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# Why Visitor Travel falls between the cracks

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## Introduction

Travel is the glue of tourism; it brings the customers from their home area to the destination area and connects their accommodation with attractions and activities within the area. Travelling in the area will generate many of the impressions which lead tourists to return, or not, and to recommend the area to others, or not. Yet the responsibility for planning such a vital element in the quality of visitor experience is often divided between multiple agencies without the resources or common purpose to ensure a quality product.

Although the majority (75%) of tourism's greenhouse gas emissions are from transport, these are predominantly from travel to and from the destination area. However, within areas, travel accounts for a high proportion of visitor emissions (approximately a third in Majorca and Cyprus (Dick Sisman and Associates 2007) and the English Lake District (Small World Consulting Ltd 2010)). It is also an aspect of tourism which can most directly be influenced by local destination management, provision and policy. Within destination areas, visitor travel planning offers opportunities not only to reduce local and global impacts, but to improve the tourist offer, open areas to new markets and generate extra spending within the area. Yet, most attempts to offer alternative forms of travel to visitors are unco-ordinated, patchy and under-funded.

This paper results from our own puzzlement about why what seems a simple way of reducing the environmental impact of visitor travel is rarely implemented. It brings together evidence from close contact with a number of destination areas through research and consultancy projects in sustainable tourism, discussions with destination managers, examination of reports and other 'grey literature', promotional materials as well as published research to help answer the question. It concludes that an 'easy win' for more sustainable tourism, improving the quality of the experience and helping local tourism providers is highly improbable without an agency charged with taking a strategic view and empowered to deliver it. However, isolated examples of successful sustainable tourism transport initiatives exist and the elements contributing to their success are explored.

The literature review draws on a range of previous research about the impacts of tourism travel, including within destination area travel, for global and local environments and the role of visitor travel planning in reducing these impacts. It discusses why strategies for utility travel planning are not appropriate for leisure travel. The benefits of visitor travel planning to different stakeholders are outlined before exploring theories and evidence for dynamics of tourist destination management. After a brief explanation about the origin and evidence

for the paper and its scope, the instruments of visitor travel planning: provision and promotion monitoring are explained including numerous examples from the UK. The successes and limitations of different organisational models are described.

The discussion explores about why visitor travel planning has not been introduced in many tourist areas and why it is unlikely to develop or be maintained in such a volatile context. It is followed by a short résumé of the paper's thesis that, while visitor travel planning offers considerable advantages to most actors within a tourist destination it is unlikely to thrive.

## Literature Review

### Tourism and Environment

In May 2013 the concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents in the atmosphere rose to over 400 parts per million for the first time in human history (Carrington 2013, IPCC 2013). The last time the earth experienced these concentrations, several million years ago, sea levels were up to 40 metres higher than they are today (Carrington 2013). The rise in temperature caused by the increase in CO<sub>2</sub> and other green house gases has already triggered a number of 'feedback reactions' such as the melting to permafrost, release of CO<sub>2</sub> from warming oceans and the melting of ice caps, which increases the absorption of heat (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007; Moritz et al. 2002). Although governmental and inter-governmental action has been painfully slow, it is clear that every industry, including tourism, will need to reduce its greenhouse emissions in the near future.

It is estimated that tourism contributes approximately 5% of global greenhouse emissions, with 75% of those from transport, the majority (40%) from aviation, followed by car travel (32%) (UNWTO-UNEP 2008:15). Travel to and from destinations, rather than travel within the destination area accounts for most of these emissions.

Yet within destination areas, local travel appears to offer one of the largest and easiest target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as potential for improving the local tourism offering. (For example, visitor travel accounted for 32.7% of the total visitor carbon count within the English Lake District, only surpassed by accommodation, food and drink (39.4%) (Cumbria County Council and the Lake District National Park Authority 2011)). Studies in Majorca and Cyprus also found that about one third of the visitor carbon count within the destination area comes from local travel (Dick Sisman & Associates 2007). Larger areas may have a higher proportion of their emissions from internal travel, particularly where this includes air and sea travel, (for example, it is estimated that 56.3% of the emissions relating to visitors in Queensland are from travel, with flights and trips by boat accounting for 82.5% of total travel emissions (Hoque et al 2010)).

In most destination areas, the majority of transport emissions are from car use (97.4% in English Lake District (Cumbria County Council and the Lake District

National Park Authority 2011) 77% in Cornwall (Small World Consulting 2012). Car use is also the source of local environmental impacts such as pollution, noise, danger and congestion, all of which lessen the attractiveness of an area for tourists and residents (Beunen, Regnerus et al. 2008; Connell and Page 2008; Kendal, Ison et al. 2011; Sharpley and Sharpley 1997).

*Poorly understood is the role of pedestrian movement in tourism. Increased traffic management has solved mass movement of vehicles, but often destroyed personal amenities in the process. (Gunn 2002; 52)*

*This influx of car-borne visitors threatens many of the special qualities that draw both residents and visitors to the two National Parks in the first place. Air and water pollution levels rise; habitats and landscape character are threatened by vehicle encroachment; tranquillity is broken by traffic noise; and the wider impacts of transport emissions and their contribution to climate change are already being seen in changing ecosystems, migration patterns and other critical aspects of species and habitat survival.*

(South Downs and New Forest National Park Authorities 2012)

A further reason for providing for car-free travel within a destination area is to influence the mode of arrival. Domestic and medium to short haul tourists use cars both for travel within the holiday area and to/from it. These trips contribute to the carbon count of the destination. Removing the need for a vehicle at the destination opens the possibility of more sustainable travel to it and is seen as a necessary step to encourage car owners to arrive by more sustainable modes (Kirkbride 2011; South Downs and New Forest National Park Authorities 2012).

### **Utility and Leisure Travel Planning**

The environmental impact of car use for utility trips has been addressed in many areas by travel planning and there is an extensive literature about the subject (see Ampt 2003; Jones and Sloman 2003; Rye 2002). It focuses on reducing car use (especially those with low car occupancy) for journeys where there practical alternatives.

However, leisure travel differs significantly from utility travel (Page 2009) and so requires different strategies from those used for more routine journeys. The main differences are:

- minimising the cost and/or time of journeys may be inappropriate, because they often have intrinsic value, being part of the experience rather than being totally instrumental in getting between places. This provides opportunities to add value through novelty (eg steam trains, open-top buses), interpretation or other forms of engagement with the locality. (Lew and McKercher (2006) differentiate between outcome-oriented tourists, who aim to minimise transit time and process-oriented tourists who perceive travel time of value. However, this would seem to be a quality of the specific trip-traveller context, rather than a consistent quality of the tourist. Robbins and Dickinson (2008; 109) however,

contend that trips to attractions are predominantly derived demand, however pleasurable the journey experience)

- being less routine, leisure travel is often in unfamiliar territory (Jafari 1987) with little opportunity for trialling different routes, modes, timing of trips as most journeys are 'one-offs'.
- the destination is often discretionary and can be influenced by considerations of the 'bundle' of mode, activity and destination (March and Woodside 2005) such as: drive to the coast, bus ride to attraction, bike ride along the canal or walk in local woods. Changing destinations is important for reducing the distance travelled and the potential to use a more sustainable mode.

Other common differences are that leisure travel is frequently undertaken in groups, leading to higher car occupancy than for utility travel (Small World Consultancy (2012, 31) and that some leisure activities, especially in rural areas, require substantial amounts of equipment lending themselves to private car travel (Dickinson and Dickinson 2006). Tourism's emphasis on being welcoming also excludes many of the measures to discourage car use advocated in utility travel planning (Guiver et al 2008). Businesses reliant on car-borne visitors can also be reluctant of introducing measures which they fear might discourage those visitors or reduce their spending (Stanford 2013).

### Visitor travel planning

Visitor travel planning seeks to reduce the local and global effects of visitors' travel within a tourist area, encouraging people to reduce their car use by switching to other modes or reducing the length and frequency of car journeys. The use of alternative methods of travel is promoted by making them cheaper, easier to use or by enhancing the experience.

Car use can be reduced within destination areas without reducing the number of visitors by:

- increasing vehicle occupancy (although already high for visitor travel),
- decreasing the number of trips (eg making it possible to spend all day at one or a close group of destinations)
- reducing the distance travelled (encouraging people to visit attractions closer to their accommodation or use accommodation closer to the attractions they want to visit)
- transferring to another mode such as public transport, walking, cycling.

(see Warren 2010)

Visitor travel planning endeavours to encourage these actions, through provision of more choice of active travel and public transport alternatives, promotion of alternative modes and closer destinations and through facilitating more sustainable, but attractive, ways of travelling around the area.

## The benefits of visitor travel planning

Visitor travel planning has potential to benefit visitors, tourism providers, local residents and the environment. Where there has been strategic planning of alternative destinations and travel itineraries, visitors benefit from a more varied travel offering, with the added value of better information, interpretation as well as any financial incentives not to drive (for example: not having to pay parking charges or hire cars currently used by most overseas visitors to England (English Tourist Board and Tourism Management Institute 2003)). This helps the many visitors who prefer not to drive (VisitEngland 2008) (for example: 45% of visitors to the Lake District want to reduce their car use while in the National Park. (Cumbria County Council and the Lake District National Park Authority 2011).

The greatest benefit to visitors is derived in car-free destinations such as the Alpine Pearls, a collection of 28 destinations in six European countries, offering holidays away from *'traffic noise and exhaust fumes'* (Alpine Pearls Association 2013) with alternatives to car use and good public transport connections with originating areas. The travel offering varies between villages, but includes electric vehicles, shuttle buses, horse-drawn carriages and ski lifts and many of the resorts provide an inclusive 'guest card' for free transport and discounts in the area (Alpine Pearls Association 2013; Simpson et al. 2008: 94).

*'Guests profit from the high quality of the air and the privilege and freedom of being able to move around the village safely.'* (Gemeinschaft autofrei Schweitzen Tourismusorte 2013)

Several islands around the world have also made a virtue of their lack of transport to offer car-free experiences (such as Sark and Herm in the Channel Islands: Romeril 1985, Gili Trawangan in Indonesia: Dodds et al 2010 and the Turkish Prince Islands: Edgü and Cîmşit 2011). In most areas, however, the benefits of going car-free for the individual are mitigated by still experiencing the traffic generated by other visitors and residents.

Travel cards grant visitors integrated travel (such as the London Visitor Oyster Card or Swiss Travel Pass) or free use of local public transport (eg Konus card in the Black Forest (Ruoff 2012) and GUTi card in Bavaria (Wibmer 2012) (funded by a small bed-night tax). Some include free (eg ZurichCard, Oslo Pass) or discounted entry into local attractions (see Hong Kong's MTR Tourist Day Pass, Melbourne's myki Visitor pack). Better visitor-oriented information provides itineraries (see Voies Vertes, France), timetables, location of toilets, gradients for cyclists, degrees of difficulty for walkers (see Ohakune Old Coach Road, New Zealand) estimates of journey times and walker/cyclist friendly accommodation and hostelryes. The use of different media such as apps (Cade 2013) can provide real-time information and customised interpretation.

Provision of novel ways of travelling such by boat (eg gondolas in Venice), vintage bus (Trossachs Trundler, Scotland), electric car (New Forest and Brecon Beacons twizies) or electric bike (English Lake District) enhances fun and excitement. While themed itineraries and interpretation add coherence to routes

(for example the Coast and Castles cycle route between Newcastle and Cook's Lookout Train in Newfoundland, Jurassic Coast bus route in Dorset, UK), better signage, vehicle livery, branded publicity (see Hadrian's Wall AD122 bus and publicity) and staff training (Lumsdon and Caffyn 2013) all help to improve the visitor experience.

Visitor travel planning has the potential to open up the area to new markets, such as people from household without cars (25% of UK households in 2011 had no car (Department for Transport 2012) many of them relatively wealthy, urban households (Wood 2009), overseas visitors (70% of whom arrive without a car (English Tourist Board and Tourism Management Institute 2003)) and those who prefer not to drive. If they perceive the area is not suitable for holidays without a car, these visitors will go elsewhere or stay at home (South Downs and New Forest National Park Authorities 2012). Where road and parking constraints limit capacity, diverting potential visitors to alternative modes can increase the number of visitors without extending parking areas or widening roads.

A benefit of slowing visitors down is that they are more likely to spend money in the locality (Halden 2013). Long distance cycle routes (Downward, Lumsdon and Weston 2009; Lumsdon, Downward and Cope 2004) and walking trails have been found to generate extra spending in the areas they pass through and walkers and cyclists have been found to spend more than car-borne visitors in local shops, cafes, pubs and restaurants (Wood 2009) which keeps money in the local economy. This delivers greater benefits (Office of National Statistics 2011; 5) through the local multiplier effect than money spent on petrol or nationally/internationally-owned chain outlets.

Local residents benefit from reductions in local traffic especially if this reduces congestion or parking problems. They are often able to avail themselves of improved travel provision whether that is better public transport or infrastructure for cycling and walking. The environment globally is improved by reductions in greenhouse emissions, and locally with less pollution, noise, danger, etc. However, while it appears that visitor travel planning offers benefits to most parties involved in tourism within a tourist destination area, organising its delivery is problematic. Many of the measures require considerable investment and planning, for example it takes three to four years for a leisure bus service to achieve full patronage Gronau and Kagermeier (2007). As with most aspect of destination planning, visitor travel planning involves strategic thinking and action by partnerships of stakeholders, as discussed in the following sections.

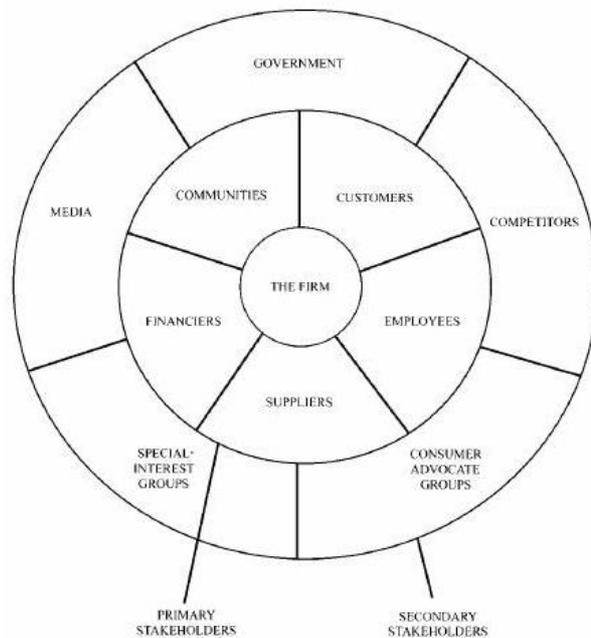
### **Partnerships and Stakeholders**

Partnerships and collaborations have long been a feature of destination management, partly because of the significant number of small enterprises involved in tourism (Bramwell and Lane 2000; 1). More recently, there has been a global push towards greater involvement of the private sector in activities which were previously undertaken or funded by public sector organisations (Hall 1999; Selin and Chavez 1995; 844-5). They have also been viewed as a way

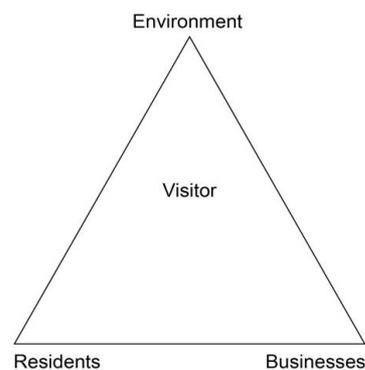
of reaching sustainable tourism goals (Laing et al. 2009; 208) and of introducing the public interest in decision-making (McCool 2009; 133). Partnerships and collaborations involve independent entities pooling some of their resources: investment, knowledge, skills, time for common benefit (Laker, Weiss and Miller 2001).

Partnerships comprise of stakeholders. Freeman et al. (2007) as either primary or secondary stakeholders, who are affected by the actions of a company (see Figure xxx). Stakeholders are defined as ‘any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives’ (Freeman 1984: 5). This differentiates between active ‘can affect’ and passive ‘is affected by’ types of stakeholder without excluding individuals or groups from belonging to both groups. Climpson (2008) applies this distinction to destination management. He groups stakeholders into those ‘who must lead and set an example by taking co-ordinated action and facilitating the participation of the remaining stakeholders’ such as the public sector, industry and landowners and those who cannot ‘be expected to initiate action of their own, but whose engagement and participation is essential for the success and sustainability of any plan’ such as residents, tourists and environmental interest groups. He and the New Forest District Council developed the VICE (Visitors, Industry, Community and Environment) model to describe the stakeholders in a destination’s management, which evolved into the VERB (Visitors, Environment, Residents and Businesses) Model (Figure xxx) used in tourism management theory aimed at the public sector.

**Figure xxx Primary and Secondary Stakeholders for a company**



**Figure xxx The VERB Model**



(VisitEngland 2012)

However, these represent idealised versions of who should be included in any partnership managing a tourist destination area. They contrast with the ‘messy’ reality (Dredge 2006; Hall 1999; McCool 2009) of collaborations between stakeholders with varying degrees of power, influence and resources and different goals, aspirations and potential to benefit from collaboration (Brinkerhoff 2002).

While partnerships to help guide local tourism policy and direction may bring increased democracy, equity, operational advantage and a better tourism product (Bramwell and Lane 2000; 2; Brinkerhoff 2002), Jamil and Getz (1995; 200) warn that ‘perceived interdependence and key stakeholder involvement are not adequate for achieving success’. A number of problems have been identified with the effectiveness and functioning of tourism partnerships causing Fyall (2011; 343) to doubt whether destinations’ direction and quality can be influenced or controlled ‘*unless all elements are owned by the same body*’. Lack of funding and political will has reduced many destination ‘management’ organisations to destination ‘marketing’ organisations (Pike 2013). Partnerships may include, or indeed exclude, parties with very different access to resources and power (Hall 2000; 149), leading potential partners not to engage, particularly if they suspect some parties are ‘free-loading’, for fear of losing control, resorting to more familiar strategies, even if previous outcomes had been sub-optimal (Jamil and Getz 1995; 201). A pattern of varying engagement is described by Dredge (2006) as a series of ‘*cycles of participation, competition and disaffection*’ with different networks attempting to promote tourism around Lake Macquarie in Australia between 1997 and 2000.

A mix of organisations from different sectors can be a forum for a clash of cultures, with public authorities more used to 'top-down' implementation, than the 'bottom up' development of communities and businesses (Wray 2011). Public administrations also have nested links with other tiers of government which make them less reactive to local circumstances (Eagles 2009; Hall 2000; McLennan 2013).

Tourist destination areas, where their borders can be defined, rarely conform to local administrative areas, let alone those of local transport providers. Thus partnerships may find themselves representing portions of different levels of administration. Lake Constance epitomises the problem of geographical and structural misalignment, being a cross border destination area, within three countries: Germany, Switzerland and Austria and very close to Lichtenstein, all with different administrative hierarchies. Despite having an umbrella destination area organisation, its management is characterised by the diverging interests of stakeholders (Rehage 2010). Opportunities to introduce more sustainable travel within the area are pursued by stakeholders who favour *'isolated stand-alone solutions. Actions are not coordinated on the destination level, they stay fragmented'* (Thimm 2012).

There are also differing time scales and planning horizons for members (Dredge 2006; 271), while the formation and maintenance of a partnership has its own dynamic includes stages of establishing of communication, trust and commitment (Wang and Xiang 2007; 79). Caffyn (2000), in her investigation of the rise, demise and eventual disbanding of a tourism partnership in Northern England, suggests such collaborations may have a life cycle, yet cautions against biological metaphors. The vitality of partnerships can reflect the flow of funding streams (Caffyn 2000; Laing et al. 2009) or progress addressing an initial problem, but the motivations and functions of the partnership may change as it develops *'more as a result of what is happening rather than from the businesses' initial ambitions and strategic goals'* (Wang and Xiang 2007; 78). Processes also create their own 'path-dependency', so that the organisation, system of governance, strategies and ethos become shaped by sets of circumstances, which then change faster than the institution. Gill and Williams (2011) describe how a pro-growth approach had been 'locked- into' by the management of Whistler in Canada and how this was not appropriate to the challenge of becoming more sustainable, needing a more corporatist model of governance.

As well as being dynamic associations, tourism partnerships exist within volatile environments (Jamal and Stronza 2009; World Economic Forum 2009), being subject to a number of changes over which they have no control. This has led some authors (Beritelle, Biegerand and Laesser 2013; Hall 2004; McLennan 2013) to question whether destination management organisations have the agency to influence how destinations develop or whether more powerful social trends will over-ride any local action. Beritelle, Biegerand and Laesser (2013) and Dredge (2013) stress that destinations are not static entities, with different constructions by different actors, existing in a fluid environment with a range of agencies, and policy cycles with different time lags (McLennan 2013). Hall (2011) links the lack of progress in sustainable tourism to an ideology which still

fosters growth and competition.

While not denying the influence of external factors, Beritelle, Biegerand and Laesser (2013), McLennan (2013) and Wang and Xiang (2007) imply that *'change can be influenced by collective human action'* (McLennan 2013; 169). Wang and Xiang (2007) identify external stimuli, such as crises, economic and technological change, as common pre-conditions leading to partnership formation, others being: existing networks, visionary leadership and a third party convener. Beritelle, Biegerand and Laesser (2013) suggest that, as a supply-led industry, tourist destinations face numerous vagaries including the development of alternative destinations and changing consumer preferences outside their control and are subject to multiple product-market life-cycles, but that this can be addressed by reforming destination management organisations.

This paper considers how visitor travel planning might be achieved and funded and the relevance of theories about partnerships in helping to explain the current failure to develop plans to improve the tourist offer while reducing the environmental impact of tourist travel with destinations.

## Context of Paper

This paper reflects on a our combined experience of researching, investigating and observing tourist travel in rural UK destinations in the last decade through consultancy projects, attending meetings of local destination stakeholders and talking to destination managers, transport providers and other stakeholders. It results from discussion and thought about why what seems a simple way of reducing the environmental impact of visitor travel is rarely implemented.

The evidence includes reports of projects, newspaper accounts, our own research and interviews conducted both specifically for this paper and in the course of previous projects. Three projects in particular have contributed to the paper:

- What makes you Move (Stanford 2013) a project commissioned by Natural England and Friends of the Lake District, examining the visitor segments most likely to contribute to local spending without large carbon footprints and to identify the messages which might influence their travel behaviour,
- Seasonal Buses, (see Guiver 2012) an ESRC funded project, surveying bus passengers in nine rural areas,
- Tourism on Board, its predecessor, (see Guiver and Lumsdon 2006 and Institute of Transport and Tourism 2007) involving bus travel in 18 rural areas.

## Instruments of Visitor Travel Planning

Visitor travel planning endeavours to promote and provide alternative modes, attractions and activities to help reduce visitor car use and its associated environmental impacts. The main instruments of visitor travel planning are

provision and promotion and, although promotion precedes provision for the customer, it follows provision for the destination manager.

### Provision

Travel involves nodes, where travel begins/ends or where routes and/or modes intercept each other forming networks and, usually, vehicles. Provision includes enhancing aspects of nodes, routes, networks and vehicles. Tourism suppliers such as accommodation and other hospitality providers, attractions and communities may individually or collectively be able to improve nodes as these are site-based. Improvements can include installing lockers for bikes or luggage, benches and shelters, toilets, refreshments (see Lumsdon and Caffyn 2013), offering information and interpretation and making sure staff interacting with visitors are knowledgeable about the range of travel options available.

Routes and networks, and in the case of public transport, services, require a more area-wide responsibility, such a National Park, local highways authority, bus or train provider. The size and density of the network depends on the number of routes and their connectivity. Often adding relatively small links can greatly increase the connectivity of a network, (Sustans' Connect2 project focusses on short links such as bridges and road crossings to extend foot and cycle networks (Sustrans 2013). Facilitating the transfer from one mode to another increases potential personal networks, so a wider range of destinations can be reached on foot (for example linear walks along Pembrokeshire and North Norfolk Coastal Paths, Hadrian's Wall (Roberts and Rees 2012; Coulson 2011, Hadrian's Wall Country 2013), or by bike if there are public transport connections and bikes are allowed on buses (Lake District). Back-up provision, (eg advertised taxis (the MoorsBus will pay for taxis if the bus is delayed, but also available to passengers if they miss the bus (Caffyn and Lumsdon 2013; 69), mobile bike repair services (such as provided by Cycle and Walk Holidays) and short cut paths back to settlements) helps develop confidence in using the network.

Public transport networks offer more potential destinations when there are close (in time and space) scheduled connections allowing people to transfer from one mode or route to another (for example the Fal Mussel card allows travel on local boats, buses and trains). Perceived networks can be extended through integrated ticketing, allowing travel on different companies' services. This not only removes the marginal cost, but also the 'hassle factor' of buying a ticket at every interchange.

Frequently the spatial and temporal network of public transport reflects residents' rather than visitors' travel patterns, for example with fewer or no opportunities to travel on Sundays. (A study of tourism flows in the Lake District, found that many of the destinations and routes frequented by car users were unavailable by public transport (Kirkbride 2013). The temporal extent of a public transport network can be increased by increasing the operational season and day.

The quality of routes can be improved through en-route information for reassurance (signage on walking and cycle routes, timetables, real-time information at stops and on vehicles for public transport services. Interpretation, from guides, brochures, phone apps, signage of what can be seen or heard, from the route/vehicle help the visitor engage with the area and is particularly relevant for themed routes (see Hadrian's Wall Country 2013) when the interpretation can explain the connections and help deliver a coherent narrative. The quality of the service will also be judged by its vehicles and equipment, whether they are clean and well-maintained, and the helpfulness and knowledge of the people delivering the service.

### Promotion

The customer's starting point to using sustainable travel within a destination area may be 'inspiring' promotions leading to searching more practical information of how to access the inspiration. The destination manager, however, has to first ensure that the customer can obtain the necessary information in a user-friendly form before launching the inspirational material. To be successful the same information needs to be delivered consistently through a variety of media and channels. For example, the same routes may feature in publicity about 'how to get here' issued by attractions (destination orientated), 'days out' issued by accommodation providers (origin-orientated) and 'getting around the area' (area-orientated) issued by tourist information outlets.

Confidence in the network starts with confidence in the information, so lack of consistency can undermine trust, leading to tourists resorting to car use as well as leaving a bad impression of the area. Accommodation providers and others in a position to advise tourists must have confidence in the service themselves to install it in others. Special or guided trips or free tickets for these 'intermediaries' have proved valuable means of 'spreading the word' (Moody 2004).

The need to give temporal information about public transport makes it particularly difficult for giving simple, easy to follow, yet comprehensive information. Where, there is some control over the services, it may be best to adapt them to easy explanation, for example having an 'clockface' hourly or more frequent regular service, so the information can state 'buses/trains leave here at ten past the hour' or 'every 15 minutes'.

This also makes public transport information prone to becoming out-of-date. Again, where there is control or agreement, the dates of changes in service can be agreed with the operators, preferably to coincide with seasonal boundaries and the publicity print-runs. Train operators, often with pivotal services to and from the destination, are probably least likely to be able to accommodate the destination's requirements because of agreed running slots on lines and connections outside the area. Changes to their services can invalidate tourist timetables prepared over a long time and with large print runs (Dinmore 2009). More flexible media, such as phone lines, web pages and smart phone information provide ways of alerting the passengers who check.

As potential visitors progress from inspiration to planning and confirming, they will require finer details of information. Interviews with visitors to the Lake District (Guiver 2006) revealed the importance of perceptions and the need for different kinds of information. A few had chosen the area, as they had the impression it was well provided with public transport (one contrasted it to Scotland, an alternative destination). Another spoke of wanting help in choosing accommodation with good public transport links. This need that was not fulfilled by conventional journey planners, which start with the question 'where do you want to go?' answering with information about how to get there, whereas he wanted to stipulate the mode and ask where to go.

Inspiring people to visit an area often relies on imagery and emotions. Encouraging them to use active modes and public transport needs careful thought about how present images of the kind of people they identify with or aspire to be. Derogatory, common connotations, particularly of public transport users, need to be avoided or contradicted. Depicting the special qualities of the area and how they relate to travel options requires skill and subtleness. Again intermediaries with direct experience the experience of travelling within the area, such as journalists and travel writers, can help portray the attraction of such holidays.

However, to avoid disappointment and so the failure to return, the product must match the promotion and information. A carless family will not be enamoured with an area promising a freedom ticket to travel, if they find there is only one bus a week.

## **Funding and Organisation**

This section first examines the possible sources of funding for aspects of visitor travel planning before describing some of the problems encountered implementing travel facilities for visitors.

### **Visitors pay**

Where the enhanced offer provides an obvious advantage to visitors they may be willing to pay for it directly. Many public transport providers have recognised this potential and offer rover tickets on a commercial basis. However, for visitors with cars, the paying fares may appear costly especially for families or groups. Group tickets can help reduce the margin and sometimes reminders of the advantages of using public transport, such as not having to find and pay for parking, better views or being able to do a linear walk (see Norfolk Green 2011) may tip the balance.

Relatively small transfers of passengers from car to public transport represent large increases in patronage. If these extra passengers are accommodated on existing services, they can help lift them to commercial operation. However, commercial transport providers often need evidence that new offers will increase patronage not abstract it from existing trade. A few operators have realised the potential, often with the help of local authorities, National Parks or other public authorities. Norfolk Green set up the Norfolk CoastHopper with

European funding and help from the North Norfolk Coast Partnership (which included two District Councils, Norfolk County Council and other organisations) but has managed to improve the offer to visitors with more frequent and better quality buses on a nearly commercial basis. It even has finger posts pointing to bus stops from the Norfolk Coast Path. Repeat visitors graduate from seeing the bus, to using it for day trips and then realising they can reach their accommodation by train and bus directly (Coulson 2010).

Promotion and provision of facilities such as footpaths, signage and bus stops are rarely paid for directly by users and it is difficult to provide the mechanisms to enable this. Voluntary payments may be solicited through visitor payback schemes such as 'Fix-the-fells' whereby visitors are asked to contribute to the cost of repairing and maintaining footpaths in the Lake District. Set up costs are high requiring channels for collection such as 'collection boxes, collection envelopes or donation leaflets in hotels, B&Bs, car parks, attractions, shops, buses or ferries' (Tourism Insights 2008). Increasing visitors' engagement by identifying the locations/repairs bought with each donation can raise more funds. For example, a Langdale Company sold 'metres' of footpath repairs with a certificate and map reference (Royce 2002) prompting donors to visit their stretch, often paying for another metre.

Voluntary opt-out schemes operate like local taxes, with businesses adding a small percentage to bills, which the customer can opt not to pay. Accreditation for participating businesses (Collier 2002), showing 'the green ticket' (Scott et al 2003) enhances uptake.

#### **Businesses pay**

Another way to finance visitor travel planning is through the businesses that benefit from the improved visitor offering. The New Forest has successfully started two new New Forest tours underwritten by attractions along its route. The evidence from the visitor figures and surveys of the first New Forest tour convinced the target attractions of the benefits to them (Gregory 2010). Breadalbane (Central Scotland) tourism businesses clubbed together to organize a similar tour (Scottish Enterprise 2012) which is partly funded by local authorities and concessionary travel re-imbursments.

Guiver et al (2006) found that visitor travel was not a priority for tourist attractions along Hadrian's Wall, with the managers more concerned about preserving the archaeology, enthusing visitors and maintaining or increasing footfall and incomes. Although keen to encourage arrivals by visitors not travelling by car, they perceived them as completely separate markets to the car-borne visitors, whom they felt were more willing to change destination than mode. Another barrier to participating in co-ordinated visitor planning was the rate of institutional change (for example proposed changes of ownership), which created a form of stasis, whereby staff could only focus on their key functions and were unable to contemplate improvements to more 'peripheral' activities.

#### **Public Authorities pay**

Tourism, with its fragmentation and the large number of micro-medium sized suppliers which '*both compete and co-operate with one another*' mean '*it requires*

*coordination of government, at the national and sub-national level'* (OECD 2002). These include authorities such as national and regional governments, Unitary, District County and Regional Councils and National Parks who pay in their capacity as the transport providers (for footpaths, cycleways, roads and certain kinds of infrastructure), enablers of public transport and supporters of local tourism.

Within civic administration, each level in the hierarchy of has different responsibilities and income streams. For example in the UK, District Councils, concerned with local planning and receive incomes from businesses as well as car parking revenues, are often responsive to the needs of tourism businesses in their area, especially where they are a substantial proportion of the total number of businesses (Moody 2013). County Councils deal with much larger areas and strategic planning, their budgets fund education, social services and they have recently taken responsibility for some public health matters. They also deal with transport planning and have to balance the needs of several districts with different mixes of employment and need. Local Parish Councils vary considerably in their effectiveness, but those of larger towns and villages can exert considerable influence (ibid).

Funding is frequently through a mix of public authorities. (For example the Brecon Beacons bus (2007) lists 15 funders including the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, four County Councils, six City or Borough Councils, a local tourism partnership, a passenger transport unit, the Forestry Commission Wales and the National Trust, an NGO. It is estimated that this service carried over 8,000 passengers and generated over £220,000 tourism spending in the area (Clark 2013). Planned improvements to cycling in the New Forest are to be funded by a grant from the Department for Transport's Linking Communities Fund and local authorities. The English Lake District's project to provide alternatives to car use in the National Park are financed through a grant from the Department of Transport's Local Sustainable Transport Fund and contributions from the National Park Authority and Cumbria County Council).

Public transport routes tend to cross administrative borders. This can lead to conflicting interests and disputes about the distribution of subsidies and revenues especially when priorities or administrations are changing. The joint funding of Hadrian's Wall bus by Cumbria County, Northumberland Councils and other partners was threatened by Cumbria County Council's decision to cut the budget for bus subsidies (Westmorland Gazette 10/3/2011). Local protests about utility bus cuts made it difficult to justify funding a bus, which largely takes visitors out of Cumbria. However withdrawal of major partner also threatened the total visitor offer provided by the bus which carries over 25,000 passengers a year (Northumberland National Park Authority 2013).

One area which appears to have united interests is Greenways in Pembrokeshire. It provides bus services (some previously fuelled by recycled vegetable oil) for walkers, opening and promoting walking and cycling routes and upgrading facilities and connections with inbound and outbound train and coach services (Roberts and Rees 2012). Its success is possibly due to the establishment of a

separate administration, with early funding from a European project, which brought together a number of organisations with different aims (such as promoting tourism, conserving and educating about the countryside, accessibility for disabled visitors and residents) which were served by the provision of better transport, information and coordination. However, its Havenlink boat service supported by Milford Haven Port Authority and South West Wales Tourism Partnership was stopped after three years because of lack of funding (Greenways 2012). Roberts (2013) reports that reduced financial contributions from several partners makes it difficult to ensure their engagement in decision-making. There is also less enthusiasm to help maintain schemes once they are up and running, than when they are being started (ibid).

Reductions in local government spending can directly impact on services, for example cuts in spending on Welsh buses have reduced services and seasons in Pembrokeshire and the Brecon Beacons and threaten those on the Gower Peninsular, while the Clwydian Ranger network was stopped in 2012 (Clark 2013). The uncertainty about public authority spending also makes planning difficult or even guarantee there will be a service in the next season. For the Hadrian's Wall bus this delays issuing timetables and prevents other outlets advertising the service which affects the travel plans of incoming tourists, especially from overseas (Moody 2004). Yet it has run for over 30 years, previously received funds from a number of public authorities (Dorset County Council 2004) and often been heralded as model service (see Reeves 2006).

National Parks and conservation areas are more likely to have boundaries corresponding to those of the destination area. National Parks' remit (in the UK) is to conserve their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and promote the understanding and enjoyment of their qualities to the public, while fostering the economic and social well being of local communities (Reeves 2006) which supports visitor travel planning. However, transport was found to be an early victim of reduced budgets (Reeves 2006). Increasingly National Parks are becoming more directed towards their commercial revenues as public funding reduces (Kirkbride 2013).

## NGOs

In a few cases, NGOs fund the provision of some local tourist travel. Friends of the Lake District helped finance and promote routes in the Lake District, until research showed the routes were not viable (Kirkbride and Moore 2011). However, there are examples of voluntary organisations organising local tourist travel facilities. Possibly the most successful in the UK is the Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company, run by volunteers who work with local bus companies to design the routes and seek out funding to support seasonal and year-long bus services for visitors to the Yorkshire Dales and Forest of Bowland Areas. They tap into a variety of funding resources, such as the National Lottery Fund, the EU, local County and District Councils, charities and concessionary travel re-imbursments (Speakman 2012).

Sustrans, a national NGO devoted to cycling and walking, organizes the provision and promotion of long distance trails and routes such as the C2C, Coast to Coast

between the coasts of Cumbria and Northumberland (built with funding from the Lake District National Park Authority, several local authorities, a tourism partnership and other NGOs (Cycle Guides 2013)). Nurture Lakeland (2013), another NGO which mobilises funding from its members and a variety of grants, has trialled the provision of information about local attractions and access by foot, cycle and bus to accommodation user through brochures and phone apps in its 'Fresh air is Free' project (Cade 2013).

The sheer number of organisations involved in each of these projects demonstrates the co-ordination and collaboration necessary to deliver some aspects visitor travel planning. Yet none of the projects/organisations detailed above provide comprehensive and strategic visitor travel planning: they mostly represent isolated attempts to provide an alternative, often to accommodate people without cars, while hoping to reduce visitor car use. It appears that no one agency has the resources or will/remit to be able to undertake long-term planning to provide car-free travel for visitors within their destination area.

## Discussion

A common problem is that destination areas straddle administrative boundaries, leading to conflict about who should fund an initiative as illustrated above by the cases of Lake Constance (Reghage 2010; Thimm 2012) and Hadrian's Wall bus. Even destinations within one district are likely to form a portion of a larger administrative area, where their interests compete with those of other areas and tourism tends to be low on the list of priorities, vying with concerns such as education, policing and social services, unless tourism is perceived as a significant income and employment generator, while elected councillors rarely see visitor travel as a priority, preferring to support services for voters, rather than visitors.

Transport Providers, largely commercial organisations, in the UK also have different administrative areas and priorities. Rural tourist areas usually lie on the periphery of a train company's area and priorities. Their attention focusses on the outward connections towards their heartlands, although community rail partnerships have been able to demonstrate the benefits of tourist trade, particularly to branch lines (Dallen 2007; Wood 2009). UK bus companies have traditionally been more concerned about competition from other bus companies than that from car travel, or the opportunities that presents. Because of route licensing rules, local authorities cannot support services which might compete with or abstract patronage from commercial services, which hampers many tourist service initiatives (Kirkbride 2010).

Local associations of businesses, such as Chambers of Commerce, Tourism and Hospitality Associations exert different degrees of influence over local priorities (see Dredge 1999). Most destination management organisations are now funded by businesses' subscriptions rather than regional or national public funding and their focus is increasingly becoming on marketing and promotion (Pike 2013) and issues of sustainability and planning are dropping off their agendas. Within

local authorities, there is a clear need to get transport and tourism planners around the same table, but many local authorities have ceased to include tourism in their areas of activity.

Another problem militating against establishing the partnerships needed to provide visitor travel planning is the volatility of the context. As well as having different structures, participating organisations are subject to internal changes in those structures as well as impacted by the changing outside environment for tourism and other spheres. Instability and uncertainty amongst stakeholders tends to halt initiatives as illustrated by Guiver et al. (2008) and the recent move of responsibility for local tourism from Regional Development Agencies to Local Enterprise Partnerships. Such changes produce uncertainty, loss of expertise and working relationships and for a temporary period (Dinan and Coles 2011). Shrinking budgets also tend to retrench organisations' activities into their core functions. In the UK, reduced public spending and the loss of a significant number of employees, means that even when officials recognise the value of visitor travel planning, they are unlikely to have any time to devote to it. In such times strategic planning, design of appropriate provision and creative promotion necessary seldom come together with sufficient funding to demonstrate what could be achieved. An exception to the trend, is the Lake District, where the award of a substantial grant from the Department for Transport for three years has led to the best example of visitor travel planning in the UK. Most of the projects are only entering their first season (2013), so their effectiveness cannot yet be judged (and in fact there is little provision for monitoring). Bringing together the partners necessary to make visitor travel planning work requires energy and vision and the ability to 'sell' the idea on a number of fronts. This requires strong leadership and the ability to gain the trust of different types of organisation, which themselves need time to develop. Often, the success of schemes referenced is due to one person's persistence, vision and negotiating skills.

## Discussion

The examples presented above demonstrate many of the issues discussed in the literature review. They include why tourism partnerships struggle to provide local sustainable tourism and for why some partnerships succeed in their efforts to increase the non-car tourist offer in their area.

The non-alignment of boundaries affects a number of areas. While rarely as extreme as the case of Lake Constance (Rehage 2010; Thimm 2012), it can cause conflict about who should fund an initiative such as Hadrian's Wall bus. There is always a temptation for one partner to threaten to reduce their contribution in the hope that others will continue to maintain the service (see (Jamal and Getz 1995; 200). Even destinations within one district are likely to form a portion of a larger administrative area, where their interests compete with those of other areas and tourism tends to be low on the list of priorities, vying with concerns such as education, policing and social services, unless tourism is perceived as a significant income and employment generator, while

elected councillors rarely see visitor travel as a priority, preferring to support services for voters, rather than visitors.

Transport Providers, largely commercial organisations, in the UK also have different administrative areas and priorities. Rural tourist areas usually lie on the periphery of a train company's area and priorities. Their attention focusses on the outward connections towards their heartlands, although community rail partnerships have been able to demonstrate the benefits of tourist trade, particularly to branch lines (Dallen 2007; Wood 2009). UK bus companies have traditionally been more concerned about competition from other bus companies than that from car travel, or the opportunities that presents. Because of route licensing rules, local authorities cannot support services which might compete with or abstract patronage from commercial services, which hampers many tourist service initiatives (Kirkbride 2010).

The mix of sectors such as public, private and voluntary also introduces tensions as illustrated by the different planning horizons for the Hadrian's Wall bus. Differences in priorities were revealed in an activity at a seminar for professionals involved in transport provision for tourists in rural areas. Bus operators and National Park employees put a high priority on reducing car use, with NGOs and academics prioritising social inclusion. Public servants appeared to want to meet all the aims (health, local spending, social inclusion, reduction of car use) with the result that their resources were spread very thinly (Guiver 2011). Within local authorities, there is a clear need to get transport and tourism planners around the same table, but many local authorities have ceased to include tourism in their areas of activity.

Local associations of businesses, such as Chambers of Commerce, Tourism and Hospitality Associations exert different degrees of influence over local priorities (see Dredge 1999). Most destination management organisations are now funded by businesses' subscriptions rather than regional or national public funding and their focus is increasingly becoming on marketing and promotion (Pike 2013) and issues of sustainability and planning are dropping off their agendas. The development of a partnership also creates its own dynamic, illustrated by the success of Greenways in Pembrokeshire, where it is proving more difficult to engage non-funding partners, especially now that services are established (Roberts 2013). Initiatives, like destinations (Butler 1980) and partnerships (Caffyn 2000) appear to have an attention life cycle and probably need revitalizing once they become stable.

It is not only the mix, but internal changes within participating organisations which prevents planning. Shrinking budgets also tend to retrench organisations' activities into their core functions. In the UK, reduced public spending and the loss of a significant number of employees, means that even when officials recognise the value of visitor travel planning, they are unlikely to have any time to devote to it. In such times strategic planning, design of appropriate provision and creative promotion necessary seldom come together with sufficient funding to demonstrate what could be achieved. Instability and uncertainty amongst stakeholders tends to halt initiatives as illustrated by Guiver et al. (2008). In the

wider context, the recent move of responsibility for local tourism from Regional Development Agencies to Local Enterprise Partnerships. Such changes produce uncertainty, loss of expertise and working relationships and for a temporary period (Dinan and Coles 2011).

Most of the volatility in the areas reported springs from the organisations supplying the tourism services, rather than the demand as reported in the literature review (eg Beritelle, Biegerand and Laesser 2013; Jamal and Stronza 2009; World Economic Forum 2009). This may be because non-car travel still represents such a small proportion of tourist travel within these mature, largely domestic, tourist destinations.

There seem to be a number of contributing factors to the several successes reported in providing alternatives to car travel within a region. Bringing together the partners necessary to make visitor travel planning work requires energy and vision and the ability to 'sell' the idea on a number of fronts. This requires strong leadership (perhaps the visionary leadership mentioned by Wang and Xiang 2007) and the ability to gain the trust of different types of organisation, which themselves need time to develop. Often, the success of schemes referenced is due to one person's persistence, vision, negotiating skills and sometimes willingness to take risks. We would suggest that this has been a major influence in the case of the Brecon Beacons, Lake District, Moorsbus, New Forest and Yorkshire Dales.

Guaranteed funding from outside organisations (such as European Union, Big lottery, Department for Transport, Regional Development Agency), usually obtained through numerous rounds of bidding, have helped planning and delivery of several projects (eg Pembrokeshire, the New Forest, Lake District and Yorkshire Dales). Although the funding rarely runs long enough for service stability and growth (see Gronau and Kagermeier 2007), it is much easier to get organisations round a table to plan services when the funding is secured.

Existing networks (Wang and Xian 2007) also seemed to have helped deliver ambitious plans in part of the Lake District where there are active collaborations between the Lake District National Park Authority, Cumbria County Council, South Lakes District Council, Cumbria Tourism, Friends of the Lake District, Nurture Lakeland and other organisations.

## Conclusions

The paper has presented the case for visitor travel planning to help reduce the environmental impact of visitor travel within a destination, influence modes of arrival, improve the local tourist offering and generate additional local spending. The literature review explored the environmental impacts of tourist travel, the use of travel planning for utility travel and how it differs from leisure travel. The section about stakeholders and partnerships underlined the 'messiness' of local tourism alliances and their own changeability within an extremely volatile environment. It included some views that the development of any tourist

destination is more likely to be influenced by external factors (markets, ideology etc.) than the efforts of a local tourism destination organisation.

The next sections set out the types of instruments used in visitor travel planning and our observations of their use in rural tourist destinations with the UK. The potential funding and organisational models were described in the next section along with how they have been put into practice. The discussion section describes some of the problems of implementing visitor travel planning and factors in the success of some of the projects observed.

The main barriers to visitor travel planning appear to be the absence or weakness of any agency which might implement it. The common factor for organisations involved in tourism destination management partnerships is that visitor travel planning is not their main objective. Yet, even if funding can be secured, the strategic thinking and planning needs to be co-ordinated in order to give visitors a comprehensive and coherent alternative to car use. Whether or not that is addressed through a formal partnership, it requires consultation and co-ordination with the organisations concerned with tourism and travel in the area: accommodation providers, attractions, retailers, transport providers, local authorities, local NGOs, etc. each with different degrees of cohesiveness and power to act in their members' interest. Although it may be instrumental in achieving their aims, which may diverge considerably, visitor travel planning is will not be at the top of their agenda.

Reducing the carbon emissions from tourism and other human activities is of the utmost importance for the welfare of current and future populations and the planet. Within tourism, travel planning within the destination appears to provide a win-win-win situation, benefitting most stakeholders, including the local environment. Yet, the difficulties of organising, funding and co-ordinating appear to present barriers which can only be overcome either when it comes to the top of the agenda of an organisation with the will and resources to implement it helped by a determined individual who can push it forward.