



# Land Use in England

## Uncorrected oral evidence: Land Use in England

Monday 11 July 2022

3.35 pm

Watch the meeting

Members present: Lord Cameron of Dillington (The Chair); Baroness Bakewell of Harding Mandeville; Lord Goddard of Stockport; Lord Grantchester; The Earl of Leicester; Baroness Mallalieu; Baroness Redfern; Lord Watts; Baroness Young of Old Scone.

Evidence Session No. 21

Heard in Public

Questions 222 - 233

### Witness

I: Dr Richard Denman, Consultant, The Tourist Company.

### USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is an uncorrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on [www.parliamentlive.tv](http://www.parliamentlive.tv).
2. Any public use of, or reference to, the contents should make clear that neither Members nor witnesses have had the opportunity to correct the record. If in doubt as to the propriety of using the transcript, please contact the Clerk of the Committee.
3. Members and witnesses are asked to send corrections to the Clerk of the Committee within 14 days of receipt.

## Examination of witness

Dr Richard Denman.

Q222 **The Chair:** Welcome to this evidence session of the Land Use in England Committee. We welcome Dr Richard Denman from the Tourism Company. Good afternoon, Richard. Thank you very much for coming before us.

You have had access to a list of interests that have been declared by members of the committee. The meeting is being broadcast live on the parliamentary website. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the committee website, but you will have an opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary.

I will ask the first question. The committee is considering a land use framework for England. Could you say how the impact of tourism, positive and negative, could be factored into that, and what key issues should we be considering?

**Dr Richard Denman:** Let me start by thanking you very much for giving me the opportunity to come and give evidence to you today. I am delighted to do so. I think it would be helpful, in answering this first question, to start by saying a few words about the importance of tourism as I see it, and then broadly outlining the main ways, to my mind, in which tourism has an impact on land use.

I will give you a few figures initially. We always talk about 2019 because it was the last normal year in this sense. In 2019, there were 542 million tourism overnights in England, 54% of which were domestic and 46% were overseas visitors, together with 1.4 billion tourism day trips. In that year, it was estimated that tourism in England contributed directly £48 billion and supported 1.4 million jobs. If the indirect effects are taken into account, such as the supply chain, food and so on, the figure rises to a contribution of £106 billion and 2.6 million jobs. Overall, it is estimated that tourism contributes in the order of 9% of GDP.

It is quite hard to obtain a figure for the number of tourism businesses in England, but I think that is important for you on this committee. We can say with certainty that a very large percentage of those businesses are micro and small businesses. A significant number, although I cannot give you an exact figure, are carried out in conjunction with other land uses and activities, such as agriculture. An indicative figure, I am afraid, goes back to the year 2000. In that year, 20% of farms in England were estimated to provide some sort of tourism accommodation. Obviously, that figure is a lot higher in certain parts of the country. Overall, the figure from 2000 is probably significantly higher now.

That is the macroeconomic picture, but it is very important to look at tourism's importance in other ways, rather than purely from the macroeconomic perspective. Clearly, tourism has a very significant impact on the places that are visited, on the environments, the culture and the local communities. This can be both negative and positive. Negatively, it can be a source of pressure and damage to fragile

environments, and generate competition for resources, with overcrowding and so on. Positively, it can provide an economic return for the maintenance and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage, which that is a key part of the reason why people travel in the UK and in England particularly. Put succinctly, tourism can provide an economic return for keeping places beautiful and special.

Finally, a further dimension, which is far too often ignored, is the importance of travel and tourism for the visitors themselves. The pandemic has particularly underlined the importance psychologically of people having an opportunity occasionally to get away from home. This has implications for concepts like tourism for all, and making sure that holidays are available to everybody. The current chair of VisitScotland, who is president of the Tourism Society, on whose board I sit, and a Member of your House, frequently refers to tourism as a generator of well-being. I do think we need to think about that and not purely think about the economics of the sector.

What are the implications of all that for your land use framework? I would suggest that, essentially, we are talking about considering tourism as a generator of demand for land. Clearly, that applies to things like land for accommodation, hotels, resorts and various forms of self-catering, camping, caravanning and so on, but adding further demand for land for public access to the countryside, open spaces, and heritage and cultural sites.

There are other factors, too, such as the implications for land use in the secondary demand from tourism, for food, water and so on, and in relation to infrastructure for travel and transport. We need to think about the opportunity that tourism has to deliver benefits to landowners and land managers from other types of activity as an important economic force in the framework for multiple land use. A lot of that relates to the link between tourism, agriculture, food and hospitality, for example, and is reflected in the landscape and its enjoyment.

Those are my thoughts at the moment on the first question.

**The Chair:** Thank you. That is very good.

Q223 **Baroness Young of Old Scone:** There are two things. One is future trends. Where do you think all this is going? Is there a peak for tourism and are there significant trends in the sorts of use of land that you think will emerge from that? Secondly, how does all this interface with the planning system? Is use of land a constraint in tourism, or is that the least of your worries compared with other things?

**Dr Richard Denman:** There are a few things about growth in the sense of where tourism is going. For many years, up to 2019, tourism in England had been growing. It had been up and down in some years, but it was going up, broadly. It was not necessarily going up particularly quickly, but there was growth, and that growth was expected to continue. We are talking about a figure, on average, of about 4% per annum.

Of course, then we suddenly had a big stop to all of that with the pandemic. It is now being predicted that we will, hopefully, be getting back to the same levels of tourism by 2025 as existed in 2019. That is the current estimate for the world, and indeed for the UK, but we are talking about a less certain world where there will be ongoing fluctuations and concerns about the pandemic and so on, so it is more difficult to plan for the longer term.

On the question about changes in patterns and trends, and the effect of that, some of the changes that I will outline were apparent before the pandemic. Others have been accelerated by the pandemic, or perhaps even, to some extent, created anew by it. We are including external factors such as climate change and particularly digitalisation and social media and its uses in the communication and promotion of tourism, in bookings and so on.

First, there is relatively greater growth in rural rather than urban tourism. Urban tourism has been particularly affected during the pandemic by, for example, a decline in business tourism. People think that will now go on, basically because, as we are demonstrating here today, a lot of people will be attending meetings through Zoom. This will stay for ever. In that sense, business tourism is a real question mark for the future.

A very important point for land use is the ongoing trend in recent years of people asking for more experiences, more adventure and special experiences when they are travelling, some of those being participatory. There is increased awareness in the tourism sector and among travellers of issues of sustainability. I have worked in sustainability in tourism for many years, and I have noticed a sea change in the last few years, both in policy and in business and visitor response. There are concerns about carbon, waste, plastic and biodiversity. It is real and it is now much more apparent in the sector. Research by Booking.com, for example, found that concern for sustainability was identified by 80% of people questioned in a survey, when it was only about 60% as recently as 2016. It is a much greater concern than in the past.

There is a greater move towards independent, individual accommodation, especially self-catering. That has been accelerated by the pandemic. Holiday lets have grown by 40% in the last three years. There is more awareness of and emphasis on domestic tourism than international tourism.

What are the implications of those changes, I am sure you will ask, for land use and the framework? I think it will be a question of more pressure on certain rural locations, as found last summer, requiring a management response. A very topical issue at the moment is pressure on housing from short lets. I mentioned the growth in short lets. In fact, DCMS has just launched a new inquiry into the impact of short lets on housing in England. It is a major issue for some parts of the country.

There is demand for new forms of accommodation that offer an experience. I point to the concept of glamping—a word that may be

familiar to some of you, if not all—as a form of escapist accommodation. There are huge opportunities for farming and rural land managers in certain parts of the country, which have been taken up. The interest in experiences gives an opportunity for more people to engage in conservation activity, specialist food and drink, and that sort of thing. There is a trend to more experience and more richness in a wider sense, if you like, but with more pressure as well.

**The Chair:** How does all this fit into the planning system?

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Do you find that access to land for tourism is very constrained by the existing planning system, or are there other pressures that are more important?

**Dr Richard Denman:** I think the planning system needs to be alert and fleet of foot to the opportunities that tourism can bring. Those particular forms of tourism activity—the more experiential that I mentioned; glamping and so on—have to be understood by the planning system a little more subtly than it being tourism or not tourism. There needs to be a clearer identity of the kind of tourism that we are talking about in applications for planning permission.

Again, this is where I am not quite sure about the spectrum of your interest in this committee as far as land use is concerned. Certainly, the impact on housing and on short lets has very clear implications for planning designations for forms of use of property, whether it is a short let or not. Up to now, short lets through things like Airbnb have not been regulated. There is a big call now that they should be. That has implications for planning processes. As I outlined before, there are implications for the planning system to accommodate those opportunities and pressures.

Q224 **Baroness Mallalieu:** Dr Denman, can you tell us, first, how tourism policy is decided at national level, and how that policy is taken and implemented at local level?

**Dr Richard Denman:** Certainly. Basically, tourism policy is determined by DCMS, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, at a national level. It has responsibility for tourism, in consultation with other departments.

A key player is VisitBritain/VisitEngland. The two are essentially the same body, whereby hangs a certain degree of confusion for those outside the sector and, indeed to a degree, for those inside the sector. The tourist board for England has a responsibility for promoting tourism in England and for developing the so-called visitor economy. So VisitBritain/VisitEngland, together with the DCMS, are key.

There is also the Tourism Industry Council, which is consulted on tourism policy. The members are mainly representatives of the private sector. Some might say that there should be a wider set of interests formally engaged in that council or similar bodies.

That national structure led in 2019, for example, to something called the tourism sector deal, which had a particular focus on the tourism business, upskilling and so on, but was rather overtaken by the pandemic. The current policy is called the tourism growth plan, which is essentially about recovery but is also about building back better and reshaping tourism for the future. I am pleased to say that DCMS has announced that a sustainable tourism plan will be created in addition.

How that is reflected at local level and sub-national level is a hugely important topic. Basically, at an area level, both regionally at county level and below, tourism is planned, marketed, developed and co-ordinated by so-called destination management organisations. They vary considerably in structure, size and stability. They bring together tourism businesses, local authorities and other interests. Some are more commercial and business focused and others have wider input from the local authority. Some have no input from the local authority, or very little. It is a mishmash and a mixture and has caused a lot of concern. Some of those organisations went to the wall during the pandemic.

I am pleased to say that this has been the subject of a government review through DCMS. The de Bois review on destination management organisations was commissioned last year, in August 2021, and we are waiting any day for the Government's response. That review said that we need more structure. It proposes a regional top-tier structure of destination development partnerships, as it calls them, and smaller area tourist boards or management organisations at a more local level, feeding into the area partnerships in a three-tier level between that and the national level.

There is a proposal in the de Bois review for destination and development plans that are written for the destinations, but take from, and indeed hopefully feed into, the national policy that I outlined earlier. There is a proposal for a more structured approach that we in the sector broadly applaud. There were one or two questions about whether the de Bois review would give enough emphasis to absolutely local-level management, which, I would say, is very important for land use questions. That perhaps needs to be looked at a bit more, but we are waiting to see the result of the review.

**Q225 Lord Watts:** The Government set the policy. Is their policy to grow the tourism business in the UK, and, if so, by how much? How will they divide their time, both nationally and regionally, with the smaller bodies that you are talking about, between the strategy of development and marketing? My experience is that most of them concentrate on marketing rather than structure.

**Dr Richard Denman:** I can answer that by saying that times are changing. Certainly the words are changing, and I think the actions are changing too. There was a big debate at one point, for example, about whether DMOs stood for destination marketing organisations or destination management organisations. Many people felt that it should be marketing, and indeed it was marketing in practice. The mantra now is

that the "M" is management. I think that reflects all that we have just been talking about. Very frequently now in government policy, people say, "We are talking about quality and not quantity". We are certainly talking about spend and not volume, but even beyond that it is not just spend but quality of experience, quality of impact and quality of benefit for communities.

That is the international call. It has been picked up now in the UK and is being echoed very strongly at local level. I am involved, for example, with the Tourism Management Institute, which represents destinations at the local level. It fully underlines the need for management. That is important, but it means that there is a greater role for bodies that understand the management requirement, such as conservation bodies, to engage and to enable those fine words that we are looking at for more management to be carried out effectively in practice.

**Lord Watts:** Are they followed up by targets? Does the department have a target for growth in tourism, and do the regions have a target, so that someone can actually measure whether they are moving in the right direction?

**Dr Richard Denman:** I would say yes, but everything is a bit different since the pandemic. Certainly a few years ago, the first few lines of the national tourism policy and strategy outlined a target for the next five years of so many more visitors, overseas visitors particularly. I hesitate to say whether that is now the current policy in the tourism recovery plan. I think my answer is that it is not, because the plan says basically that we are out to get back to where we were before, and that will be our priority over the next few years.

Do we want to see year-on-year growth once we have gone back to 2019 levels? I do not think we will see that being the lead goal. Nevertheless, they should still be putting down certain figures so that there can be some measurement of what has or has not been developed and achieved. I think it will be much more in the context of where the benefit is rather than where the numbers are.

Q226 **Baroness Redfern:** Richard, what are your experiences of working with different levels of government in England on land use and tourism priorities? How effectively does each tier of government interact with others? In answer to an earlier question you mentioned glamping sites, where some local planning authorities want to increase demand, set against national park authorities, which have resisted conversion to that and have, in effect, created volumes of appeals and held back tourism, as such.

**Dr Richard Denman:** In my experience, I have been involved with tourism governance and land use in England for over 40 years. I initially worked for one of the regional tourist boards in England in the 1980s, and then subsequently as a consultant, researcher and writer of reports and studies and so on. I have been quite involved at a national level with VisitEngland and its predecessor bodies, and with various local

authorities, DMOs and national parks. I have done a lot of work in national parks around the world, but in England as well, and indeed with ANOBs in creating destination management plans. More recently, I have been slightly less directly involved with the situation in England. My work in the last few years has been more international, so some of what I say is related a little to my experience looking back over that longer period.

It is quite interesting that about 20 years ago—you may say that is much too far back in history, but it is important to think about this—my feeling, and the practice, was that VisitEngland was much more involved with the shaping of tourism development, management and land use. It worked then very closely with organisations such as the Countryside Agency and the then Rural Development Commission on particular forms of rural development in the countryside. I actually produced a rural tourism strategy for England for that group. A lot of what it said then is very relevant to the situation today.

My experience, moving on from then, is that in 2012 I prepared some principles for the development of destination management plans for VisitEngland. This was VisitEngland saying, “We need to set a bit of guidance for the local areas, the local authorities and the DMOs. We want to set down what we think destination management plans should be about”. I was commissioned to write that guidance. That was a very good point. VisitEngland was saying, “We are the national body. We want to make sure that destinations, local organisations and so on are working to the principles that we are outlining in this guidance”.

After that, things tended to change somewhat, I have to say. In 2014, I started to work with VisitEngland on a new national strategy for tourism, which was going to pick up on some of that guidance work, but things changed. Basically, they stopped doing that strategy, and the new policy was very much to focus on marketing and the funding of projects on the ground rather than planning. I am pleased to say that we have now moved back and more into the world of planning and management. For example, it is good to see in the recent recovery plan references to sustainability and to the Glover review, implying a greater sensitivity again to national parks, landscape and so on. I think we are moving back in that direction.

As to how that affects the local level, if the de Bois review is implemented and the bodies at local level have a closer relationship with VisitEngland than they have had of late, that will be reflected down to that level as well. It has gone through a bit of a hiatus, but the outlook is very much better for a functioning relationship from the national to the local level moving forward. There will be more debate as to what that will mean for things like policy on glamping and so on. Hopefully, there will be more sharing, for example, between the national parks and their greater knowledge of some of this and other local authorities. I am relatively optimistic that we can get a better functioning structure going.

**Q227 The Chair:** The structures that you are setting out are pretty important to us in our land use. Tourism is probably much simpler than the



multitude of land uses that we are looking at. You have one agenda that you focus on. Nevertheless, it is quite an interesting example. From what you describe, the policy of VisitEngland is fed from the bottom. It comes out with a policy from the views that it is hearing around the countryside as to what it should be marketing, what it should be managing, what it should be promoting and what skills are required, et cetera. Does it produce a framework at all that the local bodies have to cater for or even look into? Are the local bodies disciplined in any way by anything coming down from the top?

**Dr Richard Denman:** I would add to what you said about what is driving VisitEngland that tourism businesses and the industry are really important players in driving tourism policy, which is understandable.

On whether the local level is dictated by VisitEngland, it is more the case that VisitEngland is saying to the local areas, "We want you to consult locally to understand the needs of your local businesses. We're not going to tell you what those needs are, but we will tell you the process. We want you to engage with them, and with local authorities and wider stakeholder interests". It is not so much, "You need to do that", but, "This is a process we want you to fulfil, but you also need to be aware that, in thinking about where the opportunities may lie in your area, our national policy on where we see the market priorities going and the sorts of messages we want to get across internationally to the incoming markets and so on are of this kind, so it would be beneficial to you and supportive to us if you fitted your broad strategy into that, while reflecting very much the local needs as you find them".

**The Chair:** In terms of land use, we will probably go for a wider area, maybe countywide or bigger. You said that for your more regional county—let us call it that, because there is no region any more—the de Bois review wants much more local initiatives to be fed in. For instance, reading about the Milton Keynes plan, it started off very sensibly with 13 organisations, but I now see that it has more than 90. I wonder how anything ever gets done in a body that has 90 organisations trying to steer it this way and that. Do you know how you get over the fact that, certainly in land use planning, the world and his wife—I suspect—want to have a say in what goes on?

**Dr Richard Denman:** Yes. That is quite difficult for me to answer. I am not sure that I have the—

**The Chair:** I am just wondering how it works in tourism.

**Dr Richard Denman:** It is really important to be able to understand and reflect the needs of local communities in terms of the kinds of opportunities and tourism activities that they want to see; I am very much a bottom-up person. That is the first point.

The other thing is that, on destinations, over the years it has been shown that local authorities are pretty important in thinking about tourism development and opportunity, partly because they have tended to be the

planning authorities, which is fairly fundamental at the end of the day. To use the tourism phrase “destination brands” in the sense of a meaningful destination to the travelling public, it is very often the counties that constitute the area that people have heard of and want to go to, and de Bois has looked at that to a certain extent. Cornwall is a classic case in point, as is Norfolk. There are one or two counties that are perhaps less well known, but the county brand, if you like, is also important. That is the kind of level at which good tourism planning can often happen.

**The Chair:** You said earlier that you put forward principles to VisitEngland. How did those get taken on board and fed downwards?

**Dr Richard Denman:** VisitEngland used to have, and to a certain extent still does, although I have had less to do with it, a fairly regular meeting of destination organisations, and it would pass down that sort of guidance through those meetings. It would also have a direct relationship with the destination management organisations. The trouble has been that the number of organisations has grown, it has all become a bit unwieldy, and that is why the de Bois review happened.

**The Chair:** From what you say, de Bois wants more organisations, more locally. It will become even more unwieldy.

**Dr Richard Denman:** No, he does not want more; he wants it structured. He wants it to be less unwieldy by having a smaller number of top-level regional-type bodies, some of which already exist, such as Marketing Manchester, which covers Greater Manchester, and into which the largely existing local DMOs would feed, rather than them all being at the same level and constituting far too big a meeting, if you see what I mean. He is talking about a structured approach.

Q228 **Lord Grantchester:** Could I come in on the challenges between national, strategic and local uses in the area of sports? The biggest bearing that I can think of in that regard is on cycleways, and how extensive they tend to be internationally, yet in the UK the demand for cycleways for health, net zero and trying to get people off the roads seems to result in the availability of roads shrinking to enhance cycleways, rather than cycleways being added to the network. That leads to conflicts, because the motorised transport, for want of a better word, gets shrunk into being highly congested, leading to more pollution and so on. From your experience of being in the tourism industry, can you see a way through for how that might develop strategically into better solutions?

**Dr Richard Denman:** It is not a field that I am particularly expert in. Cycling tourism has been growing internationally and in the UK, and it will see significantly greater growth than many other forms of tourism for a whole variety of reasons to do with health and, to a degree, the cost of energy and petrol, and green sentiment. All these are very positive things. Many local authorities, particularly the national park authorities, have been fairly active in the creation of cycling routes, often in conjunction with national bodies such as the CTC. There has generally been a pretty positive response to the opportunity, but I am afraid I may

not be answering your question, because it is a little outside my sphere of knowledge.

**Q229 Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville:** In your work on tourism development action plans and destination management plans in England, what lessons have you learned about working effectively with other land use interests, and what examples are there of good practice and effective partnership working in this respect? It would also be helpful if you have any examples of poor practice.

**Dr Richard Denman:** Thank you very much for the question. I will say something very quickly about what I mean by such tourism development action plans or destination management plans. We tend to use the phrase "destination management plans" now. The "tourism development action plan" is yesterday's terminology, to a degree.

Broadly, in what we see on the ground and in those I have produced over the years, destination management plans have tended to include the following sorts of things. We talk about research into the current patterns and performance of tourism, and look at evidence of its impact on a destination. We look at the markets, the people who are coming and what the potential future market opportunities might be, reflecting the national target markets, as we were talking about earlier.

The plans are very much based on consultation: there is a lot of consultation with stakeholders, including other sectors and conservation interests. That leads to an overall agreement on objectives, needs and opportunities for future tourism, as well as an action plan and a delivery structure. Often it is a delivery structure, such as a DMO, that commissions the plan, but it may be that the structure needs to be improved, and the plan would look at how that could happen. It would then be very much about feeding that into other policies in the destination, particularly how it is reflected in future land use plans and so on—structure plans, as was—in the destination, and vice versa. That is the sort of process that we are talking about.

On how that works and where the challenges may lie, from my experience, consultation with tourism interests has always been fairly straightforward because the tourism interests see the relevance to them. A greater challenge has sometimes been consulting other land uses and users, including the conservation bodies, which are sometimes not necessarily that bothered about engaging with tourism plans, although often that is not the case. One could say that wider sectors need to be encouraged to engage in these processes. From my experience, there have been some very good inputs in that regard from some of the heritage and conservation interests that are already engaging in tourism locally, such as the National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts and the RSPB. Often, they already have a fairly strong visitor and tourism interface and can be very helpful in talking to the wider destination interests about where the future plan should be leading.

My experience has been pretty much split between national parks and AONBs on the one hand and wider destination areas—maybe local authority-led—on the other. In all cases, the broad approach that I have outlined has been relevant, and, even outside the national parks and AONBs, that wider set of interests needs to be brought in, and has been in the past.

To give some examples, I have personally been involved with tourism plans in the Broads on various occasions. I have done tourism plans for the Dorset tourism partnership, which is a classic multi-stakeholder DMO, and for the Forest of Bowland AONB. I have done quite a lot of urban planning as well: I did a tourism plan for Cambridge. These have all pretty much followed the sort of outline of the destination management plan that I gave. The process has been very helpful and informative. I hesitate to point to some of the work I did as examples of good practice, although a lot of those studies are now some way in the past, because, as I said earlier, I have been working internationally a lot in the last few years.

It is also quite important to think about some of the practical examples that came out of some of that work. For example, we did a plan for the Forest of Bowland AONB, which was very actively involved in identifying tourism businesses that were following sustainable practice, and, in particular, using things such as local Bowland produce, very much a practical flagging on the ground of that sort of tourism product. There was a very interesting example in the past of the Devon Wildlife Trust working with a selection of farm tourism businesses that had themselves worked with the wildlife trust and had met some of the Wildlife Trusts' management objectives for wildlife in Devon. There are hundreds of quite small examples of practical interface between conversation and tourism, particularly in the area of local foods, local food product trails, getting more tourism businesses to promote local food, speciality products and that sort of thing, but I do not want to go into more detail than that.

**Q230 Lord Goddard of Stockport:** Planning for tourism is sometimes perceived to conflict with other land priorities such as agriculture and nature recovery. How can the conflicts be managed in practice, and have you come into conflict with that yourself?

**Dr Richard Denman:** The term “planning for tourism”, in the past—reflecting some of the things I said earlier—tended to mean planning to enable more tourism to grow, be developed and so on. That is still the case, but now we are increasingly talking about management of tourism rather than simply planning for tourism. I re-emphasise that it is very much about management as well as development and marketing. Partly to answer the question about how to manage potential conflicts, it is a combination of assessing the conflict, where there is existing pressure, where new pressure might happen and what the potential conflicts on the ground are, and then addressing that.

The tools for addressing go back to some of the basic processes of land use planning and development control, such as zoning and identification

of areas for more or less tourism growth or development, and linking that to development control and planning, and better integrated planning across the various sectors. I am quite a strong believer in opportunities for visitor management to try to address pressures, with things such as restricting car parking and giving more timely information to visitors about where to go and what to do. There are hugely interesting digital applications available now, which people are beginning to use more and more, particularly to find areas of overcrowding, perhaps more overseas than in the UK. There are also traditional means, such as getting the tourism businesses that are involved with the plans to be intermediaries with the visitors, to inform them about behaviour, where to go, what to do, and so on.

Finally, there is the whole movement towards more sustainable tourism. We have not talked about this so much, but I am quite encouraged by the number of tourism businesses that are now certified as sustainable and have nailed their colours to the mast of tourism that is better managed and environmentally friendly, and uses fewer resources. That is partly in the larger tourism companies, but many small businesses have been individually recognised. There are tools to use in identifying and addressing potential conflict down the line. I am quite an optimist in that regard.

It is not just about negative control; it is also about using tourism as a positive catalyst to support sustainable land use, particularly to support sustainable agriculture, for example. I will quickly cite one recent example. Even when VisitEngland was more in its project than planning phase, it put a significant amount of money into a group of national parks to develop the English National Park Experience Collection, which was about giving visitors greater experience of the heritage and culture of the park, as well as things such as modern farming practice, and working with individual farmers to give experiences of sustainable agriculture and sustainable farming practices. I was quite involved in helping them find good examples internationally of that sort of thing. Using tourism as a catalyst for conservation as well as for controlling negative impacts is really important.

**Lord Goddard of Stockport:** On that last point, is it hundreds or is it thousands of people who have been involved in practical sustainable farming and seeing how it works? Is it a niche, or is it coming more into the mainstream?

**Dr Richard Denman:** That is a very good question. It is a niche that is becoming, as you put it, more mainstream, but it has not got into the mainstream. A big challenge is how you relate all this good stuff about sustainable tourism to the mass. Are we converting the mass? It is having quite a positive effect and it is moving into the mainstream, but it is certainly a challenge.

Q231 **Baroness Young of Old Scone:** You talked about the preparation of destination management plans and all the organisations involved in them. Have you yet come into contact with any of the new initiatives on local

nature recovery strategies that the Government are promoting through Defra to happen at local level in biodiversity recovery? It sounds as though that kind of process, which is harnessing a whole load of stakeholders around a particular project, would be a very similar exercise to the destination management plan process. Has there been any interaction between the two yet, or is it too early days?

**Dr Richard Denman:** I would need to find out, because, as I mentioned earlier, I have been much less involved in the last two or three years in the situation in England, and indeed in the UK. That type of approach is very relevant to the sort of activity that I was involved with previously, and tourism can be very supportive of that sort of initiative. I hope there has been dialogue, certainly at a local destination level. I imagine that the processes of destination management planning that I have outlined would pick up on the opportunities to support and be supported by the kind of initiative you outlined. I am fairly certain that that would be the case, certainly in national parks, but provided that you have the right conservation interests around the table in wider destination management plans outside the national parks, it is highly likely that the initiative you mentioned would be taken on board. However, I cannot speak from personal experience.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Defra has run a number of pilots. Perhaps we could give you the locations of those and you could use your contacts to come back to us on whether there has been any engagement.

**Dr Richard Denman:** I would be delighted.

Q232 **The Chair:** That would be very kind if you could do that. Can I ask a bit more about the delivery plans? Obviously, they are quite new concepts to some extent. Have plans actually been developed and implemented? Is there a delivery gap between the plans and the delivery, and who pays for the delivery?

**Dr Richard Denman:** Is there a gap? Most of the plans that I have seen and been involved with have been pretty practical. We are usually talking about a five-year horizon, but with most of the action being identified for years 1, 2 and 3. In many cases, where I have been involved after five years looking back at plans, I have been pretty impressed with the level of delivery that has happened; put it like that. Obviously, it has been found that certain things were not able to be delivered, but broadly the gap is not big, from my experience.

Who pays? It tends to be a fairly wide combination. Quite a bit of it will be the tourism sector itself—individual tourism businesses. In their participation in things, they pay for engagement in a certain project or initiative. In the past, a significant amount of local authority funding has been much less, which has obviously caused a challenge. In many of the plans and areas where I worked, there was EU money. I am not sure where we stand now in the new era, because I have not been involved much with tourism in England since Brexit, but, certainly, ERDF money was really important for a lot of delivery of this sort of thing, because it

ticked a huge number of boxes in relation to rural policy in Europe, and that was very beneficial. I am afraid I cannot tell you where we stand now.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. Maybe when you come back to us you could make some inquiries as to how the funding system works without that European money. Would that be possible?

**Dr Richard Denman:** Yes, I can ask the question.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Q233 **The Earl of Leicester:** Dr Denman, can you briefly outline your international experience vis-à-vis tourism development, what lessons you have learned in relation to land use, and, in particular, how international tourism practice compares to England in relation to planning management and the delivery of land use priorities?

**Dr Richard Denman:** It is quite a large question, and I will make two or three points that will not necessarily be totally comprehensive of my experience. In the last two or three years, I have been working globally, in a sense, with UN and global bodies, looking particularly at international policies and tools for promoting more sustainable tourism. Right now, for example, I serve as an associate technical director of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, which set up the global sustainable tourism criteria. The body was initiated by the UN with industry support.

That is relevant, because the criteria for sustainable tourism have within them a number of important requirements for tourism businesses and destinations when thinking about the impact on land and the engagement of wider sectors in tourism development and management. For example, the criteria require active engagement of a wide range of local stakeholders within communities, and specific reference is made to agriculture, local supply chains and that sort of thing. There is a very strong component in the criteria of impact on biodiversity, particularly regarding visitor behaviour in relation to wildlife. Remember that these are global criteria, so a lot of them are particularly relevant to destinations that are highly dependent on wildlife tourism, but that applies to some parts of the UK now as well. There is a big emphasis in the criteria on demonstrable visitor management.

We have seen a big take-up on this by destinations and businesses around the world. The criteria have been used in advisory work and as a global standard, feeding into local certification schemes rather as the Forest Stewardship Council standard and the Marine Stewardship Council standard do for fishing and forestry. This is a standard for tourism.

To what extent have they been taken up in the UK? As such, there has not been much interface with the global sustainable tourism criteria, but I am pleased to say that one can see a lot of the principles that are articulated there in the work of a lot of our destination organisations, particularly our national parks, and the certification schemes that exist here in the UK. That is the way the world has been going, and a lot of

countries have been picking it up. We are pretty much in line with that in the UK as well, I am pleased to say, although we are not necessarily using those standards by name so much.

Another initiative I have been involved with for the last 20 years is the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, which is particularly aimed at national parks and other designated protected areas. It sets out a framework for sustainable tourism structures and planning in national parks and protected areas. It requires that there should be a stakeholder forum involving conservation bodies, community bodies and tourism enterprises for those national parks. It was partly developed based on models here in England.

There was strong involvement by Exmoor National Park and by the Broads Authority in the whole development of the charter 20 years ago. The Broads Authority has continued to be an active participant. It has been quite successful in providing a direction for more sustainable tourism in protected areas, but the number of protected areas in England that are now actively involved in the charter has somewhat dropped off compared with countries like Spain, Italy and France, where it has been much more actively promoted.

It is a similar example to the one I gave before, whereby there is a national, or in this case European, model that has been taken up by other countries and can be seen to be setting out an approach that is largely followed in the UK, although we are not so much playing at the table of the charter compared with some of the other countries. We tend to use it and then, to a degree, pull back. Maybe that is part of our national psyche. I am not sure.

In the field of national government structures and how they relate to local tourism structures, and thinking about what we were saying earlier about the relationship between VisitEngland and the DMOs and destination management plans and so on, and to what extent that is better in other countries than in the UK, there are certainly some countries where it is much more structured and thereby much better. I point to the Netherlands. I point to Norway. I point to Slovenia, which has been a real flagbearer for the relationship between destinations and the national body in sustainable tourism.

New Zealand, in particular, provides a very good example of a national-to-local partnership approach, with the national Government setting an approach in partnership with the regional bodies and very much working together on something towards a nature-based approach to tourism. They are talking about something called the Tiaki visitor promise, which is all about delivering a more intact nature and a richer cultural heritage experience for visitors, as well as getting visitors and tourism businesses to sign up to that approach. It is also very much along the lines of what we have been talking about, but it is particularly well articulated and highly promoted in New Zealand, in line with their overall tourism brand of "100% Pure New Zealand". Those are just some examples.



I said that we are not doing it quite as well as those countries, and that is the case, but we are getting there. I have been particularly encouraged by some of the approaches articulated in Scotland towards more sustainable tourism, and England is following suit. All told, there are good examples. We need to engage more with other countries and learn. Overall, I am quite optimistic. Broadly, our planning and development control system at a local level stands up well compared with some of the other countries in which I have worked. All told, we are in line with global standards and global policy and match many other countries, but we could do more.

**The Earl of Leicester:** Thank you. It is very encouraging to hear what you have just said, but would you agree that probably 15 or 20 years ago the Government barely recognised the importance of tourism? Maybe I should say 20 or 30 years ago.

**Dr Richard Denman:** I would go to the 30 rather than the 15, actually. That is a very interesting question. I started my work in tourism in, dare I say it, 1972. I worked on land management in Scotland. I did a lot of work then with the Scottish Tourist Board and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. They had very good people there. The chief executive of VisitScotland, a gentleman called Lester Borley, came down and became the chief executive of VisitEngland. He was highly aware of a lot of these issues, and that was 40 years ago. He had a pretty good relationship with the Government. I do not know whether the Exchequer, the Treasury, recognised the contribution of tourism then better or worse than it does now, but there was certainly a lot of good work happening many years ago.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for coming to see us and for your evidence. You will send us those two issues, will you?

**Dr Richard Denman:** Yes, it would be helpful if I could be asked the question in writing.

**The Chair:** Okay, no problem. We will do that. Thank you very much.