EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The general picture is one of cuts. Government policy is one of “Austerity” and local authorities are running out of funds. They cannot put the Council Tax up even if they did want to.

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES
Many have closed and others are not what they were.

FOOTPATHS
The “Parish Paths Partnership” has fizzled out.

ROADS
County Highways funding is very tight, including a lack of pen-pushers at County Hall.

CAR PARKS
There is a general lack of parking across rural England

BUSES
There are plans to eliminate County Council services across rural England.

RAILWAYS
Some Network Rail branch lines could become more like preserved railways. Some preserved railways could run a daily service for ordinary traffic. There is a need for car parks at railway stations in excess of the commercial needs of Network Rail. Extra trains are needed for a few weeks in Summer.

HERITAGE RAILWAYS
There is a general need for more covered accommodation for preserved rolling stock of all types. This would assist the preservation of these items and also improve the appearance of these sites. There are other needs for higher quality.

NON-TRANSPORT INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE
There is a need for capital investment in historic buildings and non-historic museum galleries. There is also a need for revenue support for the day-to-day activities.

NON-INDUSTRIAL HISTORIC BUILDINGS
There are needs for capital investment in repairs and restoration.

CONCLUSION
Rural tourism is not a free handout. It has to be worked at with public funding to keep quality up.

2. AUTHOR
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3. TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES
Most of these have closed or been merged with other activities. Some of them were in the wrong place. For example, there was one at Ripley Town Hall in Derbyshire which is not a tourist town. A better location would be on the A 6 between Whatstandwell and Cromford. There is a disused petrol station at the roadside. Clearly these could be revived.

4. FOOTPATHS
Some years ago there was a Countryside Commission and they financed a “Parish Paths Partnership” with parish councils. This involved some voluntary labour on maintenance and signing. In Crich and South Wingfield detailed signs were erected by the parish councils but have
now become illegible due to rust. Officially the County Councils are responsible for footpaths but this does not preclude spending by the parishes.

At one time there were a lot of Parish Wardens. They were financed partly by the district councils and partly by the parish councils. There were problems over supervision and the practice developed of hiring contractors to do specific tasks. Much of this was vegetation on both footpaths and roads. Undergrowth is the responsibility of the County but overgrowth is up to the landowner. However, you do still need officials at County Hall to enforce hedgecutting and similar.

Parish councils are very variable in size and quality. There is always a paid Clerk but they are not full time and cannot really supervise manual workers. Town councils often have several paid staff and often run a van. Perhaps the answer is to have ONE Parish Council for each County Division which are equal in size. This would give a population of about 8,000 which would justify several manual workers and a van.

5. ROADS

The picture here is that funds are lacking for all but the most essential activities. Manual workers are needed for day-to-day maintenance and office workersto keep roadside landowners up to the mark. Hedge and grass cutting is often neglected. A particular bone of contention is branches growing up in front of road signs, which are more important for tourists.

In some places there are many fingerposts at minor road junctions. They usually indicate the distance in miles to the next village. It is reported that Somerset CC has 1715 of them but maintenance is neglected. Occasionally a parish council or local enthusiasts take an interest. Some good work has been done around Selston in Nottinghamshire. There is a national Milestone Society, which has its uses but lacks funding and volunteers. Some good work is being done but others are neglected or disappear. A little national funding would be a great help.

Capital spending on local roads is sadly lacking. There was a time when the County Surveyor had a long list of improvements. Nowadays, there have to be “Bids” for “Feasibility Studies” via the Local Economic Partnership. A case in point is the A 515 Ashbourne Bypass. This idea has been around for 40 years to my personal knowledge. The historic town centre suffers from heavy lorry traffic in limestone from Buxton. There is a scheme to build the A 610 Codnor Bypass with contributions from the builders of new housing estates. This would complete the upgrade of the A 610 from Nottingham to Ambergate which must carry much tourist traffic. There is currently no sign of any activity.

6. CAR PARKS

There is a general need for more car parking across rural England. There was a proposal for a new car park in central Alfreton in the 1994 Local Plan but no sign of any action. In nearby Ripley the demolition of the Tonkers nightclub opens up an opportunity there. In Belper, a site was acquired for a Leisure Centre which has been abandoned. I have pointed out all three opportunities to the Leader of Amber Valley Borough Council but have had no response.

In some ways it is desirable to cut car use. This was policy under John Prescott from 1997 to 2000 but was stopped by Tony Blair. The grim facts are that rural tourism is going to depend on the private car for some years to come. At Belper Mills I have suggested that the adjacent football ground is taken over for parking by tourists. Clearly a new football pitch would be needed. This should all form part of the Neighbourhood Plan, which is ongoing. The Tramway Museum and the Midland Railway-Butterley are at awkward distances from the nearest railway stations. It is too far to walk and there is not enough traffic for a dedicated bus service.

Where parking is provided at attractions there are often problems with it filling up early in the morning with the cars of ramblers or cyclists who disappear into the environment and do not
visit the attraction. There are places on the public road network where parking could be provided in laybys but this all costs taxpayers money which is not available.

Some years ago the Peak Park did try to build car parks at rural locations for ramblers. It met with opposition from landowners, no doubt worried about litter and trespass.

If you think back to the “Buchanan Report” of 1962, “Traffic in Towns” it is remarkable that car ownership has risen to such high levels without even more chaos than there is.

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**BUSES**

There are currently plans to withdraw County Council support for bus services. It is alleged that this is “Non-Statutory”. It could be that there is no “Statutory Duty” to provide bus services but there is a “Duty” to provide home-to-school transport in certain circumstances. In Derbyshire there has been a “Consultation” about withdrawing ALL support for ordinary stage carriage services from October 2017. This has closed but I have heard nothing. It struck me that the amount of support was quite reasonable. I understand that Lancashire also has plans.

Confusion can arise between the Pensioner’s Bus Pass (officially the English National Concessionary Transport Scheme) which is organised by the counties but paid by Whitehall, and support for loss-making services which cost the ratepayers money. The ENCTS only pays at a discount flat rate per passenger. If this was increased the cost to the ratepayer would be reduced. The other big “customer” is the homes-to-school transport. My understanding is that this school transport determines the number of vehicles in operation and these are used for general traffic during the rest of the day. Clearly savings could be made by withdrawing Saturday and Sunday services. Another idea would be to run the current service on only one day a week. This won't suit everybody but could be a way forward. This may not eliminate ALL the cost but must give a big reduction.

Not all these services are related to rural tourism. For example, the 140 route from Matlock to Alfreton passes several major tourist attractions. The local town services within Alfreton (148,151,152, & 153) are of little use to tourists but are more of an old people’s welfare issue. Another example is route 173 which runs entirely within the Peak Park from railways. Castleton to Bakewell and is of use to ramblers.

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**RAILWAYS**

A short term problem is a lack of diesel trains. Electric trains are on order which will displace diesels, notably from Paddington. There is a well-organised project to re-use District Line electric trains as diesel units. This is organised by a chap called Adrian Shooter, who is well-known. The vehicles have accumulated at Long Marston near Stratford-on-Avon. It is likely that the London Midland train operator will order these trains but I expect the Department for Transport is mixed up in it somewhere. Looking to the future, the Class 153 single railcars could be kept going for longer. There is a problem with the cost of rebuilding with disabled toilets. These could be rebuilt to give more room for luggage and bicycles than is currently available. Perhaps tip-up seats around the outside would be the answer. It could be that this is only needed during the Summer. There are also the controversial “Pacer” units (Classes 142,143,144), some of which could be retained for tourist purposes. Both types show signs of their Leyland National bus origins.

Certain Network Rail branch lines could be developed as heritage railways. This will not be cheap as most of these lines are “Basic Railways” and facilities for loco-hauled steam or diesel trains are lacking. There would also be a need for secure sheds to keep the heritage vehicles in. Heritage railways usually only operate from about 11:00 to 17:00 daily, leaving modern trains to run early and late. There was some talk in Cornwall some years ago but nothing came of it.

In some cases heritage railways could be developed to run ordinary daily services. This will need a subsidy; the railway itself will not be able to take the commercial risk. There is already
something similar in Whitby. The most obvious case would be the Minehead branch. Peak Rail (Matlock-Rowsley) and Wyvernrail (Duffield-Wirksworth) are other possibilities. Each case would have to be worked out on its own merits.

**HERITAGE RAILWAYS**

The general problem here is that there was sufficient enthusiast interest to save vehicles from the scrapyard but not enough support to secure their long-term preservation. A particular problem is the cost of repairs to steam engines. Enough money can be generated from fares to cover day-to-day costs but not enough for heavy overhauls. Boiler certificates usually last 10 years but then expensive repairs are usually needed. There are numerous appeals for funds but they do not attract sufficient support.

There is less enthusiast interest in coaches and wagons. The need here is for proper sheds for security and preservation. This does not have to be a luxury air-conditioned Museum Gallery. These appeal to the Heritage Lottery Fund but they need to be brought down to earth at a time of “Austerity”. In any case this HLF funding is hard to come by. In many cases these disused vehicles are all-to-visible to the general public. Often they are in sidings which would be difficult to use for anything else. Thus these sheds would improve the QUALITY of the visitor attractions as well as preserving the heritage for posterity.

There are cases where vacant sheds come to notice in terms of architectural heritage. Current cases include Wolverton (Milton Keynes) and Horwich (Bolton).

It could be that, in the end, the condition of the track will end the running of trains. Secondhand track is not as readily available as it once was. Ideally the track should be bull-head rails on wooden sleepers. There might be a case for keeping a stock of new rail at Scunthorpe for use as required.

Most of these lines have had support from public funds in the past on a rather half-hearted basis. Some funds came from the Local Authority Museum Budgets, some from Tourist Board grants and a lot from Unemployment Relief/Training. Sometimes the European Regional Development Fund proved useful in those areas where it applied.

In the case of the Midland Railway – Butterley, Derbyshire County Council owns the land. Its support is limited to failing to collect any rent. Some vehicles are still legally the property of Derby City Council, despite being several miles outside the city boundary. The City Museums are now run by a trust, which makes it easier to get grants. A number of separate bodies occupy premises on the site. There was a Share Issue some years ago but it scarcely covered the cost of the Issue. There have never been any dividends and the shareholders are not a political force within the organisation. Thus the whole project is in limbo and people have lost sight of the overall project. They concern themselves only with their particular body. The Heritage Lottery Fund is interfering in “GOVERNANCE” as that is their “Flavour of the Month”. This could mean that only a certain elite is allowed to sit on the various committees. The real problem is that there is just not enough profit in day-to-day operations to finance capital projects. At the same time the site cannot really go out of business. A great deal could be spent to improve the QUALITY of the attraction.

It is likely that there are just not enough visitors to the three steam railways and the Tramway Museum which are rather close together. All four offer the same basic tourism offer to the general public.

Clearly government support is needed if these operations are to survive. It could be that loans or the purchase of shares is a better solution than just handing out grants. This could be organised by a small section of the National Railway Museum in York.

**NON-TRANSPORT INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE**
There is less enthusiast support once one gets away from transport. There have recently been some serious losses in this field as well as the perennial problem of “Buildings-at-Risk” which are not museums.

One serious loss was at Snibston Colliery, Coalville. The modern museum building has closed and is likely to be redeveloped as housing. This could make sense but the County Council is still saddled with the old colliery, which is an Ancient Monument. This has to be maintained and kept secure even if it is not opened to the public. Similarly, Lancashire County Council is planning to close 5 of its 11 museums but all 5 are Listed Buildings and have to be maintained by the Owner. The textile museums at Helmshore and Harle Syke (Burnley) are of national significance whilst Fleetwood Museum is of local significance. No doubt others are under threat from the cuts in council spending but news travels slowly in this field.

I doubt whether these attractions can even make a profit on day-to-day activities, never mind capital investment for the future. One that is paying its way is Beamish, which is a large open-air site near Gateshead. I suspect that the capital investment by a group of local authorities over many years has been written off.

Although there are probably too many heritage attractions in Derbyshire for the available visitors, there are also several “Buildings-at-Risk” which could become museums, using that term loosely. Basically, “Buildings-at-Risk” have to be maintained by the Owner, regardless of cost, for the benefit of a handful of architectural historians. A useful book called “Stopping the Rot” has recently been published by Historic England. It could be a free download but I don’t think it is a published “Book” in the traditional sense.

Here in Derbyshire, we have Belper Mills, the Butterley Engineering Works and Pleasley Colliery. In Derby City they have the Great Northern Railway Warehouse and Friargate Bridge. If you include non-industrial structures there is a “B-at-R” every few miles across England in all directions. Most councils have a list somewhere on their website. At a time of “Austerity” I advocate the External Envelope or Landscape Object approach to these buildings. Full restoration will be found to be impossible. In at least two cases, Friargate Warehouse, Derby and Clipstone Colliery in the Newark & Sherwood District, Applications for demolition has remained “Undetermined” for at least a decade. I recently visited Bennerley Viaduct and that has so far even defeated the mighty Sustrans organisation. This crosses the Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire border near Ilkeston.

Thus there are many problems/opportunities in this field but all will require public funding.

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