Based on my own experiences of establishing and growing a rural tourist based business (small campsite);

Of course we are at the mercy of the weather in the U.K. There should be greater support taking account of this fundamental dictator.

Marketing: How well do agencies promote rural destinations across England? What more should be done?

My experience is locally it is poor. Nationally via ‘Visit England’ it is good. Encouragement of stronger communication by agencies with the tourism sector.

* Access: What changes, if any, are needed to give people better access to the coast and countryside?

Public transport- Affordable shuttle Park and ride (even enforced) is definitely required during summer months to ease congestion of popular tourist destinations/attractions to make days/stays out to remember......not just because of the horrendous traffic queues! It is getting more congested and dangerous on the roads.

* Funding and fiscal policies: How can public funding be best targeted to support new rural tourist businesses?

Identification and support for key tourist areas, where demand outweighs supply.

* Planning and regulation: What, if any, changes are needed to regulations covering special rural areas? Planning assessment/applications of new rural tourist businesses are penalised for being rurally ‘isolated’. This word crops up in the NPPF and can be interpreted by LPAs in many downgrading ways.

* Infrastructure and skills: What measures are needed to ensure infrastructure meets visitor needs?

Maintenance! Policies encourage sustainable transport but in the rural environment many cycle routes/footpaths are impassable due to being grossly impeded by vegetation! and are generally unmanaged. This is offputting, limiting and disappointing for tourists to rural areas. In addition, with the vast amount of traffic on the roads, rural visitors enjoy a more
peaceful mode of transport... only to find it frustrating and impassable. Greater awareness and marketing of ‘useable’ routes is also required.

* Local environment and character: How can policies balance the needs of tourism and the environment? Enhancements and benefits to the environment and local character and communities should be a requirement (planning condition) of all planning consents! Appropriate to whether it be town or country. A benefit balance needs to be struck at all levels, not just focusing on gain and greed. This is being overlooked.

* Defra role: Should Defra play a role encouraging other government departments to support rural tourism? Yes, they probably have a greater understanding of some areas, particularly of weakness, where tourism may strengthen and benefit rural areas.

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