for a different reason, involving the displacement of local communities, loss of tradition and livelihoods, and aggressive tourism development that makes money for a few at the expense of the many.

The picture painted abroad is that rapid economic growth is transforming India into an economic superpower. In reality, vast numbers of people who gain nothing from this growth are paying the price. "Incredible India" is becoming a land of protests, where human rights violations in the name of development are common, not least in tourism. For some, this is a fight for survival. Sadly, we in India are not alone in facing such abuses.

My visit made clear the need for a shared campaign strategy on tourism. Victims' voices must be heard. We need strengthened global collaboration to stop the injustices perpetrated in the name of tourism – and we must seek better, fairer forms of tourism. Kabani and Tourism Concern have collaborated to this end for years. Our project, which seeks to empower southern coastal communities, is starting to bear fruit. I thank Tourism Concern and you, its supporters, for making this work possible. ■

SUMESH MANAGALASSERY  
Founder and director, Kabani

## Tourism Concern urges UNWTO to open its doors

In June, I travelled to Bali to lobby the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) to be more inclusive of civil society, so that human rights violations in tourism development can be effectively addressed.

Together with members of the European Tourism Network and the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, Tourism Concern is campaigning for the UNWTO – as a UN agency – to be more democratic, transparent and accountable to civil society, and to incorporate guidelines from the UN Framework of Business and Human Rights. This clearly established the business responsibility to respect human rights. The campaign has been developed from our report, *Putting Tourism to Rights* (2009).

The UNWTO is a world leader in the development and marketing of tourism. However, its decision-making processes are top down and directed by the interests of its members – in the main, ministers

and directors of tourism. There is an affiliate membership, but the fees plus the international meetings expenses are impossible for most civil society organisations to cover.

**“The UNWTO's decision-making processes are top down and directed by the interests of its members”**

I first presented to the seminar 'Responsible Tourism and its Socio-Economic Impact on Local Communities'. I argued that civil society participation and human rights need to be embedded in the development and management of tourism. Unfortunately, participants

did not appear to be committed to genuine change, despite several speakers being passionate about community-based tourism.

I then presented to the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE), which is responsible for implementing the UNWTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. Besides our argument for inclusion, my talk approached the injustice suffered by many through tourism and the 20-year history of UNWTO's marginalisation of advocacy groups. Unsurprisingly, the WCTE seemed uncomfortable and defensive. The Chair's response was: "We are open to ideas, but limited by our own mechanisms and limited by our powers."

We have, however, been assured that the UNWTO will give due consideration to our proposals and we and our networks will keep up the pressure to ensure that this is the case. ■

TRICIA BARNETT  
Director, Tourism Concern

## The Gap Year & International Volunteering Standard (GIVS)

After several years' work, we are excited at the imminent launch of our Gap Year & International Volunteering Standard (GIVS).

Tourism Concern will start assessing volunteering organisations from September. We plan a public launch and awareness-raising campaign in 2012, in partnership with organisations who have been awarded the GIVS kitemark.

With overseas volunteering rapidly growing in popularity and increasing numbers of tour operators offering "voluntourism" packages, serious questions have arisen about how such projects are managed and the benefits shared. It is also a challenge for prospective volunteers to identify organisations that embrace best practice. Therefore, it is crucial that volunteer organisations can demonstrate responsibility in the way they recruit volunteers, find placements and manage the process.

Tourism Concern's independence and reputation for delivering fair

tourism solutions put us in a unique position to develop a credible standard with a rigorous auditing process. Our engagement with volunteering began five years ago when, in response to volunteers and sending organisations concerned at the growth of this unregulated industry, we commissioned detailed research into the issue. The findings highlighted issues around the management of volunteering projects, and led to the outline of GIVS.

GIVS has been developed and trialled with a range of volunteering organisations. We are now finalising the details of the auditing and training processes. Built around eight principles, GIVS includes benchmarks and indicators for assessing compliance. Organisations able to demonstrate that they have achieved the required standard are awarded the GIVS kitemark. This is valid for two years, after which reassessment is required.

As well as assessing a volunteer-



sending organisation's current practice, the accreditation process will help them work towards improved practice. After an initial assessment, training will be offered to address areas of concern. This will include online materials, training days and peer group workshops. When ready, organisations can be assessed by an external auditor, whose report will be submitted to our GIVS Advisory Panel for final approval. If awarded, the kitemark will serve as a clear indication of quality to prospective volunteers. ■

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