

# sustainable tourism

## COOPERATION WINS BENEFITS FOR ALL



New signage at Bowlees visitor centre

Tourism is a key sector in the West Durham economy. Its attraction for visitors comes not from one individual asset, but rather from a combination of various factors. This includes its unique landscape, archaeology, history, geology, ecology and culture. Hence a multitude of people contribute to the tourism offer in the area. In order for these many players to make the most of the economic opportunities offered by its tourism industry, it is important that they have a strong brand to work with, and one which is seen as usable by all. It is also important that they are well informed on the individual aspects which make the region special.

### Actions

A lack of awareness of West Durham as a visitor destination was identified and Pathfinder informed and influenced activity to investigate the feasibility of creating a brand identity for the area, in this case, "Durham Dales". A workshop involving public and private partners was held in late 2005 which approved test marketing of the brand.

"Know Your North Pennines" (KYNP) is a training project aimed at all those operating in tourism within the area who have face to face contact with visitors to the region including accommodation providers, the staff of visitor attractions and tourist information centres and blue badge guides. A partnership of businesses, together with support from the North Pennines AONB team and Killhope, the north of England Lead Mining Museum Know Your North Pennines. It provides knowledge based training opportunities.

For KYNP, Pathfinder funding has enabled them to roll out this training programme to a wider audience.

This improves the knowledge base of those working in the tourism industry. Better knowledge and understanding of the significance of the natural environment assets has helped the businesses to enhance their tourism offer. The project has done much to improve inter-industry networking, links and cooperation, not only between businesses but also across the different sectors.

“ Having taken part in the training programme the KYNP website provides our staff with the opportunity to keep involved and revisit topics and issues we've discussed on the course ”  
David Heatherington,  
curator, Weardale  
Museum

### Activities

#### Durham Dales as a tourist destination

A series of publicity materials were produced including a visitor guide, an accommodation guide, walking and cycle guides and a guide for tour operators in addition to the development of a Durham Dales web site [www.durhamdales.co.uk](http://www.durhamdales.co.uk). A launch event was held at Auckland Castle, Bishop Auckland, in March 2006 to raise awareness of the brand.

#### Know Your North Pennines – a blueprint for others

Since May 2007 KYNP has developed a web site aimed at tourism operators:

[www.knowyournorthpennines.org.uk](http://www.knowyournorthpennines.org.uk)

On it appear details of the current series of training sessions. Twilight sessions held over the summer were specifically designed to suit the needs of busy people running tourist businesses, hence those sessions operated mainly in the evenings. Speakers for all training days were carefully chosen for their engaging presentations. Full evaluation of each session was carried out and analysed. The web site also hosts a newsletter and other useful information. Know Your North Pennines was presented at an international conference of European Geoparks in Scotland in September as a model of best practice.

#### Bowlees – an example of cooperation in action

At Bowlees in Teesdale the Visitor Centre is run by Durham Wildlife Trust, the car park managed by Durham County Council, and the main visitor walking routes cross land belonging to several privately owned estates including Strathmore and Raby. Natural England actively manages Moor House, Upper Teesdale, England's largest National Nature Reserve. Enhancing the role of Bow Lees visitor centre as a stepping stone to this gem of nature is desirable. In an effort to improve cooperation between parties and maximise business opportunities, all have been working together more closely. Signage in the immediate locality of the centre has been improved.

The Visitor Centre has been given a face lift, and a local business now provides food for sale in the on-site café.



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## Next steps and Results

### Durham Dales

In 2006 the visitor spend in the Durham Dales area increased by three per cent and visitor numbers rose by two per cent. A further evaluation of the test marketing is due shortly. By now, about 2,000 businesses are taking part in the Durham Dales branding campaign and links with the Area Tourism Partnership brand development will be further strengthened.

### KYNP

Some 35 students have signed up for the training programme. A new session of five training sessions started in October. The project's steering group has been approached by tourism representatives in other areas keen to replicate the KYNP approach. The newsletter continues to prove a useful tool. The KYNP steering group hopes to identify funding to continue the training programme beyond the current time frame.

### Bowlees

Co operation between all sectors continues to improve, and the positive visitor comments and improved turnover suggest this has been a positive venture. It is hoped to continue this inter sector liaison with a view to stimulating the creation of new innovative ideas. The aim is to expand the remit of the centre from an information point into a place where people actively seek to go and from which numerous activities radiate.



For more information on action learning please contact the chair of the West Durham Rural Pathfinder, Bryan Rees, on 0191 202 3669 or email [bryan.rees@gone.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:bryan.rees@gone.gsi.gov.uk) or visit [www.westdurhampathfinder.com](http://www.westdurhampathfinder.com).

“ The visitor guide and cycling guide are very popular with the customers coming into the centre. Overall I think they do a very good job of promoting the area. Gemma Bateman, Durham Tourist Information Centre. ”



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