

## Campaign for National Parks' submission to the Future of Transport: Rural Transport Review

February 2021

### Introduction

1. The Campaign for National Parks is the only national charity campaigning to protect, enhance and promote the 13 National Parks in England and Wales. Our mission is to inspire everyone to enjoy and look after National Parks – the nation's green treasures. We have been campaigning for over 80 years to ensure that our National Parks are beautiful, inspirational places which everyone has an opportunity to enjoy both now and in the future. Our evidence focuses on ensuring that the travel needs of visitors to National Parks and other parts of the countryside are also considered as part of this review. Visitor travel forms an increasingly important element of rural transport but the call for evidence focuses almost entirely on rural residents.
2. National Parks contribute significantly to the health and well-being of the nation, by providing attractive, healthy places for recreation and tourism and in the past year, they have proven themselves to be particularly important in this respect, attracting huge numbers of visitors whenever travel restrictions have been eased. National Parks also make a significant contribution to the economy through tourism, farming, and other related businesses. According to the latest information available<sup>1</sup>, there were approximately 100 million visits to National Parks in England in 2019 and previous research has shown that these visitors spend more than £5 billion between them per annum and support around 75,000 jobs<sup>2</sup>. Many of the tourism-related businesses in National Parks rely heavily on the high quality natural environment for their success so it is essential that this is protected and enhanced.
3. The pandemic has resulted in further cuts to rural bus services which have already been reduced significantly in recent years meaning that there are extremely limited opportunities for visiting National Parks for those without a car. Furthermore, the need for many visitors to rely on the car puts at risk the precious landscapes and wildlife in the Parks and has a negative impact on many of the benefits they deliver. Any review of rural transport must, therefore, consider what can be done to improve the car-free options for visitors to National Parks.
4. We have provided our response to selected questions below. Our evidence focuses primarily on National Parks in line with our remit and as we highlight there are particular reasons why visitor travel in National Parks should be prioritised. However, many of the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-headline-report-and-technical-reports-2018-to-2019>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0023/29039/INFOGRAPHIC-2017-hi-res.pdf](https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/29039/INFOGRAPHIC-2017-hi-res.pdf)

points we raise apply equally to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the issue of sustainable travel for visitors is also of wider relevance for all rural areas.

## **Trends**

*Do you think there are other issues facing rural areas that we should consider in the strategy?*

### ***The rise in visitor travel to rural areas generally***

5. The strategy must address the travel needs of visitors as well as residents if it is to tackle rural transport effectively. One of the key issues facing rural areas is the need to consider how increased numbers of visitors can visit safely and sustainably in ways that also provide benefits to the local communities in these areas. This issue is not considered at all in the call for evidence and it is absolutely essential that it is considered when solutions are developed as part of this review.
6. According to the National Travel Survey (NTS), the most common trip purpose in England in 2019 was for leisure purposes (26%)<sup>3</sup>, accounting for an average of 2,691 miles per person (up from an average of 2,570 miles per person in 2014<sup>4</sup>). The majority (70%) of these leisure trips are made by car or van<sup>5</sup>. The NTS uses quite a broad definition of leisure making it hard to identify exactly how much of this travel is for day trips or holidays nor does it indicate how much takes place in rural areas. But according to the Tourism Alliance<sup>6</sup>, the majority of domestic tourism in the UK involves people travelling from urban areas to rural and seaside locations. Furthermore, Visit England research<sup>7</sup> on domestic rural transport found that 89% of all overnight trips to the countryside were made by car.
7. Pandemic-related travel restrictions (at least, in the short term) and an emphasis on reducing flying due to concerns about the climate are likely to lead to an increase in the demand for domestic rural tourism, making it even more important to consider the associated travel needs.

### ***The importance of providing improved access to National Parks***

8. National Parks receive public funding in recognition of their special qualities and the benefits they deliver. They are national assets, providing natural resources such as clean water and places of peace and tranquillity in a crowded island, something that has proved particularly valuable in the past year. 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. Their statutory purposes are:

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<sup>3</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/906276/national-travel-survey-2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906276/national-travel-survey-2019.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/458434/why-people-travel-leisure.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/458434/why-people-travel-leisure.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/906847/nts-2019-factsheets.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906847/nts-2019-factsheets.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.tourismalliance.com/downloads/TA\\_408\\_435.pdf](https://www.tourismalliance.com/downloads/TA_408_435.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.visitengland.com/sites/default/files/countryside.pdf>

- 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.
9. The limited transport options available mean there is currently a strong reliance on the car among visitors to National Parks - around 93% on average - 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 and would also allow people who do not have access to a car to visit them more easily. Thus it will contribute to both of the statutory purposes of National Parks.
10. The Government has aspirations to increase the number of visitors to National Parks. The [8-Point Plan for National Parks](#) includes targets to increase the annual number of visitors and to promote National Parks as world-class destinations to visitors from overseas and the UK. If these aspirations are to be achieved in a way which does not detract from the very features which attract people to these areas in the first place, there needs to be far more emphasis on ensuring that increased numbers of people can visit without damaging the special qualities for which these areas are valued. In particular, there is a need for improved alternatives to the car to ensure that there are better opportunities for travelling to and around the Parks sustainably.
11. Even before the pandemic, many of those who might benefit the most from the health and well-being opportunities provided by National Parks were excluded from them due to the lack of affordable and available bus services. Demographic information collected as part of a survey of visitors to Exmoor National Park<sup>8</sup> showed that those with longstanding health issues or disabilities and people from ethnic minorities were under-represented among visitors to the National Park.
12. 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.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/910700/Exmoor-National-Park-Visitor-Survey-2016.pdf](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/910700/Exmoor-National-Park-Visitor-Survey-2016.pdf)

## **Car ownership and use**

13. Around a quarter of households in England<sup>9</sup> do not have access to a car and rely on public transport for most of their journeys. Car ownership and use among young people is declining<sup>10</sup>, a trend that began approximately 25 years ago and is forecast to continue, particularly among those living in urban areas. This means that in future there will be increasing numbers of people without access to a private car and who are at risk of being excluded from National Parks unless alternative transport options are improved. Research published by Natural England identified the cost and availability of transport as a barrier to young people accessing and enjoying the outdoors<sup>11</sup>.

## **Dangerous driving**

14. The review should also take account of the fact that the transport choices made by others can 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 areas<sup>12</sup> and more than half of all fatalities in crashes (59.8%) occur on rural roads<sup>13</sup>. 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 available<sup>14</sup>.

## **Economic benefits**

15. Increasing the opportunities for visitors to reach National Parks is also good for the local economy in areas which rely significantly on tourism and which have often suffered particularly badly as a result of the pandemic. Visitors who use public transport are more likely to spend money on food and drink locally and are more likely to pay for tourist attractions. For example, users of the Moorsbus in the North York Moors reported that they spent over £24 per person on average in 2018 in local shops, cafes and recreational facilities<sup>15</sup>.
16. Bus services are also important in terms of bringing employees of tourism businesses into National Parks from adjacent towns. Research published by the Department for Transport (DfT)<sup>16</sup> found 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 taking account of some of the wider benefits identified in local surveys such as the increased spending in local businesses noted above. There are, therefore, strong economic development arguments for investing in improved bus services for National Parks and other rural areas.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts02-driving-licence-holders>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/young-peoples-travel-whats-changed-and-why>

<sup>11</sup> Natural England, 2010, *Wild Adventure Space: its role in teenagers' lives*

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.transport-network.co.uk/One-in-three-drive-too-fast-for-safety-in-rural-areas/10706#.U9YBuLEvf-A>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.rospa.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/road-safety/drivers/rural-road-safety-factsheet.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://rsnonline.org.uk/drink-driving-highest-in-rural-areas>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.moorsbus.org/survey.html>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/value-for-money-of-tendered-bus-services>

## ***Environmental benefits***

17. There are significant environmental benefits to providing improved alternatives to the car for tourists visiting National Parks 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 2014-15<sup>17</sup>. 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 as providing environmental benefits.

## ***Cuts in funding for rural bus services***

18. Research by Campaign for Better Transport published in October 2019<sup>18</sup> found that since 2009 over 3000 supported bus services in England have been reduced, altered or withdrawn and that funding for such services has fallen by over £162 million (43%) in real terms. This includes major reductions in some areas with National Parks. For example, Cumbria County Council which covers the Lake District, reported spending over £1 million in financial support for bus services in 2009/10 but did not provide any support in 2018/19. Derbyshire, which covers much of the Peak District, saw a 60% reduction in support for bus services over the same period.

19. When local transport authorities have to make very difficult decisions about which bus services to support the needs of residents tend to take priority over those of visitors. This 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 visiting<sup>19</sup>. Even where bus services are available on a particular route, they may not be sufficiently frequent or run late enough for people to feel confident about relying on them for a day trip in case they get stranded.

20. A further significant deterrent is the high cost of bus fares. Some operators do offer good discounts for off-peak day tickets such as [Transport for Greater Manchester's](#) Wayfarer ticket which covers parts of the Peak District or [the Dales Rover ticket](#) which offers unlimited travel on Sundays on all DalesBus services in the Yorkshire Dales. These tickets can significantly reduce the costs of travel but 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.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.cumbriotourism.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/annual-performance-report-2014-15.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> *The Future of the Bus: Future Funding Arrangements* (available to download at: <https://bettertransport.org.uk/node/4239/done?sid=18474> )

<sup>19</sup> For example, the All Parks Visitor Survey 1994 shows that 54% of all day visits to the Yorkshire Dales occur on Sundays. NTS data also shows that 47% of all trips on Saturday and Sunday are for leisure purposes.

21. A lack of integration between transport modes can also limit people's ability to get to and around National Parks without a car. 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. Having to buy separate tickets for each mode or when using different operators can also increase the costs of such journeys.

## **Developments in innovation for rural transport**

*What examples do you have of the transport trends in rural areas?*

### ***Increasing use of active travel modes***

22. Walking is the most popular recreational activity in National Parks and there are good networks of footpaths in all the National Parks. While walking is rarely promoted as a means of transport within the Parks it is worth noting that there are potential opportunities to use the walking opportunities in these areas to encourage visitors to walk more when they return home. There is anecdotal evidence from our Mosaic programme 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.
23. 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. It is also possible to combine cycling and rail travel for journeys in some of the Parks. Some National Park Authorities (NPAs) 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.
24. There is significant potential for e-bike use by visitors in National Parks, particularly if measures are introduced which increase the opportunities for visitors to travel to/from National Parks using a combination of rail and e-bike. DfT has previously supported a shared e-bike programme which included a number of pilot projects aimed at visitors. The evaluation of this programme<sup>20</sup> identified the need to explore the potential for increasing e-bike (and pedal bike) availability at more rail stations, travel hubs and accommodation networks across the UK. The report also suggested that further research is needed into how e-bikes can contribute to accessibility in more rural areas. Many of the measures that are important for supporting the use of e-bikes are the same as those which are needed to encourage cycle 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.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://como.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Shared-Electric-Bike-Programme-Final-Report.pdf>

### **More effective integration of journeys**

25. This is an issue that Campaign for National Parks has been considering for some time. 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*<sup>21</sup>, 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.
26. A 2005 study of integrated transport in National Parks for DfT<sup>22</sup> 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. While the case studies in this report are now several years old, they provide some important details about how selected NPAs 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 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.
27. 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), and the ability to transport bicycles on public transport.
28. Visit Britain's *Final Mile: Best Practice Guidelines*<sup>23</sup> 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 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

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<sup>21</sup> Tackling Traffic (2006) report by Campaign for National Parks, produced with funding from Friends of the Lake District, Rees Jeffreys and Countryside Agency

<sup>22</sup> <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070906120804/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/buses/busgrants/rbs/parks/studyreport/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.visitbritain.org/final-mile-best-practice-guidelines>

(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 website, 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.

29. The Lake District NPA has done some work with TravelSpirit to explore the possible use of mobility-as-a-service (MaaS) in the context of visitor travel. This work 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<sup>24</sup>.

### ***Digital models for more flexible services***

30. While most of the initiatives making use of new technology to offer flexible on-demand shared journeys are currently operating in urban areas, there is a scheme based in Harrogate called Vamooz<sup>25</sup> which has been used for shared bus trips by visitors to the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The reliance on users being willing, and able, to use a smart phone, mobile data and bank account to book and pay for journeys could possibly limit who is able to use these services in rural areas where there is poor mobile connectivity. However, there is significant potential for shared transport services to help improve access in National Parks, particularly to key visitor attractions ('honeypot' locations) from the nearest railway station or nearby urban areas.

*Do you think there are other trends in innovation we haven't included?*

### ***Innovative approaches to funding rural transport***

31. Despite the significant cuts to rural bus services in recent years, there are a number of examples of bus services which continued to operate very successfully in National Parks up until 2019. Services, such as [DalesBus](#) provide a valuable service for both residents and visitors. However, despite providing over 400,000 passenger journeys on its services since it was established in 2007<sup>26</sup>, the Dales and Bowland CIC which runs Dalesbus has had to develop an innovative approach to financing it, including crowdfunding and sponsorship. Such an approach relies heavily on the commitment of volunteers to ensure that the services can continue to run each year and although it has been very successful in the short-term, there are questions about how sustainable it is in the long term. In their 2019/20 Annual Report, the CIC state that "*Whilst D&BCIC has achieved considerable success in*

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<sup>24</sup> <https://como.org.uk/mobility-as-a-service-why-people-are-just-getting-on-with-it-writes-alistair-kirkbride/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://govamooz.co.uk/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.dalesbus.org/dbcicintro.html>



*securing numerous donations and grants to support the network in recent years, a substantial part of the funding is on a one-off or short-term basis... There is therefore an urgent need to arrange more stable long-term funding for the DalesBus network.”<sup>27</sup>.*

### **Car-free tourism packages**

32. Examples from other European countries<sup>28</sup> show the importance of integrating different aspects of what is offered to visitors in order to make car-free travel as easy as possible. The Kalkalpen National Park in Austria, adapts the hours of the events it 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. In Austria luggage transfers from the nearest railway station have been used to help overcome one of the main barriers to arriving by public transport. These are offered as part of a package of measures along with guest cards which give visitors free use of frequent bus services and taxi-buses from the station to hotels and other accommodation<sup>29</sup>.
33. These types of packages are also now starting to be developed by some of the NPAs in the UK in order to tackle the pressures caused by high numbers of visitors arriving by car. Snowdonia NPA has recently undertaken a Parking and Transport Review as a result of which they have introduced measures such as a pre-booking system for visitors wishing to park cars in the busiest part of the Park. They are currently consulting<sup>30</sup> on proposals to extend these restrictions alongside the introduction of a package of improvements to alternatives to the car, such as more frequent and better integrated bus services and the development of demand responsive services. Other measures proposed include the introduction of a “Visitor Access Pass” to give visitors easy access to these services and improved facilities for walking and cycling.

### **Re-organising bus services**

34. The pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for changes to the way in which bus services are planned and operated in order to deliver an effective service in rural areas and ensure that tourists are able to visit sustainably. 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

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<sup>27</sup> [https://www.dalesbus.org/uploads/1/1/3/9/113919127/dales\\_and\\_bowland\\_cic\\_annual\\_report\\_2019-20.pdf](https://www.dalesbus.org/uploads/1/1/3/9/113919127/dales_and_bowland_cic_annual_report_2019-20.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

<sup>29</sup> [https://umwelt.naturfreunde.at/files/uploads/2011/07/Good\\_Practice\\_Soft\\_Mobility\\_in\\_Europe.pdf](https://umwelt.naturfreunde.at/files/uploads/2011/07/Good_Practice_Soft_Mobility_in_Europe.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.snowdonpartnership.co.uk/parkingandtransport>

provided in rural areas<sup>31</sup>. In Denmark, Sweden and Norway virtually all bus services have been franchised which has resulted in reduced costs and improved quality. A similar model could develop significant improvements to rural transport in this country. It should include a requirement for those planning and operating services to provide for access to recreational and visitor destinations as well as key services such as education and healthcare.

### **Encouraging transport innovation in rural areas**

*Are there specific considerations for testing and trialling new technologies in rural areas that you think we should consider?*

35. Most of the attention on the use of innovative new transport technologies has been focused on urban areas, and it is essential that the implications for National Parks and other rural areas are also considered. However, this is only going to happen if the trials take account of the particular constraints that exist in rural areas. Many of the innovative services introduced by the private sector in urban areas, such as the Arriva Click service<sup>32</sup>, have focused 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. They are generally catering for fairly reliable (at least, pre-pandemic), regular and year-round journeys in areas with high numbers of travellers who can be reached easily by promoting the scheme in the local area.
36. There is significant potential for similar initiatives aimed at visitor travel in rural areas, particularly to help improve access to key visitor attractions ('honeypot' locations) in National Parks from the nearest railway station or nearby urban areas. However, the private sector may be more reluctant to invest in such services because they are likely to take longer to become established, demand is likely to vary according to the season and the weather, and more effort will need to be put into marketing to reach people across a wide area. A greater level of public sector investment will be needed in order to test new technologies in rural areas.
37. As we have highlighted above, there are huge benefits to be gained from improving car-free access for visitors to rural areas and strong arguments for why this is a particular priority for National Parks. National Parks would, therefore, be perfect places to test a number of new transport initiatives and identify which would be of most benefit for both visitors and residents. Greater consideration should also be given to the role of demand management measures in National Parks. Such measures are likely to be more acceptable to the public if any income is ring-fenced for the provision of initiatives which support car-free travel so this is potentially an important source of revenue for new transport initiatives as well as a way of encouraging people out of their cars. Examples could include increased parking charges, the removal of informal parking and experimental road closures.

*In your view, what should the role of central government; sub-national transport bodies; and local authorities be in encouraging innovation in rural areas?*

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.urbantransportgroup.org/resources/types/reports/scandinavian-way-better-public-transport>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/arrivaclick>

38. Central government should provide the funding and other necessary support for a ‘smarter travel National Park’ pilot which tests new types of on-demand app-based shared services alongside the use of travel demand management measures such as parking charges or road pricing. 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. Such a pilot was one of the key recommendations in our 2018 report, *National Parks for all: Making car-free travel easier*<sup>33</sup>.
39. Central government should also be encouraging innovation in rural areas by providing more evidence on the benefits of providing improved transport. The availability of more comprehensive evidence to demonstrate the importance of investing in visitor transport and the benefits of improved access to National Parks would help make the case for increased support from both the public and private sector. 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.
40. There are significant opportunities for sub-national transport bodies and local transport authorities in areas with National Parks to encourage innovation in rural areas by working with NPAs to improve opportunities for car-free travel for visitors. However, there is also a need to consider the role that NPAs themselves should play. 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 authority, local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), bus operators, train operating companies, Network Rail, central 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, working closely with the transport authorities in their area. Although they are not transport authorities, NPAs are planning authorities and can use their planning policies to influence travel patterns. They also have a strong interest in improving sustainable travel as it makes such an important contribution to National Park purposes.

*Do you have any other comments on this call for evidence?*

41. There is further evidence about the importance of access to National Parks and about many of the initiatives we have discussed above in our report on improving car-free access<sup>34</sup>. We very much welcome the DfT’s support for innovative new approaches, but it is worth noting that often what is most needed in rural areas is relatively small sums of money to provide revenue support for existing bus services (see, for example, the information above about Dalesbus), and to ensure that there is good information available for visitors. We would also like to highlight that any proposal to introduce new modes must take account of the additional planning protections which apply in National Parks and the need

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.cnp.org.uk/transport-research-fullreport>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.cnp.org.uk/transport-research-fullreport>

to avoid doing anything which would damage the special qualities for which these areas are designated. This is particularly important when considering new modes which could potentially be intrusive such as drones and autonomous vehicles.

42. While we have already highlighted many of the reasons for supporting innovative transport approaches for visitor travel, we would like to conclude by reiterating that increasing the options available for travelling to and around National Parks sustainably would deliver 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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