



Visit England's Draft Transport and Tourism Action Plan
Response by the English National Park Authorities Association
March 2012

The English National Park Authorities Association (ENPAA) exists to support the policy-making process by co-ordinating input on behalf of the nine English National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority. It is governed by the Chairs of the ten Authorities. This response represents the collective view of officers who are working within the policies established by the National Park Authorities (NPAs).

Individual National Park Authorities may submit separate comments, which will draw on the specific issues for their particular area.

England's National Parks are breathing spaces for the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of the nation and provide opportunities for millions of people, every year, to have first class outdoor experiences in first class environments. The iconic landscapes and heritage sites within our National Parks attract visitors from across the UK and around the world. National Park Authorities do not have a tourism marketing remit, but support the promotion and development of sustainable tourism because it can help to further their statutory purposes and support rural communities. We see sustainable tourism as the future of tourism – not an add-on.

Our aims are that National Parks will be exemplars of sustainable tourism practice and that, as welcoming places, National Parks' value to the nation and appreciation by the public will grow. We want more people, from all sectors of society, to benefit from a deeper experience of the special qualities of National Parks through sustainable tourism.

ENPAA supports the development of sustainable tourism within National Parks. We want everyone to come and enjoy their special qualities and are working to make sure people can do so in ways that do not undermine these special qualities. Promotion of sustainable tourism is not itself a specific purpose or duty of National Park Authorities, however, sustainable tourism contributes to National Parks' two statutory purposes. Since tourism is often one of the main economic drivers of rural economies it also contributes to the duty to foster the socio-economic well being of local communities. At a strategic level, National Park Authorities seek to influence tourism and visitor management by working with and through existing tourism partnerships and providers. This includes working with partners who support and enhance the provision of information, interpretation and the activities offered in National Parks.

Extract from ENPAA's Policy Position Statement on Sustainable Tourism.

ENPAA would like to thank Visit England for the opportunity to comment on the draft Action Plan for Transport and Tourism, which sets out priority actions for the first three years of the Strategic Framework for Tourism in England 2010 – 2020. Our response has been informed from contributions from a number of National Park Authorities and is presented in accordance with the question and answer format presented at the end of the Action Plan.

Q1. Do you support the overall objectives, contexts and key issues highlighted in the Action Plan which have helped to steer the more detailed actions?

Overall, ENPAA is supportive of the challenges and objectives identified in the Action Plan. National Park Authorities are committed to developing and marketing sustainable transport and tourism and between them have demonstrated good practice through a number of innovative, exciting and successful initiatives see [ENPAA Policy Position on Sustainable Tourism](#) and [ENPAA Policy Position Statement on Transport](#).

The context and issues highlighted in the Action Plan address many of the transport and tourism issues within National Parks, and further case study examples are contained within this response.

Within the context section, we note that there is no mention of the importance of low carbon transport or electric vehicles. Although yet to reach beyond traditional ‘innovator’ markets, sales of electric vehicles are widely projected to make up at least 10% of all new vehicles sold by 2020. Rapid growth can be expected within the timeframe of the Strategic Framework and we feel that this should be reflected with a specific objective to seek to reduce the tourism industry’s carbon footprint.

There is also no recognition for walking as a mode of transport, and only a few references to cycling throughout the context section. Both are important and truly sustainable modes. We would welcome some context about how these modes act as drivers for tourism, particularly around organised events, such as walking festivals, and cyclesportive events, which have and are projected to continue to deliver significant growth, especially within protected landscapes. Many of our National Trails and other high profile recreational routes pass through national parks. These provide high quality, low impact experiences.

Also no mention of car sharing schemes – although still an emerging market, [City Car Club](#) for example has vehicles in towns and cities near many national parks (including Southampton, Leeds, Manchester, York, Sheffield, Brighton and Bristol). Members can book a car from any location in the UK which can allow people to make the major part of their journey by train and then transfer to a car for the final leg that’s less easy by public transport or to only use a car club car as and when they need to during a holiday. City Car Club (and other providers) is growing steadily as an affordable alternative to owning your own car. MoorCars in Devon has vehicles based in towns around the edge of Dartmoor. Although it is only for use by residents it still helps reduce parking issues and car use generally.

We also suggest that some additional context is provided on the importance of waterborne transport. Domestic and international ferry operators provide a key role in delivering visitors to destinations, and for some island communities are the only link with the mainland. Boat holidays are also an important area of tourism provision in national parks such as the Broads and the Lake District.

Q2. Are there any key actions missing from the Action Plan and/or do you have any alternatives to suggest that are realistic and achievable?

Short-term actions (3 years)

Although achieving modal shift can be challenging, and should not be underestimated, there are still plenty of straightforward cost-effective short-term actions that can be done. The role that individual tourism businesses can play in providing this information to perspective guests/visitors is not given much weight and could be included under the short term actions. There are examples of businesses which provide comprehensive transport information to visitors after they have booked but the majority do not and would benefit from some assistance on how best to do this and how to do it consistently so the visitor can make an informed decision. Understanding the visitor decision making process is important too – when do they decide which transport option to take to their destination?

Medium- term actions (3-5 years)

We would support an action which set out how the tourism industry could accommodate growth in low carbon and electric vehicles e.g. through the installation of charging infrastructure, participation in networks, and pilot projects to stimulate usage.

We feel that Action iv. *Input into the local transport planning system by local tourism stakeholders* should be listed as a short term action rather than a medium term action. In reality this is already happening at a destination level in many national parks.

Q3. Do the delivery partners make sense or are there other organisations that could help deliver any of the actions which are not referred to?

The preference of ENPAA is to list National Park Authorities as delivery partners in their own right against relevant actions, thus following the approach set out in the earlier Action Plans.

We understand that National Park Authorities are currently included under the Destination Management Organisation delivery partner entries. However, there is some debate as to whether this is the best approach. National Park Authorities are not invited to the Destination Managers Forum so it would be useful to understand how Visit England regards them as Destination Management Organisations. National Park Authorities also have a broad remit including planning, recreation, conservation etc so in many cases bring a different aspect to the delivery partnership.

If this approach is accepted, National Park Authorities could consider signing up as delivery partners for the following actions:-

Short term actions

ii, iii, iv, v, vii,

Medium term actions

iv, v,

Long term actions

ii

Q4. What can you do to support the delivery of this Action Plan? Would you be prepared to lead on any of the actions?

National Park Authorities are well placed to contribute to the delivery of relevant actions within the Action Plan. Parks are in some way engaged with visitor transport initiatives which could be used as best practice. See case studies below.

Q5. Are there any case studies or good examples you can share that relate to and support the actions outlined?

Hadrian's Wall Country Bus AD122, an award winning bus service linking key attractions along a World Heritage Site and Northumberland National Park, with gateway cities of Newcastle and Carlisle. Nearly half of all visitors are from overseas.

For full details see:-

<http://www.hadrians-wall.org/page.aspx/Interactive-Map/Hadrian's-Wall-Country-Bus>

The New Forest Tour, a network of open top bus experiences in the New Forest National Park which have demonstrated significant year on year growth, from 9000 passenger journeys in 2008 to over 34000 in 2011. Through increasing the customer base and selling sponsorship packages to tourism businesses, the New Forest Tour will operate for the first time in 2012 without a public sector subsidy.

For full details see:-

www.thenewforesttour.info

Dales Bike Centre provides an example of where Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority planners have worked with the business sector to get the right solutions for a national park, community and business. The project involves reusing derelict barns, providing jobs in isolated rural communities, bringing in new tourism business, etc.

The Dales Bike Centre provides a bike hire business, café, accommodation, guided rides and a cycle shop.

www.dalesbikecentre.co.uk

Haytor Hoppa – launched in 2009 the Haytor Hoppa (Summer Saturdays only) now runs with nearly 90% occupancy and in 2012 links with the mainline train station at Newton Abbot and will be supported by local Authorities, businesses and organizations on the route. It is hoped that this route will eventually operate without subsidy as per the New Forest Tour.

www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk/vi-haytorhoppa

ExploreMoor is a groundbreaking website aimed at facilitating greater public transport use in Exmoor National Park by providing inspirational ideas, itineraries and information.

www.exploremoor.co.uk

Yorkshire Dales Integrated Transport Alliance is a £1.1M initiative funded through a successful tranche 1 LSTF bid. The project is managed by volunteers with one paid member of staff, and is overseen by METRO. Through community engagement the project will look to co-ordinate existing transport services to assist these to be used more effectively. Deliverables will include joint ticketing, the provision of electronic information to make transport more accessible, and work with community hubs.

www.dalesconnect.net/transport.htm

Q6. Are there any other comments you wish to make in relation to taking this action plan forward?

The action plan comes across as being somewhat defeatist in tone. For example, page 3 states that '80% of England's domestic visitors reach their destinations by car – and the opportunities to influence this are minimal without also changing the destination'. Yet VisitEngland consumer research in 2010 which is not cited within the paper found that 66% of respondents would be more likely to use public transport while on holiday if it was easier to find out about the options available. There are various other attitudinal questions within the research that support the view that more people would use public transport with better information and incentives, including travel to the destination. There are many destinations that are served well by public transport so it's something of a sweeping statement to say that the destination would have to be changed. The key challenge remains convincing people to think about alternatives to the car – this is not even part of the decision making process for the majority.

Other key issues

a. How best can the travel needs of leisure and business tourism be addressed more effectively in the transport planning system? What can be done to help the transport and tourism sectors better understand one another?

At a destination level National Park Authorities are already inputting into the transport planning system. As Local Planning Authorities, National Park Authorities have formed close links with Local Highway Authorities which are vital to the preparation and implementation of effective Local Development Frameworks and Local Transport Plans.

The opportunity to submit bids to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) in partnership with Local Highway Authorities has in many instances further strengthened the links between Park Authorities and Highway Authorities.

Specifically, action is required to review planning policies that inhibit integrated transport development, especially in settlements e.g. demand for additional car parking development must be balanced with the overall ambience of the visitor destination.

b. Are we able to capture the economic impacts of transport on the tourism industry and can we report these back to decision makers? Can the value of tourism spending at the destination be released by improving transport capacity and quality?

Several National Park Authorities have been active in gathering economic data on transport initiatives.

Research undertaken on the 2011 New Forest Tour operation identified that this summer-time open top bus experience contributed £484 506 to the local economy.

Full report linked below:-

http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/178218/New-Forest-Tour-2011-Summary.pdf

The annual bus passenger survey for the Hadrian's Wall Country Bus AD122 can provide evidence of the economic benefits generated by the service for the local economy. Contact Bryan Scott on 01434609700 or email bryan.scott@hadrianswallheritage.co.uk

c. How can the long-term forecasts for tourism and transport be coordinated, and in particular, how will they be affected by rising fuel costs?

It is difficult to predict how long term forecasts for transport and tourism will be affected by rising fuel costs, but there is evidence to suggest that this needs careful thought. According to a poll by TripAdvisor, 35% of British travellers were deterred from taking a domestic holiday in 2011 because of the high cost of petrol. Figures from the AA show that petrol sales fell by 5% in volume between January and June 2011.

Another outcome of recent fuel cost increases has been a drive from car manufacturers to improve the efficiency of their vehicles, and to introduce new models using alternative fuels, e.g. electric vehicles.

The personal mobility advantages offered by the private car suggest that it will remain the dominant mode of transport for some time but it is worth bearing in mind that if we want to change the demographic of those visiting the countryside for tourism and avoid unintentional exclusion of some groups that some factors are pushing some groups away from the private car and towards public transport. For example, fewer young people are taking driving lessons and more are using coach travel – see extract from 26 February Guardian article below:-

“The number of 17-year-olds taking the driving test has continued to fall year on year, as many of them deal with the loss of their education maintenance allowance coupled with a steep rise in university tuition fees. Nearly half of British 17-20 year-olds had driving licences two decades ago, but only 35% do now. Although the long-term slump in young people learning to drive eased slightly last year, the number of under-25s taking their driving test has fallen by over 20% in five years, according to Driving Standards Agency.

Rising fuel prices are dwarfed by rocketing car insurance premiums, which according to AA figures mean young men receive average insurance quotes of over £3,100.”

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/feb/26/economy-young-car-coach-train>

However, rising fuel costs are also affecting public transport operators, with some bus operators experiencing a 50% increase in the cost of diesel over the last 12 months. This cost increase is likely to be passed onto customers unless other forms of income for operators can be identified.

d. How can tourism and transport be more sustainable and contribute to the Wise Growth agenda?

Successful LSTF bids within national parks will hopefully demonstrate that the tourism industry can be at the heart of successful projects which encourage visitors to travel sustainably. LSTF provides an opportunity to deliver transport in a different way and examples already being delivered suggest that this funding mechanism is one which can be further explored in the future.

The Lake District Sustainable Transport Beacon Area bid, which has received nearly £5M of LSTF funding is a great example of how a one off investment will transform visitor travel in one area of the Lake District. It will also explore how transport can be delivered using new and exciting channels e.g. Cumbria Tourism is leading on various marketing programmes within the bid which aim to achieve behavioural change amongst visitor segments.

The full bid is linked below

www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/544/6195/4065116374.pdf

e. What is the scope for developing improved travel information systems and simplified ticketing that is more accessible for visitors?

There is clearly scope and demand for integrated ticketing and already some national parks are leading the way.

In the Lake District the GoNoWLakes card is a recently-developed smart card for travel. It currently offers unlimited travel over three days on bus services between Windermere, Grasmere, Bowness, Coniston and Hawkshead plus one return journey on Lake Windermere. It has the potential to be developed into the 'must-have' freedom pass for visitors to the Lake District, offering the easiest and most affordable way to get to all the main visitor attractions, with discount on entry thrown in. It will address the barrier that visitors believe that public transport travel will be too expensive or that tickets are too complicated.

Across the parks, the biggest challenge is integrating bus and rail tickets across networks which are owned by multiple operators. Although it is far from straightforward, action is required to encourage major operators to come together to provide ticketing solutions which are far easier for customers to understand and administer.

ENPAA is also aware that many operators are already working to deliver simplified ticketing to their customers. Mobile phones provide an excellent medium for delivering this.

<http://www.arrivabus.co.uk/m-ticket/>

f. Which parts of the transport sector are able to accommodate growth?

The private car remains the preferred mode for visitors to access national parks, with up to 96% of visitors arriving by this mode. This level of private car usage can detract from the special qualities of national parks, and the very experience which visitors are seeking. It can also cause localised congestion and impacts on air quality.

In general, evidence within many national parks suggests that the rail networks and public bus networks can accommodate growth e.g. the most popular New Forest Tour service ran at 49% capacity in 2011, and there is capacity on rail services running against the peak flows (to/from London) on weekdays.

However, even on these networks there are some capacity issues within national parks. For example in the North York Moors National Park, the Esk Valley Railway (mainline railway from Middlesbrough to Whitby through the National Park) does not run a Sunday service between October and April while the limited Sunday services during the rest of the year suffers from significant peak over-crowding problems (between 150% and 200% capacity). In addition, during the summer months weekday services arriving into Whitby are often operating at anywhere between 110% and 170% capacity. The 1605hrs departure from Whitby has regularly recorded loadings of well over 100% with LENNON recorded data showing capacity at 192% and 204% at particularly busy periods.

There is capacity to increase the number of trains on a Sunday and frequency if anyone can find any trains. Improvements to the Sunday service form part of the North Yorkshire County Council/North York Moors National Park Authority LSTF bid.

Similarly the coastal bus services in the North York Moors, which are predominantly run on a commercial basis (i.e., without subsidy) by a large national operator, are frequently oversubscribed in the summer whereas the more rural bus network would have capacity.

g. How can we learn from successful initiatives from other countries and apply these more widely?

There are a number of successful examples in Europe that we can learn from. For example, the Black Forest's Konus card has been around for seven or so years and is provided for all tourists staying in hotels and holiday homes. It gives free use of all bus, tram and local rail services (but not ICE or IC train connections). It also gives reductions to attractions. It is given to visitors free of charge although each visitor pays a tourist tax of €2.20/person/overnight stay and this is used in part to pay for the card. See <http://www.blackforest-tourism.com/konus>

Similarly in Südtirol (<http://www.mobilcard.info/en/default.asp>), the Mobilcard provides access to a fully integrated public bus and rail network, letting visitors travel throughout South Tyrol for 7 or 3 consecutive days for just €22 or €18 or the museumobil card can be purchased for 7 days for €25 for bus, rail and admission to 78 museums in South Tyrol.

h. What mechanisms are there to improve the customer experience for public transport – particularly integration between modes – to facilitate a greater share of tourism travel by more environmentally sustainable transport?

Bus and rail timetabling should be integrated to ensure that customers are waiting for a minimum amount of time between modes. The transition between modes should be as seamless as possible.

Waiting areas should be high quality, and contain interpretation relating to the destination and provide information about services – preferably real time travel information via displays or text messaging (as happens in Snowdonia National Park).

Car clubs are also expanding and their flexibility could be promoted – for example, if you are a member of City Car Club in London, a visitor can travel up to York by train and pick up a City Car for onward travel to the North York Moors National Park.

For national parks, where public transport provision will continue to be more limited, the economic viability of tourism businesses not on public transport routes does need to be considered. Whilst this should include encouraging walking and cycling, pragmatically there should also be a focus on encouraging longer dwell times within an attraction or location, thereby having a more relaxing and enjoyable experience and increased likelihood of spending money by the visitor.

i. Since bus provision outside London is deregulated, with declining public subsidies, what mechanisms could help to improve the networks and services of particular interest to visitors in rural and coastal destinations?

The Action Plan context recognises that tourism business which benefits from public transport should play their role in supporting it; ENPAA is supportive of this approach. In the New Forest, research has identified how many customers from the New Forest Tour are delivered to tourism businesses during its period of operation. This information can then be used to negotiate with the business to generate a financial contribution, or more effectively, the sale of an advertising package. For 2012, the New Forest Tour is looking to generate nearly £30k income from commercial businesses along its two routes.

On a smaller scale Dartmoor's Haytor Hoppa has received financial support from local cafes and pubs (no more than £100 per business) who see the value of a bus service that is regular, convenient, competitively priced and allows people to have a meal and drink.

It is also important to use public transport to deliver memorable experiences to visitors. Open top buses have a particular ability to deliver on this as they offer a unique experience which provide views not on offer in a car. The addition of a commentary can help visitors learn about special qualities of a destination, history and cultural heritage, as well as being a useful tool to promote businesses along the route. Nearly 80% of New Forest Tour customers will get off the bus at least once as part of their journey.

Transport planning also has a role to play in improving networks, particularly those relating to the public bus. In certain circumstances low cost measures for buses can be appropriate and will deliver advantages over the private car. Such measures could include bus priority lanes, 'real time' timetabling information, high quality bus waiting facilities etc. Measures need to be considered on a case by case basis and will vary depending on the local circumstances.

Experience in Brighton and Hove shows that increasing bus use for both urban utility and tourist use is possible in the deregulated bus sector. Brighton & Hove buses would make a good case study for how to run a well used, profitable bus service including special buses to some of the South Downs National Park key visitor sites. The *Breeze up to the Downs* service started as a summer weekend only operation but is so popular it runs all year (weekends only in the winter). Through ticketing, integration with rail tickets and real-time information combined with marketing seem to be the keys to success here. The 'bus walks' series of leaflets gives ideas for rural walks from scheduled services and some scheduled services run to or near visitor spots and attractions anyway so only promotion is required (Seven Sisters Country Park, Brighton Marina, Beachy Head, etc).

ENPAA

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