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Institute of Rural Studies

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***FC 73-04-140 CHARGING FOR
CONSERVATION : VISITOR PAYBACK***

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VISITOR PAYBACK IN WALES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Methodology

This project, commissioned by the Countryside Council for Wales, assesses the potential for visitor payback schemes within Wales. The approach developed for this project involved five key stages.

1. An in-depth literature review on visitor payback,
2. Detailed case studies of four existing visitor payback schemes across the EU,
3. Structured focus group with stakeholders from tourism, recreation and conservation organisations,
4. Structured focus group of visitors,
5. Development of a tool kit for implementing visitor payback.

Definition

Visitor payback involves the *voluntary* process of visitors choosing to give money (or other help) to assist in the conservation or management of places they visit. A variety of techniques can be used in the pursuit of visitor payback (donations, opt out/opt in, merchandising, membership, participation, fundraising, sponsorship and loyalty cards).

Results

The literature review, case studies and focus group results highlight issues that need to be considered when developing a visitor payback scheme.

Common factors

- The negative perception of the term “visitor payback” with support for its reconceptualisation as “visitor investment”,
- The importance of the “feel good factor” to encourage visitors to donate,
- The need for clear aims and objectives and effective information in a visitor payback project,
- The need to have a meaningful partnership between the tourism industry, environmentalists and visitors,
- The need to channel visitor donations directly into conservation projects without incurring unnecessary administrative costs,
- The need to develop sustainable payback projects,
- The need for a lead organisation that can command legitimacy and public support.

Distinctive factors

- Clear differences in perception of preferred visitor payback techniques from visitors (donations and opt in /opt out) and businesses (merchandising, membership) focus groups,
- Significant polarisation between the case studies and focus groups in terms of the needs for administration and management costs (case studies: high; focus groups low),
- Reluctance among tourist business interests to support visitor payback concept because of increased price and tax concerns which might limit competitiveness BUT
- Willingness amongst visitors to participate in visitor payback schemes.

Opportunities for developing visitor investment (payback) schemes

- To replace ‘visitor payback’ with ‘visitor investment’,
- To develop and pilot test schemes that are simple yet attractive to industry and the visitor,
- To increase awareness amongst visitors and businesses of the need for conservation,

- To investigate the potential of opt in/opt out schemes (preferred visitor focus group mechanisms) as a legitimate strategy for businesses,
- To alert businesses to the financial and PR advantages of being associated with environmental initiatives,
- To alert all participating interests of the concept of additionality in visitor payback schemes.

Barriers to developing visitor payback scheme in Wales

- Visitor payback does not provide a means of making income or delivering substantive conservation projects,
- The reluctance of tourist concerns to take up of visitor payback schemes (particularly among small tourist businesses),
- The lack of research on visitor willingness to pay on different visitor payback schemes,
- The potential over commercialisation of the countryside possibly leading to a public backlash particularly where significant cumulative impact of visitor payback schemes occurs,
- Securing funding to accommodate the administrative requirements to manage a successful scheme.

Tool kit

This research has demonstrated that there are several techniques available as part of a visitor payback scheme. Their success lies ultimately in the way they are implemented and managed rather than in the use of any one dedicated technique. From detailed analyses of the case studies and focus groups, a clear picture has emerged of the process and associated structures that are required for a successful scheme. The differences highlighted in the focus groups between the various techniques, in terms of their desirability, do not allow us with any conviction, to state that one technique is better than the next. Therefore, what follows is a recommended plan for a visitor investment (visitor payback) scheme. Whilst this might appear prescriptive it provides best value in terms of resources and outputs.

Stage 1: Establish infrastructure

- Ensure that the organisation has the correct motives, ambitions and understanding of potential outcomes before commencement
- Lead body/individual for administration and management
- Secure funding
- Form partnership between tourist industry, visitors and environment
- Market and promote organisation
- Clear aims and objectives

Stage 2: Consultation

- Devise appropriate techniques for visitor payback scheme in a given area
- Test these in the field within the partnership and visitors

Stage 3: Implementation

- Maximise feel good factor
- Avoid cumulative impact
- Simple is best
- Reduce bureaucracy

Stage 4: Evaluation

- Review scheme via surveys and meetings
- Maintain regular meetings of the partnership

CRYNODEB GWEITHREDOL

Methodoleg

Mae'r prosiect hwn, a gomisiynwyd gan Gyngor Cefngwlad Cymru, yn asesu'r potensial ar gyfer sefydlu cynlluniau ad-daliad ymwelwyr yng Nghymru. Roedd pump prif gam i'r prosiect.

1. Arolwg manwl o lenyddiaeth yn ymdrin ag ad-daliad ymwelwyr
2. Astudiaeth fanwl o bedwar cynllun ad-daliad ymwelwyr sy'n bodoli eisoes yn y DU
3. Grwpiau ffocws strwythuredig ar gyfer pobl o fyd twristiaeth, hamdden a chyrrff cadwriaethol.
4. Grŵp ffocws strwythuredig o ymwelwyr.
5. Datblygiad ar gyfer gweithredu ad-daliad ymwelwyr.

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Diffiniad

Mae ad-daliad ymwelwyr yn broses lle mae ymwelwyr yn dewis rhoi arian (neu gymorth arall), *o'u gwirfodd*, i helpu gyda chadwriaeth neu reolaeth mannau arbennig. Mae nifer o ddulliau o weithredu cynllun o'r fath (cyfraniadau, optio mewn/optio allan, gwerthu nwyddau, aelodaeth, cymryd rhan, codi arian, nawdd a chardiau teyrngarwch).

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Canlyniadau

Mae'r arolwg o lenyddiaeth, yr astudiaethau o gynlluniau sy'n bodoli eisoes a'r grwpiau ffocws yn amlygu'r ffactorau y dylid eu hystyried wrth ddatblygu cynllun ad-daliad ymwelwyr.

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Ffactorau cyffredin

- Anfodlonrwydd gyda'r term "ad-daliad ymwelwyr" (visitor payback) ond cefnogaeth i'r syniad, dan y term "buddsoddiad ymwelwyr" (visitor investment).
- Pwysigrwydd y "feel good factor" i annog twristiaid i gyfrannu,
- Yr angen am nodau ac amcanion clir a gwybodaeth effeithiol.
- Yr angen am bartneriaeth effeithiol rhwng y diwydiant ymwelwyr, cadwriaethwyr a thwristiaid,
- Yr angen i sianelu cyfraniadau yn uniongyrchol i brosiectau cadwriaethol – heb greu costau gweinyddol diangen,
- Yr angen am ddatblygu prosiectau cynladwy.
- Yr angen am gorf i arwain y ffordd, gan roi hygyrddedd ac ennyn cefnogaeth y cyhoedd.

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Ffactorau gwahaniaethol

- Gwahaniaethau amlwg rhwng y math o gynlluniau a apeliai at y grŵp ffocws i dwristiaid (cyfraniadau ac optio mewn/optio allan) a busnesau (gwerthu nwyddau, aelodaeth),
- Pegynnu sylweddol iawn rhwng y cynlluniau a astudiwyd a'r grwpiau ffocws, o safbwynt costau gweinyddu a rheoli (cynlluniau sy'n bodoli eisoes: uchel; grwpiau ffocws: isel),

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- Amharoddrwydd ymhlith busnesau twristaidd i gefnogi'r syniad o ad-daliad ymwelwyr, oherwydd y gost ychwanegol a'r oblygiadau treth a allai eu gwneud yn llai cystadleuol OND

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- Paroddrwydd o safbwynt yr ymwelwyr i fod yn rhan o gynlluniau ad-daliad ymwelwyr.

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Cyfleoedd i ddatblygu cynlluniau buddsoddiad ymwelwyr.

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- Defnydd o'r term "buddsoddiad ymwelwyr" yn hytrach nag "ad-daliad ymwelwyr".
- Datblygu a threialu cynlluniau peilot syml ond deniadol o safbwynt y diwydiant a'r ymwelwyr,
- Ymchwilio i'r posibiladau o ddatblygu cynlluniau optio mewn/optio allan (y dull mwyaf poblogaidd o safbwynt grŵp ffocws y twristiaid) fel strategaeth dderbyniol a dilys ar gyfer busnesau,
- Tynnu sylw busnesau at y manteision ariannol a chysylltiadau cyhoeddus o fod yn rhan o gynlluniau cadwriaethol,
- Tynnu sylw'r partneriaid at yr holl fanteision a ddaw yn sgil bod yn rhan o gynllun o'r fath.

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Rhwystrau i ddatblygu cynlluniau ad-daliad ymwelwryng Nghymru

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- Nid yw ad-daliad ymwelwyr yn ffordd o greu incwm nac o ariannu cynlluniau cadwriaethol sylweddol.
- Amharoddrwydd busnesau ymwelwyr i ymgymryd â chynlluniau ad-daliad ymwelwyr (yn enwedig busnesau bychain),
- Diffyg ymchwil ynglŷn â pharoddrwydd twristiaid i dalu ar gyfer gwahanol gynlluniau,
- Y posibilrwydd o or-fasnachu cefngwlad gan elyniaethu'r cyhoedd, yn enwedig mewn ardaloedd lle mae mwyfwy o'r cynlluniau'n bodoli,
- Sicrhau'r arian ar gyfer gweinyddu cynllun llwyddiannus.

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Gweithredu cynllun ad-daliad ymwelwyr.

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Dengys yr astudiaeth hwn bod sawl techneg bosibl ar gyfer cynllun ad-daliad ymwelwyr. Yn y pendraw mae llwyddiant unrhyw gynllun yn dibynnu ar y modd y ceir ei weinyddu a'i reoli, yn hytrach nac ar unrhyw dechneg benodol. O ddadansoddi'r grwpiau ffocws ac astudio cynlluniau sy'n bodoli eisoes ceir darlun eglur o'r broses a'r strwythurau angenrheidiol ar gyfer cynllun llwyddiannus. Oherwydd y gwahaniaethau amlwg a fynegwyd yn y grwpiau ffocws, o safbwynt apêl gwahanol dechnegau, ni allwn, gydag unrhyw arddeliad, ddweud bod unrhyw un dechneg y rhagori ar unrhyw dechneg arall. Yn hytrach, cynigir y cynllun isod, sy'n rhoi'r gwerth gorau o safbwynt adnoddau a chanlyniadau.

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Cam 1: Sefydlu rhwydwaith mewnol

- Sicrhau bod gan y sefydliad y cymhellion a'r amcanion cywir a dealltwriaeth o'r canlyniadau posibl, cyn dechrau,
- Corff/unigolyn i arwain y ffordd, o safbwynt gweinyddu a rheoli,
- Sicrhau ariannu,
- Creu partneriaeth rhwng y diwydiant ymwelwyr, twristiaid a'r amgylchedd,
- Marchnata a hyrwyddo'r fenter,
- Sicrhau nodau ac amcanion eglur.

Cam 2: Ymgynghori

- Creu technegau addas ar gyfer cynllun ad-daliad ymwelwyr mewn ardal arbennig,
- Profi'r technegau yn y maes o fewn y bartneriaeth a chydag ymwelwyr.

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Cam 3: Gweithredu

- Hyrwyddo'r "feel good factor",
- Osgoi effaith gor- fasnachu ardal,
- Gorau po symlaf yw'r cynllun,
- Lleihau biwrocratiaeth.

Cam 4: Dadansoddi

- Adolygu'r cynllun drwy arolygon a chyfarfodydd,
- Cynnal cyfarfodydd cyson o fewn y bartneriaeth.

1 INTRODUCTION

Visitor payback is a term, which means the process of visitors choosing to give money (or other help) to assist the conservation or management of places they visit. The term refers to voluntary giving, rather than compulsory payment such as a local tourist tax or admission charge (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997).

This project, commissioned by the Countryside Council for Wales, assesses the potential for Visitor Payback within Wales. The approach developed for this project involved five key stages.

1 An in depth literature review of visitor payback

A number of methods are employed to encourage visitors to make these voluntary donations. This review critically examines the eight main methods employed. Reference is made to existing visitor payback schemes operating in the UK and abroad, together with a more general discussion of the factors that influence the success or failure of visitor payback schemes (Section 3).

2 Detailed case studies of four existing Visitor Payback Schemes

Four very different schemes have been selected to provide a comparative account of the strengths and weaknesses of methodologies employed. Interviews were conducted with key informants to elicit information on the implementation, management and evaluation of the schemes (Section 4).

3 Structured focus group with stakeholders from tourism, recreation and conservation

This focus group was composed of key agencies and businesses and was trying to gauge reaction to visitor payback and its associated methodologies in order to complement the literature review and visitor focus group material (Section 5).

4 Structured focus group of visitors

This focus group sought the views and perceptions of the public to towards visitor payback and its associated methodologies in order to complement the literature review and stakeholder focus group (Section 5)

5 Development of a tool kit for Visitor Payback.

After overall conclusions (Section 6) this section proposes a way forward for visitor investment schemes (replacing payback) in the form a tool kit. Here the process and structures by which a scheme should be developed is promulgated and discussed with recommendations (Section 7).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Why is there a need for Visitor Payback Schemes?*

Participation in countryside tourism and recreation has increased dramatically during the last three decades, resulting in a considerable increase in the volume of people demanding access to the countryside (Green, 1981; Valentine, 1991). As a result, negative environmental impacts are being seen in areas that attract large numbers of visitors (Environment Committee, 1995). The settings that appear to suffer the most are those that are freely accessible to the public and where entrance charges are neither practical nor acceptable (Tribe *et al.*, 2000). Over recent years concern has mounted with regard to these negative environmental impacts (English Tourist Board, 1991). Conserving the quality of the natural and built environment is of paramount importance to the tourism industry, as it is this basic resource on which the industry is built (Welsh Tourist Board, 1999).

Lack of money to sustain places frequented by ever-increasing numbers of visitors is a growing problem, not just in the UK, but also across the world (Natura, 1998). In the UK, a large proportion of funding for environmental conservation comes via the public purse, and therefore has to compete with other public sector services such as education and health care. The consequence of this is that conservation is often given lower priority when budgets are allocated. This deficit in funding has led to increasing interest in policy instruments that aim to raise additional funds directly

from visitors and tourists. This 'new' money can then be channelled directly into local environmental projects, which would otherwise be impossible to fund (Crabtree *et al.*, 1993). 'Visitor Payback' seeks to achieve this within an ideology that visitors choose to give money (or other help) to assist with the conservation or management of places they visit, thereby actively contributing to safeguarding and maintaining areas that they perceive to be of value. Visitor payback is not a compulsory payment; it is not a demand for payment or a tourist tax. Their gift is entirely voluntary and, as such, they are able to gain a sense of well being that they personally have done something positive to preserve that area. Visitors donating to schemes have expressed their appreciation to those collecting, for providing them with an opportunity to give something back to the conservation of the place they value, indeed heightening their own tourist experience (Jackson, 2001; Warren, 2001).

2.2 Visitor Payback Schemes Versus Compulsory Taxes

Many European countries have implemented a tourist tax sometimes referred to as a 'bed tax', 'overnight tax' or 'eco-tax' (Toothill, 1991). These direct charges on visitors are seen as justifiable provided visitors can see a direct return for their money in the services and facilities provided (Stephens, 2000).

The UK tourist industry is hostile to the concept of tourism tax because it is perceived as a price increase and therefore would make the UK tourist industry less competitive. The British government is also not supportive of introducing a 'bed tax'. The Rural White Paper (2000) states that the government is in favour of encouraging voluntary donation "rather than introducing new legislation which could become complex and burdensome."

Such hostilities towards a tourist tax are not unfounded, although taxes do have the potential to raise substantial revenue, they also have the potential to create a number of problems (Hughes, 1981). Many small and medium accommodation providers are marginally viable and traditionally compete with other small businesses on the basis of price (Wales Tourist Board, 1999).

There are also fears that a tourist tax collected by central government might be retained and not spent on local conservation work, or the additional money raised by a new instrument might provide an excuse for public authorities to reduce their own funding for conservation (Bramwell and Fearn, 1996). In addition, a general “bed tax” might seem rather anonymous to the visitor with no indication of where or how the money will actually be spent. The suggestion of a bed tax also has negative connotations for the tourist; it implies that the tax is a justifiable way of making up the damage they are causing by being there.

When compared to a compulsory tourist tax, visitor payback is generally felt to be a much more appealing solution. In theory, effectively run visitor payback schemes have an equivalent potential to tourist taxes to raise sums of money for conservation, whilst at the same time enabling both the tourist and the participating business to feel good about themselves because they are participating out of their own free will.

2.3 Types of Visitor Payback

When implementing a visitor payback scheme the method chosen to collect donations will critically influence the effectiveness of the scheme (Warren, 2001). For this reason, careful consideration of the merits of each method needs to be assessed and evaluated.

2.4 Methods Employed in Visitor Payback Schemes

2.4.1 Donations

Donations, via collection boxes or envelopes, are perhaps the most traditional and well-known methods of raising funds. This familiarity, together with the fact that donations represent a simple, non-intrusive method of fund raising, makes donations

very popular with tourist providers and visitors. Unfortunately, donation boxes may not collect substantial funds without careful planning, management and personal promotion. For example, boxes just left on reception desks and counters have been found to collect very little (Warren, 2001).

A number of schemes, however, have managed to reap considerable benefits using donations. The most successful have involved placing leaflets and donation boxes in tourist bedrooms (Collier, 2001) or designing creative and innovative attraction-grabbing donation boxes (EETB, 2000). The donation box method is also very easy to manage from an administration viewpoint (Collier, 2001; Royce, 2001).

Pros

- ✓ *Very simple system to set up and administer.*
- ✓ *Popular with tourism enterprises.*
- ✓ *Can be placed in a range of settings – hotels, B&B's, car parks, visitor attractions, pubs, ferries, shops.*

Cons

- ✗ *Unless actively promoted they collect very little.*
- ✗ *Administration and collection is perceived by some to be problematic*
Can be broken into unless supervised

2.4.2 Supplements (opt in/opt out levies)

Voluntary levies placed on services such as hotel bills or meals at restaurants have also been found to be an effective ways of raising funds. These levies can be either 'opt-in' whereby visitors are asked to add a small amount to their bill, or 'opt-out' whereby the sum is automatically added to the bill and visitors are asked to indicate if they do not wish to pay it. Despite a successful track record, many tourist businesses are wary of getting involved in voluntary levy schemes due to the customer perception that it is a price rise or hidden tax. This is a major consideration for many small tourist businesses, which often are marginally viable and traditionally compete with other small businesses on the basis of price (Wales Tourist Board, 1999). The irony is that those businesses that do use an-opt out levy tend to receive praise and significant participation from visitors (Warren, 2001).

This reluctance to get involved was experienced during the establishment of the 'Tarka Project', Devon. Initially 30 businesses were asked to participate in a voluntary levy scheme; of these only four agreed. However, all four reported favourable results. For example, a cycle hire company, which encouraged customers to volunteer a donation at the end of their hire period found, that sixty percent did so, with an average contribution of 37 pence (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997).

The Lake District Tourism & Conservation Partnership 'Invest in the Lakes' has found that the voluntary levy method generated the most revenue in terms of visitor payback. However, despite active encouragement of businesses to participate, relatively few have responded positively. Those that did were mostly large and, as a result, contributed a significant proportion of all monies raised by the scheme. In particular, those businesses using an opt-out supplement have found it highly effective with only a few visitors dropping out; approximately 2% compared to about a third in opt-in schemes. It was also noted that businesses operating opt-in supplements have to spend a greater time promoting it for a smaller return (EETB, 2000; Royce, 2001). Consequently, opt-out is generally perceived to be the most effective, as very few people request to opt-out, allowing small amounts of money to be collected from large numbers of people (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997).

The levy method has a number of distinct advantages over other visitor payback approaches. As visitors are already making a payment, the process is made easy for them. As the scheme is working within existing payment mechanisms, it is simpler and more cost effective than mounting donation or merchandising schemes. However, it has been questioned whether an opt-out levy is completely voluntary. Bramwell and Fearn (1996) found that 65% of visitors surveyed were reluctant to remove the levy. Significantly, 15% of respondents stated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the principle of a levy but, of these, 43% said they would not request its removal, with some indicating this was because they would be too embarrassed. Clearly this technique may reduce the 'feel good factor' that characterises the visitor payback philosophy. Their research also found that some respondents linked the levy to the quality of service they had received, expressing the view that they would not pay the levy when the levied service was perceived to be deficient.

Pros

- ✓ *Very effective at raising money*
- ✓ *Visitors are already making a payment so the process is easy for them.*
- ✓ *Experience shows that over 98% are happy to pay a voluntary supplement.*
- ✓ *Participating businesses have received praise from visitors*
- ✓ *Opt out seems to be more effective and efficient than opt in*

Cons

- ✗ *Sometimes difficult to persuade businesses to adopt this approach, especially smaller businesses and those competing primarily on price*
- ✗ *Some businesses are concerned that customers might feel 'cornered' into giving a donation.*
- ✗ *Visitors do not always appreciate that the levy is not related to the service they are receiving and therefore may view it in the same way as a 'tip' for good service.*
- ✗ *Opt in can be more time consuming to implement and administer*
- ✗ *Can reduce the feel good factor from a pure voluntary donation*

2.4.3 Merchandising

Merchandising has been introduced into a number of visitor payback schemes. The basic premise is that specific items such as information booklets, T-Shirts, pens, erasers, and soft toys with a relevant message are sold indicating that a percentage of the purchase price will be passed on to a conservation project. The items may be displayed with information leaflets and posters describing the visitor payback scheme and the area or project that funds raised will go to support. For example, the Tarka Project sells T-shirts, sweat shirts, post cards and leaflets, all carrying the Tarka logo. A five percent charge is added to all items with the money channelled into conservation projects (Tarka Project, 2001). Stockholm City Authority introduced merchandising in 1997 as part of their visitor payback scheme to raise money for conservation and environmental concerns for the Stockholm Archipelago. During three months in 1996, over 350 T-Shirts were sold but only 10 stickers. This raised a profit of £218 for the conservation fund (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997).

Although merchandising only raises modest sums of money, the items sold, especially T-shirts and sweatshirts do generate publicity and awareness. A very important aspect to the success of merchandising is that the items sold must be products visitors want to buy, as the majority of potential buyers are more influenced by design and usefulness of the product, rather than the conservation cause that it is supporting (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997). In addition, production costs must be kept low so that

a reasonable mark up can be made without making the item too expensive for the consumer, otherwise there is a clear risk that the investment will become a liability. .

On a similar theme to merchandising is 'Percentage of Sales'. Percentage of sales essentially relies on businesses actually donating a percentage of sales from a particular item or service, directly to the visitor payback project. The visitor is informed that a fixed sum will be donated to a project, but they do not have the option of removing the sum. It could be argued that this approach falls outside the remit of visitor payback as the donation is not entirely voluntary. However, the visitor is not obliged to buy the service or goods offered so, in effect, their participation remains voluntary. For example, Booths supermarkets a regional supermarket chain operating in The Lake District, raised £2,000 in 2000 to develop footpath access through St Catherine's Wood, Windermere. The funds were raised via the sale of a reusable, durable, recyclable carrier bag. 50,000 bags were produced each costing 10 pence each.

Pros

- ✓ Generates publicity and raises awareness
- ✓ Effective method of receiving money from visitors who would not generally feel inclined to donate.

Cons

- × Only small amounts tend to be raised.
- × Large sums of money are required up front to buy the initial stock,
- × It can be a bit of a gamble – the scheme may not see any return if the product is not well received.

2.4.4 Membership Schemes

Membership schemes essentially involve inviting visitors to join a club or society, which supports a conservation cause. Payment is usually by annual subscription. Members then are kept informed about the progress of the scheme; how their money is being spent and future plans for the area.

In 1993 the Tarka Project, Devon, set up a 'Friends of Tarka' membership subscription scheme. Whilst businesses were happy to participate through displaying

details of the scheme, very few memberships have been sold (EETB, 2000). A tiered ‘friends’ scheme has been in operation in Yosemite Park, USA since 1985. Wide choices of donation levels are offered between £12 and £5,000. Gifts over £2,500 are honoured with a nameplate in the main visitor centre. The Yosemite Park scheme is extremely popular attracting over 10,000 members in 1995 (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997).

Along a similar theme are schemes that offer visitors the chance to buy a metre of land or a tree. Trees for Life is a Scottish charity based at Findhorn Bay on the northeast coast of Scotland. For a donation of £10 a tree is planted, the donor is given a certificate to commemorate their contribution (Trees, 2001). The Hohe Tauern in the Austrian Alps, one of Europe’s largest National Parks, invites visitors to buy a symbolic one square metre of protected area for a price of £5. Each donor receives a certificate and a map marking their square (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997).

Pros

- ✓ *Creates a long-term source of funding*
- ✓ *Enables members to have more feedback from the organisers thus enabling them to feel more involved in the scheme.*
- ✓ *Maximises the feel good factor*

Cons

- × *Promoting the scheme can be difficult, without sufficient members the scheme may not be sustainable.*
- × *Can be costly and time-consuming as the organiser must be able to fulfil members’ expectations with regular updates and newsletters.*
- × *Administration can be costly and require significant resources*

2.4.5 Participation

Some visitor payback schemes give visitors the opportunity to physically participate in conservation activities rather than just giving monetary donations. This type of approach may appeal to individuals who want a real sense of involvement and achievement with the place they are visiting (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997).

In recent years there has been a growing market for ‘eco’ based activity holidays (Tribe *et al.*, 2000). It may therefore be possible for payback scheme organisers to

link up with the organisers of activity based holidays or local conservation groups to develop projects that enable this potential 'voluntary' work force to undertake conservation work in their area.

The invitation can also be extended to employees in tourism enterprises, who may wish to be actively involved in the projects they are collecting money for. By actively taking part employees may feel more involved with the scheme and its merits and therefore are likely to promote it more enthusiastically when communicating with visitors. For example, members of staff at George Fishers in Keswick regularly volunteer to clear litter on the popular Catbells Footpath. The clearance takes place 3 to 4 times a year. It was launched with a 'trash dash' in May 1996 around Keswick for media interest. Michael Standing, Managing Director of George Fishers said "all our people care desperately about the area and litter is abhorrent to everybody on the staff" (The Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership, 2000).

Pros

- ✓ *Enables visitors to be actively involved in conservation.*
- ✓ *Raises awareness and understanding of conservation issues.*
- ✓ *Allows the scheme to tap into a valuable manpower resource – thus reducing cost of labour.*

Cons

- × *Training and supervision of volunteers can be time consuming and expensive.*
- × *Health and safety considerations may make the use of inexperienced staff impractical.*

2.4.6 Fundraising Events

Visitors attending free events are asked to make a voluntary contribution towards a conservation cause. These events can be one offs or regular annual events. Events can be a very effective way of promoting a visitor payback scheme and raising visitor awareness. However, they do require a lot of organisation to be successful (Collier, 2001).

The Peak District Tourism and Environmental Trust hold a 'Pound For The Peak' week where volunteers collected donations at major honeypot sites throughout the National Park (EETB, 2000).

Events do not have to be just for visitors; a scheme called 'Residents Open Week' coordinated by South Lakeland District Council operates annually in the Lake District. This aims to give local people the opportunity to take advantage of special offers, free admission and discounts at over fifty of the area's top hotels, attractions and retailers, for a week long period before the summer season begins. To take part in the event residents have to obtain a pass (with proof of local residency). In response to requests from participating businesses, South Lakeland District Council joined forces with The Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership and suggested a 50 pence voluntary contribution for each pass, with all proceeds going towards conservation. As a result, the scheme has generated over £7,200 in the past 3 years, clearly illustrating that the local community is also willing to contribute to conservation work in the environment in which they live (The Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership, 2000).

Pros

- ✓ Excellent way of raising public awareness
- ✓ Substantial sums of money can be generated

Cons

- × Require lots of enthusiasm, commitment and time from the scheme organisers if the event is to attract visitors.

2.4.7 Corporate Sponsorship

Tourism businesses or other companies who have strong links to an area are invited to make payments to support a specific project; these can be one off large payments or annual smaller payments. Alternatively companies may be asked to donate services in-kind or items they manufacture or retail to support a visitor payback scheme.

For example, the outdoor clothing company Regatta, sponsored Exmoor Paths Partnership by providing clothing for their entire team of footpath workers. The

scheme also secured sponsorship from Ford who loaned the team a vehicle (EETB, 2000).

Schemes may encourage corporate sponsorship by offering the company recognition of their input at the project site. For example, a small notice with the companies name and amount donated may create PR spin off's for the sponsoring company by showing that they value and care for their local environment.

Pros

- ✓ Sponsorship can bring in large sums of money for the conservation fund
- ✓ Significant public relations spin-offs for the company

Cons

- × A visitor payback scheme has to be effectively marketed to attract sponsorship from business enterprises.
- × It may be especially difficult to attract sponsorship from companies during the early days of a scheme.

2.4.8 Loyalty Cards and Voucher Schemes

Loyalty cards are a novel idea that have recently been introduced by Friends of the Ionian (FoI). FoI was set up as part of the European Year of Tourism in 1990 with the aim of redirecting tourism development in Greece's Ionian Islands along less destructive lines. The organisation has embraced a number of schemes to raise funds and awareness including self guided trails, walking booklets, wildlife booklets and other publications. Their loyalty card, called the 'Omega Card', is a recent introduction, that is offered as part of FoI membership. The membership fee goes towards promoting the region and local conservation projects, and the card allows the member to receive discounts of between 10 and 15% at taverns across the island. In addition, the card lets tavern owners know the visitor cares about the island and its people thus ensuring that he or she receives the best possible service.

Cockington Country Park, South Devon, initiated a scheme run by the South Devon Green Tourism Initiative, which raised funds through discount offers. A stamp on arrival, for which the visitor paid £1, validated the vouchers. This validation money raised £2,456 between Easter and September 1994 (Countryside Commission, 1995).

Pros

- ✓ As well as raising money for the scheme, the visitor receives tangible benefits
- ✓ Potentially a valuable marketing tool for participating businesses
 - visitors are given an incentive use their establishment
 - the businesses is identified, as an establishment that cares about the local environment and conservation

Cons

- × Encouraging businesses to participate may be difficult, as they have to accept a loss in profit, in order to give the visitor a discount
- × Visitors may see these as commercial gimmicks
- × Visitors may not like to be labelled a tourist

2.5 Visitor Payback: Issues and Concerns

2.5.1 Visitor Perceptions of Visitor Payback

2.5.1.1 Visitor Willingness to Pay

If every tourist within Europe offered 6 pence per night of his or her stay, this would raise over £112 million per annum for conservation (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997). The theory of everyone giving a small sum is highlighted in the promotional leaflet for the Peak District visitor payback scheme. They estimate if every visitor gave just 50 pence, over £10 million each year would be raised to help carry out conservation projects (Warren, 2001). With the potential of such attractive sums of money it is not surprising that visitor payback has attracted a lot of interest. In theory the concept does sounds attractive, but does it really have the scope to deliver in practice? Are people really willing to give money ‘voluntarily’ whilst on holiday, or visiting an area?

The quality of the environment is of increasing importance to visitors (Bramwell and Fearn, 1996). This being so, it is reasonable to expect that visitors will be prepared to pay to conserve what they themselves have come to enjoy (Tribe *et al.*, 2000).

The Peak Tourism Partnership undertook research in 1993 to examine visitors’ attitudes to donating to environmental projects. The research found that 75% of visitors agreed with the principle of visitors contributing directly to local conservation

and environmental works. However, it can be questioned whether agreeing with a scheme in principle translates to real donations.

Christie and Matthews (2001) compared actual donations and contingent donations to the Welsh Kite Trust, a charity set up to aid the conservation of Red Kites in Wales. They found that the proportion of respondents stating an intention to make a hypothetical donation was greater than the number of respondents who would make an actual donation. They also found that the size of the hypothetical donation was twice that of the actual cash donation made.

Research undertaken in 1996, at Los Christianos, Tenerife, found similar results. The survey examined visitor attitudes to the whales and dolphins and explored how much they were prepared to pay for their conservation. Of the 659 visitors interviewed, 90% agreed that it was important to protect the whales and dolphins. However, only one third were prepared to pay an additional charge during their holiday to ensure this protection. Supplementary charges on whale watching excursions and souvenirs were found to be more acceptable than charges on hotels and flights. Visitors were also found to be more accepting of an additional charge, if they knew that their tour company was involved. Nationalities may also vary in their sympathy toward visitor payback. German visitors were found to be the most willing to pay (46%), followed by Dutch (33.5%) and then the British (18.7%).

East England Tourist Board found that level of willingness to pay was significantly lower than had been indicated by previous surveys they had conducted. A reason for this was that visitors felt that they were already paying excessive prices for tourism services. They concluded that visitors' perception of whether they are receiving value for money during their stay has a significant impact on their willingness to make a voluntary donation (Warren, 2001).

In conclusion, it appears that people's willingness to give can be attributed to a range of factors and a commitment of behavioural intention does not necessarily lead to actual behaviour. Hence, visitors who indicate in a survey that they would pay, do not always do so in practice. This may happen for example, if they were temporarily short of money, or if they were visiting alone and felt it less important to behave in a

way considered responsible (Bramwell and Fearn, 1996). However, behavioural intention is an immediate determinant of actual behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980).

The research indicates that a large percentage of individuals are not against the principle of contributing directly to conservation. Denman and Ashcroft (1997) concluded in their research that visitors' willingness to pay for conservation is considerable and should therefore not be a deterrent to establishing a visitor payback scheme.

2.5.1.2 Linking Visitor Payback to a Conservation Projects

The money raised from visitor payback can be linked to specific local conservation projects so that visitors can appreciate the value of their contribution and gain a sense of satisfaction from having actively helped an area that they personally value. The link between donation and project is direct and there is an assurance that their donation will make a difference on the ground. This, in itself, is seen as a major influence on people's willingness to give (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997). The Lake District and Tourism Partnership have embraced this concept whole heartedly by allowing businesses participating in the scheme to raise money for individual conservation projects near to where they operate. The success of a scheme is very closely linked to the effort and enthusiasm of those people on the frontline, who are in regular contact with visitors (Royce, 2001; Collier, 2001). By carefully linking the businesses with local conservation causes they have found that businesses are more enthusiastic and feel a greater sense of ownership of the scheme, rather than seeing it as something that they are doing for another organisation (Royce, 2001; Denman and Ashcroft, 1997). This enthusiasm is then conveyed to the visitor.

It is important to note, that although it is generally felt that linking the visitor payback schemes to specific projects is desirable (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997; Royce, 2001; Collier, 2001), it is not essential. Schemes such as those operated by Kite Country and the Tarka Country Trust do not give specific details to donors as to how the money will be spent. Visitors giving to Kite Country are told that their donations will be

passed on to the Welsh Kite Trust (the organisation running the Red Kite conservation project), but exactly how the money is spent is not specified. Similarly, Tarka Country Trust donors are told what type of activity their donation will support, but specific allocations are not decided until the amount of money collected is known. This approach has the benefit of enabling a wider range of tasks to benefit from the funds raised (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997).

2.5.1.3 Organisations Involved in Running Visitor Payback Schemes

Denman and Ashcroft (1997) found that the willingness of visitors to give can be affected by the status of the organisation asking visitors for money. Local authorities and other public bodies do not project an appealing image and visitors may feel concerned that their donation will not reach the cause to which they donated. In addition, visitors are unlikely to give to projects that they feel to be part of the statutory duty of the Local Authority. Organisations that are independently run, especially if they have a voluntary or charity status, are more appealing to give to. Therefore, many schemes use existing local environmental or community organisations, which have suitable projects to support. Alternatively, some schemes establish independent trusts e.g. The Tarka Country Trust in Devon, Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust and Island 2000 Trust on the Isle of Wight. The appeal of trusts is that they are seen to be independent and non-profit making. As well as reassuring some potential donors, trust status may open up opportunities for outside funding through various trusts and grant giving bodies.

This is not to say that Local Authorities or statutory bodies cannot manage visitor payback schemes, but if they do, they must give a very clear promises about the types of projects the money will go towards and must choose target projects very carefully at the start. Local Authorities can overcome some problems by linking the scheme with existing environmental or community organisations. For example, the Forest of Bowland, Lancashire operate a visitor payback scheme that is administered primarily by a local authority (Ribble Valley District Council). However, the scheme is in partnership with Lancashire Wildlife Trust who administer the fund and can use landfill tax revenue they receive to match payback revenue (EETB, 2000).

2.5.1.4 Encouraging Voluntary Contribution

In practice it appears that the approach to an individual visitor greatly affects their decision on whether, and how much, they give. Three approaches were adopted by ski tour operators in the French Alps. Each used the same promotional leaflet 'Protecting the Alpine Environment' as the backbone of their fund raising, yet each used slightly different approaches with different financial outcomes.

Simply Ski gave their visitors the promotional leaflet at the beginning of their holiday with their standard welcome letter. No money was collected until after the holiday on the return coach journey to the airport. During which time the scheme was described to the passengers and then a collection box was passed round. This resulted in 70% of passengers giving. The total collected over the season was £400, equivalent to 19 pence per head across all 2000 clients.

Le Ski collected donations in their chalet accommodation. Leaflets and collecting boxes were placed in the main lounge and posters displayed on visitors' notice boards. Sometimes, chalet staff mentioned the scheme during the last meal and passed around the collecting box. A total of £100 was raised using this method with an average of only 5 pence per head across all 2000. This was significantly less effective than the method used by Simply Ski.

Ski Peak's approach was perhaps the most effective of all three companies. Like Simply Ski they issued the promotional leaflet to the visitors on their arrival, and collected monies on the return coach journey, but with a subtle difference; instead of passing a collection box, individual envelopes were passed around. This resulted in approximately 75% of passengers contributing. This totalled £504 across all 1450 clients, an average of 31 pence per head (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997).

These three examples clearly illustrate that donation boxes on their own, with little publicity and promotion, collect very little. A more interactive, personal approach is essential. Amounts raised appear to be closely related to the total effort expended.

In conclusion it would seem there are a number of factors, which affect a visitors' perception of visitor payback schemes. Research suggests that visitors are willing to pay for conservation, but their decision to donate to a particular scheme will be influenced by a variety of factors. These include the appeal of the organisation collecting the money, the enthusiasm and commitment of those collecting and the project or cause for which the funds are intended. By appreciating the factors that will affect a visitor's decision to give, scheme co-ordinators can endeavour to ensure that schemes are as appealing as possible and thus able to maximise potential visitor donations.

2.5.2 Business Perception of Visitor Payback Schemes.

2.5.2.1 What is in it for them?

Businesses involved in visitor payback schemes not only benefit through actively helping to preserve areas in which their businesses success depends, but also improving their own public image by projecting concern for the local environment. However, many projects have found it difficult to persuade businesses to join visitor payback schemes, particularly in its infancy. Before joining scheme, businesses need to feel that there are tangible benefits, in return for taking on extra responsibility and work (Royce, 2001; Collier, 2001).

It is therefore essential that the visitor payback scheme not only appeals to visitors making a donation, but arguably and more importantly, that it appeals to businesses, without whose support a visitor payback scheme can not exist. The schemes identified will have a major influence on its effectiveness. Unless a scheme establishes a strong identity in its pioneer days, it will be very difficult to get businesses on board. Businesses have to be confident in the product. They have to believe that association with the scheme will improve the image of their business, not damage it.

A new visitor payback scheme located on the Suffolk coasts & Heaths called 'Connect to Conservation' aims to attract support from the tourism businesses by offering a number of 'unique advantages' to its members. These advantages include 'Green Credentials' a scheme that show visitors that the business is supporting and protecting the landscape. They also give their members access to conservation information and events, and offer them the opportunity to publicise their business on the Suffolk Coast & Heaths website. In addition, they provide the businesses with information leaflets, collection boxes and promotional material and acknowledge the assistance provided by the businesses in press releases, publicity and media events (Connect, 2001).

The PR spin offs can be substantial for the businesses involved. The Regent Hotel, Waterhead, a member of The Lake District Tourism & Conservation Partnership Ltd., raised funds to reinstate a traditional packhorse style bridge. The hotel gave £500 to pump prime the scheme and over the following 12 months raised a further £2,000 through a voluntary levy. The total cost for the project was £12,000 and involved bringing in specialist stone contractors to undertake the masonry work. The hotels' support was welcomed by the other funding partners: Friends of the Lake District, Grasmere Rothay Appeal Trust, Lake District National Park Authority, Lakes Parish Council and The National Trust. The project was televised by BBC North as an excellent example of a joint public, private and voluntary sector scheme. The television coverage was also picked up and broadcast by BBC Radio Cumbria.

The vast majority of businesses who get involved in visitor payback schemes find the experience very positive (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997).

2.5.2.2 Ambassador Businesses

Support from a larger business is very valuable as greater return is possible from larger businesses with the same amount of effort (Denman & Ashcroft, 1997). A large percentage of all funds raised by The Lake District Tourism & Conservation Partnership 'Invest in the Lakes' comes via four large businesses operating voluntary levy schemes:

Heart of the Lakes and Cottage Life	£32,200
Langdale Leisure Ltd	£53,100
English Lakes Hotels Ltd	£10,800
Fallbarrow & Limefitt Caravan Park	£18,000

(Total funds raised since joining the visitor payback scheme)

In addition, backing from larger businesses adds credibility to the value of the scheme whilst at the same time reaching a wider audience. Larger businesses can also act as ‘ambassadors’ attracting other business to join the scheme; there is no voice more convincing to a tourism business than one of their peers (Warren, 2001).

Encouraging participation was seen as the main aim to increase the connection between tourism and conservation rather than sole revenue generation in the Exmoor Paths Partnership scheme. However, in hindsight, they concluded that whilst this approach is valid, it must be combined with concentrating resources on getting a least a handful or a core number of ‘wealthier’ businesses (EETB, 2000).

2.6 Are Visitor Payback Schemes Worth All the Effort?

If revenue generation is the sole motivation in starting a scheme then disappointment is inevitable (Warren, 2001). Visitor payback is not a get rich quick scheme nor is it a fund raising mechanism. Rather it embodies the symbiotic relationship between place and visitor.

2.6.1 The Cost of Running a Visitor Payback Scheme

Initial funding is vital to get even the most modest of schemes off the ground. Administration costs are extensive and must not be underestimated at the outset of a scheme. Publicity in the form of leaflets or posters, collection boxes, collection of donations, dispersal of funds, negotiation with large numbers of small businesses can run into thousands of pounds. Existing schemes usually cite funding for staff time as the main constraint in developing and expanding their scheme (Royce, 2001; Collier,

2001). It is unrealistic to expect donations to cover these expenses. As the schemes grow, more and more administration is required. Whether schemes have the potential to make it alone once funding dries up should be a major consideration prior to commencement of any visitor payback schemes.

This issue is clearly illustrated by The Exmoor Path Partnership, which was set up in September 1997 as a three-year project. Funded by the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), under the auspices of the Objective 5b criteria, Exmoor National Park Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, National Trust and English Nature. During the three year period the project improved 225 kilometres of paths and over 80 businesses signed up to help raise funds, resulting in over £15,000 being generated from voluntary contributions (Exmoor Paths Partnership, 2001). However, the scheme's running costs were £180,000 p.a. (EETB, 2000). When the support-funding package came to an end in September 2000 the project wound down. In recognition of the importance of the project the National Park Authority secured an additional grant allocation from the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions to continue the works on the ground during the winter of 2000 and into the New Year (Exmoor Paths Partnership, 2001). However, today, whilst there is still some active support amongst hoteliers, the level of erosion control activity is much reduced (South Downs National Park, 2001).

Even the most successful schemes often are highly dependent on additional funding. The Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership 'Invest In The Lakes' scheme is probably the most well know visitor payback scheme in the UK. It was established in 1993 and since that time has raised £150,000 in voluntary donations. However, core funding is still used to cover the administration costs of the scheme, which amount to around £40,000 p.a.; substantially more than average annual donations. If core funding was not available for administration, the scheme could not cover its costs via donations, let alone support conservation projects. Currently only two paid staff are employed which is considered to be a chief constraint in the scheme being more successful (Royce, 2001)

2.6.2 The Non-Financial Benefits of Visitor Payback

Denman & Ashcroft (1997) found that although most schemes produced very modest financial results, those involved were still keen to continue. This was partly because they believed that numbers of enterprises participating, and the amounts received from visitors, would grow as schemes become properly established. In addition, non-financial benefits from the schemes were emerging such as developing positive relationships between tourism and conservation at a local level, improving residents attitudes towards visitor impact and encouraging tourism businesses to act in an environmentally sustainable manner (Denmnan & Ashcroft, 1997).

The success of a visitor payback scheme needs to be evaluated not by how many pounds and pence it has raised for footpath repair or tree planting, but rather how much interaction between public, private and voluntary organisation it has facilitated and the level of awareness it has been able raise amongst visitors, local communities and businesses.

Even the most impressive visitor payback schemes, i.e. Invest in the Lakes, do not make up for the short fall in government funding conservation work and it is debatable that they ever could. However, what they have undoubtedly been able to demonstrate is that tourism businesses, local communities and environmental organisations working together, with funds raised from visitor payback schemes can make a real tangible difference on the ground. The projects may only be small but the enthusiasm, commitment, awareness and co-operation they generate is immense.

3 CASE STUDIES: Review of existing visitor payback schemes

In order to elicit numerical, administrative and management details from successful visitor payback schemes operating in the UK and Europe, four detailed case studies of existing schemes were undertaken. The chosen schemes were:

- The Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership
- A Gift to Nature, Isle of Wight
- Kite Country, Mid Wales
- Friends of the Ionian, Greece

These schemes were selected because they demonstrate varying aspects relating to the implementation of visitor payback mechanisms, including; donation, voluntary levies, merchandising, percentage of sales and membership. They also demonstrate a variety of managerial and organisational approaches that can be adopted when running visitor payback projects.

Through a combination of face-to-face interviews and desk research we have sought to illustrate the diversity that exists within visitor payback thereby enabling the reader to gain a valuable insight into the administration, management and funding issues, associated with setting up and running a visitor payback scheme. Quotes from the visitor payback project officers have been included within the case studies to bring the scheme descriptions to life.

Information from The Lake District and Tourism Partnership, Gift to Nature and Kite Country was gathered using face to face and telephone interviews with the project managers of each scheme:

Kirsty Royce – Lake District and Tourism Partnership, Cumbria.

Michael Bunney – Kite Country, Mid Wales.

Becky Collier – Gift to Nature, Isle of Wight.

Information from The Friends of the Ionian scheme was collected from the Friends of the Ionian web site <http://www.foi.org.uk> and previous research undertaken as part of the European Visitor Payback Project (Denman and Ashcroft, 1997).

3.1 Island 2000 Trust – Gift to Nature

Gift to Nature was launched in March 2000 with the aim of developing new ways to conserve and enhance the Isle of Wight's environment, whilst developing new avenues for sustainable tourism and economic regeneration. Gift to nature invites tourists to make voluntary donations towards local conservation projects so that money brought in from tourism can be channelled back into the conservation of the island.

3.1.1 Aims and Objectives

Gift to Nature is managed by the Island 2000 Trust which evolved from the Isle of Wight's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Project. When Countryside Agency funding came to an end, the project's four members of staff decided to create an independent, self-financing, not-for-profit company – Island 2000.

'Spring 1999 our umbilical cord to the Council was finally severed and we set out in the world on our own'

The Island 2000 Trust has three main aims

1. To act as a catalyst, promoting new ideas and approaches
2. To document and disseminate the lesson learned
3. To build partnerships

The basic idea behind the Gift to Nature visitor payback scheme is to channel money from tourism into the conservation of the countryside; a key factor in visits to the Island. Gift to Nature, as a visitor payback scheme, aims to ask local tourism

businesses, to invite tourists to make a voluntary donation towards local conservation projects.

The project is still in its infancy; the first few months were spent developing a logo and producing promotional material. The official launch of Gift to Nature was held in March 2000. The evening was very successful and 14 businesses signed up immediately to support the scheme. To date there are 65 businesses committed to supporting the scheme.

3.1.2 Management of Scheme

The scheme has one Project Officer, who is involved in a 'Gift To Nature.' She feels it is essential to have a dedicated officer to keep the scheme's momentum going. Approximately half of her time is spent on a Gift To Nature.

'Without a dedicated officer the scheme would take a back burner and wouldn't raise a lot of money or have a good profile, what you put in is what you get out.'

The Island 2000 Trust was a partner with the Isle of Wight Council, in a European Funded Interreg project for the year 2000, which has allowed the idea to be tested in Ventnor prior to its island wide development. The project secured £10,000, which paid for leaflets, collection boxes, window stickers and a launch event.

The Countryside Agency have also supported the further development of Gift to Nature as an island wide project by giving a gross of £7,000 towards new literature, the website and the development of prototype collection boxes. Forthcoming Heritage Lottery Funding of £6,000 for Island 2000 will also help to cover the costs of future promotion and publicity.

The £10,000 to kick start the scheme has stood them in good stead, they still have a large supply of collection boxes and leaflets to distribute to new businesses coming on board and to replenish existing businesses. The first thing to run out will be the

funding for their jobs, but they are hoping to obtain Countryside Agency funding and Lottery Heritage funding for the future.

Isle of Wight Tourism will half fund the Project Officer's job from next April. This is a major breakthrough, as Isle of Wight Tourism, which is the marketing organisation for the island, were not supportive of the visitor payback scheme at first.

'Although they didn't oppose the scheme in principle they were unwilling to "dip their toe in the water" for fear that their members (the local tourism businesses) would disapprove of their involvement.....their over riding attitude was that the Isle of Wight hasn't got the same reputation as a green destination like the Lakes; it is still perceived as a bucket and spade holiday place.'

This attitude surprised the scheme's organisers as Isle of Wight Tourism has based the thrust of its marketing for the last four years on promoting the area as a 'brilliant place for walking,' with 'over 50% of the land area having AONB status', over 70% of the island is designated for one reason or another.

The progress made by the project has led to increasing support from the Isle of Wight Tourism. Three years down the line they are now very supportive, they have collection boxes in all the tourist information centres, promote the scheme in their walking festival programme, raise money from guided walks and as mentioned earlier next year they plan to half fund the Project Officer's post. However, they still do not mention the scheme in the main tourist brochure.

'They don't see that they should give over valuable advertising space, because they feel it's ultimately an Island 2000 scheme and not theirs.'

The Project Officer feels that if an area is able to get the support of the main tourism marketing body it is a significant help.

3.1.3 Collection methods

Of the 65 businesses supporting Gift to Nature, only four have an 'opt-out' levy, the rest have collection envelopes/boxes.

Wightlink Ferries Limited, have agreed to support the scheme by operating an opt-out voluntary levy on all Wightlink Holidays in 2001. Every one booking a holiday will be asked if they are happy to pay a £1 supplement, which is included in the price of their holiday. Red Funnel Holidays have agreed to add a small, optional supplement on their '5 Day Sail Away' deals with four holiday parks operating on the Island.

Gift To Nature is also experimenting with different types of collection boxes in different situations. A number of local artists have been commissioned to design and produce individual boxes. These include a polished concrete outdoor seat with a wall lizard motif which incorporates a collection box, which has so far raised £400. An automata box for a seaside pub, which features a mermaid who pops up when the coins are inserted and another automated box at Ventnor Botanic Gardens.

Wherever possible they try and tag Gift To Nature onto current projects. A number of other businesses also supported the scheme via walking and cycling festivals held in May and June 2000, whereby they have asked participants at these events if they would like to make a donation.

In order to make management of the donation system as easy and efficient as possible, a standard agreement letter is drawn up for each participating businesses stating that; Island 2000 will provide new collection boxes if needed and leaflets. In return the hotel will collect all the donations, add them up and send a cheque in. If a hotel has not sent any donations in for over six months the project officer will give them a call to check there are no problems.

The outdoor collection boxes require a slightly more labour intensive approach, as they have to be emptied by the trust staff on a regular basis.

3.1.4 Allocating funds

For the first project 'Lizard Wall' the idea was based on advice from the Country Council Ecologist and Wight Wildlife Officer, who both agreed that the lizard wall

would make a good small scale starting project. Being small, it was possible to fund entirely with tourist donations. The project basically involved building 3.5 meters of dry stonewall in Ventnor Botanic Gardens.

'The wall lizards are actually a mediterranean species and shouldn't live in Britain at all. So what better advert for a holiday town than mediterranean things are living there because its warm and sunny.'

The project was completed within the first year of a Gift to Nature, which meant that visitors returning to the Island could see exactly how their money had been spent.

The second proposed project is to build a red squirrel viewing hide. Again this was with the advice of the County Council Ecologist and Wight Wildlife Officer. This is a much more ambitious project, which will cost £10,000. The project has the added appeal, that the visitors are actually getting something back as, it is essentially an attraction for them. However, there are concerns due to the time required to collect the necessary funds and also the more indirect relationship towards conservation.

'It's difficult to know whether we made a mistake choosing this as our next project. Maybe we should consider doing another little project to keep the momentum going.'

For future projects they plan to take suggestions from the Isle of Wight biodiversity action plan. Businesses are told that they are welcome to put forward suggestions for projects. To date no businesses have put forward any ideas.

3.1.5 Visitor surveys

As part of the European Funding grant, surveys were undertaken in Ventnor – Gateway to the AONB. 1 or 2 questions were asked about visitor payback, but only a total of 50 surveys were completed. Approximately 50% of businesses thought it was a good idea to collect donations from visitors.

3.1.6 Future Plans

They plan to continue along the theme of innovative collection boxes. Their latest creation is a brightly coloured sand castle collection box, which is handmade of fibreglass resin. These will be displayed with bunches of paper flags.

They would like to persuade more people to have opt in/out levies

‘Even if you only have a handful of businesses that are willing to do voluntary levy, if its done effectively it can raise nice sums’.

‘We were warned off merchandising by other schemes, people don’t buy the items just because they’re for a good cause. We could end up saddled with a lot of unsaleable items.’

3.1.7 Achievements

Donations raised during the first six months of the visitor payback scheme have been used to build a dry stonewall for Ventnor’s rare wall lizards.

The project has attracted support from 65 tourism businesses, ranging from small shops and cafes, to farm B&Bs and hotels. It has also received support from two large companies operating on the island, Wightlink Ferries limited and Red Funnel Holidays, who have agreed to support Gift to Nature with opt out supplements on their holiday prices.

Gift to Nature is featured in the English Tourism Council’s sustainable tourism strategy “Time For Action” (April 2001), as an example of good practice.

3.1.8 Lessons learnt

- Start small.
- Identify a clear conservation project that is attractive

- Create the necessary human infrastructure to manage the project and maintain momentum
- Make the scheme as easy as possible for a business to implement
- Build up tourism contacts
- Do not undertake ambitious projects
- Do not base success on financial aspects alone

For A Gift To Nature, success is not measured by how many £1000's they raise and how many projects they do.

'Making businesses feel proud and committed to the scheme is the mark of success.....if a hotel only raises £10 it doesn't matter. If they've got a collection box they're never going to raise a lot, but it's another business on board that you've got dialogue with.'

'If you work it out it financially it's completely NOT worth it! There is a real danger of reading about the Lake District's success and thinking wow that's an excellent way of raising money,but visitor payback has so much more to offer, its about engaging the visitors and about bringing the two sides, conservation and tourism together to help each other.'

3.2 The Lake District Tourism & Conservation Partnership

The Lake District and Tourism and Conservation Partnership aims to link visitors, tourism businesses and conservation bodies to help care for the area's environment, by raising much needed funds for vital conservation projects in the Lake District.

3.2.1 Aim and Objectives

The Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership was set up in 1993 as a pilot scheme. The partnership is funded by a consortium of agencies which comprise: Cumbria Tourist Board, Cumbria Training and Enterprise Council, the Lake District National Park Authority, National Trust and the Rural Development Commission. Each partner provided £10,000 annually for the first three years, to pump prime the scheme.

By 1995 conservation projects were securing significant private sector sponsorship. In March 1997, the partnership achieved independence as a non-profit distributing company limited by guarantee.

Over the last two years the profile of the partnership has risen substantially with more businesses joining as members; today the partnership has over 100 businesses and is viewed as a highly successful scheme.

The partnership aims to raise funds from visitors and tourism businesses to maintain and enhance the Lake District, the objectives of the partnership include:

1. Raising Funds

- To encourage businesses in partnership with their customers to fund conservation projects.
- Enable visitors to contribute to conservation projects.
- Maximise Grant Aid.

- Encouraging businesses to provide 'in kind' support to reduce administration costs.

2. Promoting awareness that responsible sustainable tourism can benefit a fragile landscape & secure a prosperous future for businesses

- To speak at events and seminars.
- Develop an effective PR campaign.
- To organise a series of awareness raising events.
- To provide a beneficial consultancy service on visitor payback.
- To advertise the success of completed projects.
- To deliver the Green Audit Kit and other similar accreditation schemes.
- Include a description of initiative in appropriate publications.

3. Maintain an effective non-political forum, which brings together business conservation and amenity organisations to foster understanding

- Maintain a wide spectrum of supporters.
- Develop a business plan that encourages all partners to work together.
- Keep board membership under review.
- Hold regular board meetings to further the work of the Partnership.

4. Secure improvements to the Lake District environment

- Maintain a portfolio of projects that will enhance the Lake District.
- Match fundraisers to projects.
- Monitor projects to completion.

<<http://www.lakespartnership.co.uk/aims.html>>

3.2.2 Management of the Scheme

The partnership initially employed one full time member of staff but as the scheme progressed a further post has been created

'The profile of the partnership is getting higher and higher, we've certainly seen an increase over the last two years and you have to keep the momentum going. That's why its great having two members of staff, because what used to happen was, if I was away on holiday, the phones weren't answered, emails weren't responded to, there

was no one at meetings, so the partnership simmered for a bit, but now there's two of us it keeps the momentum going.'

However, lack of staff time is still felt to be the main constraint on the project being more successful.

'If I marketed the scheme really successfully to all the tourism businesses in Cumbria and 50% of them applied, I wouldn't be able to keep up with them, because there's only two of us in the office. It has got to be sustainable, its no good biting off more than you can chew. Seventy percent or more of my time is spent with administering the scheme and it shouldn't be that way round. It would be far more beneficial if that 70% was freed up to do other things.'

The partnership has a board of directors who offer their support on a voluntary basis. This enables the scheme to reach a broad range of organisations and businesses.

Members of the board include: The Regional Director of the National Trust; Managing Director of English Lakes Hotels Ltd; Chief Executive of the Cumbria Tourist Board; The Lake District National Park Authority; Mountain Goat Tours and Holidays and Farmer and Tourism Operators. However, the partnership itself is very much an independent body with funding from all different organisations, therefore they do not have the constraints other schemes may have.

'As an organisation we sit completely independently. When tensions were high with foot and mouth we maintained our independence and didn't get dragged in to political debate..... We don't beat the drum for the National Park Authority, and are not a fund raising mechanism for the National Trust. We support a diverse range of groups with their conservation projects and that's why the tourist industry is so interested in us.'

The regional tourist board is also very supportive of the scheme, and has been since the partnership was formed. This relationship has been critical to the success of the partnership.

'The tourist board are very much behind the scheme, without it my job would be a nightmare. Cumbria Tourist Board have benefited hugely from being actively involved in the partnership because they are seen as the region that has a sustainable tourist link, and its becoming higher and higher on the agenda.'

3.2.3 Cost of Administration

Administration of the scheme costs £50,000 per annum. This includes wages for two full time members of staff, cost of collection boxes, promotional information, telephone bills, travelling expenses etc.

These administration costs are covered by core funding, and a 15% management fee is creamed off all visitor donations; the remaining 85% is directed, into conservation projects. Some hotels want to make sure that all of the visitors' contributions go to project work, so they themselves pay the 15% fee.

All businesses involved in the projects pay a membership fee. The fee is structured depending on the size of their organisation; i.e. a small B&B will only pay £21 whereas a large hotel will pay £100. The idea of membership fees actually came from the businesses themselves.

The Partnership also receives a lot of help in-kind, for example; the office space is provided rent-free by Heart of the Lakes and Cottage Life, accountancy work is done free of charge by a local accountancy firm. Local solicitors provide legal services. The paint for the office was donated, as was the office furniture.

3.2.4 Marketing the Partnership

Approximately 20% of staff time is spent promoting and marketing the scheme.

The partnership holds a lot of presentations at Marketing Consortium Groups, Cumbria Tourist Board, Hotel & Caterers Association events to promote the scheme.

'The best marketing comes from within the trade itself 'word of mouth'. The scheme has a very high profile with businesses in the Lakes and, to a large extent, promotes itselfThe key to the success in the Lakes is that the brand is worth something; businesses want to be associated with it.'

A steady trickle of new businesses sign up to the scheme every year. The organisers feel that they do not need to promote the scheme more aggressively as their current staff constraints mean they would be unable to cope with a sudden increase in members. There are currently around 100 businesses involved with the scheme.

3.2.5 Visitor Payback Methods Employed

The partnership uses a variety of visitor payback methods to raise funds, including:

- Opt-in and opt-out
- Donation boxes
- Percentage of sales
- Proceeds from events

3.2.5.1 Opt-in and opt-out

A large percentage of all funds raised partnership comes via four large businesses operating voluntary levy schemes. These levies operate in two forms; 'opt-in', where visitors are invited to add a small amount to their bill, or 'opt-out', where a small sum is automatically added to the visitors bill and they are asked to indicate if they do not wish to pay it.

Heart of the Lakes and Cottage Life raise approximately £8,000 annually by operating an 'opt-out' levy, which encourages visitors to contribute £1, at the point of booking their holiday. English Lakes Hotels Limited, have raised over £10,800 using 'opt-out' since joining the partnership in 1995, and Langdale Leisure Timeshare have an 'opt-in' of £10, in their management fee, to support their footpath repair worker 'our man at the top' which generates about £13,000 a year.

Opt-in involves more administration from the organisations point of view because they have to physically ask each person if they would like to contribute a £1.

Fallbarrow & Limefitt caravan park also operate a opt-in scheme and they do it really well. Last year they raised £12,000; this year £7,000 and they match pound for pound.

Normally businesses operating opt-in and opt-out are large businesses, there is no exception, a small B&B in Keswick which has only got five rooms.

'Traditionally we ask for a £1 supplement per stay, but this B&B felt that they would hardly raise anything with only five rooms so they opted to do it £1 per head, this year they've raised £700.'

3.2.5.2 Donation Boxes

Donation boxes with the membership have only been in operation a year. These were introduced mainly to open the scheme up to smaller businesses who, due to price sensitivity, felt opt-in/out was not suitable for them.

'A lot of the businesses here in Cumbria are less than 50 beds so they're classed as small operators. Marketing budgets are tight so even though it's only £21 to join and for that you get that little bit more recognition. They often feel they haven't got the time to dedicate to it; you have to win them over, and show that it really is a hassle free system; once they become a member, they are provided with leaflets and collection boxes, all they have to do is promote the scheme.'

3.2.5.3 Percentage of Sales

Percentage of sales has been successfully implemented at Booths' supermarkets, a regional supermarket chain. They raised £2000 last year by donating a percentage of every reusable carrier bag they sold. This year the bag carries the image of a Red Squirrel and all funds raised will go towards Red Squirrel conservation.

3.2.5.4 Special Events

Proceeds from the Lakes annual event 'Residents Open Week' which is organised by the county council has generated funds for the last three years.

'The event is organised as a way for the tourism businesses to promote what they've got on offer to the residents and offers an opportunity for the residents to experience what the tourism industry has to offer.'

Each resident is given a passport of vouchers, which entitles them to special offers at various establishments during one week in April. When the residents collect their

passport at the tourist information centre they are invited to make a voluntary contribution to conservation.

'This year was difficult because of foot and mouth, but the scheme still raised £1,800 in a week, the year before it was £2,500 and the year before that £1,600 and each year there's more promotion going into it.'

3.2.6 Funding

Collection of Funds Raised

Businesses involved in the scheme collect donations and send a cheque directly to the partnership.

'It would be too hard to go round and empty all the collection boxes so there's a large element of trust. Most boxes are emptied twice a year, two members of staff should be present when the box is emptied.'

The larger businesses are promoted on a quarterly basis and asked to forward the raised funds, rather than waiting 12 months, to keep the project alive.

Annual Funds Raised

The partnership has been going from strength to strength with membership numbers and donations increasing each year. In 1999 £42,000 was raised; in 2000 £73,000. This year due to foot and mouth and the petrol crisis, it is unlikely that they will exceed the £73,000 raised last year, but they are optimistic that they will beat the 1999 figure of £42,000.

Allocating funds

Ultimately it is the individual hotel or business that decides how the funds it raises will be spent. There is a lot of discussion by the project officer with the business about the kind of project they would like. This is the area where most of the partnership's administration time is spent. The first stage is to get a feel for the type of market that the businesses attract; is it primarily walkers or leisure break guests? Then they find out what the staff is already involved with and what the management are keen on.

'If you get something they are keen on it's easier to gain the support of the staff as well as the visitor.'

All the conservation organisations that operate within that business's area are then contacted to find out what projects are available for funding. The business is then presented with all the options, the different types of projects, the costs and the time scales involved.

'The personal touch is essential or else the project just loses momentum. It's also essential that all the hotel staff know what the scheme is about, as they are the ones who have to promote it. The staff have to be involved, enthusiastic and committed to the project or it won't attract money.'

3.2.7 Future Plans

The Partnership currently does not do any merchandising, but they would like to try it because it 'helps spread the word'.

3.2.8 Achievements

The partnership is recognised within the UK as a centre for excellence and is emulated throughout the UK and beyond. The partnership has developed a professional, efficient image that has attracted more than 100 tourism businesses.

'The profile of the scheme is getting to the point where businesses feel it's something they need to be part of.'

Funds raised from the partnerships visitor payback schemes have increased each year; in 1999, £42,000 was raised; in 2000, £73,000. These funds have enabled a wide variety of conservation projects to be implemented throughout the Lake District.

The partnership has won a number of awards in recognition of its work these include:

- Best Practice - Tourism Strategy awarded by UK Government - Tourism, Culture and Media
- Tourism & Environmental Award (Silver) – was awarded by the English Tourist Board for 'Our Man at the Top' sponsored Heart of the Lakes & Cottage Life.

- Tourism for Tomorrow Award, awarded by British Airways

3.2.9 Lessons Learnt

- Success is not measured in pounds raised
- Establishing a visitor payback scheme requires significant investment
- Scheme needs to be hassle free for business and visitors
- Start small and build slowly
- Build a successful dialogue with industry
- The scheme must be professional
- Effective information and communication of the scheme is required.

‘If a business wants to promote what they are doing for sustainable tourist within their region, then visitor payback is an excellent scheme to be involved in. It is primarily about bringing people together, but from a financial point of view, there has to be question marks raised.’

‘There has been no negative feedback; 100% positive. Those businesses who really make it work are the ones who put in the personal energy themselves. They talk about the scheme with their guests at every opportunity..... setting up the scheme is completely hassle free, but there has to be enthusiasm and commitment from the business to make it work’

‘The Lakes Partnership was set up at the same time as The Peak Environment Fund. The main difference was that the Peak Environment Fund tapped into European funding at the time, so they opened with office, computers, everything. They also had eight members of staff that they had inherited from another project. The lakes started by approaching the businesses to get money, that has continued and they have expanded, but in the Peaks when the funding dried up they were so tied up with European funding, they didn’t have the time to go out and approach the businesses to get them contribute and make it more sustainable.’

‘The embryonic years have to be spent wooing the industry. Visitor payback starts slowly it’s not something that gets going overnight. We started in 1993 but we didn’t have a membership scheme till 1998. It’s only since 1999 that things have really taken off.’

3.3 Kite Country – Mid Wales

Kite Country is an environmentally inspired tourism project marketed and co-ordinated by 'The Festival of the Countryside'. Kite Country was established in 1994, to encourage visitors to come to Mid Wales and discover more about the Red Kite and other wildlife. The project implements a number of initiatives which involve local communities to ensure that they receive the maximum social and economic benefits associated with increased numbers of visitors. These include; promotion of farm based accommodation in the Kite Country area, provision of grants for farmers to provide nature trails for visitors and encouragement of local hoteliers and B&B establishments to provide a "Kite Country" breakfast with all food being sourced locally in Wales.

3.3.1 Aims and Objectives

The Festival of the Countryside is supported by the European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund and the National Assembly for Wales Rural Development Fund. It is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Wales, employing a team of four staff. The Kite Country project is undertaken in partnership with Severn Trent Water plc; Welsh Water; RSPB; Powys, Ceredigion and Camarthenshire Country Councils; the Welsh Kite Trust; Forest Enterprise; Mid Wales Tourism and the Countryside Council for Wales.

Red kites had previously been encouraged onto land at Girgrin Farm, Rhayader and the Tregaron Kite Centre and Museum, through regular daily feeding. Thus Kite Country set about establishing these and six other outlets as Kite Country Centres and Information Points. This was Phase 1 of the Kite Country project, which was funded for three years under the Welsh Office's Strategic Development Scheme. The total budget for phase 1 was £1.4million, which enabled the six Kite Country Centres and Information Points to be established.

In August 1999, funding was secured through the Welsh Office Rural Development Funds and EU EAGGF Structure Fund to progress with Phase II of the Kite Country Project, which involves marketing the Kite Country brand and implementing new

initiatives to provide economic benefits to organisations, local businesses, local communities, landowners, individuals and farmers. The total budget for this phase of the project was £235,000. The cost of the visitor payback element of the scheme is extracted from this budget.

3.3.2 Management of the Scheme

Through their Centres and Information Points, Kite Country sells two items, the Red Kite booklet and video, which help to raise funds for the Red Kite Trust. The video, produced for the Kite Country project and entitled 'Kite Country' is presented by Iolo Williams (BBC's The Birdman), with an introduction by David Bellamy. The video includes footage of Red Kites on the nest, with chicks in flight and feeding. It also features other birds and wildlife found in Kite Country, and the area's spectacular scenery. The Video cost £8.99 from which £1 is donated to the Welsh Kite Trust.

The booklet is bilingual and features photographs of the Red Kite and other wildlife. It tells the story of the Red Kite's fight back from the brink of extinction and gives details of Kite Country's six centres and information points. Booklets cost £1, the sale of each booklet generates a 50p donation for the conservation work of the Welsh Red Kite Trust, 25p goes to the seller and the remaining 25p covers the cost of printing.

Both items are available at Kite Country Information Centres and also at some Tourist Information Centres throughout the Mid Wales. Items can also be ordered via Kite Country's web site: <http://www.kitecountry.co.uk>.

Monies raised from sale of merchandise at visitor centres is collected by the project staff. The donation element is then extracted for distribution to the Welsh Kite Trust. It is difficult to quantify how much staff time is spent directly on the visitor payback element of the Kite Country Project, as it is a very small part of the Kite Country project.

3.3.3 Project Rationale

The Kite Country project was not set up to help conserve the Kite, but rather as a marketing project. By setting up centres where visitors are more or less guaranteed to see Red Kites they are able to attract visitors throughout Mid Wales. The project is not therefore directly involved in Red Kite conservation. Having established these centres, the simple idea of selling certain items and then donating a percentage of the profits to the Red Kite Trust followed. This has the dual benefit of allowing visitors to buy items in the knowledge that they are making a donation to preserve the birds they have come to see (feel good factor) and providing an effective hassle free way of raising funds to support the work of the Red Kite Trust.

Kite country is about adding value to tourism services in Wales such as farm accommodation – *‘Kites conservation doesn’t really come into it as such’*,

3.3.4 Achievements

Visitor numbers have increased by 250,000 per annum since the project's conception, with visitors coming from all over the UK to watch and observe kites.

At the end of December 2001 the Kite Country Project had raised £3,000 for the Welsh Kite Trust through the sale of its booklets and videos.

3.3.5 Lessons learnt

- Merchandising is straight forward and hassle free
- Visitors are prepared to donate to conservation causes .
- Good quality products are vital

3.4 Friends of the Ionian - Greece

Friends of the Ionian (FoI) is a voluntary, non-profit organisation founded in the UK but operating in Greece which seeks to promote and protect the culture and environment of the region by increasing visitors' understanding and appreciation of the Ionian Islands. It is funded and assisted by a private membership, through sales of its publications and by 20 UK tour operators; whose support varies from simply promoting FoI's work in their brochures and distributing leaflets, to sponsorship of interpretive maps, trails and wildlife walks, giving regular donations, and supporting FoI in kind by providing flights and accommodation.

3.4.1 Aims and Objectives

FoI was set up as part of the European Year of Tourism in 1990 with the aim of redirecting tourism development in Greece's Ionian Islands along less destructive lines. In 1996 they took part in the European Visitor Payback Project, and launched a scheme which aimed to (1) attract visitor donations to fund conservation causes, and (2) make potential donors more sensitive to conservation issues on the island.

They selected three causes, each of which was specific, visible, and involved local people. These were:

- Conversion of a former Venetian mansion in Gaios, Paxos into a folk museum, by the Paxos Arts Society.
- Restoration of a historic fort in Assos, Kefalonia, organised through the village mayor.
- Conservation of a lagoon next to the airport in Corfu, by the Society for the Protection of Halikiopoulou Lagoon.

Initially, local communities needed some persuading about the validity of visitor payback; many were concerned that visitors were already paying enough for their holidays and already helping the area by spending money locally.

The scheme was warmly received by tour operators who were prepared to promote the concept to visitors and distribute information.

3.4.2 Management of the Scheme

Two approaches were piloted; self guided walks and guided walks.

Self-guided walks involved preparing interpretation leaflets for Gaios and Assos, which described, in detail, a set route which guided people past the chosen conservation causes. The leaflets also explained the principle and purpose of the scheme. A donation envelope was folded into each interpretation leaflet, on the back of which was a short questionnaire to enable information to be collected about the donors. A wooden collection box was erected at a strategic point on each route for the donation envelopes to be posted; alternatively the envelopes could be mailed to FoI or handed to a tour representative.

The walks leaflets could be obtained from tour operators' offices and a number of village outlets. The leaflets were sold in Gaios but, at the request of the Mayor, were free in Assos.

The initial results were slightly disappointing; only 445 leaflets were distributed in total. The cover price in Gaios was felt to be a disincentive. Despite their support of the scheme, tour operators did not actively promote the leaflets. As a result, most were obtained from local shops and the museum. Allowing for wastage it was estimated the around 300 were used by visitors.

Only 48 envelopes were returned, the majority of which were placed in the donation boxes, only two were mailed back. The average donation per envelope was £2.90. Most gave a 1000 drachma note (£2.11), though 20% gave significantly higher sums, especially when using their home currency. One single donation of £62.20 was received (this sum was excluded from the average calculation).

Eighty five percent of donations came from individuals who had walked the trail. Of these, half felt that the trail made them more aware of the local conservation needs and thus encouraged them to donate. Only 56% stated they would have contributed to a donation box without the trail. 78% were supportive of individual donations to support local conservation causes. 27% were in favour of voluntary charges on holiday bills, and 13% were even prepared to accept compulsory charges.

Guided walks on Corfu and Paxos were organised in September 1996. At the end of each walk participants were given a brief talk about the local conservation causes and invited to make a donation using envelopes, which could either be handed back to the tour guide or tour operator. The proportion of people giving (27%) and the average amount donated (£3.30) were higher than for the self-guided walks. Almost all the visitors (83%) said the walk had made a difference to their donation, making them want to give something back to the environment. Only 10% said they would have given money to a collection box on its own.

Today FoI continues to raise money via its guided walks and collection boxes, but has developed a number of new innovative ideas, which it promotes predominately from it's own web site www.foi.org.uk.

The FoI site provides visitors with an extensive range of information, some of which can be accessed free of charge and some, which is available for a small fee. Free information includes a 'learn to speak' Greek page, which teaches commonly used phrases, local cultural and wildlife information and a selection of downloadable files including topics such as Sampling Ionian Wines; Keeping Cool the Greek Way and Trail Blazers. In addition the site offers a membership service, which enables individuals to join online and become a 'Friend of the Ionian'.

FoI asks for a minimum £3.50 donation for a Digital Island Information Pack for each island. This helps to fund the upkeep of the site, as well as helping to develop new resources for the Ionian Islands. To access the information, you simply enter your details and Friends of the Ionian will automatically email you an access code allowing you three days to download all the information you need at your convenience. You can either download the publications individually or as a package.

3.4.3 Friends of the Ionian membership

FoI membership costs £12. As a member, in addition to the FoI Digital Information Pack for your island, you will also receive by post a smart carry case to keep it all together, a full-colour A2 Island map and a set of eight FoI wildlife booklets (Ionian Birds, Ionian Butterflies and Moths, Ionian Insects, Ionian Reptiles, Ionian Flowers, Ionian Trees and Shrubs, Mediterranean Marine Life). In addition member also receive a discount card called the 'Omega card':

'The card is a simple way in which the visitors' loyalty to the islands is rewarded by local taverns, restaurants, ouzeria and cafenions'. The Omega Card is about more than just discounts it shows islanders that the visitor cares about the culture and environment of the islands, and because the membership fee goes towards promoting the region, islanders are keen to reward the holder with a range of discounts.'

Together with Omega card discounts the member also receives a Tavern Review Guide, which helps them to find the best taverns across the island.

Omega card benefits include:-

- Discounts of between 10 and 15% at the top taverns across the islands.
- FoI members are provided with the most up to date reviews of the islands top taverns, including local specialities and wines, together with details of how to find them.
- Ensuring that members receive the best possible service from restaurants, taverns and other local services.

- Identifying the visitor, as one who cares about the island and its people.
- Helping the member contribute to raising the standard of tourism on the Ionian Islands (the feel good factor).

As well as online publications and information FoI sells a range of merchandise including T-shirts, shopping bags, wildlife booklets, baseball caps and videos. As FoI is a non-profit making organisation all profits made from these sales goes back to supporting and promoting their work

3.4.4 Future plans

FoI plan to introduce a series of 'imaginative wildlife walks' and 'cultural excursions' for the year 2002 on the islands of Zakynthos and Kefalonia.

'They will be fun, informative and, above all, laid-back in their approach.....No cattle-truck coach excursions, no suspect Greek nights, just the quiet confidence of knowing that you are having a truly professional, authentic experience.'

The programme will be an extension of FoI's regular publications giving visitors a first hand taste of the environment and culture of the region. Each walk will be led by a British or local expert on the subject.

The programme will be based around resorts, leading small groups on foot where possible. In a similar way to the 'Ghost walks' in the city of York, each excursion will have its own theme and last for between two and four hours. FoI hopes to arrange longer one day walks (either by foot or cycle) on a weekly basis. Walks will cost between £4 and £7 depending on the theme. Transport details of how and where to meet will be distributed by flyers and via the Internet.

Once a week FoI will also arrange a free taster walk for those interested. Discounts for those booking several walks or as a group will also be available. Children up to the age of 15 will go free. Each walk will be limited to a maximum of 20 people and will places will be a first come first serve basis. FoI members, however, will be allowed to book in advance. FoI also plans to arrange a whole month of special walks

and excursions on Zakynthos and Kefalonia in May 2002 and is keen to assess the amount of interest from UK visitors.

'Each week there will be a series of local walks and excursions further a field that will allow the visitor to embalm his/herself in the essence of the real Greece.'

The cost of one weeks' walks in May is expected to be in the region of £43.00 per person. The cost for a fortnight is expected to be around £62.00 per person.

This price will include:

- Access to five walks/excursions per week or 10 over a fortnight each led by either a UK wildlife guide or local expert.
- A Silver or Gold Island Information Pack
- A copy of the video, Walk on the Wildside if they're joining for a fortnight.
- Access to the Speak Greek Interactive Web site.
- Access to Members Only feedback site giving the participant access to all the feedback comments FoI members have given about their favourite beaches and taverns.

FoI will also be working with selected UK tour operators and local businesses to ensure participants are able to get the best possible travel deal to the islands. The programme will be for a maximum of 20 people and so places will be limited. There will be less than 100 places for each island throughout May.

3.4.5 Achievements

FoI services over 7,000 written inquiries from couples and families about Greece annually.

The scheme has produced 30 self-guided trails communicating history and culture; eight wildlife booklets for the Ionian on everything from marine life to insects and

produced two documentary videos, one of which was nominated for a Royal Television Society Award.

FoI continues to raise funds for local Greek causes: In 1996, FoI raised funds for the Folk Museum in Gaios, Paxos, and the Venetian fort in Assos, Kefalonia.

FoI's work has received two international commendations for the development of sustainable tourism and received project funds from two EU projects for developing sustainable tourism.

FoI works with 20 UK tour operators to the Ionian to publicise the culture and heritage of the region.

3.4.6 Lessons learnt

- Do not evaluate visitor payback in financial terms
- Recognise the importance of bringing together participation from all vested interests
- When setting up any new scheme it is important to respect the response of local cultures, allowing for discussions and administrative procedures.
- People are more likely to give if the request is linked with interpretation of conservation issues.
- A personal appeal was found to be the most effective interpretation tool.
- Tour operators need quick and simple ways of getting involved, which offer something in return.

4 FOCUS GROUPS: perceptions of visitor payback

This section reports on two focus groups held to evaluate the potential of visitor payback in Wales. The first focus group comprised organisational representatives from the tourist, environmental and recreational industry. The second focus group involved members of the public.

4.1 Focus Group 1: Strategic decision makers

A focus group involving organisations at a strategic level was held at the IRS on Friday 7th December 2001. The following organisations were targeted for the session due to their strategic focus with regard to conservation, tourism and recreation matters: Snowdonia National Park, Ramblers Association, Wales Wildlife Link, Mid Wales Tourism, Welsh Association of Visitor Attractions, Welsh Association of Tourism Officers, Wales Tourist Board, Festival of the Countryside.

Following a general discussion led by a facilitator on visitor payback, the session progressed into a series of presentations of the various techniques that could be part of a visitor payback scheme with critical comments.

4.1.1 What is visitor payback for?

The focus group commenced with a critical discussion of visitor payback. There was clear concern expressed at the vagueness and ambiguity of the term. This could lead to confusion.

‘What we need is a clear unambiguous concept that can be applied to Wales’.

The group recognised the critical importance of visitor payback having a clear funding remit.

‘What payback must ensure is that it generates additionality. It must not be seen as a substitute for statutory functions of organisations which could have implications on future funding’.

In part, this could be addressed by having a clear focus on what should be funded. Here there was strong support expressed for sustaining elements of the rural environment and the community. The case of the project officer on Hevellyn (Our man at the top) was cited as a good example, where visitors could see the tangible results from their donations (particularly given the significance of repeat visitors).

It was also recognised that visitor payback was not/nor should be, about raising money for projects. It was more about a feel-good factor for visitors, allowing a more direct connection between the places they visit and the protection of the habitat/species or environment more generally. It also had important benefits from bringing organisations and agencies together in collaborative partnerships.

There was significant discussion about the scale of any project. It was felt that a project needed to be at a local scale where it could be identified on the ground, where the visitor would have a clear connection with their voluntary contribution and the results at a local scale.

‘It seems clear to me that people would more readily support say a scheme of footpaths around Llyn Padarn than footpaths in the National Park’.

However the group did recognise that it was important to ask visitors themselves.

Significantly, the group expressed considerable hostility towards the term visitor payback. A more favoured term was *‘Visitor Investment’*, where the negative connotation of payback was replaced with a more positive image of visitor investment.

‘We have to be careful about the vocabulary we use. Payback implies something negative. This could backfire with the visitor; they need to feel positive in what they do’.

These sentiments illustrate the sensitivity of the vocabulary used by professionals. Within this discourse there was also recognition of the potential of an all-Wales

managed scheme rather than a plethora of small schemes without clear funding or strategic direction.

4.1.2 Concerns of the Private Sector

The concept of visitor payback generated much concern amongst the respondents due to its perceived 'tax' status. It was felt that small tourist businesses, in particular, were concerned that this might discourage visitors and have negative impacts on trade. It was recognised that businesses already paid high business rates and this could act as a major disincentive to participate in such schemes. It was also believed that visitors may not be prepared to pay; as tax payers they might resent the idea of making further contributions even if they were voluntary.

If any payback scheme is to succeed, the involvement and support of the private sector was deemed essential. The concept of partnership with voluntary organisations was promulgated as a useful model to implement schemes. However, concern was raised about the high administrative burden in managing a scheme, together with the need to ensure that the money is fed into effective projects on the ground.

It was recognised that the group could not speak on behalf of the visitor and, to this end, they recommended that a further focus group be held with visitors to elicit their views and critical commentary.

'It is vital when you want to develop a toolkit for visitor payback, that you involve the public'.

4.1.3 Types of scheme

Whilst each scheme could have been evaluated separately, the group were more concerned about the risk of a plethora of visitor payback methods employed in a given area. Cumulative impact could cause saturation and visitor disaffection in high profile areas.

'So if a visitor has used an opt out payment for a cottage; he then goes to the area and is bombarded with requests to support this and that. Where does it all end?'

Nevertheless, after a review of each scheme led by the facilitator, merchandising was seen as the most effective and popular technique in the group because of the perceived 'feel good' factor for the customer. It also served a dual purpose in terms of a product being bought. Similarly, membership was seen as a particularly rewarding way to promote the feel good factor. However, there were real concerns expressed over the way poor merchandising could result in over commercialisation of the countryside with negative visitor reactions.

Opt in/Opt out strategies were also seen in negative terms due to their perceived 'tax' status which were thought not to be popular with visitors. Similarly, donations were seen as problematic due to issues of collection and administration.

4.1.4 Is visitor payback worthwhile?

Towards the end of the focus group there was emerging dissatisfaction with visitor payback in terms of the results achieved versus the effort required.

'As this session has gone on I have become increasingly disillusioned with what visitor payback delivers. The cost and resources required are likely to be huge and is it all worth it?'

There was a very real concern that the potential was more than outweighed by the considerable disadvantages inherent within charitable type schemes. In many ways this sounds a note of caution for those bodies that might view visitor payback as some kind of panacea for funding difficulties or delivering conservation goods.

4.2 Focus Group 2 : Perceptions of visitors

On the 19th January 2002, eight visitors were randomly selected from the streets of Betwys Y Coed to participate in a one-hour focus group on visitor payback. The group composition was diverse in terms of age, visitor motivations and preferences.

The focus group was structured around specific examples of visitor payback methods obtained from the case study material. For each method, comments were elicited on

willingness to pay, together with a critical evaluation of the example and technique. Finally, the discussion was widened to consider the general factors influencing people's willingness to pay.

The examples used were:-

Donations – Gift to Nature (Isle of Wight)

Opt in/Opt Out - Cottage Life and Heart of the Lakes holidays

Merchandising – Kite Country

Membership- Friends of Ionia

Participation- National Trust Working holiday

4.2.1 Overall perceptions of visitor payback

In terms of public perception of visitor payback it was clear that the 'feel good' factor was an all-important factor.

'Regardless of the method of collection the most important thing has to be the feel good factor. The fact that you are giving money to charity out of choice is the critical element here'.

In addition, there was a clear consensus that whatever technique was used it needed to be hassle free and easy for participation. Indeed, rather than significant critical commentary on the techniques themselves, there seemed more general concern about the credibility and legitimacy of the organisation(s) involved in the exercise, particularly in terms of the administrative burden and the overall sustainability of the project involved. To this end, it did not matter that projects were of a large scale provided that they were worthy in the eyes of the visitor. For example:

'I am happy to give towards the maintenance of footpaths; I do not need to know which footpath it was or have money wasted giving me updates on what has happened. I feel good when I donate.'

There was a clear rejection of overt or even covert commercialisation with clear preferences expressed for donations to support something that the visitor had actually connected with during the course of a visit. Finally the importance of marketing was

recognised in providing effective and clear information about a project, especially its importance for conservation.

4.2.2 Donations

This was seen as a very positive way to support conservation projects.

'I somehow like the anonymity and serendipity afforded by the envelope approach'.

The concerns were more to do with the status of the organisation involved in the project rather than the principle of donations.

'We need to know who the organisation is and that it can be trusted....We need to be sure about the history and future of the organisation and project'.

The issue of the project's sustainability, as a prime factor, was particularly interesting. The feel good factor was also of prime concern. However, there were concerns expressed. In this respect there was clear concern voiced about how much money goes to salaries and administration versus the direct benefit to the project.

With respect to the Gift for Nature project, there was some concern about the organisation as well as the emphasis on the lizard. Given the 'non sexy' association with the creature it was felt important to have better information about the need for conservation. It was felt that innovative approaches with donation boxes could provide the emotional link that could effect a donation. For example, red squirrel boxes could have a strong appeal. Comments also talked about the need for subtle techniques to get money using both donations and the 'personal touch; eg hotel staff giving further information about the project. This project complementarity was seen as essential to a successful scheme.

The hassle free nature of the method and the variety of approaches (envelope, donation box etc) made this a popular technique. However, the element of chance was commented upon concerning an individual's propensity to pay conditional on the frame of mind at the time, as well as the availability of loose change.

4.2.3 Opt out / Opt in

This technique, whether opt out or opt in, attracted significant support. The opt out approach did appear more popular, albeit with slight resentment of peoples' hands being forced through the donation, which could lead to a diminishment of the feel good factor. This was important, as most respondents wanted to feel in control. However, this had to be set against the ease of approach and the potential to raise significant monies. Detailed questioning of the group revealed that they were willing to contribute, without any reservation, 5% of a holiday cost. However, this was dependent upon it being a cottage holiday involving considerable up-front expense. This principle was not endorsed for a budget camping holiday/weekend where it was thought that a donation box would be more acceptable.

The group were critical of any information that separated the payback scheme details from the booking form. This was felt to be 'more hassle'.

4.2.4 Merchandising

This technique attracted the most hostile responses. With respect to the products marketed by Kite Country, the response condemned the perceived tackiness and over commercialisation of nature. The suspicion that this was really a business enterprise dressed up with charitable overtures was evident in most responses. The discussion was particularly instrumental in revealing a clear predilection towards financial donations to conserve species or resources.

'It is one thing to go somewhere and see the species, it is quite another to wear the tee shirt. Is it to sell the tee shirt or raise money for the Kite'.

Further questioning revealed a willingness to purchase factual booklets providing that they were high quality and contained good information. However, they did not want conservation to be trivialised in the way the items were marketed.

The criticism of Kite Country merchandising was surprising and largely unexpected. However, given its universal criticism it sends a clear message to policy makers. Specific concerns related to the section of the leaflet detailing the costs of products which was only in English. The rest of the leaflet was bilingual. In addition, the tee

shirt did not support the Kite Trust and the perception of trivialisation of the Kite concept; all pose significant food for thought and further assessment.

4.2.5 Membership

The example of the Friends of the Ionian also attracted significant hostility. Again this was due to a perception that this was being marketed as a discount card rather than as something to generate a feel good factor. This was compounded by the rather negative attitude expressed by some of the group towards loyalty cards in the UK. The conservation message was seen as secondary to the primary importance of a discount. In many ways this contradicted the emerging consensus of what visitor payback was all about in the minds of the group. The group wanted an explicit focus on conservation and specific projects to be stated and explained.

Interestingly, there was also reluctance amongst the group to be singled out as tourists in a foreign country; issues of security and discrimination were real concerns. Issues of credibility and status of the organisation were seen as important factors, particularly, given the web-based nature of FOI.

4.2.6 Volunteering

Significantly, over half of the visitors had been on conservation working holidays or had volunteered for conservation organisations. Other participants also stated that they would value this type of experience. However, this method attracted less critical discussion than previous techniques and seemed to revolve around the 'fun' and 'skill' element rather the more esoteric attributes from financial donations.

Particular issues related to the time and place of the activity with clear preferences expressed for variable timetables and activities. In addition, any organisation must be well known and have an established track record in safety and training.

4.2.7 Summary of visitor perception

It can be concluded that the pre-occupation with particular techniques is seen as misguided given the results of this focus group. There is a clear need to use complementary techniques that make it easy for the visitor to donate towards projects. Of prime importance is the need to facilitate a feel good factor and allow the visitor to have, or perceive himself or herself to have, control over the donation element. This was illustrated graphically when after a discussion about the imposition of a tourist tax respondents felt that something personal would be lost.

‘Although I am not against the principle of direct taxation; after all we are becoming increasingly used to a user pays scenario, we would lose something important that comes from the freedom to give.’

There is also the need to consider the organisation involved in the project and ensure that it is sustainable and effective at translating support to projects on the ground rather than diverting them into administration charges. Effective information is the key to this; in the form of clearly written messages reinforced through staff on the ground. The visitor is increasingly aware of the user pay philosophy and is sensitive to the impacts that they make. This needs to be acknowledged in more innovative approaches to facilitate conservation of these places and peoples.

4.3 Business versus the Visitor: Consensus or Conflict

The two focus groups attracted significant comments about visitor payback. The groups however did vary in their preferences for particular visitor payback techniques (Figure1)¹.

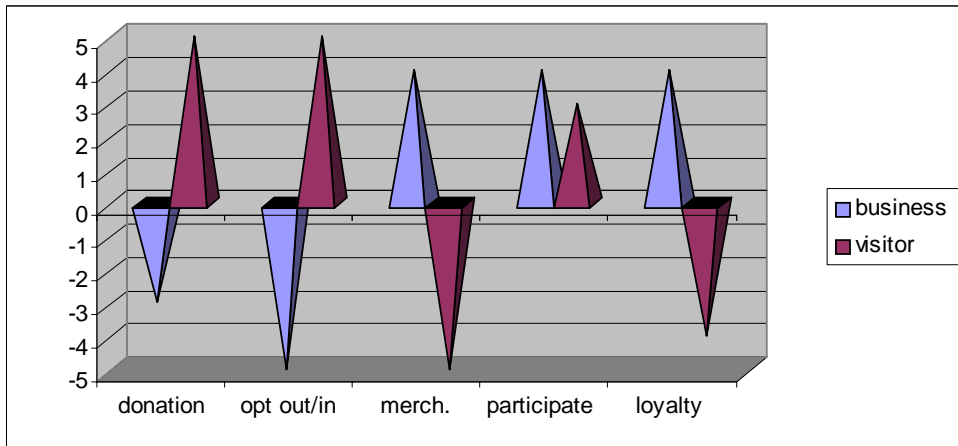


Figure 1 Comparative assessment of visitor payback schemes

Note: The scale +5 - -5 is a subjective scoring system devised from the analysis of the focus group comments. Negative scores indicate dissatisfaction to a maximum of -5 and positive scores indicate satisfaction to a maximum score of 5

These differences are interesting and tend to reinforce points made in the literature review (Section 2). Whilst the visitors are keen to donate (achieving the highest feel good factor), they also prefer the ease and simplicity of the opt out scheme. They are sharply critical of the merchandising and loyalty based schemes. Conversely, the business group favour the merchandising and loyalty/membership schemes at the expense of the donation and opt out/in schemes.

Another significant difference emerging from the two focus groups was the issue of the scale of a project. The businesses felt that a payback scheme should focus on a particular locality at a local level so the visitor could more easily identify with the benefits from their contribution. The visitor focus group seemed less concerned with

¹ The scale 1-5 is a subjective scoring system devised from the analysis of the focus group comments. Negative scores indicate dissatisfaction to a maximum of -5 and positive scores indicate satisfaction to a maximum score of 5.

this provided the cause they were giving to was valid and based on conservation. For example, giving to improve footpaths in Snowdonia was perfectly acceptable and had no perceived disadvantage over giving to a path around Llyn Padarn.

The polarisation of views is problematic for this study and clearly needs further investigation. Two focus groups are not in any way to be seen as representative, but the sharp differences do indicate that any simple ranking procedure of the techniques is likely to be flawed and meaningless. Clearly more needs to be done to marry the perceptions of the public with those of business to their mutual benefit. What is significant, however, and can directly influence policy responses, are the points of agreement that came from both groups.

1. The need for a payback scheme to have a clear identity and focus with good information.
2. That conservation should lie at the heart of any scheme
3. The status and credibility of the organisation is likely to be a critical factor
4. A visitor payback scheme must ensure that the money goes to the project and not get diverted into administration costs
5. It must generate a feel good factor for the public and the business
6. It must be a sustainable project

These comments show that visitor payback schemes need sound and accountable structures if they are to meet with business and visitor approval. In essence this necessitates a professional 'managed' approach. This is explored in the final section.

4.4 Case studies vs focus groups : Consensus or Conflict

This section compares the findings of the focus groups with the case studies. Significantly, there appears to be a one crucial difference between the case study findings and the focus groups centring around the importance of resources for management and administration with the visitor and industry perceptions that

administration costs should be minimised but case study findings highlighting their overall importance. .

For successful schemes like the Invest in the Lakes scheme the presence of two full time project officers (Salaries £50,000 total) and Gift to Nature (1/2 time project officer) was seen as critical to the success of the project, particularly given the huge time commitments spent negotiating between businesses and conservation organisations to ensure that the right project was selected. This ensures that all parties receive maximum benefits, but at a cost. This has to be squared against the overwhelming perception against high administration costs from the focus groups.

Both these organisations had secured most funding from other sources and clearly this is a viable approach. However there is a significant risk that project officers could be spending significant time trying to maintain their own existence rather than focussing on the project. Such is the vagaries and short term nature of project funding at the present time.

Is there a middle ground that can still deliver? The example of Kite Country and Friends of the Ionian shows how merchandising techniques can be integrated within a commercial environment and deliver some benefits with a minimum of administration input. However, this conflicts with the visitor focus group perception of over commercialisation of the countryside.

This is a conundrum and demands more research before a convincing answer can be promulgated. Ultimately, it depends on what goals an organisation/area has for a visitor payback scheme. Whatever, there is a need for a significant investment of time and resources prior to commencing with any scheme. Funding for the scheme is a major issue to consider at the outset.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The literature review, case studies and focus group results are brought together in this section providing a current state of play in perception of visitor payback schemes. The following issues have emerged.

1. The importance/necessity of a “feel good” factor for visitors participating in visitor payback schemes,
2. The need to directly involve the tourist, environmental and visitor organisations in a partnership with active dialogue,
3. The current reluctance of business interests to embrace the visitor payback concept due to its perception as a hidden ‘tax’,
4. Significant differences between the preferences of visitor payback techniques from the visitor (opt in/opt out and donations) and business focus groups (merchandising and membership),
5. The need for clear aims and objectives in a visitor payback project pertaining to conservation and visitor involvement (not income based),
6. The need to present clear, unambiguous information about a conservation visitor payback project to the visitor,
7. The need to have a flexible and complementary approach to the use of visitor payback techniques suiting a chosen technique to the needs of the tourism industry and visitor preferences with a valid project,
8. The need to channel visitor donations into conservation projects and not lose them in administrative costs,
9. The need for administration and professionally managed visitor payback schemes,
10. To develop payback projects that are sustainable in terms of the project and the agency administering the scheme,
11. To have a lead organisation that can command legitimacy and public support.

Indeed, it is remarkable the congruence of the literature review material with the focus groups in terms of the views of the visitor and industry. Visitor payback is not about doing conservation projects *per se*, it is about the involvement of the public and businesses in conservation projects. The process may take longer to complete than conventional methods such as grant aid etc., but the unique selling proposition is that the visitor and sponsoring businesses directly or indirectly participates in the project. These outcomes are difficult to quantify or evaluate however. The success of a given scheme should not be seen one dimensionally in the monies raised or the completion of a certain number of projects. Rather, it is the synthesis of the public and businesses receiving a feel good factor with the promotion and increased awareness of conservation matters. This research has confirmed a significant public appetite to participate in sound and sustainable conservation projects. Nevertheless, this message seemingly, has yet to percolate through to the smaller tourist businesses who still perceive payback to be a risk.

Consequently, there are specific barriers that must be overcome.

1. The low business take up of visitor payback schemes,
2. The lack of research on visitor willingness to pay on visitor payback techniques,
3. The potential over commercialisation of the countryside,
4. Securing funding to accommodate the considerable administrative burden required to manage a scheme,
5. Visitor payback does not generate money and there are administrative issues to overcome.

The barriers present significant hurdles to the development of a visitor payback scheme in Wales and should not be dismissed lightly. The research has shown that substantial work and administration is required to run a scheme successfully. It might be promulgated that the money and time could be better spent investing in grant bids rather than involving people in a time and labour consuming process. Indeed, is there any substantive evidence that the businesses participating receive any benefits? Full answers to these questions goes beyond the remit of this research. However, it can be stated that visitor payback must bring tourism businesses on board. Their fear of

'taxing' visitors is very real. Nevertheless, the visitor does appear willing to pay and, for some medium to larger size businesses, the opt out scheme is likely to be productive. Donations, whilst popular with the visitor, do not appear to raise significant sums of money and can pose administration problems. Nevertheless, innovative examples together with direct marketing and appeals by staff can help overcome these limitations, so for small businesses this response seems entirely logical.

The issue of commercialisation of the countryside is also important to consider. The results do indicate a real concern that poor merchandising could lead to significant problems, particularly with regard to visitor perceptions. However, the results from Kite Country tend to indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the scheme and its relatively modest input. Such ventures do have the added problem of requiring businesses to invest up front carrying significant risk, whereas the opt in/opt out schemes and donations require little risk.

Other benefits to businesses are likely to be more subtle. The public relations aspect should not be underestimated. There is significant competition amongst businesses and the 'environmentally aware' tourist is likely to base decisions on location of holiday, types of businesses visited and accommodation on green credentials. The visitor payback concept may therefore help businesses that want to market and capture the "green ticket".

The biggest problem to overcome are the costs of maintaining and running a scheme. For example, at the top end is the highly successful Lake District scheme which costs £50000 and employs two full time project officers. The Isle of Wight also has a dedicated project officer. Clearly, such costs are likely to generate negative comment, if people perceive their money is being used to support them. It is therefore recommended that funding for such staff is separated from any contributions given by the public. Securing long term funding is also recommended to avoid the Catch 22 of project officers spending time in grant applications for further funding to keep the project alive.

The visitor payback package must be presented, first and foremost as a collaborative participation exercise between conservation and tourism interests and the visitor to secure conservation with a range of benefits that are likely to be long term in nature. Here issues such as increased awareness of conservation and the impact of their activities are powerful bonuses to a scheme. If the financial expectation is relegated in terms of outcomes, the costs of public and business participation and enjoyment can actually seem good value for money.

Specific opportunities are also evident:

1. To develop schemes that are simple yet attractive to industry and the visitor.
2. To increase awareness amongst visitor and businesses of the need for conservation.
3. To investigate the potential of opt out/ opt in schemes (preferred visitor focus group mechanism) as a legitimate strategy for businesses.
4. To use appropriate grant schemes and funding opportunities for the development of visitor payback projects and associated officers.
5. To develop strategic partnerships between Countryside Council for Wales and Wales Tourist Board for future development and advice about visitor payback schemes.

Keeping it simple is an important maxim that applies to visitor payback. Anything that requires much thought, reading or comprehension is likely to be unsuccessful for both the participation of the visitor and tourist concerns. This is where donations and carefully structured opt out schemes seemingly have a comparative advantage (if only the negative perception of industry can be overcome). The research showed a clear visitor predilection for donations and opt out schemes based on their simplicity. The opt out scheme was also seen as the most effective way of collecting money although the take up by businesses was poor. Ironically those businesses that did go for opt out secured significant sums of monies. This all suggests that more effective marketing of the opt out scheme could enhance business involvement. The perceptions of business need to be addressed by more focussed research which support the findings

of this project, Other forms of payback require risk (merchandising) or significant administrative burdens (membership, sponsorship and events).

Visitor payback can bring additionality, not only in terms of projects completed, but also via the increased awareness of conservation between businesses and the visitor. The multiplier effects of this are important and worthy of further research. As mentioned previously the consumer is ever more discriminating in the types of tourism business used whether for accommodation or activities. Tourist concerns can benefit substantially from being associated with environmental initiatives.

6 DESIGNING A VISITOR INVESTMENT SCHEME ²

6.1 Rationale

This research has demonstrated that there are several techniques available as part of a visitor investment scheme. Their success lies ultimately in the way they are implemented and managed rather than in the use of any one dedicated technique. From detailed analyses of the case studies and focus groups, a clear picture has emerged of the process and associated structures that are required for a successful scheme.

The differences highlighted in the focus groups between the various techniques, in terms of their desirability do not allow us, with any conviction, to state that one technique is necessarily better than the next. Therefore, what follows is a recommended plan for a visitor investment scheme (visitor payback). Whilst this might appear prescriptive it provides best value in terms of resources and outputs (Figure 2).

² The term payback elicited strong negative connotations from both focus groups. The idea of recasting the term in a more positive manner is likely to prove more acceptable. The term 'Visitor Investment scheme' proposed in the organisation focus group is promulgated as a meaningful and attractive term that could be used in a Welsh context

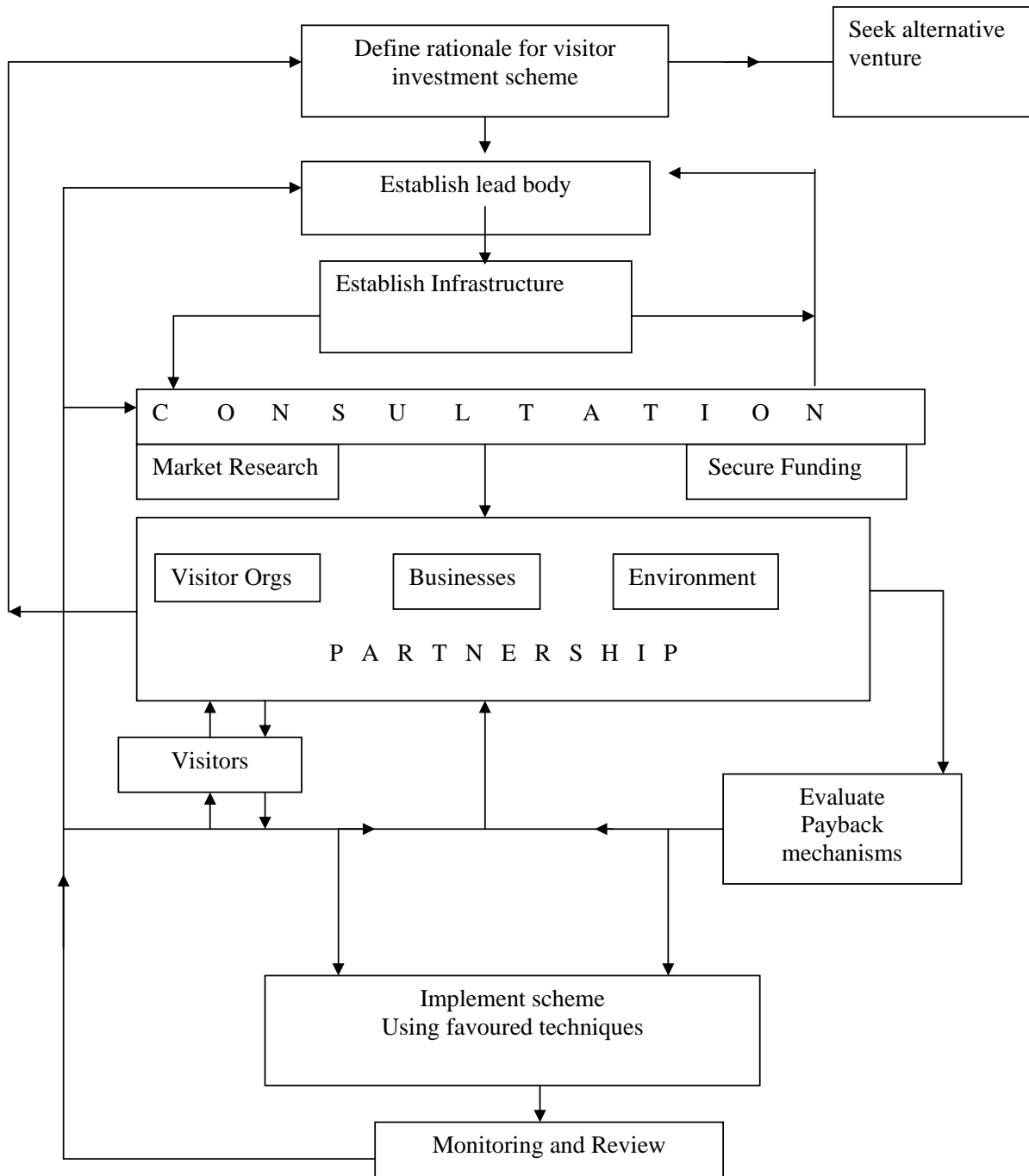


Figure 2 : Recommended Sequence in establishing a visitor investment scheme

6.2 *Is Visitor investment suitable?*

The process illustrated in Figure 2 is applicable at a range of scales; national-regional-local. However, the most important issue that needs to be addressed is whether a scheme should be developed in the first place. This research has demonstrated significant concerns about the utility and wisdom of visitor investment and it is clear that the rationale for visitor investment must be based more on the concepts of partnerships, visitor satisfaction, environmental awareness and business participation than with any motive towards fund raising or carrying out of conservation projects. In this vein it is important for any individuals/agencies to clarify motives and aspirations before commencing a scheme. If non-financial and process-led outcomes are desired then a visitor investment scheme is a viable undertaking. If not, other tools and techniques should be utilised.

6.2.1 Establish Lead body

Once the key decision has been taken it is recommended that there should be a lead organisation co-ordinating the scheme. Given the importance of a managed process it is important to have a dedicated project officer to facilitate this. This brings with it a requirement for core funding. This must be separated from the payback component and it is recommended that a partnership approach be established to help submit bids to European, Lottery or Government based initiatives.

6.3 *Establishing the visitor investment infrastructure.*

A successful scheme depends critically on effective and extensive research beforehand. It is clear from both focus groups that eliciting views of tourist businesses, conservation organisations and visitor organisations is an essential prerequisite. Understanding the needs, motivations and concerns of these groups will help unravel the potential of visitor investment and the most suitable techniques to

employ in a given area³. This consultation process should, ideally, be formalised within a strategic partnership linking business, environment and visitor organisations together. As Figure 2 demonstrates, this partnership underpins the whole process.

6.3.1 Secure funding

Effective market research costs time and money. It is important that any partnership uses funding to contribute towards such research, tapping into grants and other sources of finance. It is also important that conservation organisations have a range of sustainable projects that could qualify for visitor payback; projects with a distinct identity and focus that do not duplicate existing funding packages.

6.3.2 Maintain consultation and dialogue

The consultation and dialogue with industry, business and conservation organisations is ongoing and should not be seen as a discrete stage in the process. This requires investment in terms of time and money. It is critical, therefore, that the partnership can support and sustain the costs of this. The case studies have shown that the administrative and management burden can be significant, but ultimately good management fosters success. Consequently, visitor payback, in the short term, is not going to be self-financing, nor should it be seen as a means of raising money. Rather, the results show that the multiple outcomes from visitor investment are visitor appreciation of their impacts, new conservation projects completed, promotion of the feel-good factor and wider awareness of conservation matters. The participating businesses are also exposed to conservation messages and can benefit from being directly linked to valuable conservation projects.

6.3.3 Market and promote partnership/organisation

The local partnership that administers a potential scheme needs to have both credibility and legitimacy in the minds of the public and the tourist businesses that participate within it. Therefore, it is essential before starting projects that the partnership devotes time and resources to self-promotion and marketing. In part, this

³ Different areas within Wales have different tourist infrastructure. This will critically affect the suitability and acceptability of particular visitor payback techniques.

can be done during the research and consultation phases previously described, and as part of the payback project.

Indeed, marketing principles are critical to both the organisation and the payback techniques used. For example, the use of complementary techniques involving people, media, infrastructure and innovation to promote visitor investment and the organisation.

6.4 Visitor investment Techniques Consultation

As stated, consultation shapes the whole process. However, there is a need to have a more formal consultation phase to evaluate the particular payback methods that can be used for a given area/project. Whilst we can hypothesize from the findings in this research that 'donations' and 'opt out' approaches offer the most potential for payback schemes, it is important to have consultation with visitors and businesses to assess the most suitable techniques to use as part of a specific project. The focus group approach is a particularly useful technique to distil this information. This was perceived to be a key factor in the success of the Lake District Partnership.

6.5 Implementation

Visitor investment works most effectively where an integrated approach has been used in the establishment and development of the project. The Isle of Wight (Gift to Nature) and Lake District Partnership have demonstrated the value of this approach, building on the partnership aspect and linking potential projects with businesses of differing scales. It is essential that the process of consultation is ongoing and projects are tailored to the specific needs of the organisation, environment and visitor. This gives a scheme flexibility to respond to small and large businesses/projects differently. For example, the money raised by Bed and Breakfasts is significantly smaller than a large hotel and timeshare business. Consequently, the projects supported and the means of collecting funds need to be different. Significantly, members of the local partnership are going to be most influential in who else eventually comes on board. This process requires considerable administration and officer time.

6.5.1 Payback projects

Any project must be developed with clear aims and objectives. The conservation message needs to be clear and explicit. Crucially, any scheme should start small. The Gift to Nature project (IOW) showed how important it was to have tangible results from visitor donations as quickly as possible. Problems occur if a project is grandiose, requiring significant funds, as it will take considerable time to achieve. This may cause dissatisfaction with sponsoring businesses, environmental groups and the public. Matching suitable types of environmental projects, whilst recognising the fund raising potentials of the businesses involved, is critical for the overall sustainability of the project.

6.5.2 Maximise the feel good factor

The visitor focus group graphically illustrated the importance of stimulating and fostering a ‘feel good’ factor regardless of the technique(s) of visitor investment used. The focus group stated that this was dependent on effective information and interpretation about a project and organisations involved. It is recommended that the conservation message and credibility of any organisation is promoted to the front of any scheme particularly when any form of merchandising or discount card is involved (Friends of Ionia or Kite Country). Ultimately, it is the conservation that the visitor wants to feel good about and, all too often, the commercialisation interest can override such interests. There is also scope for confusion as illustrated in Gift for Nature where money is being raised for a red squirrel observation hide. This, in itself, does not help conserve the red squirrel and may send out mixed messages to potential donors. Conservation should be the principal output.

6.5.3 Make it easy

Any payback scheme should make it easy for the visitor to participate. Any real thought or effort, on the part of the visitor, was likely to be counterproductive. It was also pointed out that the visitor had no preference for specific types of projects or projects linked to specific places. Therefore, scale does not seem to be a critical variable. For example, visitors were happy to give to footpath maintenance in

Snowdonia knowing that their money was helping Snowdonia more generally rather than any focus on a particular path in Snowdonia. Clearly, the need was for worthwhile conservation projects in the area rather than the locality. This is useful in ensuring that monies received can go to a variety of outcomes. It is also much easier to donate if you receive several messages about a project. For example, via a leaflet and staff recommendation and attention grabbing donation box/envelope.

6.5.4 Reduce bureaucracy

There is considerable concern amongst tourism businesses and visitors about the way possible funds could be swallowed up in administrative and running costs. Our research has shown that successful projects demand a labour intensive approach which can cause a significant drain on resources. Such issues need to be thought about very carefully when deciding on possible techniques.

There is a key dilemma here in that the successful case studies had substantial administrative costs. Without the necessary resources and manpower any scheme is likely to fall at the first hurdle and is unlikely to be sustainable; something that was seen as important by both focus groups and all the case study analyses. Reconciling these tensions lies at the heart of a scheme's success. Critically, it is recommended that any scheme should separate the funding to support administration from the donations received from the project. Long term funding, if obtained, offers the best solution.

6.5.5 Avoid cumulative impact

The local partnership should ensure that a visitor investment scheme can be co-ordinated and targeted to particular areas. It is important, however, to ensure that no particular area is overwhelmed with different projects that could lead to visitor saturation. Whilst this could allow any potential visitor to eventually contribute, there is also the chance that one visitor might get frustrated at continually being subjected to opt out scenarios, donation boxes, merchandising and loyalty cards. This could result in significant visitor dissatisfaction.

6.6 Monitor and Evaluate

It is important to ensure that within any visitor investment scheme each project is monitored and evaluated. Regular meetings with businesses and environment organisations are required to achieve this. Also some attempts could be made to contact visitors to ascertain whether they made a contribution, the form it took and their satisfaction with the progress or otherwise of the project. Visitors who did not contribute could also be asked why and these responses could be fed into the development and extension of possible schemes.

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