



Inbound (Tourism) Development (UK) Ltd

Sennybridge, Crai and Trecastle Rural Alliance



Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2013 – 18



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Sennybridge, Crai & Trecastle Sustainable Tourism Strategy & Action Plan

Section 1 - Background and Rationale

Since 2009 when Tourism and related businesses in key communities of the Brecon Beacons National Park together in the form of clusters as recognised under the Collabor8 project, focus has been on the development of tourism within the community as a means of delivering locally identified and supported benefits.

The aim of Collabor8 was to develop and support clusters of local businesses that were committed to the values of sustainability, sense of place and quality and were keen to work together by embracing these principles and delivering added value to the products and services they offer.

The success of the Collabor8 project within the BBNPA identified the need and will to continue to develop locally focused community actions that fit within the broader strategic objectives of developing vibrant, vital and sustainable communities within the National Park. The Rural Alliances programme enables follow-on activity which is able to reach deeper into the rural make-up of the BBNP and add to the economic, social and cultural aspects of community and destination development within the National Park.

As part of this process, Sustainable Tourism Action Plans were developed with many of the communities within the National Park, setting out agreed common priorities for action. This has yet to be achieved with the communities of Crai, Sennybridge and Trecastle.

The purpose of this piece of work is:-

To produce a five year sustainable tourism strategy and action plan, rooted in the Rural Alliances programme values of Sustainability (economic, environmental and social), Sense of Place and Quality, whilst supporting and reflecting the ambitions of the community for their area through the cultivation of identified ideas and developing a realistic plan of actions to enable realisation.

As part of this process the following activities have been undertaken:-

- Consultations with the local community/ies and stakeholders;
- Consider the wider objectives and agendas within the community;
- Provide due reference to target markets;
- Review existing visitor and market survey data;
- Develop ideas and aspirations into meaningful objectives;
- Ensure 'fit' with relevant strategies and action plans;

The fundamental principle is that the community is fully engaged with the process and outputs of the strategy and action plan, reflecting the aspirations of the various groups and their members.

Overview

The communities of Crai, Sennybridge and Trecast  are located amidst spectacular scenery in the north of the Brecon Beacons National Park, between Llandovery and Brecon. These small rural settlements benefit from good long established communications routes and associated facilities for visitors. Between them they have a resident population of just below 2,000.

The rural economy is strongly associated with farming, Sennybridge being traditional market town, with a regular livestock market. Trecastle's history is strongly linked with the growth and defence of Brecknockshire, and the village contains a number of listed properties. It was an important trading centre before the arrival of the railway to Sennybridge.

Crai and Defynnog are smaller nearby settlements and these communities between them provide a rich and varied range of facilities, events and opportunities for visitors.

There are no facilities within the study area that are formally considered to be visitor attractions, however, there are many within easy reach. It is also largely the case with activity providers. A range of accommodation establishments provide for staying visitors, although the area attracts more than 7 times as many day visitors.

Tourism as a driver of sustainable development

Tourism relies on the environment, both built and natural, as well as the ambiance, culture and services in the area in which it occurs. In order to be sustainable, the operation and development of tourism must consider the needs of local communities, respect and enrich local cultures and traditions, contribute to economic prosperity, whilst at the same time protecting the environment upon which it depends.

Tourism is a powerful economic development tool, safeguarding and creating jobs, - keeping local businesses alive, particularly those of community importance such as pubs and post offices. It can feed income into a wide cross section of the economy, from food producers to graphic designers, provide new business opportunities for local residents and strengthen local economies.

In addition to economic benefits, tourism adds less tangible, but equally important payoffs. It supports vibrancy, which is partly economic but is also cultural - festivals and concerts, arts events and male voice choirs all are encouraged and supported by a strong tourism market.

It can improve the quality of life for residents as they take advantage of the services and facilities tourism adds. It promotes community pride, which grows as people work together to develop a thriving tourist industry.

For these reasons, the local community has a valid voice in establishing the direction that tourism develops. It has a role to play in contributing towards the development of local services, products and events that will improve the tourism offer and also add to the 'liveability' and vibrancy of the area.

Section 2 - The Process

The process of formulating the Sennybridge, Crai and Trecastle Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action plan involved a number of meetings, consultations and workshop sessions, where interested parties participated in discussions and activities which would inform this piece of work.

The following aspects were covered:-

Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is development and management of tourism activity that is driven by and relies on the community, respects the local environment, society and culture, providing benefits which enhance local services and economic benefits which stay within the community and economy.

In practice, this means:-

- The involvement and participation of the community in the provision of services and facilities for visitors;
- Purchasing locally, using local products and services wherever possible and providing opportunities for visitors to support local businesses and engage with the community;
- Sharing the passion for the area with visitors by providing them with opportunities to engage with the community and its environs;
- Working together to extend the season and increase opportunities for visitors and facilities / services for the community;
- Sharing of knowledge and best practice;
- Help look after the environment and provide opportunities for visitors to participate.

The Rural Alliance Partnership

The desire for a collaborative partnership under the Rural Alliances programme was initiated by the local communities themselves, wishing to engage with the process aiming to instil the ethos of engagement and ownership in order to strive towards developing vibrant and vital communities within the National Park.

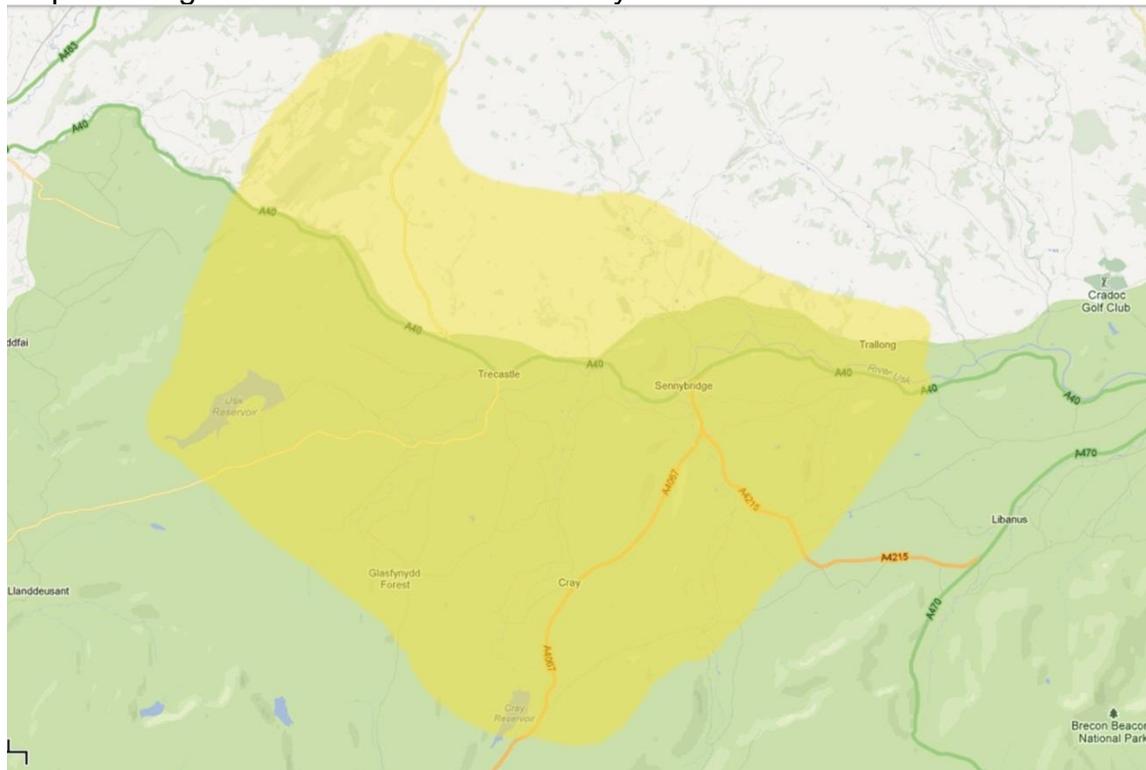
Whilst the partnership comprises representation from all groups which have a base within the study area as well as lay representatives, attendance at meetings and workshops was not as inclusive and wide ranging as hoped. This led to additional consultation taking place in order to put forward a more 'balanced' response.

Geographic Boundaries

The boundaries of the plan were considered by the group resulting in an area that covered the communities of Sennybridge, Crai and Trecastle, including Trallong and Cwmcamlais Defynnog, Heol Senni, Llywel, the Epynt Way and the Crai and Usk Reservoirs. These boundaries are not meant to be definitive – rather a rough indication to enable focus for the purposes of this work.

The Upper Usk Valley was put forward as the name for the area. This was widely supported and felt to be both accurate and appropriate.

Map showing indicative boundaries of study area



Product Audit

Existing tourism product in the area was identified as being a range of accommodation provision, infrastructure and opportunities for informal recreation, a small selection of eateries and retail provision, plus a range of community organised events services.

The landscape within the study area is the area's key asset - a craggy blend of and wild undisturbed uplands, with a gentler, rolling landscape to the south. It encompasses two reservoirs, many miles of footpaths and bridle ways, as well as open access land, all set within the Forest of Bowland Geopark. The recent Dark Skies accreditation provides additional opportunities.

Tourism to Area

Existing survey data from was used to assess visitors to the area –who they are, why they come to the area and what they do. Data used included extracts from research undertaken by Brecon Beacons National Park, Brecon Beacons Tourism, and Visit Wales.

The volume and value (visitor numbers and spend) to the area was identified using the Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM).

A product audit was undertaken to identify the current tourism offer and a SWOT analysis was used to an assessment tool.

Relevant strategies and policy documents were consulted to provide an insight into the thrust and priorities of organisations whose tourism related activities have an impact on the Upper Usk Valley.

Looking ahead

The group finally considered what the Upper Usk Valley would be like 5 years from now, through the eyes of the visitor and the local community. This provides the basis for the action plan.

The desire for an identity was iterated early on in the process and initial work on this was undertaken. Further work needs to be commissioned to fully develop and deliver this.

A vision for the Upper Usk Valley has been agreed upon and has the community at it's heart. The group were very keen to be as wholly inclusive and maximise opportunities that the tourism sector could provide either directly or indirectly to the host community.

Key objectives were decided upon and an action plan to deliver these objectives has been drawn up and consulted upon.

Section 3- Strategic context

There are numerous existing policy documents and strategies at a national and regional level which have a bearing on the visitor economy. These include the national tourism strategy, the Wales Cultural Strategy, Sustainable Tourism Framework, and Rural Development Plan for Wales.

Sustainability lies at the heart of the Welsh Government's agenda for Wales; the Sustainable Development Scheme, One Wales: One Planet was launched some years ago, and sets out the Government's vision a sustainable Wales, embedding the principle in all activities and actions. There is a requirement on all organisations in Wales to actively commit to sustainable development, with 'One Wales: One Planet' providing leadership and direction. Its purpose is to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing and enhance people's quality of life.

Tourism Strategy for Wales

The Welsh Government, through Visit Wales, has a role to play in providing leadership and strategic direction to the tourism industry in Wales. It does this by supporting the sector to grow and respond to changing market conditions, which is articulated in the national tourism strategy.

The national tourism strategy – Partnership for Growth - sets the direction of tourism development for Wales as a whole – identifying priorities for support and development and directional thrust for marketing activities based on economic, market and industry intelligence, as well as supporting the Government’s wider economic and social objectives.

The vision for tourism in Wales is :

Wales will exceed expectations as a tourism destination and develop a reputation for delivering outstanding quality, excellent value for money and memorable, distinctive experiences: we will offer a warm welcome that means every visitor who leaves us wants to come back.

The goal is to drive sustainable growth in tourism that delivers jobs and wealth for the Welsh economy and supports a profitable tourism industry.

This will mean focussing on;-

Product Development - stimulating investment in high quality, reputation-changing products and events;

Promoting the Brand - promoting and marketing a strong, single, distinctive brand for Wales, using a product-led approach;

People Development - training provision to enable career progression and improvements in customer satisfaction;

Profitable Performance - building the capacity of the industry to utilise the latest Technologies for business management, marketing and growth;

Place Building - developing destinations that people want to visit and recommend and providing opportunities for local communities to deliver memorable visitor experiences;

Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Brecon Beacons

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is the statutory body with responsibility for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Brecon Beacons, promoting understanding and enjoyment of the area’s special qualities and with a duty to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities.

A wide range of the Authority’s activities make an essential contribution to the performance of the area as a tourism destination, including management and provision of countryside access and infrastructure, provision of information, interpretation and

ranger services, and looking after the fine landscapes and biodiversity that visitors come to enjoy.

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy (2011-2016) puts forward the following objectives in order to deliver a sustainable tourism industry within the National Park:-

Effective marketing - To raise awareness of the Brecon Beacons as a leading destination for quality rural experiences, generating overnight visits throughout the year

Coordinated information and interpretation - To ensure that all visitors have access to accurate information and interpretation that strengthens appreciation, enjoyment and understanding of the Brecon Beacons and stimulates curiosity and a desire to explore, stay longer and return

Environmental responsibility - To encourage and promote responsible use of the environment by visitors and tourism stakeholders and establish ways for them to support the management and conservation of the Brecon Beacons

Product diversity - To provide a rich diversity of visitor experiences in line with potential market interests and opportunities and with Brecon Beacons brand values

Communities and place making - To work with local communities to strengthen the individual distinctiveness of the towns, villages and rural areas in the Brecon Beacons and their appeal and amenities for visitors and local residents

Supporting businesses - To encourage and assist tourism-related enterprises to improve their quality and performance, undertake appropriate investments and work together to ensure the success of the Brecon Beacons as a sustainable tourism destination

Sustainable Tourism Partnership

The Sustainable Tourism Partnership evolved in response to this new thrust of joint collaboration, acknowledging that there are many stakeholders who need to work together with shared vision and values. This body coordinates and plans the tourism development work undertaken by its members within the direction given by the agreed Strategy. Local Authorities, Tourism Associations and Regional Tourism Partnerships covering the National Park area; together with a wide number of voluntary, community and environmental organisations connected with tourism are represented on the Partnership.

Rural Alliances

The Rural Alliances project is a European programme lasting for a period of 3 years (2012-15) with the aim of helping local communities work with their tourism businesses to develop and manage tourism in their area. Building on the successful predecessor, COLLABOR8, it seeks to expanding the scope of the work and widen the involvement of local people. The key concept is that businesses should work closely with their local communities to achieve common ends, using sustainable tourism as the driver.

Brecon Beacons Tourism

Brecon Beacons Tourism is a membership association of over 200 tourism businesses, working together to market and support all tourism businesses across the Brecon Beacons National Park and providing a strong tourism voice to represent the views of the industry.

The Vision of BBT is 'to actively work together with our business network and partners to ensure a focus on developing successful and sustainable tourism in the Brecon Beacons.'

The BBNPA and BBT have a Memorandum of Understanding to underpin the way the two organisations relate to each other. As the key private sector partner, BBT takes the lead for the Brecon Beacons Marketing Co-ordination Group in managing the delivery of the marketing strategy.

In order to work as an effective and strategic partner in the marketing and management of the Brecon Beacons, Brecon Beacons Tourism also interacts with the three Regional Tourism Partnerships, Mid-Wales (the lead), South East Wales and South West Wales, as well as Visit Wales and Wales Tourism Alliance.

BBNPA Local Development Plan (LDP) 2012 Assessment

BBNPA Local Plan consultations with the community of Maescar identified the desire to support cultural heritage, sustainable tourism and local food production.

Fforest Fawr Geopark

The **Geopark** is an area with geological heritage of international significance. It has aims which largely coinciding with the statutory duties and purpose of the Brecon Beacons National Park within which it sits. It is run by a partnership of several organisations, which include the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

Regional Tourism Partnerships

The **Regional Tourism Partnerships** are organisations which aim to join all sectors of the tourism industry together at a regional level. They work in partnership with Visit Wales, the local authorities, tourism sector businesses and other local organisations to develop and implement regional tourism strategies. They governed by a board which comprises of a public/private partnership.

The Regional Tourism Partnerships work with their partners to provide marketing for the region and support for tourism businesses (often via the Tourism Associations), which includes training and investment in the tourism offer.

Three of the four Regional Tourism Partnerships have an involvement in the Brecon Beacons National Park. Their purpose is to support and develop tourism in their respective regions. They are constituted as a public private sector partnership organisation funded by the Welsh Government. Each has a remit which reflects the

priorities identified in the national strategy, tailored to the needs of their region. They do this by:-

- Integrating the private and public sector agendas. To ensure growth and net inflow of tourist money rather than redistribution of existing benefits from tourism spend.
- Advocacy and support for investment in the tourism industry.
- Industry leadership and brokering of partnerships between national agencies and regional and community groups. To coordinate activities that take place at local, regional and national levels and ensure best use of resources, eliminate duplication and share the benefits of shared learning.
- Direct financial support (for research, marketing and promotion, product development, skills) linked to regional priorities

Destination Management

Destinations are the places that people want to visit and experience. In order to create a successful and sustainable visitor economy in an area, all the components that make a successful destination need to be managed in an integrated and long-term way, with a clear focus on the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

Destination Management is the framework within which all future tourism activity is developed, delivered and managed. It brings together in a partnership public, private and voluntary sector organisations and communities which have an interest in and a part to play in that destination.

In the Brecon Beacons, Destination Management is guided by the Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism, building on the foundations established by the previous Sustainable Tourism Strategy; strengthening partnerships, co-ordination, engagement and close working relationships with stakeholders. The management structure is the Sustainable Tourism Partnership, which is made up of members from public, private and third sectors and includes community and conservation interests as well as those of economic development and tourism. There are 2 sub-groups, one dealing with marketing and the other coordinating development work such as our own and the Rural Development Plan tourism projects.

BBNP Walking Tourism Strategy

In recognition of its commitment to walking, the National Park Authority has produced a Walking Tourism Strategy with the following aim:

To develop and manage opportunities for visitors to enjoy walking in and around the Brecon Beacons National Park in ways that will bring new economic and social benefits to the area, while minimising adverse environmental and community impact

Tourism as an economic driver

Tourism is a major contributor to the local economy – dynamic and adaptable; it is one of the strongest growth sectors. It is also extremely durable – a holiday is generally regarded as a necessity. Within the current economic climate, foreign destinations do not appear as attractive to the British holiday maker and domestic tourism is receiving the benefit.

In 2011, tourism spending accounted for an injection of £11.1m into the economy of the Upper Usk Valley, as defined by postcodes LD3 8P through to LD3 8Y. (For the entire BBNP it was £220.8m during the same period.)

The visitor economy has an impact on a range of services from accommodation and attractions to the retail, food and transport sectors and, because it is made up of predominantly micro-businesses, much of the primary visitor spend is re-invested as secondary spend in the local community, maximising its impact.

The tourism industry generates employment – it is labour intensive. Not only are there jobs directly involved in hosting visitors, but also indirectly within sectors which support the industry, such as food producers, printers, plumbers, transport providers etc.

When visitors come to an area they invariably spend money - hotels, attractions, activity providers and shops are in the front line to benefit from this spending. As with employment, there is also an indirect effect. Money spent by visitors will generate further rounds of spending. For example, an accommodation operator will spend money on purchasing supplies such as food, cleaning products, toiletries etc. The suppliers of these products pay their workers, who shop in local shops. Local shop workers shop at other shops, and so the cycle continues. The additional income from tourism can make all the difference to the viability of a small enterprise. Also, without the additional income from tourism, local facilities such as tea rooms, pubs, restaurants, and transport services may not be viable.

Section 4 - The Current Situation

Sennybridge, Crai, Defynnog & Trecastle tourism summary

STEAM is a model used across much of the UK to provide at data on local economic impacts of tourism based on the measurement of tourism at the local level from the supply side; estimates of number of tourists and number of tourist days and estimates of revenue generated by tourists. The model used is built up from the above basic information, by drawing on data from published or unpublished sources, local interviews and supplementary trade enquiries to define the economic parameters within which the local tourism sector operates.

Whilst not designed to provide a precise and accurate measurement of tourism in a local area, but an indicative base for monitoring trends, nevertheless the confidence level of the model is calculated to be within the ranges of plus or minus 10% in respect of the yearly outputs and plus or minus 5% in respect of trend.

The data below is as accurate as can be achieved for the study area. It is based on postcodes LD3 8N through to LD3 8Y, which includes part of area around Libanus.

Volume and value

Based on the 2011 Powys STEAM report, tourism in the area has an economic impact of £11.1 million (£'s 2012). Of this, £1.1 million is from visitors staying in serviced accommodation, £5.8 million from visitors in non-serviced accommodation, £0.4 million from visitors staying with friends or relatives, and £3.8 million from day visitors.

This spending comes from 151,000 visitors, staying for a total of 217,000 days. The category breakdown is as follows:

| | Tourist days 000's | Tourist numbers 000's |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Serviced accommodation | 10 | 5 |
| Non-serviced | 67 | 10 |
| SFR | 7 | 3 |
| Day visitors | 132 | 132 |

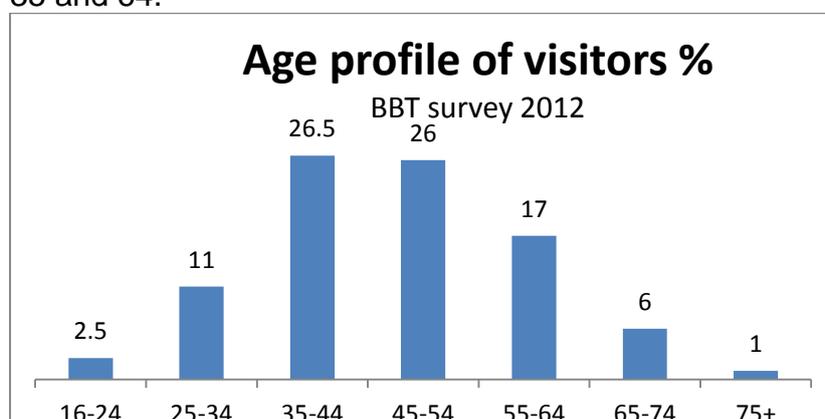
Prepared by Cathy James, GTS(UK) Ltd, April 2013

STEAM data was used to identify the current (2011) volume and value of tourism to the Upper Usk Valley. This is illustrated as follows:-

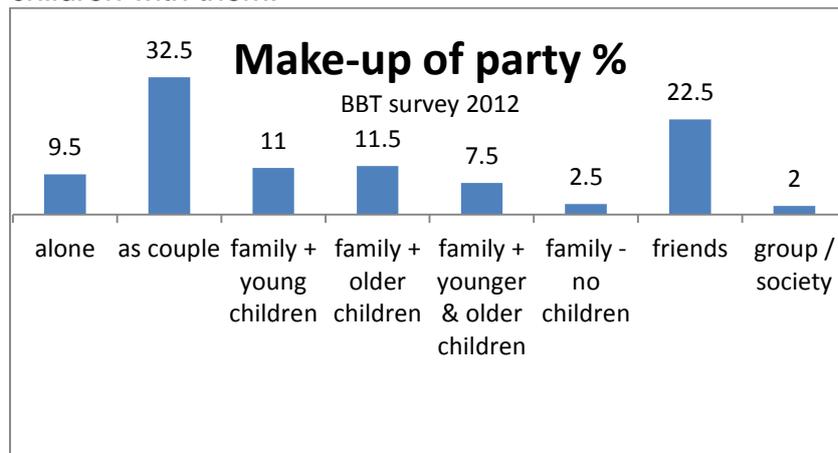
| | Visitor numbers | Total Spend | Length of Stay (days) | Spend per person per day |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Serviced Accom | 5,000 | £1.1 m | 2 | £110 |
| Non-serviced | 10,000 | £5.8 m | 6.7 | £86 |
| SFR | 3,000 | £0.4 m | 2.3 | £57 |
| Day visitors | 132,000 | £3.8 m | 1 | £29 |

Visitors

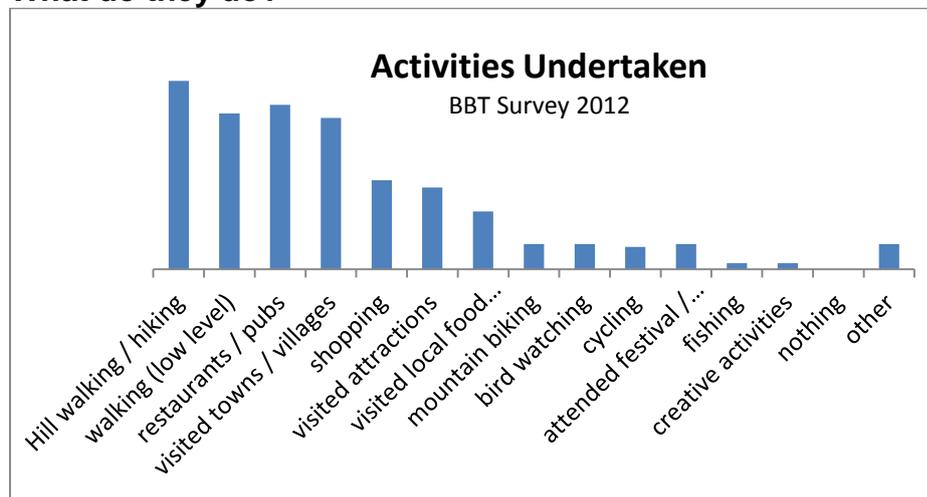
Based on the 2012 BBT Visitor Survey, the majority of visitors are between the ages of 35 and 64.



Over 50% of visitors are couples or groups of friends. Just over a quarter (28%), have children with them.



What do they do?



Walking, eating out and sightseeing were the most popular activities undertaken by visitors.

Visitor Profiles

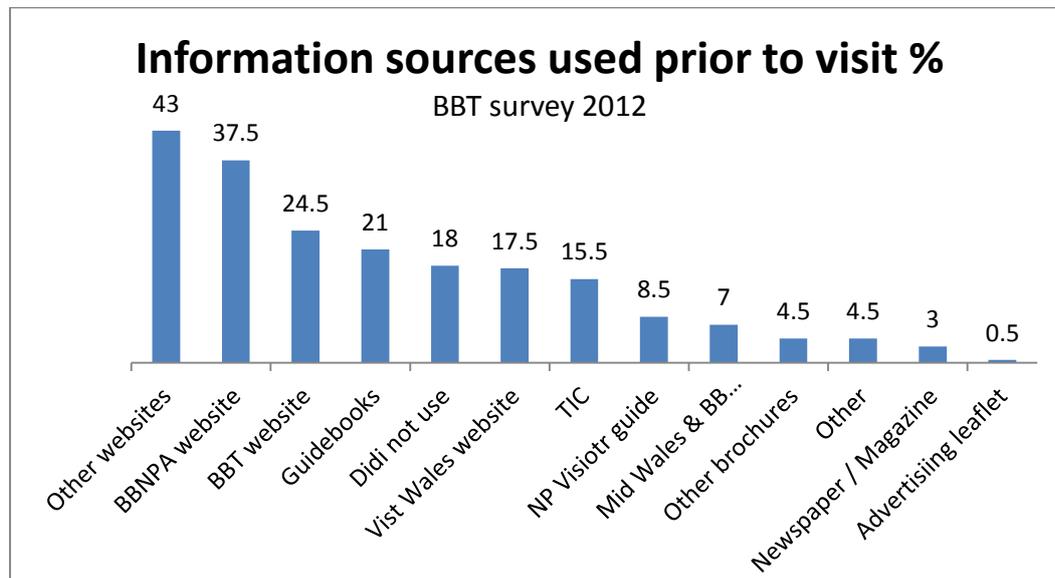
As indicated earlier, the majority of visitors to the BBNP are in groups of two - either as couples or friends, and are between 35 and 64 years of age. Families make up around a quarter of visitors to the area. Activities are a significant part of the holiday experience to the target audiences.

They are relatively affluent although appreciate value for money. Time is precious them, so providing them with readily available information on opportunities to make the most of their time in destination is key.

Quality of product is a key consideration – this applies to all elements of the destination they sample and they appreciate something special.

Information sources used by visitors

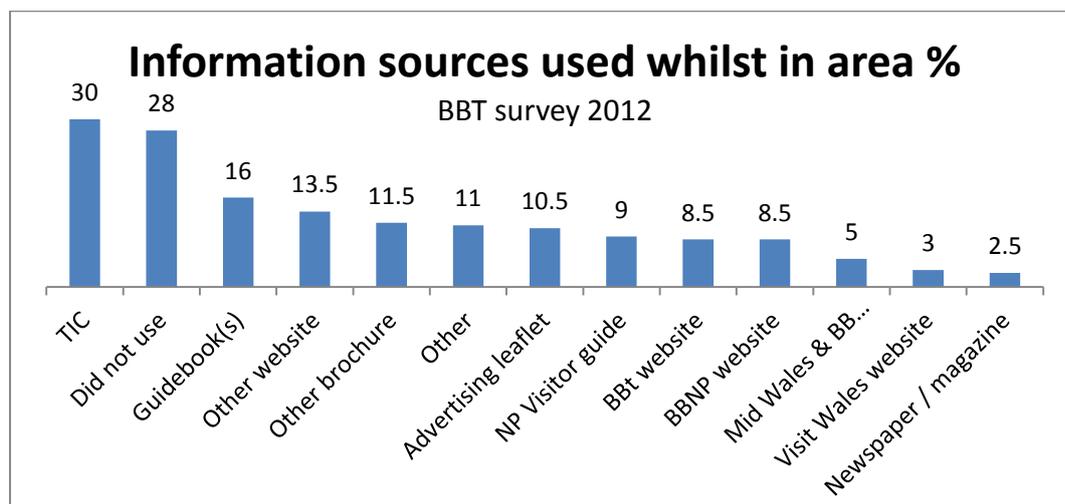
Pre-Visit stage



Percentages exceed 100% due to multiple answers.

The majority of visitors used websites as a source of information prior to their visit. The relatively high proportion of respondents claiming not to have used information prior to their visit is perhaps a reflection of the high incidence of repeat and regular visitors to the area.

Whilst on territory



Percentages exceed 100% due to multiple answers.

The internet, widely used at the pre-visit stage was little used on territory. Instead, Brecon's TIC tops the sources of information used during a visit by just under a third (30%) of visitors.

Based on the above information, most visitors to the area do not use mobile devices for downloading data on the area at this point in time. Added to that, patchy signal availability in the area necessitates more dependable sources of information be available.

The Upper Usk Valley Tourism Offer

The Upper Usk Valley is a typical and traditional Welsh agricultural area. Tourism has evolved as a means of diversification and income generation for farming communities. These closely knit communities stage a range of events and activities – primarily to provide social interaction and entertainment for residents. There is still the traditional livestock market which draws buyers and viewers from across the region, and annual events to draw visitors and celebrate local farming traditions and related activities.

The main attraction within the study area is the landscape and scenery and what that presents by way of opportunities to visitors - be that informal recreation, more structured activities, peace and tranquillity, or a combination. Tourist Information services are provided at Brecon, the National Park Visitor Centre near Libanus and in Llandovery. Visitor accommodation is generally of a good quality and is scattered throughout the area. Opportunities for eating out are limited to a handful of establishments.

Identity

The Upper Usk Valley suffers from a lack of identity - there is nothing to set it apart from any other part of the national park, although it has distinctive qualities based on its location and environment and make-up. A strong place identity conveys what is unique about an area and provides a stronger reason to visit.

Accommodation

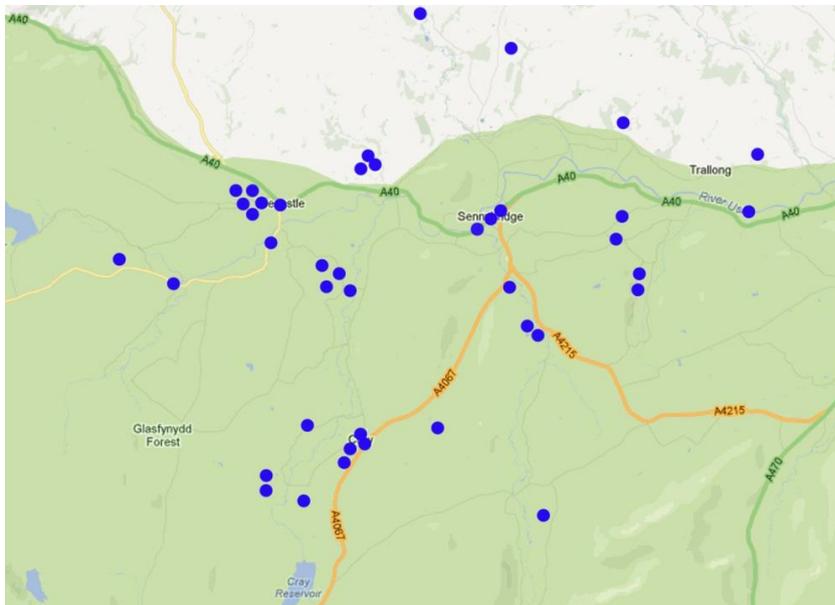
Bedstock surveys are undertaken periodically on a local authority-wide basis throughout Wales in order to establish available commercial bed-spaces so as to inform analysis of the value of tourism.

The commercial bedstock is:

| Category | Establishments | Bedstock |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------|
| Serviced (all 10 rooms or under) | 12 | 96 |
| Self- catering | 16 | 80 |
| Hostels / bunkhouses | 4 | 96 |
| Touring caravans & camping | 4 | 312 |
| Total | 36 | 584 |

Prepared by Cathy James, GTS(UK) Ltd, April 2013

Visitor accommodation is scattered throughout the area with many high quality properties which are often located in stunning settings.



Of the total bedstock in the Upper Usk Valley, around 70% is graded by either Visit Wales or the AA, the majority of which have attained grades of 4 & 5 stars. Brecon Beacons Holiday Cottages act as agent for a number of properties in the area.

Serviced accommodation counts for approximately one sixth of available bedspaces – roughly half of what is available in the self-catering sector. The largest category of accommodation is touring caravans / camping, accounting for over half of all bedspaces.

Average duration of staying visits is 4.6 nights, which compares well with many other regions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that occupancy levels are reasonably high in the peak summer period whilst there is significant unused capacity the rest of the year.

Recent trends of shorter lead times and short breaks are becoming the norm and have altered the way in which providers need to operate in order to maximise income and maintain profitability.

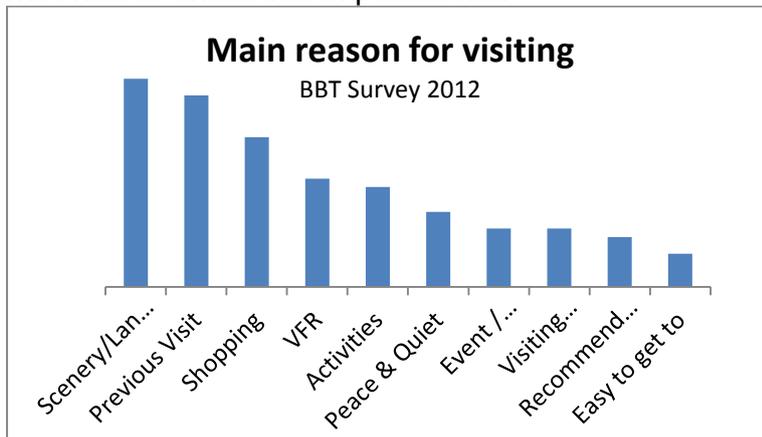
Due to the remoteness of many accommodation establishments, un-regulated signs are located on the roadside to aid navigation. These vary tremendously in style, design and quality.



Attractions

The only formal tourism attraction in the study area is the Brecon Beacons Mountain Centre near Libanus, although there are many attractions easily accessible from the study area. 

The biggest draw for the area and its key asset is the landscape - providing the main reason for visits. There is a high incidence of repeat visits suggesting that the product met with or exceeded expectations.



Historic sites & local heritage

The landscape bears reference to a rich heritage with abundant indications of times long past, as qualified by Geopark status. Information on what can be seen however, is not easy to come by in the main and requires something of an enthusiasts approach.

The recent development of a GPS triggered multimedia app will enable visitors to explore and learn about Y Pigwn, the Roman marching camp with the aid of their GPS enabled smart phones.

Sarn Helen is an ancient Roman road built to link forts in North and South Wales, provides insights into early history in the area through the standing stones, cairns and artworks which can be seen along the route.

There are many historic buildings within the study area which provide interesting streetscapes. Trecastle benefits from an interpreted self-guided walk through the settlement. Churches, remains of castles and earlier settlements add to the richness and the visage of the study area.

Activities

There are no activity providers based in the Upper Usk Valley, although operators based elsewhere use the landscape and facilities to provide a range of activities for their customers. Countless groups and organisations on day 'expeditions' use the miles of accessible routes, open access land and natural features to participate in a wide range of activities. Organised activities include caving, canoeing, sailing, hang-gliding and parascending, as well as hill and gorge walking, mountain biking, etc

Opportunities for informal activities

Walking is by far the most popular activity, but cycling, mountain biking, fishing and horse riding are also popular.

The entire area is a labyrinth of footpaths, bridleways and byways providing innumerable opportunities to roam on foot, ride on horseback or cycle. Open access land provides the opportunity to explore without having to stick to footpaths and bridleways. *(Generally, horse riding, cycling, fishing, camping, taking animals other than dogs onto the land, driving a vehicle and water sports are not permissible on open access land.)* There are no measures in place to measure usage of this asset.

The Epynt Way (administered and maintained by the MoD) is a permissive path which follows the boundary of the Sennybridge Training Area and is available for use at all times by walkers, horse riders and cyclists. There are limited user facilities along the route such as corralling and parking. The Conservation Centre along the route provides a spot for rest and shelter as well as interpretative information. Route descriptions are available on-line or purchasable through various outlets. The entire route is in the region of 50 miles, although is broken down into 8 shorter linear route. There are also 5 circular routes at key points.

The **Forestry Commission**  has provided a way-marked route for walking, horse-riding and cycling at Glasfynydd Forest in the vicinity of the Usk Reservoir.

The Public Rights of Way network in the National Park is managed by the BBNPA. Amongst its duties is the provision of the opportunity for residents and visitors to access, enjoy and understand the National Park. It has responsibility for the repair, maintenance, signing and protection of this network.

The Local Access Forum  which represents users and landowners, advises the National Park Authority on the improvement of public access in the area for the purposes of recreation and enjoyment. The LAF considers all forms of access, including horse riding, cycling and off road driving, and walking.

Riding

Whilst there are miles of bridle ways and permissible routes for horse riding, the only opportunities for visitors to ride are provided outside of the study area. Visitors wanting to ride the bridle ways in the Upper Usk Valley would need to bring their mount with them.

Fishing

Fishing is available in the river Usk and both reservoirs (Usk and Crai).

Canoeing

Canoeing is permissible on the River Usk at certain times of year, to the east of Sennybridge.

Cycling

Sennybridge is something of a cycling hub, with a number of published and promoted routes passing through the town. Three MTB trails routes from simple to fairly severe (red, blue and yellow) are located in the study area. Two of these pass through Sennybridge.

There are proposals for a cycling route (National Route 43) which will run approximately 2 miles to the west of Sennybridge and Defynnog and will connect Swansea to Builth Wells.

Events

Geopark events are organised for the public - including walks and talks, including an established fortnight long Geopark Festival; the Sennybridge Show is a large-scale annual agricultural event, and there are moves afoot to revive the Trecastle Agricultural Show. There is also a Dog Show, a Local Hunt and a Beer Festival.

A programme of themed guided walks, organised by a variety of organisations are provided throughout the year. The National Park visitor centre stages on events and activities for children during the school holidays, and hosts star and solar gazing events.

The landscape acts as a draw to a variety of sporting events and challenges arranged and managed by organisations with no connection to the area.

Numerous events organised by community groups take place within the study area – such as local walks, sporting challenges, motor club events, church open days, cinema club, concerts and drama.

Star gazing

The Brecon Beacons National Park has been recognised internationally as a prime site for star gazing. There are only a few places with this status in the world, so is worth capitalising on. Three locations within the study area – Crai Reservoir, Usk Reservoir and the National Park Visitor Centre at Libanus are listed in the Brecon Beacons – Star gazing Top 10 – being flat areas with easy vehicular access.

A number of tourism businesses have equipped themselves with telescopes and sky maps to help their guests make the most of the dark skies. There have been occasional star gazing events across the National Park, but there is little pro-activity, promotion and co-ordination.



Information Provision

Web-based information

Most if not all accommodation operators have a web presence. This varies tremendously – the most basic being a listing on a third party websites, right through to comprehensive sites providing plenty of information on the property and surrounding area.

Seeking information on local activities and facilities in the Upper Usk Valley is an arduous task and to be successful, necessitates a geographic knowledge of the area. Whilst electronic information exists, it takes commitment and dedication for anyone not familiar with the area to find anything useful and relevant.

There is plenty of information on the Brecon Beacons National Park, this is park-wide and not helpful if seeking information in a specific location. The new destination website www.breconbeacons.org is the most comprehensive of on-line information sources and contains a section on Sennybridge and Trecastle. The information contained in this section is limited to The Epynt Way, mountain biking routes, and very brief details on some facilities in Trecastle and Defynnog.

The Upper Usk Valley is mentioned on the Geopark website. Enjoying / places to go / Brecon and the Upper Usk Valley

The Mountain Hut (www.Brecon-beacons.com) is a good source of information, but again – to find anything related to the study area is laborious to anyone unfamiliar with the area.

On-territory information

A number of walking publications are available for sale which include routes within the study area, and are available from Information Centres in the region and direct from the publishers.

Whilst there is purchasable information on walks and web-based information, there is nothing available for visitors to pick-up and use. This is particularly relevant where an interesting leisurely walk could be part of a day's activity.

Tourist Information Points (TIPs) are in place In Sennybridge and Trecastle. Sennybridge benefits from professionally produced general orientation of the settlement and also in recognition of its status as a mountain biking hub. The former is badly weathered and in need of attention. These are located on the entrance to the Maescar Community Hall, where there is also parking and recycling facilities.



The TIP in Trecastle is located on the A40 opposite the Tea Rooms and is a commendable attempt by the community to address the lack of local information provision. However, it's appearance is shabby and uninviting.



Community notice boards exist in each of the settlements. These carry information pertinent to the local community, such as details of meeting and events. Information is contained behind glass doors, providing protection from the elements. They are not locked and information can be added by members of the community.

There is a Trecastle leaflet in existence, although no copies could be found apart from one pinned to the community notice board, which bore the text "This leaflet details two short walks, a village trail and two longer walks. All the routes are waymarked and easy to follow with the help of this leaflet."



Defynnog



Sennybridge

Ambassador Programme

BBNPA have been running an Ambassador programme for tourism businesses that are prepared to share their passion for the National Park with visitors. So far, over 100 people have been trained, of which only six or so are located in the Upper Usk Valley. More recently specialist modules have been introduced to develop knowledge around specific areas or products, including **Fforest Fawr Geopark**. 

Other services & facilities

Food and Drink

There are a number of pubs within the study area, most of which serve food; some in a more 'formal' restaurant setting, with a couple of establishments stating that they use local produce. There is little obvious evidence of family-friendly dining although all will cater for children.

There are tea rooms in Defynnog and Trecastle, and café's at the Llwynon Saddlery and Glanusk Services. Opening times can be a little sporadic in some of the establishments.

Retail

Retail opportunities are limited to the Post Office, general grocers, walking equipment store and Glanusk Services. The latter stocks some local produce and souvenirs. Penpont operates a seasonal farm shop, the antiques centre in Trecastle draws custom into the area, and an art gallery at Defynnog adds another dimension to the retail offer.

Whilst there are a number of arts and crafts producers in the area, there is nowhere within the study area that their products are can be purchased.

There are no banks in the study area, although a cashpoint is provided in Sennybridge.

Local Produce

The opportunity to purchase local produce is limited within the study area. The Penpont Farm Shop, occasional farm gate facilities and a few random items in the local shops.

One local business provides guests with the opportunity to purchase organic hampers of locally produced supplies, delivered to holiday lets.

There are local produce markets in Brecon and Llandovery.

Transport Links

The Upper Usk Valley is served by major access roads – the A470 and A40. By far the majority of visitors arrive by car and continue to use their vehicles during their stay. The upper Usk Valley is served by public transport along these two main arteries, providing a means of vehicle-free access to, and to some extent, around the National Park.

The Beacons bus operates during the summer months and includes cycle-carrying provision on Sundays.

Mobile Communications

Mobile communications signals in the Upper Usk valley are patchy at best, making it an unreliable method of information provision whilst on-territory.

SWOT

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape & environment – hills & mountains, geopark, wildlife, natural and wild in places; • Dark Skies status; • Traditional agricultural setting with country smells and sounds; • Peaceful and quiet; • No mobile signal in places; • Easy to get to – good road connections; • Good quality visitor accommodation • Abundance of footpaths, bridleways and byways • Within the Brecon Beacons National Park • Strong friendly communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  dependent / clear identity • No broadband, no mobile signal in places • Poor signage tourism to and around the area • No local information provision • Limited public transport • Eating establishments not geared up for visitor market – inconsistent opening times, family provision • Limited food options • No public toilets • Availability and prominence of local food • Un-inviting entry and access points • Limited community buy-in |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and utilise identity • Develop profile within Brecon Beacons destination website • Proximity to major events and visitor attractors • Proposed Sustrans route 43 • Growing interest in health and well-being • Spare capacity in shoulder season • Provision of comprehensive information to visitors before and during visit • More joint working and cross-selling • Promotion of walking routes • Greater use and availability of local food and drink • Retail opportunities for visitors • Sense of place, arrival and orientation improvements • Grow / expand events • Building on Dark Skies and Geopark status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of leadership and direction • Lack of resources and support • Over commercialisation • Resistance to change • Limited participants of do-ers • Unclear / unrealistic aims • Limited timeframe for Rural Alliances support  |

Section 5 - Looking Forward

The preceding sections provide the rationale and background to developing a sustainable tourism strategy for UUV. This section provides the link between the current position and the vision.

Quality is a key driver of success. Visitor expectations are higher than ever before - they expect quality in all aspects of their experience and are increasingly vocal when they experience poor quality.

An identity provides the mechanism through which the areas attributes are communicated to consumer through short-hand, encompassing in a single visualisation the distinctiveness and promise offered. The destination reflects the brand values making promotion more effective.

Tourism depends upon the environment (built, natural and community) in which it takes place, and is the reason that visitors are attracted to it. Growing the incidence of tourism will have impacts upon that environment and must therefore be managed in a way which allows the essence and culture of that environment to be preserved and enhanced, whilst being shared with and embraced by visitors.

Increasing tourism to the area will provide additional jobs in existing establishments, present opportunities for new businesses to be established and existing ones to develop and flourish, providing a setting within which the young people of the area could stay and build a future for themselves.

Vision

By 2018, the Upper Usk Valley will be widely recognised as a friendly and welcoming destination within the BBNP and the Geopark, where quality facilities and services are provided by and for the local community.

Visitors will be drawn to this location for its natural, unspoilt, environment that stimulates the senses and to experience all that we have to offer in this special area.

Their experience through engagement with the local community and the surroundings will firmly place the Upper Usk Valley in their hearts and minds, instilling the desire to return frequently and recommend this destination to others.

In order to achieve this vision, the following objectives were identified:-

1. To become an inclusive whole-community organisation, collaborating widely to deliver benefits and opportunities for all
2. The creation of a distinct identity for the area
3. Enhancement of the visitor experience to encourage new and repeat visits
4. Grow staying visitor numbers, especially off-peak

At the heart of this vision is the community and its involvement in the development and delivery of the tourism product of the Upper Usk Valley. Much of the product offer available to visitors is embedded in the landscape and the human, built and natural environment in which it is based. The mitigation of impacts and maximisation of benefits is dependent upon collaboration and involvement of the community in which tourism activity takes place.

OBJECTIVE 1

To become an inclusive whole-community organisation, collaborating widely to deliver benefits and opportunities for all

The principals behind the Rural Alliances programme is to assist communities within the National Park to become sustainable and inclusive, maximising benefits and opportunities for all whilst ensuring that the environment and the integrity of those communities are preserved. In the Brecon Beacons, the focus of work is tourism – both its development and its management. All activities should support the destination's (Brecon Beacons) agreed Sustainable Tourism Strategy. It therefore becomes vitally important that the Upper Usk Valley Rural Alliance becomes an encompassing organisation working toward agreed goals and targets. All organisations based within the community should have a voice on the group, and endeavour to find common interests on which they can work together to increase local vibrancy.

At this stage, engagement across the entire community has been limited, although it is hoped that as understanding of the purpose of the Upper Usk Valley Rural Alliance grows and momentum increases through action that the group's membership will widen. To date the key participants have been mainly tourism and related interests.

The Rural Alliances programme is a fixed term initiative, providing support for communities which have elected to be part of the programme. The programme ends in 2015 by which time the group needs to be sufficiently established and operational to be able to draw on its own skills and resources to maintain a vibrant and vital community.

The Upper Usk Valley Rural Alliance will need to arrange itself into an organisation which can deliver agreed actions and outputs. It is highly recommended that the group agrees a structure and elects as a minimum – a chair, deputy chair and a secretary so that internal and external communications are managed and actions are prioritised and co-ordinated. Support will be available from the Sustainable Tourism Officer within the BBNPA for the life of the programme and there is also some funding available for project implementation.

In the fullness of time, it may be prudent to consider a more formal structure and constitution for the Upper Usk Valley Rural Alliance, particularly if external funding for the fulfilment of identified actions is to be sought. There are many opportunities for community-based constituted organisations to attract external funding that are beyond the reach of the public sector. It is suggested that this is implemented prior to the

cessation of the Rural Alliances programme, as costs associated with establishing a formally constituted body can be covered by the current RA Programme.

Whilst there is funding for the delivery of projects coming out of this Strategy and Action Plan, the sums available are not vast, and care ought be taken to not spend on actions that could realistically be delivered 'in-house' by the group, thereby ensuring that the available funding is used to achieve greatest benefit and impact.

BBNPA's The Sustainable Tourism Officer will be available to support the group and to help establish priorities, identify options for delivery and funding, assist in commissioning work and highlight opportunities for collaboration. It is therefore important that the enthusiasm generated to date is maintained and networks enhanced in order to maximise tangible outputs during the life of the RA Programme.

As tourism impacts on the locale in which it takes place and affects the lives of residents, it is in everybody's interest that any negative impacts generated by the actions of tourists are minimised and the opportunities to benefit from embracing the industry are spread as wide as possible. For this reason it is important to expand membership of the group to a broader representation of the local community, or at least engage productively.

There are already some excellent informal communications networks within the settlements and these could provide the means to inclusivity.

OBJECTIVE 2

The creation of a distinct identity for the Upper Usk Valley

The study area suffers from a lack of recognition – there is nothing to define it as a destination or entity within the National Park. The Rural Alliances programme is centred on the engagement and participation of the community to the benefit of its defined geographic area. In order for this to be a realistic opportunity, the community needs to feel distinct from the other places within the National Park.

The distinctiveness of a place is a key aspect of the tourism product, so a strong place identity is needed, and work on developing an effective brand to convey the unique sense of place is crucial and needs to be very much a part of this project.

With its own identity, the Upper Usk Valley will be able to portray itself as a distinct destination within the Brecon Beacons National Park and be in a position to compete for visitors with other destinations such as Llango  Talgarth, Cwm Tawe etc

The Key Assets make up the USP that will underpin the Upper Usk Valley identity and be reflected in promotional and marketing materials. These were defined  by the group as:-

- The Geopark
- Dark Skies
- Traditional Rural Landscape
- River & Reservoirs
- Welcoming and Friendly Community
- Big Spaces & Solitude
- Hidden Gems

Strap lines were discussed during a workshop and the following were put forward:-

- The Upper Usk Valley is all that is best about Rural Wales
- Wild Welcoming and Woolly
- 50,000 sheep can't be wrong!
- A welcome in the hillside shaped by generations
- Explore Upper Usk's Hidden treasures
- The Dark Heart of the Park
- Characterful, embracing and closer to a more peaceful and natural way of life
- Activity, Creativity, Community

A strap line needs to be very short and punchy – ideally 3-5 words in length. It needs to capture the essence of the destination, its personality, positioning, and distinguish it from competing destinations. A strapline is shorthand for what the destination stands for and delivers, it needs to be meaningful and memorable and require frequent and consistent use.

More work is needed to be undertaken on this aspect and ideally to involve a wider group more representative of the resident community.

Utilisation of destination identity

The Upper Usk Valley's new identity will need to be exploited in order for it to have an impact and start to develop recognition amongst local residents, passers-by and visitors.

It should be used on all communications and hardware – from individual operator websites, leaflets and advertising through to signage and leaflet dispensers. There is no reason why it could not be used by all businesses and events (not just tourism) based in the study area. The development of a style guide would enable consistency of application across all media and by all users.

Signage

Signage in all its forms is a fundamental part of tourist infrastructure. Their purpose is to assist visitors in reaching a destination or facility in a straightforward manner. Attracting

visitors to an area also generates a need for parking, which should be clearly signed on approach. Parking should be in central locations where orientation / visitor information is provided, and easy access is afforded to basic visitor facilities such as public toilets and refreshments.

Signs are the first thing visitors see and welcome signage should be just that – welcoming. Currently each of the settlements within the study area has boundary signs on approach. These should be replaced with signs with a message of welcome.



In recent years, signage regulations have been amended and it is now permissible to include some text relevant to the settlement being entered, other than, or in addition to a safety message. There are a number of options available for inclusion, which can include town crests, iconography, an identifier, safety and welcome messages, twin towns and of course the place name.

Therefore, it would be possible, albeit at the discretion of the highways authority, to include a phrase, or logo which relevant to the study area identity. Some examples of what is possible:-



Ultimately, 'Welcome to the Upper Usk Valley' signs could be considered. These types of signs do more than inform visitors when they are entering an area — they help create an identity or brand. The BBNPA demarcation signs are an example of this.



Discussions need to take place with Highways officials if welcome signs are to be located on the public highway. In this scenario, there needs to be adequate land available to ensure road safety requirements can be maintained.

For the purpose of this report, welcome signs are distinct from town or village boundary signs mentioned earlier and do not fall under the regulations of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRDG) if they are not located on the public highway. However, they are usually classified as advertisements and will, therefore need express planning consent from the planning authority, in this case the BBNPA. This will require the identification of suitable locations for siting as well as permission from the land owners. Key considerations will be visual impact and public safety, where the highway authority will be consulted.

The purpose of welcome signage is to provide a sense of arrival to the visitor and elicit an identity. For the destination they serve to instil a sense of place and promote pride in the area.

There are countless examples of town welcome signs – anything that can be dreamt up can be produced. The creative aspect of Identity Development Action X), will devise graphics, iconography and message (or strap-line) to be used.

There are some interesting examples of welcome signs all over the world and they often take the form as sculptures, structures, or just simply signs. Some examples of what could be achieved are provided below. (There are countless others)



OBJECTIVE 3

Enhancement of the visitor experience to encourage new and repeat visits

Enhancing the quality of the Upper Usk Valley tourism offer can result in better perceived value for money, develop trust in the brand and distinctiveness of the area. This happens when the visitors expectations have been exceeded which prompts repeat business and leads to them recommending the destination to others. Word of mouth is the most powerful and cost effective promotional medium there is. The quality of a destination is the sum of all the component parts that the visitor has an interface with – what they see, feel and hear, the interactions they have had with people and places, the food they have consumed, the welcome they received, the things they have had the opportunity to sample.

Tourists are becoming increasingly sophisticated and less tolerant of poor facilities and mediocre or indifferent service. Providing the visitor with a quality experience from start to finish is a basic requirement of an economically sustainable industry, and will encourage longer stays, repeat visits and recommendations.

The industry's success depends on the quality of service it provides its customers. At the same time, this industry relies on product – the physical facilities and infrastructure used by the visitor whilst in the destination, such as where they stay, what they do, how they get around. Today's visitors have high expectations and also considerable choice as to where they go and what they do; competition for tourism spend is fierce. There is no 'second chance'. Judgment is made on the whole 'experience' of service, product and interface at point of delivery.

Everything within a destination which affects how a visitor feels about the place is under scrutiny and affects the 'experience' of each individual visitor. Signage, welcome, information, parking, litter, weather, shopping, footpaths, public transport and a myriad of other features will all have an impact on the view formed by the visitor.

Capitalising on strengths and opportunities to encourage more visitors or persuade existing visitors to stay longer can have a considerable impact on the local economy. Similarly, addressing weaknesses, whether real or perceived, and improving the visitor experience can help to grow visitor numbers and spend, as destinations across the UK compete for domestic and international business.

In order to maximise the benefits that tourism can bring, stakeholders must work to develop the tourism product to make it a more attractive proposition. Provision of appropriate infrastructure is a key part of this.

If the Upper Usk Valley can meet and even exceed the expectations of its visitors, then it will have an advantage over competitor destinations.

The tourism product is an experience that begins in advance of the actual consumption of the product and continues after consumption. The experience of visiting an area has a number of phases, which are all part of the overall experience.

- a. Awareness**
- b. Information**
- c. Welcome**
- d. Access to and quality of facilities, services and destination**

a. Awareness

In order to be able to influence the process of selecting a destination the potential visitor has to first of all be made aware of the opportunity. It is therefore important that all marketing activity and all operator websites utilise the Upper Usk Valley branding. In order to be found, all individual operator websites need to be optimised. The Brecon Beacons Destination site acts as a portal and information relating to the UUV should be located, or hot links provided on a dedicated page for the UUV. The bulk of the information can sit elsewhere if necessary and be drawn in through these links.

Secondly, there needs to be a compelling reason why the visitor should come to the Upper Usk Valley rather than another destination. This is where the Key Assets come into play – the USP that makes the Upper Usk Valley stand out from its competitors. The selection of a destination is based on match between the needs that the potential visitor has at that time and the opportunities there in the destination for satisfying those needs. Therefore, information needs to be available at this stage in the process, ie – on websites.

All operators should be encouraged to be represented on the destination site. Links should be available to individual business websites. Live bookings would be beneficial (although not always practical). Individual business websites should provide information on all possible activities, services and facilities of relevance to visitors. This again could be done through links.

Websites should be optimised. Social platforms are a significant consideration for search engines and their usage should be adopted – as a minimum flickr and you tube, which will require only periodic interaction. Tweeting and blogging are useful tools, but it must be born in mind, that once started, continuation and regular interaction is critical.

b. Information

It is vitally important that information is available to visitors at all stages of the decision making process – from the initial search stage right through to on-territory information.

There is little evidence of any information available on-territory identifying the services, facilities and opportunities for visitors to the area. Literature is still the main means by which visitors select activities when on-territory – especially in locations with unreliable and patchy telecommunications signals.

Visitors need information on opportunities for them to fill their time whilst in the area, ranging from structures activities to practical information.

A well-presented guide is essential for any area looking to attract visitors, and influence their activities / behaviour. It should be branded as Upper Usk Valley and could include a map, promotion of retailers, restaurants, local activities and attractions, events where visitors would be welcome, information on the settlements, Geopark and Dark Skies; overviews of walking routes, etc. The aim should be to make all publications self-financing through advertising / sponsorship, although there may be the need for initial support until proven worthwhile. The use of a contract publisher could be considered, although it would be more appropriate and beneficial to use a local business if at all practical.

In addition:-

The provision of standardised UUV branded information sheets within self-catering accommodation and camping facilities on places to eat, containing brief details of cuisine type, opening hours etc.;

Collated information on all walks in a simple publication containing overview information including start points / distance / duration/ grade; general information on where to / where not to roam, transport links and other useful information.

Village trail leaflets provide an opportunity for the visitor to explore with access to refreshments and comfort breaks. Such a leaflet is in existence for Trecastle, although the only copy found was pinned inside a notice board in the village. This should be updated and reproduced to higher standard than the current leaflet and be readily available to visitors. A sister publication should be developed for Sennybridge / Defynnog. Consideration needs to be given to repeating the exercise for Crai.

Walking tourism is a growing market, growing at a rate of 3.5% per year and is worth in the region of £500 million. It is an important element of 74% of all UK holiday trips to Wales and is the main purpose of 5% of all holidays. It is less seasonal than 'traditional' holiday activities and has the ability of providing a benefit to areas that other forms of tourism do not reach. In order to capitalise on this market, the product offer must be right, the associated infrastructure must deliver and potential customers need information on what is available and where.

c. Welcome

First impressions are crucial in setting the tone of the visit. Welcome signage has already been discussed. The meet and greet afforded to visitors is extremely important, and whilst this comes naturally to a successful business operator, the destination also needs to be inviting and welcoming.

The visitor experience is made up of tangible and intangible aspects of the interface developed within a destination including the aesthetic, visual, practical and human. It involves everything the visitor comes into contact with in – from the facilities used to connections made – both human and aesthetic.

Whilst it is outside of the scope of this study to look at destination management and marketing, it is nevertheless a useful reference point, highlighting the need to consider a bigger picture, or holistic approach to the provision of services and facilities within the Upper Usk Valley as well as general appearance.

The provision of orientation and information at key entry points to the settlements has a key role to play in creating that first impression and making the visitor feel welcome. Visitor facing information is located in Sennybridge and in Trecastle.



The Sennybridge / Defynnog panel and structure, located at the entrance to Maescar Community Hall, contains basic information on four mountain biking routes in one dedicated panel, and a notice-board type structure containing general information and points of interest on Sennybridge and Defynnog, which is badly faded and the structure itself is weathered and scruffy.

The Trecastle Community Notice board located on the A40, opposite the Tea Rooms contains a considerable amount of visitor-orientated information, too much in fact, given its nature! The positioning and scale of the information makes it extremely difficult to absorb, is faded and stained and of limited use attached to a board.



The structure is in need of refurbishment and although efforts to include useful information for visitors are commendable, the content is faded and weather-stained, making it look untidy.

Public Realm

The public realm is equally important – the general appearance of a settlement can either encourage a stop or deter. Street furniture (litter bins, benches etc), notices and signs, pavements, phone boxes, planters, public spaces – all contribute to how a place is perceived. Faded and damaged signs and street furniture should be reported to and replaced by the organisation responsible for them, the streetscene should be clear of

clutter, old notices (eg planning notices) removed. Planting could be introduced to brighten the visual aspect in some areas, recycling facilities need to be kept tidy etc.

The Royal Horticultural Society's It's Your Neighbourhood is a scheme for volunteer-led community gardening groups which are focused on cleaning up and greening up their local area, whether that's the estate where they live, the back alley they share, or the local community centre's outside space.

The corner-stones of the scheme are: community participation, environmental responsibility and gardening achievement. Groups are visited by 'In Bloom' experts who provide valuable feedback on development of current activities and encourage on-going improvements. Communities receive an RHS certificate of achievement reflecting how well they have met the aims of the scheme.

Projects undertaken in other areas include the restoration of a churchyard, converting disused space into usable green space, transforming a back alley into a community gathering space and garden. There are many examples from amongst the hundreds of participating groups, and support and advice available from the RHS.

The key purpose of the scheme is to bring members from across the community together to effect a positive change to the place they live, work or spend their leisure time. Benefits of participation include: increasing positive interaction between community members; generating pride and community empowerment; addressing issues such as sustainability, resource management, recycling, conservation, litter & graffiti reduction, green space development and other sustainable practices; reduction in anti-social behaviour; positive effect on the local economy such as increased commercial enterprise and increased tourism.

Sense of Place

The concept of Sense of Place embraces everything that is unique about an area - special and memorable qualities that resonate with local people and visitors. Local communities and businesses often forget that their everyday qualities are often part of a holiday experience for visitors and can add value and enrich that experience for visitors. Adding Sense of Place into the aesthetics of a tourism business is helpful in locating it in the wider environment and adding to the visitors' sense of being somewhere unique - language, people, food and drink, arts and crafts, environment and landscape all contribute to Sense of Place.

The Upper Usk Valley has its very own cultural history and identity which differentiates it from neighbouring areas. These attributes should be used to inform the development of the UUV logo and brand in a way that will resonate with target audiences.

Developing a local food offer through catering establishments is also key to evoking a sense of place. Providing information on the farm or producer where the key ingredients comes from adds credibility.

Ambassadors

Ambassadors can be an invaluable resource to visitor. They are passionate and knowledgeable about their local area. They have benefited from free, accredited training, provided by the BBNPA, to become a welcoming host and a reliable source of information about their locality. Additional bolt on modules have been developed, and whilst there are only a handful of ambassadors in the Upper Usk Valley currently, the scheme is still running and participation should be encouraged. The promotion of the services of local Ambassadors to maximise the benefits to visitors needs to be considered.

At a basic level, all individuals who have an interface with visitors should be confident of knowing what the area has to offer, what they feel they could recommend and where to direct visitors.

WAW accreditation

Walkers are Welcome is an accreditation scheme which denotes a welcome to walkers. It relies on a bottom-up approach, with the community demonstrating their support by ensuring that the needs of walkers are catered for.

The benefits of accreditation include:-

- Attracting more people to visit the area to enjoy local walks
- Economic benefit for local shops, B&Bs, Hotels, Pubs, Cafés, Restaurants, etc. through increased footfall
- Strengthens Towns' reputation as a walking destination
- Demonstrates that walkers will be given a warm welcome by the local community

The process itself is of benefit as it brings community groups and businesses together in partnership for the benefit of the whole community

d. Access to and Quality of Facilities and Services

As detailed in the previous section, the product offer within the Upper Usk Valley is made up of visitor accommodation, the landscape with the informal recreational facilities provided within it, signage and information provision, events and local services such as food and drink establishments, shops etc.

Accreditation of visitor accommodation is still important, as they are often used during the early stages of the selection process. Customers like to feel good about their choice of accommodation and will select a property that has a green award over one that does not, if it fulfils all other requirements. Schemes such as walkers / cyclists are welcome are a form of shorthand demonstration that certain facilities aimed at this particular sector are provided as standard.

Customer review sites such as Trip Advisor and Reevoo are also extremely important. Reviews are often used as a secondary filter by potential customers and high ratings need to be protected by ensuring that any negative comments are dealt with appropriately and not ignored.

Visitor demands are constantly increasing and maintaining standards at a level where they meet or exceed expectations is a constant pursuit. It is however extremely important to manage expectations and not to oversell or exaggerate as this leads to extreme dissatisfaction. It is therefore critical that the quality of the product is pro-actively managed and monitored. Whilst businesses will generally undertake this as a matter of course, it is easy to overlook the public facilities and which are more remote from the organisations that have responsibility for them.

The Upper Usk Valley nestles in a special, spectacular and varied landscape; it has a very strong walking product offer and this should be fully exploited. The number of organisations involved in the provision and maintenance of the network of footpaths, bridleways and byways has not helped to achieve a situation where access to information by users is straight-forward. A considerable amount work needs to be done in order to bring the user closer to the product.

The Geopark and Dark Skies accreditation are not fully exploited and more should be made of these. These are truly special assets and merit considerable profile and development as part of any visitor's itinerary.

Geo-caching is still on the increase and is great for a family activity. It is an outdoor recreational activity that uses navigational techniques to hide and seek 'caches'. A typical cache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook where the geo-cacher enters the date they found it and signs it with their established code name. After signing into the log, the cache must be placed back exactly where the person found it.

There is potential and the will to link existing agricultural events and possibly develop 'fringe' events alongside to provide a month-long celebration of agricultural life in the area. Some existing community events and routine activities lend themselves to growth and active promotion to visitors, helping to extend the season 

Churches are unique in having a physical presence in almost every community. Their social importance is mirrored in the value of their built heritage: they are often the most architecturally significant buildings in the landscape or townscape in which they are found. Many people will visit a church while on holiday, or out for the day for reasons which can be spiritual, impulsive, connections with family or famous people or have an interest in architecture.

Many churches open their doors to visitors and through interpretation they can enhance visitor enjoyment and understanding of churches and rural communities; provide a more effective ministry to visitors and provide opportunities for community development and a welcome source of additional funds.

OBJECTIVE 4

Grow staying visitor numbers, especially off-peak

Building a strong identity base around the Key Assets of the Upper Usk Valley will create awareness and generate curiosity. Availability of information to satisfy that

curiosity will build a knowledge and understanding of the area. Product enhancement and development will ensure that the heightening expectations of visitors are met and exceeded, providing an experience they will wish to repeat.

The area receives a high proportion of repeat visitors and maintaining these is important as they provide word of mouth recommendations and peer reinforcement. Efforts should be taken to encourage longer stays, through greater awareness of available opportunities in the landscape, opportunities for community engagement access to improved local facilities and services; in essence, helping visitors to devise a 'package' for themselves .

This group should be easy to target if contact details are requested which can then be used for selective and careful e-marketing.

Day visitors should also be encouraged to return as staying visitors. Key to this aspiration is the availability of information strategic day visitor touch-points.

Occupancy rates and anecdotal information suggests that the focus of growth needs to be in the off-peak periods.

Existing marketing activities for the area are undertaken by the Brecon Beacons Destination Partnership and also by Powys County Council. Each tourism business also undertakes marketing at some level, dependant on their own objectives, abilities and desires for growth.

It is not felt to be necessary to undertake additional significant marketing activity, as there is adequate provision for businesses to buy into should they wish. However, there is room for more pro-activity using the PR / Social Media in place to drive traffic to the Upper Usk Valley. The creation of a dedicated website and / or dedicated page on the Brecon Beacons site for the UUV would enhance brand identity and enable an awareness of the destination to begin to form. All businesses in the UUV should have a presence on the regional (BB & PCC) sites, as well as the UUV site (should this be developed), with links to their own businesses, through which contact is established with the customer.

Each business needs to ensure that their own websites and on-line information (via third party sites) is accurate and comprehensive, providing all the information that potential visitors would need to encourage them to stay in the area.

The collection of customer data enables the development of a relationship and increased likelihood of repeat visitation. E-marketing activities should be undertaken to encourage additional visits during the quieter periods.

Increasing the length of stay is as important, if not more so, than increasing visitor numbers. In order to encourage this, visitors need to be provided with all the opportunities to enjoy the area at the time of decision-making. Therefore it is vital that pre-visit information is comprehensive and enticing.

BBNPA's Marketing Strategy identifies the following target audiences for the National Park

Target audiences

Some work has taken place on the likely target audiences as visitors to the area. The following priorities have been identified in a series of strategies for Tourism for the area.

Priority 1

- **Freedom seekers.** Looking for relaxation and soft activities in a scenic natural environment with good food and accommodation. Main message "Escape and change of pace"
- **Active seniors.** Looking for the above together with broader cultural interest. Main message "Indulgence"
- **Outdoor activists.** Specifically seeking hiking, cycling, riding, canoeing and other activities in a scenic environment. Main message "Freedom and space"
- **Families.** Looking for active family holidays. Main message "Plenty to do".

Priority 2:

- **Youth Groups.** Looking for activities, personal development and bonding and field studies. Main message "Challenging but safe"
- **Business/corporate activities.** Looking for team building etc. Main message "Inspirational environment"

Priority 3:

- **Independent overseas tourers.** Looking for scenic beauty, soft activities and culture. Main message "Scenically beautiful and culturally interesting"
- **Other special interest.** Looking for specific themes, e.g. conservation, geology etc. Main message to be geared to particular interest
- **Day visitors (general).** From South Wales primarily. Looking for the 'National Park' and individual attractions. Main message "The Brecon Beacons is your back garden"
- **Day visitors (outdoor).** From South Wales and the Bristol area. Looking for undertaking regular activities. Main message "Indulge your passion close to home"
- Also identified: Fishing and Family and Friends

These target audiences are equally relevant to the Upper Usk Valley. Therefore any marketing activities undertaken by the Brecon Beacons destination will already be skewed to these audience groups.

The enhancement of the product offer, information provision, wider local engagement and an identifiable presence in the market place are considered to be the necessary steps in developing sustainable tourism to the Upper Usk Valley. As a destination, the Brecon Beacons is already well established in the market place and it is unrealistic to try and compete. One of the key strengths of the UUV is that it is located within the National Park and this should be exploited through complementarity and not undermined by competitiveness.

Collaboration amongst the members of Upper Usk Valley Rural Alliance and across the community is key to the delivery of this Strategy and Action Plan.

Section 6 - Action Plan

The following action plan is built around delivering on the objectives outlined in the previous section as a means of achieving the vision for the Upper Usk Valley. Actions have been allocated a priority ranking, although no timeframes have been included as implementation will need to be reactive to funding sources available and the resources (time, commitment and skills) that can be brought to the table from within the Upper Usk Valley Rural Alliance.

| Community Engagement | Comments | Priority | Delivery |
|--|--|-----------------|---|
| Establish RA group, elect chair, deputy and secretary as minimum | | H | Group with support from STO |
| Agree aims and objectives, frequency of meetings etc. | | H | Group with support from STO |
| Prioritise actions and allocate tasks | | H | Group with support from STO |
| Decide on methods and delivery of internal communications | Mechanism for updating and informing the community of groups activities to encourage involvement | H | Group with support from STO |
| Develop Upper Usk Newsletter (electronic) and/or social media platform or similar as means of external communications and engagement | | H | No cost, although some training via BBNPA might be required |
| Identify key influencing groups within the community and seek support and engagement | Groups such as guides, YFC etc. | H | RA Group |
| Explore ways of engaging with younger audience to recruit volunteers for heritage attractions, cycle/walking routes. | Opportunity for all involved in taking UUV RA forward | M | BBNPA |
| Identify training / workshops that would be helpful in building confidence / skills in relation to the UUV RA group | For example:- Ambassador, Managing meetings, customer care, menu development, sense of place, IT etc | M | Group / BBNPA |

| Identity Development | Comments | Priority | Delivery |
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| <p>The nomenclature 'Upper Usk Valley' is to be used to specifically identify the area as a discrete destination within the Brecon Beacons National Park and to begin to set it apart from other destinations within the Park. The benefit of this is two-fold:- providing the communities with a sense of cohesion and common purpose in terms of developing the tourism economy; and providing the visitors with a recognisable destination that can help to build loyalty and market awareness.</p> | | | |
| <p>Creation of identity for UUV based on key strengths / assets. Produce style-guide</p> | <p>Additional Piece of work to be undertaken by consultant and/or design agency.</p> | <p>H</p> | <p>Rural Alliance / Group to commission</p> |
| <p>Development of a common UUV branded resource for information provision in accommodation</p> | <p>Use of branded ring binders. Contents to include information sheets and leaflets.</p> | <p>H</p> | <p>Rural Alliance / Group</p> |
| <p>Use of logo / strapline on all appropriate communications, websites, webpages, advertising etc.</p> | <p>In order to generate awareness. All businesses to participate.</p> | <p>H</p> | <p>No additional cost. All to participate</p> |
| <p>Entry signage to UUV - Lobby PCC Highways and BBNPA to support bespoke 'Welcome to UUV' on highway, utilising identity.</p> | <p>An alternative would be to erect signage structure on private land, with BBNPA planning permission. In this scenario – creative solutions would be possible.</p> | <p>H</p> | <p>Group / RA</p> |
| <p>Improve the Public Realm in settlements to give a better welcome and sense of place eg relevant planting, welcome signage, etc.</p> | <p>Welcome signage – replace town/ village entry signs to include 'welcome to'. Consult with PCC Highways.</p> | <p>M</p> | <p>Rural Alliances / Group</p> |
| | <p>Establishment of 'In Your Neighbourhood' scheme (RHS)</p> | <p>M</p> | <p>Community / RA Group</p> |
| <p>Commission branded leaflet dispensers. Control usage.</p> | <p>Purchase ready-made Perspex leaflet dispensers (c. £12.50 each). Commission production of branded self-adhesive front stickers.(production / print costs will depend on size and number of dispensers)</p> | <p>M/L</p> | <p>Rural Alliances Sponsorship may be possible</p> |
| <p>Develop / update town / village trail leaflets</p> | <p>Review and re-produce Trecastle trail leaflet. Develop / review for others</p> | <p>M</p> | <p>Community Council / sponsorship / Rural Alliances?</p> |

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| Develop Sense of Place in visitor-used establishments through the inclusion of local artwork, photography, crafts, produce etc. | | Identification of available products, skills within the community. Meet the producer event (B2B) | M | BBNPA / RA / Group |
| Develop Interpretative Plan to relay information in key laybys and viewpoints. | | Additional Piece of work to be undertaken by consultant and/or design agency. | L | Rural Alliance / Group to commission |
| Information Provision | | Comments | Priority | Delivery |
| Information must be easily available to potential visitors looking to opportunities for days out and staying visits in the area. The Upper Usk Valley needs to present itself at the time when searches and decisions are being made, in places where competing destinations appear. | | | | |
| Pre-Visit | Develop customer facing website on UUV to include all product, events, activities and means of accessing the area (inc public transport). Link to member / operator websites and 'group' sites such as BBT, Tourism Powys etc . Website must be built to enable easy maintenance and optimisation. | This to become the main source of detailed information for visitors. UUV member(s) to be designated as 'webmaster' and be responsible for updating. Potential to enlist help from younger community member and provide training if required. | H | Rural Alliances BBNPA |
| | Lobby for additional section on BBT & BBNPA& Powys websites for UUV (the new BBNP destination website will be visitor facing and will take the www.breconbeacons.org url) | There is already a Sennybridge and Trecastle page on BBT website. New Destination website being developed – ensure adequate UUV representation. | H | RA Group |
| | Incorporate wider UUV information on individual businesses websites, utilising identity. Link to UUV site. | Responsibility of individual businesses. Standardised content could be developed within group. In-group mentoring may be useful. | M | RA Group |
| On-territory Literature | A well-presented guide is an asset for any area looking to attract visitors and influence their activities / behaviour. It can include a map, 'what's on', listings, promotion of retailers, restaurants, local activities and attractions. | | | |
| | Produce leaflet / brochure on UUV - to include attractions and activities, places to eat and drink, key events, towns for distribution on-territory and within region | Appoint contractor to develop and co-ordinate content, sales and production. Offset production costs through advertising / inclusion costs. | M/L | Rural Alliances / Group |
| | List / promote places to eat / drink. Make available in S/C accommodation and camping facilities. To include brief details | Can be done in-house by volunteer group member. Print costs will depend on format. Colour photocopy cost c.£0.10p per A4 sheet. (Could | H | Group |

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| | of establishment, location and opening times. Use UUV branding. | <i>provide electronic master copy with onus on operators to provide in accommodation)</i> | | |
| | Provide information on local services and facilities – including where to buy provisions, fuel, post office and cashpoint; local events, family activities, suggested itineraries, wet-weather activities, nearby attractions etc. | Include in branded ring-binder. Centrally produced resource by group, supplied to members in PDF format for printing. Use UUV branding. | M | Rural Alliances / group |
| | Collate all walks and develop publication of overview information on all walks including distance / duration/ grade information on where to / where not to roam, transport links etc. | Group activity with support from BBNPA and The Epynt Way Association. Print costs. Printer-friendly version needed. Formatting and print costs. | M | Rural Alliances / Group |
| | Develop printer-friendly downloads of all new publications. | | H | |
| Distribution | Literature needs to be available for visitors in places that they are likely to be found and picked up. The use of branded dispensers – either free-standing or wall-mounted – would strengthen identity and provide an easy to maintain resource. | | | |
| | Identify local outlets for literature display, such as accommodation, eateries, shops and other visitor touch-points | Group exercise. Devise rota for replenishment. | M | Group |
| TIC Services | Tourist Information Centres provide a valuable service to visitors already in the destination, and provide the opportunity to encourage visitors staying in the wider BBNP area to visit the Upper Usk Valley to partake in an activity, event etc | | | |
| | Ensure the Tourist / Visitor Information Centres (Brecon, Libanus, Llandovery) carry comprehensive information on UUV | Volunteer(s) from group to engage and maintain contact and to ensure supply and visibility | M | No cost |
| | Organise and host Familiarisation trip for TIC / VIC staff | Volunteer(s) from group to arrange and 'guide' visit | M | No cost / minimal hospitality costs |
| Orientation | Orientation points provide the visitor with an awareness of what the area has to offer and can provide a welcoming introduction. | | | |
| | Visitor information / orientation in Sennybridge, Defynnog, Crai and Trecastle at key hub / arrival points | Renew Sennybridge panel and structure. | M | RA / BBNPA / Community Council |
| | Also at The White House Country Inn | Replace Trecastle TIP. Re site in area of car parking | H/M | RA / BBNPA / Community Council |

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| | | Commission additional orientation point for The White House | M/L | RA / BBNPA / Community Council |
| | Community Notice Boards | Devise process which will ensure relevance and timeliness of material inserted. | H | Community Councils |
| | Days out / Familiarisation visits for local operators to build local knowledge and raise awareness from a visitor perspective | Group exercise | M | RA / BBNPA |
| | Ambassadors / greeters Expansion and extension of programme with local 'modules' similar to green badge guides. The target audience could include are those who perhaps don't think of themselves being in the tourism sector but still have contact with visitors eg - people working at the filling stations, shops, pubs, etc. | Explore opportunity with BBNPA . Can provide a mechanism for community embracement and engagement. | M | BBNPA |
| Signage | | Comments | Priority | Delivery |
| Signing of existing parking in settlement areas, from both directions. | | Lobby PCC Highways to sign parking suitable for visitors from both directions. Report any maintenance requirements. | M | RA Group |
| Standardise directional signs on private property to accommodation, using UUV logo, standardised font etc. | | Agree design style of non-highway directional signs to accommodation (to be erected on private land) | M | |
| Establish mechanism for reporting maintenance requirements and gaps in way marking along footpaths etc. | | Devise system for reporting issues into LAF for action. | M | RA Group |
| Lobby PCC highways to install advance signage of layby's with mobile phone signal | | Likely to be lengthy process as will require agreement to concept and submission of design to WG for approval | L | RA Group |
| Visitor Facilities | | Comments | Priority | Delivery |
| Identify conveniences available for use by visitors. Sign using UUV logo | | Seek out facilities which will welcome use of conveniences by public. Develop signs / window | H | RA. |

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| | | stickers | | |
| Consistent and published opening / meal times in Café's / tea rooms; pubs / eateries | | Lobby operators. | H | RA Group |
| Family friendly meals and meal times | | Lobby operators | H | |
| Explore opportunities for a visitor orientated retail outlet. | | Discuss potential with BBNPA. Community Halls? Resource Centre? Empty premises? Business opportunity? | M | Unknown at this stage. Exploratory piece of work. |
| Accommodation – cycling / walking –friendly facilities (bike wash, secure storage, drying facilities etc.) | | Promote where in existence. Consider developing where not. | H/M | |
| Lobby for better mobile communications and broadband coverage | | To enable visitors to access information and make bookings whilst in territory. | H/M | BBNPA / Community |
| Product Development | | Comments | Priority | Delivery |
| Walking | Develop leafleted trail(s) between settlements, using suitable off-road routes if possible. Identify starting point(s), distance, facilities, public transport links, WC, etc. | Discuss potential with BBNPA wardens/ land owners etc. | M | RA to fund production of leaflet(s) |
| | Explore potential of Walkers Are Welcome accreditation. | Requires buy-in from wider community. | M | No cost |
| | Development of additional interpreted walks along ROW network in consultation with BBNPA & landowners eg Roman Road | Co-ordinated group activity. Assistance from BBNPA., Historical societies, Cadw etc | M | External funding may be possible |
| | Identify suitable routes to comply with Walking for All requirements | Publicise & promote through existing channels and specialist avenues | H | BBNPA / Group |
| | Provision of rest-points walking routes. | Identify appropriate locations and arrangements for the provision of rest / picnic spots on walking routes | M | Group / BBNPA / Landowners |
| | Develop on site interpretation / orientation at key walking hubs | Group activity with BBNPA Wardens. Identify most suitable points where there is a story to tell – eg Sarn Helen, | M | BBNPA / External funding?? |

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| | Develop geo-caching for family market | Discuss with BBNPA. Guidance available from http://www.geocaching.com/guide/ | M | Group / BBNPA / Landowners |
| | Develop family-friendly themed walks – eg wildlife. Develop downloadable guide – with PDF copies available on-territory. | Opportunity for students / young farmers in association with BBNPA Wardens and Ecologists. | H/M | No cost |
| | Explore potential for guided walks (new future business opportunity?) | Initially connect with existing walk leader to organise 2 or 3 easy guided / interpreted walks for staying visitors. | M | RA funding. Could be off-set by charging participants |
| | Explore opportunity for Sherpa transport route for cyclists / walkers / canoeists and moving luggage for 'easy' walkers. Calls at pubs, hotels (new business opportunity?) | Explore opportunity & assess demand via workshop with accommodation operators and activity providers | L | RA to facilitate |
| Cycling / Mountain Biking & Riding | Heighten the promotion of Sennybridge as a cycling 'hub'. Engage with magazines to secure editorial copy. Investigate product development requirements along cycle routes | Provide secure parking at Sennybridge hub, information on routes, facilities etc. | M | Funding required. BBNPA? |
| | | Survey cyclists / mountain bikers in conjunction with BBNPA / BBT. | M | Wider BBT activity |
| | | Use of BBNPA PR contract to reach publishers, encourage editorial and Blog | H | RA Group |
| | Ensure Bike Hire and repair details available. (opportunity for new business or community enterprise, or franchise) | Identify existing local business(es). Include information in ring binder. Consider charging inclusion fee. | M | Group activity |
| | Lobby for implementation of planned Sustrans route 43 (Swansea to Builth) | BBNPA to take lead | M | BBNPA |
| | Develop family-friendly themed circular cycle routes. | Discuss with BBNPA / landowners. Develop downloadable route map. Make available on-territory. | M | RA / BBNPA funding, Sponsorship / Grant aid |
| | Develop publication of routes for cycling and riding | Discuss with BBNPA / landowners. Develop downloadable route map. Make available on- | H | RA / BBNPA funding, |

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| | Investigate opportunities for linking existing permissible routes to develop and promote circular routes | territory. | | Sponsorship / Grant aid |
| | Promote on websites as identified above. | Section on key website(s) with links to all publications. Overview information on individual business websites with links. | H | |
| | Establish process by which any shortfalls / maintenance requirements that come to light can be passed to the Local access Forum for attention. | This is applicable to all footpath, bridleways, byways etc. | H | |
| Dark Skies | Identify key location(s) to enjoy experience | Workshop with astronomical society to explore requirements, gain insights, information and assistance. | H | RA to facilitate |
| | Build knowledge | Workshop with Astronomical Society | H | BBNPA |
| | Develop a 'product offer' and publicise | BBNPA officers to advise | M | Group activity |
| | Production of 'guide to our skies' publication. | With assistance from astronomical society. Initially as downloadable PDF. Make available on-territory | M | Group activity. |
| | Provision of basic low-key infrastructure such as seating, shelter etc. | Possible donation / sponsorship / grant aid / BBNPA / Astronomical society | M | Group to explore in conjunction with RA |
| | Pilot scheme of hire / loan of equipment by visitors (Telescopes / seats / blankets / picnic baskets) | Devise 'policy' and terms. This could be a central resource(s) which the community and visitors could have access to. Consider charging & deposit. | H | |
| | Train a network of Guides / Ambassadors (providing them with a business opportunity?) | Ambassador module? Training session via BBNPA / BBT. | H/M | BBNPA |
| | Establish two key events in UUV | In conjunction with Astronomical Society | M | RA Group / BBNPA |
| | Lobby for / develop a website / webpage | Lobby BBNPA to produce a web-page / site and promotional activity | H | RA Group |

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| | Develop awareness | Work with relevant bodies to develop the profile and opportunities for viewing, understanding and promoting the UUV as one of the key destination in the National Park for the Dark Skies experience | H | RA & others / BBNPA |
| | Link with other areas in NP which are becoming involved in promoting the Dark Skies experience. | | | |
| | Encourage educational visits – schools & universities | Joint work between Hostel operators and BBNPA to include the development of educational resources and promotion to educational market | M/L | BBNPA lead |
| Churches & Chapels | Consider ways to involve the local churches in engagement with the tourism industry | Explore fund-raising opportunities in conjunction with other local groups and events – such as Churchyard tours, Recipe book, Refreshment stop during guided walk / walking festival etc. | M | Church / Chapel groups + RA Groups + community |
| | | Link with historical society / local archives to provide paid-for genealogy assistance | M | |
| | | Open doors on a periodic, but regular basis to provide interpreted tours | M | |
| Food and Drink | Development of local produce offer by encouraging hospitality businesses to buy, feature and promote local food and drink and build sense of place into menus | Awareness raising / Training session. Consider developing one or two providers and helping them to develop as 'exemplars' for others to follow suit. | H | BBNPA / RA |
| | Investigate opportunity to develop a voucher scheme for staying guests | Joint initiative between accommodation providers and restaurants / cafes etc. | H | Group activity |
| | Develop and promote local produce based home delivery service for staying guests | Already being done, although limited. Expand using additional producers. | M/L | Now business opportunity |
| | Explore ways of developing a local food retail offer - such as a farm shop, pop-up shop, or community shop. | Awareness raising of availability and demand | L | BBNPA |
| | Waste reduction in hospitality sector | Encourage participation in schemes to reduce food waste costs and landfill contributions | H | WRAP |
| | Meet the supplier event (food and crafts) | Business to Business event | H | Group activity |

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| Events | Events are a tried and tested way to attract people to a place, engage the local community and give people a fabulous experience. By using outdoor space as well as indoor venues, it is possible to create themed, seasonal, fun events that attract wide or specialist audiences into the area who then shop, buy food, or even stay overnight. | | | |
| | Links to events in wider region such as Brecon Jazz, Hay Festival, Royal Welsh etc. | Promote existing events in the area on UUV web site / pages and individual sites as a means of increasing bookings to serviced accommodation, touring sites, as S/C busy at these times. | M | Businesses and web-masters |
| | Bring together groups of interested individuals to develop sustainable annual or biennial festivals; | Could consider:- Food Festival, Antiques festival, Dark skies events, Geocaching event, Local Craft days, garden days, farm walks | M | Group + community |
| | Utilise Sennybridge show as an anchor for a month long programme of events and activities leading up to the Llandovery Sheep Festival. To include the revived Trecastle Agricultural Show | Group events together to promote a month-long 'Sheeptember' festival. Promote on UUV web site / pages and individual sites. Utilise BBNPA PR contract | H | Community Groups |
| | Grow existing successful community events and develop new ones that that celebrate the distinctive assets of UUV | Events such as (family) treasure hunts, star-gazing, plant sale, open days, beer festival, guided village trails etc. Promote to and welcome visitors | H | Community Groups |
| Interpretation | Develop interpretation at key sites, including digital interpretation. Consider use of QR codes, Augmented Reality etc. where practical and appropriate – for example roman camps (done), village centres etc. | QR codes are a cost-effective way of providing detailed information, (if mobile signals are available). Information should also be downloadable from websites. | L | Potential future project |
| | Explore ways of utilising the Ambassador Scheme to tell the local story | Discuss with BBNPA and local Ambassadors | M | Possible business opportunity |
| Research | Participation by tourism businesses in STEAM / VW occupancy surveys | Encouragement to provide occupancy data in order to provide more accurate outputs for area in order to monitor impacts | H | All |

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| | Tourism businesses to encourage customer completion of BBNP survey | Completion could be encouraged through incentives | H | Incentives provided by members |
| | Invite customer feedback on aspects of UUV, eg signposting, information provision, customer service, visitor experience etc. | Group to gather and collate responses. Identification of potential actions. | H/M | Group activity |
| Promotion | | Comments | Priority | Delivery |
| | Produce articles / editorial copy for The Post and other publications | This could present an opportunity to engage wider community members / mentor young people? | M | Group |
| | Use of social media to talk about area and assets. | Utilise the existing PR/ Social media contract to raise awareness and drive traffic to UUV | H | Group + BBNPA contract |
| | Identify opportunities to develop short breaks linking with other local provision of services and activities, eg - photography breaks, pamper breaks, foraging, romantic star gazing with champagne picnic etc.... | Organise 'speed-dating' event to explore possibilities for collaboration. Develop and promote offers based on experiences | M/L | RA to facilitate |
| | Use of contact form on UUV / individual website to develop database for marketing purposes. Utilise social media and optimisation techniques to heighten visibility and rankings. | Provision of training in copywriting for digital media, use of databases, newsletter formatting such as Mail chimp | H | BBNPA / BBT / All |