I have operated a holiday park in the Peak District for 17 years, also collaborating with an EU based marketing organization & attending tourism expositions in Utrecht, (Netherlands), Sweden, as well as the NEC, GMEX, Manchester and so on.

1. The marketing budget in the UK is totally inadequate. The Vakantieboeurs outdoor show in Utrecht is a perfect example with huge stands for France, Spain, Italy – and the UK represented on a few tiny stands lumped in the smallest salon with the likes of Latvia.

2. At the last tourism conference I attended, Visit Peak District cited a 25:1 return on marketing investment. Obviously the marginal return will fall as more money is invested – but at that return there is a long, long way to go – there should be more investment.

3. Visit England did not even exist for years – and is grossly & unfairly underfunded compared to visit Scotland, both in outright terms – still more relative to population and receipts from English businesses. What funding there is is totally London centric – there was virtually zero dispersal of tourism spend from the London Olympics.

4. In my experience there is virtually zero awareness abroad of England apart from York & London.

Actions –
- increase UK marketing budget, particularly for English regions.
- Allow SME’s to work alongside tourism staff to communicate their superior knowledge and passion for their area.

Access

The local bus stops directly outside our site - and is often used by our guests – but no account is taken of their usage patterns, even though they probably use it as much as the locals. There is also nil information given out. We have provided a lot of accommodation that is suitable for people who don’t own cars – but the bus service is now under threat, due to budget cuts.

- Maintain the bus service.
- Improve the timetable & marketing of the same – start by consulting with tourism businesses.

Funding & Fiscal Policies

Tourist businesses need to be sustainable in the long term, therefore there is no point giving tax breaks for start-ups only for them to founder when they end. In the long run you need more customers, otherwise more businesses with the same number of clients just leads to a churn of business start ups & failures. However, our rates have increased about 20 fold in 17 years, in return for which we get – nothing. We have no mains sewer, no street lighting, a 3rd world broadband & mobile phone service, we pay for waste disposal on top. Local fire, ambulance & police services have been cut, weekend A & E is 45 minutes away at weekends.

Actions
- Cut local rates to a fair level commensurate with the poor level of service provision in rural areas for ALL tourist businesses.
- Increase the marketing to attract new customers for business to serve.
Planning etc

Planning policies are applied with a broad brush, even where (for example) local topography may result in no visual impact. Greater consideration should be given to the detail of each individual application & its landscape impact – but the latter should remain of prime importance.

Actions
- Alter planning policy to be supportive of development where there is (strictly) no visual impact.

Infrastructure and skills - Issues

1. There is a chronic shortage of affordable housing in the area considering the wages in tourism are fairly low, and, with current levels of VAT, rates etc there is little scope to increase wages, whilst keeping tourist businesses viable.

2. There is a lack of skilled labour – chefs, waiting-on staff and so on ARE skilled, if they are good.

Actions:
- Permit tourism businesses to provide staff accommodation.
- Provide more training support to re-train older staff who are ineligible for apprenticeships.
- Make it easier to get rid of non-performing staff, so there is less risk in taking staff on – particularly as (bluntly) we are now scraping the barrel, when it comes to the current pool of unemployed labour.

• Local environment and character: How can national and local policies get the right balance between growing tourism and enhancing the local environment and character?

The policies can resolve this by simply focusing on the environmental impact of expanding local businesses/creating new ones. Whilst some proposed projects will inevitably have a visual impact, or traffic impact that cannot be mitigated and will make the proposal unacceptable, many proposed sites can be made acceptable– provided suitable investment is made in tree planting and so forth.

In my view, the planning system should permit the hospitality/tourism industry to expand – but demand more in terms of investment in good architecture, materials, landscaping and so forth.

The current problem is that planning policies are not joined up and are used as a tool to obstruct development without consideration of the bigger picture. E.g. if one policy appears to oppose a proposal, that is usually sufficient for a refusal.

In many cases the expansion of existing sites will be attractive because:

1. There is already likely to be some impact caused by an existing site; better to have a marginal increase than impact a new area.
2. Opportunities to expand an existing site could be granted with strings – including the improvement of existing landscaping & infrastructure.
3. Economies of scale may well render a plethora of new small sites uneconomic – and result in dilapidated projects without the resources to invest in landscaping/sewerage treatment plants/high quality buildings and so forth.

• Defra role: What more should the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs do to ensure government departments (including Departments for Communities and Local Government, Business, Innovation and Skills, Culture Media and Sport and HM Treasury)
support rural tourism?

It could start by making its rural payments on time, reducing its propensity to continually change its web site and be a bureaucratic nightmare, and actually respond to our emails – which it doesn’t bother doing presently. We are still waiting for a response for our 2016 claim.

Secondly, it could prevail upon CMS to remove the BT Openreach monopoly so there is some prospect of a viable Broadband service so we can run our business properly, and provide a service for customers.

Thirdly, it could correct the erroneous belief that people who work in the hospitality & tourism service are “low skilled” – people capable of providing customer service at the highest level most certainly are not.

_August 2015_