

MARKET RESEARCH

Bee wild in the Borders

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Contents

1.0 Executive Summary	3
2.0 Tourist Demographic	4
3.0 Key Tourism Markets	5
3.1 Nature.....	5
3.2 Attractions.....	5
3.3 Walks	5
3.4 Food and Drink	5
4.0 Visitor Accommodation Analysis	6
5.0 Glamping Popularity	7
6.0 PESTLE Analysis.....	9
6.1 Political	9
6.1.1 Brexit Uncertainty & Covid-19 Impact	9
6.1.2 Brexit	9
6.2 Economic	9
6.2.1 Inflation	9
6.3 Social.....	10
6.3.1 Outdoor Recreation.....	10
6.4 Technological.....	10
6.4.1 Renewable Energy.....	10
6.5 Legal.....	10
6.5.1 Regulations.....	10
6.6 Environmental	10
6.6.1 Environmental Policies	10
7.0 Summary.....	11
8.0 References	12

1.0 Executive Summary

This report will examine whether current accommodation options local to Kelso and the surrounding areas are sufficient to meet tourist demand. It will also look at tourism trends to suggest if a new glamping site in this area is warranted. This will demonstrate the need for this glamping development, as well as its potential to benefit the local area economically, socially, and environmentally.

To demonstrate the need for and benefit of this development, this report will focus on the local tourist demographic, key tourism markets in the area, existing visitor accommodation and demand, and recent tourism trends including glamping. This document will be supported by a PESTLE analysis to understand the external environment within which this development will exist and demonstrate the potential for success.

In summarizing this report, a clear demand for this development will be determined and its contribution to the area highlighted. This will encapsulate a strong case for the support of this glamping site – Bee wild In the Borders.

2.0 Tourist Demographic

The Scottish Borders have a thriving tourism market. The latest figures available were from 2019 and showed a significant increase in the length of visitor stays and average visitor spending, despite a decrease in the number of stays (VisitScotland, 2021). Figures also showed that the majority of overnight visitors to the Scottish Borders were visiting from within Great Britain (VisitScotland, 2021).

Overall Tourism Summary:
Visits, Nights and Spend in the Scottish Borders, 2017-2019 Annual Average Figures

VISITS BREAKDOWN	Visits		Nights		Spend	
	2017-19 Average (000s)	% Change 2016-18/2017-19	2017-19 Average (000s)	% Change 2016-18/2017-19	2017-19 Average (£m)	% Change 2016-18/2017-19
Europe	22	+10%	89	+33%	6	-1%
North America*	4	-33%	16	-24%	1	-14%
Rest of World*	3	+50%	22	+57%	1	+104%
Total International Overnight	29	+7%	127	+26%	9	+6%
Scotland	144	+13%	387	+51%	24	+14%
Rest of Great Britain	196	+7%	750	+14%	39	+15%
Total Domestic Overnight	340	+9%	1,137	+25%	63	+15%
Total Overnight Tourism	369	+9%	1,264	+25%	72	+13%
Total Day Tourism	2,705	-10%	N/A	N/A	72	+18%
Grand Total	3,074	-8%	1,264	+25%	144	+16%

Figure 1 – Overall Tourism Summary. Source: VisitScotland, 2021.

For Bee wild in the Borders, this tells us that the key tourist demographic will likely be domestic tourists. This is supported by the increasing trend of “staycations” (Shilling, 2021), something which the glamping industry has grown largely as a result of.

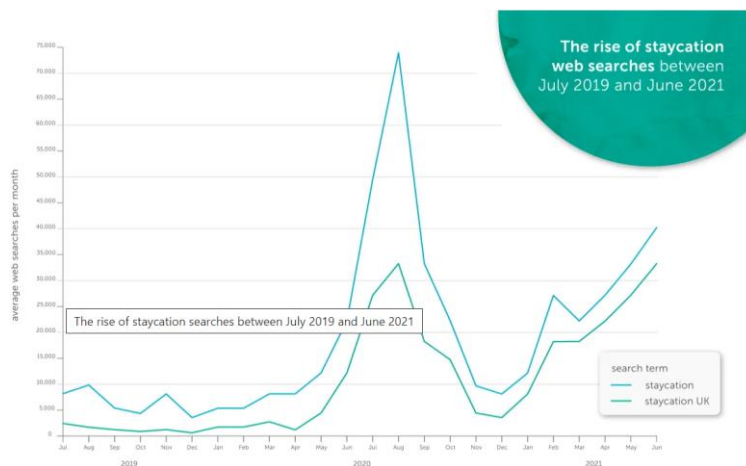


Figure 2 – Rise of Staycations. Source: Shilling, 2021.

Economically, this domestic tourism averaged a yearly expenditure of £63 million (VisitScotland, 2020).

Although statistics specific to Kelso are not available at present, we strongly believe that the scale of the tourism industry in the Scottish Borders overall demonstrates the demand for visitor accommodation and supporting this development would be a positive step for the Council to take, allowing for more tourist accommodation to be provided in the area and boosting the local economy accordingly.

3.0 Key Tourism Markets

3.1 Nature

The Scottish Borders are known for it's beautiful green scenery. The existing landscape is rich in wildlife and natural elements with plenty of cycle routes, nature trails and hikes to discover. The nearby Priorwood Garden is situated on the outskirts of Galashiels in Melrose. The enclosed garden is home to ancient plants and dried flowers, where guests can learn about their rich history and explore the vibrant elements.

The site operators are very passionate about encouraging nature to their proposed site and to create a 'secret garden' type feel to the area. Throughout the site, areas will focus on re-wilding and encouraging biodiversity and wild flowers to the area. In turn this will enhance the wildlife in the surrounding area.

3.2 Attractions

The region is home to a plethora of historic sites and attractions, all within a suitable distance from the proposed glamping site. Tripadvisor lists 31 attractions in Kelso, ranging from castles and historic monuments to galleries and markets. Surprisingly, there are only 26 visitor accommodations in Kelso listed on Tripadvisor. This highlights the capacity for the development of more tourist accommodation to boost visitor numbers to the available attractions.

3.3 Walks

Within reasonable proximity to the proposed site lay many nature sites and walks for those who wish to explore when visiting the region. The North Town Circular and Kelso Town Trail are both accessible to the proposed site, alongside a plethora of other walks and footpaths (Visit Kelso, 2021). The natural beauty of the area undoubtedly contributes to the significant visitor numbers previously discussed, and this glamping development will be an excellent opportunity to provide accommodation that further connects visitors to the natural environment.

3.4 Food and Drink

Local highlights for food and drink to the area include The Cream Chimneys, Hoot 'n Cat, and Off The Square. Key dishes appear to feature British cuisine. By bringing more visitors to the area, this site will likely create the opportunity for visitors to appreciate the food on offer and contribute to the economy through visitor spending in these largely independent businesses and promote the expansion of the food and drinks industry in Kelso.

4.0 Visitor Accommodation Analysis

Below is a list of similar accommodation options near the proposed glamping site and within the surrounding area.

- **Coldstream Holiday Park**
Website: [Link](#)
Approximate Nightly Cost: £57
- **Queens Head Hotel**
Website: [Link](#)
Approximate Nightly Cost: £100
- **Black Swan Hotel**
Website: [Link](#)
Approximate Nightly Cost: £80
- **Dryburgh Arms**
Website: [Link](#)
Approximate Nightly Cost: £75

It is clear that local accommodation options tend towards hotels, B&Bs, or country manor hotels. There was only 1 glamping site identified in close proximity to the proposed development, and therefore a clear gap in the market can be seen. With glamping's popularity growing ever stronger (and the impact of Covid-19 likely to accelerate it further), we can be confident of sufficient glamping demand to justify Bee wild in the Borders.

By comparison to the choices above, the proposed glamping site would be a different proposition to the current options and likely attract a new, wider tourist demographic. The site could expect to command upwards of £110 per night per unit. Accommodating the tourists at this site should also see benefits pass through to the local economy through both visitor expenditure (as discussed in section 2.0) and job creation.

The tourist trade in the winter months is naturally low in most parts of the UK. Despite this, we believe there would still be sufficient demand for a glamping site in the low season, again due to the additional level of comfort and luxury allowed by the proposed style of units.

5.0 Glamping Popularity

Each year we witness an increase in google searches for glamping (as seen below). This trend matches Glampitect’s experience of witnessing increasing demand. Interestingly the trend shows increased demand for both peak and off-peak seasons & shows no sign of decreasing for the time being.

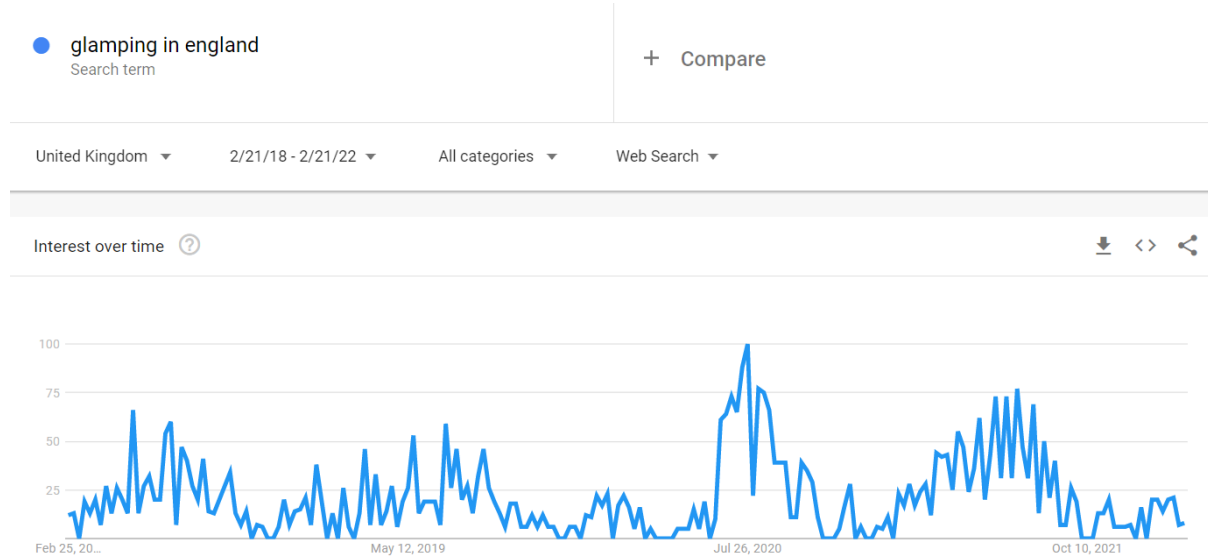


Figure 3 - Glamping Popularity. Source: Google.

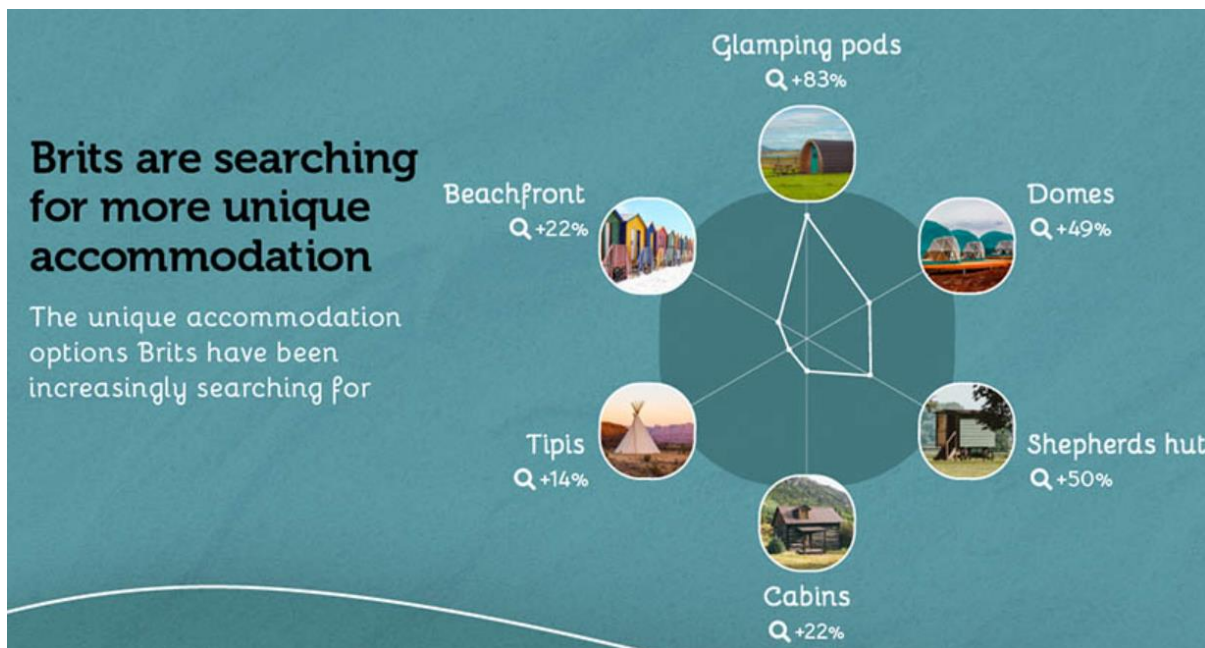


Figure 4 – Staycation Searches 2020-2021. Source: Parkdean Resorts, 2021.

The concept of luxury glamping is now gaining popularity throughout the UK, with standards and guests’ expectations on the rise. It is intended by the site operator that this site will be amongst the best available in the area. At the moment, there is little presence in the Kelso area offering this kind of luxury glamping accommodation and giving guests exclusive facilities. Therefore, we feel the site would be providing a positive alternative for visitors to the area and capturing a sector of the market that is not yet saturated.

We have seen in other parts of the country that glamping sites are popular even in areas short of tourist attractions, and when close to other glamping options. Furthermore, glamping demands a much higher nightly rate than camping (Cool Camping, 2021), thus attracting a typically higher average spend and consequently boosting the local economy.



Figure 5 – Glamping Price. Source: Cool Camping, 2021.

Glamping sites tend to be rural in location to provide a relaxing get-away for all guests. This particular proposal aims to provide secluded accommodation in a natural environment. The site operators aim to re-wild the land to allow guests to experience the natural elements around them.

Glamping has a certain novelty, meaning it is now an attraction in its own right. The location of this site, whilst being close to plenty of other attractions, will certainly appeal to potential visitors – drawing tourists to the area and benefitting the local economy.

6.0 PESTLE Analysis

This PESTLE analysis will analyse the external environment of the proposed development in order to identify opportunities, threats, and influential factors which may impact, positively or negatively, upon the likelihood of success for this business.

6.1 Political

6.1.1 Brexit Uncertainty & Covid-19 Impact

Historically, uncertain political times have seen UK based tourists favour ‘stay-cations’ over foreign holidays. Fears over foreign travel due to the Covid-19 Pandemic are also expected to continue to encourage home-based tourism.



Figure 6 – Staycation Statistics. Source: Parkdean Resorts, 2020.

6.1.2 Brexit

This is staycation boom tempered by the possibility of fewer tourists arriving from the International Market, due to the same uncertainty. However, domestic tourists using accommodation typically outnumbered international tourists by a ratio as high as 9:1, so we view this as a potential net benefit.

6.2 Economic

6.2.1 Inflation

As inflation rose by 5.4% in 2021 (Thomas, 2022), many Britons may face tighter financial situations in the coming year. Whilst this could be a threat to tourism, when compared with figure 6, we can see that as inflation rose, so did the staycation trend. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that given continuous inflation, staycations will continue to rise accordingly, demonstrating a need for more visitor accommodation and glamping sites in the UK.

6.3 Social

6.3.1 Outdoor Recreation

Participation in outdoor recreation has been a significantly growing trend over the last few years as Covid-19 has pushed communities to meet up outdoors and encouraged people to take up new pastimes in the natural environment such as cycling, resulting in the “bike boom” (Muittari, 2021). Running app Strava recorded significant growth in users since the start of the pandemic (Muittari, 2021). Glamping provides a great opportunity to connect this trend with visitor accommodation in your area, giving tourists a real connection to the natural environment in which they are staying.

6.4 Technological

6.4.1 Renewable Energy

With growing concerns over climate change, the need for and use of renewable energy is more important than ever. This development acknowledges the benefits of renewable energy and is open to further investigation into the future opportunity of utilising renewable energy sources to better their future glamping business.

6.5 Legal

6.5.1 Regulations

As is the case with any development or new business, there are many regulations that must be adhered to. In this case, the applicant recognises this and has enlisted the assistance of *Glampitect* to ensure that all legalities are met, and the future glamping business abides by all relevant regulations.

6.6 Environmental

6.6.1 Environmental Policies

We recognise the importance of the natural environment in Kelso and have closely examined the policies that the Scottish Borders Council considers against planning applications to maintain this landscape amenity. As glamping units require minimal excavation, physical landscape damage is typically very minimal with this kind of development. In addition to this, at *Glampitect* we take great care in the design process to ensure that our projects protect and enhance the environment around them.

The site operators plan to re-wild the site which would provide further screening and an added environmental benefit, the site will aim to enhance and encourage the biodiversity on the land. All development will require minimal groundwork construction to create the space.

7.0 Summary

As identified within this report, the Scottish Borders experience large numbers of visitors, the majority of whom are domestic tourists taking advantage of the staycation trend.

The four key tourism markets which draw visitors to Kelso specifically are nature, attractions, walks, and food and drink. The addition of this development will provide the opportunity for further growth within this industry.

The site will focus on protecting and enhancing the ecology and biodiversity on the land, to encourage as much nature to the site as possible. This will be done through various methods.

Existing accommodation in the area was examined, and a clear gap in the market for glamping development has been identified. Bee wild in the Borders will fill this gap and boost the accommodation offering in the area, thus attracting more visitors and potential tourists of a new demographic.

Glamping is an indisputably accelerating trend within the UK and one which is likely to increase with the continuous impact of Covid-19. Demanding a higher nightly rate than traditional camping, it will be an excellent way to diversify accommodation offerings within Kelso and boost the nightly rate in the area.

Finally, having conducted a PESTLE analysis, multiple opportunities have been identified for this development, including Covid-19 and Brexit, inflation as a driver for staycations, the growing trend of outdoor recreation, and renewable energy. Many factors which would typically impact negatively upon a business success will likely impact positively upon this development, making glamping an excellent venture.

It has been demonstrated that the proposed development will boost the local and rural economy and offers a desirable accommodation style for visitors. Therefore, we are confident that Bee wild in the Borders will be beneficial to Kelso economically, socially, and environmentally.

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