

Julie Middleton, Head of Industry Partnerships, the Travel Foundation
Statement for Cyprus Destination Partnership 'Greener Beaches' Press Conference

I am delighted to be here today to see the results of this pilot project and the practical tools and support that has developed from it. The project has demonstrated what a best practice "green beach" can look like and, as with many initiatives in sustainable or green tourism, it shows the outcome is a win-win for all concerned. Protecting our beaches isn't just the right thing to do from an environmental perspective; communities and businesses benefit too.

I would urge everyone here in Cyprus to get involved: set up a green team to give your local beach the green treatment. The CSTI and CTO will support you, and you can be confident that the ideas within the handbook are tried and tested and will deliver real results. Many of the ideas such as introducing eco-ashtrays or organising beach clean-ups are low-cost and immediate. Some will even save you money, and offer a chance to get local communities engaged in looking after their beach. Could your green team organise an indigenous planting scheme using cuttings from their own gardens, display local artwork or allocate days for promoting local delicacies? All of the ideas in the handbook will help safeguard the future of tourism in your locality.

I'm sure I do not need to say to this audience that now it is more important than ever for Cyprus to adopt a sustainable approach to tourism. This means valuing and protecting the local characteristics of Cyprus that bring millions of holidaymakers here year after year: it's not just the beaches but the unspoilt villages, the historic ruins, the mountains, the rich and varied culture and history, and of course the food! By valuing these local characteristics through initiatives like 'Greener Beaches', you can be sure that tourism will benefit the Cypriot people and the Cypriot economy, and Cyprus will become more attractive as a destination

This project is part of a number of projects which make up a unique five year 'destination partnership' between the CTO, CSTI and the Travel Foundation which began in 2010. It aims to cement Cyprus' reputation as a destination of sustainable tourism excellence. Other projects within the partnership will introduce national minimum sustainability standards for accommodation (thought to be a world first!) and reduce waste to landfill from the tourism industry. Our view at the Travel Foundation is that destination partnerships will become increasingly valuable to help the evolution towards sustainable tourism. Just as the successes of Fig Tree Bay and Nissi Beach can champion greener beaches, I hope the successes of the Cyprus destination partnership can champion greener tourism internationally.