# Skegness faces rising homelessness and economic decline despite thriving tourism



Skegness, a coastal town in Lincolnshire, has garnered a reputation for its family-friendly attractions, including Butlins and local theme parks. However, a deeper look into the town reveals challenges faced by its residents and businesses, which often go unnoticed by the influx of tourists during the busy summer months. The town's population, which stands at approximately 20,700, swells to over 250,000 when visitors flock to experience its nostalgic seaside charm.

Despite its appeal, Skegness has seen a decline in its local economy and community well-being. The town was ranked last in Which? Magazine's 2023 poll of British seaside resorts, prompting local concerns about its future. Businesses are struggling, leading to many closures that exacerbate the area's "run-down" appearance. Tony Singh Talwar, owner of the Massive Clearance Shop on the high street, noted a troubling increase in homelessness, attributing it largely to drug addiction. He remarked, "It's very sad to see and it comes down to drugs. I know some homeless people because I have helped them get off the streets."

Residents have echoed Talwar’s observations, with 65-year-old Paul Canning commenting on the visible presence of homelessness, stating he sees individuals sleeping in doorways of boarded-up shops. Paula Carter, a long-time visitor to Skegness, reported noticing more homeless individuals during her yearly visits. While local businesses strive to sustain themselves amidst these challenges, many have been forced to shutter their doors, contributing to the overall decline of the town centre.

In response to the growing homelessness crisis, East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) allocated £70,000 to install emergency sleeping pods in Skegness. This decision came after reports highlighted a spike in rough sleeping in the area, with 75% identified in Skegness alone. Following the unfortunate death of a homeless man in December, ELDC faced criticism over its management of homelessness, though the council defended its actions, claiming many individuals had declined offered accommodation.

Mental health and substance abuse issues have been cited as exacerbating factors in the situation. Councillor William Gray noted an increase in people with "chaotic" lifestyles last year, indicating that such challenges hinder their ability to maintain stable living conditions. Business owner Tony Talwar expressed concern about the impact of nightlife on local safety and well-being, stating he becomes "scared" at night due to anti-social behaviour linked to substance use.

While the reality of life in Skegness contrasts starkly with the vibrant atmosphere of local attractions, some residents remain hopeful. Butlins in Skegness has reportedly managed to maintain its visitor numbers, welcoming approximately 550,000 guests annually, partly due to significant infrastructure investments. Butlins CEO Jon Hendry-Pickup acknowledged community concerns, admitting the need for a concerted effort to improve local conditions.

Recent political changes have further clouded the future of Skegness. The Reform UK party recently gained control of Lincolnshire County Council, winning 44 out of 70 seats and signalling a potential shift in local governance. Former leader Martin Hill defended the council’s substantial debts of £469 million, emphasising that such borrowing is necessary for future development projects that could help revitalise the area.

Moreover, the East Midlands Railway has announced a £26 million investment aimed at enhancing transport options for tourists, which locals hope will alleviate overcrowding on busy routes during peak seasons. Uber driver Kay Farmer described frequent overcrowding on trains, indicating that increased capacity could significantly benefit the visitor experience.

Community members have expressed mixed feelings about the ongoing transformation of Skegness. While some lament the rise of fast-food establishments in place of traditional fare and the overall decline in the town’s infrastructure, others remain passionate about the town’s scenic qualities and resilient spirit. Carter, a caravan owner who frequents Skegness, remarked, "I absolutely love Skegness for its gorgeous beaches and lovely people," encouraging visitors to explore beyond the stereotypes that the nicknames "Skeg-Vegas" and "Skeggy" may propagate.

As Skegness continues to grapple with its challenges, the outcomes of ongoing investments and community efforts will be closely monitored by residents and local authorities alike, leaving the future of this beloved seaside town in a state of cautious anticipation.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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