Background
My husband and I set up the Hawkshead Relish business following the Foot & Mouth epidemic that hit rural communities in 2001. Already making a few relishes and preserves we diversified and took our products to a consumer that was no longer able to reach us due to travel and access restrictions.
Within a few years the brand grew and became established and known throughout the UK. Our aim has always been to create jobs and a sustainable business in the rural setting of the Lake District and put back into our local economy as much as possible and to help and encourage others to do the same. From the small start of making just 12 jars a day with two members of staff, we now have 25 staff all living locally and make around 5,000 jars a day, all by hand in a 16th barn on the edge of Esthwaite close to the picturesque village of Hawkshead.

Submission
Marketing
In the past few weeks the Lake District has seen an influx of visitors to the area, due in part to the increase of marketing following the devastating storms of last winter, the media have been asked to promote the Lake District with filming, print media and online services all point out that it is a great place. The difference this had made is measureable against the figures for visitors in previous years and from our experience with our retail shop where footfall has increased exponentially as a result of the roads re-opening and added marketing.
However, this needs to be maintained. In this digital age, bad news especially travels far and wide in an instant. We have customers globally and when the floods hit the region last December it was reported worldwide, the following clean up and re-opening however is not reported, my distributor in Japan for example assumed that we were closed and not accepting orders, purely on the back of the BBC news reporting.
It is vital that the marketing continues and is not just as the result of disaster management, is clear and reaches as wide an audience as possible, certainly for areas such as the Lake District which receives 16.4 million visitors a year and 24 million day visitors (Source – STEAM 2014 Cumbria Tourism)

Access
Many of the roads in Cumbria (The Lake District) need attention, the weather impact of storm Desmond in December had left the roads in very poor states and the County Council completely overwhelmed by the task in hand. The A591 was closed from early December through to mid-May which had a huge impact on tourism for the businesses locally. The lack of information, assistance or support for business during this time was devastating and in some ways was a repeat of the experiences from Foot & Mouth to a lesser degree.
Insufficient consideration was given to keeping the roads open and traffic flowing freely. Likewise when repairs have to be made to busy arterial routes they should be done
overnight so there is less disruption to the tourism and working community at peak times of
the year.

Infrastructure and Skills

In the past few years the community of Hawkshead has battled to maintain a doctors
surgery in the village, we are now faced with potentially losing the Pharmacy both due to a
lack of funding.

The visitor numbers coming to Hawkshead treble in the summer months, with people
coming for days out cycling, walking, climbing and running, families who come to camp, stay
in holiday cottages and caravans, all of whom may need to see the doctors whether for
ongoing treatment or for an emergency, indeed, we have a people who come for respite
and palliative care breaks who need intensive and critical care during their stay and all of
these people need the services of the rural GP practice. However, with the number of
holiday homes in the immediate area, the number of residents is vastly reduced in
proportion to the properties and therefore the numbers registered with the GP’s has been
the cause of the threatened closure. For the time being it has been saved by amalgamating
with two other local practices, but the bigger picture of looking at the additional services for
a growing population over the holiday period is not factored into the funding.

The village, like many in the Lake District is an hour from the nearest hospital, in the
summer months this can easily take half as long again, for the residents of the community
this can have serious consequences when dealing with life threatening conditions.

Local Environment & Character

Villages such as Hawkshead receive many thousands of visitors throughout the season, and
year round, yet there is no assistance to maintain and keep the streets clean, tidy and well
kept, many of the local residents look after their own properties, and what was once
referred to as a chocolate box village is becoming a tired, worn and sad looking and the
businesses are struggling to maintain themselves without additional costs of upkeep of
areas beyond their properties. It would be helpful to have someone responsible for the
upkeep of public areas, where saplings are growing alongside the roads, in the past these
would be cut and maintained. Now they grow into sizeable trees, and undermine the roads
and walls, causing dangerous conditions.

Transport to and from these small villages is intermittent, as many people travel by train we
need the infrastructure in place to help these visitors to reach the smaller communities
without recourse to using a car.

Parking is a huge issue in Hawkshead, the car park for the village is run by the LDNPA (Lake
District National Park Authority) they set the parking charges and collect fines. The village
has a small car park run by the parish council and for which residents of the village can apply
and pay for a space, although at most it will park around 30 cars only. There is a small
amount of short stay residents only parking in the centre of the village, and beyond that
there is no on street parking in the village at all. So if a visitor is staying in a holiday cottage
outside the village and wants to pop in to the shops in Hawkshead for say bread, milk and a
newspaper they have to park in the car park and pay for two hours minimum. So the reality
is that they drive to other towns and villages nearby where there is free on road parking
available, or they have their shopping delivered by one of the supermarket multiples and cut out the local shops altogether. There needs to be a fairer system in place for communities such as Hawkshead.

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