As the curator of a tiny museum in the heart of The North Pennines AONB for the last 31 years I have gained an understanding of some of the difficulties facing rural tourism in this part of the world, though I may not be able to express these in terms of public policy.

**Definitely the greatest difficulty is lack of product in areas which are remote from main markets and have scattered local population.**

Marketing: How well do agencies promote rural destinations across England? What more should the Government do to support this work?

Marketing agencies are looking to promote their best sellers (their flagships) the places which already attract the most visitors. In County Durham special arrangements are made to promote the leaflets of the 10 biggest attractions, travel journalists are entertained in tours of flagship attractions, website coverage is biased in favour of those who can pay most and budgets are spent promoting Durham City. The hope that tourists will trickle out does not materialise with travellers who now opt more and more for short breaks.

Administrative boundaries often work to the detriment of rural areas – for example the North Pennines is partly in Durham, partly in Northumberland and partly in Cumbria. The Destination Agencies are unable to spend beyond their administrative boundaries and there is too little product to market in their small portion. Visit County Durham thus markets Durham City and its environs, Northumberland markets the Roman Wall and the Coast, Cumbria markets the Lakes.

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

Funding and fiscal policies: How can public funding be best targeted to get new rural tourist businesses off the ground and keep them going? Are changes needed to tax levels and business rates?

There is a big chicken and egg problem for tourism and businesses in rural areas.

1) There is not enough product to attract visitors in large volumes.

2) Businesses find it difficult to established and sustain new product because there are insufficient visitors. (particularly in the off peak season).
Planning and regulation: What, if any, changes are needed to planning and other regulations covering rural areas of special character, such as National Parks, to encourage sustainable tourism?

Where destinations cross political administrative boundaries as with the North Pennines Destination planning and regulation need to be relaxed so that spending can occur across boundaries.

Infrastructure and skills: What measures are needed to ensure transport, housing and other infrastructure meets visitor needs? How can the sector ensure there are enough people with the right skills to support customers and businesses?

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

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?

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