Introduction

The wellbeing of Rural Tourism cannot be seen by itself. It is inextricably linked and is secondary to the health of the rural economy and environment as a whole. The growth of tourism can be a mixed blessing in rural areas, and can either be part of the decline of other areas of the rural economy, or part of its revitalisation. Growth of tourism has limits. Whilst a sensible amount can boost sustainable rural economic activity, too much can be seen as parasitic... and can kill it's host.

Marketing.

1) The 'product' must live up to the sales pitch. In the future tourism marketing for Ryedale will have to say 'Come to Ryedale : the home of the Fracking industry' We doubt that this will be a big pull. Marketing must understand what visitors might be looking for, and make sure that a healthy countryside environment and flourishing communities are there to welcome visitors. Tourism needs to be seen as additional to the local economy, not a replacement for it. Tourism is supported by other industries, such as farming and forestry and these are supported in turn by tourism. Many long term jobs in Ryedale will be either directly or indirectly put at risk from the fracking industry, which may well turn out to be a boom and bust phenomenon, rather than a solid and sustainable sector

2) In some areas of the U.K. there is spectacular scenery, and these areas, (such as National Parks) strict limits are imposed on activities that can happen there. This means that these areas will have 'pretty' farming, whilst areas that are seen to be less picturesque will be home to the industrial farming units that nobody wants to see. These areas, such as the flat-lands of the fens, may have wonderful soil and could also host 'visitor attractive' farming, but on the whole, due to lack of visitors, this is not the case. A spread of visitors to less obviously attractive parts of the country could lessen pressure on beauty spots and encourage more attractive and environmentally sustainable farming methods in these areas.

3) Other areas rely on their peace and quiet, or their 'unspoiled' qualities. Industrial activities, such as Fracking will adversely affect that quality

4) People may visit for local specialties, such as food products. Any perception of contamination will adversely affect this growing clientele. In our area, Malton is becoming known as a 'Food Hub” with new high quality food enterprises springing up that support the local sustainable farming economy. Fracking will clearly have a detrimental effect on this growing and healthy sector. Future investment in this area will be discouraged, putting a stop to the growth of employment in these area.

5) People increasingly come to areas, such as Ryedale, for cultural events such as music festivals or literary and other cultural events, Increased traffic and industrialization, as might arise from fracking, and industrial activity will adversely affect this. Others come to visit stately homes or other attractions ... in our area the biggest attractions such as Castle
Howard, other stately homes and Flamingo-land Zoo and funfair have all said that they will be badly affected by fracking. Flamingo-land, in particular, being so close to the proposed fracking site at Kirkbymisperton are worried both about their animals health and about those that stay in the caravan site that is so close to the fracking well. Will anyone want to stay there in the future?

2) Some people come to see special sites of interest, or wildlife. Biodiversity is likely to suffer if the landscape is industrialized by fracking. Night-time noise, light pollution, vibration and other pollution could adversely affect wildlife.

3) In our area horse racing is a big industry and feeds into visitor numbers at race meetings throughout the country. Horses can be very susceptible to the pollutants from fracking, and many vets have voiced concerns. If horse health is affected, it could be the end of horse training in the area.

4) Some visitors just want to find a living countryside, with communities engaged in farming, and other rural occupations. They may want to 'reconnect' to nature, and to witness the natural rhythms or the seasons. They may want to introduce children to where their food comes from, and what life away from a screen can offer. They may want to engage in sport and exercise. The industrialization that comes with Fracking will impact badly on these visitors who will chose to go elsewhere.

5) New Reports that fracking can be linked to many health problems, such as asthma, migraine, are hardly likely to attract visitors

Ways in which tourism can benefit the rural economy:

Tourism can add income to by providing accommodation, and by providing a market for local products. This, in turn, can create jobs, and sustain the production of local specialties, which increases the character of particular places. These can help to maintain the base activities of farming and woodland management.

It can increase understanding about the natural world for urban people.

It can increase understanding about the nature of food production for urban people. These last two will help to counter the ever heavy pressure to lower food prices.

Ways in which tourism can be harmful:

Too much of the available housing being used for second homes/holiday lets. This pushes up the price of housing in rural areas, and prevents lower paid rural workers from living in their own communities. It means that local services such as shops and schools become unviable, and can close.

Villages become 'dead' out of season. Transport that is based around tourism often is not there out of season for locals.

Concentration on history and 'quaintness': Preservation can get in the way of fresh thinking about sustainable rural living, It doesn't have to be a negative, but if the countryside is to be considered as a living place change is inevitable.

Traffic levels can increase, impacting on peace and quiet. In our area it can impact on rural occupations... such as shepherding of sheep on the common land and moors.

Access;

1) The less public transport that there is, the more people rely on the car. If the villages become deserted due to too many holiday homes a vicious circle can arise.
2) Transport for tourism must make it easier to arrive on a bus or train with a bicycle. Increased HGV traffic from fracking will discourage sustainable transport. The wear and tear on rural roads will also be very detrimental and expensive.

3) Most transport for tourism is much reduced out of season, making much less useful for local people, with a knock-on effect that it is difficult to live as a non-driver in rural communities. Access for non-driving elderly or disabled people, or young people is thereby very limited.

4) What public transport there is, is very expensive, making it prohibitive for families on low incomes to visit. There is a lack of coordination between public transport operators. These problems exacerbate the viability problems of local communities, which contribute to their demise or transformation into uninhabited holiday villages.

5) Subsidized, coordinated, regular community transport could make a big impact for locals and visitors alike, and would lead to more people meeting each other.

6) Rural speed limits, such as the forty mile an hour limit in place in the New Forest national park, should be considered in other areas, particularly National parks. This would enable visitors to appreciate their surroundings, run over less wild life and use less fuel.

Funding and Fiscal policies:

1) Second homes should pay twice the amount of council tax. This would either discourage second home ownership and thus make more housing available to local communities, or, when paid, add greatly to the coffers of hard pressed local councils, thus enabling them to counteract the disadvantages of sparsely spread communities, such as supporting local transport initiatives.

2) A Land value tax should be imposed

3) A small tax on tourist visits, who come to enjoy the surroundings, would help pay for the upkeep of what they like to see, such as stone walls, and field barns and environmental conservation schemes.

4) If fracking is to go ahead there must be compensation bonds held by local councils that are sufficient to pay for any damage that may be caused by contamination, wear and tear to roads, and harm to local businesses. Otherwise who will be paying?

Planning and Regulation:

It should not be permitted to separate a farmhouse from the farm land.

'Change of use' permission should be sought when a permanent home is transformed into a second home or holiday let.

All new housing in the countryside should be affordable, low environmental impact, and for local needs only.

Creating/maintaining a 'balanced' population, in terms of age, should be a material consideration in planning in order to encourage young people to stay in the countryside.

Cumulative impact of industries and tourism should be given great weight as planning issues. Fracking, in particular has the capacity to harm the rural environment, and to impact upon other ways of earning a livelihood, such as farming and tourism. At the moment, because each fracking application has to be looked at one at a time, there is no way in which a projected cumulative effect can be countered. Clarification about this issue is urgently needed. At the moment we are told that a precedent has not been set by the granting of one application. However it is unlikely that a single well
will be viable, especially in the light of each fracking license requiring maximizing of the resources. Material considerations of cumulative effect should take account of the exploitation of each license area, and the likely infrastructure that would be needed to support that, in terms of pipelines, compressor plants, traffic increases and pollution, before they are applied for. Otherwise, the cumulative effect will be devastating. It should be possible to require that any such extracted gas, is extracted to the highest possible standards and used to a high level of efficiency, for the maintenance of the national power supply, and that it is to replace any imported gas within a short time frame. (i.e. not twenty years+)

Similarly, with tourism, the cumulative effect should be a planning consideration, with permission for more holiday accommodation withheld when a certain saturation point has been reached. This would necessitate information being kept about the use of rural dwellings.

Infrastructure and Skills:

Jobs in the countryside are changing, with many people working from home through the use of the internet. Many places have weak connections, but cannot afford better. Local schemes fail through poor co-ordination with commercial providers, and a lack of sensitivity to the landscape creating opposition, particularly in National Parks. Fibre Optics could solve much of the problem of poor broadband connection, leaving poor mobile phone connections as more of a safety issue in these areas. These internet based jobs are not necessarily connected to the land, and will not, in the long run create the landscapes that people want to visit as the skills to maintain those landscapes will have died out.

Enterprises of unusual types, such as thatching, milling, charcoal burning, woodland and coppicing crafts that could create viable rural livelihoods may not fit into the available apprenticeship schemes. Ways for subsidising trainees on the job need to be found so that rural skills can be passed on.

Local Environment and Character:

A positive sense of place is vital to tourism. Pollution and Industrialisation from both farming and fracking are capable of harm to both wildlife and human health. Even the public perception of either will harm both farming and tourism, which both depend upon a healthy environment. It is not all change that has to be avoided, it is harmful change. The precautionary principal must be used, and not merely mouthed. Sustainable and environmentally sound methods of farming should be encouraged and our soils and waterways kept healthy. Any future subsidies for farming should be towards this aim. Farming that encourages employment and access to land will be the bedrock of future rural communities with economies that are connected to the land. These in turn will create places that people want to visit.

D.E.F.R.A.s role:

1) They should commission a new report into the possible impacts of fracking on the rural environment, economy, and social environment. Since the government seems to say that the last one was inadequate. This should happen with some urgency, before the rural environment is despoiled.

2) A sustainable tourism industry relies on the landscape and surroundings and social networks being in good health. It cannot be separated from it's surroundings. The following actions would support that healthy countryside environment which would, in turn support sustainable tourism.
3) The role of DEFRA is to counteract the corporate lobbies that seek to despoil our rural environment for commercial gain. There should be a national food and water policy, that connects the health of the population, environment and biodiversity with food production and national food security. A lot is talked about in terms of national energy security, why not food and water? A clear set of directives would make it possible to steer what happens in the countryside better.

4) They should have policies led by evidence, rather than the otherway around, and could contribute to that evidence by putting back the ADAS research facilities that were first privatised and then closed by previous governments. There was research into new organic methods of farming that were not about selling agrochemicals but about sound new thinking. They could look at robustness of our soil management, which is our most valuable asset. They could do work on BioChar and how to enable its best use. They should be examining the looming crisis of phosphate depletion, and overuse of nitrogen fertilisers. This research is difficult to fund otherwise. In the end good maintenance of the land will lead to sustainable tourism.

5) The government should have some sort of policy on land use. At the moment, land value is not related to it’s productivity which makes a nonsense of the economics of many farming activities. Land is being treated as some sort of speculative piggy bank.

6) It would be good to revive the agricultural training board which offered such useful and practical help to farmers.

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