Current challenges facing rural tourism:
1. Closure of Tourist Information Centres (TIC's) in many rural areas
2. Funding cuts to Destination Management Organisations (DMO's) have caused some to demise and others now have reduced impact
3. Not everyone is smart/i-phone literate, mobile reception and effective broadband connectivity is difficult

Consequences of these challenges:
 a. Overall lack of access of information to a wide selection of places to visit in hard-copy
 b. Lack of awareness of the range of things to do
 c. Over-reliance on websites/ internet to search for ideas

Suggestions for Government Policy:

i. Create a working party consisting of representatives from VisitEngland, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee, existing reputable regional distribution companies to work together to initiate and drive a sustainable scheme and provide the support mechanism and tight control of standards going forward

ii. The working party (with Government backing) would lobby major supermarkets to provide space in their stores of a suitable size, nationally for 'Tourist Leaflet Information Hubs' - a predominantly self-funding scheme to display hard-copy leaflets and brochures - For example, our regional scheme (Leaflets Galore Limited) has been successfully operating on a similar basis for 12 years and achieves almost 100% renewal each year. The scheme currently supports in excess of 300 local businesses - approx. 95% of which are in rural areas

iii. The emphasis of the scheme should be on maximising choice (for the customer), affordability (for the tourism businesses) and locality (e.g. 50 mile radius from information hub) - For example, our scheme operates a tiered approach to charges, so that even the very small businesses can have a presence.

iv. Further suggestion to offer advice, support and some funding opportunities for 'clusters' of rural tourism businesses to produce successful initiatives such Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourist Association DL leaflet and Leominster County Tourist Association A5 brochure - inspiring stay-overs as well as day visits)

Why Supermarkets?
• Conveniently accessible for an inclusive public, including Group Organisers, Coach Operators, family members, local residents and holiday makers (both inbound and domestic)
• High footfall (e.g. across 53 major supermarket outlets in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, South Shropshire, North Wiltshire and Bristol - 3-4 million customers visit these stores weekly)
• Long opening hours, good public transport links and free parking
• Easy to promote consumer awareness of 'Tourist Leaflet Information Hubs'

September 2016