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Sustainable Visitor Travel



- What is it?
- Why is it important?
- Natural England's 'Vision'.
- What are Natural England doing?



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What is sustainable visitor travel?

- all travel to, from and within the natural environment by visitors (day or longer)
- usually by modes other than the car
- low carbon/high health forms of transport.



Why Important

- 25% of households in Britain have no access to a car.
- Health
 - obesity/heart disease
 - the importance of the natural environment for physical and mental health and well-being.
- Impact of road traffic on the natural environment
- UK carbon reduction targets



Impact upon the Natural Environment



- High levels of visitor traffic and congestion can alter fundamental qualities of the countryside, such as tranquillity, views, 'getting away from it' experience.
- Impacts include:
 - Light pollution
 - Noise
 - Visual intrusion
 - Increased parking
 - Roadside clutter – (signage, advertising)
 - Air pollution – carbon and other emissions
 - Road danger



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Result of the impact on the Natural Environment

- Visitors view traffic as greatest threat to qualities of the countryside (North York Moors NP)
- Impact upon the sense of place, the character of the landscape and its quality
- Impact on peoples' levels of enjoyment of the countryside and on whether they choose to return



Our Vision – Modal Shift

- More visitors using alternatives to the car or, using the car less.
- Travel to become more enjoyable as an experience in its own right.
- A wider recognition at all levels of the social, environmental and economic benefits.



How?

- reduce the need to travel
 - creating natural green space close to where people live (green infrastructure)
- increasing use of rail and public transport for longer journeys to get there and back.
- increasing use of 'slow' modes for travel at destination eg walking, cycling, horse riding, boating.
- encouraging protected areas to become exemplars of sustainable transport networks.



sustainable visitor travel.



What are the benefits?

- Health and quality of life benefits
 - walking and cycling improves mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- Social justice
 - the opportunity of access for all
- Economic benefits
 - mainstay of the rural economy



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Delivering the 'Vision', a partnership



Priority - higher profile for sustainable visitor travel

- leadership, and resources from central, regional and local government
- integration between, health, business, tourism
- greater engagement from the tourism sector in the promotion of alternative travel modes



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Partnership Priorities should include

- Better infrastructure close to where people live
- Greater encouragement to leave cars at home
- Properly integrated public transport that puts sustainable leisure travel at its heart
- More emphasis in key policy documents (eg Regional and Local Transport Plans)
- Higher priority to visitor travel planning
- A shift in the information, promotion and marketing of visitor attractions to sustainable modes



What are we doing?

- Research & gathering evidence
 - Commission
 - Disseminate
- Partnership
 - Establish a 'Visitor travel Network'
 - Conferences, seminars, briefings
 - Sharing good practice
- Demonstration
 - Improving access to our own sites
- Business travel policy
 - Commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 50% by 2010

Champion



- Policy and Influencing
 - Challenging transport policy
 - Department for Transport
 - Local Transport Plans



Research/evidence – What are we doing?



- Priority: the impact of visitor/leisure travel upon natural environment is under-researched
- New survey commissioned, 'Monitor of Engagement with Natural Environment'
 - Capture information on visitor travel
- Commissioned research:
 - Impacts of the benefits of visitor travel – case studies
 - Good practice case studies
 - Guidance on visitor travel plans
 - North West 'What Makes you Move?' (later presentation)

Demonstration – what are we doing?

- Travel Plans for all National Nature Reserves
- Implementation of projects to improve access

Examples in the North

- Yorkshire & Humber
 - Yorkshire Dales & Humber Peatlands
 - South Pennines
- North West
 - West Cumbria Coast

Examples from elsewhere

- Visit Suffolk by Rail and Bus

Summary



- Natural England will champion sustainable 'visitor' travel
- encourage modal shift so that more visitors are using alternatives to the car, or more visitors using the car less.
- higher profile for sustainable visitor travel through leadership, and resources from central, regional and local government (eg through LTP3).
- greater engagement from the tourism sector in the promotion of alternative travel modes
- greater synergy between sustainable tourism, transport, rural economies, green infrastructure, health and climate change to deliver multiple benefits across the sectors.