Rural Transport Learning Network Roundtables 2023-24

Roundtable 3: Leisure and Tourism 12 December 2023

Summary

This report summarises the third in a series of roundtable discussions in 2023/24 commissioned and sponsored by Transport East[1] for the Rural Transport Learning Network and organised by the Smart Mobility Unit at the University of Hertfordshire.

The series builds on earlier roundtables hosted by the University of Hertfordshire between 2020 and 2022 to address the shortage of research and policy on transport outside cities and in rural areas.

The format for this roundtable was a two hour online meeting via Microsoft Teams and consisted of presentations by speakers followed by questions and discussion, both verbally and via the chat function.

The theme for this roundtable was the future of transport for leisure and tourism outside cities in rural areas. Topics considered were:

- What are the lessons from these and other initiatives to promote sustainable tourism in rural areas?
- What are the opportunities, benefits and barriers for less car-based tourism and leisure travel and access?
- Ways forward for local authorities, tourism and leisure groups, transport operators and bodies such as National Parks in promoting less car-based tourism.

There were 29 participants. Sectors represented were: sub-national and local government, technology/innovation, transport consultancy, academic research, non-governmental organisations, statutory bodies, visitor attractions and destination management organisations. Stephen Joseph chaired the discussion. The meeting heard from four speakers with expertise in transport for leisure outside cities. Three of these had a primary focus on making leisure and tourism travel more sustainable. The fourth represented an organisation involved in community engagement with the rail sector whose work results in behaviour change for sustainable travel. Participants responded with questions and comments and discussion followed.

1. **Alistair Kirkbride, consultant,** made the case for the right governance structures and empowered local leadership to decarbonise transport for leisure in rural areas. Visitor travel can be broken down into six main components. Travel to the destination has the largest carbon impact and is the hardest component to tackle. Best practice for 'within destination' travel can be found overseas, including the Austrian and Swiss Alps. With the correct governance and funding these models can be applied to UK locations so that car-free travel becomes an integral part of the visitor experience.

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2. **Nat Taplin, founder/director, Good Journey**, explained how Good Journey enables destinations to attract car-free visitors. Good Journey provides advice and support to communicate travel information, design discount schemes and develop infrastructure and services for visitors to navigate the 'last mile'. Good Journey works closely with The National Trust, RHS and other major destinations and is also now working with local authorities eager to promote sustainable leisure travel.

3. **Jools Townsend, Chief Executive, Community Rail Network,** showed how Community Rail Partnerships build community resilience and social capital by engaging people with their local stations and railways. This work takes many forms and involves a wide range of people who are often new to or lacking confidence in travelling by train. The Community Rail Network brings partners together locally to improve transport infrastructure, services, ticketing and accessibility. Communities with a strong sense of pride and cultural connection to their local railway make more sustainable travel choices.

4. **Roger Clarke, secretary of the Hope Valley Climate Action** described HVCA's nationally significant sustainable transport pilot work. The HVCA is a community led project in the Peak District National Park. With the sustainable transport project, Travelling Light, community engagement and co-creating solutions are central aspects. With the benefit of DfT funding and strong political support, the group has obtained improvements to rail timetabling and ticketing and, by raising awareness of bus service shortcomings, persuaded the County Council to install real time bus information. Travelling Light helped the subnational transport body Midlands Connect promote a project for peer-to-peer car sharing and EV charging and is now involved in an Active Travel Masterplan with the County Council. Key to the HVCA vision is reducing vehicle use and the group favours exploring options for traffic management in the National Park.

Barriers which emerged from discussion ranged from transport taxation (VAT on combined travel and entry tickets) to the meandering rivers of the Broads making bus travel difficult, especially across county boundaries. Devolution was seen as a double edged sword. More local control of rail would allow innovative services for tourists. However it was also suggested that concentration of transport powers at subnational level can mean a loss of resources and skills for meaningful local community engagement. On the whole there was agreement that transport for leisure is poorly addressed in transport planning and more should be done to find synergies between resident and visitor travel needs.

There was wide agreement that viewing transport through the lens of the visitor experience is transformational. Sustainable travel is an easy sell when it is enjoyable and integrated into a holiday experience, for example by including guestcards for free local travel with hotel bookings. Enabling car-free travel to rural leisure and tourism destinations is increasingly important because younger cohorts are driving less. Affordable and convenient alternatives to the private car would also reduce the recruitment problems faced by the rural leisure economy.

Cornwall, Wales and Scotland offer lessons for managing transport for leisure in rural areas which can be applied elsewhere in the UK. Promised new funding for non-metropolitan areas in the Midlands and North of England was welcomed, as was a new duty on public bodies to seek to further the purposes of National Parks. Likewise the forthcoming general election was seen as an opportunity for positive change.

Overall there was a sense of a vacuum in leadership and management of the leisure and tourism sector. This may explain why this roundtable generated such active discussion and participants were unusually eager to share contact details.

By contrast there was strong feeling that communities are a rich resource with the skills and knowledge to find innovative solutions and inspire behavioural change if given the opportunity. People are willing to embrace new ideas and create a sense of vision and new possibilities. Local communities therefore need to be invited to engage in developing new governance structures for managing visitor travel.

Presentations

1. Alistair Kirkbride – Decarbonising the visitor journey

Alistair is a freelance researcher and consultant in visitor and resident travel and transport in rural areas. In 2023 he was awarded a Churchill Travelling Fellowship to examine how to decarbonise the whole 'home-to-within destination' visitor journey, focussing on the role of traffic restraint[2]. In 2020 Alistair was awarded a Foundation for Integrated Transport fellowship in 2020 to develop the case for the Lake District and Peak District National Park Authorities to take on transport powers[3].

The problem

Visitor journeys are important because they generate significant carbon emissions and currently there is no plan to address the problem. Leisure travel emissions remain persistently and stubbornly high regardless of trends in overall transport. Moreover there is no ownership of these emissions. Many different people and organisations are involved but no-one has ultimate responsibility.

Research for the National Parks Partnership Programme has exposed the scale of the problem in relation to their destinations[4]. The National Travel Survey shows that younger cohorts are driving less. Research into tourism in the Lake District shows that visitor markets are changing substantially. It is not clear how destinations are planning to address these trends.

The six component model

Alistair has developed a model of visitor travel with six components. Component 1 is the first and last mile of the journey to the destination. Component 2 is the journey to/from the destination itself. Component 3 covers 'within destination' travel. This has multiple aspects: integrated extensive transport, walking and cycling routes and services, micromobility and other distinctive and fun transport and finally guest travel cards (free and paid). Components 4, 5 and 6 are traffic and parking restraint at the destination, baggage transfer, and marketing and governance respectively.

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[2] https://www.churchillfellowship.org/ideas-experts/fellows-directory/alistair-kirkbride/
http://lowcarbondestinations.org/
[3] https://integratedtransport.org.uk/project/alistair-kirkbride
[4] https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/documents/conservation/new-forest-national-park-greenhouse-gas-emissions-assessment-report/

Most attention is usually applied to component 3, travel within the destination, but the majority of carbon emissions are generated in component 2, the journey to/from the destination. This is also where there is least ownership of the emissions.

The six component model of visitor travel was used to scrutinise European destinations and understand how each component can be decarbonised and integrated. Many places address some of the components of the model well but nowhere succeeds in all aspects. A useful approach is to envision the desired future end-point and work backwards to identify the actions required in the present.

Alistair's findings agree with existing research that the governance structures for tourism and transport in the UK present a colossal problem for reducing emissions from visitor journeys.

Case studies

Swiss Alps

Swiss tourist destinations are very good at imposing traffic restrictions. There are excellent examples such as Zermatt, Saas-fee, Wengen and Mürren where visitor car access is highly managed and transport access is an integral part of the visitor experience. For example, a hotel booking in Saas-fee automatically includes a guest card for free access to bus and cable cars at the destination. This is a major lesson for the UK where travel is not treated as part of the visitor experience.

However, the downside is the colossal size of the car parks at the entrance points to these destinations. The car park at the train station which provides a shuttle service into Zermatt has 2100 spaces for cars[5]. Alistair encountered a strong reluctance to discuss the proportion of visitors arriving at Zermatt by car compared to train. This is a drawback of the Swiss model. It appears that destinations are addicted to the parking revenue. There is also a slightly artificial 'theme park' feel to some of these destinations.

Austrian Alps

The visitor experience here was very high quality, with a good public transport network and free travel for visitors via guest cards. The Tirol separates 34 destinations at the scale of the valley with each providing guest cards for free bus travel and optional extras as paid for perks.

Werfenweng[6] in the Salzburg alps has a rail station with free shuttle buses to hotels. Mainstream electric vehicles are available to hire on a 'pay as you go' basis, along with a wide range of 'fun' e-mobility options. The guestcard provides free travel on the W3 buses and free transport and access to events such as Christmas markets in Salzburg.

Station shuttles and excursion destinations and hiking areas in our neighbouring communities of Werfen and Pfarrwerfen. E-V cars can be used free of charge with the Werfenweng Card, depending on availability. W3 bus (coordinated to the trains) and E-LOIS will reliably take you from A to B within our village at any time. Unlimited and free use with the Werfenweng Card. From https://mywerfenweng.eu/en/mobility

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[5] https://www.zermatt.ch/en/Media/Attractions/Matterhorn-Terminal-Taesch
[6] https://www.werfenweng.eu/en/

USA Yosemite Park

Yosemite National Park has adopted a different model for managing traffic: seasonal timed visitor numbers[7]. Reservations are required to drive a private vehicle into the national park at certain times of the year.

Governance

DEFRA commissioned a Landscapes Review[8] in 2018 from Julian Glover to examine the future of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England. The review concluded that governance changes were needed to remove barriers to addressing problems caused by visitor travel. At present, organisations with powers over and responsibilities for transport and traffic are different to those with knowledge of visitor demographics and destinations.

In 2020 Alistair received funding from the Foundation of Integrated Transport to research the governance problem highlighted by the Glover Review. The resulting report[9] recommended an optimum governance model for access and transport to England's National Parks. This suggested where the control of different measures should reside and which governance structures, powers and responsibilities are required. These recommendations were informed by existing knowledge and expertise, including Cornwall County Council's approaches to managing visitor access.

Subsequently the relevant transport authority, Cumbria County Council, was reorganised and in April 2023 split into two unitary authorities. The report's recommendations need to be read in the light of this.

Locality focussed governance structures work very well. In Switzerland, valley-based governance oversees decision making and spending in the car-free villages of the Jungfrau. Each locality has a destination management organisation (DMO) linking the visitor business community with transport providers. This ensures a consistent approach to setting and using income from a combination of visitor levy, business levy and government funding.

Tools for local revenue raising exist in the UK, such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). Something similar could be used to transform visitor travel here but BIDs are very different in scale to the approach adopted in the Swiss and Austrian Alps.

Also, in the UK there has been no comprehensive plan to do things differently and therefore no debate about what new funding would be used for. As a result discussions of tourism taxes cause controversy. A good example is the media reaction[10] to mention of a tourism levy for the Lake District.

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[7] https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/fees.htm (Alistair did not visit Yosemite in person).
[8] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review
[9] https://integratedtransport.org.uk/downloads/Alistair_Kirkbride_final_fellowship_report_December_2021.pdf and https://integratedtransport.org.uk/could-different-governance-unblock-long-standing-national-park-access-and-transport-problems
[10] https://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/news/23404978.calls-tourism-tax-criticised-business-boss-jonathan-denby/

Compared to elsewhere, the UK is not very good at bolting down accessible mobility and transport to and within visitor destinations. We need clarity about the mobility systems required before we can plan the revenue model and make funds available for implementation.

The UK should learn from Cornwall County Council's success doing transport differently in rural areas with high visitor numbers. Also the Bus Services Act gives powers for local authorities to regulate timetables.

Appetite for change

There is no doubt that people are hungry for change. For example a pre-booking system[11] has been introduced at the Pen y Pass car park in Eyri (Snowdonia) National Park between April and October, with enforcement to address the hundreds of cars illegally parked on verges. Parking charges have also been increased. There is a park and ride with a shuttle bus lower down the valley. This has worked very well with few complaints from visitors.

New market research from the Lake District[12] shows there is an appetite for different kinds of transport services. People want managed access at busy times.

Conclusions

Action is required to decarbonise visitor travel. From studying overseas models we know the components required but at present it is unclear how the UK will approach the challenge.

Governance structures need to change otherwise we will remain stuck with short term projects dependent on short term funding.

Once at the destination, transport must be an integrated part of the visitor experience.

Travel to and from the destination is the biggest source of leisure carbon emissions but there are no easy solutions. Switzerland and Austria are aware that they have great public transport products and services but the majority of people still use a car to get to their holiday destinations.

2. Nat Taplin – Good Journey: welcoming car free visitors

Good Journey addresses the need for more sustainable visitor travel in the UK[13]. Good Journey is about helping people in the UK to have car free adventures of all kinds: day trips, holidays and short breaks. Founder/Director Nat Taplin has been promoting sustainable transport and tourism for over 25 years.

The problem

60% of scope 3 (indirect emissions) from visitor attractions come from visitor cars. 22% of all households in the UK have no car, representing 15 million people with less access to leisure, nature and the outdoors. A survey on the free shuttle bus from rail stations to NT Wallington

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[11] https://snowdonia.gov.wales/visit/snowdon/pen-y-pass-car-park/

[12] https://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/what-we-do/transport and
https://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/news-events/news-there-is-an-appetite-to-travel-differently-in-the-lake-district-2023-11-28

[13] https://www.goodjourney.org.uk

near Morpeth this summer found 8 out of 10 passengers had no access to a car, so the bus was the only way they could visit the attraction[14].

Good Journey approach

Good Journey teams up with visitor attractions to generate more car-free visitors. Most visitor attractions associate cars with money, since currently 90% of visitors arrive by car. The upshot is that popular destinations become overwhelmed by cars and we know that the public is concerned about this. For example in October 2023, images of the overflow to the overflow car park at Cliveden House attracted 179K views on social media.

Visitor attractions' websites typically have poor information on public transport and other non-car options for access. Good Journey helps provide easy step by step travel information, a live journey planner, plus information on walking routes from the nearest bus stop or train station. Good Journey keeps the public transport information updated thereafter which is one of the hardest things for visitor attractions to do themselves.

Visitor attractions working with Good Journey give a reward of some form for people visiting car free, usually a discount on entry. In return, they can display the Good Journey mark.

There are simple changes attractions can make to change behaviour. One example is putting the car-free travel information at the top of the 'getting here' page on the website. Research has proven what a major effect this gentle nudge has.

Good Journey has now signed up approximately 400 attractions, with particularly good representation of the major historic houses in the UK. The Good Journey website has over 150 car free itineraries for people to explore a particular area, with guides for car-free adventures across the UK.

Results

Blenheim Palace was the first major visitor attraction to join Good Journey in 2018. Over this time the annual car free visitor numbers have increased from 5,000 to 41,000 because of good public transport, a worthwhile discount and very prominent messaging about arriving car-free. Green travel now permeates their public communications.

All five RHS gardens (Harlow Carr, Bridgewater, Rosemoor, Wisley and Hyde Hall) are now in the Good Journey scheme, giving a 30% discount for car free entry. The RHS has also been experimenting with different models for shuttle buses. At Wisley the RHS teamed up with a community transport provider to run their own bus for several years. Visitors using the shuttle bus have risen from 3,000 in 2022 to 8,000 in 2023. The local authority has now agreed to operate the route for 2024 using larger vehicles.

In 2023 Good Journey ran a pilot with ten National Trust (NT) properties in the North East of England to encourage more car-free visitors. This was a success and will be rolled out to 50 NT properties across England and Wales in 2024.

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[14] https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/north-east/wallington
https://www.goodjourney.org.uk/attractions/wallington/

A new cycle link from Aylesbury Vale rail station and Waddesdon allows access to the NT property of Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire[15]. This brought in 70,000 visitors in the first year, demonstrating the appetite for change. Other similar examples exist across the UK.

Norfolk became the first Good Journey County[16] in 2023, to be followed by Suffolk in 2024. Good Journey supports these counties to manage marketing campaigns promoting itineraries to explore by train and bus.

Future plans

Good Journey will scale up and extend existing work with the National Trust to include more properties and other national organisations. This will attract smaller organisations on board in a snowball effect.

Good Journey will continue to help visitor attractions make practical changes on the ground. This can include improving access to bus stops, improved signage for walking and cycling, better walking routes, options for left luggage, areas for drying wet clothes for cyclists and walkers, free tea in the café.

The organisation would also like to see a combined scheme for train fare/bus fare/discount entry at a national level. This has happened in the past, as 'one off' projects in conjunction with rail companies.

The ultimate goal is for car-free visitors to always receive a warm welcome at attractions. Ironically at present a dog arriving in a car is often received more enthusiastically than a person arriving without a car.

3. Jools Townsend – Engaging rural communities with rail and enabling sustainable leisure travel

Community Rail is a growing, community-led grass roots movement which works closely with the rail industry, community transport organisations and government partners. The Community Rail Network is a national not-for-profit umbrella body engaging and empowering communities across Britain to get involved with their local railway for sustainable and inclusive travel. There are currently 77 Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) and 1200 station friends and volunteer groups helping communities to get the maximum value from their stations.

While CRPs are very diverse, there is a concentration of members in rural areas and a long history of promoting rail based tourism. Many have a focus on promoting nearby leisure and tourism destinations. Even where partnerships are not in tourist areas there is usually a focus on local history and heritage and opening up outbound sustainable tourism and leisure.

Resilience, social capital and behaviour change

Rail lines with CRPs have historically experienced stronger passenger growth; they also recovered better after the covid pandemic. CRPs bring people together, create cohesive communities and increase social capital. There is strong evidence for the social value created by CRPs both through volunteering and the work members do to break down barriers to mobility. Sometimes these transport accessibility changes are life changing.

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[15] https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-transport/walking-cycling-and-wheeling/view-walking-cycling-and-wheeling-routes-2/waddesdon-greenway/
https://waddesdon.org.uk/your-visit/getting-here-parking-access/
[16] https://www.goodjourney.org.uk/norfolk-good-journey-county/

Research shows that local engagement and empowerment are essential for people to make changes to their behaviour. This is particularly true in relation to transport where there are a range of practical and perceived barriers to behaviour change. A widespread lack of confidence in and familiarity with using public transport has built up over time. Many young people and families grow up either with car dependency or mobility restrictions if lacking access to a car. Rebuilding this confidence is best done at a grassroots level.

Platform Rail[17] is a community rail education scheme in the South West of England. It engages thousands of children and young people each year, giving many their first taste of rail and indirectly influencing parents' attitudes to travel. These initiatives inspire sustainable leisure travel with trips to green spaces for wellbeing as well as enabling access to education, training and employment.

There is a video online[18] about combatting loneliness in young people by using the train to access nature with the support of a peer group. It also underlines why confidence building in using public transport is needed.

Advocacy and integration

CRPs engage with marginalised groups and disabled people, organising days out whilst at the same time enabling their voices to be heard. This work helps the rail industry to understand the lived experience of diverse groups of people and to put their needs on the agenda. For example, on the Bentham line the CRP works with northern and local charities get involved in making the line, staff and stations more dementia friendly.

CRPs also work to integrate active travel, buses and shared mobility with rail services to enable sustainable end to end journeys. This is especially important for leisure and tourism journeys which are typically longer and more complex than day to day trips. Tourists are more likely to have bulky luggage and/or travel with children and there is more peril if a connection fails in an isolated location. The local knowledge of CRPs is very valuable for addressing these challenges.

Community Rail can draw on local knowledge to make modes work better together and improve collaboration across operators, which is generally sorely lacking in our experience. CRPs innovate solutions especially to close gaps caused by bus service cuts[19]. Examples include the Rivington Park Rambler in the West Pennines and its sister service to RHS Bridgewater, run by local bus companies but instigated and promoted by the local CRP. The Tyne Valley Line CRP is introducing e-bike hire to better connect Haltwhistle with Hadrian's Wall.

Modal shift follows naturally

Community Rail can do a huge amount towards achieving the mode shift required to decarbonise and create a healthier and more equitable mobility. This can be more about having fun and bringing people together than explicitly pushing the green agenda. For example 'bucket and spade' trains[20] in Essex take hundreds of families to the seaside each year, who otherwise would rarely use the trains.

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[17] https://platformrail.org/
[18] https://communityrail.org.uk/reports-and-research/tackling-loneliness-with-transport/
[19] https://communityraillancashire.co.uk/news/rivington-rambler-bus-to-run-again-this-summer/
https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/bridgewater/plan-your-visit/shuttle-bus-frequently-asked-questions
[20] https://www.greateranglia.co.uk/about-us/news-desk/news-articles/all-special-event-trains-running-in-essex-in-2023 https://esscrp.org.uk/events/bucket-and-spade-trains/

Local rail can be an attraction in its own right. CRPs have a strong tradition of actively promoting local railway history and culture, leading to a sense of discovery and excitement for local communities. CRPs are using digital channels more and more.

Research conclusively shows that using the local landscape, culture and pride of place encourages an increase in care for the environment. Sustainable behavioural change happens seamlessly as part of the work of CRPs.

Conclusion

CRPs are a key tool for co-creation and collaboration and can help develop better forms of governance for leisure travel. It is crucial that those who are developing and operating transport are made responsive to local needs and the needs of visitors. CRPs empower communities to lead the way, shape their transport future and influence how visitors are treating and respecting their localities. CPRs are inspiring greener forms of tourism and enabling people to value and protect their communities. Generally there are not enough of these participatory approaches in the transport or the tourism sectors.

Particular opportunities exist for engaging and enthusing people around rail-based leisure and tourism. Over decades the private car has developed an iron grip on lifestyles, communities and perceptions of what freedom, leisure and mobility mean. To break free of this and get transport moving in a better direction needs empowerment and momentum from the grassroots up, to build pride and ownership around the alternatives to car travel.

Please feel free to talk to CRN or local CRPs.

4. Roger Clarke, Hope Valley Climate Action and Travelling Light

Roger convenes the travel and transport group of Hope Valley Climate Action (HVCA)[21].

Background and approach

The Hope Valley is mid way between Sheffield and Manchester and in the centre of the Peak District National Park. There are 3 to 5 million visitors a year, mostly arriving by car on day trips from the conurbations. For the last four years Hope Valley Climate Action has been raising awareness about and encouraging action on climate change at personal, group and community levels alongside advocating for policy change.

Travelling Light[22] is HVCA's nationally significant sustainable transport pilot project. The vision for transport in the Hope Valley includes integration, active travel and good quality public transport alongside a move away from private vehicles. Tranquillity is seen as an asset valued by visitors and residents alike.

The approach is for the community to co-create solutions with the local transport authority and public transport operators and use lessons from other communities and projects in the UK and overseas.

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[21] https://hopevalleyclimateaction.org.uk/about-hvca/

[22] https://hopevalleyclimateaction.org.uk/travel/travelling-light/

Community engagement

Community engagement is a very important part of the whole picture. HVCA works with local residents, visitors and partner organisations such as the destination management organizations 'Visit Peak District' and 'Visit Derbyshire'. There is also a joint project with the Community Rail Partnership at Bamford Station at the moment. Maintaining momentum is tough because it takes a long time to deliver visible achievements in transport. Getting real time information for buses provided a helpful quick win to increase community confidence in the project.

Active travel

Active travel is neglected, especially in rural areas. People say they can't walk or cycle on rural roads because it is too dangerous. This must be addressed because many of the journeys visitors want to make will be short and on public roads. Designating some of those roads with low speed limits and priority for walking and cycling is very important.

At the outset HVCA promoted active travel through cycling with 'try an e-bike' day events. People were keen but felt unsafe on the local roads. So HVCA is very pleased to be working with Derbyshire County Council on an Active Travel Masterplan for the Hope Valley. While lots of walking happens in the hills, there is no network of good paths and safe routes between local settlements in the valley itself. For example making simple trips from home to school or from the campsite to the pub or local shop are difficult on foot or by cycle.

Public transport

Public transport is at the core of provision for leisure travel. The HVCA is for integrated, multi-modal transport access to the Hope Valley. There needs to be one network, one ticket and one timetable across modes with seamless modal transfer for travellers. Separate provision for visitors is not helpful. For example Chatsworth House employees need public transport access just as much as visitors do.

Public transport services by rail are especially good now that, in response to pressure from HVCA and others, Northern Trains agreed to change to a clockface service every hour for all five stations in the Hope Valley. Situated at the start of the Pennine Way, Edale is the busiest rail station with 120,000 passengers per year, yet it has the smallest residential settlement.

Bus services are pretty poor and HVCA is lobbying for improvements. Two 'use the bus' campaigns revealed how concerned people were about poor reliability, poor quality services and lack of information about buses.

Shared mobility

Travelling Light includes a shared mobility project for car clubs and peer-to-peer car sharing in partnership with Derbyshire County Council and Midlands Connect, the sub-national transport body. HVCA's role is to promote these practical projects but also conduct community conversations in each of the villages to collect views on issues and possible solutions from local people and visitors. Commonplace, the citizen engagement platform[23] was used to collect views and suggestions for projects.

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[23] https://www.commonplace.is/

Demand management and integrated planning

Shared mobility is fine, but can only scratch the surface of a much bigger issue about how to manage access into popular areas like National Parks. This is a thorny issue because people feel strongly about it. But it's an area to explore further, whether through pricing or physical restraint, as well as providing good public transport alternatives.

Up to now the transport network has been planned from the point of view of the resident community and hinged largely around commuting and local community use. Whereas the way forward is to think about visitor travel in terms of the routes, the kinds of services that are on offer and when they run. All stakeholders now need to start looking at transport in the Hope Valley as part of the visitor experience not simply as a functional means of getting into and around the area.

Funding

HVCA has been fortunate to be supported for an initial period by the Department for Transport. This enabled a great deal of community engagement but sadly the multi-year funding has now been withdrawn. However the community interest remains strong and there is a good partnership with the local authority. HVCA has worked to get the politics right, especially with the two local MPs and politicians at the local authorities.

Conclusion

Visitor travel is a neglected subject. 30% of people in Sheffield and Manchester have no access to a car. HVCA wants people to come and enjoy the National Park but residents and visitors agree that the biggest problem diminishing this enjoyment is too many cars.

A key issue is to change governance structures. Public authorities have to set the agenda, not simply for public transport but also for public provision for active travel and managing car use. The creation of a mayor for the East Midlands is a promising development, based on the transport achievements of the mayors in Greater Manchester and in South Yorkshire. Whatever else there will be a General Election in 2024 and this will bring new politicians and new possibilities. So HVCA wants to inform regional and county and national level priorities.