I am responding to this inquiry to highlight certain risks applicable to the highly important tourism industry in this region, which represents a significant proportion of employment locally. Tourism provides myself and my wife with employment and the major part of our income.

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

1. I am not aware of govt agencies promoting rural destinations at all. Even the highly successful and effective local tourism authority, WtY is completely funded by its members. While this is not unreasonable, a level playing field would be appreciated, as others (e.g. Scottish authorities) receive govt funding. In this area, local govt and National Park authorities try their best to promote tourism, but money is so tight that this will soon be a top priority for abolition, even though it supports employment and job creation – often a high priority for these authorities.

2. While individual businesses must be responsible for their own advertising and promotion, the vast majority will be small family concerns and are therefore unable to promote areas or regions, such as Yorkshire or North York Moors National Park.

3. Govt needs to be acutely aware of both the employment numbers and the visitor spend that rural areas absolutely rely on for present and future viability (alongside agriculture).

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

4. This area suffers from relatively poor and limited road and rail communications. Due to spending cuts, the bus network can barely be described as a network and is quite inadequate for local travel need, never mind tourists. Hence more visitors are forced onto the barely adequate road network, that suffers regular gridlock during peak season (and rush hour). The A64 often resembles a car park. The fast approaching spectre of fracking and the inevitable huge increase in HGV traffic this would bring can only make this situation markedly worse on main arterial routes. On small rural road and lanes it will be even worse, dependent on who is expected to pay for bridge and road strengthening and maintenance, alongside the inevitable increase in accidents and incidents.

**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?**

5. Tourism businesses inevitably struggle in the first few years, due to the costs of setting up, building, getting known etc. This must be recognised by taxation and rates.
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?

6. First and foremost, the term ‘sustainable’ must be adequately defined. Sustainable must mean capable of operating successfully in the long term without damaging or destroying those things and places that visitors are attracted to. There should also be a recognition that all our NPs and virtually all the scenery are man-made, and therefore capable of adapting – preferably in an organic and gradual way. NP planners appear to work reasonably well and mainly in accordance with local needs and requirements in this respect, although they should not be subject to central govt pressure.

7. NPs (and other protected designations) are another area where fracking has a huge potential to damage both tourism and the environment that NPs were specifically set up to protect.

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?

8. Here’s a major problem. Those all need funding, and nobody wants to part with any. While multi-national businesses amass huge profits and routinely avoid taxation, SMEs and small businesses pay the price. Most rural tourism businesses are precisely those small businesses. Much of the local small scale infrastructure and services in rural areas is increasingly being run by overworked volunteers. I have no doubt this is the same all over the country. These people are becoming burned out, overburdened and not replaced when they die or keel over from exhaustion. There is a severe danger of essential services collapsing. There must be a strong core of professional people with the necessary training, funding and support to avoid this. Effective taxation is necessary to pay for this.

9. The current planning system; NPPF; planning authorities; planning inspectorate strongly supports those large developers of market housing with the necessary financial and legal clout. Small developers and those of social housing (like hen’s teeth) or affordable housing (there’s another that needs defining properly) have virtually no power.

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

10. For a start, let local people decide what their areas need, rather than dictating from the centre. Fracking is an excellent subject in point, where despite the rhetoric about Localism, decisions are being taken away to ‘head office’. In the case of a remote and rural area like N Yorkshire, with well established, long term, sustainable and successful employment through agriculture and tourism, fracking is likely to be a short term and potentially damaging industry. It is only able to operate through a
proliferation of well pads, therefore industrialising the countryside. There can be no denying the amount of traffic it will create, the amount of water to be tankered in and the waste water to be tankered out. This is before even thinking about the very real risks of water and air pollution, noise and light pollution and health issues. These risks to both agriculture and tourism are likely to destroy more long-term, sustainable jobs than the short term, unsustainable ones created instead.¹

11. It must also be appreciated that it is not only actual harm from fracking that will damage existing industries, but also the perceived harm. Mainly due to environmental damage from the oil and gas industry in the US and Australia, people will not want to eat produce from areas with fracking and many will also choose other tourism destinations, given the choice. The DEFRA report that the govt made strenuous efforts to hide, then to discredit when they failed, is quite clear on the impacts on the rural economy. Honesty, openness and integrity have been woefully lacking from govt and industry in the whole fracking debate.² Selectively quoting from a small number of outdated reports (PHE, RS etc), then ignoring a burgeoning raft of independent, peer review science is quite scandalous and short sighted when many rural economies are at severe risk from unsustainable development. That’s without even starting on climate change, easily the greatest risk to human existence.

12. There also needs to be a realistic appraisal of the balance between numbers of tourists and the overwhelming of those very things that attracts them in the first place by people and traffic.

13. The issue of second homes destroying the character of pretty rural villages need addressing somehow. A well known, but thorny issue. It destroys community and amenities and artificially raises house prices beyond local means. Unfortunately, there are a pathetically small number of genuinely affordable or social houses being built to compensate (see para 9).

14. Back to sustainability –the authorities must correctly define and interpret this word if local environment and character are to be protected and preserved (but not in Aspic!)

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?

15. The Environment Agency (EA) can barely cope with a small number of applications to frack. It will be completely swamped if the industry gets a toehold, with potentially drastic consequences for tourism.

16. Central govt agencies would be far better advised to facilitate regional or local authorities to support rural tourism themselves, with their local knowledge, after putting a guiding framework and a degree of funding in place.


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