Who earns from the coast all year?

A visitor leaves after a weekend. A council buys shoreline surveys for decades. Both bring money to the coast. They create very different prospects for someone trying to build a working life there.

A town can host a growing industry while its residents still struggle to earn a reliable living. We would look for three things in any proposal to change that. Are there customers who buy throughout the year? How do residents get paid work and progress? Who has a lasting claim on the income?

TOURISM & PRODUCTIVITY

The quiet months tell us more about job security than the busiest weekend.

In nine EU coastal regions, more than half of 2024's recorded tourist nights fell in July and August. In Croatia's Adriatic region the share was 57.7%. The OECD supplies a different piece of the picture. From 1995 to 2025, real output per full-time-equivalent job grew 13% in global marine and coastal tourism, compared with 75% across the ocean economy.

Consider the hotel that could fill another August weekend and the electrician who could win a winter maintenance contract for several hotels. Both can benefit tourism. The second order could also keep a technician employed long enough to supervise an apprentice. Visitor nights measure demand for accommodation. They tell us little about who gets paid in February, and productivity estimates do not measure wages.

> **Decision.** Before backing an event or a new attraction, compare it with a second source of demand. Ask employers for monthly paid hours, hourly pay and contract length. Track whether incumbent workers gain income in the three quietest months.

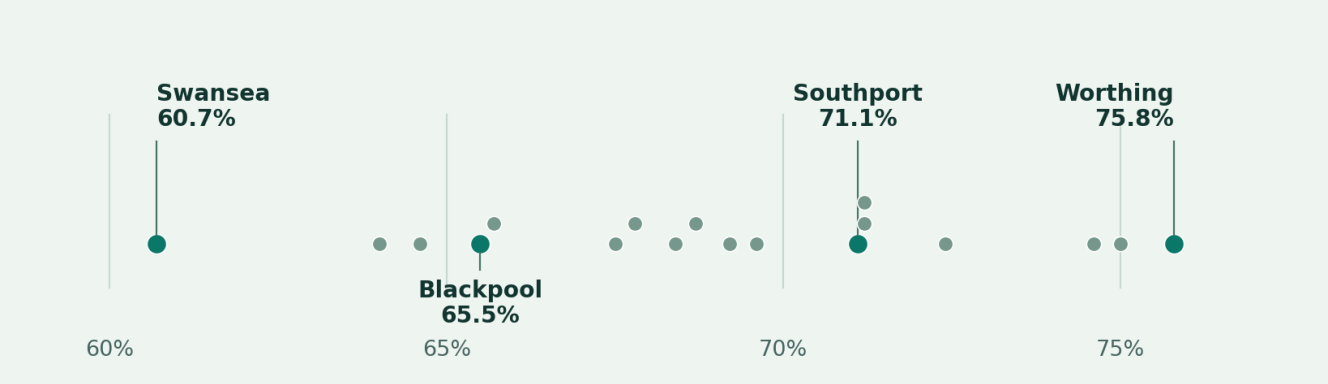
Eurostat · regional tourism nights · OECD · tourism productivity, figure 6.8

PLACE & LABOUR MARKETS

A seaside postcode is a poor guide to the right intervention.

In the 2021 Census, 68.7% of working-age residents in coastal built-up areas of England and Wales were in work, against 71.0% in non-coastal areas. CEDO's calculation from the same ONS workbook finds a 15.1 percentage-point spread among the 18 large coastal settlements alone, from 60.7% in Swansea to 75.8% in Worthing. Southport was at 71.1% and Blackpool at 65.5%.

Residents aged 16–64 in work, March 2021



Each dot is one ONS large coastal built-up area. Overlapping values are stacked.

That range describes one pandemic-era Census day. Age, student populations, health and commuting all deserve investigation. A town where residents travel to good jobs faces a different choice from one where employers have vacancies that residents cannot reach or afford to take.

> **Decision.** Choose a peer with a similar age profile, employer mix and travel-to-work geography. Then find a comparable place with better earnings or retention and investigate what it does differently. A higher employment figure is a starting point for a visit.

ONS · Census workbook, table 7d · ONS · geography and Census context

A QUESTION FOR A LOCAL PARTNERSHIP

Which comparison town would change your decision?

For Southport, start by comparing the places residents travel to for work. Then compare pay and progression in jobs people can reach from home. This would distinguish a shortage of local employers from a shortage of affordable ways into existing work.

SKILLS & INDUSTRIAL DEMAND

The missing partner in a skills strategy may be a customer.

Sefton recorded 964 apprenticeship starts per 100,000 people in 2024/25, close to England's 959. Yet in 2024 the borough had 0.60 workplace jobs per working-age resident, against 0.82 in the North West. Starts are recorded by home address. Jobs density counts jobs in the area, including those held by commuters. Together they raise a question about where residents can use their skills after training.

In the Basque Country, a vocational centre used a manufacturer's components to learn a new 3D-printing process. Teachers tested materials, revised the parts and produced prototypes. The company brought an actual production problem. The college acquired expertise it could teach again. That is evidence of a working arrangement. Its impact on wages remains an open question.

> **Decision.** Ask three employers what job they are already paying someone to do badly, slowly or at a distance. Build one paid assignment around the answer, with a supervisor, a route to the next job and a check on work and pay six months later.

DfE via ONS · starts by residence · ONS Nomis · Sefton jobs density · TKgune · manufacturer and college project

TRADE & OWNERSHIP

Follow a sale until you know who keeps the margin.

On Pemba in Zanzibar, seaweed farmers described losing orders when sand contaminated crops as they dried on the ground. Better drying facilities helped buyers accept the crop. On Unguja, a women's group took a further step into making products such as soap. FAO finds that women account for 62% of post-harvest fisheries and aquaculture workers where sex-disaggregated data are available. Counting only the harvest misses much of the workforce.

In Aotearoa New Zealand the question reaches further. The 1992 Māori fisheries settlement financed a 50% stake in Sealord and provided for 20% of quota for species newly entering the quota system. Rights secured through a Treaty settlement have their own legal and political history. Other places can ask who has an enforceable claim on future value.

> **Decision.** Trace one local product or service from buyer invoice back to the people doing the work. Record payments, costs, unpaid hours, ownership of equipment or designs, and who can set terms next year. A processing investment earns its case when producers' net returns improve after those costs.

UN / IFAD · Pemba and Unguja · FAO · workers along the value chain · Te Ohu Kaimoana · settlement history

CIVIC ASSETS & ENTERPRISE

A building can house an industry and help residents keep a stake in it.

Recife's Porto Digital brings technology firms and training into a historic port district. Its operator reported 541 firms and 24,079 workers across its ecosystem in 2025. Those totals cannot tell us how many local residents gained jobs because of the district. Hastings Commons offers the complementary evidence. Its community land trust owns a third of its property development company, with a route to full ownership when the buildings cover their costs.

One case asks what firms can do together in a place. The other asks who controls the rents once people want to be there. A town that answers only the first risks paying to create a district its original tenants can no longer afford. A town that answers only the second may own a building without enough income to maintain it.

> **Decision.** For a building such as Southport's Assembly Rooms, first run a recurring paid use in borrowed space. Record repeat bookings, customer income and the cost of opening on an ordinary weekday. Pair that evidence with repair and insurance costs, affordable rents and explicit voting rights before taking on long-term liabilities.

Porto Digital · 2025 operator results · Hastings Commons · ownership and rents

ADAPTATION & LONG-TERM FINANCE

The work after construction belongs in the investment decision.

In Beira, Mozambique, restoring the Chiveve River and creating an urban park raised a practical question. Who would pay for upkeep? The design included rental income and a park management body. In Canada, 17 First Nations secured CAD 335 million in initial funding for Great Bear Sea stewardship and community economic development. That agreement establishes finance and decision-making authority. Its long-term effects on livelihoods will need to be measured.

Monitoring can also tell a community when to change course. In a pilot on Indonesia's subsiding Demak coast, researchers measured erosion seaward of permeable structures and mixed results behind them over 2021–22. Even where sediment accumulated at the control site, the bed remained too low for mangrove colonisation. Counting structures installed would have missed the central finding.

> **Decision.** Cost inspection, repairs and monitoring across the asset's life. Identify the rights holders, who pays for repeat work and who can change or stop the intervention. Pair a livelihood measure with a physical outcome, such as paid maintenance days alongside measured changes in erosion.

World Bank · Beira management plan · Coast Funds · Great Bear Sea agreement · Demak · monitored pilot and control site

A FIELD TEST FOR SOUTHPORT

Try selling a shoreline service before buying equipment.

Sefton's regional monitoring programme already buys expertise. Its procurement report records £124,000 spent on terrestrial ecological mapping across the 2016–21 programme. The council also awarded a coastal remote-sensing framework in 2024. These records identify real buyers and incumbent suppliers. They establish neither an open contract nor an unmet need for a new entrant.

For an initial conversation, that puts shoreline monitoring ahead of independent-living technology and simulation training. All three could generate useful work. Monitoring already has a public purchasing history we can inspect. The quickest way to find out if Southport can add value is to ask the people who commission and deliver it.

Days 1–30 · Find a gap in what buyers can get.

Civic Coast could interview the programme team, incumbent survey firms and a second coastal authority. Ask for the last delayed, repeated or unusually costly job, the specification, what it cost and who could authorise a trial. Pay local technicians and learners for time spent shaping it.

Days 31–60 · Quote for one job.

A college and an experienced supplier could cost a supervised assignment such as checking a shoreline dataset against survey records. Include wages, travel, insurance, quality assurance and rework. Agree acceptance criteria, data rights and a price with the buyer before delivery.

Days 61–90 · Test whether it travels.

Deliver only against an agreed paid order. Ask the first buyer what would earn a repeat order and a second place whether it would buy to the same specification. Publish the price, paid hours and acceptance result where disclosure is agreed.

> **Decision at day 90.** Expand only with accepted paid work, a credible repeat buyer or second buyer, and a price that covers supervision and fair pay. If demand is already well served, record that finding and move on. An existing supplier willing to host paid placements would be a useful result in its own right.

Sefton · ecological mapping procurement · Sefton · remote-sensing contract register

WHAT A COASTAL OBSERVATORY CAN CHANGE

Let towns compare the orders they win and the livelihoods they sustain.

A national funder could pay for small trial orders and the time it takes colleges and suppliers to deliver them together. An international network could publish the specification, the price range, who benefited, why an order was lost, and what another place would change. Small towns would gain access to customers and evidence they could rarely assemble alone.

CEDO could follow a small panel of workers, suppliers and buyers through a full year. These four measures would make a stronger public account of progress than an annual total of trainees, visitors or capital announced.

Work across the year	Median paid hours and take-home earnings for the same workers in the three months with the lowest baseline demand. Include informal and self-employed workers through consented income diaries.
Repeat demand	Value and count of paid repeat orders, buyer location and share of sales to the largest buyer. One enthusiastic customer can mask a fragile business.
Progression	Paid entrants still working at six and twelve months, their pay and hours, and whether the job is reachable. Record who dropped out and why.
Local ownership	Who owns the asset and sets its terms, what producers retain after costs, and which income flows back to residents. Report wages and profits separately to avoid counting the same money twice.

The test for a coastal investment is whether someone who already lives there can earn reliably from it, learn a skill worth taking to their next job, and have a say in what the place becomes.

How to read the evidence

Prepared by the Coastal Economy Data Observatory, a Civic Coast initiative, on 26 November 2026. The six findings draw on selected cases, official statistics and a place comparison calculated from ONS Census 2021 table 7d. The comparison includes all 18 settlements classified by ONS as both large and coastal in England and Wales. The 15.1-point range is the highest published rate less the lowest. Coastal and non-coastal headline rates are ONS population aggregates.

OECD's experimental ocean-industry estimates describe activities worldwide. Eurostat counts nights in tourist accommodation. Neither measures the whole economy of a coastal town. Southport figures refer to its built-up area. Sefton figures refer to the wider borough. Selected cases illustrate mechanisms and constraints. They cannot establish average impacts or guarantee results elsewhere. The Southport trial, proposed partners and scorecard are recommendations for testing.

Read the briefing online at CEDO Global