



National Parks for all: Making car-free travel easier

A review of the evidence

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March 2018

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This research was completed with financial support from the Alan Baxter Foundation, BMC Access and Conservation Trust and the Foundation for Integrated Transport.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Campaign for National Parks was founded over 80 years ago to lobby for the conservation and enhancement of our most stunning landscapes and ensure they were available for everyone to enjoy both now and in the future. Securing improved access to the countryside has, therefore, always been an important part of our work. Today, a significant proportion of the population are still excluded from many parts of our National Parks because the opportunities for visiting without a car are so limited. The need for many visitors to rely on the car also puts at risk the precious landscapes and wildlife in the Parks.

We want to make it easier for people to visit and enjoy the National Parks of England and Wales by more sustainable means. This report sets out our research, which examined existing and current sustainable transport initiatives, and draws on the research to make recommendations about how to improve the options for travelling to and around National Parks more sustainably.

The research was based primarily on a review of relevant published literature and was not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of every single sustainable transport initiative in the National Parks.

Why access to National Parks matters

National Parks are our finest landscapes and are recognised for their natural beauty, wildlife, cultural heritage and the recreational opportunities they offer. They are national assets, providing natural resources such as clean water and opportunities for tranquillity and healthy outdoor activities. National Parks receive public funding in recognition of their special qualities and the benefits they provide but unfortunately not everyone is able to visit and enjoy them. Nationally, a quarter of households do not have access to a car and there have been significant cuts to rural bus services in recent years.

The Governments of both England and Wales have aspirations to increase the number of visitors to National Parks. We support these aspirations but we want them to be achieved in a way which does not detract from the very features which attract people to these areas. The limited transport options means there is currently a strong reliance on the car among visitors to National Parks and high volumes of traffic can have a negative impact on the tranquillity and natural environment. Providing improved alternatives to the car ensures that increased numbers of people can visit without damaging the special qualities for which these areas are valued as well as allowing people who do not have to a car to visit them more easily.

The benefits of improved access

Increasing the options available for travelling to and around National Parks sustainably would provide many benefits including:

- For individuals - improved physical and mental health through opportunities for engaging with nature.
- For local economies – there is evidence that visitors by public transport spend more than those arriving by car.
- For the environment and local communities – by reducing the number of people who travel to National Parks by car and the associated impacts in terms of carbon emissions, noise pollution, road danger, blight and severance.

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Tackling the issue

The report reviews the evidence on a range of ways of improving transport to and around National Parks including:

- Providing more options – increasing their availability and frequency and ensuring they are affordable (see section 3);
- Providing more and better information about the existing options (see section 4); and
- Making options easier through, for example, integrated ticketing or real time information, or more attractive through, for example, incentives (see section 5).

We have tried to identify options that do not rely on significant amounts of additional funding. However, given that the National Parks are national assets, there is a case for providing more public resources to ensure that they are available to everyone.

Who should be taking the lead on improving transport to and around National Parks?

A large number of different organisations have some responsibility for the provision, promotion and funding of transport in each National Park including the National Park Authority (NPA), local transport authorities (LTAs), local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), bus operators, train operating companies, Network Rail, Westminster/Welsh Government, and individual tourism attractions and accommodation providers. With so many different organisations involved, there is a need for one organisation to take a strategic overview of how best to improve access for visitors. We believe that NPAs should take on this role. Although they are not transport authorities, they are planning authorities and can use their planning policies to influence travel patterns. They should also have a strong interest in improving sustainable travel as it makes such an important contribution to National Park purposes.

The need for further research

There is a need for more comprehensive evidence to demonstrate the importance of investing in visitor transport and the benefits of improved access to National Parks. This would help make the case for increased support from Government, NPAs, LTAs and others. For example, it would be helpful to have more evidence of the benefits to the local economy as a result of increased expenditure by visitors arriving by sustainable transport, and the cross-sector benefits such as improved health and well-being. This could be part of a wider piece of work to develop new economic models which take account of the full range of costs and benefits associated with visitor travel to, and around, National Parks.

Recommendations

Based on this research, we make the following recommendations:

- **National Park Authorities should take a strategic lead** in improving transport to and around their National Park. This should involve working with local partners to identify and improve opportunities for visitors to get to particular locations without a car and to secure the necessary funding for those improvements from LEPs, LTAs and other relevant bodies.
- **National Park Authorities, Destination Management Organisations and all other relevant organisations should provide high-quality, consistent and up-to-date information** about

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options for car-free access. In particular, the National Park Authorities should **actively promote and update the car-free guides** that have been [produced for each of the National Parks¹](#), as well as initiatives such as [Good Journey](#).

- The Westminster and/or Welsh Government should provide funding for a **'smarter travel National Park' pilot** to test new types of **on-demand app-based shared services** and the **use of travel demand management measures**. The pilot should also support **the development of sustainable travel hubs** - key centres within the Park offering a range of activities within one location and good car-free access to other locations nearby. The evaluation of the pilot should inform future policy and funding priorities.
- National Park Authorities should work with local transport authorities, transport operators, accommodation providers and tourist attractions to **tackle 'the final mile'**, the journey from the nearest station or major public transport interchange to a visitor's final destination. This should include the development of **services such as luggage transfers, shuttle bus services and integrated ticketing**.

¹ <http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/visiting/car-free-guides>

1. Introduction

1.1. Why improved access is important to Campaign for National Parks

Campaign for National Parks was founded over 80 years ago to ensure that our most stunning landscapes are preserved for everyone to enjoy both now and in the future. As Britain became increasingly industrialised in the early years of the twentieth century, urban dwellers seeking fresh air and recreation at weekends found themselves in conflict with landowners who wanted to restrict access to the countryside. From the beginning, we have worked to ensure that National Parks are places which are accessible for everyone to enjoy as well as being protected from inappropriate development.

Years of tireless campaigning led to the *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949* which enabled the designation of the first National Parks in England and Wales as well as introducing important new legislation relating to public rights of way and access to open country. Since then, opportunities to access the countryside have expanded still further most notably through the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* which introduced a right of access to 'open country' (mountain, moor, heath and down) and registered common land. However, there is still more that needs to be done to improve access to National Parks. One of our main concerns today is that a significant proportion of the population are excluded from many parts of our National Parks because the opportunities for visiting without a car are so limited.

We want everyone should be able to visit and enjoy the National Parks. Our aim, therefore, is to make it easier for people to visit and enjoy the Parks by more sustainable means. Achieving this aim will both increase the opportunities for those without cars to visit National Parks and reduce the environmental impacts of motorised vehicles on the Parks.

1.2. How does transport currently limit people's access to National Parks?

Research by Campaign for Better Transport in 2017² found that funding for bus services across England and Wales had been cut by 33% since 2010 and over 500 routes were reduced or completely withdrawn in 2016/17. This includes large cuts by some local authorities covering areas with National Parks, for example, Derbyshire County Council which covers part of the Peak District cut funding for bus services by 55% in 2016/17 and Cumbria County Council covering the Lake District has completely cut its funding, meaning that it now provides no support for bus services.

Recent cuts in public funding have seen local transport authorities having to make very difficult decisions about which bus services to support. In general, the needs of residents tends to take priority over those of visitors which often means that services for those wishing to travel into National Parks from surrounding urban areas are given low priority. Week-end services are usually particularly badly affected by such decisions with public transport access in National Parks often at its most limited on Sundays and public holidays despite evidence to show that this is the most popular day for visiting³. Diversions and longer travel times as a result of engineering work on the railways can also make travelling on a Sunday more difficult and less convenient than it is on

² <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/buses-crisis-2017>

³ For example, the All Parks Visitor Survey 1994 shows that 54% of all day visits to the Yorkshire Dales occur on Sundays.

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weekdays. This can be particularly problematic for people wishing to take their bicycle to a National Park by public transport as bicycles are not usually carried on rail replacement bus services.

Even where public transport is available on a particular route, it may not be sufficiently frequent or run late enough for people to feel confident about relying on it for a day trip in case they get stranded. For example, one of the Mosaic community champions cited the limited options for travelling between Sheffield and the Derwent Valley in the Peak District (a 30 minute journey) where there is a popular visitor centre. This acts as a deterrent to taking groups into the National Park even though it is on the city's doorstep and readily accessible for those with cars.

A further significant deterrent is the high cost of bus fares. Some operators do offer good discounts for off-peak group travel or day tickets such as the Peak Wayfarer or DalesBus Rover which can significantly reduce the costs of travel. However, unfortunately, such tickets are not available in all National Parks and it is often very difficult to find out information about the cheapest options or any group discounts that may be available. Community champions reported being given incorrect information on telephone information lines and having to bring a print-out of the relevant section of an operators' website to prove the availability of a particular group discount ticket to a bus driver.

A lack of integration between transport modes can also limit people's ability to get to and around National Parks without a car. It is no good being able to travel by train to within a few miles of your destination if there is no means of completing your journey, other than by taxi which could potentially be very expensive. If bus routes do serve train stations, there is rarely any co-ordination between the timetables, meaning that any journey requiring the use of both modes can become extremely inconvenient and time-consuming. When journeys are timed to allow convenient transfers between modes, this may not work in practice if a delay of only a few minutes results in a missed connection. Having to buy separate tickets for each mode of transport can also increase the costs of such journeys.

Research published by Natural England identified the cost and availability of transport as a barrier to young people accessing and enjoying "wild adventure space"⁴.

The transport choices made by others can also limit people's options, particularly when it results in dangerous or unpleasant conditions for those not using cars. Speeding traffic can deter people from walking and cycling in National Parks. One-in three drivers admit to driving too fast in rural areas⁵ and more than half of all fatalities in crashes (58%) occur on rural roads⁶. There is also some evidence which suggests that people are more likely to drink and drive in rural areas and this has been attributed to the lack of public transport available⁷.

1.3. Approach to the research

This was primarily a desk-based research exercise, involving a review of relevant published literature and a number of telephone interviews with those of knowledge and experience of transport initiatives in National Parks. In addition, towards the end of the project, we held a small seminar

⁴ Natural England, 2010, *Wild Adventure Space: its role in teenagers' lives*

⁵ <https://www.transport-network.co.uk/One-in-three-drive-too-fast-for-safety-in-rural-areas/10706#.U9YBuLEvf-A>

⁶ <https://www.rospa.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/road-safety/drivers/rural-road-safety-factsheet.pdf>

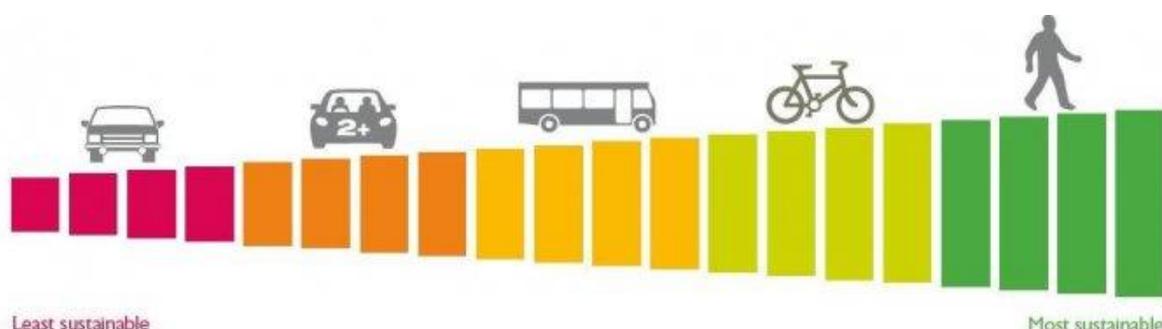
⁷ <http://www.rsonline.org.uk/services/drink-driving-highest-in-rural-areas>

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with invited representatives from transport and environment charities, National Park Authorities and Government departments and agencies to discuss our emerging recommendations. A full list of all those who kindly gave their time and expertise to the project is included in Appendix 1.

We recognise that many residents and visitors to the Parks will feel they have no choice but to use a car if they have access to one. Our intention is not to be anti-car but to encourage people to make choices which are higher up the sustainable transport hierarchy (see Figure 1). Our main focus is on increasing the availability of potential alternatives to the car and people's awareness of those choices. However, there are some places in National Parks where high levels of car use are so damaging to the environment that it may be appropriate to consider measures to restrict car use as well so we have also considered the potential for demand management in National Parks.

Figure 1: The sustainable transport hierarchy (© University of Exeter Design Studio)



We have considered a range of ways to make it easier for people to travel to and around National Parks including:

- Providing more options – increasing their availability and frequency and ensuring they are affordable;
- Providing more and better information about the existing options; and
- Making options easier through, for example, integrated ticketing or real time information, or more attractive through, for example, incentives.

We have aimed to identify options that do not rely on significant amounts of additional government funding. However, given that these are national assets, there is a case for providing more public resources to ensure that they are available to everyone. Although we have considered a wide range of different options, the research was not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of every single sustainable transport initiative in the National Parks.

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2. Why access to National Parks matters

2.1 National Parks are for everyone

National Parks are the finest landscapes which have been granted the highest level of protection.

The statutory purposes of National Parks are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks
- To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Parks

There are aspirations in both England and Wales to increase the number of visitors to National Parks. In England, the [8-Point Plan for National Parks](#) published in March 2016, includes targets to increase the annual number of visitors to National Parks from 90 million to 100 million and to encourage more diverse visitors to National Parks. Among the issues addressed in the [Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales](#) report, published in May 2017, was the role of the designated landscapes in attracting tourists to Wales. We support these aspirations and want to see more people benefitting from the health, well-being and spiritual inspiration that National Parks provide. Visitors to our National Parks also make a huge contribution to the rural economy, spending more than £5 billion each year and supporting over 75,000 full time equivalent tourism related jobs in England alone⁸.

We want to enable everyone to visit a National Park, whether or not they own a car and ensure the high quality environment in National Parks continues to be protected and enhanced for future generations to enjoy. High volumes of traffic already have a negative impact on the tranquillity and natural environment in some parts of our National Parks. Providing improved alternatives to the car ensures that increased numbers of people can visit without damaging the special qualities for which these areas are valued. Thus it will contribute to both of the statutory purposes of National Parks.

National Parks receive funding from taxpayers in recognition of their special qualities. They are national assets, providing natural resources such as clean water and places of peace and tranquillity in a crowded island. They are therefore a critical public service and should be available for everyone to enjoy and to benefit from what they have to offer, not only in terms of leisure opportunities, tourism and a sense of place, but also their contribution to health, well-being and spiritual inspiration.

Around a quarter of households in England and Wales⁹ do not have access to a car and rely on public transport for most of their journeys. While residents of National Parks generally have higher than average levels of car ownership, there is still a significant minority who do not have access to a car – 6% of households in the most rural areas – and these people are increasingly isolated as local shops and services have closed. So improved alternatives to the car are important for those who live in National Parks as well as those who want to visit them.

⁸ http://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/1070313/INFOGRAPHIC-2017-hires.pdf

⁹ Statistics taken from <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/people-vehicle-licensing-ownership/?lang=en> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts02-driving-licence-holders>

2.2 Who travels to National Parks and how do they get there?

In common with other rural areas, there is a high level of car ownership among National Park residents. The most recent census data shows that 88% of households in National Parks owned one or more cars¹⁰ compared with 74% nationally. Those without cars are left increasingly isolated as local shops and services have closed and other transport options have declined, a situation that has been exacerbated recently by a reduction in public funding for bus services.

The limited public transport means there is also a huge reliance on the private car by visitors to National Parks and 93% of visitors to UK National Parks travel by car¹¹ on average. About 25% of households nationally do not own a car¹² so many of those who might benefit the most from the health and well-being opportunities provided by National Parks are currently excluded from them, due to the lack of public transport. In particular, there are poor services on Sundays and public holidays, despite these being the most popular days for visiting. Where public transport is available, it is often infrequent or finishes early limiting the opportunities for access. The high cost of bus fares can also be a barrier¹³.

A number of the NPAs have undertaken surveys of visitors to get an understanding of their views on tourism-related issues in the Park and many of these provide an insight into who travels to National Parks and how they get there. For example, a survey of visitors to Exmoor National Park¹⁴ in 2016 found that 96% of visitors had arrived by private transport (car or motorbike) compared to 93% at the time of their last survey in 2010. Demographic information collected as part of this survey showed that younger people, those with longstanding health issues or disabilities and people from ethnic minorities were under-represented among visitors to the National Park.

More comprehensive research - including surveys of both visitors and non-visitors was undertaken for the Peak District National Park Authority in 2014. The survey of visitors to the National Park found that 83% had arrived by car. A large proportion were from the more affluent, healthy sectors of society – two thirds were categorised as ‘affluent achievers’ or ‘comfortable communities’, using the ACORN categories of consumers¹⁵. Visitors from the ‘financially stretched’ or ‘urban adversity’ categories were underrepresented compared to the GB average.

The surveys of non-visitors were undertaken at various locations in Greater Manchester. A lack of awareness of what the National Park has to offer was given as the most common reason for not visiting (24%) but the same proportion of people cited transport related reasons. This included 14% who said that they do not have a car or do not drive and 10% who said that it was too far away or too difficult to get to. In addition, 4% cited cost as a barrier which is likely to relate at least in part to the cost of fares on public transport. Respondents from some areas were significantly more likely to cite a lack of transport and cost as barriers to visiting the National Park. In the most deprived wards surveyed, only 10% cited a lack of interest in visiting the National Park but 52% identified difficulties

¹⁰ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-national-parks-in-england-and-wales/index.html>

¹¹ <http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/learningabout/ourchallenges/tourism#howget>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts02-driving-licence-holders>

¹³ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmenvaud/201/201.pdf>

¹⁴ http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/910700/Exmoor-National-Park-Visitor-Survey-2016.pdf

¹⁵ http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/538772/vistor-non-visitor-survey-2014.pdf

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in getting there and 31% the associated cost as reasons for not visiting. Difficulty in getting to the Park was also most significant in the 65+ age group. Publicity and provision of affordable public transport links were the two main factors that non-visitors said would encourage them to visit the National Park – cited by 33% and 17% respectively.

2.3 The benefits of improved access

There is increasing recognition of the physical and mental health benefits that the landscape and outdoor recreation provides, for example, research by the National Trust¹⁶ highlights the profound impacts that nature deficit disorder has on children's health, especially with regard to obesity caused in part by a significant reduction in time spent playing outdoors. Natural England has also published a literature review¹⁷ which found widespread recognition that experience of the outdoors and wilderness or wild spaces has the potential to confer a multitude of benefits on young people's physical development, emotional and mental health and well-being and societal development. In many parts of the UK, the only places that offer a wilderness-like experience are in National Parks.

For many years, Campaign for National Parks managed the Mosaic engagement programme which successfully recruited and trained hundreds of volunteer community champions to introduce thousands of people from urban areas to the physical and mental health benefits of National Parks. We targeted people from disadvantaged communities which are under-represented in National Parks. Evidence from the Mosaic community champions demonstrates both the difficulties of accessing National Parks without a car and the benefits of introducing new visitors to the Parks. They cite examples of mental health benefits for people who feel more relaxed and happier as a result of visits to National Parks. There are also examples of people who have been introduced to walking on visits to National Parks and as a result have started walking more for local journeys in their own communities. This has obvious benefits in terms of health and social inclusion.

Increasing the opportunities for visitors to reach National Parks is also good for the local economy in areas which rely significantly on tourism for their economic well-being. There is evidence¹⁸ that visitors who use public transport tend to spend more money in tourist areas than visitors by car. They are more likely to spend money on food and drink locally and are more likely to pay for tourist attractions. There is also evidence¹⁹ that supported bus services generate between £2 and £2.50 in benefits to local communities for every £1 of local authority spend as a result of improved access to work and leisure activities and reduced road congestion and carbon emissions. This is before you even take account of some of the wider benefits such as increased spending in local businesses which has been identified in local surveys. For example, Moorsbus users reported that they spend over £13 per person on average in local shops and cafes²⁰. In addition, it has been estimated that passengers on DalesBus Sunday and Bank Holiday services brought £187,000 per annum worth of visitor spending to the Yorkshire Dales National Park²¹ and that passengers on the New Forest Tour

¹⁶ National Trust, 2012, *Natural Childhood by Stephen Moss*

¹⁷ Natural England, 2010, *Wild Adventure Space: its role in teenagers' lives*

¹⁸ MVA Consultancy in association with David Simmonds Consultancy, 2006, *Evaluation of Rural Transport Provision* (report for Lancashire Economic Partnership)

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/value-for-money-of-tendered-bus-services>

²⁰ <http://www.moorsbus.org/passenger-survey.html> (figures used are for food/drink and shopping in 2016)

²¹ Dales Integrated Transport Alliance, 2011, *Connecting the Dales Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid*

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contributed an estimated £680,000 to the local economy in 2014²². There are, therefore, strong economic development arguments for investing in improved public transport for National Parks.

Finally, there are significant environmental benefits to providing improved alternatives to the car particularly where appropriate marketing is used to promote the service to existing car users. It is estimated that the GoLakes Travel Project in the Lake District saved over 41,750 tonnes of carbon in 2014-15²³. Reducing the number of people who travel to National Parks by car would also help reduce the associated impacts of carbon emissions noise pollution, road danger and the blight and severance caused by high volumes of traffic. This would provide benefits to local communities and enhance the experience of visitors as well providing environmental benefits. There is currently a huge reliance on the private car by visitors to National Parks - around 93% on average²⁴.

2.4 Who should transport initiatives provide for?

As well as reducing the barriers for non-visitors, improved alternatives to the car are needed to encourage those who have a choice to use their cars less in National Parks. In some places, the number of cars can undermine the areas' special qualities and have a negative impact on tranquillity and the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and cultural heritage.

There has been some research undertaken to examine how measures to reduce car use in National Parks can be most effective. A paper in 2014²⁵ emphasised the importance of targeting specific promotional messages at different audiences. This is based on market segment research to identify the types of messages that would be most successful with different audiences. The research also identified "the market segments with the greatest potential for pro-environmental behaviour coupled with the greatest spend". The conclusion of the paper is that: "Identifying visitors who are most easily influenced to behave appropriately and have the highest economic impact should be the first step in visitor transport behaviour management. Combining the attributes of market segments for both environmental and economic benefits has great application in practice to ensure that optimum tourists who tread lightly and pay their way are attracted to our fragile and precious environments."

Other research has also identified the importance of tailoring messages effectively. An evaluation of the projects supported by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) between 2011 and 2015²⁶ identified the 'Drive Less See More' campaign in the Lake District which highlighted how bus travel or cycling gave visitors more chance to enjoy the view as an example of good practice. Visitor travel surveys showed that in the years when most visitors indicated they chose sustainable travel "as part of the visitor experience", a higher proportion of them swapped their cars for an alternative mode, showing that they had been influenced by the messages about being able to enjoy the view while cycling or using the bus.

²² http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/news/article/640/record_year_for_green_transport_in_the_new_forest

²³ <https://www.cumbriatourism.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/annual-performance-report-2014-15.pdf>

²⁴ <http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/students/ourchallenges/tourism>

²⁵ Reducing visitor car use in a protected area: a market segment approach to achieving behaviour change – Davina Joanne Stanford, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 2014

²⁶ *What works? Learning from the LSTF 2011 to 2015* (published 26 January 2017)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-sustainable-transport-fund-what-works>

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Targeting visitors with high levels of disposable income can be very successful in encouraging a switch from cars to buses. For example, in 2014 there were 41,877 passenger journeys on the three routes of the New Forest Tour over its 11-week season, saving around 226,000 private care miles²⁷. The New Forest Tour charges a premium fare and has become part of the 'visitor experience' complete with offers like free ice cream, free cakes and tea. However features such as premium pricing may deter the use of services like this for other trips by residents and high prices will also limit the role they play in improving access for the disadvantaged groups currently under-represented among visitors to National Parks. In addition, services which are only available for a short summer season are likely to have limited value for residents who need to travel year round.

Many of the LSTF-funded transport initiatives in National Parks were targeted at visitors with the intention that this would also lead to improved transport for local residents. However, it can take time to build up passenger numbers to commercially viable levels which may not always be possible with short-term funding. An evaluation of the LSTF project in the South Downs found that the car mode share for day visitors travelling to/from the National Park had reduced from 88% in 2012/13 to 83% in 2015/16, resulting in a net saving of over 4,000 tonnes of CO₂. The biggest reduction in car use (from 86% to 83%) happened in the final (extension) year of the five year project.²⁸

Independent research based on interviews with those involved in the LSTF programmes in National Parks²⁹ highlights the importance of informing all stakeholders of the benefits of the project and particularly making sure that residents understand how they will benefit from improved visitor travel as well as the importance of communicating the commercial benefits of improved visitor travel to the private sector. Other interesting observations from the interviews include the difficulties resulting from short-term funding, particularly where this comes through a competitive process, for example, the length of time it takes to get started, an inability to carry money over from one year to the next, the fact that changing visitor travel habits is a long-term process. It also highlights that local highway authorities are often reluctant to tackle visitor travel as their priority is the residents who vote for them but there is a strong justification for focusing on visitor travel given the numbers involved relative to residents in most National Parks and the potential benefits in terms of reduced carbon emissions and congestion as well as improved bus services for residents. The paper finishes by emphasising the importance of disseminating the lessons learnt from LSTF more widely and suggests that Natural England should do this. The Department for Transport (DfT) commissioned research into the impacts of LSTF visitor travel but unfortunately this has not been published.

²⁷ http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/news/article/640/record_year_for_green_transport_in_the_new_forest

²⁸ *End of Project evaluation report of the Two National Parks LSTF programme (2015/16 extension)*
Report to South Downs NPA Governance Committee – 5 July 2016

https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/GOV_July-5-2016_Agenda-Item-14-Appendix-4.pdf

²⁹ Driving pro-environmental change in tourist destinations: encouraging sustainable travel in National Parks via partnership project creation and implementation – Davina Stanford and Jo Guiver, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 2016

3. Funding and provision of transport in National Parks

3.1. Who is responsible for transport in National Parks?

A large number of different organisations have some responsibility for the provision, promotion and funding of transport in each National Park. National Park Authorities (NPAs) are not transport authorities but they are planning authorities and can use their planning policies to influence travel patterns. The majority of public transport is delivered by private companies and primary responsibility for transport policy rests with the local transport authority for an area. This is usually the relevant county or unitary council such as North Yorkshire County Council or Pembrokeshire County Council. Most bus services are provided on a commercial basis but local transport authorities can also pay operators to provide services that they consider to be socially necessary.

In both England and Wales, Network Rail is responsible for rail infrastructure and passenger services on the railway are provided by train operating companies (TOCs). The majority of services are provided under a franchise agreement following a competitive process. However, there are some differences between the two countries with regard to many other aspects of transport provision as briefly summarised below.

In England

In some areas there are now Integrated Transport Authorities or Combined Authorities, such as Transport for Greater Manchester or West Yorkshire Combined Authorities which have overall responsibility for transport in an area. The *Bus Services Act 2017* extended the range of options for such transport authorities, including bus quality partnerships, franchising or other relationships with operators to improve services. In addition, new Sub-National Transport Bodies are emerging, bringing together partnerships of local authorities, and seeking additional devolved transport powers and funding from central Government. Transport for the North is the first of these to receive statutory powers.

Highways England is responsible for maintaining and improving the Strategic Road Network (SRN) – motorways and the major A-roads. From 2020/21, Vehicle Excise Duty will be allocated to a new National Road Fund which will pay for the SRN. Until a few years ago, local highways authorities were generally responsible for implementing all other local transport schemes with funding provided by the Westminster Government on the basis of Local Transport Plans. As a result of increased devolution, major local transport schemes are now expected to be delivered by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and local authorities, either alone, or as part of Combined Authorities. The Westminster Government is proposing to introduce a Major Road Network consisting of the most regionally significant parts of the local road network and which would also receive funding from the National Road Fund.

All local transport authorities are now expected to produce Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans which identify the cycling and walking improvements needed at a local level to increase the number of trips made by walking and cycling. While this is generally viewed as a positive development, concern has been raised about the lack of funding to support the measures identified in these plans.

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Another issue for National Parks is the fact that some Parks are covered by a number of different local highway authorities, none of whom will necessarily prioritise the needs of visitors when making decisions about walking and cycling infrastructure or the planning of bus services. For example, there are six different transport authorities covering the Peak District. A further complication is that the move towards greater devolution to local government means that those areas with combined authorities now have more powers than other local transport authorities, for example, they are able to introduce bus franchising, which would allow them to determine the bus route network in their area and to let franchises to private bus companies to operate services on those networks. To date, none of the eligible authorities have taken up these powers.

The Westminster Government leads on setting requirements for train services and quality measures, and holds franchising competitions that reward bidders for committing to investment, supporting and developing the business and its people, and offering great customer service.

From 2010-15, NPAs were able to participate in bids to the Department for Transport's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) (see section 3.2 for further details on this) to support a range of sustainable transport measures, including improved public transport provision. A number of NPAs were involved in successful bids and, as a result, some NPAs have played a key role in delivering bus services in recent years.

In Wales

Transport is a devolved policy area and the Welsh Government has overall responsibility for transport policy in Wales.

Local authorities in Wales have similar responsibilities for transport policy, highways and public transport as their counterparts in England but there are a number of important differences, particularly with regard for support for sustainable transport. In particular, the *Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013* places new duties on local authorities in relation to the provision of active travel routes and the promotion of active travel. In addition, the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* places new duties on public bodies to consider the longer-term impacts of their decisions which should also encourage them to provide greater support for sustainable transport measures.

Another recent change is the creation of Transport for Wales, a not-for-profit company wholly owned by the Welsh Government which is responsible for delivering key public transport projects in Wales. It is currently leading on the procurement of the next Wales and Borders rail franchise with support from the DfT. The Welsh Government has indicated that they would like Transport for Wales to become the owner or operator of all Wales' bus and rail networks in the future, and to perform a similar role to Transport for London. There are ambitious plans for an integrated bus network, starting with the South Wales Metro for routes in and around Cardiff.

Welsh Government is responsible for the motorways and the major A-roads and local authorities are responsible for local transport schemes funded by grants from Welsh Government.

3.2. Funding for sustainable transport in National Parks

Those NPAs in England that have been able to support bus services in the last few years have often relied on the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). This was launched in 2011 to support projects which improved local transport infrastructure and encouraged more sustainable travel behaviour. A

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total of £540 million in capital and revenue funding was spent on 96 projects across 77 local authorities in England up to 2015. LSTF applications relating to National Parks could be taken forward by a single local transport authority or as a joint application in cases where National Parks span more than one local authority. Bids were led by the relevant local transport authority/ies and endorsed by, and delivered in partnership with, a National Park Authority/ies. Eight of the ten National Parks in England were covered by LSTF applications but not all of these were successful.

The successful LSTF funded bids covered three National Parks - Lake District, New Forest and South Downs - and supported a range of different types of initiative including buses, cycling and marketing and branding. Collectively, these initiatives led to a 3.7% increase in visitor bus journeys, with services that received funding showing more positive patronage trends than those which did not. There was also increased cycle use in all of the Parks and increased rail use in two of them³⁰. For 2015/16, £100million of capital funding for the Fund was made available through the Local Growth Fund. In 2016, the Westminster Government provided £21 million of Sustainable Travel Transition funding but unfortunately none of the bids involving National Parks were successful.

In addition, four National Parks - Dartmoor, New Forest, Peak District and South Downs – received funding through the Cycling Ambition Grant in 2013. An assessment of the value for money of this programme³¹ found that the four National Park schemes as a package were expected to provide more than seven pounds of benefits per pound invested, with the individual Benefit: Cost Ratios (BCRs) ranging between 3:1 (New Forest) and 13:1 (Dartmoor). The Peak District BCR was 6.5:1 and the South Downs 4.6:1. The social benefits identified included factors such as the health benefits of increased physical activity, improved journey experience and reduced congestion. The high score for Dartmoor was primarily due to delivering much higher benefits for physical fitness due to the terrain. The BCRs for the nine cities which received funding ranged from just over 2:1 to in excess of 30:1 but most have a BCR of less than 5:1. Investment in cycling in National Parks can clearly provide good value for money.

There is still much more that could be done to improve sustainable transport options in National Parks but there is no longer anything equivalent to the LSTF available. Currently the only Westminster Government funding targeted at increasing sustainable travel is specifically focused on encouraging cycling and walking to work. Revenue support can be crucial in sustaining rural bus services and many of the other sources of funding available to local transport authorities have also been cut significantly in recent years.

Evaluation of the LSTF³² has highlighted the length of time it takes to build up patronage to commercially viable levels, for example, it took three to four years to get the New Forest Tour to commercial viability, starting almost from scratch.

³⁰ Department for Transport, October 2017, *Impact of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund Summary Report*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impact-of-the-local-sustainable-transport-fund-summary-report>

³¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/348943/vfm-assessment-of-cycling-grants.pdf

³² *What works? Learning from the LSTF 2011 to 2015* (published 26 January 2017)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-sustainable-transport-fund-what-works>

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In February 2018, Welsh Government announced £8.1 million funding for local authority schemes which support active travel and improve road safety. We hope that some of this funding will be used to improve the provision of sustainable transport to and around National Parks.

Bus services are supported by a variety of public funding in addition to fare revenue. These include Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG), subsidies from local authorities to support services which are not commercially viable, concessionary travel funding to reimburse the costs incurred in providing free travel for those who are eligible. BSOG is mainly paid directly to bus operators by central government but local authorities receive the BSOG for the services they support. It is based on the mileage of local bus services and is usually described as a partial rebate on fuel duty for local bus services. There have been a number of calls in recent years to reform the way in which bus services are funded generally and the arrangements for reimbursing concessionary fares in particular, such as, the IPPR report, *Total Transport Authorities: a new deal for town and rural bus services*³³. There is not space to consider these issues in detail here, however, one issue of particular relevance is the impact of free travel as a significant proportion of bus passengers in rural areas are using a concessionary bus pass.

Although there are some slight differences in eligibility, concessionary travel schemes offer free travel at most times for people above a certain age in both England and Wales. Research³⁴ has suggested that the concessionary fare reimbursement system creates an incentive for bus companies to set high fares, as reimbursement is set at a proportion of the average fare foregone. Fares on many bus routes in National Parks are particularly expensive and as has already been highlighted this can act as a deterrent to bus use.

There are a number of concerns about the current concessionary travel arrangements, including:

- The cost to operators and/or local authorities means that services are being cut, particularly in rural areas.
- Eligibility for a concessionary pass is not means tested so the scheme may not be equitable or good value for money.
- There is a lack of concessions for young people, many of whom would also benefit significantly from subsidised travel – outside London, only 26 local authorities offer these.³⁵

The legislation only requires concessionary travel to be offered on services that are registered as local bus services and there are some buses operating in National Parks that do not offer free travel. For example, the New Forest Tour buses are registered as a service for tourists which means there is no requirement for them to provide concessions. While this reduces the cost to the operator and has helped the service to become commercially viable, it does mean that there are potentially some visitors and local people who are excluded from using it, due to the cost involved.

³³ <https://www.ippr.org/publications/total-transport-authorities-a-new-deal-for-town-and-rural-bus-services>

³⁴ http://www.transportforqualityoflife.com/u/files/160120_Building_a_world-class_bus_system_for_Britain_FINAL1.pdf

³⁵ Ibid.

4. Increasing the options for travel to and around National Parks

4.1. Walking and cycling

4.1.1. What is currently available?

Walking is the most popular recreational activity in National Parks and there are good networks of footpaths in all the National Parks but walking is rarely promoted as a means of transport. In many places the distances involved and the lack of direct routes between key locations which are suitable for pedestrians mean walking is unlikely to be a suitable option.

Cycling is more likely to be used as transport as well as for recreational purposes as it allows people to travel longer distances. Many parts of the National Parks are served by the National Cycle Network, allowing people to explore the Park without a car. Examples include the Cinder Track between Scarborough and Whitby in the North York Moors, the Pennine Cycleway in Northumberland and Lôn Las Cymru which crosses both Snowdonia and the Brecon Beacons. However, concern has been raised³⁶ about the extent to which the National Cycle Network provides effective access to town centres and visitor attractions, meaning that many people travel by car to use the routes.

It is possible to combine cycling and rail travel for shorter trips in some of the National Parks. For example, bicycles can be carried in the guards van on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway and there are carriages designed to carry bicycles on the Ravenglass Railway in the Lake District.

Some National Park Authorities are introducing other measures to encourage and support cyclists such as secure cycle parking at stations and attractions and working with businesses in their area to promote the benefits of cycle tourism.

Case Study: Pedal Peak for Business Project

The Peak District NPA is working with Derbyshire Dales District Council and Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire to deliver the [Peak Pedal for Business Project](#), which was set up in December 2016. The work is supported by funding from the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme until 2019. The aim is to attract more cycle tourists to the Peak District by providing better facilities for cyclists including more cycle friendly accommodation.

The project provides support to businesses to help them target cyclists. This includes a Cycle Tourism toolkit³⁷; grants for new products and services such as covered cycle parking and tools for loan; and workshops and networking events to help businesses understand the needs of cycling customers and increase their share of cycling tourism. The project is also responsible for awarding the Cyclists Welcome accreditation scheme. It is aimed primarily at accommodation providers in the vicinity of popular Peak District cycle trails such as the Monsal Trail and the Tissington Trail but it is also open to cycle hire, cafes and other tourism businesses in the area.

³⁶<http://www.bha.org.uk/report-inquiry-coastal-communities/>

³⁷http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1027958/PDNP-Cycle-Tourism-Toolkit-2017-10.pdf

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Electric bike hire

There is clearly significant potential for e-bike (electric bicycle) use by visitors in National Parks. The beautiful scenery is often best appreciated from the back of a bike, the battery power helps reduce the additional effort required to cycle in hillier terrain and people are more likely to be receptive to trying out a new idea when on holiday.

LSTF funding was used to support the creation of electric bike hire schemes in several National Parks, many of which were run by the [Electric Bicycle Network](#) (EBN), an organisation set up by people who used to work for Cycling England. The first network was established in the Peak District in 2011 and there were also networks in the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales and the South Downs. These all operated in a similar way with EBN managing the bicycles and working in partnership with tourism organisations, existing cycle hire companies and the NPA to recruit visitor attractions and accommodation providers to act as hire points. The idea was to provide the bicycles at places that visitors would be going to anyway to ensure that they were very visible and to avoid the need for people to have to make a special journey to collect a bike. Campsites worked particularly well. EBN also made arrangements with places such as cafes to act as charge points so that cyclists could charge their bicycle while stopping for refreshments.

Evaluations undertaken by the EBN found that the places which generated the most hires were ones near to existing cycle routes (usually off-road) and where there were clear suggestions of routes for people to use. A lot of those hiring bikes were either people who were not already very familiar with e-bikes and wanted to try them out with a view to buying one and many were not particularly confident cyclists so very clear route information was important. However, there was insufficient take-up overall for any of these networks to continue after LSTF funding finished.

Shared electric bike programme

In 2015, the Department for Transport funded [a shared electric bike programme](#) which explored which places, people and journey purposes are best suited to pooled electric bikes. The projects covered in this programme were a mixture of those aimed at tourists and those aimed at regular commuter journeys. They include [the PEDALL project](#) in New Forest National Park which was focused on providing specialist bikes for people with disabilities [and one on the edge of Plymouth](#) which provided access to Dartmoor as well as a number of others aimed at visitors to rural areas, such as [Red Squirrel Bikes](#) in the Isle of Wight and [We-cycle](#) in Hebden Bridge.

An evaluation of this programme published in 2016³⁸ found that one of the advantages of the e-bikes were that they enabled visitors to travel further than they would otherwise have done – nearly half (47%) of the visitor riders said they would have hired a regular bike and cycled a shorter distance if the e-bike had not been available. It also made cycling available to people who might not have been fit enough or confident enough to ride regular bikes. E-bike riders were more likely to own a car than the general population – 87% compared to 74% so it appears that their main contribution is in encouraging reduced car use rather than improving access. It is also likely that their use might lead to changes in people's travel behaviour for other journeys. Three in ten visitors said they were more likely to purchase an e-bike after using one.

³⁸ <https://www.carplusbikeplus.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Shared-Electric-Bike-Programme-Final-Report.pdf>

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The survey of users of the e-bikes on the Isle of Wight identified significant benefits to local tourism businesses with the bikes being used to visit a wide range of attractions across the Island – only a quarter of people said they would have visited the same attraction (by regular bike or other mode) if the e-bike had not been available. The remaining 75% would have done other activities.

The evaluation report notes that it was more challenging to develop the shared e-bike programmes aimed at tourists than the ones aimed at regular journeys due to the seasonal nature of the demand and the fact that usage was more likely to be affected by the weather. Each of the projects considered ways of attracting use for other types of trips. Aside from visitors, the next largest rider group has been those ‘trying before buying’, something which also occurred with the EBN schemes. The majority of riders in both cases were older or less fit which demonstrates the appeal of e-bikes to those who might not ride regular bikes. There were also interest from people in the 30-45 age group with children who could use trailers or tag-alongs. The majority of use was on off-road routes.

Several of the tourism projects had been looking at ways to expand their offers. The Isle of Wight project has developed marketing promotions with local visitor attractions and is considering joint ticketing promotions. The Hebden Bridge project had intended to lease e-bikes to local Bed and Breakfasts and campsites (this would be something similar to the EBN model) but had not generally had a positive response from businesses. Instead they made the e-bikes available in lockers in hill-top community pub car parks where they were available for both residents and visitors to use and the pub landlords would be able to keep an eye on them. Most usage has been by residents and the evaluation report suggests that there is a need to find a way for accommodation providers to avoid taking on too much financial risk to ensure that the e-bikes can be marketed to visitors more effectively.

4.1.2. What else could potentially be made available?

The potential for e-bikes in National Parks

There has been increasing media interest in e-bikes recently, largely prompted by ongoing concerns about air quality in urban areas and e-bikes are now much better known than they were even six years ago when the first of the e-bike networks in National Parks were set up. The design of e-bikes has improved significantly in recent years and in particular, batteries are lighter and longer lasting which increases the suitability of e-bikes for journeys in rural areas. It should also be possible to provide e-bikes as part of dockless cycle hire schemes (see below) although this has not yet been tried, probably due to the higher cost of e-bikes.

E-bike sales rose from 5% of the UK bike market in 2015 to 12% in 2016³⁹ and it has been reported that the Westminster Government⁴⁰ is considering introducing a subsidy similar to the one that already exists for electric vehicles in order to further encourage take-up. A recent report from the European Cyclists Federation⁴¹ recommended a purchase subsidy of 500€ for e-bikes in markets where there is currently a low take-up. The purchase price of certain electric vehicles is currently

³⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/sep/16/rise-of-the-ebike-how-going-electric-could-revolutionise-your-ride>

⁴⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/oct/20/uk-may-consider-electric-vehicle-subsidy-to-increase-cycling>

⁴¹ https://ecf.com/sites/ecf.com/files/FINAL%20for%20web%20170216%20ECF%20Report_E%20FOR%20ALL-%20FINANCIAL%20INCENTIVES%20FOR%20E-CYCLING.pdf

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subsidised by up to 35% or a maximum of £4,500⁴². The take-up of e-bikes in the UK is still far below the take up in many other European countries and there are a number of successful large e-bike visitor schemes in continental Europe including Movelo in Germany and Austria and Flyer in Switzerland.

One of the key recommendations from the evaluation of the DfT's shared electric bike programme was to explore the potential for increasing e-bike (and pedal bike) availability at more rail stations, travel hubs and accommodation networks across the UK. This could significantly increase the potential for visitors to travel to/from National Parks using a combination of rail and e-bike. It was also suggested that further research is needed into how e-bikes can contribute to accessibility in more rural areas.

The discussions with experts identified a number of factors which may need to be addressed in order to encourage greater take-up of e-bikes, particularly if they are to play a role in improving access as well as providing an alternative to the car. Alongside increased provision of e-bike hire at stations there needs to be some form of integrated ticketing to allow travellers to book their e-bike hire in conjunction with their rail ticket and ideally to receive some form of discount when doing that. EBN set up a partnership with First TransPennine for their project in the Peak District which gave rail users 10% off the cost of e-bike hire. Having a range of different types of bikes available is also very important to allow people the flexibility of having different bikes for different types of journey, for example they may need a cargo bike to get from the station to their accommodation with their luggage but would probably want a different type of bike for exploring. In areas, where it is not feasible to provide e-bike hire at stations (perhaps because the distance to the National Park is too far or the demand is too low), accommodation providers could be encouraged to offer a pick-up service for those hiring e-bikes during their stay to make it easier for them to arrive by public transport.

One clear message that emerged was that many of the things that are important for supporting the use of e-bikes are the same as those which are needed to encourage cycling use more generally – conveniently located, secure cycle parking and cycle-friendly accommodation (and information about where to find this) and above all providing good segregated cycle routes and making roads safer for cyclists by reducing the speed of vehicles and giving cyclists clearer priority. The only special facilities that e-bikes need is somewhere to charge the battery but as they can be charged from a normal socket and e-bike hirers typically cycle relatively short distances each day, it is unlikely that they will need to re-charge during a day out. However, it was felt that having a network of cafes etc. offering charging facilities to customers was a good way of promoting the e-bike hire as well as offering reassurance to users.

Dockless bike hire

Dockless bike hire schemes, also known as smart bike share, allow users to hire bikes and return them to any reasonable location rather than requiring the use of fixed docking stations as is the case for schemes such as the London Hire Bikes (Santander Cycles). The concept originated in Southeast Asia and relies on the use of a smart phone and mobile data as users locate and unlock the bikes

⁴²<https://www.gov.uk/plug-in-car-van-grants>

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through an app. Most specify recommended parking areas and incentivise users to leave the bikes in these areas to reduce inappropriate parking or bikes being left outside the area of operation.

The first dockless cycle schemes in the UK were launched by [Mobike](#) in Greater Manchester in July 2017 and there are now a number of others in London, Cambridge and other cities. While this new approach has generally been welcomed for its potential to provide cheap and convenient access to bicycles, some local authorities have expressed concern about the rapid and unregulated expansion of the schemes. There are concerns about the bikes being parked inconsiderately, blocking pavements and causing obstructions and about the maintenance and roadworthiness of the vehicles. Some cities, including London and Oxford, are now trying to address these issues by developing codes of conduct for dockless cycle schemes in conjunction with operators.

While the companies providing dockless cycle schemes are now operating in a wide range of different countries across the world, their emphasis to date has been on urban areas and there do not seem to have been examples of such schemes launching in rural areas.

4.2. Public transport

4.2.1. What is currently available?

Bus services

Despite the significant cuts to rural bus services in recent years, there are a number of examples of successful bus services which continue to operate in National Parks, providing a valuable service for both residents and visitors. Some of these are managed and supported by local voluntary groups, for example the [DalesBus](#) network of routes providing links between the Yorkshire Dales and local towns and cities and the [MoorsBus](#) services in the North York Moors. There are also services provided by NPAs, often working in partnership with bus operators and other organisations, such as the seasonal [Tour routes](#) and [Beach Bus in the New Forest](#). Other examples of successful bus services in National Parks, which are run by the relevant local authority often working in partnership with the NPA, include the [Breeze up to the Downs](#) network linking Brighton with the South Downs on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays all year round; the [Snowdon Sherpa](#) which provides a link between the routes up Snowdon and visitor and tourist attractions in the area; and the [Pembrokeshire Coastal Buses](#) which serve the whole length of the coast, allowing people to walk sections of the coast path without the need for a car.

The New Forest NPA has produced a *Visitor Bus Toolkit*⁴³ which provides guidance on setting up and promoting successful visitor bus services in National Parks and other special landscapes. This includes further details on some of the examples listed above. This emphasises the importance of developing good relationships with local authorities, tourism organisations and visitor attractions when planning services as well as with bus operators. It also highlights the need for strong marketing and good branding and suggests the use of incentives and discounts for bus passengers to encourage people to use the services. The guide includes a section on potential sources of revenue for bus services. These include: advertising, merchandise and visitor payback and the Toolkit refers to research in the Lake District which suggested that a donation of just £1 per night per visitor could fund free bus travel for everyone within in the Park.

⁴³http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/downloads/file/1120/visitor_bus_toolkit

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Where time and effort has been put in to improving access by bus to National Parks, it is clear that there is a huge demand for it, particularly among groups who are currently under-represented among visitors to National Parks. The Yorkshire Dales Society, now known as Friends of the Dales, set up the Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company (CIC) to run DalesBus in 2007, and since then around 345,000 passenger journeys have been made on its services⁴⁴. The Breeze up to the Downs service was highly commended for 'The Bus in the Countryside' Award in 2009. The citation for the award describes it as the most popular of all leisure bus networks in Britain, carrying the greatest number of people and compared to similar leisure services, Breeze attracts a younger age profile, higher numbers identifying as Black and Minority Ethnic Groups, a higher proportion of women and a higher proportion of people accompanied by children⁴⁵.

Unfortunately, many of the bus services that were operating in National Parks have been reduced or cut back completely in recent years and even those services which survive face a continual struggle for funding. At one stage many of the NPAs funded sustainable transport initiatives. For example, Moorsbus in the North York Moors, which is often cited as an example of good practice, used to be very well funded by the NPA but that funding was significantly cut a few years ago. The original service was introduced in 1981 with the NPA taking the lead from 1991. Following withdrawal of NPA funding, the Moorsbus CIC was established and they now run a much smaller selection of the most popular routes. The CIC funds the services through donations, external funding and sponsorship as well as fare revenue and concessionary travel reimbursement. A case study of Moorsbus based on research undertaken in 2004⁴⁶ provides details of the way in which the routes had been designed to allow people to travel to lots of different parts of the Park replicating the way in which people would travel by car as far as possible. Critical success factors identified included the affordability of bus fares for families, the availability of integrated ticketing with local train services and the refunding of car park fees for Moorsbus passengers.

Despite the success of DalesBus, the Dales and Bowland CIC has had to develop an innovative approach to financing the service. This has included crowd funding through Just Giving and sponsorship, such as agreeing a two-year deal with Harrogate Spring Water for one route and support from Acorn Stairlifts for one of the other services. Such an approach relies heavily on the commitment of volunteers to ensure that the services can continue to run each year and there are questions about how sustainable it is in the long term. In their 2016/17 Annual Report⁴⁷, the CIC emphasise that many of the funding opportunities they have used to support DalesBus are unlikely to be repeated and the service will cease to exist in its current form without greater levels of investment by the public sector. They suggest that an [annual] budget of £100,000 would be sufficient and highlight that this represents less than 2% of Yorkshire Dales NPA's current budget.

Rail services

The extent to which rail provides a viable option for travel varies significantly between the National Parks. For some National Parks such as the New Forest, the South Downs, the Peak District, the Lake District and Snowdonia there are good rail connections to major urban areas and rail also provides

⁴⁴ <https://www.dalesbus.org/dbcicintro.html>

⁴⁵ <http://www.ukbusawards.org.uk/content/index.php/countryside-09>

⁴⁶ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070811153908/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pggr/regional/buses/busgrants/rbs/parks/gpg/improvingocialinclusion>

⁴⁷ <https://www.dalesbus.org/dbcic-news/annual-report-201617>

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an option for travelling around between some of the towns within the National Park. For example there are direct trains to the New Forest from Southampton, Bournemouth, Poole and London and rail routes through the Park also allow for easy journeys between key centres such as Brockenhurst and Lymington and Ashurst and Christchurch. In the Peak District, the Hope Valley Line between Manchester and Sheffield also serves a number of villages in the Derwent, Hope and Edale valleys and there are other rail lines providing access in to the Park from Derby and Manchester.

Other National Parks have mainline railway stations located relatively nearby. For example, there are good mainline train connections to Exeter, Newton Abbott and Plymouth all of which are within about 30 minutes' drive of Dartmoor. There is also a station at Ivybridge right on the edge of the Park. The Brecon Beacons is also well-served by train lines on the edges of the Park – the Heart of Wales line serves Llandeilo and Llandovery on the west side and the Manchester to Cardiff line serves Pontypool and Abergavenny on the eastern side. In these cases, it is sometimes possible to use a combination of rail and bus to access the Park but unfortunately the cuts to bus services in recent years mean that the opportunities for doing this are now more limited than they were in the past.

Some of the branch lines serving National Parks are now supported by Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs), bringing together local authorities, local people and the rail operators to promote the services available and work towards providing improved services and stations. Many CRPs have introduced a range of initiatives to support and encourage visits to their area by rail, such as providing tourist information offices at stations and working with local bus operators to provide connections to tourism attractions. Examples include:

- the [East Hampshire Community Rail Partnership](#) which covers a number of stations such as Petersfield and Liss which can be used as gateways to the South Downs National Park and which aims to attract more visitors to the area using trains.
- the Conwy Valley Rail Initiative in Snowdonia offers free conducted tours of the line to local hoteliers, tour operators, tourist information centres and other relevant parties, to show what it has to offer as an attraction in its own right and the links it provides to places of interest and other modes of transport⁴⁸.

The Westminster Government is currently developing a Community Rail Strategy and this must take account of the needs of visitors.

In some places, there are also heritage railways. For example, there are seven heritage railways in and around Snowdonia National Park such as the Ffestiniog Railway and the Welsh Highland Railway, which both provide connections between towns on the national rail network and other towns and villages in the National Park. Such lines potentially offer increased opportunities for access to National Parks without a car, especially where they provide interchanges with mainline rail services or bus services. However, they are primarily operated as visitor attractions rather than modes of transport with tickets priced accordingly and the journeys they provide tend to be scenic but slow and expensive. A further disadvantage is that they often run to a much reduced timetable out-of-season – some only operate for a few weeks each summer. While they may provide a useful

⁴⁸ https://acorp.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/140916_Value-of-CRPs-and-volunteering_final-draft-v3.17.pdf

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additional option for some people, they are only ever likely to make a small contribution to providing improved access.

Boat Services

In some National Parks, notably the Broads and the Lake District, scheduled ferries and other boat services contribute to the range of options for visitors to travel around by car. For example, there are a number of different boat trips available in the Lake District, some of which offer joint ticketing with the attractions they serve. Unfortunately the departure points for such services may not always be easily accessible for those relying on public transport.

4.2.2. How could more public transport be made available?

Re-organising the way bus services are planned

Some of those we spoke to were keen to highlight that what is needed is a complete reform of the way bus services are planned and funded in this country. The current deregulated system in the UK is never going to deliver the kind of rural transport service that many other European countries have as it does not allow for any cross-subsidy between revenue-generating and loss-making routes. In contrast, the system which operates in most Scandinavian regions allows for some cross-subsidy meaning that there are generally higher levels of service provided in rural areas⁴⁹. In Denmark, Sweden and Norway virtually all bus services have been franchised which has resulted in reduced costs and improved quality.

The *Bus Services Act 2017* provides local transport authorities with new powers to introduce franchising or partnership arrangements and aims to make it easier to introduce multi-operator ticketing and provide improved information to passengers. These powers are available to the six combined authorities with directly elected mayors (Tees Valley, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, West Midlands, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and the West of England) and other local transport authorities can apply to the Secretary of State to use them. It is not yet clear to what extent they will be taken up.

NPAs are not local transport authorities but we secured changes during the passage of the Act through parliament which ensure that they will be consulted when authorities use the new powers to plan bus services in their area. We argued that this was essential in order to take account of the needs of visitors to National Parks and the existing bus services supported by NPAs and voluntary groups in National Parks. There were also calls during the passage of the Act for the franchising powers to be automatically available to all local transport authorities. One of the experts we spoke to as part of this research suggested that they should also be available to NPAs to allow them to franchise services.

The calls for wider reform of the bus system are backed up by the report, *Building a world class bus system for Britain*⁵⁰. The report argues that only a wholesale shift to franchising, or municipal bus companies, will deliver better bus services for the whole of Britain. The report highlights that the current deregulated, privatised bus system in the UK only works if bus companies make a profit for their shareholders. Almost all the bus companies' operating profit in the 10 years to 2013 was paid

⁴⁹<http://www.urbantransportgroup.org/resources/types/reports/scandinavian-way-better-public-transport>

⁵⁰ http://www.transportforqualityoflife.com/u/files/160120_Building_a_world-class_bus_system_for_Britain_FINAL1.pdf

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out as dividends to shareholders, a total of £2.8 billion. Nationally, this equates to one-tenth of the public money that goes into supporting bus services.

The report goes on to set out some of the other problems with the deregulated system and suggests that replacing the current system with franchising across Britain could deliver net financial gains of around £340 million per year as a result of retention of 'excess' profit, increases in patronage and efficiency savings. These gains would be enough to restore recent cuts in the funding available for local bus services, and over time, as patronage and revenue increased, would provide additional funding for new services. The report also supports the creation of Total Transport Authorities, an idea that was originally proposed by IPPR⁵¹ and recommends that they should have more powers to raise income locally for their public transport networks, as is common in other countries. However, it is emphasised that national funding for bus services will remain essential.

Some of the options for raising funds locally which are discussed in the report would be relevant in a National Park, such as a visitor lodging levy used in Switzerland. It also discusses a number of options for specific standards for network coverage, calling for local transport authorities to be given a statutory duty to improve bus services and increase local bus use to complement the new powers. The importance of providing for access to recreational and visitor destinations as well as key services such as education and healthcare is highlighted.

New rail services

In 2015, Campaign to Protect Rural England published *Rural Reconnections: the social benefits of rail reopening*⁵² which considered the potential for expanding the rail network in rural areas. In particular, this looked at the wider impacts of reopening the Plymouth-Tavistock-Okehampton-Exeter railway and how this line could better serve the rural area through which it passes as well as providing a second mainline to Devon and Cornwall. The line would run along the west and north sides of Dartmoor and would be very close to the National Park in some places. The report highlights the potential benefits to the visitor economy as well as the increased potential for commuting to Exeter and Plymouth from locations within the National Park. It also highlights that these benefits would only be delivered if the new line is properly integrated into the existing public transport network, such as through integrated ticketing and timetabling.

The report also notes, however, that reopening the line could threaten some of the existing tourism market if it results in a loss of tranquillity on rights of way in the area or makes them less convenient to use if there are not sufficient safe crossings of the line. In addition, the line would be visible from large areas of moorland within the Park although it is noted that sections could be naturally screened by existing woodland as long as this was retained. The Dartmoor Preservation Association has significant concerns about the potential negative impacts on the National Park of re-opening the rail line.

Dartmoor NPA commissioned its own report⁵³ into the reopening of the section of rail line between Tavistock and Okehampton. This identifies the potential benefits for residents and businesses in the Park. It also notes the significant potential which the new line would offer for visitor travel,

⁵¹<https://www.ippr.org/publications/total-transport-authorities-a-new-deal-for-town-and-rural-bus-services>

⁵²<https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/transport/rail/item/3986-rural-reconnections>

⁵³http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/948784/2015-07-22_DevonMainLineRouteOptions_Final_Report.pdf

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suggesting that it could help to extend the visitor season and make the National Park more accessible to new market segments as well as providing improved access for existing visitors. This would reduce congestion on the roads as well as providing increased custom for local shops, restaurants, accommodation providers and recreation based businesses which would in turn lead to increased employment, potentially throughout the year. However, it is noted that much of the potential benefit is dependent on there being sufficient capacity for carrying bicycles on the local passenger trains and through improvement to the public right of way network to enhance the links to smaller rural communities and the moorland.

In November 2017, the Government published *Connecting people: a strategic vision for rail*⁵⁴ which discusses the potential for expanding the rail network. The emphasis of the strategy is very much on increasing capacity for commuter journeys and providing new routes would could allow significant new housing or economic development. There is very little reference to the role of rail in rural areas and no mention at all of the potential for new rail services to provide improved access for visitors to rural areas. However, there is a commitment to look at opportunities for restoring some of the capacity that was removed from the rail network in the 1960s and 1970s and the examples of proposals currently being considered include the re-opening of the line between Tavistock and Okehampton. This document stresses that all the proposals being considered need further development and will need to demonstrate a strong business case where they are seeking any available government funding.

While re-opening certain branch lines could offer significant potential for improving visitor access to National Parks, they would need to be planned and designed carefully to avoid damage to the National Park and rights of way and to ensure the benefits are maximised. There is also the potential to do more to promote the use of existing branch lines in National Parks, in conjunction with Community Rail Partnerships.

4.3. Community transport

4.3.1. What is currently available?

There is no statutory definition of community transport but those providing community transport usually share a number of features that distinguish them from other passenger transport operators. In particular, they are usually third sector organisations – non-commercial and non-statutory – which are strongly embedded in their local community and rely on substantial contributions from volunteers for both their management and operation.

Community transport services are used by a wide variety of groups and individuals although the majority of users tend to be those unable to access regular public transport or taxi services due to age, specific health needs or a remote geographic location. The operators of such services do not currently need a full Public Service Vehicle (PSV) Operator's licence⁵⁵ and instead can apply for licences under Section 19 and Section 22 of the *Transport Act 1985*. Section 19 permit vehicles cannot be used to carry members of the public and are used by organisations providing transport for their members or particular groups of people that they have been set up to help. A standard Section

⁵⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/663124/rail-vision-web.pdf

⁵⁵In February 2018, the Westminster Government launched a consultation on possible changes to this exemption following challenges from independent bus operators.

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19 permit allows an organisation to operate a vehicle with up to 16 seats but there are also Section 16 Large Bus permits available. A Section 22 permit allows organisations to provide transport for the general public by way of a local registered bus route. Operators with these permits can also apply for permission to offer other services, such as private hire, to subsidise the local bus service.

As Section 19 services do not usually run on fixed routes and are only available to members of particular organisation, it is Section 22 community transport services that are most likely to be of relevance to visitors to National Parks. There are a number of examples of successful community transport services operating in National Parks, particularly in the Yorkshire Dales where the local transport authority, North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) has supported local people to set up community transport initiatives to replace existing subsidised services that it could no longer afford to provide and which were previously operated by the private sector. Examples include the Little White Bus,⁵⁶ based in Wensleydale; the Upper Wharfedale Venturer⁵⁷ (see case studies of each of these below); the Western Dales Bus⁵⁸ which provides services between Sedbergh, Dent and Kendal; and the Upper Wharfedale Packhorse which is partially funded from the profits of a local beer festival and provides Saturday night bus services connecting villages throughout Upper Wharfedale and Littondale, allowing people to visit pubs and restaurants in the area without needing to drive. Other community bus services providing services for visitors in National Parks include Cuckmere Buses⁵⁹ in the South Downs and the Exmoor Community Bus⁶⁰.

By ensuring remote villages that would otherwise have no public transport retain a link to local train stations and market towns, these services offer a lifeline for residents without a car and are hugely valued by visitors to the area. For the initiatives in North Yorkshire, the County Council owns and maintains the vehicles and provides support with licensing issues and promoting the services. This means the operators are able to rely on NYCC for advice and technical support but the cost to the local authority is still significantly less than the subsidy that they were previously providing to a commercial operator. The operators rely heavily on volunteer drivers in order to keep costs down but the funding provided by NYCC enables them to employ some paid drivers to ensure they are able to meet the commitments of a scheduled service.

Case Study, Upper Wharfedale Venturer

The Upper Wharfedale Venturer provides a service three times a day on school days (five times on Saturdays and school holidays) between Buckden, a small village in the Yorkshire Dales and Grassington, where passengers can connect with Pride of the Dales services to Skipton and Ilkley. Until 2015, the Pride of the Dales services ran all the way through to Buckden but the 10 mile section of the route between Buckden and Grassington was the least used so it was identified as one for which the subsidy could be cut when NYCC needed to reduce its budget. NYCC held a meeting in Kettlewell to discuss the situation with the local community at which they suggested the only option for maintaining a service would be community transport. Following this, a small group of local residents decided to form a Community Interest Company (CIC).

⁵⁶ <http://www.littlewhitebus.co.uk/>

⁵⁷ http://www.vetch.co.uk/uw_bus/

⁵⁸ <http://www.westerndalesbus.co.uk/>

⁵⁹ <https://cuckmerebuses.org.uk/>

⁶⁰ <http://www.exmoorcommunitybus.co.uk/index.html>

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The CIC put forward a bid to provide the same level of service as the previous operator but with a reduced level of subsidy and using a vehicle owned by NYCC. They are carrying about the same number of passengers as previously – 12,500 in the first year, 52% of which have concessionary passes (a smaller proportion than previously). There are no figures on the number of visitors using the service, but they believe that there are more visitors than locals using the service as the paying passengers are predominantly visitors as well as many of those with concessionary passes. There is lots of variation in the number of passengers carried – in their busiest week they carried over 500, in the least busy less than 100. Another indication of visitor use is that there have been reduced numbers of passengers since one of the local pubs shut. As well as bringing visitors in to the area, the service is very important to local pubs and cafes who rely on employing people from elsewhere in the Dale, who may not have their own transport or be too young to drive.

They employ a part-time administrator and a mixture of paid and volunteer drivers but there is no physical base for the administration of the service – it is all run over the internet – which keeps the cost down. It would just about be possible to run the service using only paid drivers but the use of volunteers helps reinforce the local connection and demonstrates the community's commitment to the service. They are also popular with visitors. As a new organisation, set up from scratch to deliver this service, the CIC had to put in a lot of work to identify what needed to be done in terms of licensing, insurance etc. The Community Transport Association (CTA) helped with finding an insurance company but the CIC's directors have spent a lot of time researching various issues themselves. It was difficult to work out which bits of the legislation apply.

The CIC accepts donations to support the bus services and is also considering other ways of generating additional income, such as selling advertising.

4.3.2. What else could potentially be made available?

There is potential for community transport services to be set up elsewhere to provide improved access around National Parks for both residents and visitors, particularly as the cost to the local transport authority is significantly less than the cost of contracting a commercial operator. However, there are a number of key issues that would need to be considered before deciding whether this was the most appropriate option:

- The need to recruit volunteer drivers – this has not been an issue for the Little White Bus which is based in a “self-reliant independent community” as John Blackie described it but this could be more difficult in some other places. Without good support from volunteers, it may not be possible to operate a sufficient level of service for the available subsidy.
- The role of the local authority – NYCC's approach and the operational support they have provided have clearly critical to the success of the schemes in the Yorkshire Dales.
- The potential for buses to be over-subscribed at very busy times (particularly if only using minibuses which are not allowed to take standing passengers) – the Little White Bus has dealt with this by trying to run part of the route again to pick up anyone left behind but this relies on both driver and vehicle being available which may not always be possible and means some people are left waiting for the return service.
- The need to meet the same operational standards as other operators when providing local bus services can place a strain on small voluntary organisations.

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- Concerns about the level of support available for those running Section 22 services – it was suggested that the CTA is more focused on the needs of those using Section 19 services and possibly more concerned with community transport in urban areas.
- The need for resources to support those setting up similar services elsewhere, particularly where there may not be the same level of support from the local authority e.g. guidance on insurance, licencing, recruiting volunteer drivers and the various other steps needed to establish a community transport operation, such as budgeting and developing a business plan as well as the legal requirements.

4.4. Shared journeys

4.4.1. What is currently available?

Shared bus services

Recent advances in technology have seen the development of a number of initiatives from the private hire and bus industry aimed at offering flexible on-demand shared journeys, usually booked via an app. One such scheme based in Harrogate called [Vamooz](#) has been used for shared bus trips to the Yorkshire Dales National Park using crowdfunding technology to share the costs between users. Any group or individual can use their app to suggest a particular journey which others are then invited to sign up for as well. A minimum number of passengers are required for the journey to happen and the more people who book the cheaper it is per passenger. In summer 2017, Vamooz worked with Dales and Bowland CIC and two community centres in Bradford to put on a number of trips to the Yorkshire Dales. The community centres bought tickets in bulk for their groups and the remaining tickets were offered to the general public.

Car sharing

The car sharing organisation, [Liftshare](#) enables organised car sharing by connecting people travelling in the same direction so they can arrange to travel together and share the costs. After registering with Liftshare people can seek or offer a lift for both regular and one-off journeys and there are now 100,000 shared trips each day. Liftshare work closely with a number of festivals to encourage car-sharing and the festival organisers often provide incentives to encourage take-up. For example, Glastonbury provided guaranteed parking for car-sharers in a prime location.

4.4.2. What else could potentially be made available?

On-demand shared journeys

Other examples of on-demand shared journey initiatives which have launched in the last year or so include [Arriva Click](#) which is currently being trialed in Sittingbourne in Kent and which has provided over 125 rides in its first six months, [Slide Bristol](#) owned by the international urban transport operator RATP and [Simply Connect](#) operated by Exeter City Futures. All these services use small or medium-sized vehicles (12-16 seats) and charge fares that are less than an equivalent taxi journey and often less than local bus fares.

So far, these types of services have mainly been offered in urban areas and the focus of most of them has been on offering an alternative for commuters, often taking advantage of the fact that they can benefit from facilities that are not available to car drivers, such as bus lanes to cut through congestion. Most are still in the very early stages of implementation and it is unclear how many will

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continue operating in the long-term. Another issue is that all such services rely on their users being willing, and able, to use a smart phone, mobile data and bank account to book and pay for journeys. This could limit who is able to use these services, particularly in rural areas where there is poor mobile connectivity.

While some of these types of initiatives could potentially help improve access for visitors to National Parks, they are likely to be most relevant where significant numbers of people are travelling to the same, or similar places, at the same time so their main use is likely to be for travel to special events. However, there could also be the potential for some types of shared transport services to help improve access to key visitor attractions ('honeypot' locations) in National Parks from the nearest railway station or nearby urban areas.

4.5. Private Vehicles

Electric cars

As petrol and diesel vehicles are phased out over the coming decades, there will be a need to ensure that there is adequate provision in National Parks for those using electric vehicles while still encouraging them to use alternatives to the car whenever possible. Greater use of electric vehicles would reduce the carbon emissions from road transport at the point of use although it would not reduce the volume of vehicles in the Parks. Small two-seater electric Twizy vehicles are available for hire in a number of the National Parks including the Lake District and the Brecon Beacons. They were also previously offered for hire in the New Forest but this scheme has ceased operating⁶¹.

Connected and autonomous vehicles

A further change in the future will be the increasing use of connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs), often known as driverless cars. The Westminster Government has set up the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles to support the development of policy in this rapidly changing area and is funding a number of projects to test CAV technology⁶². In October 2017, they published the *Automated and Electric Vehicles Bill 2017-19* which is intended to enable consumers in the UK to benefit from improvements in transport technology. It includes provision for new insurance arrangements for CAVs. To date most of the attention on the use of CAVs has been focused on urban areas, and it is essential that the implications for National Parks and other rural areas are also considered.

⁶¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-36991351>

⁶² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/winners-of-51-million-government-competition-to-develop-world-leading-self-driving-car-testing-infrastructure-unveiled>

5. Providing better information about travel to and around National Parks

One way of making it easier for people to travel to and around the National Parks by sustainable transport is to ensure that they have good access to information about the different options that are available. These options may still be limited in some places but the easier it is for people to find out about them, the more likely they are to be able to use them. The online journey planners available, such as the publicly funded [Traveline](#) are generally reliable but visitors looking for information about bus services on destination websites are likely to find that it is either non-existence or inaccurate due to the frequent changes to bus timetables. There is also often little, or no mention, of public transport in the free promotional magazines that NPAs produce for visitors each year, for example, the magazine produced by the Yorkshire Dales NPA, *The Visitor*, does not mention DalesBus despite the fact that this provides a comprehensive network of bus routes aimed at visitors.

Several of the experts we talked to in the course of this research highlighted the importance of promotion in ensuring that sustainable transport initiatives, such as bus services and electric bike hire, are well-used and are thus more likely to continue. This is thus one relatively easy way that NPAs can support sustainable transport in their area. There is also potential for them to engage with tourism providers in their area to promote sustainable transport through their websites and marketing materials.

Previous research undertaken by the Campaign for National Parks⁶³ found that those NPAs which had “a good marketing strategy, a strong brand and good publications design/distribution” had managed to increase sustainable transport patronage. This research recommended that NPAs do more to promote sustainable transport and to raise awareness of the negative environmental and social impacts of car travel.

The level of information available about alternatives to the car varies between the National Parks. In some cases, a lot of effort has gone in to marketing particular services resulting in significant increases in patronage. For example, the New Forest NPA put a lot of effort into promoting the New Forest Tour with the result that they have been able to increase patronage levels on services that were previously uneconomic. While NPAs have a limited role in the provision of transport services, their websites are an important source of information for visitors to the Parks. It is important, therefore, that these provide good information about the full range of transport options. Doing this also fits well with NPAs’ responsibility to promote opportunities for enjoyment of the Parks.

Audits of NPA websites

In 2017, we undertook audits of the NPAs’ websites to see how well they performed in signposting people to alternative travel options. We considered both the general information they provided on different modes of transport and also the specific advice they gave on how to get to their main visitor centres. The first audit was undertaken in February 2017 and found a very mixed picture. Some did not mention travel by car at all or provided far more information about alternatives to make it clear that people are encouraged to use alternatives. Exmoor NPA even has a page of ideas for car-free days out with circular walks and public transport information⁶⁴.

⁶³ *Tackling Traffic* (2006) report by Campaign for National Parks, produced with funding from Friends of the Lake District, Rees Jeffreys and Countryside Agency

⁶⁴ <http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/enjoying/travel>

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All the NPAs included a page about travel options and all those mentioned public transport in some form. A few were very impressive with easy to use online travel maps which include links to public transport websites and advice on how to get to popular areas. Some also mentioned cycling as a way of getting to the Park as well as for exploring when you get there, these were often the Parks with the best access by rail. There are, of course, significant differences between the Parks in terms of the amount of public transport available and it was notable that some of those we rated highly for information provision were ones where the options are more limited but they were making as much as effort as possible to promote those options which were available. Some NPAs also made a good effort to provide information about alternatives, for example, the Lake District NPA provides a link to a lift-sharing website⁶⁵.

However, there was definitely room for improvement and we were particularly disappointed in the amount of information that NPAs provided on how to get to their visitor centres. Some of the visitor centres are in places that are hard to reach without a car but some only provided an address and no further details when information about the nearest train station or available cycle routes and bus services would be very helpful for visitors. We also felt that there was a lot more that the NPAs could do to make the information about transport easier to find on their website (sometimes it was several 'clicks' away from the home page) and to provide as much useful information as possible, for example, making print versions of their leaflets and maps available online.

We provided detailed individual feedback to each of the NPAs following this audit and were pleased that many of them responded to say that they were addressing at least some of our concerns. We then repeated the audit in July 2017 to assess what improvements had been made and where further changes might still be needed. This second audit found that many of the NPAs had made improvements, in particular in terms of making travel information easier to find from their home page. However, we still feel that there are lots of opportunities for NPAs to do more to promote sustainable transport options as the first choice for getting to the Parks and to ensure that there is the best possible information available on the options that exist in their area.

Good Journey

Good Journey⁶⁶ is a new initiative which provides information on car-free travel to visitor attractions, many of which offer discounts to non-car users. It was set up by a small independent organisation which is working with visitor attractions and venues across the UK to improve and promote access by sustainable transport. Attractions which sign-up to the initiative and provide good information for visitors are awarded the Good Journey mark and feature on the [Good Journey website](http://www.goodjourney.org.uk/), which was launched in January 2018. As the scheme develops and more attractions are added, we would like to see a section which lists all the venues in each of the National Parks which have been awarded the Good Journey Marks so visitors can find out quickly which places they can reach without a car when visiting the Parks.

⁶⁵ <http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/planyourvisit/gettinghere>

⁶⁶ <https://www.goodjourney.org.uk/>

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Car-free guides

National Parks UK, in conjunction with Greentraveller.co.uk has produced a series of car-free guides to each of the National Parks which are available online⁶⁷. Each of these include details of how to get to the National Park by public transport and how to get around by public transport and cycling.

⁶⁷ <http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/visiting/car-free-guides>

6. Making travel to and around National Parks easier and more attractive

Better integration

For sustainable transport schemes to be successful they must be made as easy as possible for the potential user. Successful initiatives tend to focus on developing both operational integration (ensuring a seamless physical interchange between modes) and integrated timetabling/through-ticketing with connecting services. Examples identified in our 2006 report, *Tackling Traffic*⁶⁸, include Moorsbus collecting passengers from train stations and the Lake District's B4 network, which encouraged people to mix their modes of travel (bike, bus, boot and boat) offering physical interchanges, integrated ticketing and timetabling as well as enhanced services.

A 2005 study of integrated transport in National Parks for the DfT⁶⁹ found that a small number of factors were critical to the success of most integrated transport schemes. The most common factors were:

- effective use of partnership working;
- an appropriate source of funding;
- effective promotion; and
- the integration of services, tickets and information.

In addition, the study found that many of the most successful schemes often had a committed lead officer or 'champion' who was responsible for driving a project forward and putting in all the work necessary to obtain funding and partnership support. Whilst partnership working between National Parks and local authorities was recognised as being of critical importance, officers also stressed the value of 'formal' partnership mechanisms such as Rural Transport Partnerships and Community Rail Partnerships.

The most common barriers to greater adoption of integrated transport identified were:

- differing priorities facing National Park and local authorities;
- the cost of rural transport provision; and
- limited revenue funding for transport.

The report suggests it is possible to overcome these through partnership working and the utilisation of innovative funding sources. "Effective use of data to promote the benefits of a scheme, inventive scheme design which maximises the revenue potential and ensuring existing schemes operate along the most efficient routes can all help in reducing the cost of operating a service and therefore the cost of travel to passengers."

While the case studies in this report are now several years old, they provide some important details about how selected National Park Authorities have been able to increase the use of public transport services in the past. For example, the case study on effective marketing and promotion highlights marketing campaigns and the introduction of through-ticketing and discounted fare deals for families. Other case studies highlight the benefits of a flexible 'mixed use' of services. One example

⁶⁸ *Tackling Traffic* (2006) report by Campaign for National Parks, produced with funding from Friends of the Lake District, Rees Jeffreys and Countryside Agency

⁶⁹ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070906120804/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/buses/busgrants/rbs/parks/studyreport/>

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included is the Pembrokeshire Coastal Bus Network which made vehicles available for community use outside the 'core' operating hours of the services thus increasing the utilisation rates of individual vehicles. The research concluded that many of the most effective integrated transport measures involved the subsidising of new public transport routes, which require revenue rather than capital expenditure.

As well as improved integration between different types of public transport, consideration should be given to ensuring that there is good integration between public transport and other sustainable modes of transport. In particular, ensuring that passengers can conveniently combine travel by public transport and bicycle would make it much easier for visitors to access destinations in National Parks which it might not be possible to reach directly by public transport. This requires a range of different measures such as easy access to bike hire at major transport interchanges (including bus stations as well as train stations), the ability to transport bicycles on public transport. The Scottish Government clearly recognises the importance of such measures and has committed to introducing dedicated carriages for cycles and other outdoor sports equipment on rural rail routes in their programme for Scotland 2017-18⁷⁰.

Case Study, the B4 Network

[The B4 Network](#)⁷¹ (the 4Bs are boots, bikes, boats and bus) was first developed in the Lake District in 2001 to promote the concept and use of modal interchange. A new boat-bus-boat service called the Cross Lakes Shuttle was established with an integrated timetable, through ticketing and discounts at local attractions. Improvements were also provided for cyclists and walkers including bike racks on the boats and buses and new traffic-free routes. The package was promoted to both residents and visitors and become a tourist attraction in its own right. Research found that four out of ten B4 Network customers visited the Lake District specifically to sight see, walk or cycle on the B4 Network. The package helped support the local economy through the use of joint ticketing schemes with other local attractions and by enabling visitors without access to a car to visit attractions further afield than the main honey pot areas. 57% of passengers surveyed had a car available which they chose not to use. The integrated timetables and through tickets, allowing travel on all modes, were identified as crucial success factors.

Although the B4 Network is no longer marketed in the same way, many of the elements involved are still operating including an integrated boat and bus service, now called the Cross Lakes Experience. In addition, the NPA has recognised the importance of making it as easy as possible for those arriving by car to use the bus to travel around the Lake District and have introduced the Park and Explore inclusive bus and parking tickets⁷². This costs £18 for all-day parking and bus travel in the Central Lakes zone for up to six people.

Tackling 'the final mile'

The recently published, *Final mile – best practice guidelines*⁷³, includes recommendations on how to make it as easy as possible for visitors to travel to destinations by public transport. While the guidelines are aimed at increasing visits outside London by overseas visitors some of its

⁷⁰<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/09/8468/downloads>

⁷¹http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/170537/open_return_2004_7cs5.pdf

⁷²<http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/planyourvisit/travelandtransport/park-and-explore>

⁷³<https://www.visitbritain.org/final-mile-best-practice-guidelines>

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recommendations and case studies are of relevance to all visitors for example, providing 'seamless ticket offers' and increasing on board luggage capacity. It includes a case study of a one ticket solution developed in partnership between West Somerset Railway (a heritage railway), Buses of Somerset (the local bus company and Great Western Railways (GWR) which allows people to book a single ticket covering the rail journey from their station of origin, the bus connection as well as a day out on the West Somerset Railway. It is reported that in addition to making it much easier for people to use public transport, the combined ticket, which is available through the GWR website⁷⁴, represents 19% saving compared to separate tickets. Another case study in the publication is the example of Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire which provides a free shuttle bus service and two for one grounds admission vouchers for people arriving by train.

Mobility as a Service (MaaS)

Mobility as a Service (MaaS) is a new approach to providing integrated transport. It is defined as the integration of various forms of transport services into a single mobility service accessible on demand. The idea is that MaaS "brings all means of travel, transport providers and payment options together into one single service, giving customers instant access to all public transport, from trains and trams to buses and bikes."⁷⁵ One example is the Whim app⁷⁶ which has been available in Helsinki since 2016. This allows people to book and pay for taxis, public transport, car club or bike hire either on a pay as you go basis or through a monthly payment plan, allowing people to easily chose and pay for whatever means of transport best suits that particular journey. The first UK pilot of Whim began in the West Midlands in October 2017 in partnership with National Express and includes National Express bus and metro tickets, routes and timetables and Gett taxis. There are plans to add rental cars and city bikes, however, it does not appear to include local bus services or rail services.

The Lake District NPA is interested in the potential for MaaS in the context of visitor travel and has worked with TravelSpirit to explore the possible use of MaaS. This work has identified that MaaS does not necessarily need to be hi-tech and there is significant potential for using more low-tech solutions to introduce the idea to visitors. Individual communication via those running and working in visitor accommodation and attractions can also play an important role in providing MaaS to visitors. It has also been suggested that another important factor is 'service envy', that is the idea that the service provided would be more flexible, hassle free, and cheaper than using a private car.⁷⁷

Car free tourism packages

A package of measures may be required to make it as easy as possible for people to visit a National Park without a car. For example, luggage transfers from the nearest railway station can help overcome one of the main barriers to arriving by public transport. These initiatives have been used in Austria along with guest cards which give visitors free use of frequent bus services and taxi-buses from the station to hotels and other accommodation⁷⁸.

Examples from other European countries⁷⁹ show the importance of integrating different aspects of what is offered to visitors. The Kalkalpen National Park in Austria, adapts the hours of the events it

⁷⁴ <https://www.gwr.com/destinations-and-events/heritage-railways/west-somerset-railway>

⁷⁵ <https://maas-scotland.com/what-is-maas/>

⁷⁶ <https://whimapp.com/uk/>

⁷⁷ <https://www.carplusbikeplus.org.uk/mobility-as-a-service-why-people-are-just-getting-on-with-it/>

⁷⁸ http://www.umwelt.naturfreunde.at/files/uploads/2011/07/Good_Practice_Soft_Mobility_in_Europe.pdf

⁷⁹ Ibid.

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organises to suit the bus timetable and additional buses are provided when there are special events attracting large numbers of people. In the Saxon Switzerland National Park in Germany, free maps are distributed to visitors providing details of walking routes and information on the public transport to reach them. Users of public transport also get reduced entry to the visitor centre. Elsewhere in Germany, the Berchtesgaden National Park has developed a package called 'Be mobile by train' which includes a return ticket, a seven night stay in a guest house and transfer by taxi to and from the accommodation as well as an 'Upper Bavaria Card' which is valid for three days public transport use.

The majority of the English NPAs have recently received funding to encourage overseas visitors from the Discover England Fund, administered by Visit England⁸⁰. The project will target visitors from Australia and Germany and make it easier for them to plan visits and book trips to England's National Parks. While it is still in its early stages, we hope that the project will be used to develop car-free packages for overseas visitors and that these will also be made available to visitors from the UK.

Demand Management

We recognise that many residents and visitors to the Parks feel they have no choice but to use a car if they have one available and our main focus is on increasing the availability of potential alternatives to the car and people's awareness of those choices. However, there are some places in National Parks where high levels of car use are so damaging to the environment that it may be appropriate to consider measures to restrict car use.

Some of those we spoke to as part of the research suggested that there are potentially opportunities to experiment with approaches such as road pricing in National Parks as they might be more acceptable to people if presented as a way of demonstrating their willingness to protect these areas. Research on tackling traffic in National Parks, published in 2006⁸¹ identified a number of unsuccessful measures to restrict car use including the Burrator proposal in Dartmoor and the initial Snowdonia Green Key proposals. However, the use of parking charges as a means of discouraging car use did seem to have been more successful. For example, the North York Moors NPA introduced a flat charge with non-interchangeable tickets to discourage 'grazing' between locations and thus encourage longer stays and modal shift to bus, cycle or foot. In 2005, the Peak District NPA applied unsuccessfully for funding to test a road user charging scheme for visitors⁸².

Despite the limited success of previous attempts, it is now appropriate to look again at transport demand management in National Parks due to the growing numbers of visitors and the increasing awareness of the negative impacts of high levels of car use.

⁸⁰<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/make-great-memories-in-englands-national-parks/>

⁸¹*Tackling Traffic* (2006) report by Campaign for National Parks, produced with funding from Friends of the Lake District, Rees Jeffreys and Countryside Agency

⁸² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1504735/Peak-District-may-be-first-national-park-to-impose-a-congestion-charge.html>

7. Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Why access to National Parks matters

National Parks are our finest landscapes and are designated for their natural beauty, wildlife, cultural heritage and recreational opportunities. They are national assets, created for the benefit of the nation and financially supported by the tax payer so everyone should have an opportunity to visit them. The cuts to rural bus services in recent years mean that it has become increasingly difficult to reach many parts of the National Parks without a car. Not only do the limited transport options mean that many people are excluded from visiting, but high volumes of traffic can have a negative impact on the landscapes and wildlife, the very things that attract people to the Parks in the first place.

Increasing the options available for travelling to and around National Parks sustainably would provide many benefits including:

- For individuals – improved physical and mental health through opportunities for engaging with nature.
- For local economies – there is evidence that visitors by public transport spend more than those arriving by car.
- For the environment and local communities – by reducing the number of people who travel to National Parks by car and the associated impacts in terms of carbon emissions, noise pollution and road danger.

7.2 Improving the options for travelling to and around National Parks

This report shows that, despite the significant cuts to rural buses in recent years, there are a number of examples of successful services which continue to operate in National Parks. There are also signs that the bus industry is starting to consider the potential to use new technology to deliver flexible on-demand shared journeys for visitors. But there is still much more that needs to be done, particularly as there are aspirations in both England and Wales to increase the annual numbers of visitors to National Parks. We support these aspirations but we want them to be achieved in a way that ensures that the beautiful landscapes of our National Parks are available for everyone to enjoy both now and in the future.

Our research has identified a wide range of different options for improving access to National Parks including e-bikes, on-demand app-based shared services and community transport. It is also clear that issues such as information provision, integrated ticketing and demand management will all need to be addressed if the options for car-free travel are to be made both easier and more attractive in future.

These are interesting times for the transport sector with advances in technology and changes in the way people plan their travel providing new opportunities. It is important that the benefits of such changes are experienced in rural areas as well as in the towns and cities which often seem to be the focus of discussions about innovations in transport. Much of what is set out in this report will also be of relevance to other rural areas, particularly those which attract a lot of visitors. However, given the importance of ensuring that National Parks are accessible for everyone, there is both a need and an opportunity to test out new ideas in these areas.

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7.3 Who should be taking the lead on improving transport to and around National Parks?

As set out in section 3.1, a large number of different organisations have some responsibility for the provision, promotion and funding of transport in each National Park including the NPA, local transport authorities (LTAs), local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), bus operators, train operating companies, Network Rail, Westminster/Welsh Governments, and individual tourism attractions and accommodation providers. With so many different organisations involved, there is a need for one organisation to take a strategic overview of how best to improve access for visitors. We believe that NPAs should take on this role. Although they are not transport authorities, they are planning authorities and can use their planning policies to influence travel patterns. They should also have a strong interest in improving sustainable travel as it makes such an important contribution to National Park purposes.

7.4 The need for further research

Although there is a strong justification for ensuring National Parks are available to everyone, there is a need for more comprehensive evidence to demonstrate the importance of investing in visitor transport and the benefits of improved access to National Parks. This would help make the case for increased support from Government, NPAs, local transport authorities and others. For example, it would be helpful to have more evidence of the benefits to the local economy as a result of increased expenditure by visitors arriving by sustainable transport, and the cross-sector benefits such as improved health and well-being. This could be part of a wider piece of work to develop new economic models which take account of the full range of costs and benefits associated with visitor travel to, and around, National Parks.

7.5 Recommendations

Based on this research we make the following recommendations:

- **National Park Authorities should take a strategic lead** in improving transport to and around their National Park. This should involve working with local partners to identify and improve opportunities for visitors to get to particular locations without a car and to secure the necessary funding for those improvements from LEPs, LTAs and other relevant bodies.
- **National Park Authorities, Destination Management Organisations and all other relevant organisations should provide high-quality, consistent and up-to-date information** about options for car-free access. In particular, the National Park Authorities should **actively promote and update [the car-free guides](#)**⁸³ that have been produced for each of the National Parks, as well as promoting initiatives such as [Good Journey](#).
- The Westminster and/or Welsh Government should provide funding for a **‘smarter travel National Park’ pilot** to test new types of **on-demand app-based shared services** and the **use of travel demand management measures**. The pilot should also support **the development of sustainable travel hubs** - key centres within the Park offering a range of activities within

⁸³ <http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/visiting/car-free-guides>

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one location and good car-free access to other locations nearby. The evaluation of the pilot should inform future policy and funding priorities.

- National Park Authorities should work with local transport authorities, transport operators, accommodation providers and tourist attractions to **tackle ‘the final mile’**, the journey from the nearest station or major public transport interchange to a visitor’s final destination. This should include the development of **services such as luggage transfers, shuttle bus services and integrated ticketing**.

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Annex 1: People who provided information and expertise

Campaign for National Parks is grateful to the following people who provided their time and expertise to contribute to this research, either by attending the seminar to discuss the emerging recommendations and/or participating in telephone interviews or meetings. Their involvement does not necessarily imply endorsement of the report or findings.

Alan Baxter, Alan Baxter Foundation
John Blackie, Little White Bus
Bill Breakall, Moorsbus
Rebecca Burnett, Transdev
Dan Carey-Dawes, Campaign to Protect Rural England
Mark Corner, Friends of the Dales
Peter Elland, Bicycle Association
Bridget Fox, Campaign for Better Transport
Bill Freeman, Community Transport Association
Rupert Furness, Department for Transport
Mark Hand, Liftshare
Anders Hanson, ACORP
Alistair Hanton, Foundation for Integrated Transport
Mark Holroyd, New Forest National Park Authority (until December 2017)
Peter Howe, Broads Society
Stephen Joseph, Campaign for Better Transport
Alistair Kirkbride, Carplus Bikeplus
Pippa Langford, Natural England
Lucy Moss-Blundell, North Yorkshire County Council
Simon Norton, Foundation for Integrated Transport
Diane Pottage, North Yorkshire County Council
Antonia Roberts, Carplus Bikeplus
Mark Slater, Cycling UK
Lynn Sloman, Transport for Quality of Life
Colin Speakman, Dalesbus
Isobel Stoddart, Freelance Sustainable Transport Consultant
Nat Taplin, Good Journey
Malcolm Turner, Alan Baxter Associates
Allison Thorpe, South Downs National Park Authority
Peter Vetch, Upper Wharfedale Venturer
Mary Welch, North Yorkshire County Council
Rachel White, Sustrans
Kate Willshaw, Friends of the Lake District