

VISITOR BUS TOOLKIT

Developing successful visitor bus
services in National Parks and
other special landscapes



Acknowledgements

This toolkit was **produced** by New Forest National Park Authority, **funded** through the Department for Transport's *Two National Parks LSTF* programme.

Thank you to everyone who contributed information and ideas, including: Richard Johnson, Colin Speakman, Ed Beale, John Davies, Matt Kitchen, Bryan McFarland, Emma Moody, Owen Roberts, Mark Holroyd, Maria Taplin and especially Lynn Sloman.

Photos: New Forest National Park Authority, Nat Taplin, Brighton & Hove City Council, DalesBus, Baytrans, Go Lakes/LDNPA, Stagecoach, Southern Vectis, Pembrokeshire County Council.
© New Forest National Park Authority 2015.

CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Benefits	6
Routes	8
Partnerships	12
Tendering	13
Marketing	14
Journey	20
Income	24
Summary	27
Case studies:	30
Breeze up to the Downs	30
DalesBus	32
Gower Explorer	34
Needles Breezer	36
Lakes Connection	38
New Forest Tour	40
Pembrokeshire Coastal	42



INTRODUCTION WELCOME ON BOARD

Buses give visitors a chance to break out of their cars, meet local people and take in the view. Visitors exploring by bus typically spend more time in local villages and attractions – spending more money and getting more out of their visit.

The best visitor buses turn the journey into an attraction in its own right – with friendly drivers, scenic routes, panoramic windows and links to walks and attractions, as well as discounts and incentives to reward travellers.

This toolkit is a practical guide to setting up and promoting successful visitor bus services in National Parks, AONBs and other special landscapes. The toolkit's suggestions are based on experience from the New Forest National Park and six other well-established visitor bus services from around England and Wales.

Our experience shows that it is possible to develop commercially-viable visitor bus services in popular destinations. This has already been achieved in the Isle of Wight, the Lake District and the New Forest – all showcased in this toolkit.

The case studies show that visitor bus services can succeed in a variety of different situations: where passengers are mostly local residents (as in the South Downs); where passengers are mostly staying visitors (as in Pembrokeshire); or where passengers are mostly day visitors from surrounding cities (as in the Yorkshire Dales).

One key thing which all these services tend to have in common is a champion – someone who believes passionately in providing great bus services for visitors and local people. If that person is you, then I wish you the best of luck!

Nat Taplin

Sustainable Transport Officer
New Forest National Park Authority
March 2015

BENEFITS MAKING THE CASE

As you'll need to find £50,000 or more to get a new service off the ground, you're likely to have to make a case for it. You'll need to win support from within your own organisation and from other partners.

Here are some of the benefits a successful visitor bus service can deliver:

- helping to safeguard the tranquillity of the area by reducing the visual clutter and noise pollution of cars (visitors often say traffic spoils their experience)
- increasing visitor spend with local businesses – research shows that people visiting by bus spend more than people visiting by car (surveys on the Gower Explorer and DalesBus both reported £3 spent locally for every £1 of subsidy)

- taking cars off the roads – reducing congestion, pollution and carbon emissions (it is estimated that the New Forest Tour saved 226,000 car miles in 2014)
- widening access to the countryside, especially the elderly and low income families – around two thirds of passengers on visitor buses don't have access to a car (29% of Brighton's *Breeze up to the Downs* passengers would otherwise stay at home).

Another key factor is that the service can become fully or largely commercial within a few years – meaning that the subsidy can come to an end but the service lives on...



ROUTES

PLANNING YOUR ROUTE

Before you get out your OS map and highlighter pens to start planning your route, do a bit of research into your customers:

How many people live in and around the National Park?

Day visitors – where are they from, when do they come?

Staying visitors – where do they stay, where do they go?

What are the key hubs and hotspots?

This doesn't need to be too exhaustive – you're just trying to work out the places most people go on their days out.

Make sure that your buses will be running from where people are to where they want to go. You'll want your route to include:

- Main towns in or just outside the National Park
- Key arrival points (car parks, rail stations, bus hubs)
- Holiday parks, campsites or clusters of hotels/B&Bs
- Honeypot villages
- Major visitor attractions
- Iconic landscape features
- Top view point/picnic spots
- Popular walking routes.

Work out your top USP (unique selling point)

It could be:

- a spectacular mountain pass or coastal road
- a famous heritage site or attraction
- a tour of the most popular villages/sights
- a long distance footpath
- an iconic landmark/heritage site.

This USP is the hook on which to hang your route, your identity and your marketing.

TOP TIP

The **Needles Breezer** on the Isle of Wight has exclusive access to the National Trust's Needles Battery – the only other access is a one mile walk each way – a key selling point for the service.



Left: The Dambuster Shuttle

The length of your season

This is the main way you can control the cost of the service. What days of the week and times of the year are you likely to have enough passengers to fill your buses?

Daily

A daily service has the benefit of providing a regular, visible service to win over the maximum number of locals and visitors during the peak summer season. Running just for the school summer holidays might make sense if you're aiming at families, or you can extend into June and September for walkers, couples and retirees.

Weekends only

If you're looking at a longer season, then running weekends only makes sense. A typical season for many weekend services is May half term to end of September, or Easter to October.

Timetable

An hourly clock-face timetable makes it easy for people to understand. Even with fewer buses, aim for a regular timetable and avoid variations and footnotes if possible.

Make sure the timetable is realistic – can be driven at a leisurely pace, allowing for people getting on and off, congestion, and layover time at each end.

The length of your route

■ How long does the route take, allowing time for stops and congestion? How many vehicles are needed to run a regular service? (a leisurely 30 mile route might take 75 minutes each way – needing three buses to provide an hourly service)

■ Where possible you want to follow the scenic roads with the best views

■ Weigh up the benefit of a longer route, all the way from a large town or city, against a shorter 'shuttle' service within the National Park

■ Bear in mind trees... branches may need to be cut back to fit double decker buses, especially open-toppers. The highway authority has a statutory duty to do the necessary tree cutting, but won't welcome the extra cost!

A great trick if you can swing it is to negotiate exclusive access along a scenic route which is otherwise closed to traffic – like the Dambuster Shuttle in the Peak District which runs along Ladybower Reservoir when it is closed to cars at weekends.





PARTNERSHIPS MAKING FRIENDS

It's important to build good relationships with all the key players – local authorities, key organisations (such as a tourism partnership or the National Trust) and visitor attractions.

You may also want to sound out community groups, community rail partnership, Ramblers groups etc.

It might be useful to set up a group to harness ideas and commitment from partners, without creating too many meetings or admin! The main

thing is to find some key allies who will champion the bus service and help win funding and support.

The most important relationship of all is with your chosen bus operator...

TENDERING FINDING THE PERFECT PARTNER

Try to build a really good, open working relationship with your chosen bus operator. Find an operator with a can-do attitude who will invest time, effort and money into the service with a view to establishing a commercial (or semi-commercial) route and reaping the benefits.

You could work with the Passenger Transport team at your local authority to handle the tendering process, or you may want to do it yourself. The Department for Transport has produced a handy guide *Tendering Road Passenger Transport Contracts – Best Practice Guidance* (you'll find it on Google). Here are a few options:

- If there's a particular operator you've already got in mind, you could go straight to them for a 'de minimis' tender (just the one quote). DfT guidance is that this should usually be for contracts of no more than £30,000.

- If there's an existing bus route you think can be adapted or developed into a more appealing visitor bus service you could provide 'kick start' funding – subsidising the operator to serve a particular site, run on Sundays, or more frequently – combined with a marketing push, with the aim of becoming commercially viable in 2 or 3 years.

- If you are starting a new route from scratch, you might need around £50,000 (excluding your time), for example, to run and market a weekend-only service for four months.

Types of tender

Minimum cost

You pay a fixed price to the operator but you get all the ticket revenue – so the cost is variable – you take the risk/reward.

Minimum subsidy

You pay a fixed price to the operator, but they keep all the ticket revenue – so the cost is fixed – operator takes the risk/reward.

'Sliding scale'

You may be able to negotiate a hybrid with the operator, where the amount of subsidy you pay them reduces according to how much ticket revenue they take. Like this:

Total ticket revenue	Operating subsidy
Less than £10,000	£20,000
Then on a proportional sliding scale to:	
£30,000	Nil

The important thing is to team up with an operator who really wants to make it work.

MARKETING SPREADING THE WORD

As you can't drive the buses and can't control the weather, marketing is the most important thing you can control. Marketing is crucial. As Richard Johnson at Brighton & Hove City Council succinctly puts it 'there's no point in running buses if you don't market them'.

Brand

First of all you want a really catchy name. Here are a few for inspiration:

Coasthopper (Norfolk)
Snowdon Sherpa (Snowdonia)
Beach Bus (New Forest)
Pendle Witch Hopper (Bowland)
Puffin Shuttle (Pembrokeshire)

It's usually best to substitute the word bus with something more exciting like: Explorer, Coaster, Rambler, Experience, Tour.

You may want to associate your bus with something locally distinctive like Robin Hood Rover or Bakewell Tart Bus (those are made up, but you get the idea).

An appealing animal can make a great logo/mascot. A perfect example is the puffin used in Pembrokeshire. You could also choose an iconic flower (like the Bluebell Railway) or a famous person, landmark, castle etc.

It's a really good idea to commission some eye-catching graphics, which showcase the USPs of the route.

Illustrations can work better than photos, as they are bolder and

can enhance or montage the key highlights of the route.

If using photos, try and source professional ones (Visit Britain has a photo library). Pictures with people enjoying themselves in the outdoors work well.

A strong image can be repeated across all your marketing materials. You may want to enlist a professional designer/illustrator to help you create good graphics.

Message

A great slogan sums up the USP of your route and can be used repeatedly to lodge in people's minds, such as: Breeze up to the Downs (Brighton), Take an open top safari (New Forest).

Inside the website or leaflet you can

TOP TIP

You could give your bus a catchy number, like Northumberland's AD122 Hadrian's Wall bus.



feature other benefits:

- Relax, let someone else do the driving
- Get great views from the top deck
- Walk one way and bus back
- Hop on and off all day
- Enjoy great discounts

Underlying messages for any visitor bus service are that it is *fun* (see more, explore, have an adventure, new experience), *easy* (easy to reach, regular, stops right outside) and *great value* (day rover tickets, discounts at attractions).

Above: Free ice creams on The Beach Bus

Incentives

Offering discounts and benefits is a great way to tempt people on board and reward them for going car-free. Negotiate discounts at key attractions, activities and eateries along the route, when passengers show their bus ticket.

Here are some examples:

- 2 for 1 entry at a major attraction
- 20% off at a number of attractions
- Free cup of tea in the café
- Free cup cake/stick of rock etc.

Ideally try and get the same offer (eg 20% off) everywhere and avoid fiddly conditions at individual businesses. Don't forget that you are delivering new customers to them – who will spend money in their gift shops and cafes – so even if they discount by 50% they'll still be quids-in.

THE MARKETING MIX

You need a mix of marketing to reach different people. You'll definitely want an appealing leaflet and webpage for starters.

Leaflets

A boring leaflet costs just as much to print and distribute as a beautiful one. Track down a good designer (look out for great leaflets and find out who did them).

Here are a few leaflet tips:

- Put an eye-catching image and headline on the cover (in a leaflet rack you may only see the top third)
- Lead with your route USP and any headline discount/incentive
- Keep the text fun and friendly (try reading it out loud) – think of it as an attraction leaflet rather than a public transport leaflet.

You'll get more for your money, by spending your leaflet budget doing one good design and big print run.

Then make sure they are well distributed. One cunning plan is to have mega dispensers in key locations, filled with a massive stack of your leaflets.

Posters

A small A4 poster is best for B&Bs etc. Go for a thicker paper (250gsm) so it pushes easily into poster holders on buses.

If you can find sites for bigger posters (info centres, attractions or empty

shops) – stressfreeprint.co.uk are good for small runs.

Banners & flags

Outdoor banners, feather flags and pavement signs can be eye-catching and cheap to produce.

Bus wraps

By covering your bus in eye-catching graphics it becomes a moving billboard – turning heads and tempting people on board. This is a big ticket item, but if the operator is up for it and you've got the budget (£2-£4K per bus) then go for it.

Bus stops

If you can, put up branded bus stop signs along the route (about £15 each). Failing that, a branded sticker could be added to existing flags. Branded timetable posters at stops can double as appealing adverts. For a really big splash you could wrap a whole bus shelter (using Contra Vision film).

Adverts

Which publications are most likely to reach your target audience? Which ones get well distributed/displayed? Which ones actually get picked up and read? Try and get a page



in the official visitor guide. Other possibilities are community, what's on and family activity magazines.

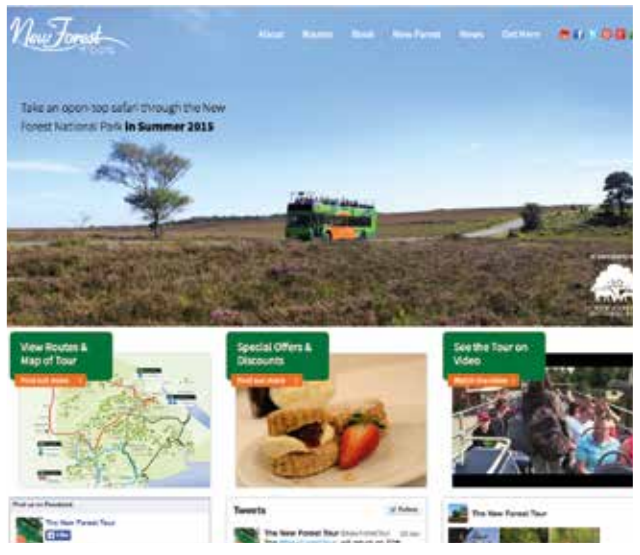
Door-to-door

You can get leaflets delivered by Royal Mail to targeted areas for around £60/1,000 (£500 minimum). You'll need to book about six weeks in advance – 0800 169 1194. There's a handy postcode counting tool on the Royal Mail website.

Another way to get through people's letter boxes is a free newspaper. You could look into the cost of a wrap (a special cover sheet) – a good way of getting spotted before the paper goes into the recycling bin.

Radio

You might get some free coverage from your local Radio station – especially if you're launching a brand new service. You could run a competition to win free tickets. See www.rab.co.uk



Website

Ideally have your own website/page, with the same name as the bus. It can be a simple one page site, as long as it looks nice and does the job. If your only option is a page on an existing website, have it designed to match your other marketing.

If you do take the plunge with a new website, it's a good idea to go for responsive design or an additional mobile version (45% of views of the New Forest Tour website are on mobile/tablet).

Make sure your site is a fun place to visit (the less like a local authority or bus company website the better!) For inspiration visit www.thebeachbus.info

Web traffic

A great way to gain free publicity is to get content and links on to key

websites. Top targets would be the main 'destination' website(s) and top visitor attractions. Ideally, try and get a banner or link on the homepage – this can drive a lot of traffic your way.

It's also worth getting listed on local websites, such as: what's on, family activities, walking, towns and villages.

Many tourism organisations and attractions send out regular e-newsletters – a feature in one of these can generate hundreds of click-throughs and lots of potential passengers.

Social Media

The main investment with social media is time rather than money (unless you go to a specialist agency).

Facebook

Facebook is a great way to stay in touch with customers and to find new

ones. If possible set up a branded page just for the bus. You can post teasers and photos in the run up to the season. Facebook is all about pictures – so make sure you get good photos of buses, people and places (especially fun/quirky things) to post through the season. You'll need to respond daily, in a friendly way, to questions and comments. See 'getting started with facebook' on www.marketingdonut.co.uk

Facebook advertising

You can increase your reach and likes on Facebook with paid advertising/promoted posts. Clever tools enable you to:

- set time and spending limits for your campaign
- target people according to location, age etc.
- test different pictures and headlines, to see what gets the best response
- create an appealing introductory post and 'pin' it to the top of your page.

In 2014 the Beach Bus Facebook page attracted 1000 page likes in one week with a spend of £300.

Twitter

You can use Twitter to develop a lively dialogue with your customers. It revolves around snappy news, comment and banter more than photos. It's a good way to share news about live events or service changes, but it can also provide an outlet for passenger complaints. See 'getting started with twitter' on www.marketingdonut.co.uk

Trip Advisor

Setting up a page on Trip Advisor is a good way to reach visitors. Good reviews can push you up the rankings and even win you a 'certificate of excellence', but there's also no hiding from bad reviews. It's best to wait until you are confident that you have mostly happy customers before sticking your head above the TA parapet.

Other ideas

Ads on the back of parking tickets are a good way to reach motorists – especially if you have a 2for1 offer to tempt them and to track response rate.

Beermats are good for a feel-good message – 'enjoy a pint without having to drive home'.

Response rates

With all advertising, it's a good idea to try tracking the response, to work out if it's good value for money. This can be through discount vouchers/codes, online tracking tools, or a simple 'how did you find out about us?' question on surveys.

Budget

Ideally you want a budget of at least £5,000-£10,000 per year for marketing your bus service. You may want to spend more in the first year on things like bus wraps and website.

THE JOURNEY ENJOYING THE RIDE

Getting to you

Make sure it's as easy as possible for people to reach the service, by:

- calling into rail stations, attractions and holiday parks
- signing bus stops really clearly
- giving details of connecting services on leaflets and website.

TOP TIP

Needles Breezer had an upturn in passenger numbers since they added full details of bus and ferry connections to their leaflet.

The **New Forest Tour** gives free travel on connecting buses from surrounding cities for customers who buy a Tour ticket.

Type of bus

An open-topper is always a crowd pleaser. The perfect all-weather compromise is a bus with the front of the top deck covered.

Otherwise, you want a bus with big picture windows and a bus operator who'll promise to keep them clean!

If the operator is willing, and you can afford it, have your bus wrapped (or part wrapped) with themed graphics. A compromise option is to have the brand name and logo/mascot added

with low tack vinyls, which can be peeled off at the end of the season.

It's a nice statement to have a bike trailer/space on the bus – but make sure there's the demand before you go to the trouble (some trundle around empty).

Drivers

Just like any visitor experience, a friendly (or grumpy!) driver can make all the difference. Ideally the operator will select staff who enjoy driving a visitor bus.

You could produce a simple briefing sheet for drivers to summarise special fares and discounts and offer a few simple suggestions like: make passengers welcome, offer them a leaflet, call out key stops.

TOP TIP

New Forest National Park Authority runs training sessions for drivers, with a lunch and free tickets for familiarisation trips to the main visitor attractions.

On the bus

It's great to have some form of interpretation on board to bring the journey to life. Here are some things people have tried:

- Journey guide leaflet about places and activities along the route
- 'I-spy' spotter leaflet for things to see from the window
- Route guide running along above the windows inside the bus
- Seatback stickers with fascinating facts
- Audio commentary – played over speakers, or as a podcast
- Live onboard guide – perhaps someone in character/costume.

New Forest Tour has an on board commentary complete with music, sound effects and character voices. A tablet on board each bus runs an app (supplied by www.audiotrails.co.uk) and the tracks are automatically triggered by GPS, played over speakers. (The same technology can be used to create tours people can download to their own devices.)

Attractions

It's helpful if the driver announces arrival at key attractions along the route and, if possible, drives right to the entrance. Make sure that any discounts are flagged up in leaflets/onboard.

TOP TIP

The **Norfolk Coasthopper** bus has special finger posts all along the North Norfolk Coast Path, pointing the way to nearby bus stops.

Walks and itineraries

A walk is the number one activity for visitors to protected landscapes. It's good to provide easy walk routes in leaflets or downloads. A to B walks are a particular USP of the bus.

Itinerary leaflets/downloads give people a readymade day out – which can be themed to appeal to different ages and interests. You'll find some good examples from Exmoor National Park at www.exploremoor.co.uk

Customer care

Make sure the whole experience for customers (customer journey) is a good one from start to finish:

- Your publicity is appealing and friendly
- FAQs (dogs, concessionary passes etc.) are on your leaflet/website
- Enquiries are answered quickly and helpfully
- Drivers understand all the tickets/ offers and are friendly
- Attraction staff know about discounts
- You respond well to complaints

Social media provides a lot of opportunities for staying in touch with your customers through offers and competitions. If you capture email addresses you can stay in touch through e-newsletters, using tools like mailchimp.com

It's useful to carry out a simple questionnaire every year or two to find out things like:

- Where people have travelled from
- Proportion of locals, day visitors and staying visitors
- How they found out about the service.



TOP TIP

Volunteers can lead walks, turning the bus journey into a guided day out. **Dalesbus** has volunteer-led walks every Sunday in the winter, which get people on board out of season www.dalesbus.info/ramblers



INCOME MAKING IT PAY

Fares

What people are happy to pay depends on what they think they are paying for – people only expect to pay a few pounds for a bus, but they are used to paying a lot more for a visitor attraction. Here are some things you can do to add value:

- Sell the route as a special scenic journey/tour
- Make the bus special – open top, wrapped, themed, catchy name
- Include a free guidebook/commentary
- Offer discounts (or joint tickets) for attractions
- Give away a freebie of some kind
- Let people 'hop on and hop off' with a day ticket (perhaps valid for 24 hours).

By turning the bus into an 'experience' you can price day tickets at £10+ for adults and £20+ for families (but make sure the experience lives up to the publicity!).

Local fares

It's good to have single tickets available for locals and walkers, but if you push the day tickets in your marketing then most people will go for those.

Concessions

Over 60s can make up about half your passengers, so you need to weigh up the pros and cons of remaining within the national concessionary pass scheme.

The relevant criteria from the Department of Transport for exemption from the scheme are:

- Services that are intended to run for a period of less than six consecutive weeks
- Services operated primarily for the purposes of tourism or because of the historical interest of the vehicle
- Services where the fare charged by the operator has a special amenity element.

Google 'Guidance for Travel Concession Authorities on the England National Concessionary Travel Scheme' for the details.

By charging around £5 for concessions you'll probably get more income than you would through the scheme, but you'll get a reduction in the number of over 60s travelling.

On the New Forest Tour in 2014 concessionary fares (£11) generated about 75% as much income as adult fares (£14).



Bulk sales

You could provide ticket vouchers to large hotels or holiday parks to sell on commission, or perhaps sell in bulk to a community group or local charity.

The New Forest Tour sells now sells nearly 20% of its tickets through visitor information centres and other agents, who take a 10% commission on sales. The agents sell vouchers, which are exchanged for tickets on board.

TOP TIP

The Beach Bus sold 200 group tickets (at a small discount) to a community organisation to give out to local low income families.

Other income

Having maximised revenue on board, you may still need to come up with other funding sources to bridge the gap. Here are some possibilities...

Advertising

If the bus operator is happy for you to wrap the buses, you can generate income from selling advertising space on bus rears, to local attractions (around £500 a month per bus). You could also sell 'headliners' above the windows inside the bus, or adverts in a guidebook or leaflet. The New Forest Tour generates about £30,000 a year in advertising revenue.

Merchandise

You could sell themed merchandise on board – walk guides, sun visors, cuddly toys.



Visitor payback

This is well established in some European countries. In Germany's Black Forest staying visitors pay an automatic 'bed tax' and receive a free Gästekarte public transport pass in return. Research in the Lake District suggested that a visitor payback donation of just £1 per night could fund free bus travel for everyone (it has yet to be tried in the UK!).

Business sponsorship

Local tourism businesses, such as hotels and attractions, may be willing to offer sponsorship in return for marketing and PR opportunities and perhaps a bus service to their door. Lake District's Freerider service offers £1 travel in the South Lakes area, during the summer holidays, largely funded by the visitor attractions.

Car parking

Some protected landscapes earn millions of pounds a year from car parking charges. Why not add £1 and earmark it for convenient buses, serving the car parks? You could even give the £1 back when they use the bus, like a deposit on a festival beer glass.

TOP TIP

In the Lake District, the parking machines at the National Park Visitor Centre will soon be selling discounted combined parking and bus tickets.

Local supporters

Regulars on the Shropshire Hills Shuttle can buy a season ticket for £50 to help support the service.

Locals in Hay-on-Wye stepped in to save their Sunday bus service. The *Hay Ho!* bus service now runs to/from Hereford every Sunday and local businesses have pledged to meet any shortfall in income.

TOP TIP

Friends of DalesBus contribute around £5,000 a year towards the service, as well as leading guided walks and distributing leaflets. friendsofdalesbus.org.uk



Four financial fixes

- 1 Reduce the operating season to peak periods when you can be sure to get plenty of people on board.
- 2 Reduce the frequency – and hence the number of buses/drivers needed (two vehicles might be viable where three might not).
- 3 Consider charging over 60s – they would probably prefer to pay rather than lose the service (especially if there's a free cup of tea included in the price!).
- 4 Increase revenue by turning the bus into an 'experience' and charging a bit more.

Above: on board
The Hay Ho! Bus

SUMMARY

In a nutshell, there are three key ingredients to success:

Make it easy – make sure your route goes where the most people live/stay and has easy connections with other public transport.

Make it tempting – create an 'experience' with a great USP and a strong brand, then add extra benefits and incentives.

Make it everywhere – use eye-catching graphics and appealing messages and repeat them on everything from buses to beermats.



CASE STUDY 1

BREEZE UP TO THE DOWNS



Route: three routes, 5-7 miles long, from Brighton city centre to South Downs.

Operating: hourly service at weekends and bank holidays, all year round. Number 77 to Devil's Dyke runs every day from June to August.

Journey: The flagship 77 route is open-top during summer, with passenger attendants on board. There are route guide leaflets for all three routes – including linear walks – and a podcast audio guide for the 77.

Benefits: Discounts at selected eateries; a programme of ranger-led walks during the summer.

USP: Open-top bus ride from Brighton sea front up onto the South Downs.

Key players: Brighton & Hove City Council are the driving force, working

closely with the National Trust, South Downs National Park Authority and the Brighton & Hove buses.

Marketing

Brand: operating under *Breeze up to the Downs* banner since 2002. Distinctive 'collage' graphics appeal to adults and children with a different bird mascot on each route.

Key activities: 250,000 leaflets distributed throughout Brighton and beyond; features in the Brighton & Hove timetable brochure (90,000 copies); adverts in a wide range of community and visitor publications.

Spend: £20,000 per year

Top marks: adverts on bookmarks at busy Brighton library; consistent profile in Brighton for over a decade has resulted in very high brand recognition.

Finances

Income: fare income covered 64% of operating costs in 2014, supplemented with grants from Brighton & Hove City Council, National Trust and South Downs National Park Authority.

Fares: Return ticket costs £4.50 (reduced from £6 to bring it into line with the bus operator's city-wide day ticket).

Concessions: concessionary passes accepted on all routes. Could exempt (especially 77), but prefer the benefits of local goodwill and social inclusion.

Passengers

Population: 260,000 people live within 30 minutes travel of the service.

Numbers: passenger journeys have increased from 53,808 in 2007 to 97,025 in 2014.

Profile: 72% of passengers come from within Brighton postcode area. 38% are over 60 (concessionary pass holders).

Lessons

What's worked best: Long term relationships with the bus operator and partners like the National Trust

A consistently high level of marketing year on year.

Top tips: Build strong relationships with important partners

Marketing is key – start marketing before you start your service.

CASE STUDY 2

DALESBUS



Route: 13 routes – mostly longer routes from surrounding cities into the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Operating: Sundays only. Four routes run all year round, the rest are summer only.

Journey: Regular programme of guided walks led by *Friends of DalesBus* volunteers.

Benefits: 50% off at National Trust's Fountains Abbey.

USP: direct access from big cities to heart of the National Park, connections between routes opening up wider range of destinations.

Key players: Dales & Bowland Community Interest Company (DalesBus), bus operators, Yorkshire Dales National Park, West Yorkshire Metro.

Marketing

Brand: DalesBus brand and logo

Key activities: leaflets for each service distributed locally by volunteers, DalesBus timetable booklet produced by West Yorkshire Metro (100,000 copies), DalesBus website www.dalesbus.org

Spend: £7,000 in 2014

Top marks: piggybacking on West Yorkshire Metro's publicity machine, building network of local supporters to help with low cost publicity.

Finances

Income: income from fares covers about 40% of operating costs, with the remainder met by grants and support from a raft of sources, including £5,000 from Friends of



DalesBus. Subsidy has been reduced from about £6 per passenger journey in 2008 to about £2 per passenger journey in 2014.

Fares: Day rover tickets cost £8

Concessions: concessionary travel passes currently accepted – but this is under review as about 70% of passengers are concessions.

Passengers

Population: an estimated five million people live within 30 minutes travel of the services (as they run from major cities outside the Yorkshire Dales).

Numbers: passenger journeys have doubled in the last five years from: 20,363 in 2010 to 56,494 in 2014.

Profile: 70% over 60s, a smaller but growing number of young people. Around 80% of passengers are day visitors from surrounding cities.

Lessons

What's worked best: Friends of DalesBus – active network of volunteers who lead guided walks and help to publicise services

Working closely with local communities to listen to their needs and give them a sense of ownership of their local bus.

Top tips: Run buses from where people are to where they want to go

Talk to users – listen to them

Get the bus operator on board and working with you.



CASE STUDY 3 GOWER EXPLORER

Route: two main routes to the north and south of the Gower Peninsula (AONB), direct from Swansea, with connecting services to other parts of the Gower.

Operating: Sundays and Bank Holidays from Easter to October, hourly from Swansea.

Journey experience: quality new buses with large picture windows and wifi. Buses service nine sections of coast path. One ticket covers both routes.

Benefits: 50% discount at Gower Heritage Centre and smaller discounts at selected eateries

USP: easy link direct to the Gower from Swansea city centre.

Key players: Baytrans partnership, working closely with Swansea city council, Gower AONB and partners.

Marketing

Brand: Gower Explorer and logo

Key activities: Gower Explore leaflet and guide with map and activities, Baytrans website www.baytrans.org.uk, the tourist information centre plays a key role publicising the service.

Spend: £2,500 in 2014

Top marks: consistent messaging and publicity about exploring the Gower car-free. The website provides a one-stop-shop for car-free exploration, including walk guides.



Finances

Income: Income from fares accounts for just over 50% of operating costs, with the remainder coming from grant funding.

Fares: The adult day rover fare (set by the operator) was £4.70 in 2014.

Concessions: free travel for concessionary pass holders (yielding about £2.65 per head).

Passengers

Population: about 300,000 people live within 30 minutes travel of the service.

Numbers: passenger journeys have risen from about 3,400 in 2011 to 9,700 in 2014.

Profile: about 30% of passengers are under 24 and about 30% from overseas – reflecting the large number of students in Swansea. About 50% of passengers are day visitors/locals.

Lessons

What's worked best: a direct link from Swansea to the iconic destination of Rhosili, with a scenic ride on the way.

Top tips: Build a good working relationship with the bus operator

Make sure your buses have big clean windows.

CASE STUDY 4 NEEDLES BREEZER



The Needles © ThisParticularGreg, Flickr.com CC BY-SA 2.0



Route: circular route from Yarmouth Isle of Wight ferry terminal to the Needles.

Operating: every day (every 30 minutes!) from March to November, with two specially-branded open top buses.

Journey: scenic ride with great coastal views – going right up to the world famous landmark.

Benefits: National Trust members get 50% discount to 'park&ride' to the Needles.

USP: Open top bus ride; audio commentary; the only vehicle access to Needles.

Key players: Southern Vectis (bus operator), National Trust.

Marketing

Brand: Needles Breezer (since 2008); new graphics introduced in 2004 – used on buses, stop signs and marketing.

Key activities: 30,000 leaflets, page in IOW timetable booklet (140,000 copies), page on website: www.islandbuses.info

Spend: £12,000 in 2014

Top marks: new leaflet in 2013 included details of ferry links from mainland – resulting in more day trips; adverts for Needles Park attraction on bus rears are blended into overall design style.

Finances

Income: service is 100% commercial – operating at least 10% profit.

Fares: Adult day ticket is £10 (price held for four years) – which is valid for 24 hours.

Concessions: exempted from concessionary passes in 2010 (concessions travel for £5 – 50% discount).

Passengers

Population: about 40,000 people live within 30 minutes travel of the service.

Numbers: passenger journeys have increased from 75,087 in 2011 to 110,973 in 2014.

Profile: overwhelmingly visitors to the island (not locals) – many visiting Isle of Wight car-free.

Lessons

What's worked best: Great USP – only access to the Needles (except on foot)

Better information and publicity about transport links to/from the service.

Top tips: Make sure you've got a USP and you understand it

Consistent brand, stick to it, use it on all marketing

Explain how to get to the service – 'spoon feed' people

Dedicated and enthusiastic drivers – who live and breathe the route.

CASE STUDY 5

LAKES CONNECTION

Route: 15 miles from Bowness-on-Windermere to Grasmere.

Operating: Easter to October, daily from 8am to 8pm, every 20-30 minutes.

Journey: Open-top buses, with audio commentary, serving string of key visitor destinations.

Benefits: 10-20% discounts at various attractions, discounted joint ticket for bus and Windermere Lake Cruise, coming soon: joint car parking and bus tickets.

USP: open-top bus ride through stunning scenery, unique experience.

Key players: Stagecoach (bus operator), with additional marketing and innovations through the Lake District LSTF programme.

Marketing

Brand: Lakes Connection and logo used on buses and marketing. Linked to wider 'Drive Less See More' sustainable travel brand/campaign.

Key activities: Lake Connection timetable booklet distributed to over 500 outlets (280,000 in summer, 150,000 in winter); branded buses and bus stop posters; extensive additional publicity through LSTF programme (guides, itineraries, social media and on www.golakes.co.uk).

Spend: around £5,000 each year, plus extra LSFT marketing in recent years.

Top marks: Large stands full of timetable booklets in key locations;

Route maps and frequencies on side of buses; desktop pads of bus route maps for hotels.

Finances

Income: service is 100% commercial.

Fares: day rover ticket is £8.

Concessions: concessionary passes are accepted and account for about 40% of passengers.

Passengers

Population: about 70,000 people live within 30 minutes travel from the service.

Numbers: exact figures unavailable – but according to the operator, they are increasing by about 5% each year, with particularly good growth in 2013 and 2014.

Profile: roughly a 50/50 split between locals/day visitors and staying visitors, with about 40% over 60s.

Lessons

What's worked best: Going from where people are to where they want to go.

Passing lots of accommodation providers along the route.

Top tips: Lots of publicity – in advance – could take a few years to build profile.

Pick the right route – where people want to go.





CASE STUDY 6 NEW FOREST TOUR

Route: three circular routes around New Forest National Park – each about 30-40 miles long.

Operating: daily for 11 weeks from June to September, hourly.

Journey: Open-top buses, with audio commentary and free guide book, calling at honeypot villages and attractions.

Benefits: 20% discount at most attractions, free bus/ferry travel to the Tour from surrounding cities.

USP: grandstand views of the New Forest and free roaming animals – ‘take an open top safari’.

Key players: New Forest National Park Authority working closely with bus operator Morebus/Bluestar as well as the Destination Partnership and key visitor attractions.

Marketing

Brand: Well established New Forest Tour brand and logo; fully branded buses and bus stop signs – colour coded for the three routes (red, green, blue).

Key activities: 100,000 leaflets distributed throughout the area; new website, with responsive design and online ticket sales; large social media following; extensive additional marketing activity in 2013 and 2014 funded through the LSTF programme.

Spend: around £30,000 in 2014, typically £10,000 in most years.

Top marks: strong website and social media – driving increased online ticket sales.



Finances

Income: income from tickets covered 100% of operating costs in 2014 (the service will operate without subsidy in 2015). Promotional partnerships with visitor attractions generate around £30,000 of advertising income each year, which is reinvested in developing the service.

Fares: An adult day rover ticket was £14 in 2014 (with discounted multiday tickets).

Concessions: concessionary passes are not valid – over 60s pay a discounted fare of £11 (yielding 75% as much revenue as adult fares).

Passengers

Population: There are approximately one million people living within 30 minutes’ travel from the service.

Numbers: passenger journeys have

risen steadily from 4000 in 2004 (one route) to 42,000 in 2014 (three routes).

Profile: 60-70% of passengers are locals or day visitors from surrounding cities; about 40% are over 60s.

Lessons

What’s worked best: The Tour is expected to cover its own costs in future.

Advertising revenue is helping to fund ongoing development and marketing.

Top tips: Make the buses look special and eye-catching.

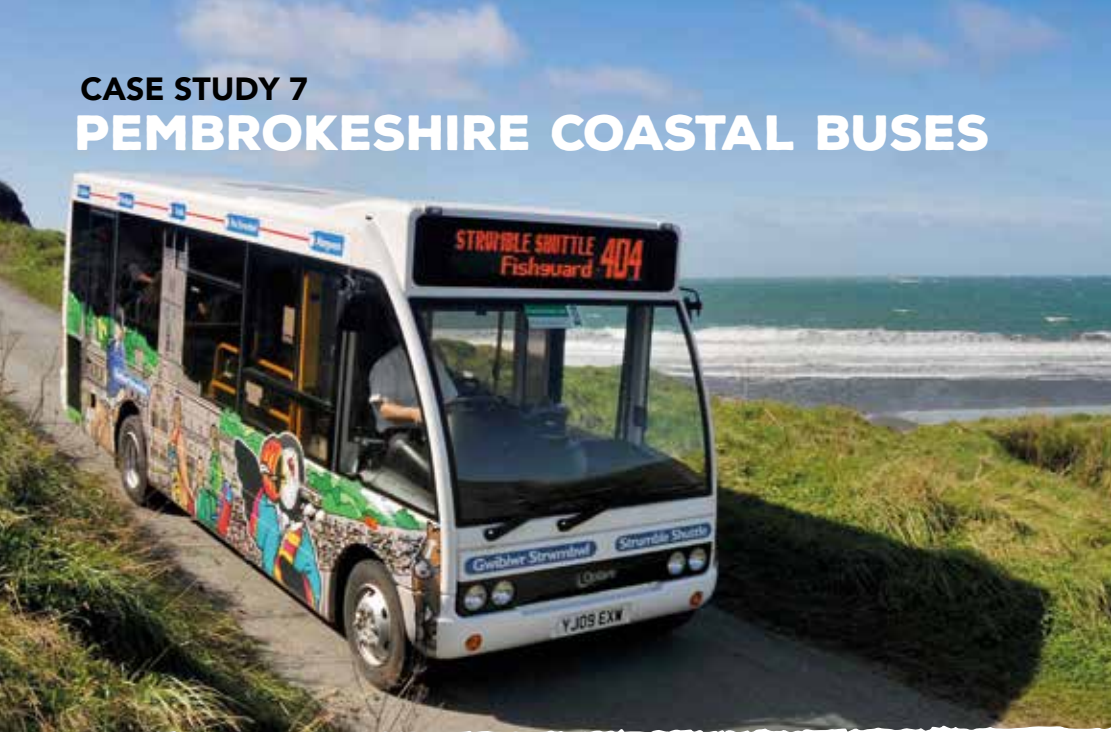
Put as much time, effort and money into marketing as you can afford.

People will pay more for an ‘experience’ than a bus.

Do the maths and consider exempting your service from free concessionary fares.

CASE STUDY 7

PEMBROKESHIRE COASTAL BUSES



Route: Five routes covering the whole length of the Pembrokeshire coast, with a fleet of fully-branded bespoke buses.

Operating: Daily from May to September and two days a week during the winter months.

Journey: Dedicated vehicles serving the coast path and beaches, with great coastal views. Also providing a Park & Ride service from St David's to Ramsey Island Ferry.

Benefits: no discounts/incentives.

USP: Links the whole of the 186 mile Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail (now part of the Wales Coast Path).

Key players: Pembrokeshire County Council, in partnership with Pembrokeshire National Park (which contributes 25% of funding).

Marketing

Brand: Pembrokeshire Coastal Bus Service, with branding for individual routes, such as Puffin Shuttle, Celtic Coaster and Poppit Rocket. The colourful 'Penfro Puffin' logo makes an appealing mascot/brand.

Key activities: 45,000 timetable booklets distributed through visitor outlets; full page in National Park visitor newspaper/brochure (1 million copies).

Spend: £10,000 in 2014

Top marks: suggested walks and itineraries included in the timetable booklet; eye-catching branding.



Finances

Income: about 50% of income is generated through fares, but the service is likely to need continued subsidy (especially during the winter months).

Fares: An adult day rover ticket costs £7.50. There is also a popular £1 single fare on the Celtic Coaster around the St David's Peninsula.

Concessions: Free concessionary pass travel of all routes (resulting in about £1.70-£2 income per journey).

Passengers

Population: approximately 125,000 people living within 30 minutes travel.

Numbers: increase from 48,901 in 2005 to 79,285 in 2015.

Profile: around 75% are staying visitors; about two thirds of passengers use the bus to go for a walk.

Lessons

What's worked best: enabling people to reach the whole coast path by bus, eye-catching brand, fully branded buses.

Top tips: Engaging with partners and businesses.

Appealing eye-catching branding.

Producing pocket timetable booklet – with walk suggestions and coast path mileages.



2 NATIONAL
PARKS LSTF

