

Workshop 6 – Environment, tourism and the green economy



North Yorkshire's environment, ecology and heritage are some of its greatest assets, and tourism and the green economy make a major contribution to the economy of the county.

We need to make sure that we work to enhance these assets while developing economically, socially and environmentally sustainable local communities.

Facilitators

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Tourism/ green economy – what are we talking about?

- 'Green Economy' - the aim should be that there is no longer this distinction – as this should reflect all of the economy - not just a portion of it. Inclusive Growth should reflect not only the people but also the places. The aim should be for "Good Growth", not economic growth at any cost.
- Principle that environment was integral to economy and health so it is about demonstrating the wide range of ways that investing in the natural environment that can lead to economic growth, rather than boxing it into areas such as renewable energy or biofuels.
- Could take it as any economic activity that is enhancing to the environment or at least has no detrimental impact.
- Importance of making it relevant to people, as there are so many interpretations of 'green economy.'
- Important that negative activities on the environment do not impact on economy, e.g. fracking site in Ryedale is believed to be having a negative impact on tourism in Ryedale, and may potentially lead to negative perception in wider North Yorkshire.
- There is a need to promote the value and benefit of good environmental practice. At present, "Green" is seen as a cost or negative where as there are many positives that could be promoted. Benefits to companies, individuals, health, cost savings, well-being, opportunities to save money. Etc.

What assets are we trying to enhance?

What needs to be done to enhance these assets/ natural capital?

- Concern was raised about the state of the rights of way network across the county, and some areas being unusable, e.g. Ebor Way in Ryedale on a recent visit. This can have a negative impact on tourism and recreation, as people will not want to return, and creates a bad reputation.

- Is there a need to focus on some areas and make the network of footpaths and routes really good, so that we can promote them with confidence and tie them in with a range of factors, e.g. promoting outdoor recreation, promoting access to the countryside, and linking these into local businesses that are supporting such local activities? This is an opportunity to pull in new support groups and explore different funding opportunities. E.g. some recent evidence showed that birdwatchers were high tourism spenders when they visited to see birds, e.g. using cafes, shops, accommodation.

How can we do this whilst encouraging economic growth and sustainable development?

- Above point is relevant to this.
- Natural capital approach gives opportunity to build in where to invest in the environment for economic gains – which are the places that would have negative impacts on the economy if they are removed e.g. greater flooding; what investment in natural assets would improve the economy e.g. reduced flooding, better air quality, greater quality of place?
- Local green spaces are often the most important spaces for people. Those spaces within just a couple of miles of home. These are often the first taste of the outdoors for most people and as such we need to value these green spaces, the parks, verges, trees, fields, close to our communities.
- Need to encourage developers to enhance or provide local green spaces within any development. Planning policies encourage this at a strategic level but it often comes down to the individuals dealing with the applications. The challenge is encouraging change on the ground and in delivery.
- Local communities have the opportunity to get involved through their local plans and neighbourhood plans. However, the compliance for these legal documents can make the process quite onerous and does not encourage people to get involved.
- Action is needed at the local level to change attitudes so that everyone recognises the benefit of playing their part – no matter how small. Need to push the value of collective action for long term gain.
- Also a change in the mind set of those planning for the future is required. There is the need for a much longer term vision, with an aspiration for quality, good growth and development, not just satisfactory. At present everything is planned on a short term basis and is about saving money. A major challenge is how to change this mind set to promote a much longer term vision.
- EG: A “Green Standard for Development” was suggested to encourage a cultural change in designers and developers.
- Is there a soft power approach of influencing developers to be greener e.g. create a local green standard for development. Is there scope for the LNP and LEP to work together on this?