Written evidence submitted by the Gloucestershire Local Access Forum (RUT0043)

Marketing

As the branding of an area is a central part of developing a perception of what visitors will receive when they visit, research (if there is no up to date information) into current perceptions of target visitor groups will provide core information that will indicate how the marketing budget is best spent and where emphasis is placed.

Perhaps more publicity emphasising the enjoyment of countryside all year round, ‘there’s no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes’.

Access

Many visitors will use private cars to travel around and parking is an issue in many rural areas. A scheme for all an area’s car parks can be paid for using a daily or weekly ticket may be welcomed by visitors.

The Local Access Forum is specifically concerned about access to the countryside for the public using footpaths, bridleway and byways and the removal of stiles and gates allows better access for all. A local scheme in the Cotswolds AONB has created a number of stile free walking routes.

Better signage of routes, not just at the start and end but also regular waymarks and other indicators, would encourage visitors to venture further from their cars. Where businesses control routes more flexibility could allow more access during long summer evenings.

Planning and Regulation

Providing sympathetic planning permission guidelines and tax advantages for rural businesses will encourage them to have the long term confidence to invest and grow their businesses.

Infrastructure

Encouraging rural businesses to support and recommend each other is a central plank to sustain and develop rural businesses and their profitability. A co-operative approach by local businesses could ease their marketing costs.

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