Written evidence submitted by John Lamb (RUT0171)

1. Marketing.
   1.1 I think that the agencies are doing well in promoting rural destinations across England in terms of printed literature, in the media and online information.
   1.2 The Government should continue to support this work both in principle and with funding. The Government could also help with ongoing IT development such as apps for mobile phones and tablets.

   2.1 In order to give people better access to the coast and countryside, there needs to be public transport for the substantial number of people who do not have access to a vehicle.
   2.2 People who do have a vehicle need to be able to find somewhere to park it whilst they visit the coast/countryside.
   2.3 People also need to know where to go, and where they can go, including on foot, bicycle and on horseback. This requires signage out on site and routes being available on maps and on mobile phones and tablets.

3. Funding and fiscal policies. No comment.

4. Planning and regulation.
   4.1 Development control and other regulations are required to cover rural areas in general as well as areas of special character, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coasts and National Parks, commensurate with their status, but this should not prevent sustainable tourism and in many cases sustainable tourism should be encouraged and promoted.
   4.2 Whilst areas of special character do warrant development control and other regulations, this should not be at the expense of other areas, especially those that are closer to cities and towns, and more accessible to larger numbers of people both in terms of distance from home, travel time and cost of getting there.
   4.3 The planning and regulatory system, including Local Plan Policies, the National Planning Policy Framework and Environmental Stewardship, should be seeking not only to conserve/protect the countryside, but to enhance it especially around cities and towns. An example I am aware of is the Brun Valley Forest Park on the eastern edge of Burnley in Lancashire.
   4.4 Local authorities should be aware of, and working towards, the Government’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) which at recommends that: there be at least 2ha of Accessible Natural Greenspace per 1000 population; no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace; there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km from home; there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km; and there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km.
   4.5 Existing developments that are unsustainable should be discouraged.
4.6 Applications for new developments that would have adverse impacts on the countryside and/or rural tourism, such as hydraulic fracturing (‘fracking’ for shale gas or coal tar sands) should be refused.

5. Infrastructure and skills.
5.1 What measures are needed to ensure transport, housing and other infrastructure meets visitor needs?
5.2 In order to give people better access to the coast and countryside, there needs to be public transport for the substantial number of people who do not have access to a vehicle.
5.3 People who do have a vehicle need to be able to find somewhere to park it whilst they visit the coast/countryside.
5.4 People need to find affordable accommodation if they are to visit and stay overnight in rural areas. Accommodation needs to include camping and caravan sites as well as bed & breakfast, hostels and hotels.
5.5 Farmers and other landowners are often in a good position to provide accommodation.
5.6 Local people who work in businesses that are used by visitors need to be able to find and afford somewhere to live themselves. There is competition from people moving from cities and towns to rural areas and are often better placed to buy houses when they come up for sale than local people, especially young adults and first-time buyers who need, and struggle to get, a mortgage.
5.7 In many places there is a need for affordable housing for local people, especially first-time buyers, and they should be given priority over people moving to the area.
5.8 Other infrastructure should include on site information boards, signage for footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways. Path surfaces and countryside ‘furniture’ such as benches/Seats, gates and stiles need to be kept in good condition, especially on sites that are accessible to people with disabilities.
5.9 I do not know how the sector can ensure there are enough people with the right skills to support customers and businesses.

6. Local environment and character.
6.1 Policies can get the right balance between growing tourism and enhancing the local environment and character by being holistic and sustainable. Tourism should conserve and enhance the natural and built environment and make a positive contribution to green infrastructure, ecosystem services and ecological networks. Tourism that is subject to development control and other regulations should provide ‘net gains in nature’ as required by the National Planning Policy Framework and Local Plan policies. Development should be environmentally and socially sustainable as well as being economically viable.
6.2 Applications for new developments that would have adverse impacts on the countryside and/or rural tourism, such as hydraulic fracturing (‘fracking’ for shale gas or coal tar sands) should be refused.
6.3 Applications for renewable energy, including biomass, geothermal, solar, water, wind and woodfuel should be encouraged and supported, subject to comments on 6.1.
7. Defra role. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs can ensure government departments (including Departments for Communities and Local Government, Business, Innovation and Skills, Culture Media and Sport and HM Treasury) support rural tourism by:

7.1 Encouraging children to understand, enjoy and visit the countryside by including rural issues in the national curriculum.

7.2 Help with ongoing IT development such as apps for mobile phones and tablets.

7.3 Encouraging and supporting programmes on TV radio to promote rural tourism including local food and drink, local accommodation, renewable energy, public transport, visitor facilities etc.

7.4 Encouraging celebrities to promote rural tourism including local food and drink, local accommodation, renewal energy, public transport and visitor facilities etc.

7.5 Developments that would have adverse impacts on the countryside and/or rural tourism, such as hydraulic fracturing (‘fracking’ for shale gas or coal tar sands) should not be allowed to proceed. If fracking is allowed to go into the production phase it will mean the end of rural tourism for the affected areas. Please do not let this happen.

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