

APPENDIX C CASE STUDIES

1. SENSE OF PLACE

Developing a Sense of place toolkit was a direct recommendation of the Forest of Bowland's Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (Jan 2005) – action plan point 2: *'Strengthen the identity of the Forest of Bowland AONB as a sustainable tourism destination, recognised and promoted in partnership by all those involved with tourism service delivery in the wider area.'* And point 2.3 *'encourage tourism businesses in and around the Forest of Bowland to use the special qualities of the AONB as their USP.'*

The aims of the project were therefore to

- a. Identify the special qualities of the area
- b. Educate businesses about these special qualities
- c. Encourage businesses to use these messages in their marketing of the area and of their own business

The project began with a summer-long consultation process carried out by Pathways Consultancy. This engaged over 300 people in a variety of focus groups and culminated with a stall at the Hodder Valley Show in September 2005. Information gathered included childhood memories; best places to shop, eat or walk; folk tales; favourite places to picnic or paddle; and wildlife to look out for. Results of this consultation were then merged with the AONB's own interpretive themes:

- A place to enjoy and keep special
- Delicious local food and drink
- A landscape rich in heritage
- A living landscape
- Wild open spaces
- A special place for wildlife

A toolkit was developed by the AONB Unit with graphic design from Countryscape. The resulting publication was then distributed to all known tourism businesses within and around the AONB together with all our main partners. It is also available as a download from our website.

<http://www.forestofbowland.com/publications/strategies/FOBSenseofPlaceLoRes1.pdf>

The toolkit sets out the special qualities of the AONB, and provides some 'set text' on each theme which can be cut and pasted, together with images, from a free CD Rom and into a business's own marketing materials. This assists with the generation of a consistent set of messages about the AONB and what it has to offer to tourists.

The toolkit also encourages businesses to examine the special qualities of their own area, community or business – and gives advice on how to promote this to visitors in order to generate loyalty and repeat visits.

The toolkit was then supplemented with the provision of 6 free training days, attended by over 70 businesses over a period of 12 months. Training was provided by the AONB staff, with input from Paul Mahony of Countryscape who focussed on marketing and how big businesses use a sense of place to sell their goods and services.

The project has been used as an example of best practice by Natural Economy North west, and by English Heritage and the Tourism Centre. It is being replicated by several other AONBs and tourism destinations around the UK.

Economic benefits

The sense of place toolkit has enabled local businesses to find out more about the AONB and to trade on its reputation as a quality destination. Businesses developing their own 'sense of place' have also seen the impact in terms of repeat visits and customer loyalty and recommendation. We are already seeing 'our messages' replicated and used on partners and businesses websites and other publicity materials, and we see this as a positive development as it helps to promote the AONB.

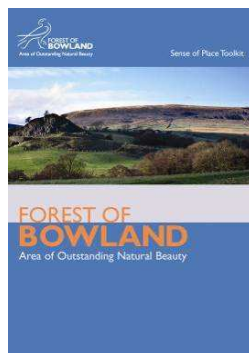
Environmental benefits

The sense of place project has sought to educate and raise awareness of the area's special qualities, which are primarily environmental. Issues such as ground nesting birds; local food and other products; dispersal of visitors away from honeypots; and so on are all covered in the agenda. We seek to celebrate the area's wildlife, heritage and grandeur – promoting these as things of beauty and worthy of protection – and encourage our business partners to do the same.

Social benefits

Much of the sense of place consultation focussed on people's feelings and memories of the area – elements of visitor loyalty that make a place special and which make you want to return. Aspects such as 'a living landscape' also focus on the special way of life found in Bowland – farming, village life, housing styles – and 'a place rich in heritage' links this to traditions, culture, dialect and so on.

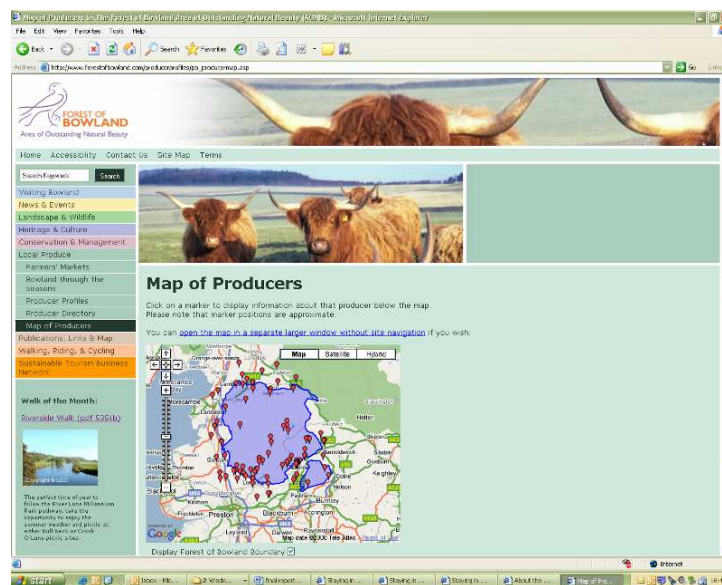
Social benefits also include encouraging visitors to use local services – buses, post offices, shops and pubs – which create a more viable community for residents in the long term.



2. TASTE OF BOWLAND

The sustainable tourism strategy for the Forest of Bowland AONB specified the need to *'support the development of enterprises within the Forest of Bowland that are based on local food, art and craft skills etc, that reflect the special qualities of the AONB and add to the tourism offer'* (point 7.5) and to *'encourage tourism enterprises to manage supply chains in favour of local products'* (point 7.6). There was also a growing movement nationally and globally to support local production in order to support local distinctiveness, reduce food miles, and to promote freshness and seasonality. Our project was in the early stages when this trend began to develop, and we have benefited from its emergence and the resulting awareness, which has led to a great popularity with partners, consumers and buyers.

The local food directory for the Forest of Bowland was compiled by our information officer, who contacted and met most of our producers face to face. The resulting data was then entered into a database which is made available, and searchable online at http://www.forestofbowland.com/prod_intro.asp either from the database or by an interactive map. Data available includes address, website, how to order, opening times and outlets. This database is regularly updated.



The database was augmented with a number of 'producer profiles' which enable the consumer to find out more about where and how their food is farmed.

A printed directory 'Taste of Bowland' was published in March 2007, and updated and re printed due to popular demand in 2008. This contained all the food producer information from the database in a readable and attractive format, including a map and more producer profiles. The directory was distributed to Tourism Information Centres, key retail outlets such as farm shops and delicatessen, and via the

producers themselves. Copies were also made available to accommodation providers to encourage visitors to buy local food during their stay.

We also ran a 'meet the producer' event in conjunction with LEADER+ which attempted to improve the local supply chain – by bringing together producers with buyers from local hotels, restaurants and shops. This event was attended by over 100 people.

Economic benefits

We are aware of some new contacts made at the event we held, which resulted in new supply chains being created. Development of this work was taken on by the Made in Lancashire team.

Environmental benefits

The environmental benefits to producers of additional promotion for their produce via the website and directory could lead to sustained farming in the AONB and an opportunity for farmers to carry on working the land and conserving our special landscape.

Social benefits

Supporting farming in turn helps preserve our landscapes and promote regional identity, eg heather reared lamb and Lancashire cheese. This helps us to move away from the over centralisation of foods and add to our developing sense of place.



3. BUSINESS NETWORK

The Forest of Bowland AONB's Sustainable Tourism Business Network, or 'the Business Network', was created in January 2007 as part of the process of developing the European Charter mark for sustainable tourism businesses. This is part of the AONB's own Charter Mark status – won in 2005 as a protected area.

Setting up a network was the idea and responsibility of our business development officer, although the sustainable tourism strategy had suggested the need for '*tourism enterprises to play an active role in the development and management of tourism within the AONB*' point 1.2. The development of a network was seen as an opportunity to bring committed businesses together, to provide them with an easy 'first step' into a green accreditation scheme, and to support the workings of the sustainable tourism working group and forum.

The Network was launched at a business event at Dalesbridge in January 2007, which had originally been planned to launch the Green Tourism Business Scheme. However, due to delays with Europarc agreeing on its methodology for working with businesses and Charter Partner status, the Network was set up and quickly began to recruit members. Membership is free, although businesses have to 'sign a pledge' to demonstrate their planned and existing sustainable activities. The action plan is based on:

- Supporting the local economy – eg buying local produce, working with other local businesses
- Conservation and environmental management – eg creating wildlife areas, reducing energy and water use
- Marketing and visitor information – eg using sense of place, providing AONB information

In return Network members can receive several benefits. These include:

- A one to one visit from the business development officer
- Opportunity to attend Network meetings (held 3-4 times a year) and build relationships with other members
- Free training courses
- Bedroom browsers and wooden leaflet racks to promote the AONB
- Free use of Brochurelink services to re order promotional materials
- Free use of the Network web pages
- Promotion of their business activities and events via AONB website
- Opportunity to join the GTBS scheme at a reduced rate, and if successful, to become a European Charter Business which provides preferential publicity

Network meetings and spin off events have included speakers on how to write press releases, or participation in a visitor payback scheme; a short course on how to use 'memory map software' to develop local walking routes for your visitors; news on funding and promotional opportunities; opportunity to meet like minded businesses and develop collaborative projects

Economic benefits

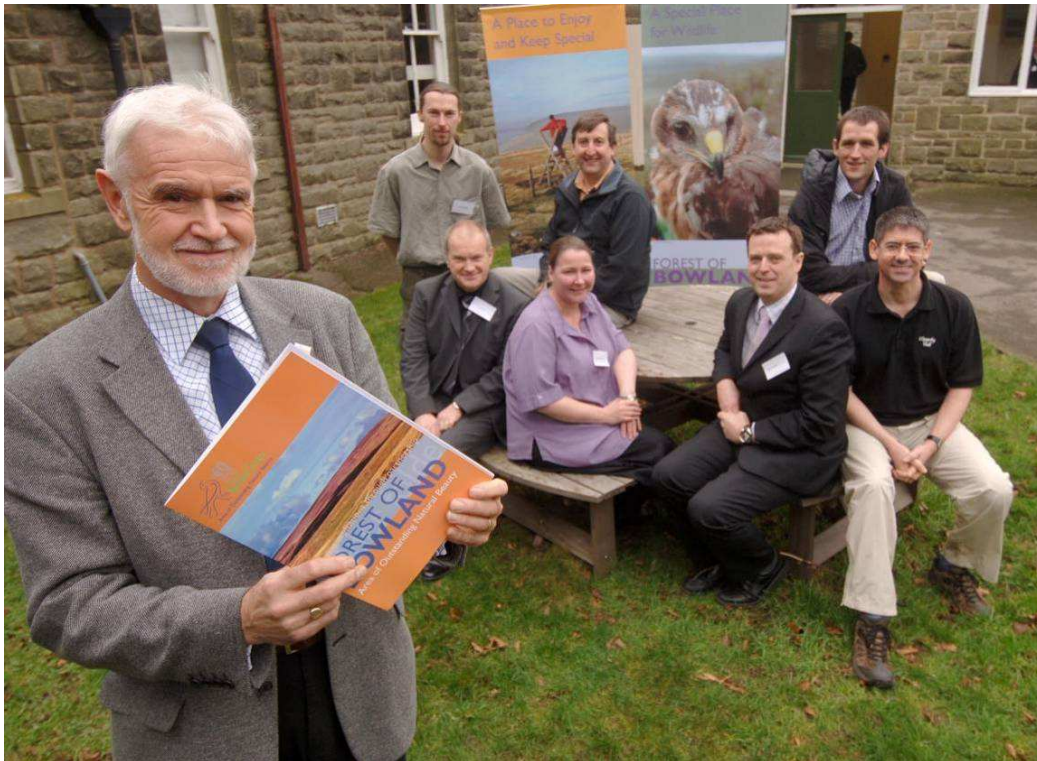
Businesses can extract cost savings from good practice shared with other members, eg energy savings tips, collaborative marketing

Environmental benefits

Improving a business's environmental performance can lead to financial savings, but also reduces the environmental impact of a business. Positive measures such as tree planting and meadow management can also lead to environmental benefits.

Social benefits

Network members have found the opportunity to meet, socialise and do business with other members invaluable. The AONB has also found the network to be a beneficial vehicle for circulating information to interested and active partners

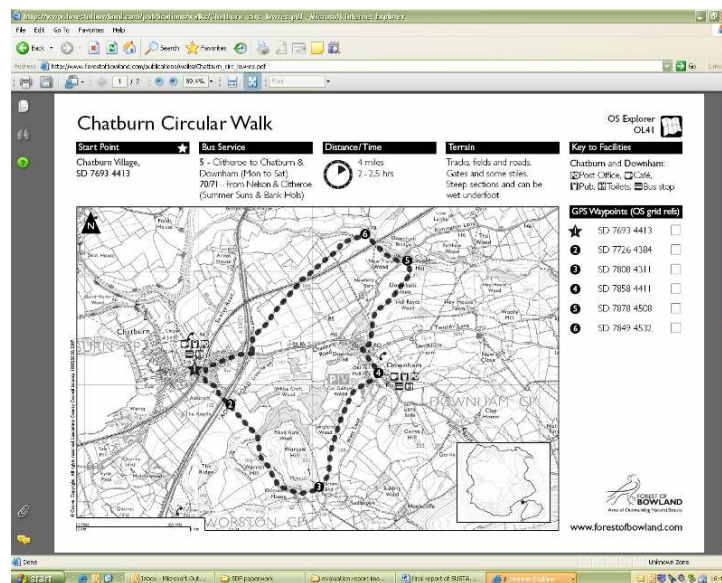


4. WEB ROUTES

The Forest of Bowland AONB's strategy for sustainable tourism suggested the need to 'create accessible information on walking, cycling and riding opportunities, including downloadable maps' (7.3); and also, to 'review the portfolio of existing published walking routes' (4.2). Combined with a need to develop more sustainable forms of interpretation and promotion, by using our website as the main vehicle for marketing the AONB, this led to the development of the innovative web routes.

A web template (walk, ride or trail) was designed to enable routes to be easily downloaded and printed from a standard desk top black and white printer. Web routes include a map showing the route; information on how to get to the start point by public transport or car; nearby facilities (toilets, pubs, shops etc); a walk description; points of interest along the route and standard text on acting safely and sustainably during your visit.

Two templates for walks exist, a short walk version, eg http://www.forestofbowland.com/publications/walks/Chatburn_circ_lowres.pdf



And a longer walks or riding version which includes a larger map and GPS co-ordinates, eg http://www.forestofbowland.com/publications/bus_walks/WennToWrayAndHornby.pdf

There are now 35+ webroutes on our website, offering a variety of gentle and longer walks suitable for people of all ages and mobility. They also include horse riding and cycling routes, plus specially developed tramper trails for people with disabilities using specially adapted vehicles.

The webroutes have been widely hailed as good practice and are beginning to be used elsewhere in the region by local authority countryside management services and tourism departments. We are happy for other agencies and communities to host

appropriate routes on their own websites, and also will support partners who wish to transfer their own promoted routes onto our website using the template. All routes which are promoted have gone through a selection process and are also waymarked and maintained by LCC Countryside Service. We are attempting to ensure even coverage of routes throughout the AONB, although this is not always possible. 25 additional routes have already been identified to be incorporated into the template and website, to extend the offer for walking, riding and cycling.

Economic benefits

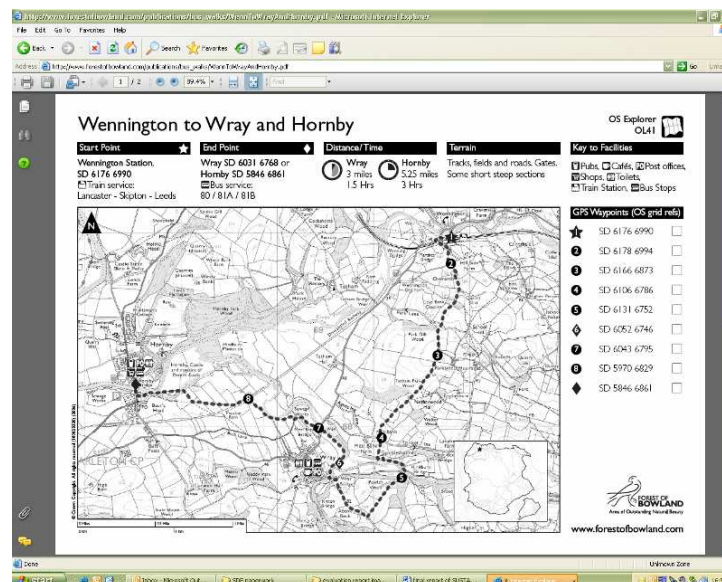
Producing routes as webwalks costs c£75 design costs, whereas a printed leaflet could cost 10 times that amount, and also require distribution and re printing.

Environmental benefits

As well as the environmental benefits of a reduction in paper, print and distribution; web routes can also enable the planned dispersal of visitors away from honeypot sites by providing a range of alternative routes.

Social benefits

Routes always include local service information, and therefore encourage the use of buses, local shops and post offices etc, and can bring spending visitors to previously quieter areas of the AONB.



5. DALE HOUSE CAMPING BARN

In late 2006 Chris and Cheryl Morris-Barrow and their young family purchased a house in an idyllic spot with views over Stocks reservoir and Gisburn Forest. Attached to their house was a derelict 17th century barn and it was their dream to preserve this barn in a way that was sensitive to the beautiful surroundings but also to develop it in some way to bring it back to life, and to provide some income for the family.

And so began the project of Dale House camping barn...

Chris and Cheryl wanted to develop a barn that didn't detract too much from the original structure and so set about creating accommodation space around the original fixtures and fittings. The beams were incorporated into the build of the stairs, which lead to a cosy mezzanine floor sleeping area. The remainder of the space is made up of a simple kitchen, living area and toilets and showers which make use of the original cattle stalls, and the toilet has been adapted specifically for disabled access. The barn has also made use of a Bio Disc sanitation system which is an efficient and environmentally safe solution to sewage disposal. The cosy ambience to the barn is finished off with a wood burning stove, which soon warms the building after a day on the fells.

Chris and Cheryl were supported by an adviser from Lancashire Rural Futures who guided them through planning permission and building regulations. It was LRF who brought the project to the AONB's attention and suggested funding from Sustainable Bowland. A grant of £15,000 was approved, and matched with significant investment of their own, plus hours of unpaid labour, the Morris Barrows were able to complete the work only slightly over budget.

Chris and Cheryl became active Network members, and although they were too late to get involved in the GTBS scheme in 2007, they hope to join in 2008. They also attended a number of our training days – sense of place and marketing – and were keen to incorporate these ideas into their own publicity. See <http://www.dalehousebarn.co.uk/index.php>

They also benefited from the AONB's relationship with BTCV – now bringing them regular bookings of working holidays, and they have returned the favour by hosting visits by various committees and familiarisation visits arranged by the AONB unit.

Dale House camping barn is promoted via an independent hostel association (recommended to them by another Network member) and is undergoing Visit Britain inspection.

For more information visit the website or contact them on 01200 446820



6. WYRESDALE WHEELS FOR ALL

Wyresdale Wheels for All is an innovative collaboration, built around a desire to provide accommodation and outdoor experiences for people with mobility problems.

Having attended an open day held at Beacon Fell country park, Jonty Collinson, joint owner of the Priory at Scorton and a number of other businesses in the area, joined forces to purchase a tramper and trailer, and promote associated routes between the businesses.

The tramper is a specially designed all terrain electric buggy which can be used off road and even on rough ground, mud and grass. It and is currently being used and promoted by both Lancashire and Wyre countryside services at council owned sites such as Stannah and Beacon Fell. This project was innovative because it planned to take trampers onto normal rights of way crossing private land, plus the vehicle itself was to be owned and managed by private business, not a local authority.

The project was supported by Lancashire and Wyre countryside staff, plus Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board (through their Lancs Rural Tourism Initiative) and Wyre Tourism Association, Garstang Partnership and the business partners. The Forest of Bowland AONB unit provided publicity support through their website and a specially produced leaflet highlighting the tramper trails and accommodation providers.

The business partnership now includes 12 private businesses, and has created 25km of tramper usable trails, including 17km of off road routes. Up until April 2007 the project had received 48 bookings over 69 days (this includes 4 accommodation stays in the area for more than 1 day.) An online booking service now exists linking the accommodation and the tramper bookings, together with other activities such as fishing and guided walks.

The tramper friendly routes were created as part of the North Lancashire bridleway developments in the Scorton area. Routes around the village, plus sections across farmland at Cobble Hey, Bleasdale and Broadgate (all participating partners) and Landskill farm were negotiated and new gates installed as necessary, by LCC countryside officer Tarja Wilson.

The project has been promoted widely as an example of good practice and recently received an equality and diversity award from the North West Employers Organisation. LBTB, Wyre Borough Council, LCC and the Forest of Bowland AONB all intend to develop further tramper projects incorporating trails and accommodation – in Bowland possibly at Chipping Wild Boar Park and in Gisburn Forest.

Total costs of the project £20,600, excluding the trail developments.

