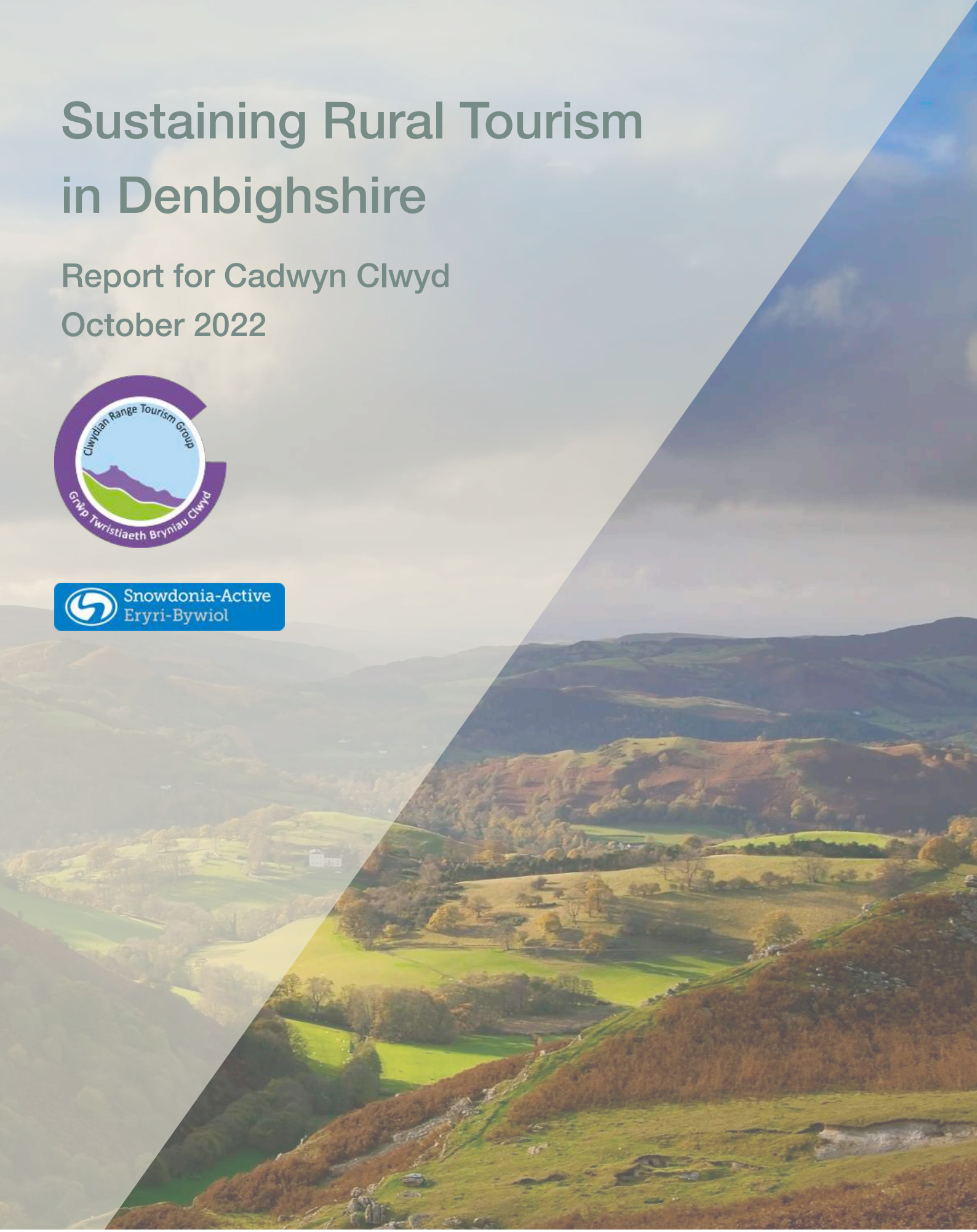
Sustaining Rural Tourism in Denbighshire

Report for Cadwyn Clwyd

October 2022



Clwydian Range Tourism Group
Grŵp Twristiaeth Bryniau Clwyd

Snowdonia-Active
Eryri-Bywiol

UK Government Wales
Llywodraeth y DU Cymru

Cyngor sir ddinbych denbighshire County Council

CADWYN Clwyd
Asiantaeth Datblygu Gwledig
Rural Development Agency

This project was initiated and delivered in partnership with the Clwydian Range Tourism Group (CRTG). It was administered and supported by Cadwyn Clwyd and has received funding from the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund.

The UK Community Renewal Fund is a UK Government programme for 2021/22. This aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches to prepare for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. It invests in skills, community and place, local business, and supporting people into employment. For more information, visit www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund- prospectus.

Author:

Emma Edwards-Jones
Snowdonia-Active
emma@snowdonia-active.com

Image Credits

Cover image: © Malcolm Davies
Contents page: © Alun Disley
Page 7: © Tom Hutton
Page 9: © Alun Disley
Page 13: © Michelle Barratt
Page 28: © Malcolm Davies
Page 36: © Alun Disley
Page 37: © Tom Hutton

1. Introduction 5
2. Aims 5
3. Context 5
4. Methodology and Findings 7
4.1. Survey 7
4.2. One-to-one interviews 8
4.3. Event - Sustaining Rural Tourism in Denbighshire 10
4.3.1. Event Promotion 10
4.3.2. Attendance 10
4.3.3. Speakers 10
4.3.4. Lunchtime sessions 11
4.3.5. Afternoon Discussion 11
4.3.6. Evaluation 13
4.4. Research 14
4.4.1. South Downs National Park: Our South Downs 14
4.4.2. Surrey Hills Enterprises 15
4.4.3. Lake District National Park Partnership 16
4.4.4. Cumbria Tourism Sustainable Tourism Business Toolkit 17
4.4.5. Forest of Bowland AONB EcoEscapes 18
4.4.6. The New Forest Tour 19
4.4.7. Swiss Travel Pass 19
4.4.8. Wales on Rails 20
4.4.9. England's Coast 20
4.4.10. MEET (Mediterranean Experience of EcoTourism) Network 21
4.4.11. Woodfire - a South Downs business 22
4.4.12. Trash Free Trails - Purposeful Adventures 23
4.4.13. Slow Ways 23
4.4.14. Leave No Trace Ireland 24
4.4.15. New Demand Responsive Transport - Mole Valley Surrey 24
4.4.16. The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism and Tourism Declares 25

4.4.17. Winchester and District Business Support - Net Zero 26
5. Sustainable tourism - recurring and associated issues 28
5.1. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 28
5.2. Development of sustainable tourism in the UK protected landscapes 28
5.2.1. New National Park for North East Wales 29
5.3. Understanding the visitor 30
5.4. Consultancies/initiatives providing cost and carbon reduction solutions (and carbon footprinting) to businesses 31
5.5. Collective switching and purchasing of energy 33
5.6. Sustainable supply chains 34
5.7. Historic buildings and energy efficiency 34
5.8. Green Accreditation 35
6. Innovation Plan 37
6.1. Regional collaboration and connectivity 37
6.2. Sustainable business practices 39
6.3. Understanding and communicating with visitors 41
6.4. Flexible and creative private sector 43



1. Introduction

Tourism businesses are currently facing an unprecedented period of challenge and change posed by significant changes in tourism demand and visitor behaviour post-Covid, the increased pressures arising from massive increases in fuel charges, recent technological advances (for example, electric vehicles and heat pumps), and the proposal for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB to become Wales' fourth National Park. As a result, now is an opportune time to consider the vision for tourism in the future and what support is required going forward to sustain rural tourism in the region.

1.

2. Aims

This feasibility study explores new ways to sustain rural tourism in Denbighshire through developing, maintaining, and promoting good quality tourism providers. The study will;

- Consider what sustainable tourism means to Clwydian Range Tourism Group (CRTG) members
- Review sustainable tourism initiatives in the UK and Europe and consider their potential benefits for Denbighshire and Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB regions
- Ask whether there are aspects of their work that tourism businesses struggle to deliver due to a lack of time or skills
- Consider ways micro businesses can keep in touch and share best practices.

3. Context

Sustainable tourism is about travelling in a way that is sensitive to the climate and nature emergencies while ensuring that the well-being of the places we visit gains long-term benefits from us travelling there.[1]

The sustainable development of tourism is an integral component of destination management. Without sustainability at its core, the growth of tourism in a region can have serious impacts on people's lifestyles, natural habitats and wildlife, historic sites and essential resources such as water and energy; without careful planning, negative impacts can quickly prevail as tourism grows. This can eventually degrade the destination and lead to the destruction of its assets. But with good destination management, tourism can continue to bring economic rewards for the long term, supporting jobs and employment for local people. In light of the proposal for the region to be designated as a National

[1] Richard Hammond (Green Traveller) - presentation to CRTG Sept 2022

Park, there is a need to build capacity within the tourism sector to ensure that it can meet the necessary sustainable development goals.

The Clwydian Range Tourism Group were constituted in 2012 and since then has delivered activities designed to;

- Share information, news and updates relevant to the tourism sector (including Covid-10 specific updates and advice)
- Provide opportunities to network, collaborate with and learn from others
- Lobby on behalf of the interests of the local businesses and the wider sector
- Represent the sector at regional events
- Provide links with the Local Authorities and the AONB
- Promote sustainable tourism and encourage businesses to make the link with the AONB as a USP
- Provide training opportunities and workshops
- Direct visitors to businesses through the website
- Host an annual Tourism Forum
- Develop new supply chains and/or products.

As of October 2022, CRTG has 36 members, with a mailing list of approximately 200.

Developing the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the sector in the region has been a key priority of the group. In a survey conducted on behalf of CRTG in 2021, when asked what makes CRTG unique, the feedback noted their 'area-specific / local angle' and their focus on 'sustainability. Sustainability (environmental, social and economic) was highly valued by respondents across the board (av 4.2/5). In addition, respondents to this survey recognised the importance of encouraging links between businesses and the AONB and the value of business support in the form of training opportunities, workshops, peer-to-peer support and networking.[2]

This study seeks to gain a more in-depth understanding of the interventions that might be appropriate to sustain rural tourism in the region. The study addresses the needs of tourism businesses, determined through discussion with CRTG members but also recognises the holistic nature of the tourism offer from a visitor perspective. The visitor experience is multi-faceted and determined by the work of private businesses (including tourism businesses and businesses that provide core services such as transport) as well as public sector organisations such as local authorities and NRW. The visitor economy within a protected landscape must be sustainable, and therefore sustainability must be an integral component at all stages of the visitor experience.

---

[2] Evaluation of the Eat Stay Do Project to identify a Future Direction for the Clwydian Range Tourism Group. Resources for Change. 2021



4.Methodology and Findings

Themed a ‘Summer of Debate’, this project sought the views of tourism businesses via an online survey, one-to-one interviews and a one-day conference. Combined with research to learn from sustainable tourism initiatives in the UK and beyond, the findings have informed the development of an innovation plan which seeks to ensure the sustainability of rural tourism in the region.

4.

4.1. Survey

A link to a Google forms survey (English and Welsh versions) was sent to CRTG members on 1st July 2022 and distributed by Denbighshire County Council, Flintshire County Council, and CRDV AONB. The survey was closed on 20th September 2022. 35 respondents completed the questionnaire. Given the small sample size, the findings of the survey should be considered indicative, but not definitive of the position of tourism businesses in the region.

Full survey responses are provided in Appendix 1.

Key findings from the survey are:

- 88.5% of the businesses that responded employed less than 2 people.
- 85.7% of respondents considered operating sustainably to be important or very important to them and their businesses.
- 88.6% of businesses are not signed up to a green accreditation scheme.
- 80% of respondents thought they could or might be able to do more to minimise the environmental impact of their business.
- Renewable energy technology and energy efficiency were the most commonly cited areas for improvement, with waste management also cited.
- Many businesses have improved the energy efficiency of their lighting, improved their waste management, or swapped to ecologically friendly cleaning products in the past 3 years.

- Only 5.7% of respondents had set objectives for annual improvements in the environmental/sustainability performance of their business
- The frequency of monitoring of electricity/oil/gas/water consumption varied considerably among respondents, with many reading meters less frequently than once a month.
- 25.7% of respondents believe that their environmental performance influences visitors to book/not book with them.
- 68.6 % of respondents are likely or somewhat likely to make changes to improve the environmental efficiency of their business in the next year.
- The key factors preventing respondents from improving the sustainability of their business were finances (57.1%), time (25.7%) and lack of knowledge and skills (25.7%).
- Other barriers preventing respondents from improving the sustainability of their businesses were Listed Building consent, lack of certainty with regard to policy such as the 182-day let threshold, and lack of public transport.
- 80% of respondents thought that financial support in the form of grants is required for them to take action to improve the sustainability of their business.
- 45.5% thought that information/training via workshops and webinars would help them make their business more sustainable with 22.9% wanting business-to-business mentoring.
- 54% of respondents felt that there are aspects of their work that they don't have time to address adequately, 45.7% felt that there are aspects of their work that they don't have the skills to deliver adequately.
- The most commonly cited aspect of their work that businesses don't have time and/or skills to address adequately was marketing, especially social marketing.
- Respondents stated that they don't have the finances and/or are unable to provide sufficient hours to employ additional staff.

4.2. One-to-one interviews

Twelve respondents to the survey indicated that they would be happy to take part in a one-to-one meeting. All were contacted and interviews were conducted with the following businesses;

- Plas Newydd Caravan Site
- AdventureTours UK
- The Laundry Retreat (face-to-face meeting)
- Mynydd Sled Dog Adventures
- Porth y Dwr, Ruthin
- The Forge Corwen
- Suplass Adventures

- Brenig Cottage Escapes

These conversations were conducted via Zoom. lasted approximately 40 minutes and enabled a more detailed exploration of the survey responses.

Key findings from the one-to-one interviews are:

- Flexibility is key - businesses need to be able to respond quickly to changes in booking patterns.
- National Park status will bring challenges but will be good for the area; it will elevate people's opinion of the region.
- Support from the public sector is often not accessible/suitable for micro-businesses.
- There are gaps in the visitor offer - eg. visitors struggle to find places to eat on a Monday evening.
- More needs to be done to establish sustainable supply chains.
- Traditional government-funded business mentoring schemes are felt to be old-fashioned and out of touch with the tourism sector.
- The boundary of the CRTG should be expanded to match that of the CRDV AONB.
- The tourism and food sectors should work together to help develop and promote a cohesive regional tourism offer.
- The capital funding required to enable investment in renewable technologies is out of reach of many micro-businesses.
- The public transport service in rural areas is not sufficient to enable businesses to recommend it to their guests
- Visit Wales marketing should have an increased focus on the region. There are many small, unique products that are overlooked compared to the 'big players' in North Wales such as ZipWorld.



4.3. Event - Sustaining Rural Tourism in Denbighshire

The one-day conference was held at Nantclwyd y Dre, Ruthin on 28th September 2022. Additional funding for the venue and catering was provided by CRDV AONB and Flintshire County Council.

4.3.1. Event Promotion

Social media posts to launch the project and disseminate the survey link were posted on https://www.facebook.com/groups/TheClwydianRangeTourismGroup. An e-flyer was sent to Denbighshire County Council, Flintshire County Council, and CRDV AONB.

Several short vlogs, focusing on different topics were filmed and released on CRTG social media channels over the summer. These were used as teasers to generate interest in the September event.

4.3.2. Attendance

60 tickets were available via Eventbrite, all tickets were booked. 48 delegates attended, 28 of which represented local businesses.

4.3.3. Speakers

(Speaker presentation slides are provided in Appendix 2)

Richard Hammond - GreenTraveller (Keynote speech)

Founder of Greentraveller.com, in May 2022, Richard published 'the green traveller: Conscious adventure that doesn't cost the earth'. Richard says in his introduction that the book "is about how to travel in a way that is sensitive to the climate and nature emergencies". It is primarily focused on experiences that have a lower carbon footprint and provide a positive effect on the conservation of biodiversity. It is also focused on individual actions that can make a significant difference in the impact of how we travel. Richard provided an international perspective of sustainable tourism in protected landscapes with case studies from the UK and Europe. He showed the opportunity for protected landscapes to develop a tourism industry which is sustainable through creative and innovative approaches to itinerary planning, transport, Dark Skies, and carbon calculators.

Mark Griffiths - Woodfire

Mark and his wife started a food and camping (not glamping!) business in the South Downs in 2017. Located on rented farmland, the business model is based on the Italian, Agriturismo model. Mark talked inspirationally about the challenges and benefits of starting and running a business in a National Park and presented his 'key learnings' from the last 4 years.

Emma Edwards-Jones - Snowdonia-Active

As project lead, Emma provided a summary of the preliminary findings from the business survey, 1-2-1 interviews and research undertaken as part of this project. Potential

opportunities and challenges were presented including the need for the sector to focus on the development of a cohesive, sustainable tourism offer which focuses on the needs of visitors (defined as anyone spending recreation time in the region) throughout their stay.

4.3.4. Lunchtime sessions

Energy efficiency - Dave Walker, Litegreen Ltd

Dave discussed ways in which small tourism businesses can become more energy efficient. Dave was able to answer specific questions from businesses during his sessions.

Enhancing biodiversity - Katie Piercy, CRDV AONB

Katie discussed the requirements for shelter and food and what it means to different species. The wildlife value of using native plants in gardens, fruit/larder trees, woodpiles and meadows (compared to lawns) was covered. Some delegates were already knowledgeable and are managing large areas, others had basic knowledge but would benefit from more support.

Green accreditation - Facilitated by Richard Hammond and Emma Edwards-Jones.

The benefits of paying to join a recognised green accreditation scheme were discussed. Businesses were interested in whether there was a marketing advantage from green accreditation. In general, it was felt that the benefits (in the form of information, guidance and marketing) for a micro-business were not worth the annual fee (£150+) of the main schemes (Green Key and Green Tourism). Other questions related to how to influence visitor behaviour in order to discourage them from altering the settings on heating systems. It was felt that green accreditation was unlikely to help with this issue; a suggested solution was to ask guests on booking what temperature they would like their accommodation to be set at so that it could be ready on their arrival (a positive service!), then restrict their access to the heating controls.

Much of the information provided through green accreditation schemes is freely available and could be collated and provided to businesses in the region free of charge.

Coffee and lunch were provided by local producers, The Bakehouse (Ruthin), The Little Cheesemonger, Marina cakes, Becky's Bickies, Owen and Edwards Ltd.

4.3.5. Afternoon Discussion

The afternoon discussion was structured around a number of questions;

- Thoughts from the day?
- What are our strengths?
- Where are the gaps?
- What's the vision?
- How do we get there?

Key discussion points were as follows:

- When talking about his business and its link to the local plan, Mark Griffiths (Woodfire) talked about the role of his business as a conduit – 'we exist to complement the surrounding countryside' - this resonated with the delegates.
- It was felt to be useful and positive to hear from initiatives outside of the area.
- Richard Hammond mentioned that one study had found that a significant contribution to the carbon footprint of a hospitality business had come from food waste.
- Question asked: How do we dovetail the specific needs of our region into national policy? Answer: Through CRTG representation on the Denbighshire Tourism Forum, Tourism Partnership, North Wales Tourism Forum and DCC Tourism Strategy Group.
- National Park status has the potential to raise awareness of the region as a visitor destination. The boundary is not decided but could cover quite a large area. It will put the region on an equal footing with Snowdonia. National Park status will increase funding into the region to improve/maintain infrastructure.
- The region's strengths are its beautiful landscape, accessibility to high-population areas, uniqueness (hidden gem!), and the strength of networking between tourism businesses and organisations.
- The most significant gap/weakness in the sustainable tourism offer is the public transport system. It needs to be considered from the visitor's point of view; can it get people where they want to go, when they want to go and back to their accommodation? The service is still not back to the pre-Covid timetables and it's expensive, especially for families.
- There are gaps in the tourism offer, for example, it can be hard to find places to eat on a Monday night, and cafes often close at 4 pm. Many hospitality businesses struggle to recommend places to eat near them. Could this be improved by businesses cooperating with each other to close on different days and drive customers to those businesses that are open so that it's worthwhile?
- Businesses should be encouraged to tell visitors, via their websites and social media channels, about the action they have taken to become more sustainable.
- Businesses should ensure they are findable via Google Maps.
- Some businesses felt they would benefit from support to improve the SEO of their online content.
- CRTG is encouraging businesses to develop digital welcome books through the Touch Stay platform (CRTG members benefit from a 10% discount code).
- Businesses should be encouraged to share their sustainability journey and successes.
- It would be useful to know more about the demographics of visitors to the region. Some information may be available from STEAM data, but a regional visitor survey undertaken by businesses may be useful to enable them to understand their visitors in more detail and their interests and motivations.

- If a sustainable tourism offer is a shared vision for the region and part of its USP, then it needs to have integrity and be sustainable throughout the visitor journey (research, booking, travel, visit). Visitors are quick to spot gaps and suspect greenwash.
- A vision for the regional tourism offer would be useful. It should be clear and achievable and include sustainability KPIs. It may be useful when seeking funding.
- Consideration by local organisations (public and private sector) should be given to signing the Glasgow Declaration and Tourism Declares.
- The relevance of high-level sustainability goals to small businesses may be lost and the big picture can scare businesses into not taking action. If carbon reduction (potentially with a Net Zero goal) is to be encouraged it needs to be at a level businesses can relate to - a small number of achievable steps.

4.3.6. Evaluation

The event was followed up with an evaluation survey (SurveyMonkey). This evaluation was undertaken by CRTG.



4.4. Research

An online review was undertaken of approaches to sustainable tourism adopted by other protected landscapes in the UK and Europe.

In addition, meetings were held with;

- Dan James, Sustainable Economy Manager, Exmoor National Park
- Mark Alden, Enterprise Development Lead, South Downs National Park
- Richard Hammond, Green Traveller
- Wendy Varcoe, Surrey Hills Enterprises
- Crispin Sykes, Meercat Associates.

Summaries of the initiatives reviewed and the associated learning with relevance to the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB are outlined below.

4.4.1. South Downs National Park: Our South Downs

Our South Downs is a supportive network of businesses dedicated to building an economically alive South Downs National Park where nature can thrive. Our South Downs is a community created to support local businesses in their pursuit of sustainability. They help micro and small businesses connect with each other, and share and develop skills, learnings and resources around their common values in order to fulfil their stated mission.

> *Our South Downs mission: To promote stronger, shorter rural supply chains and support businesses in their pursuit of sustainability.*

Our South Downs is based on the belief that the creation and development of a supportive community of like-minded businesses will help the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) achieve its environmental goals more quickly and easily, at the same time as helping businesses to prosper financially. This initiative recognises that the businesses of the South Downs National Park (SDNP) are among the most important custodians of the landscape. There are more than 8,000 businesses in the SDNP. Over 70% of the landscape is owned by businesses and they provide jobs for over 54,000 people. The actions and contributions of businesses are paramount to the National Park's environmental, financial and social development.

Our South Downs is a cohesive approach to protecting the region, recognising that together, they can make a real difference, the impact of which will ripple far beyond the edges of the SDNP. The Our South Downs platform is a key part of the SDNPA's journey toward achieving its Nature Recovery Targets of 33% by 2030 and Climate Change targets of net zero by 2040.

Learning

- *A wider approach, bringing together all businesses, not just the tourism sector facilitates opportunities to promote stronger, shorter rural supply chains.*

- *Recognition that rural businesses are the custodians of the landscape and that their actions are vitally important to the environmental, financial and social development of the SNPA.*
- *A stated strong, shared commitment to achieving Nature Recovery and Climate Change targets brings businesses and organisations together to achieve far-reaching sustainability objectives.*

4.4.2. Surrey Hills Enterprises

Surrey Hills Enterprises is a membership organisation established in 2012 that works to;

- Support local enterprises
- Develop a thriving rural economy
- Promote sustainable tourism
- Increase environmental sustainability
- Motivate the community to "Buy Local"
- Highlight the special nature of the people and landscape of the Surrey Hills.

Surrey Hills Enterprises is a Community Interest Company (CIC) that operates in partnership with the Surrey Hills AONB. Funds generated from its work go back to support the work of enhancing Surrey Hills, its landscape and local communities. They inspire the local community to purchase local products and support local services and create a platform for recognising and building a reputation for quality in the Surrey Hills. They deliver environmental and educational projects aiming to build awareness and conserve and enhance the Surrey Hills. Surrey Hills Enterprises refer to the "Surrey Hills Family", as being a member offers a strong sense of belonging, community and support

Surrey Hills Enterprises offer a membership programme with marketing support. Being part of Surrey Hills Enterprises raises member profiles and increases connections across Surrey and the surrounding areas to potential customers, supporters and other companies and organisations. Their marketing platform includes a listing for members in the business directory within the Surrey Hills AONB website which showcases members and their products and services. They also run targeted social media on Instagram and Facebook, hold events, send regular e-newsletters to the wider public and member-to-member e-newsletters and feed into magazines and publications (profiled within Surrey Hills editorials, press releases and opportunities for discounted advertising).

The Trade Mark Surrey Hills is an accreditation mark of local provenance, quality and sustainability. The Award promotes the best of what Surrey has to offer and celebrates those businesses of high quality that reflect and support the distinct and special nature of the Surrey Hills. Members can apply for the Trade Mark which can then be proudly displayed on marketing materials, websites, products, in shops etc. The scheme is administrated by Surrey Hills Enterprises; they review applications and applicants who don't meet the quality and sustainability criteria are declined.

Surrey Hills Enterprises are funded by;

- leading businesses who invest in their growth and development as corporate partners and sponsors
- grant funding
- Surrey Hills Enterprises Membership Programme
- events hosted by Surrey Hills Enterprises

Learning

- *The structure of the Surrey Hills family of organisations and the close working relationship between the four organisations has proved to be a successful model for delivering sustainable tourism within the protected landscape.*
- *Since 2017, innovative and dynamic management of the Surrey Hills Enterprises CIC delivered by paid staff has enabled a significant increase in membership.*
- *The development of a Surrey Hills brand that has rigorous sustainability and quality requirements has been a significant factor in the growth and success of Surrey Hills Enterprises in recent years.*
- *Corporate sponsorship is an important part of their funding model.*
- *Members are listed on the Surrey Hills website.*

4.4.3. Lake District National Park Partnership

There are currently 25 organisations involved in the Lake District National Park Partnership with representatives from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. In 2006, the Partnership agreed on a Vision for the National Park in 2030, representing a collective commitment to work together in the best interest of the National Park, its environment, communities, economy and visitors. Their shared vision is that the English Lake District will be:

An inspirational example of sustainable development in action.

A place where its prosperous economy, world-class visitor experiences and vibrant communities come together to sustain the spectacular landscape, its wildlife and cultural heritage. Local people, visitors, and the many organisations working in the Lake District or have a contribution to make to it, must be united in achieving this.

The Partnership's Climate Change Group have drawn up a Carbon Budget Action Plan (2019-20) to reduce emissions. The latest report shows the two areas which offer the greatest opportunity to significantly reduce emissions in the Lake District are the transport sector, particularly visitor transport, and the accommodation, food and drink sector. The plan is overseen by the full Lake District National Park Partnership. It forms part of the management plan for the National Park, The Partnership's Plan. It is part of the Low-carbon Lake District initiative, an area-wide strategy to tackle climate change.

Learning

- *The value of a shared regional vision linking different sectors of the economy and communities to achieve agreed carbon reduction targets.*

4.4.4. Cumbria Tourism Sustainable Tourism Business Toolkit

Development of this toolkit was supported by The Low Carbon Lake District initiative, a comprehensive programme to help tackle climate change in the National Park, working in partnership with local businesses and communities to reduce greenhouse gases and prepare for the impacts of climate change. The toolkit has been designed to help businesses understand more about more sustainable working practices – not only to reduce their impact but also to cut costs and even develop new unique selling points.

The toolkit includes a range of real-life examples, expert advice and networking opportunities for business owners to chat with businesses who are already on this journey.

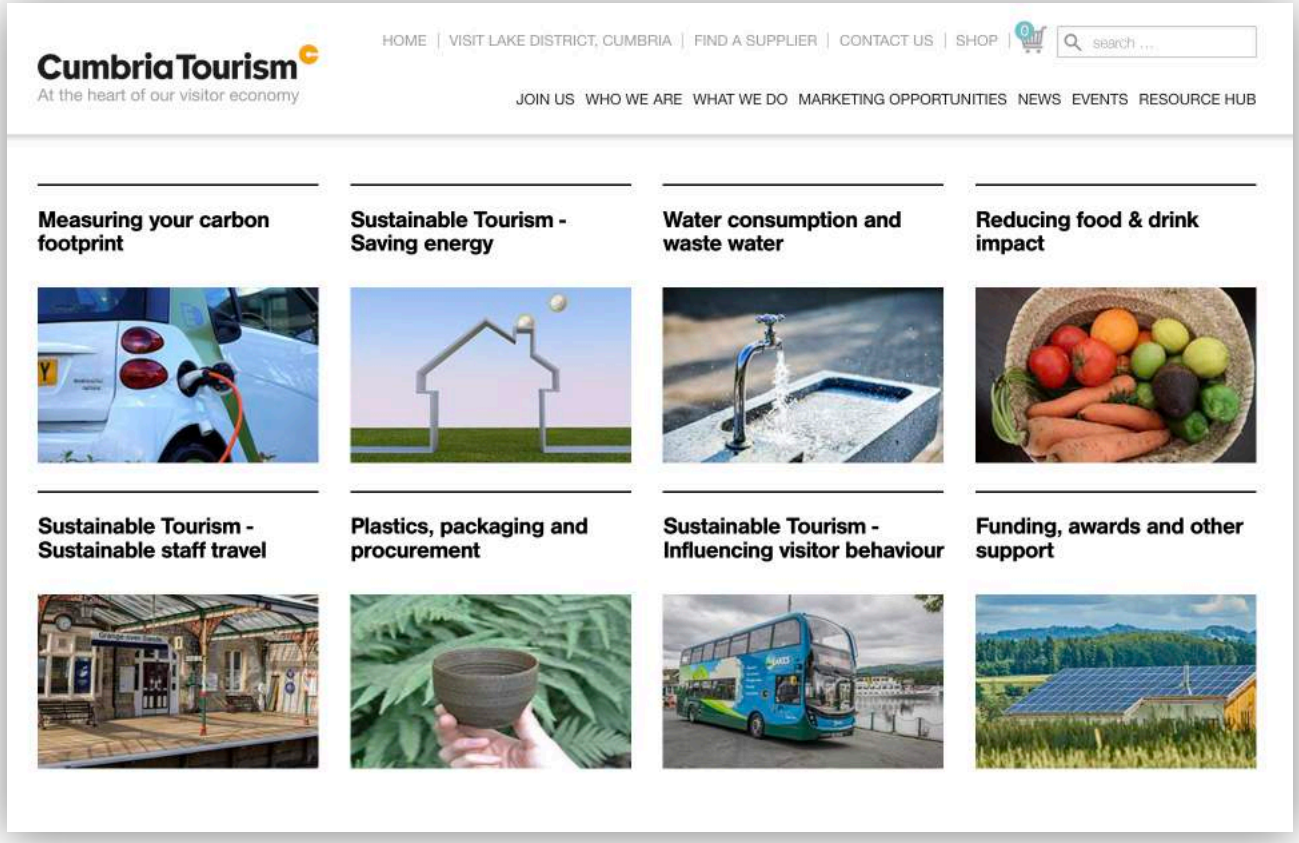


Fig 1 https://www.cumbriatourism.org/who-we-are/resource-hub/sustainable-tourism-business-toolkit/

The development of the toolkit was led by the Lake District National Park Authority, other key partners include the Lake District Foundation, the National Trust, South Lakeland District Council and Cumbria Tourism. Low Carbon Lake District received funding from the England European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020.

Learning

- *This bespoke toolkit for regional businesses signposts the best online tools and resources, supported with local case studies.*

4.4.5. Forest of Bowland AONB EcoEscapes

In 2022, Forest of Bowland AONB launched an initiative to support rural businesses by creating a collection of walking and cycling routes to promote sustainable tourism experiences in the Forest of Bowland and Arnside & Silverdale Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. They will be targeting eco-conscious tourists keen to explore active travel or public transport options and discover the natural landscapes, wildlife and local food by following a series of integrated itineraries which showcase quality accommodation, hospitality, experiences and activities. These will be linked with the gateway rail stations of Lancaster, Clitheroe, Silverdale, Settle and Bentham, to highlight the wide variety of visitor attractions and quality accommodation available and inspire visitors to stay a little longer.

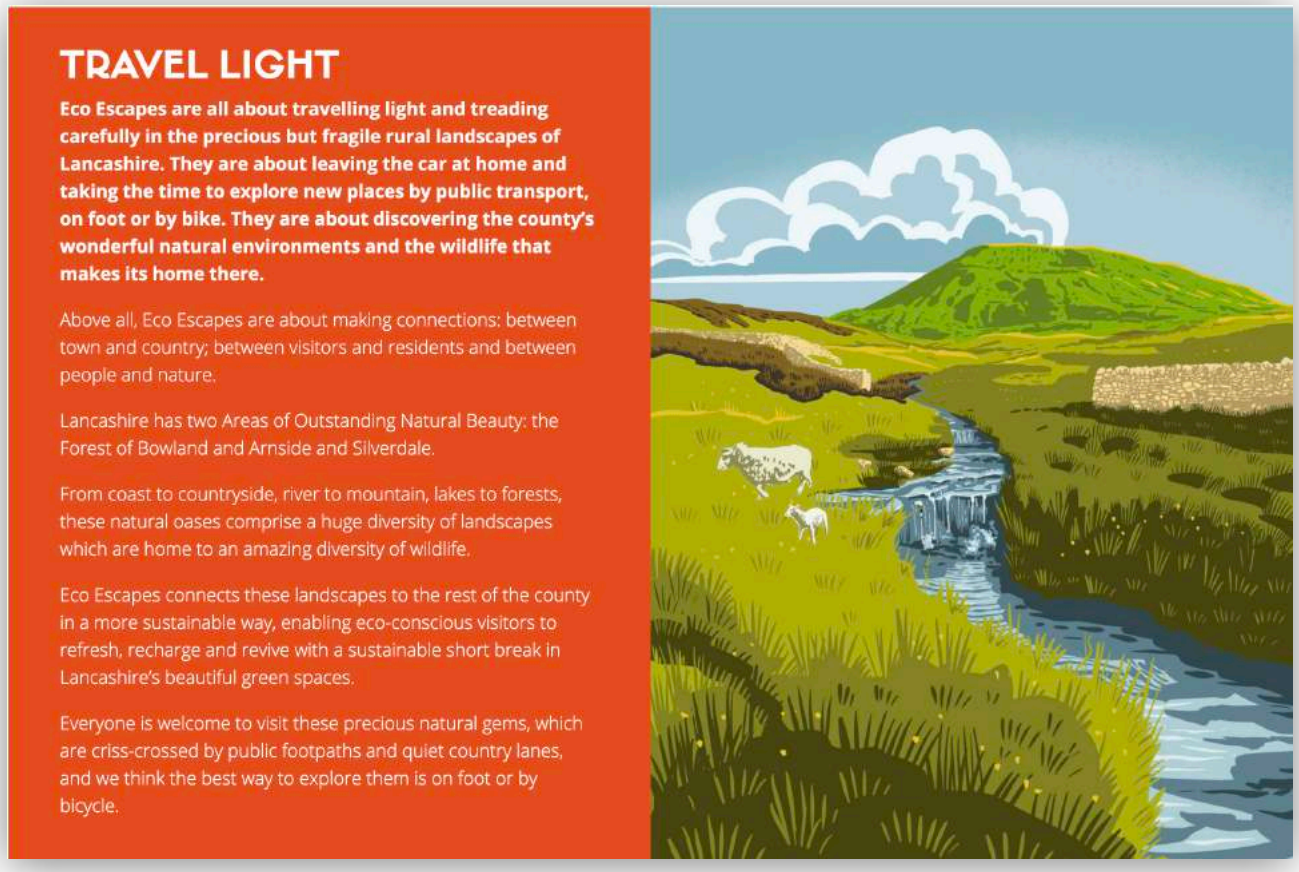


Fig 2. https://www.discoverbowland.uk/activities/ecoescapes

The funding has come from Lancashire County Council as a pilot cluster project to support rural recovery from the Covid pandemic and is managed by the Forest of Bowland AONB.

Learning

- *A marketing initiative aimed at attracting the eco-conscious traveller.*
- *Offers a complete, sustainable offer by linking travel, food, experiences and accommodation.*

4.4.6. The New Forest Tour

The New Forest tour bus operated by Morebus runs on three routes during the summer season providing outstanding views of the New Forest National Park.

Passengers are able to hop on and off wherever they like and catch the next Tour bus, or switch between routes, all on the same ticket. An audio commentary provides stories of the people, places and animals of the New Forest – with characters, sounds and music, bringing the view to life. Live departure times can be tracked via the website or more conveniently via the morebus app.

The service is designed to enable visitors to take in a walk or cycle ride from the Tour (bikes go free*) and dogs are also welcome. The Tour is promoted as an experience offering the chance to "open-top ride through the treetops and experience the New Forest as you've never seen it before".

Learning

- *Designed to encourage sustainable travel within the National Park, the tour can be used as a means of transport to a destination but also as an experience in its own right. (It has similarities with the Picturesque bus).*

4.4.7. Swiss Travel Pass

For foreign guests, the all-in-one ticket Swiss Travel Pass is the key to Switzerland's public transport network. This single ticket enables visitors to explore Switzerland from end to end by train, bus and boat on 3, 4, 6, 8 or 15 consecutive days. The benefits are:

- Unlimited travel by train, bus and boat. View area of validity.
- Unlimited travel on premium panoramic trains (seat reservation fees and/or surcharges apply).
- Unlimited use of public transport in more than 90 towns and cities.
- Free admission to more than 500 museums.
- Mountain excursions included: Rigi, Stanserhorn and Stoos.
- Up to 50% discount on many other mountain excursions.
- Up to 30% discount on SBB RailAway offers. Available at all ticket counters within Switzerland.
- Children from their 6th up to their 16th birthday accompanied by at least one parent (holding a Swiss Travel System ticket) travel free of charge with the complimentary Swiss Family Card.
- Children under 6 years of age who are accompanied by a holder of a valid Swiss Travel System ticket travel free of charge.
- The Swiss Travel Pass is available as e-ticket.

Learning

- *A simplified ticketing system helps demystify exploring by public transport for the visitor.*
- *Linking with free/discounted admission to visitor attractions encourages tourism travel by public transport.*

4.4.8. Wales on Rails

Wales on Rails promotes tourism by using public transport throughout Wales. Encouraging safe, sustainable, and scenic adventures. The Great Little Trains Limited marketing group manages and promotes this website and is funded by the Visit Wales Tourism Product Innovation Fund and the Community Rail Partnerships in Wales and the borders. Attractions and things to do located within three miles of a railway or bus station are promoted through a series of route cards and via route maps.

Learning

- *Promoting and facilitating tourism using existing public transport services.*
- *Positively promotes to visitors the benefits of using public transport via an attractive visitor-facing website (rather than relying on bus timetables on local authority websites).*
- *The Wales on Rails website makes it easier for visitors to put together itineraries by promoting attractions which can be accessed via public transport.*

4.4.9. England's Coast

A government-backed promotion of the English coastline to British consumers, delivered by the National Coastal Tourism Academy (NCTA). NCTA was established in 2013 and supports the growth of the visitor economy on the coast through the dissemination of good practice and the creation and interpretation of research that leads to exceptional visitor experiences.

England's Coast is a consumer website and itinerary builder, a marketing and booking tool, all-in-one. The itinerary builder allows visitors to create their ideal holiday, choosing where to stay, what to eat and do. It showcases eight regions and holiday suggestions with more than 2,000 businesses listed (increasing daily). The website content is translated into: German, Dutch, French, Spanish and Italian.

The website makes it easy for visitors to plan their next adventure. Using the interactive map visitors can discover things to do in each region around the coast, or for general inspiration explore the coastal regions page to help decide where to go. There are eight stretches of coastline, from Northumberland in the northeast, across Yorkshire and the east coast, travelling along the southeast, the Jurassic Coast and along to Devon and Cornwall in the southwest – each shoreline features unique natural landscapes, activities and events for a perfect and unique coastal trip.

Learning

- *Although not a sustainable tourism initiative, this online itinerary planner provides a useful model. However, it is dependent on there being a sufficient volume of products in the region from which visitors can choose an itinerary that suits them.*

4.4.10. MEET (Mediterranean Experience of EcoTourism) Network3

In 2018 the MEET Network Association was founded to represent a new ecotourism model and provide a membership network for protected areas that are committed to embracing a new way of developing tourism in the Mediterranean. Today MEET has 11 Protected Area Members and applicants and is continuing on its journey to shaping the Mediterranean into a leading ecotourism destination.



Fig 3. MEET values

MEET is developing high-quality ecotourism experiences that benefit conservation and local communities. MEET Experiences are nature-based, cultural experiences which allow travellers to discover a new side of the Mediterranean. They actively seek new partnerships with outbound tour operators and travel industry representatives to become MEET Travel Industry Partners.

DestiMED Plus project supports destinations so that they can follow this new (and important) path. Using the MEET Model for ecotourism development, it helps local operators to create and design the ecotourism package in strict collaboration with the protected area, thus contributing to the transformation of local tourism value chains. And this is a virtuous circle: supporting nature-based tourism encourages the conservation work of protected areas and therefore targets tourists' expectations in destinations.

---

[3] https://www.meetnetwork.org/meet-news/2022/7/25/nature-based-tourism-experiences-and-their-benefits-for-the-destination-and-your-business

The model is based on the establishment of tourism clusters. A tourism cluster is a group composed of tourism attraction owners/managers within a limited geographic area (i.e., a destination), with services and activities delivered by local providers (e.g., local tour operators, hotel and restaurant owners, tour guides, tourism shops, transportation providers and the like). For the purposes of MEET, a Local Ecotourism Cluster (LEC) is a private-public tourism cluster or group initiated or supported by the protected area and composed of multi-sector (private, public and NGO/community) stakeholders. This group acts together to collaboratively develop and manage ecotourism products according to a common vision.

Through MEET, many tourism operators have started to build new sustainable products and they have already seen the positive impacts they are generating in terms of tourist satisfaction and local benefits.

Learning

- *Close collaboration between the protected areas and local businesses has stimulated the development of more/new sustainable tourism products; thereby the initiative is ensuring the impacts of tourism are reduced and also stimulates economic growth.*
- *The Local Ecotourism Cluster model has proven successful in stimulating ecotourism products according to a common sustainable vision.*

4.4.11. Woodfire - a South Downs business[4]

Located in the South Downs National Park (SDNP), Woodfire offers accessible, comfortable camping (not glamping), combining affordable accommodation with quality, local food. The business model is based on the established agriturismo model developed in Italy in the 1950s.

Established in 2017, the business owners ensured that they understood the SDNP plan, local plan and other local authority plans. Although Woodfire is not marketed as an "eco-campsite," the owners are conscious of not leaving a trace. They see themselves as a conduit to the South Downs National Park and its landscapes, farms and producers, seeking to complement the surrounding countryside. The Woodfire product is aligned with the National Park Brand, which provides credibility and a shared identity. By focussing on sustainability they encourage guests to act responsibly, not just for recycling! Woodfire is a centre of excellence based on what is being produced nearby and so they are rooted in place.

A number of challenges were faced during the establishment of the business.

- Trying to understand the regulations and processes was daunting, especially with regard to the building of composting toilets. The Environment Agency are regulatory and was not in a position to offer advice.
- Services such as waste collection are poor in rural areas.

---

[4] [4] Mark Griffiths (Woodfire) Presentation to CRTG Sept 2022

- It is usually cheaper to get it right the first time rather than adapt.
- Guests are on holiday and don't need a lecture. Too many rules can mean that the message gets lost.
- It's important to get your staff on board so that they don't cut corners.

Learning

- *A sustainable business in a protected landscape can be a conduit to the landscape.*
- *A claim to be sustainable has to have integrity and underly everything the business does - no greenwash*
- *Businesses in protected landscapes should align themselves with the relevant plans*

4.4.12. Trash Free Trails - Purposeful Adventures

A summer campaign to encourage people to #LeaveAPositiveTrace on the people and places they pass through on their adventures.

> "This page is our version of a 'one-stop shop' for Purposeful Adventure. Whether you're an individual planning your first-ever adventure or a business who'd like to invite adventurers to drop in on their way through your community, we hope this page helps to provide the inspiration, information and tools you need to get started!"

Learning

- *Rather than focusing on what businesses can do to minimise their impact, it may be more effective to emphasise how businesses and their guests can leave a positive trace.*

4.4.13. Slow Ways

Slow Ways is an initiative (2019) to create a national network of walking routes connecting all of Great Britain's towns and cities as well as thousands of villages.

Using existing paths, ways, trails and roads, people can use Slow Ways routes to walk or wheel between neighbouring settlements and combine them to create longer distance trips. It's designed to make it easier for people to imagine, plan and go on walking journeys.

There are currently over 7,000 Slow Ways stretching for over 100,000km. This network of routes was created by 700 volunteers during the Spring 2020 lockdown, creating a unique Slow Ways map in the process.

Learning

- *CRTG and the public sector need to be alert to such initiatives and coordinate involvement on a regional basis. For example by encouraging local volunteers to walk slow routes between towns within and around the region and submit reviews to the website.*

4.4.14. Leave No Trace Ireland

Leave No Trace Ireland is an Outdoor Ethics Education Programme designed to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research and partnerships. As increasing numbers of people seek the beauty and exhilaration of outdoor travel and recreation, our collective mark on the environment and its natural processes increases. Litter, water pollution, disturbance of vegetation, wildlife, livestock and other people are all indicators of the need to develop a national ethic that protects both natural and cultural heritage. Techniques designed to minimise the environmental and social impacts in these areas are incorporated in and promoted by the national Leave No Trace education programme as the following seven principles:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Be Considerate of Others
- Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Leave What You Find
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Minimise the Effects of Fire

Learning

- *Face-to-face conversations are an effective means of engendering behaviour change. Businesses can help promote responsible outdoor recreation by promoting the seven principles to their guests during their everyday conversations as well as through their marketing materials.*

4.4.15. New Demand Responsive Transport - Mole Valley Surrey

Surrey County Council has launched the new Mole Valley Digital Demand Responsive Transport service for all residents who live north of the Guildford to Redhill Railway Line that passes through Dorking West and Dorking Deepdene Stations.

This new digital on-demand service, which operates with accessible electric minibuses, enables passengers to book and pay for their journeys online via an App or website. It does not have a fixed timetable – passengers decide the route of the bus depending on where and when they want to go. The digital software dynamically schedules the journey requests, grouping journeys in the most efficient and effective way. Passengers not able to go online to book can phone a call centre.

Learning

- *Seemingly intractable issues such as viable public transport services in rural areas require innovative solutions that are designed around visitor needs.*

4.4.16. The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism and Tourism Declares

The Glasgow Declaration is a catalyst for increased urgency about the need to accelerate climate action in tourism and to secure strong commitments to support the global goals to halve emissions over the next decade and reach Net Zero emissions as soon as possible before 2050.

Over 450 organisations have become signatories of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism to accelerate climate action. By becoming signatories, organisations agree to implement the commitments detailed in the Glasgow Declaration, notably:

- Support the global commitment to halve emissions by 2030 and reach Net Zero as soon as possible before 2050.
- Deliver climate action plans within 12 months of becoming a signatory (or updating existing plans), and implement them.
- Align plans with the five pathways of the Declaration (Measure, Decarbonise, Regenerate, Collaborate, Finance) to accelerate and coordinate climate action in tourism.
- Report publicly on an annual basis on progress against interim and long-term targets, as well as on actions being taken.
- Work in a collaborative spirit, sharing good practices and solutions, and disseminating information to encourage additional organisations to become signatories and support one another to reach targets as quickly as possible.

Everyone in the tourism sector has a role to play in accelerating climate action and therefore all tourism stakeholders (legal entities) can become signatories of the Glasgow Declaration. Destinations (national and local governments), businesses (accommodation providers, tour operators, suppliers, etc.) and supporting organisations (NGOs, business associations, academia, etc.) can become signatories of the initiative.

Tourism Declares exists to enable everyone in tourism to implement the Climate Action Plans needed to halve sector emissions by 2030. Any person working for a company or organisation that makes the declaration on the website or signs the Glasgow Declaration is welcome to join the Tourism Declares community.

Through the online forum, industry groups, case studies, education programmes etc, they are creating best practice and guiding and supporting members to plan their emissions reductions.

Learning

- *If many different regional organisations become signatories they can work collaboratively to accelerate and coordinate climate action in tourism.*
- *By becoming signatories, organisations can access good practice and solutions from other regions/countries.*

4.4.17. Winchester and District Business Support - Net Zero

Winchester City Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. In 2020, the Council formally adopted a Carbon Neutrality Action Plan that commits the council to review its own activities to reach carbon neutrality by 2024 - and sets the same ambitious goal for the wider district by 2030.

The aim is to reduce the carbon emissions that are causing climate change and to support environmental improvements in the district. The focus is on the biggest sources of carbon emissions – transport, property and energy. Progress will be measured and reported publicly.

Winchester and District Business Support - Net Zero is one of various initiatives to meet the ambition of carbon neutrality for the district by 2030. Delivered by Meercat Associates. This support is free of charge and includes one-to-one consultations, online webinars and events. Business benefits are cited as;

- Gain competitive advantage
- Increase brand value and customer loyalty
- Reduce energy and water usage
- Become more efficient
- Reduce business cost
- Environmentally managed waste
- Build staff pride and become an employer of choice

For those that want to explore further, there is a Zero Road Map to a Net Zero business, a certified support programme with personal Carbon Coach, a Carbon Reduction Strategy and marketing support.

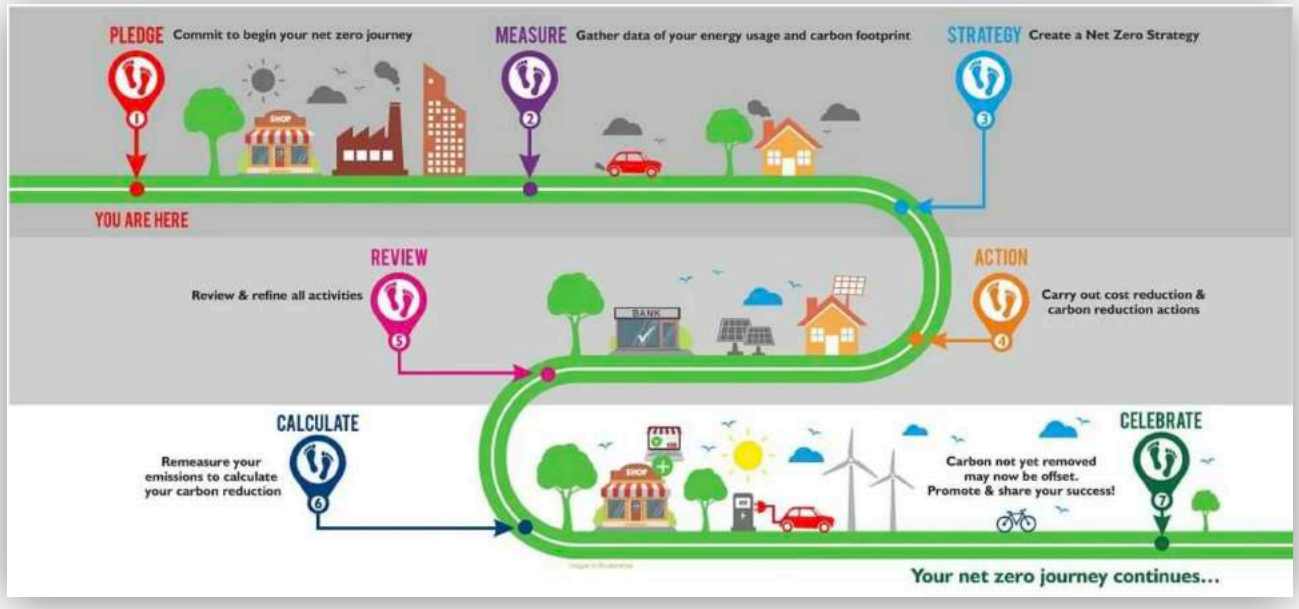


Fig 4. The Road Map to Net Zero (https://www.meercatassociates.com/net-zero/)

While the service to businesses to create a net zero strategy and action plan is free of charge, funded by Winchester City Council and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), some businesses may wish to invest further in energy conservation and reduction measures like LED lighting, insulation, heating or machinery upgrades. Grant assistance towards such improvements is also available and can be accessed in the Clean Growth Programme by Low Carbon Across the South and East (LoCASE).

Grants can cover 40% of expenditure towards business growth, up to a maximum of £10,000 and green audits may also be offered to businesses where more intensive work is required.

Learning

- *By declaring a climate emergency and adopting a Climate Neutrality Action Plan, the local authority began a journey towards Net Zero which is driven by ambitious targets.*
- *A package of business support (provided by consultants) has been put in place in order to help businesses to meet the targets. The support includes bespoke advice and mentoring and ties in with other initiatives that provide grant assistance for improvements in energy conservation.*



5.Sustainable tourism - recurring and associated issues

Any discussion of sustainable tourism in protected landscapes inevitably reaches out into an ever-widening circle of associated issues relating to how people live, work and recreate in rural areas. In the course of this study, a number of topics have surfaced repeatedly and require further discussion.

5.

5.1. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

In 2015, world governments agreed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with it the Sustainable Development Goals, a framework comprising 17 goals and 169 targets, through which States, civil society, and the private sector can guide and measure their contributions to sustainable development towards 2030. Tourism has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly to all of the 17 goals. In particular, it has been included as a target in Goals 8, 12 and 14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, respectively. Future regional initiatives to sustain rural tourism should be cognisant of these goals and work to meet them.

5.2. Development of sustainable tourism in the UK protected landscapes

The regional economic reliance on the tourism industry in rural areas and protected landscapes in particular presents challenges. Natural beauty, sensitive ecosystems and rural communities/culture are the USPs of tourism in protected landscapes but tourism can also pose a risk to the protection of cultural and natural sites. Protected landscapes are tourism destinations and since Covid, growing numbers of people have discovered the benefits of visiting National Parks and AONBs. Consequently, increased visitor numbers have highlighted the importance of developing tourism sustainably in order to enable economic growth whilst still preserving the culture and biodiversity of these areas.

The development and promotion of sustainable tourism is a frequently cited aim of the authorities who manage Protected Landscapes in the UK. The move towards a sustainable tourism offer requires a cohesive and integrated response to pre-existing and new pressures to ensure the delivery of a high-quality tourism product.

The Welsh Government's ambition for the visitor economy is to 'grow tourism for the good of Wales….The role of Park Authorities in supporting the management of visitors to ensure communities are able to benefit from tourism, and minimising the negative impacts for people and the environment, is critical.'[5] There is an expectation that each of the National Park Authorities will engage with tourism providers to identify how they can contribute to achieving the sustainability of the area.[6]

In 2021-22, the Auditor General published three reports on how each of Wales' National Park Authorities is responding to the challenge of managing and helping to deliver sustainable tourism. Each of these reviews identified some difficulties faced by National Park Authorities and their partners in implementing their responsibilities. Common issues that emerged from these reports include:

- The three National Park Authorities play a vital role in managing the environment and encouraging visitors to enjoy the outdoors.
- National Park Authorities in Wales have to balance encouraging tourism with conserving the natural environment but find this difficult to achieve.
- Tourist businesses mostly value the work of the National Park Authorities but do not think they have the balance right between their two statutory purposes.
- Most tourist businesses seek to work sustainably and recognise the value of sustainable tourism.
- National park authorities do not have the resources or powers to control or influence the number of people who visit their areas, nor their behaviour and impact.

Audit Wales suggests that the Welsh Government should consider these findings when developing and setting their priorities for National Park Authorities, in order to assist the effective implementation of national policy.[7]

5.2.1. New National Park for North East Wales

Welsh Government have committed to establishing a new National Park in north-east Wales; this will be the first new National Park in Wales since 1957. The plan was one of a number of pledges for North Wales in the Welsh Labour manifesto ahead of the Senedd elections in May 2021.

The findings of this report provide a clear direction of travel for the tourism sector in North East Wales in order to align with National Park status in the future. In particular, the acknowledgement that National Park Authorities have neither the power nor capacity to directly control or solely deliver the significant infrastructure changes needed to help achieve sustainable tourism. Many of the statutory responsibilities for responding in these

---

[5] Term of Government Remit Letter for the National Park Authorities. May 2022

[6] Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks, July 2018.

[7] Sustainable Tourism in Wales' National Parks July 2022 Audit Wales

matters are vested in partners, most notably local authorities and/or the Police, or private landowners. Therefore, the new National Park Authority will have to work in partnership with partners from both the private and public sectors and with tourism businesses, in particular, if sustainable tourism is to be achieved.

All three existing National Park Authorities reported to Audit Wales that the Welsh Government's annual funding cycle does not allow for long-term planning of, and investment into, infrastructure which supports sustainable tourism. Equally, all three National Parks continue to source additional funding from elsewhere and this is likely to grow yet further going forward.

National Park status provides a stronger and more universally recognised brand image than AONB status. As a National Park, the region will have greater national marketing opportunities and reach into both domestic and overseas markets, potentially enabling them to attract visitors who may previously have driven through the region on their way to Snowdonia.

5.3. Understanding the visitor

Any initiatives designed to support and develop the tourism economy of the region should be based on an understanding of who is and who isn't visiting the region and why. National data sets such as STEAM may provide some insight but a review of other studies would also be beneficial.

For example, in 2020 Visit Wales commissioned a market study; the resultant report (which outlines the findings from the UK market) is the first in a series of regular reports which will be issued following each wave of the study.[8] This first study found that only 9% of UK residents surveyed were considering visiting North East Wales. Given the quality of the offer in the region and its fit with the Visit Wales priority audience segments (older cultural explorers, pre-family explorers and active family explorers) this figure is lower than might be expected.

There are many possible theories as to why the CRDV AONB doesn't attract its share of UK visitors, for example;

- the proximity to and therefore, competition with Snowdonia National Park
- difficulty in defining the area in a way that has meaning to the visitor
- lack of a joined-up approach across the sector to develop and market the offer effectively.

The only way of determining the significance of these theories is to gather and analyse visitor data. Some of this data may already exist, such as the Visit Wales study but other more regionally specific data may also be useful.

[8] Tourism Market Demand Report: UK March 2020 © Crown Copyright Digital ISBN 978-1-80082-894-0

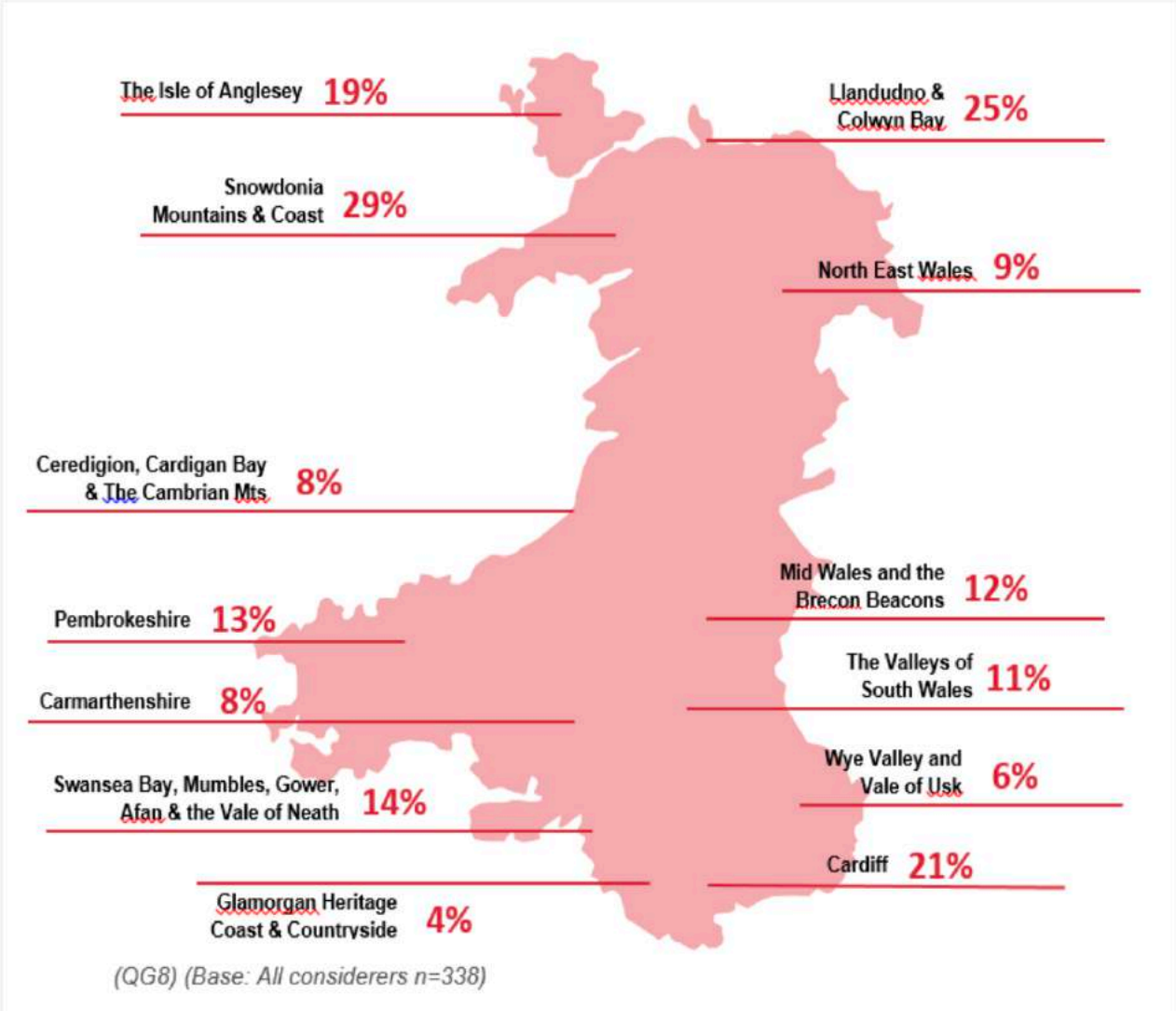


Fig. 5 Areas of Wales considered for a visit in 2020 (%)

5.4. Consultancies/initiatives providing cost and carbon reduction solutions (and carbon footprinting) to businesses

There are many consultancies and initiatives set up to offer de-carbonisation support and advice to businesses. Some are already working on a regional basis through public sector-funded initiatives, others are already working with businesses in the region on a consultancy basis, and others offer free online tools.

- https://www.meercatassociates.com/ - Meercat is a procurement consultancy that aims to improve business profits while caring for the planet. ZERO is a certified, 12-month support programme for environmentally-conscious businesses which reduces carbon and increases profits. A Media Pack is included with certificates, graphics and marketing copy to help businesses promote their efforts. It is aligned with the SME Climate Hub, UN Race To Zero and PAS 2060. Meercat is currently working with local authorities to run programmes for Winchester, Reading, Kent, Birmingham and Solihull.

- https://businessclimatehub.org/uk/ - The SME Climate Hub is a global initiative that aims to mainstream climate action in the small to medium-sized business community, and enable SMEs to build resilient businesses for the future. The SME Climate Hub has developed free, practical resources specifically tailored to support SMEs on their net zero journey through strategic emission reductions and opportunities for climate leadership. Businesses can calculate their emissions with the Business Carbon Calculator, learn how to take action with the Climate Fit education course and access support through the Financial Support guide and 1.5°C Business Playbook. The SME Climate Hub has also partnered with Oxford University to provide SMEs with a library of external tools that offer additional support to small businesses taking concrete steps towards climate action.
- https://www.clean-growth.uk/net-zero-360/ - Clean Growth UK is a university-based network of forward-thinking green businesses. Net Zero 360 is a full-service, net-zero business package. It can take businesses from the first steps on their net-zero journey to becoming bona fide sustainability pioneers.

  Net Zero 360 includes:

  - A workshop series to guide you through the steps to becoming a net-zero business
  - A rigorous carbon calculator
  - Action-planning support
  - Access to university innovation expertise and facilities
  - Support with funding your net-zero mission
- https://www.carbonfootprint.com/ - provides de-carbonisation services/support for businesses including carbon footprinting, carbon calculators (including a free online calculator for micro-businesses) and environmental management systems.
- https://www.ecollectivecarbon.com/ - is a consultancy offering carbon reduction support and advice for businesses with the aim of striving for Net Zero. The price of a carbon audit with ecollective is based on how long they estimate it will take them to calculate your carbon footprint. Projects typically start from £1,000.
- https://businesswales.gov.wales/green-growth-pledge-0 - The Green Growth Pledge helps Welsh businesses take proactive steps towards improving their sustainability, demonstrating their positive impact on the people and places around them, as well as joining a growing community of forward-thinking organisations who are helping Wales transition to a low carbon future.

  It offers a range of straightforward, practical actions that can be taken, such as reducing vehicle use, increasing water and energy efficiency, and working with responsible suppliers that will help companies become more efficient, decarbonise and win new business.

  By signing up to the Green Growth Pledge, businesses are asked to make a commitment to one or more positive actions that will help reduce their carbon

footprint and impact on the environment while ensuring sustainable performance, including:

- Working with responsible suppliers
- Efficient transport & logistics
- Using land, energy & water wisely
- Measuring the impacts of your business
- Improving the well-being of staff and your local community
- Using appropriate packaging
- Preventing waste & pollution
- Reviewing products & services
- Promoting sustainable best practices.

Signing the Pledge means that businesses can access sustainability support from Business Wales, helping Wales to decarbonise and transition to a low-carbon future.

- https://www.litegreenltd.co.uk/ - Litegreen are energy efficiency specialists based in Wrexham, who provide a one-stop service for energy surveys & energy efficiency matters. From assessment and diagnostic trouble-shooting surveys to advice, recommendations, Retrofit, compliance and consultancy.

These companies and initiatives outlined above can potentially help businesses on their journey to de-carbonise their activities. The approach taken within the region would be dependent on funding but an effective, value-for-money initiative could combine bespoke consultancy advice and the use of free, online tools.

5.5. Collective switching and purchasing of energy

Collective purchasing and switching is when consumers get together to negotiate a group deal with their gas and electricity suppliers. There is no set model for how individual schemes operate, though a third party usually facilitates them.

Collective switching is where the third party actively negotiates a better tariff on behalf of the group. The benefits of taking part in a collective switch scheme are best found when the group is made up of like-minded and/or similar individuals. That way, everyone's energy needs (such as saving money) or goals (such as going green) can best be reached with one, collective plan. These types of deals might also be more attractive to groups living in more rural areas, where distribution costs can be higher. Individually, a cheap deal may be harder to find, but by banding together to collectively receive energy from the same supplier, a cheaper price could be negotiated as the benefit to the provider is higher.

There are many organisations offering group purchasing including the NFU (for NFU members only).

Collective purchasing is where the third party or group buys a commodity (eg energy efficiency solutions) from a gas or electricity supplier, with a view to then supplying that commodity to a number of consumers.

Collective purchasing and switching have the potential to enable CRTG members to secure cheaper energy contracts, however, further research would be required to determine the potential benefits and drawbacks and to identify trusted schemes. Some local businesses have already joined group purchasing schemes - their experience is valuable and should be shared with other businesses.

5.6. Sustainable supply chains

Tourism supply chains involve many components – not just accommodation, transport and activities/attractions, but also cafes and restaurants, handicrafts, food production, waste disposal, and the infrastructure that supports tourism in destinations. These all form a part of the experience that is expected by visitors when they reach a destination. The quality of the visitor experience and level of sustainability depends on performance at all the links in the tourism supply chain. Tourism, like all other supply chains, operates through business-to-business relationships, and supply chain management can be applied to deliver sustainability performance improvements alongside financial performance, by working to improve the business operations of each supplier in the supply chain.

Sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) is the use of purchasing policies and practices to facilitate sustainable development at a tourist destination. SSCM practices are an essential component if the regional tourism industry is to reach sustainable development goals. Businesses in the region should be encouraged to consider the sustainability of their supply chains and to make sustainable performance a key criterion when choosing suppliers, thus providing a driver for improving sustainability within the wider economy. The development of local sustainable supply chain case studies would help showcase the benefits to businesses and the improvements to the quality of the tourism offer.

5.7. Historic buildings and energy efficiency

Historic buildings were designed to absorb moisture and release it gradually via breathable materials. They were heated by open fires and needed to have good natural ventilation. In contrast, modern buildings are generally designed to be impervious and generally need draughts to be eliminated for their heating systems to be effective.

Many historic buildings have had works done to improve energy efficiency (most often this has meant having double-glazed windows fitted). Whilst these changes can result in lower energy bills, the use of impervious materials can effectively create a ‘hermetically sealed box’ which can be problematic for the building over a period of time. Interstitial condensation can build up behind dry-lined walls. This can cause mould growth and lack of ventilation can harm timber which can sweat and lead to dry rot.

These problems can have a detrimental effect on a listed building which may have statutory protection because of its architectural and historic interest. Any positive benefits of energy-saving measures on a listed building need to be considered against the harm to the building.

This includes any harm that:

- is visual
- involves a loss of fabric
- causes the structure to be jeopardised in some way

Intrusive measures must be assessed by requesting advice relating to listed building consent (submit a pre-application enquiry). Consent may be refused if it is considered that a proposed measure would cause harm to the building's special interest.[9]

In the CRDV AONB many tourism businesses operate from historic buildings and this was recognised by respondents to the survey as a barrier to them being able to take action to improve the energy efficiency of their premises. They cited a lack of understanding of the most appropriate and cost-effective changes to make or new technologies to adopt, in addition to a presumption that they couldn't afford the appropriate changes. Any support, training, mentoring, funding schemes proposed need to specifically address the issues of improving the energy efficiency of older buildings.

5.8. Green Accreditation

A green accreditation scheme provides a third-party assessment of a business's environmental and sustainable practices. Generally, the performance of a business is matched against a set of criteria, which can cover a range of sustainability aspects. By meeting those criteria, the business gains the certification's label, which can then be used as an independently verified badge of validation.

Many schemes are renewed regularly to ensure that businesses are maintaining their sustainability activities; it formalises current environmental work in a visible and verifiable way to staff, customers, suppliers and community.

Green accreditation schemes offer businesses a means of;

- reviewing environmental, social, and economic impact
- reducing their carbon footprint
- facilitating action to maximise the positive benefits to the business, wider community and environment
- monitoring ongoing environmental performance
- facilitating behavioural change of guests, staff and suppliers
- aligning the product with the ethos of caring for the landscape in which they operate.

[9] https://www.wrexham.gov.uk/service/listed-buildings/energy-performance-certificates-and-listed-buildings)

Schemes often cite the marketing advantage by meeting increased demand for sustainable businesses, however, the economic validity of this claim has not been proven. However, the independent verification of the actions taken can provide a robust and credible certification to help promote a business's sustainability commitment to potential customers, benefitting the business as well as developing a more sustainable destination.

For the past 15 years, green accreditation schemes have been promoted as a means of encouraging and supporting businesses on their sustainability journey. There have been many UK initiatives to subsidise membership fees to encourage businesses to gain accreditation, including past schemes in Wales and a current, post-Covid scheme in Scotland. The Scottish scheme, the Sustainability Certification Scheme Fund for Tourism Recovery, was launched in 2021 as part of the Destination Net Zero Programme. Through the scheme, three sustainable tourism certification scheme providers were successful in securing funds to offer tourism businesses a membership fee discount. A total of £60,000 was allocated to the three programmes - EarthCheck, Green Key and Green Tourism.[10]

In the current economic climate, membership fees (even if subsidised) are likely to be a barrier to businesses joining green accreditation schemes. However, there are many online sources of creditable information and sustainability criteria specifically aimed at tourism businesses which can be accessed for free. A bespoke business toolkit that utilises these sources could present a value-for-money option, especially if combined with one-to-one expert advice and support.



[10] https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/responsible-tourism/green-certification-schemes#Available%20programmes



6.Innovation Plan

A holistic, strategic approach to the development and delivery of tourism provides opportunities to influence people's behaviour, reduce pressure on communities and maximise economic return. With the prospect of a new National Park on the horizon, this feasibility study has engaged with private sector businesses in order to better understand how they can align their products with an agreed vision for sustainable tourism in the region and the support and mechanisms that are available to assist in this process.

The Innovation Plan outlines a number of proposals for future projects and project development. Indicative costs and timescales are included but each proposal will require further development and detailed costings.

6.

6.1. Regional collaboration and connectivity

Connectivity in the development and management of the regional tourism offer should aim to deliver a visitor experience that is consistent in quality and meets visitor expectations at every stage of their journey. Sustainability is an integral component of a quality tourism offer and must be embedded at each 'touch point' the visitor has with organisations and businesses, requiring the public and private sectors to work together. In addition, if marketing activity raises expectations of sustainability it is important that this is met throughout the tourism offer, visitors are aware of and quick to spot 'greenwash'.

6.1.1. **Consultation process to develop a shared vision for sustainable tourism in the region** - with a full definition of what sustainable tourism means for the region with emphasis on making a positive contribution rather than just minimising impact. This statement of intent will facilitate the identification and pursuit of a common set of goals and objectives that both public sector organisations and the private sector can commit to. This vision should be developed in the context of the likelihood of National Park status and should enable the subsequent development of an action plan/road map which outlines the shared delivery across public and private sector stakeholders to achieve the vision. Key components of the vision should include a declaration of intent by key stakeholders on nature depletion and climate change (Net Zero).

NB. where elements of the action plan refer to carbon reduction targets for businesses they must be at an appropriate scale with clear KPIs.

Timescale: Vision to be agreed by all partners by April 2023 and draft action plan out for consultation by Autumn 2023.

Cost: Dependent on whether this is undertaken by the three local authorities in consultation with other stakeholders or undertaken on a consultancy basis.

6.1.2. **Regional local authorities and CRTG to sign the Glasgow Declaration and Tourism Declares.**

Timescale: 2022/23

Cost: £0

6.1.3. **Re-positioning of CRTG to meet the changing needs of the sector**. To be undertaken through the development of a new 5-year business and development plan as outlined in 'Evaluation of the Eat Stay Do Project to identify a Future Direction for the Clwydian Range Tourism Group'11 To include a review of the group's legal setup and status and an overall Vision or Mission statement and aims & objectives for its delivery. This review should include consideration of funding/ business model potential for developing corporate sponsorship, and membership subs.

The current separation that exists between the food and drink and tourism sectors is counter-productive and encourages unnecessary competition for funding. Many businesses could see themselves sitting within both groups but are unlikely to join both. Bringing the Food and Drink and Tourism Groups together would provide creative and innovative funding opportunities which would contribute to a cohesive offer.

Timescale: Completed by March 2023

Cost: To be undertaken by CRTG Board with consultancy support (£3,500)

6.1.4. **Review of CRTG governance and membership of CRTG Board to reflect partnership working with public sector stakeholders.** To include consideration of a) representation on the Board from DCC, FCC and CRDV AONB (defined by a Memorandum of Understanding) and b) the ability to access suitable funding to implement CRTG business and development plan.

Timescale: Completed by March 2023

Cost: To be undertaken by CRTG Board

6.1.5. **Learning from South Downs National Park** - CRTG committee, CRDV AONB staff and CRTG members should establish mechanisms to enable shared learning

---

11 Evaluation of the Eat Stay Do Project to identify a Future Direction for the Clwydian Range Tourism Group. Resources for Change. 2021

between the two protected landscapes. Although connections already exist at a high management level it is recommended that a relationship is established at officer level and through business-to-business connections. This relationship may be best achieved via a short learning journey by both staff and business owners to the South Downs.

Timescale: Online meeting at Management/Executive officer level to take place by February 2023. Learning journey to take place in April 2023.

Cost: £4,500 (based on 6 people travelling, £300pp travel and £150 per night accommodation, plus meals and local transport)

6.1.6. **Chair of CRTG to meet with Wendy Varcoe MBE from Surrey Hills Enterprises** to gain an understanding of the governance of Surrey Hills Enterprises and their relationship with the other AONB organisations. Can be conducted virtually.

Timescale: Completed by 31st Dec 2022

Cost: £0.00

6.1.7. **CRTG to continue to effectively voice the views of their members** to the Denbighshire Tourism Forum, Tourism Partnership, North Wales Tourism Forum and DCC Tourism Strategy Group.

Timescale: Ongoing

Cost: £0.00

6.1.8. **Feasibility study for an 'Open all hours scheme'** to co-ordinate the opening hours of food and hospitality businesses, plus catering companies. This study would need to identify geographic areas where this is an issue, guage 'by-in' from businesses and develop a pilot project. The scheme will require commitment from accommodation providers to drive business to the food and hospitality businesses.

Timescale: Completed by end of Mar 2024

Cost: £6,000

6.2. Sustainable business practices

Sustainable business practices can both enhance the visitor experience and increase the profit margin by reducing overheads, whilst minimising the impact of the business on the environment. Within Denbighshire, the Clwydian Range Tourism Group (CRTG) have played a pivotal role in raising awareness of sustainability within its membership. Between 2008 to 2014 there were a number of funded initiatives to support the development of a sustainable tourism offer in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB. These were publically funded projects which sought to engage with tourism businesses via business networks such as the Clwydian Range Tourism Group (CRTG). During this time many

businesses made great progress in improving the fabric of their buildings, and their day-to-day operations and communicated their progress and their reasons for doing it to their guests. This was reflected in the significant number of businesses that became accredited through green tourism accreditation schemes such as Green Tourism.

Many aspects of sustainability are now mainstream and the level of public understanding and participation in energy-saving and waste-reduction actions is much higher. However, with the high turnover of businesses in the tourism sector and rapid advances in low-carbon technology, it is appropriate and timely to reassess the current adoption of sustainable business practices by tourism businesses in the region.

This study has assessed the current level of understanding and adoption of sustainable business practices by tourism businesses. Significant barriers remain which will require new targeted interventions.

6.2.1. **A two-year programme of support for micro businesses (<5 employees), to increase their understanding of how to improve the sustainability of their offer.**

To include;

- one-to-one support to be accessed by each business over a 2-month calendar window to be agreed upon with the business. Support to include a carbon footprint calculation, building energy audit, retrofit plan, follow-up discussion and overall report. A specific focus on the requirements of historic buildings is required.
- training and skills development (workshops, webinars)
- case studies (research, writing and publication)
- business-to-business mentoring. (Supported by 'Future Direction for the Clwydian Range Tourism Group' (Report by Resources for Change, 2021)[12]

Timescale: 2023-2026

Cost: £60-80K (£30-40k per year) (price is dependent on the number of businesses supported and number of events run)

6.2.2. **Financial support for Low Carbon improvements**. Two-year grant programme, offering grants for decarbonisation costs at up to 60% intervention rate (maximum grant £5,000). Aimed at businesses with 5 employees or less. Applications to be based on an energy audit undertaken by a recognised contractor. Applications to be reviewed by an independent expert panel.

Timescale: 2 yr grant programme

Cost: £100,000. Indicative cost based on 15 grants of £5,000 (total £75,000), plus administrative costs.

12
Evaluation of the Eat Stay Do Project to identify a Future Direction for the Clwydian Range Tourism Group. Resources for Change. 2021

6.2.3. **Development of a Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Sustainable Tourism business practices checklist/toolkit.**

Can be collated from publically available materials (such as green accreditation criteria) and tools (such as carbon footprinting) but curated to ensure its relevance to the Clwydian Range region (Using the Cumbria Tourism model). This toolkit should be free for businesses and could be usefully linked to expert consultant support in specific areas such as energy efficiency.

Timescale: 4 months (consultancy)

Cost: £6,000

6.2.4. **CRTG to continue to work with businesses to enhance their ability to act as a 'conduit' for their guests to the protected landscape.** All members are encouraged to join the Denbighshire Ambassador Scheme and take the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB module and the sustainable tourism module. A series of site visits/events to share best practice among CRTG members and encourage creative approaches to fostering links with the AONB.

Timescale: Ongoing

Cost: £0

6.3. Understanding and communicating with visitors

Seamless, consistent communication and marketing of the tourism offer in the region to inform and enable the visitor to explore and enjoy the region sustainably. This requires good clear information provision at all stages in the visitor journey. A collective vision for the region will enable the public and private sectors to work together towards a common goal and to share the same language when presenting the offer of the region to the visitor.

6.3.1. **Regional Visitor Survey**: Understanding the visitor to inform initiatives that aim to increase the share of domestic visits. Simple survey (online and print versions) distributed by CRTG members for their guests to complete. Survey should gather demographic data, information on interests and activities undertaken during their visit, their motivations for choosing them, and the information sources used in their research. Survey design and data analysis to be undertaken by data analysts. Survey to be undertaken across a full calendar year to help inform initiatives to increase year-round visits.

Timescale: Full calendar year (April 2023 to April 2024 recommended)

Cost: £10,000

6.3.2. **Gap analysis to evaluate and improve the sustainability of the regional tourism offer of North East Wales**. It is recommended that two forms of gap analysis are considered;

a) to evaluate visitor satisfaction compared to their expectations with the sustainability of all aspects of their trip (transport, infrastructure, accommodation, food etc). Closing the distance between what visitors want and expect with what they experience increases their satisfaction.

b) to compare tourism provision in the region compared with an identified optimum level of sustainability.

Gap analysis can be an impetus for ensuring data on the 'moments of truth' for various tourism stakeholder groups is relevant, disciplined and up-to-date. However, it is an indicator, not a management template. Gap analysis will not provide answers regarding why a gap occurs, whether or not the gap should be addressed, and if it is to be addressed in the best way for doing so. A response to the gap analysis findings will require consideration of the key business management functions and stakeholders' views through a collaborative decision-making approach.

Timescale: By Mar 2024

Cost: £15,000

6.3.3. **Review of regional tourism marketing** from a visitor journey perspective to evaluate what, when and how is information provided and accessed by visitors to the region. All partner organisations from both public and private sectors should collaborate on the development and delivery of a shared, cohesive marketing and communications plan which is designed to deliver high-quality marketing and visitor information. Build on existing relationships to ensure closer alignment between the CRDV AONB/DCC/FCC and CRTG to enable more cohesive development and marketing of regional tourism offer. Focus on fostering trusted relationships and working collaboratively towards the new shared sustainable tourism vision. To include a review of the regional tourism brand 'North East Wales' in readiness for National Park designation.

Timescale: To be in place prior to National Park designation

Cost: N/A delivered by tourism stakeholders

6.3.4. **Development www.clwydianrangeanddeevalleyaonb.org.uk/ as the central online visitor-facing information resource for the region.** Development to include more detailed content about where to go and what to do; information about how to visit sustainably; itinerary planner based on a business directory and event calendar (developed in collaboration with CRTG).

Timescale: Responsibility of CRDV AONB

Cost: Delivered by CRDV AONB

6.3.5. **CRTG and the public sector stakeholders to be alert to national initiatives such as 'Slow Ways' and coordinate involvement on a regional basis.** For

example, by encouraging local volunteers to walk slow routes between towns within and around the region and submit reviews to the website

Timescale: Ongoing

Cost: No additional funds required

6.3.6. **Development of Wales on Rails route cards** based on businesses/attractions based within three miles of Wrexham General Railway Station and the Traws Cymru T3 bus route (Wrexham to Corwen). To be initiated by CRTG and CRDV AONB contacting the Community Rail Partnership.

Timescale: Completed by May 2023

Cost: £1200

6.3.7. **Improving business website content - 20 'Things to do' pdfs** written and designed for businesses to upload to their websites and use in social media marketing. Aimed at improving the quality and detail of the information provided to visitors via business websites. To include consistent messages (agreed by the public and private sector) on how to enjoy the region responsibly and linked to other strategies such as the Central Clwydian Range Recreation Strategy. For example, suggesting that during the summer people park at Loggerheads and access Moel Famau via the Loggerheads Link path.

Timescale: Completed by Sept 2023

Cost: £6,000

6.3.8. **Feasibility study to gauge the potential for a regional brand/quality mark**, similar to the Trade Mark Surrey Hills. CRTG to consider the potential for this approach to increase the value of return on membership and increase visibility and quality of the regional tourism offer.

Timescale: Completed by March 2023

Cost: £1000-£2000

6.4. Flexible and creative private sector

A private sector with a flexible and creative approach to its business models and to the management of its operational activities has the potential to increase opportunities for job creation and upskilling. The one-to-one interviews highlighted the need for businesses to be 'fleet of foot' in response to changes in demand and booking patterns. For example, many businesses had to revise their minimum stay policy and pricing structure during the course of the 2022 summer season.

Micro-business owners are experts in juggling their time to take on the myriad of different tasks required to run their businesses. Limited time availability is one of the many barriers to business owners reviewing their practices and implementing change. The CRTG have

already identified that one of the key issues tourism micro-businesses face is that they are time-poor but are not in a position to offer realistic employment opportunities.

Innovative approaches to operational activities can help prevent 'burnout' thereby increasing the longevity of small businesses; increasing employment opportunities; and creating pathways into the sector via programmes such as Kickstart.

6.4.1. **A pilot study to employ a social media influencer to develop bespoke online marketing content** and schedules for a limited number of businesses.

A high proportion of businesses stated that they felt they had inadequate time and skills to effectively market their products via online and social media channels. The traditional response to this recognised need is to provide training courses for business owners. However, this study has highlighted that these courses do not solve the problem and that businesses require the ability/capacity to bring in outside expertise to deliver this element of their business. This study would implement and evaluate the value to businesses of being able to buy social media support on an 'hours per week/month' basis. Coordinating together to 'share' one influencer could present an employment opportunity.

Timescale: To be completed by March 2024

Cost: Dependent on the number of businesses supported. 5 hours of support (@£20 per hour) per month for 6 months for 10 businesses = £6,000

6.4.2. **Evaluation of the potential for collective purchasing and switching** to enable CRTG members to secure cheaper energy contracts. Research is required to determine the potential benefits and drawbacks and to identify trusted schemes. Some local businesses have already joined group purchasing schemes - their experience is valuable and should be shared with other businesses. If the experience of these businesses is positive then a meeting with a representative of a recommended scheme should be held to explore the potential further.

Timescale: To be completed by March 2023

Cost: Work to be undertaken by CRTG Board.

6.4.3. The development of a small number of local sustainable supply chain case studies would help showcase the benefits to businesses and the improvements to the quality of the tourism offer. At least one business in the region is known to have considered the sustainability of its supply chain. There may be others, or there may be businesses who are willing to consider doing this work with support.

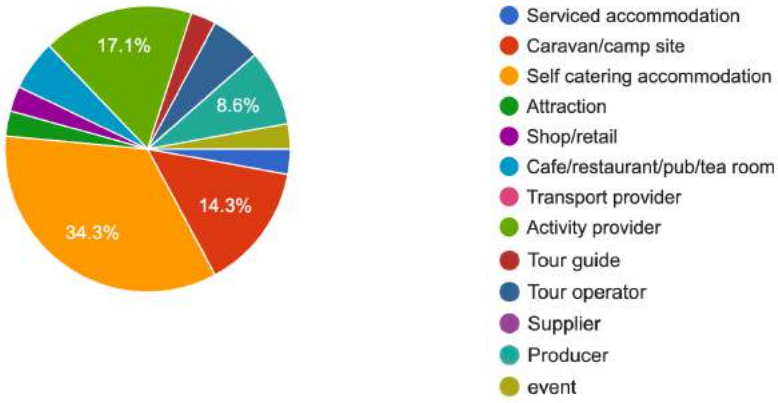
Timescale: To be completed by end of 2023

Cost: Cost will be dependent on how much support potential case study businesses require to establish sustainable supply chains.

Appendix 1: Survey Responses

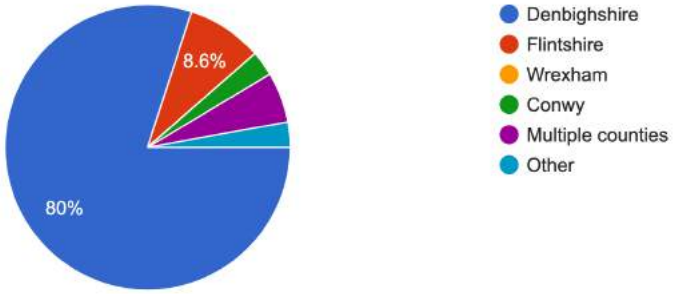
1.1 Which category best describes your business?

35 responses



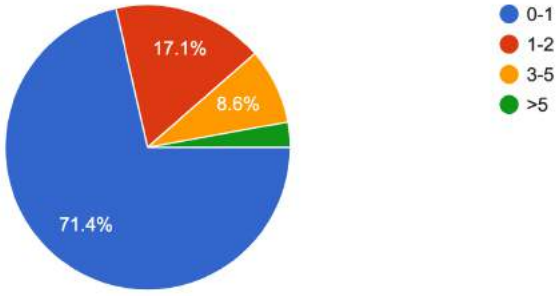
1.2 In which county is your business based?

35 responses



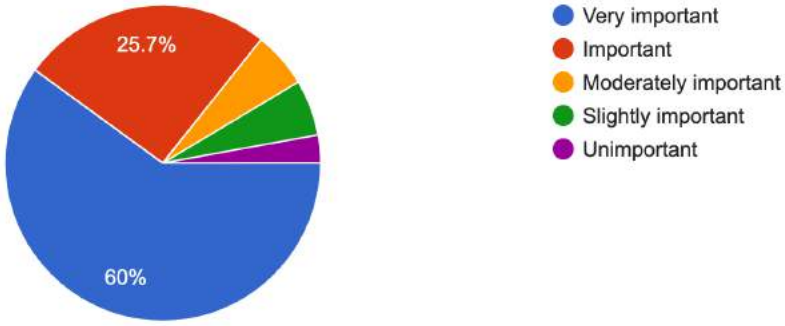
1.3 How many full-time equivalent staff are employed in your tourism-related business?

35 responses



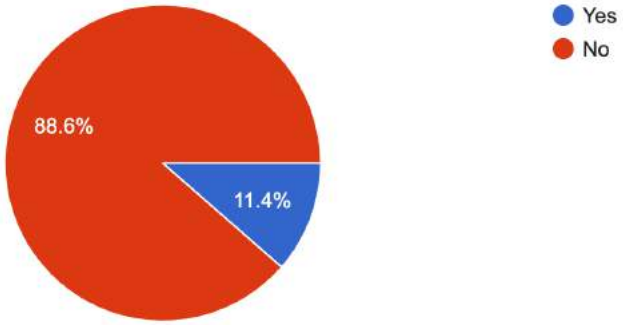
2.1 How important is operating sustainably to you and your business?

35 responses



2.2 Is your business signed up to a green accreditation scheme?

35 responses



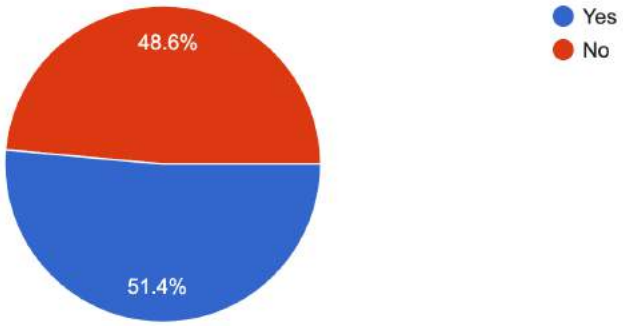
2.3 If you answered yes, please state which accreditation scheme (eg. Green Tourism, Green Key, David Bellamy Conservation Award Scheme etc.) you are a member of.

4 responses

Green Key
Green Growth Scheme Conwy Council
Leace no Trace and Wise accredited operator
Conwy Green Growth Scheme

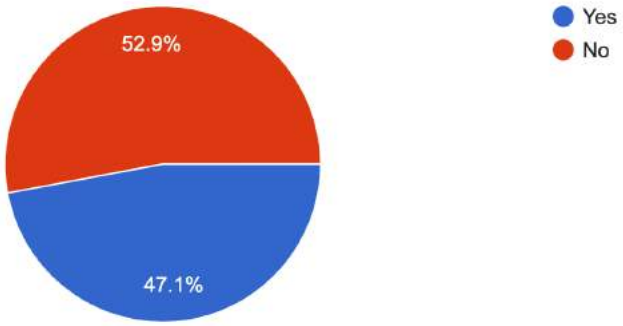
2.4 Does your business have an environmental policy?

35 responses



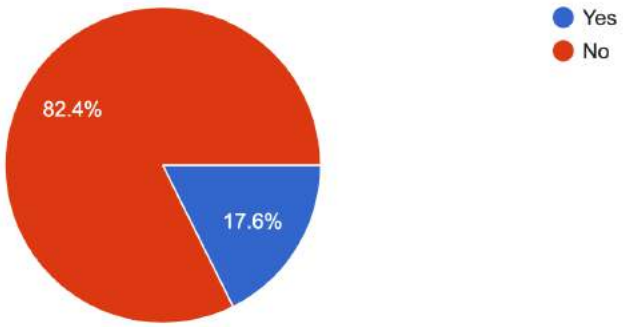
2.5 Does your business have a member of staff with responsibility for environmental/sustainability matters?

34 responses



2.6 Do you, or have you considered measuring the carbon footprint of your business using a recognised CO2 measurement tool?

34 responses



2.7 If yes, which tool do you use?

5 responses

It was done for one of our units by Canopy & Stars. I don't know what they used.

The consultancy ecollective created a tool for us

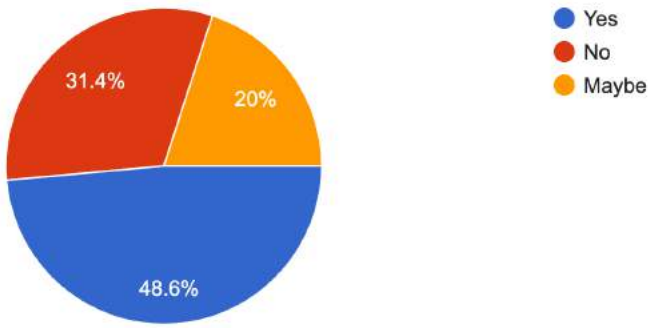
Not sure which tool accurately measures it

This is something we hope to undertake in the future

considered

2.8 Do you feel you could do more to minimise the environmental impact of your business?

35 responses



2.9 If you answered Yes or Maybe to the above, please provide details of areas in which you think you could improve.

24 responses

water waste

More use of alternative energy

We would like to use renewable energy sources, particularly hydro, but the technology is prohibitively expensive

Using green energy

Waste, electricity

I could drive an electric van but can't afford it

There is always room for improvement, eg moving to electric vehicles, reducing the number of vehicle transfers needed, hotel partners switching to renewable energy providers, even more locally-sourced food on the menus at partners hotels / restaurants and so much more!

Water conservation, reduction in vehicle miles

Energy efficiency- solar panels, electric car charging unit, ground source heating,

Ground or air source heat pumps in our new build

Transport - car sharing. Recycling of used kit and equipment

haven't a clue where to start. Please don't tell me to plant a tree.

Possibly solar panels on the roof for heating

Washing of linens and towels

Afford a hybrid self charging car

Alternative heating sources, insulation

Recycling

Electric Vehicles

Use of cling film / packaging (but cost to use more sustainable alternative is currently prohibitive)

Replace oil fired heating in the cottage with renewable energy or heat source. Install solar energy system for electricity. Insulate the walls of the cottage to improve efficiencies and reduce heat losses.

Energy consupmtion / recycling

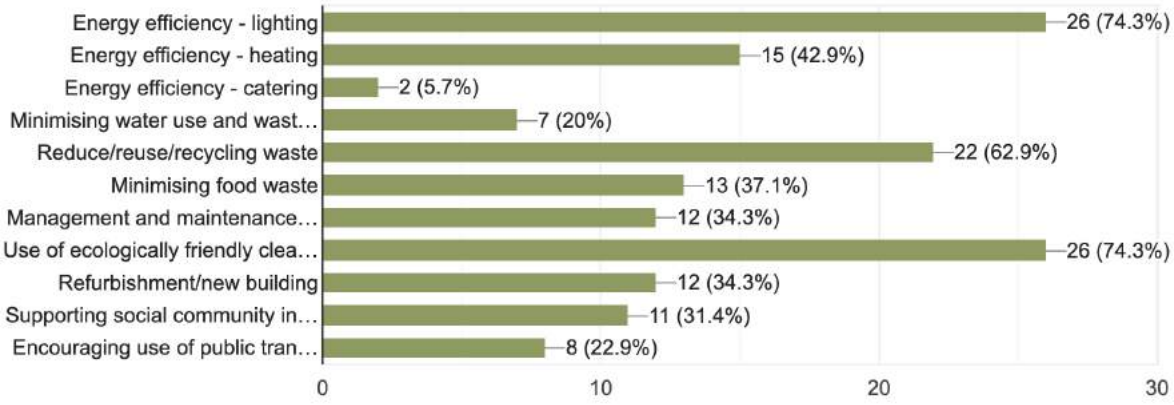
I could drive an electric van, but they are too expensive and i can't afford to buy one. I would be interested in finding out how my business could improve.

lowering vehicle emissions associated with business by allowing customers and staff to travel using public transport (awful bicycle carrying capacity at present) or by allowing vehicles to keep still once at a venue (overnight parking / freedom camping)

Refilling soap bottles, looking for second-use slippers instead of single-use ones. Facilities to electrify a car were considered. Consider solar panels if there are grants. Consider electric bikes too. (used Google

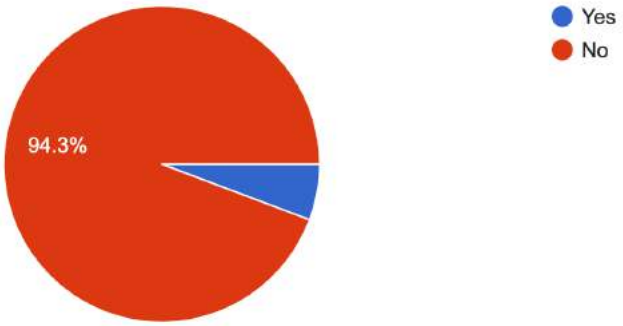
3.1 In the past 3 years have you made changes in your business practices to improve your sustainability with regard to... (please tick all that apply)?

35 responses



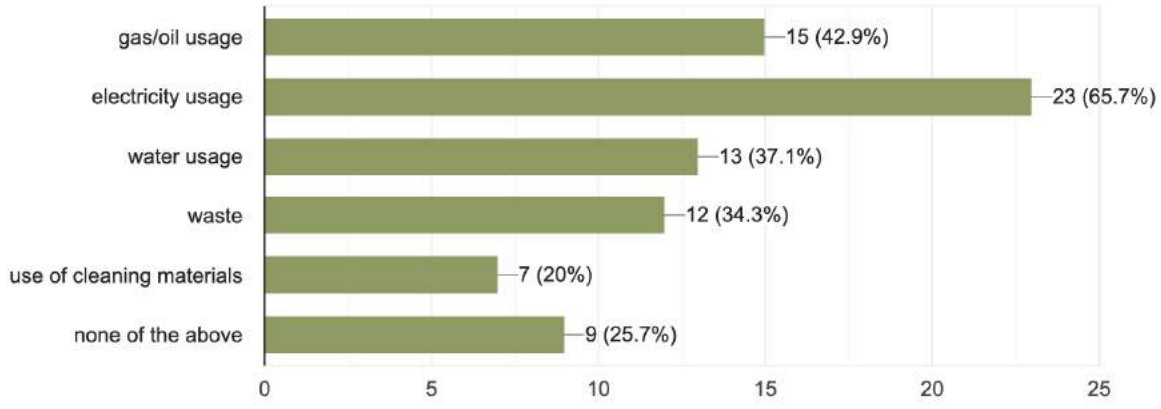
3.2 Do you set objectives for annual improvements in the environmental/sustainability performance of your business?

35 responses



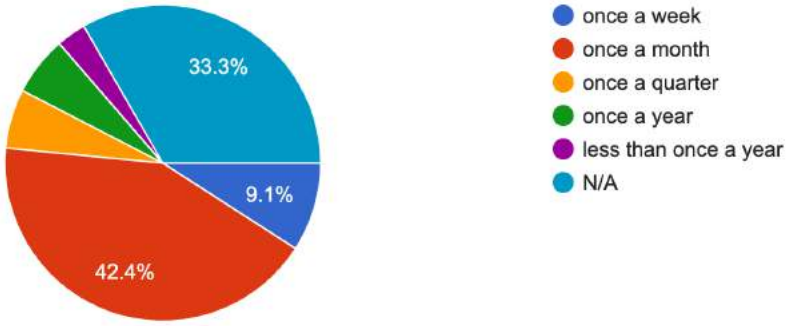
3.3 Do you regularly monitor/audit your....? (please tick all that apply)

35 responses



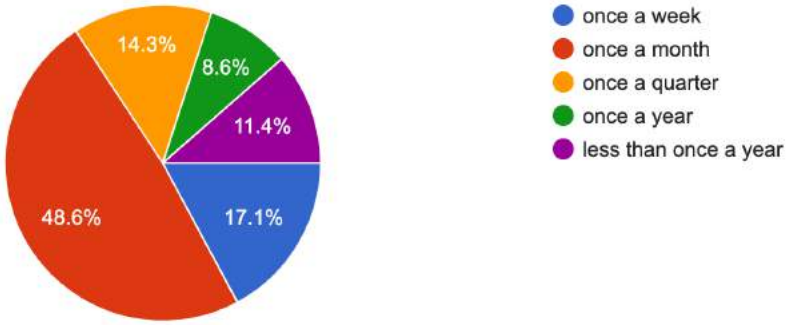
3.4 How frequently do you read your gas/oil meter/gauge?

33 responses



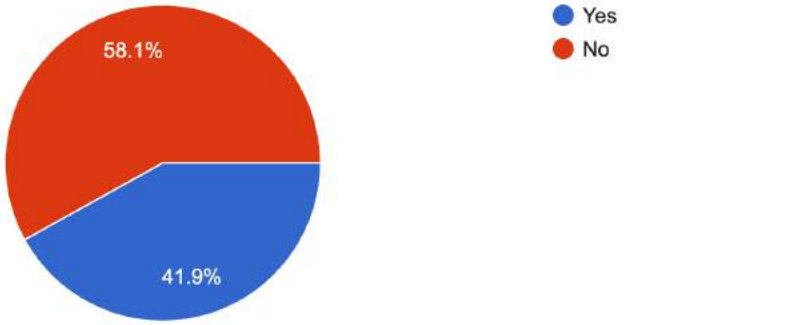
3.5 How frequently do you read your electricity meter?

35 responses



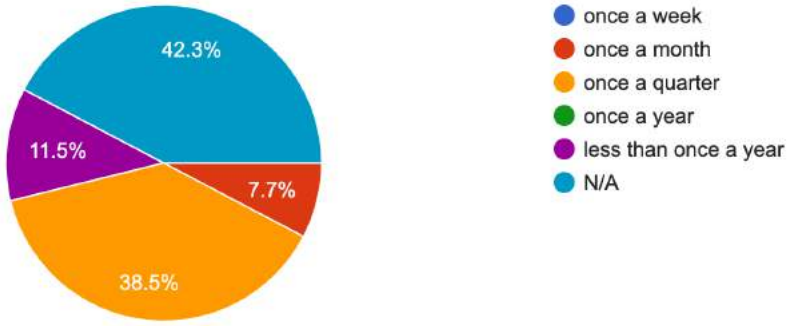
3.6 Do you have a water meter?

31 responses



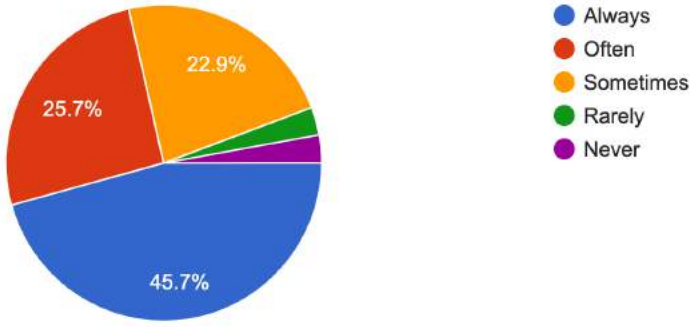
3.7 If you have a water meter, how frequently do you read it?

26 responses



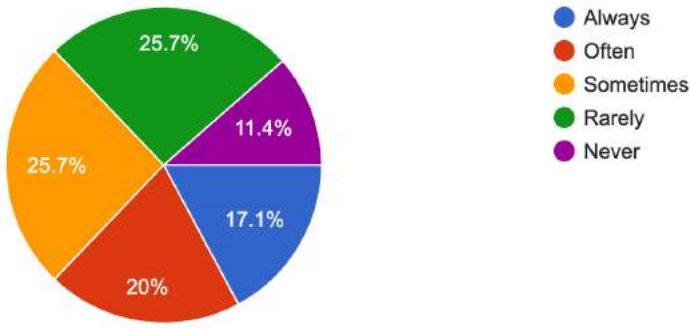
3.8 Do you consider energy consumption when buying new equipment/appliances?

35 responses



3.9 Do you consider water consumption when buying new equipment/appliances?

35 responses



3.10 Please provide details of any other significant changes you have made to your business to improve sustainability/efficiency.

15 responses

use of environmentally sustainable building materials

Reduced use of plastics

Our water comes from our own spring so we do not have a meter

Closing the seasonal caravan site as costs have risen to the point where profits have reduced significantly enough to lead to change

First UK inbound operator to provide carbon labels on all group tours, published first annual carbon impact report this year, on the journey toward becoming B Corp certified

We have installed an electric vehicle charger for guests use and upgraded our solar panels

Highlighting more local venues and activities ; ground source heat pump

We collect and reuse all our grey water. We collect all our rainwater for watering our plants. Solar panels on our main cabin and for all lighting and phone charging.

using ethical and local suppliers where possible - food/kit and equipment

I don't feel I can, I don't make anything I use the service of others.

Un-mown grass areas; timers; wool duvets ; unironed linen bed linen ;

No

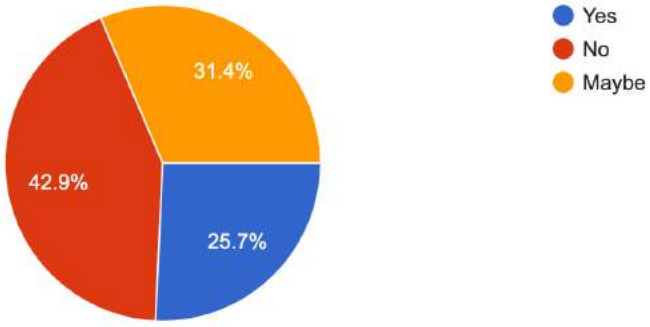
We have stopped selling plastic bottles in the cafe. Switched from sauce sachets to pumps to reduce plastic waste.

My office, van and dog areas are insulated with sheep fleece. I have planted almost 400 wildlife encouraging tress on our land. I use locally sourced products where possible. We grow our fields naturally, no fertiliser. We have a sustainable arrangement with a local farmer who cuts our grass once a year to make hay for his sheep in winter. The Hay is moved 1/4 mile to a storage barn ready for winter. He pays us per bale! Our water is sourced from a mountain well. Straw dog bedding is produced locally, when the dogs have finished with it, it is recycled and used for our chickens, when the chickens have finished with it we use is (fertilised with chicken poop) as mulch on the trees we have planted.

Reduced single use packaging

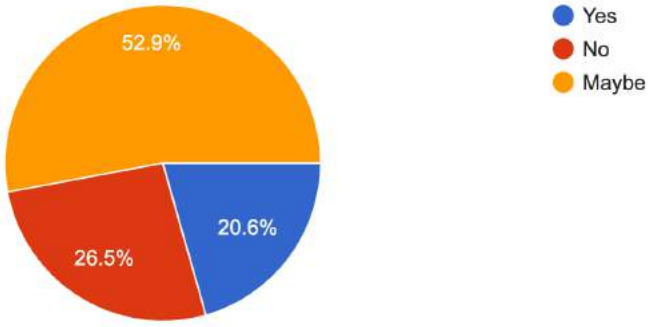
4.1 Do you believe that your environmental performance influences visitors to book/not book with you?

35 responses



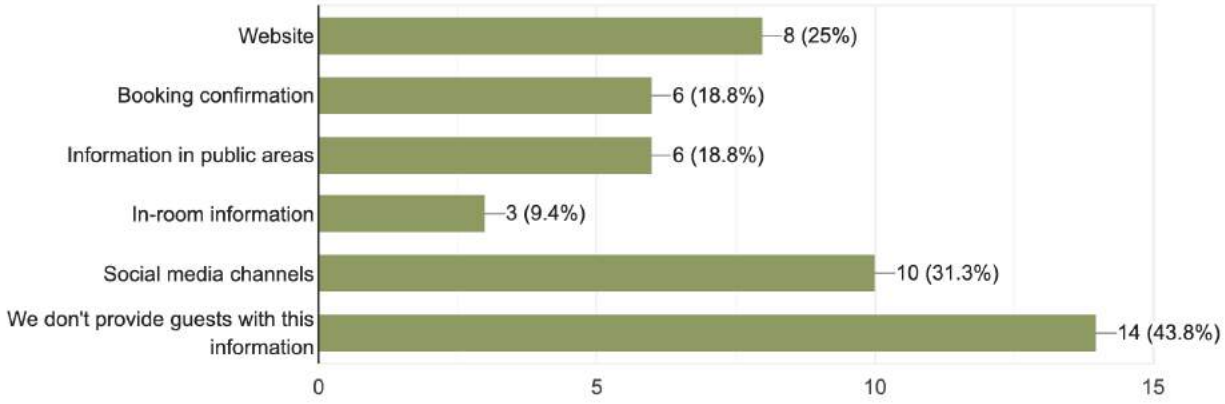
4.2 Do you believe that environmental sustainability is important to your guests/customers during their stay/visit?

34 responses



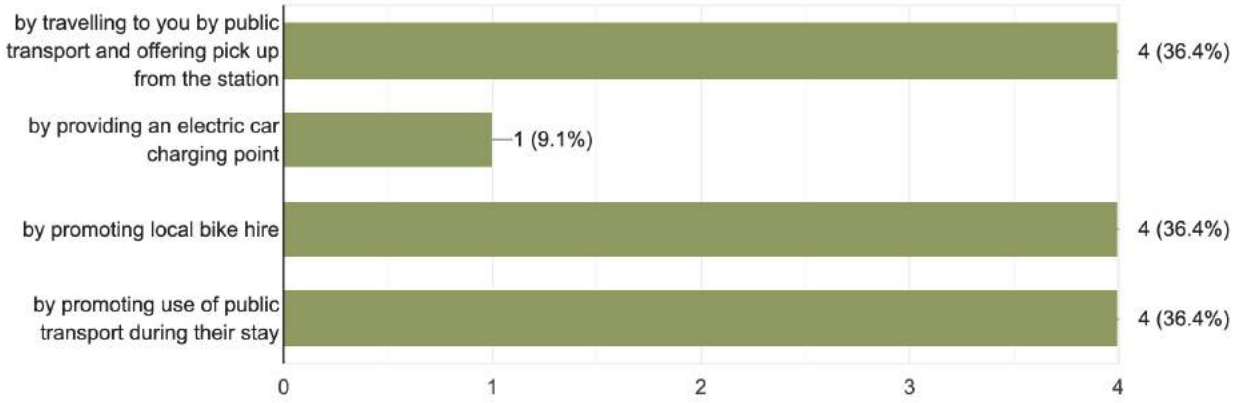
4.3 Do you provide your guests with information about your environmental/sustainability performance? (please tick all that apply)

32 responses



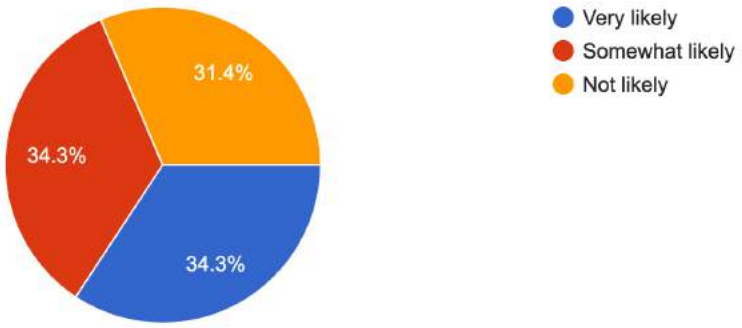
4.4 Do you encourage guests to minimise their petrol/diesel consumption ...(Please tick all that apply)

11 responses



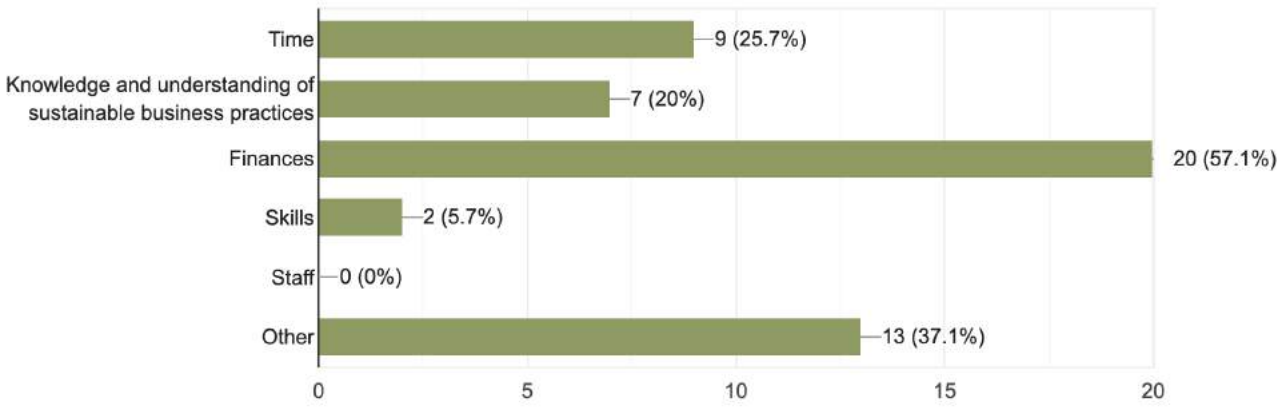
5.1 How likely are you to make changes to improve the efficiency of your business in the next year?

35 responses



5.2 What prevents you from improving the sustainability of your business? (please tick all that apply)

35 responses



5.3 If other, please provide details

17 responses

time

listed building and location

we already do

Our partner suppliers are the biggest drawback - we need our suppliers to complete our carbon assessment form each year and to make changes within their business, such as moving to a renewable energy provider. Simple changes like that would make a huge difference to our carbon footprint

Grade 2* listed building - construction/alterations fully environmentally-friendly products/methods, very limited possiblity of further changes

Potentially having to pay 4 x council tax for holiday accommodation if we don't reach the 182 day let threshold. This money would have been used to invest in car charging units and more. At the moment we can't invest as we don't know if we will survive the possible tax changes.

not possible

We are a small 5 van site so do not have huge financial resources . There is no public transport to our area so guests have to use their own transport. We already use ecologically friendly cleaning products. We insist on environmentally products being used by guests (eco toilet fluids). We maintain wild verges on the site, whilst still maintaining an attractive area. We don't have mains gas, so have to use bottle gas for heating water on site. We pay for a recycling company to remove waste from site.

where do get the info, who do you buy it off?

Getting timing right with rapidly changing technology;

Rural village so have to use a car to be a tour guide.

Cost

Grade 2 listed building which cannot be double glazed, cavity filled etc

There is no financial support for my household to improve the environmental efficiency of either the cottage or campsite. We do not have the financial resources to fund this ourselves and we are not taking additional borrowing to fulfil that improvement.

No public bus service in the area

external barriers - poor ev charging network in rural areas, awful public transport, poor cycle route network

The uncertainty of the Welsh Government's policy regarding 182 days of accommodation and therefore the possibility of getting 4 x council tax which comes to around £8000. It is an uncertain time. If full grants were available I will invest. (Google Translate)

5.4 Where do you/would you look for further information/advice on sustainable business practices?

20 responses

Internet

google

Online

Google...

Everywhere! We work with carbon consultancy ecollective but we also read a lot of travel media and other information sources to keep on top of the latest sustainability initiatives, trends and technology

Internet searches; visit wales ;

DCC, Cadwyn Clwyd, Farming Connect.

Internet

North Wales Tourism. Welsh Government

Other similar businesses - what are they doing

Haven't a clue where to look

Business forums ; competition

Google websites

Not Interested

Social media

Google / business wales

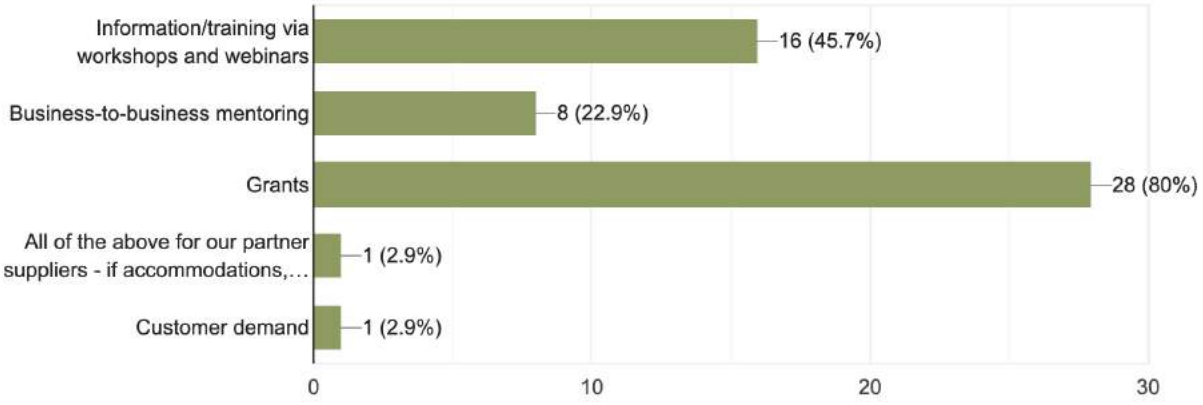
I dont really look I just do what I can and what feels right.

Wales gov. Com

I had a course with Farming Connect. Search the web. (Google Translate)

5.5 What form of support would help your business to become more sustainable? (please tick all that apply)

35 responses



5.6 If you answered 'other' to the previous question, please give details

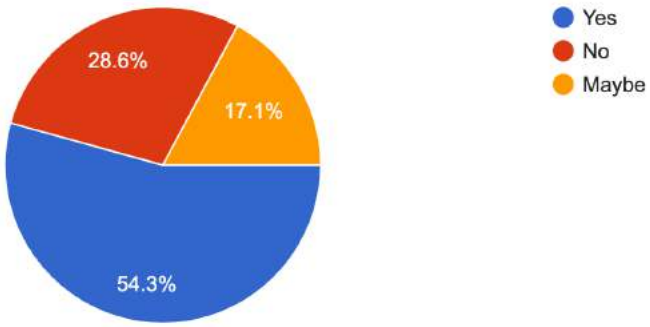
2 responses

All of the above for our partner suppliers - if accommodations, eateries and transport providers became more aware and took more action, it would have a hugely positive impact on our tours

Customer demand

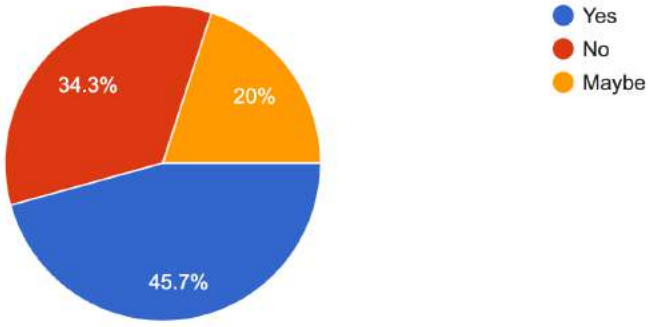
6.1 Are there some aspects of your business activities (eg. social media, marketing, accounts, procurement etc.) that you don't have time to address adequately?

35 responses



6.2 Are there some aspects of your business management activities that you feel you have insufficient skills to deliver properly?

35 responses



6.3 Which aspects of your business activities would you like to devote more staff time to/require additional skills to address?

25 responses

Marketing
Social media
keeping up with new legislation and licencing
marketing/social media
Social media and book keeping
Marketing
Social media
accounts
More time for sales generation
marketing, social media
Social media ; accounts ; marketing
Website. Green energy, marketing.
Brand and marketing
booking system
How to be sustainable (that doesn't include solar panels) accounting, finances, tax info, investment info - accountants seem to work for HMRC now a days.
Cleaning
No time for social media, but have an up to date and modern website which works
Advertising
None
Social media, video creation, strategic thinking
Social Media, Marketing and promotion
marketing
Operate more effectively and green. Advertising (Google Translate)

6.4 What are the barriers to you employing additional staff to undertake the activities you have insufficient time/skills to deliver? (For example, lack of skilled applicants, unable to provide sufficient hours, cost etc)

26 responses

Cost

all of the above....distance away from a volume of potential staff

previous poor service not economically viable

Lack of recommendations

Finance

Ignorance and worried about how to employ people, help/ advise would be good

Finances

Lack of finance to support more staff

The economy is not stable and clearly moving into recession so I am reluctant to expand

cost

Cost.

hours to offer and cost - looked at a VA service

Skill set, and the training time needed to skill staff up to a level to deliver well.

There's no one that wants a full time job!

I do offer tour guide jobs to fellow guides if I can't do it but this is ad hoc and don't need additional staff

Unable to provide sufficient hours and cost

Unable to provide sufficent hours, costs etc...

None

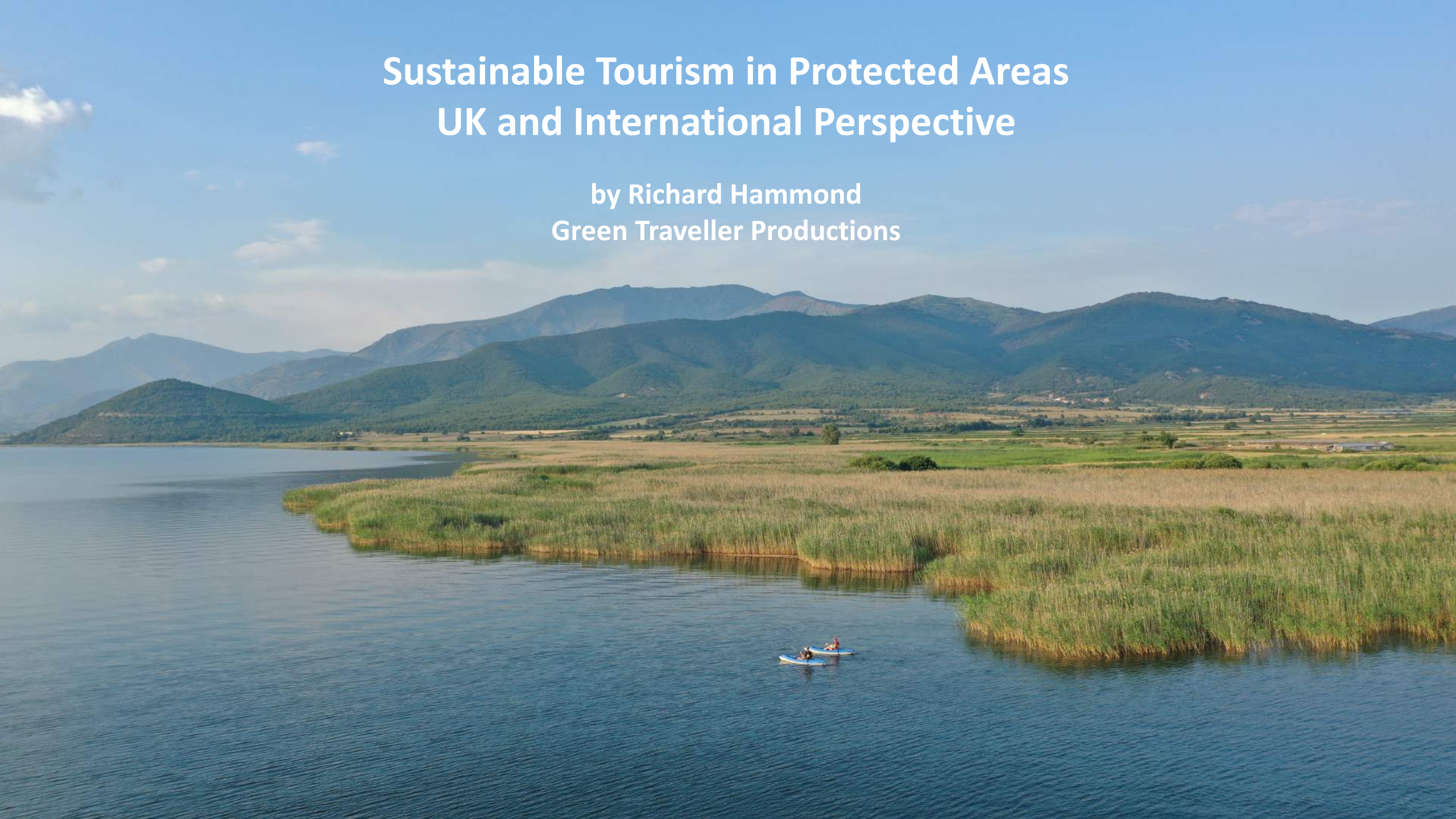
Funds

sufficient hours

Administration

Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas
UK and International Perspective

by Richard Hammond
Green Traveller Productions





- **What is Sustainable Tourism and Why is it important?**
- **The Opportunity for Protected Areas**
- **Case Studies**

What is Sustainable Tourism and Why is it important?



Sustainable tourism is about travelling in a way that is sensitive to the climate and nature emergencies while ensuring that the well-being of the places we visit gain long-term benefit from us travelling there.

“Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education”

The International Ecotourism Society


Glasgow Declaration
Climate Action in Tourism

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





The Opportunity for Protected Areas

Booking.com’s Sustainable Travel Report 2022, which surveyed 30,000 travellers across 32 countries and territories, indicates that travellers are selecting planet-first options and looking to brands for sustainable choices and more purposeful travel

“Sustainable travel is no longer the ambition of the few but of the many.”

The Price of Sustainable Travel

- Nearly 70% of consumers are willing to sacrifice some element of convenience in order to travel more sustainably.
- Nearly 3 in 4 travelers would choose a destination, lodging, or transportation option that supports the local community and culture, even if it was more expensive.

Opportunities in Sustainable Travel

- Half of travelers want to see more sustainability information from destinations, tourism boards, or visitor resource groups.
- Recommendations for locally owned businesses and restaurants and transportation options that have lower environmental impact is the leading type of sustainable travel information consumers want to see when planning a trip.

Key Takeaways

- Travel brands should make sustainable travel information easier to understand and show the value and impact of responsible travel choices.
- Travelers want to know that travel brands are committed to sustainability, not just checking a box.

Data from Sustainable Travel study April 2022, Expedia Group Media Solutions

Best practice Case Studies of Sustainable Travel

Car-free Travel
Dark Skies
Joined-up Itineraries
Public-Private Partnerships
& The Power of Networks

eco escapes

ITINERARIES FIND OUT MORE DISCOVER: BOWLAND ARNSIDE AND SILVERDALE






EXPLORE LANCASHIRE'S OUTSTANDING NATURAL LANDSCAPES

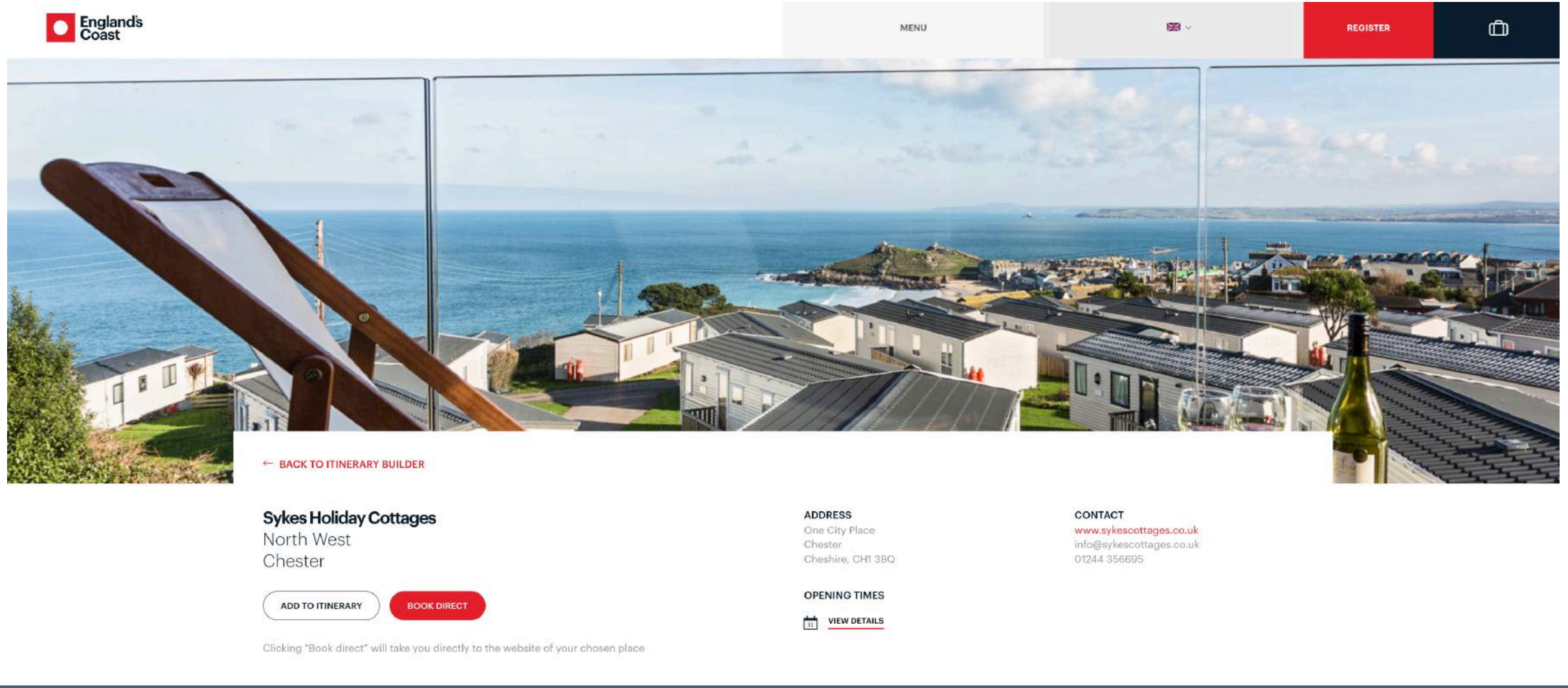
The New Forest Tour



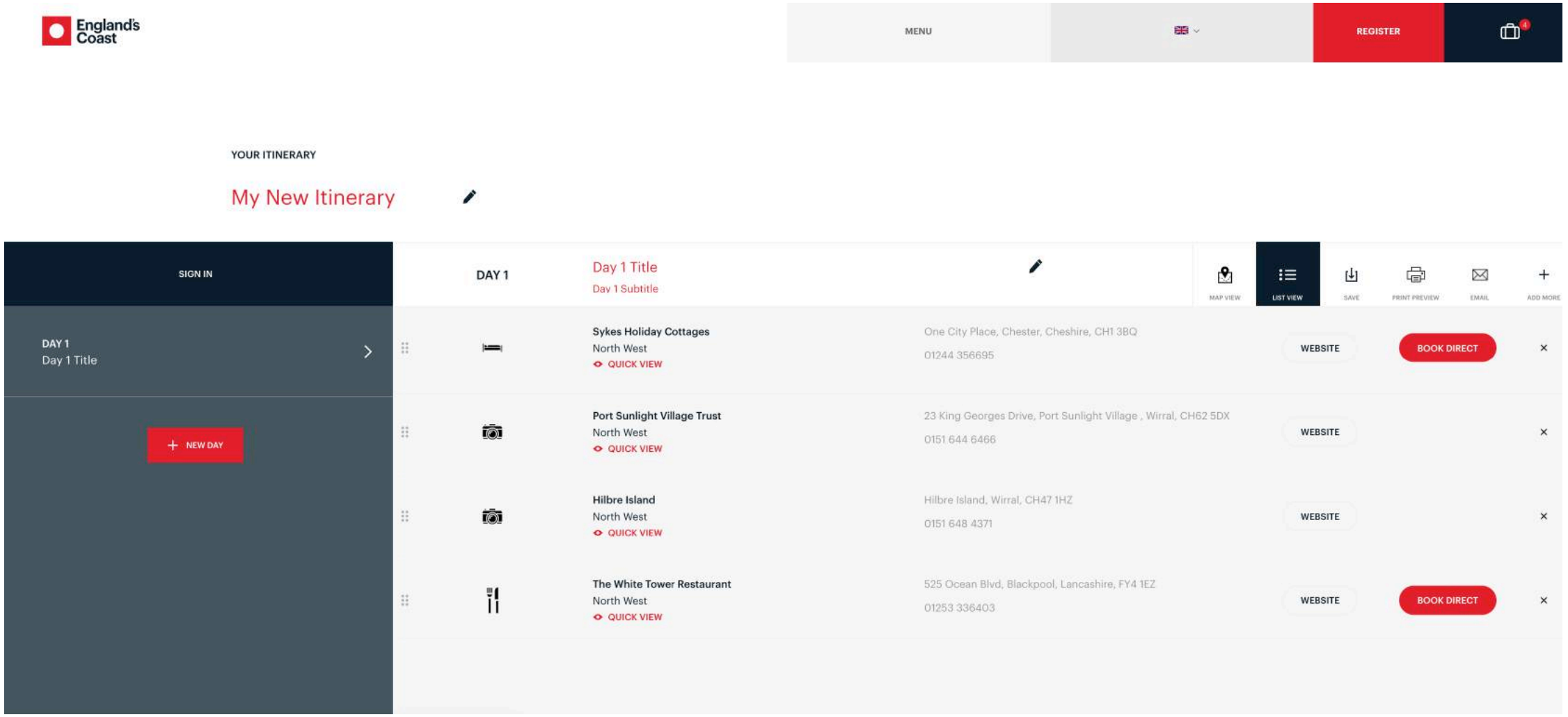




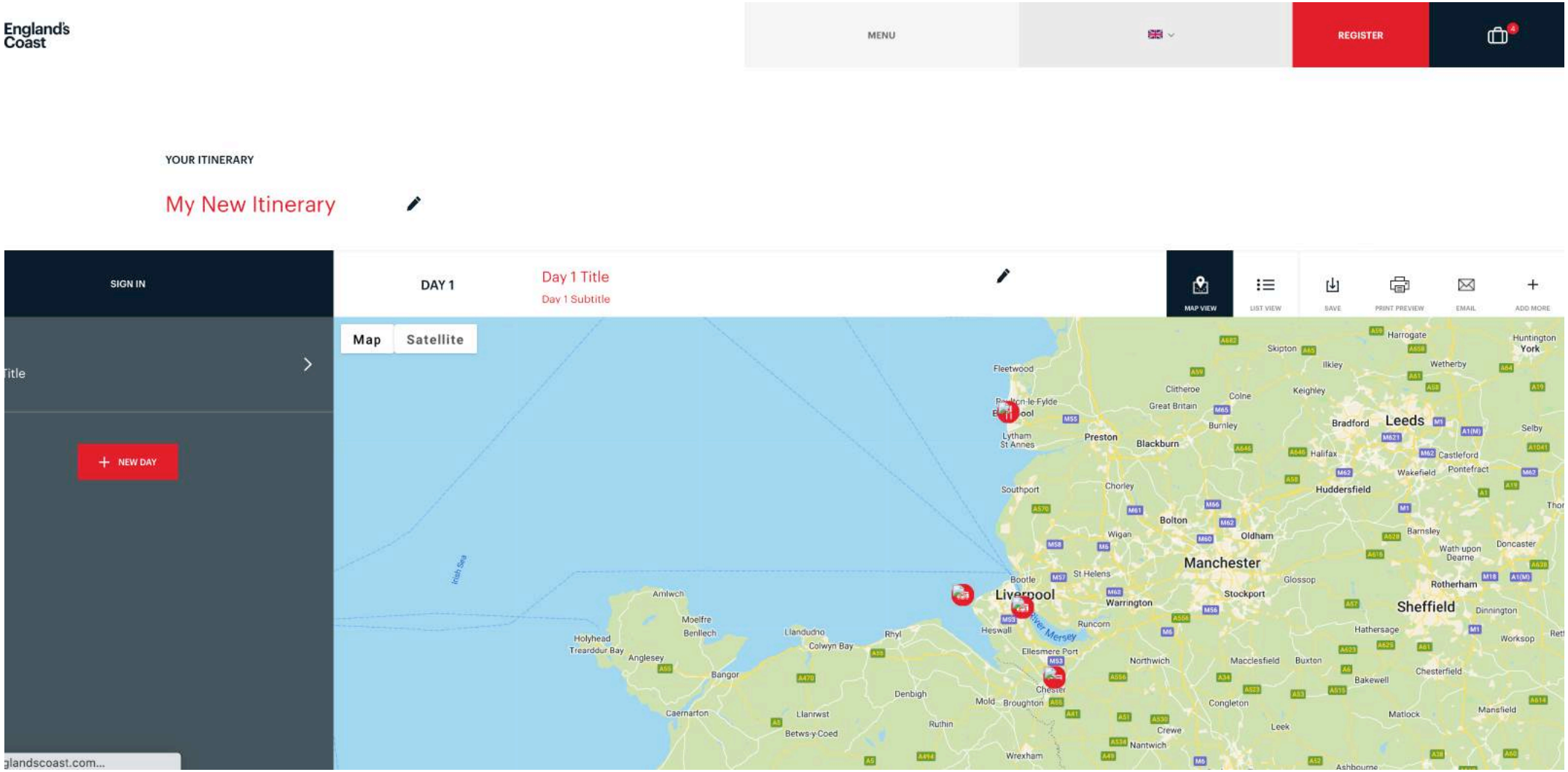
England’s Coast
‘Create an Itinerary’



England’s Coast
‘Create an Itinerary’

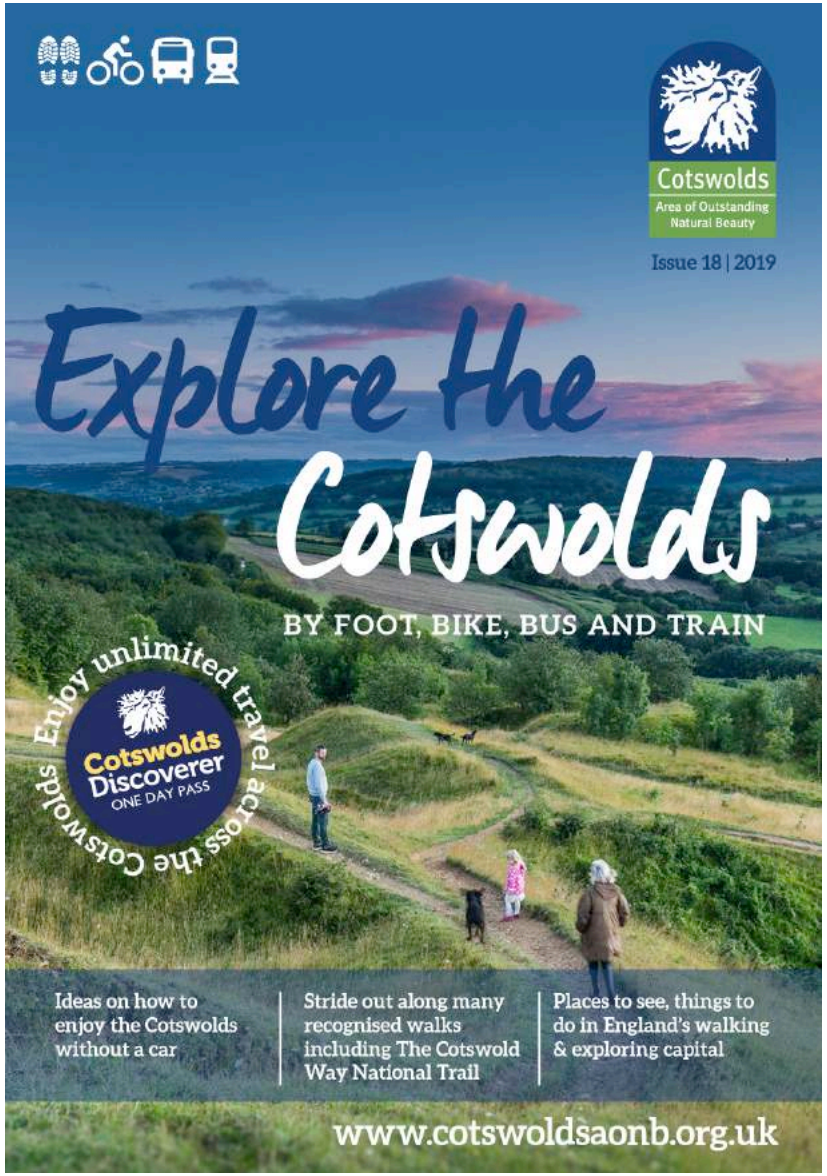


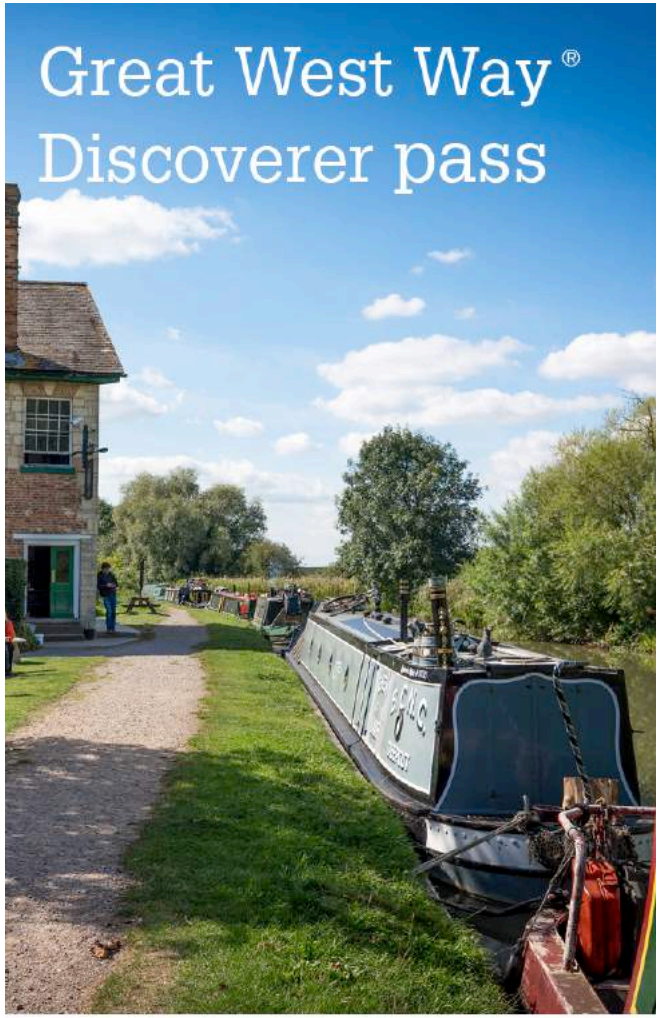
England’s Coast
‘Create an Itinerary’



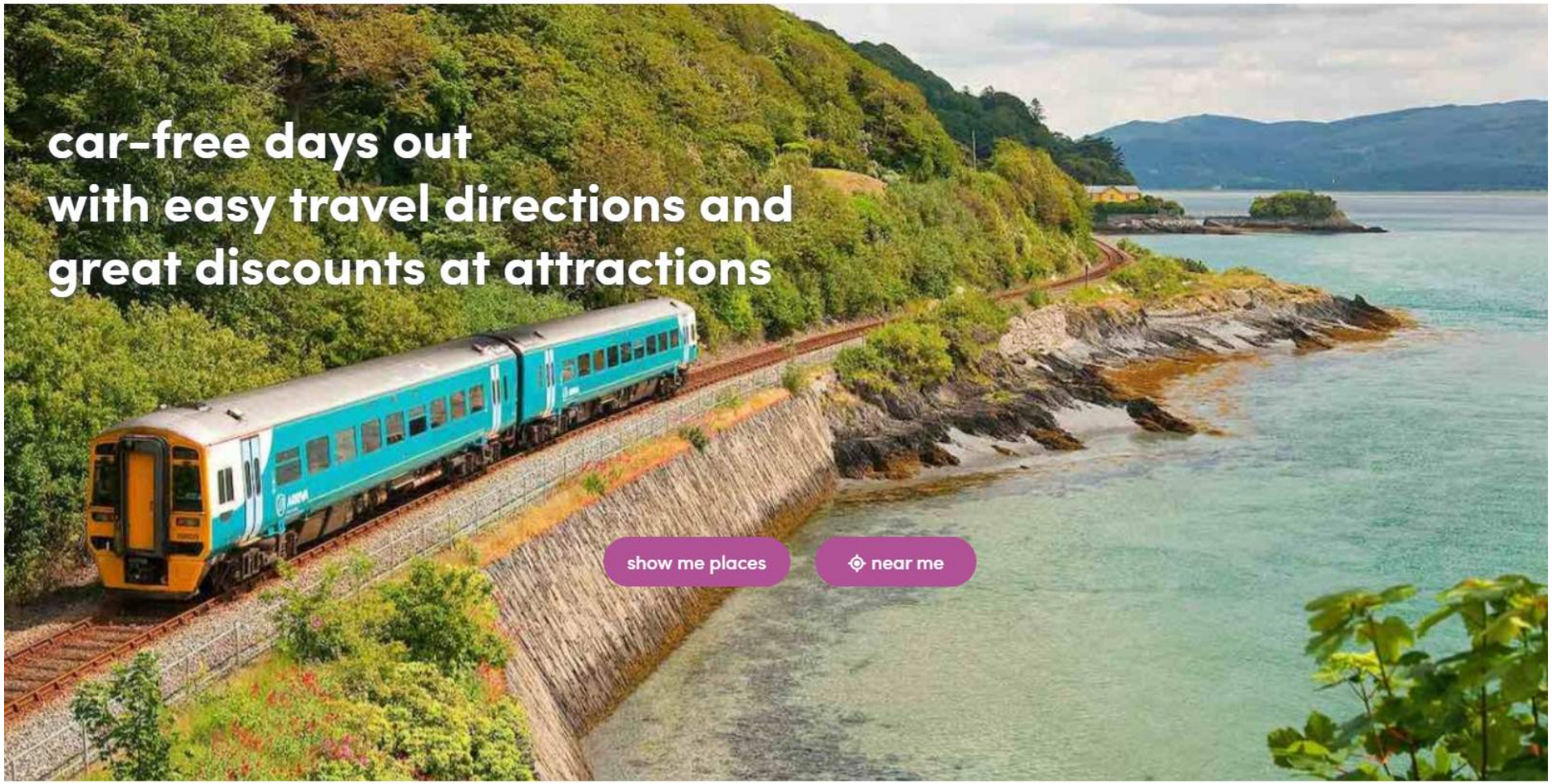


Swiss Travel Pass





GREAT WEST WAY®



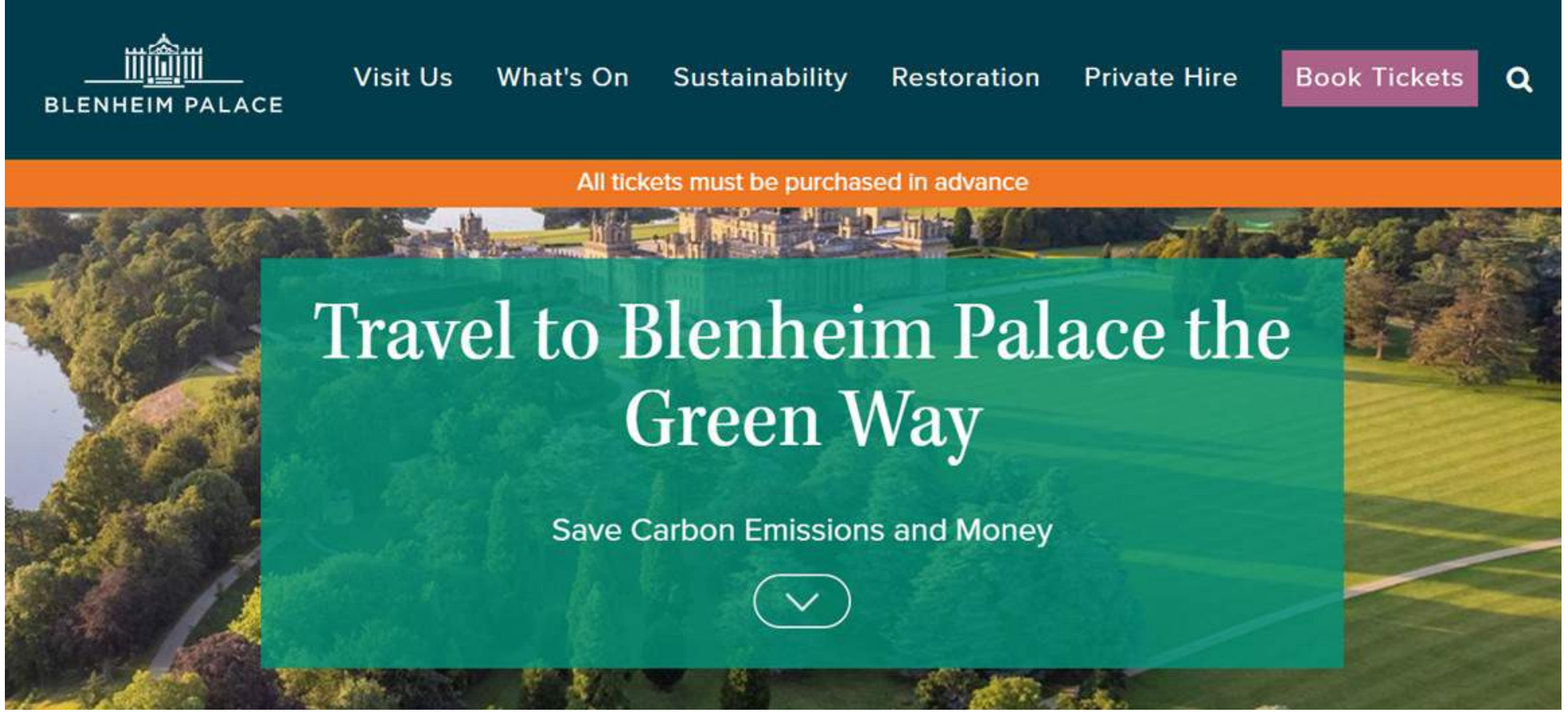
goodjourney.org.uk covers over 200 attractions –
from Jupiter Artland in Scotland to The Eden Project



Providing easy travel info and discounts of up to 50% for car-free visitors

Opening up access for the 24% of UK households without a car

Taking over 100,000 car journeys a year off the road



Blenheim Place have increased car-free visitors from 5000 to 30000 a year, since joining Good Journey.

They now aim to get 50% of all visitors arriving by low carbon travel by 2027.

Dark Skies



Photo: Chris Willan

RESEARCH INTO THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF DARK SKY TOURISM



As one of England's most rural areas, Northumberland enjoys some of the darkest skies in the country. In December 2013 The International Dark-Sky Association (IDSA) awarded International Dark Sky Park status to the combined areas of Kielder Water & Forest Park and Northumberland National Park.

Research was carried out during 2018, including a survey of businesses, to establish the impact of Dark Sky Tourism in Northumberland during 2017.

Over £25million economic benefit

supports 450 jobs

BUSINESS INVESTMENT

13% who had invested in their business in the last 10 years did so partly or solely due to dark skies

BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

15% reported an increase in business performance as a result of dark skies

KIELDER OBSERVATORY

estimated to bring over **£1m** of expenditure into the region

> The increase in the visitors that we have in the winter means that we can keep the staff we have all year round
>
> Northumberland Business Owner

Exmoor National Park

First International Dark sky reserve to be designated in Europe (2nd in world) in 2011 – development of the idea stemmed form UN Year of Astronomy (2009) and evidence that Exmoor's skies were not only some of the darkest and have *relatively* more cloud free nights than other areas of the UK.
Since then they've sought to further protect and enhance their dark skies as well as engaging people in them.

- Dark skies festival now in its 6th year with approx. 5,000 attending over 50 events throughout 3 weeks in October.
- New Dark Sky discovery Trail launched last year
- Dark Sky Hub hosted within local hospitality business plus new discovery hub coming soon at Wimbleball
- Pocket Guide aimed at entry level
- Astronomers Pack aimed at more experienced astronomers
- Hardback book published
- Telescope hire through National Park centres
- Dark Sky Friendly business Scheme launched

They've seen those attracted to Exmoor by its dark skies has risen from 11% in 2012 to 25% in 2021

Most of this is overnight stays in the shoulder seasons. So good for the economy, minimal impact, engaging people in nature

Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas in the Mediterranean





“Let us re-introduce you to the Mediterranean”

Tell me and I will forget;
Show me and I may remember;
Involve me and I will understand.

Chinese proverb

- The MEET Network offers a range of itineraries designed to harness tourism in a way which contributes to the critical conservation of protected areas and local cultures.

- Each park has collaborated over several years with a team of local travel suppliers to design and refine the products.





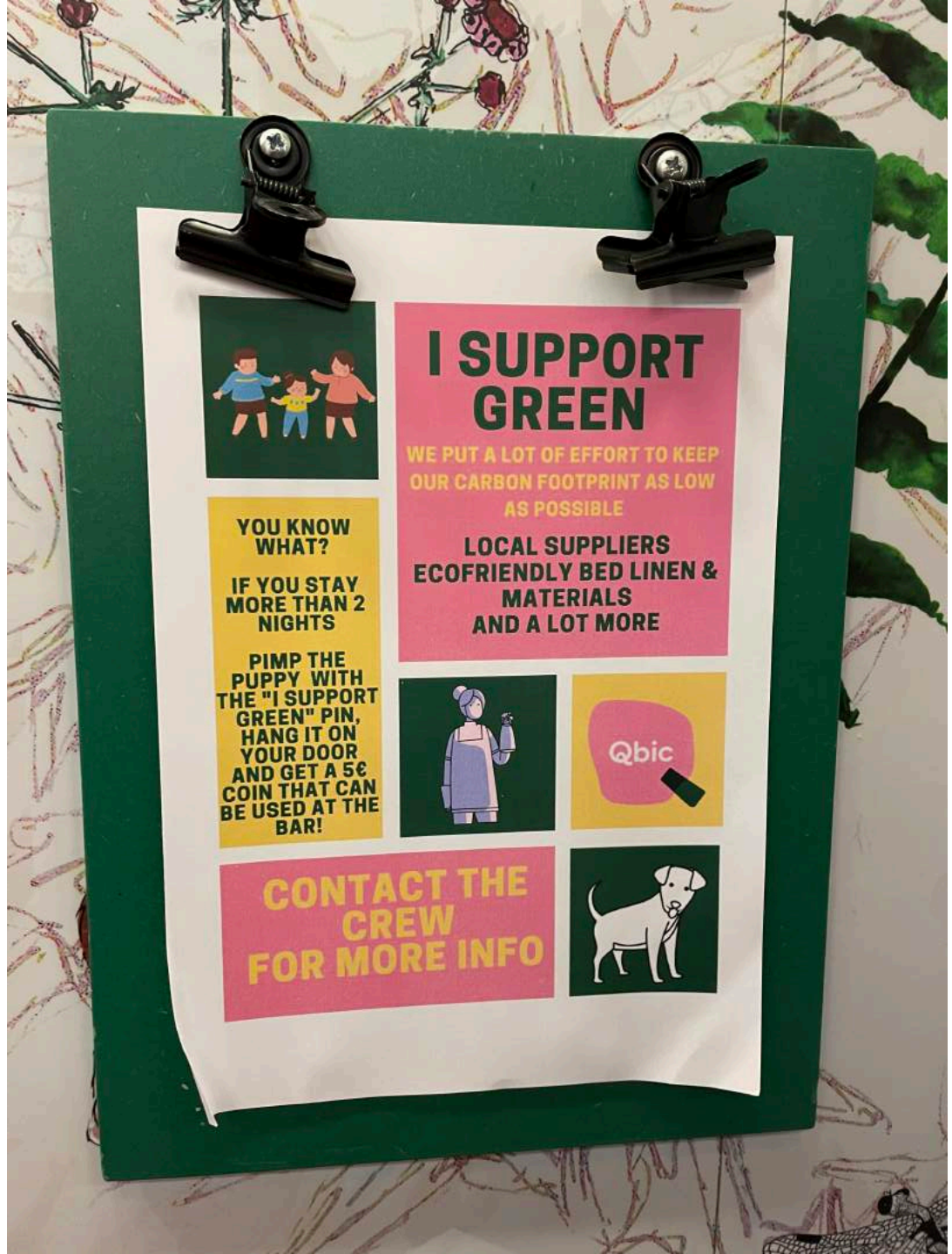
MEET's Carbon Calculator for itineraries in protected areas

The calculator is an industry-specific online tool that helps protected areas and tour operators to assess and manage the sustainability of the packages they offer. The assessment takes into account the combined ecological footprint of food and drinks, accommodation, activities and services.

Xavier Font's Video on 'Six Financial Benefits of Good Sustainability Marketing'

>> TrainingAid.org

Reduce	Reduce costs
Attract	Attract more customers
Improve	Improve your customer satisfaction
Increase	Increase your customer expenditure
Increase	Increase customer loyalty
Reduce	Reduce seasonality


I SUPPORT GREEN
WE PUT A LOT OF EFFORT TO KEEP OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT AS LOW AS POSSIBLE
LOCAL SUPPLIERS
ECOFRIENDLY BED LINEN & MATERIALS
AND A LOT MORE
YOU KNOW WHAT?
IF YOU STAY MORE THAN 2 NIGHTS
PIMP THE PUPPY WITH THE "I SUPPORT GREEN" PIN, HANG IT ON YOUR DOOR AND GET A 5€ COIN THAT CAN BE USED AT THE BAR!
Qbic
CONTACT THE CREW FOR MORE INFO

richard@greentraveller.com

greentraveller
productions
words | pictures | films

www.greentraveller.com

Woodfire Camping & South Downs National Park

Sustaining Rural Tourism in Denbighshire

28th September 2022

INTRO





WHAT IS WOODFIRE?

- Accessible, comfortable camping (not glamping), combining affordable accommodation with delicious food
- Based on:
  - our nostalgic 1970s memories of camping (but comfortable!)
  - an established agri-tourism model from Italy
  - village feasts in France
  - sense of communal, shared responsibility
- Not an “eco-campsite,” but we don’t leave a trace
- A conduit to the South Downs National Park and its amazing landscapes, farms and producers

AGRITURISMO MODEL

- Italy in 1950s was suffering from urbanisation
- Skills, knowledge and culture were being lost as young people left the countryside
- Italian government developed financial incentives to attract tourists to the countryside
- All produce comes from the single farm
- How to replicate this in the UK?

MATCHING OUR IDEAS TO THE LOCAL PLAN

- Understanding the SDNP plan and the local plan
- National Park is one of several different authorities – understand their plans too
- Alignment with the National Park brand gave us credibility and a shared identity
- By focussing on sustainability we encourage guests to act responsibly, not just for recycling
- Our role as a conduit – we exist to complement the surrounding countryside
- Develop a centre of excellence based on what is being produced nearby and so we are rooted in place

SUSTAINABILITY ISN'T A FEATURE

- Intrinsic throughout everything we do – don't run in parallel
- Helped us justify our business plan to the different authorities
- Waste management
- Water management
- Energy sources
- Building materials
- Processes
- Procurement
- Network of local tradespeople, farmers and businesses

CLIVE, ENVIRONMENT AGENCY & POO BINS

Environment Agency



WOODFIRE CAMPING

CHALLENGES

- Environment Agency are regulatory, not advisory
- Feels overwhelming
- Inadequate services for rural waste collection
- Much cheaper to get it right first time rather than adapt
- Guests are on holiday and don’t need a lecture
- Too many rules mean that the message gets lost
- Train staff not to cut corners

Key learnings from the last 4 years

- Aligning our plan to the National Park made life so much easier
- Someone else has done it before, so learn from them
- Network of food and accommodation providers has created a destination for specific towns/markets that we can all target
- Plenty of tradespeople who are passionate about sustainable approach
- Sustainability pays for itself