

English Nature HEATH Project Tourism Deliverables

Visitor Payback Report.

A report on experiences of, and potential for, tourism pay-back schemes to support heathland management.

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Executive Summary

Intro

The Cornwall HEATH is a ground-breaking and innovative project that aims to restore the ancient heathland landscapes of West Cornwall and develop European partnerships to demonstrate sustainable landscape management and related spatial planning mechanisms across NW Europe. It will do this by developing demonstration sites of good heathland management practice in Cornwall that will involve substantial management works. This report assesses the efficacy and relevance of tourism payback schemes, more commonly known as visitor payback schemes (VPS) as a mechanism to support heathland management.

VPS is essentially a voluntary opt in or opt out payment made by visitors to assist the conservation management of places they visit, differing significantly from the compulsory tourist or bed tax practiced in other countries. There is a dearth of published research and case studies, from around the UK and beyond, that have critically reviewed the concept and operationalisation of VPS; all highlight that VPS is a complex concept to evaluate, both in theory and practice, involving a range of benefits and dis-benefits. The general consensus however has been that support for VPS varies considerably, with visitors on the whole being strongly receptive, whilst tourism business interests are more cautious. Case studies go on to demonstrate that although the financial benefits can be immense they appear less prevalent than the more esoteric 'feel good' factor and increased awareness of conservation projects, issues and partnerships that are evident with VPS.

Most of the research to date however has focused on visitors receptivity to VPS or on examples of VPS in action. This report aims to demystify the tourism business resistance to VPS and find out exactly what the barriers are to business involvement in such schemes; until these barrier can be overcome the potential of VPS will remain constrained. The report also aims to assess how the esoteric 'feel good factor' can be tapped into, to raise financial benefits for heathland management as well as awareness of and interest in the heathland as a habitat of international importance.

Method

A **visitor payback scheme**, for this context, was defined as the process of visitors choosing to give a donation, monetary or other, to assist the conservation management of places they visit. The report is a multi-stakeholder analysis; information was collected through archival research, semi structured interviews, key informant interviews and questionnaires. The respondents were split into five types: agencies, or organisations, already involved in VPS; agencies, or organisations, not already involved in VPS (to understand a little of how

perceptions are actually played out in real life); businesses who were currently operating VPS; businesses who were not; and visitors.

Results

There are many differing concepts of what VPS can be, including financial contribution, in-kind support, and visitor engagement in relevant issues eg local campaigns and promotion of local goods and services. Therefore there is an endless supply of different projects/issues VPS can support and many different ways visitors can donate or contribute to VPS. Schemes can be independent of one another or can take a more centralised form, lead by an agency responsible for the schemes co-ordination, marketing, administration and management. Although such centrally lead schemes will incur costs to manage they have the benefit of focusing money collected on needy areas by creating 'themes' that businesses and visitors can support. This has the extra benefit of allowing visitors to see the real impacts of their contribution.

The findings support the dearth of research already done on VPS that highlights the general consensus; that visitors are strongly receptive to VPS, whilst the tourism businesses are more cautious. Tourism business resistance primarily comes from the fact that there is a general misunderstanding amongst businesses that VPS is a voluntary opt in or opt out scheme – not a tourism tax. There is also wide misinterpretation of the benefits of VPS and how schemes are operationalised and implemented. Agency staff also do not fully understand the concept of VPS, which has led to a real gap between the businesses implementing VPS to raise monies and the agency managing the environment in that area. Even agencies that were directly benefiting from money being generated appeared to have no relationship with the businesses supporting them and therefore no knowledge of how VPS were benefiting their work.

At present, the heathland as a landscape is grossly undervalued by businesses and visitors and is therefore not the landscape of choice for businesses or visitors to support through VPS. Innovative ways of ensuring money raised from VPS directly benefits heathland management are going to have to be found if it is pursued as a funding option. It is fortunate that as long as the VPS the business is operating is supporting a project they believe in, environmental or social, visitors can be encouraged to participate, as it is not so much the project/activity being supported that makes the difference to whether a visitor will contribute, but rather it is the integrity and transparency of the scheme and the passion with which it is communicated by the business that sells VPS to visitors. Efforts should be concentrated on promoting the easiest and most favoured methods of VPS such as opt-out schemes or contribution through products that have a % embedded in the price already. It is also vitally important that businesses and agencies realise the key to a successful VPS is communication.

Recommendations

- ✓ Conduct a public relations exercise to boost public understanding and appreciation of heathland sites.
- ✓ Raise awareness and understanding of VPS and the benefits it can have for heathland management, with agency staff.
- ✓ Raise awareness and understanding of VPS with businesses.
- ✓ Encourage more/better communication between EN staff and local businesses.
- ✓ Develop a programme of themes businesses & visitors can support.
- ✓ Pilot a county wide VPS campaign that would have maximum visible impact.

Acronyms

AONB.....	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BAPs.....	Biodiversity Action Plans
BHA.....	British Hospitality Association
CDMO.....	Cornwall Destination Management Organisation
CoaST.....	Cornwall Sustainable Tourism Project
CTF.....	Cornwall Tourism Federation
CWT.....	Cornwall Wildlife Trust
DEFRA.....	Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
EN.....	English Nature
HVMCA.....	Helford Voluntary Marine Conservation Area
LNR.....	Local Nature Reserve
MCS	Marine Conservation Society
NNR.....	National Nature Reserve
NT.....	National Trust
RNLI.....	Royal National Lifeboat Institution
SSSI.....	Site of Special Scientific Interest
VPS.....	Visitor Payback Schemes

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

English Nature is the UK Government's independent statutory agency that champions the conservation of wildlife and geology throughout England. It protects sites by notifying them as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and promotes good management practice through partnerships. The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly team of English Nature delivers nature conservation across the county by working in partnership with owners and occupiers of SSSIs, through direct management of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and through strategic partnerships and projects with others.

The Cornwall HEATH is a ground-breaking and innovative project that aims to restore the ancient heathland landscapes of West Cornwall and develop European partnerships to demonstrate sustainable landscape management and related spatial planning mechanisms across NW Europe. It will do this by developing demonstration sites of good heathland management practice in Cornwall that will involve substantial management works.

1.2 Scope

The HEATH project will last approximately 3 years and will involve substantial infrastructure work across approximately 55 sites, totalling 3,500 ha, spread through the western extremity of Cornwall, predominantly in Penwith and the Lizard.

The project has a significant tourism element and a number of deliverables that examine the socio and economic connection the environment, specifically the heath, has with tourism.

Within the UK project these are specifically:

- a visitor payback report (Action 2.5)
- a sustainable transport appraisal (Action 3.4)
- an integrated visitor plan (Action 4.6)
- a strategic plan for tourism and heathlands (Action 4.6)

There are significant common elements between the tourism deliverables within the HEATH project and the terms of reference within The Cornwall Tourism Forum Strategy and Action Plan 2004 (CTFSAP 2004). To ensure that the work within the HEATH project compliments that of the CTFSAP 2004, the Cornwall Sustainable Tourism Project (CoaST) have been selected to deliver the required elements. The common areas with the CTFAAP have been identified in this report.

CoaST has been working across Cornwall in partnership on sustainable tourism issues with local, regional and national statutory, non-statutory, community and private sector bodies since 2003. As one of the co-founding members of the Cornwall Tourism Forum (CTF) Sustainable Tourism Working Group, it contributed significantly to the development of the CTFSAP 2004, and worked with the group to contribute to the development of the South West Tourism (SWT) Towards 2015 Strategy. It currently runs a number of specific initiatives, besides supporting and advising businesses, strategic bodies and new initiatives, and operates a county-wide network of approximately 700 members.

1.3 Rationale

Heath project Action Number	Action Name	Description	Concrete Results/ Outcomes
Action 2.5	Review of heathland tourism	Review of tourism pay-back schemes in heath and similar landscapes	Report on experiences of, and potential for, tourism pay-back schemes to support heathland management.

With well over 80% of visitors choosing Cornwall because of its natural environment, tourism in Cornwall is reliant on the environment. And yet the 'unspoilt landscape' promoted in brochures does not simply look after itself; economic realities remain at the forefront. Those responsible for managing the environment are facing depleted budgets and keen to find ways to tap into visitor spend. This report aims to explore whether VPS could be a way to help maintain, protect and/or enhance the environment of Cornwall; specifically the heathland environment.

As stated in the briefing, The Cornwall Tourism Forum Strategy and Action Plan (2004) also has several targets specifically related to Visitor Payback which this project will contribute to:

- *Investigate visitor payback schemes – voluntary or otherwise – and assess potential for Cornwall.*
- *Integrate visitor payback schemes and assess potential for Cornwall as part of the pilot clusters, or as separate project.*
- *Pilot and champion visitor payback and hypothecation to maintain and enhance natural and built environments.*
- *Support and promote those schemes which recognise the credit due to host community infrastructure e.g. visitor payback.*

CoaST has already been contributing to these targets in a number of ways via existing work:

- ✓ Collating existing data on visitor payback schemes from the UK and abroad to highlight best practice examples.
- ✓ Collating and monitoring examples of visitor payback schemes in Cornwall.
- ✓ Organisation of workshops pulling in good practice from South Hams 'On the Right Track' Scheme and contributing to understanding how visitor payback schemes could operate in Cornwall.
- ✓ Supporting CoaST members who have been among the first businesses in Cornwall to trial visitor payback schemes.
- ✓ Supporting Carrick DC, Penwith DC and Restormel DC in their efforts to explore the potential for VPS in each district.

Small scale visitor payback schemes are proving to be successful at tapping into visitor spend to help support projects that maintain, protect and enhance the environment of Cornwall. They are also proving to be a good way to raise awareness of environmental issues and projects of local concern. There is potential to engage more businesses and therefore more visitors to participate in such schemes that will possibly help maintain, protect or enhance a wider range of projects and raise awareness of a wider variety of issues of local concern, such as heathland management.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 This report considers the following areas:

- Review existing research on visitor payback schemes (VPS) as related to open access and lowland habitat management across the UK and Northern Europe. To include a detailed review of current and planned work underway in Cornwall.
- Review of VPS already in action in and around the heathland sites in the UK and Europe, exploring the potential for any of the schemes to support heathland management.
- Identify differing concepts of what VPS can be, including financial contribution, in-kind support, and visitor engagement in relevant issues eg local campaigns and promotion of local goods and services.
- Explore Cornwall's visitor attitudes to VPS that could support heathland management.
- Explore Cornwall's business/community attitudes to VPS that could support heathland management.
- Examine the role of VPS as a tool to raise awareness of and education about heathland.

2.2 Definition of terms:

A **visitor payback scheme**, for this context, was defined as the process of visitors choosing to give a donation, monetary or other, to assist the conservation management of places they visit.

2.3 Data collation:

This report is a multi-stakeholder analysis; information was collected through archival research, semi structured interviews, key informant interviews and questionnaires.

- An archival search was carried out in the CoaST office to draw on existing experience of VPS. A search was also carried out via the internet and yielded important insights about documented incidents and the interpretation of visitor payback schemes around the UK and beyond.

- Contact was made with 103 businesses and 20 agencies, primarily in the South West, using Survey Monkey, an on-line survey tool. A visitor questionnaire was also e-mailed to 10 CoaST member businesses to print out for their visitors to complete. 60 were posted back to CoaST for analysis.
- Semi-structured face to face interviews were carried out with CoaST members, agency representatives, businesses not already part of the CoaST network and visitors. Any opportunity to discuss visitor payback schemes was grasped (i.e. a chamber of commerce meeting, a CoaST Host event, 2 community consultations, a National Nature Reserve conference, 2 tourism association meetings and individual contact with a number of agency representatives). The rule was: get an informant/s onto the topic of VPS and get out of the way. Informants were then able to provide views and information about visitor payback schemes that they thought important.
- 12 Key informants were identified and targeted; businesses that have experience of running visitor payback schemes; district tourism officers that have experience of VPS and other agencies that have been involved in VPS. More time and careful probing was spent with these individuals.

The respondents were split into five types: agencies, or organisations, already involved in VPS; agencies, or organisations, not already involved in VPS (to understand a little of how perceptions are actually played out in real life); businesses who were currently operating VPS; businesses who were not; and visitors.

The analysis below attempts to compare the responses amongst all five types. CoaST as an agency has not filled in the survey, but comments as appropriate are fed through into the analysis where appropriate.

3.0 Managing Heathland

3.1 Heathlands: an overview

Lowland Heathland is one of the rarest and most fragile environments found in Europe. The UK supports approximately 20% of the world's total. Traditional conservation practices of lowland heathland in the UK are threatened because there is no longer economic demand for products. 90% of Cornwall's heathland has been lost and the result has been a significant disintegration of heathland and a dramatic degradation of Cornwall's cultural sites and its unique plant and animal species. Heathlands are included in Annex 1 of the European Habitats directive 92/43/EEC as 'a natural habitat type of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of special conservation' (European Commission 2003). The UK therefore has an international obligation to conserve this habitat type.

Sufficient resource allocation is essential if nature targets and responsibilities are to be met. In the UK however, adequate resources are not currently allocated for nature conservation. The UK Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) provides a good example of this. Whilst BAPs stimulate long-term visions and set objectives, non-governmental organisations and government agencies are expected to compile and implement plans but receive little additional resource to do so. Those responsible for managing the environment in the UK are facing depleted budgets and keen to find ways to tap into visitor spend, this is especially true for those managing heathlands.

Although the heathland is highly valued for its biodiversity, landscape and archaeological importance and as a resource for recreational activities by conservation organisations like English Nature, there is a lack of understanding or appreciation amongst the general public in the UK about the importance of heathland sites. Unlike any other resource, heathlands provide a direct continuous link to past civilizations and yet heathlands are often perceived by people as a wasteland. As Orr (1992) points out people will not value or fight to save what they do not love. It will therefore be very difficult to tap into visitor spend to protect an environment people do not care about. Even in Cornwall, where the relationship between the natural and historical landscapes is a major attraction for visitors, many people are still unaware that they are walking on a living historical artifact.

3.2 Heathlands & Environmental taxes

In the report, 'A comparison of heathland management practices, approaches and mechanisms in the UK and Netherlands', Williams (2003), highlights how across much of Europe, including the Netherlands (which is reputed to be 20 years ahead of nature conservation than the UK), tourists are charged a small environmental tax or 'bed tax', which

is added to hotel/B&B/camping bill. The money collected is then distributed to organisations responsible for countryside management. The report goes on to suggest that this could provide a solution to concerns raised by countryside managers in the UK; that tourists make an inadequate contribution to the cost of site maintenance. Introducing an environmental or 'bed tax' for tourists in the UK, as practiced across Europe, would provide a solution by generating much needed funds for management of heathland sites.

In a statement to the national press, Sir Michael Lyons, the author of the Lyon's inquiry, an independent report which has suggested the possible introduction of a tourism tax in the UK, said: "Taxes on tourist activity have been suggested to the inquiry as worthy of investigation... and we are looking at those ideas alongside a range of other proposals." The tax could be in the form of a local levy on overnight accommodation; hotels, holiday lets and B&B's. However, there is much opposition to the introduction of a tourism tax or 'bed tax' in the UK which will make this option difficult to pursue.

"BHA says VAT will be added to bed tax"

"The British Hospitality Association (BHA) 'Say No To Bed Tax' campaign has attracted overwhelming industry support, with more than 1,000 hospitality operators and owners already signing the petition. The battle is not yet won, however, as the Government could still go ahead with the 5-10% tax on room nights across the UK, despite increasing opposition to the tax from all sectors of the industry. The BHA

have gone onto warn that the bed tax would also be subject to VAT. A bed tax of 7.5% would therefore rise to 8.8% after VAT (see table). This would take the total tax demand on overnight accommodation to 23.4%, not 22.5%, making the UK the second-highest taxed country in Europe, behind Denmark at 25%."

(Caterer & Hotel Keeper; 27th April 2006)

There has also been an angry reaction in the South West to the Lyon's inquiry:

"Dismay over 'tourist tax plans"

"There has been an angry reaction in the South West to the Lyon's report. Malcolm

Bell, South West Tourism's chief executive, said the idea of a tourist tax was "barking

mad" and had already been tried in Europe and had failed. "This was tried in the Balearic Islands and after about two years they dropped it," he told BBC News. "I think we should learn from others who've gone down this route and found all the problems." Mr Bell said a tourist tax could deter visitors from coming to the region. "You could end up with an increase in the number of people leaving the country to fly abroad, polluting the sky and not paying any tax." The chairman of Newquay Tourist Information Centre in

Cornwall has also criticised the suggestion of a tourism tax. Paul Harknett, who used to be a local hotelier, believes there would be a good deal of scepticism over how the tax would be spent. "It's a bit like road tax - how much of a tourist tax would actually be invested in local tourism? This bed tax concept was floating about three or four years ago and in my view I think common sense prevailed because I think it will cost the industry more than it's going to raise." **(BBC News, 10th March 2006)**

3.3 VPS: A solution?

The Cornwall Destination Management Organisation (CDMO) Action Plan 2006, the base document for the Strategy and Action Review 2006/7, also has as a specific strategic objective 'to lobby against the imposition of a tourism tax by all means available'. But, the Action Plan does go on to say that it will 'encourage and support visitor payback schemes (VPS)'. This highlights that VPS are not a tourism tax. VPS are essentially a *voluntary* opt in or opt out payment made by visitors to assist the conservation management of places they visit, differing significantly from the compulsory tourist or bed tax practiced in other countries.

Other areas in the UK and Europe have tried VPS and have found them to be generously supported by visitors; In the Peak District a survey carried out in 1993 showed that 75% of visitors agreed with the principle of visitors contributing directly to the local conservation and environmental works. On buses of ski tourists in the Alps, an average of 70% of passengers made a donation for the natural environment on request. The same piece of research went onto find that where tourism enterprises had added a payment automatically, usually less than 2% have indicated that they do not wish to pay (Denman & Ashcroft, 1997). These schemes have been able to raise significant pots of money for conservation management.

To highlight how small contributions from VPS can add up one piece of research made the prediction that 'if every tourist within Europe offered 6 pence per night of his/her stay, this would raise over £112 million per annum for conservation' (Denman & Ashcroft, 1997). In this spirit, with 5 ½ million visitors to Cornwall every year, if each visitor was able to make a one off contribution of 6 pence at some point during their holiday, that would raise £330,000 for environmental conservation projects in Cornwall each year. If this contribution were raised to

10 pence, as much as £550,000 per year could be raised for environmental projects in Cornwall.

Participation in a VPS enables businesses or agencies to take an active role in giving visitors the opportunity to help conserve the beauty of the natural environment in turn promoting a better understanding of the environment and creating a positive effect on our environment. Through VPS the tourism industry can develop more of a caring reputation by demonstrating how tourism can positively help the local environment. VPS could therefore be an alternative to a 'tourist tax' and real solution to the problem of dwindling resources for heathland management in the UK.

4.0 VPS: Case studies from Europe & the UK

4.1 The European Visitor Payback Project

The term 'Visitor Payback', which refers to the process of visitors choosing to give money (or other help) to assist the conservation or management of the places they visit, was 'introduced' by the Tourism Company in June 1996 when they were commissioned by the European Commission, under the EU Action plan for Tourism, to set up and direct an 18 month study on VPS. A summary report by Denman & Ashcroft (1997) was published and circulated widely throughout Europe and is the key reference document for VPS.

The European Visitor Payback Project ran from January 1996 to June 1997; its aim was to see whether any more direct methods of VPS could be developed to persuade visitors to contribute to the local conservation needs of the places they visit. The project explored the concept by establishing, monitoring and evaluating five practical schemes in different European Countries, testing ways to raise voluntary resources from visitors to support conservation. It included projects in Corfu, Devon and Stockholm as well as schemes run by a Dutch wildlife tour operator and the UK based Association of Independent Tour Operators. The project found that the amounts raised varied considerably according to the methods and approach adopted but did draw a number of interesting conclusions;

- Visitors do show a considerable willingness to pay for conservation on places they visit, especially where their holidays involve appreciating the environment and wildlife in destinations.
- Practical schemes show that the amounts donated are quite low, but when added together over time can make a significant contribution.
- The tourism industry lags behind the consumer in its enthusiasm to participate; this report aims to understand more fully why.
- Some methods of approaching visitors and collecting money, such as donation boxes, require considerable effort and promotion to bring in modest returns. Methods that can be built into a company's system easily, such as adding a supplement to bills, may be more sustainable in the long run.
- In order for the concept to flourish it needs to be expanded so visitors anticipate it as a natural activity in their destinations and tourism enterprises have confidence in supporting it.

4.2 VPS: Case studies from around the UK

There are a number of VPS operating around the UK that have been set up by partnership projects, charities or district councils; these projects are centrally managed by a lead organisation that is responsible for the administration, management and marketing of the schemes. Businesses become part of the scheme by setting up a VPS in their tourism business that contributes to the cause. Visitors are invited to contribute by supporting the schemes participating businesses.

4.2.1 The Lake District Scheme

Every year thousands of visitors enjoy the English Lake District; the ravages of nature, the Lakeland weather and the pounding of countless boots all take their toll on this unique environment. In 1993 the Lake District Tourism & Conservation Partnership was established, initially as a pilot scheme to establish joint ventures between tourism and conservation organisations to demonstrate that the two could be mutually supportive, the partnership hoped to connect visitors, tourism businesses and others to conservation organisations who protect the landscape and manage the impacts of visitor pressure. The aim of the partnership was to promote sustainable tourism by raising much needed funds for vital conservation projects in the Lake District.

In the early days of funding conservation through tourism, each member business adopted their own particular project to support. This has and still does work incredibly well, however in the last few years the partnership has seen, with increasing popularity, businesses supporting conservation themes; these include supporting red squirrel habitats, dry stone walling, hedge laying, bridleway enhancement and many more which are all vital to the fabric of The Lake District. This way money raised by individual businesses can be pooled, this soon adds up to significant pots of money projects can tap into. By supporting these themes businesses are still able to retain a tangible project; as their guests explore The Lake District they can identify with the theme and subsequently the funds raised as the money is directed to the most needy practical conservation projects throughout The Lake District. More than 130 projects run by a range of beneficiaries have received funding this way.

By 2004, 170 tourism businesses – hotels, guest houses, B&B's, caravan parks, retailers and attractions- had helped raise £1/2 million for practical conservation. Each business had contributed to the conservation themes using their preferred method of donation; i.e. donation boxes, voluntary opt out schemes and or % of proceeds from products (i.e. local food items) or services (i.e. bike hire). One family hotel group alone raised £37,000 to support bridleway repair.

4.2.2 National Trust - "Caring Tourism" Scheme

In April 1999, the National Trust launched "Caring Tourism"—a VPS which encourages visitors to give money to assist the conservation and management of the places they visit. Lots of different pockets of research has shown that the quality of the environment is increasingly important for visitors and that they are willing to contribute to the preservation of the environment they have come to enjoy, this is particularly true amongst visitors who like exploring heritage and countryside. 'Caring Tourism' offers an opportunity for these visitors to link directly the places visited with local and conservation needs and thus the contribution the visitors make to the places they visit.

Hotels participating in the scheme ask their guests to donate £1 to local Trust conservation projects. On arrival, each guest is given a leaflet describing the National Trust scheme and highlighting local conservation projects assisted by the scheme. They are asked to agree to a voluntary contribution of £1 which will go to help fund these projects and the donation is automatically added to their bill unless they have informed the hotel reception otherwise. The scheme has resulted in participating hotels attracting more visitors because of their support of the National Trust; visitors welcome the opportunity to invest in their heritage and countryside while enjoying them; and the scheme has generated much needed funds to support the Trust's conservation work.

4.2.3 Isle of Wight – "Gift to Nature" Scheme

The Island 2000 Trust, a registered charity, evolved from a partnership between an AONB Project, local council, and Countryside Agency. An independent, self-financing, not-for-profit company was set up in April 2000 which aimed to demonstrate linkages between landscape, the economy and culture on the Isle of Wight.

The Trust's 'Gift to Nature' is a scheme whereby visitors and tourists are offered the opportunity to contribute to conservation works taking place on the Island. 'Gift to Nature' is all about voluntary giving – the trust are clear to highlight it is not a tourist tax. Many tourism businesses on the Island are participating in 'Gift to Nature' by asking their customers to make a voluntary donation through collection envelopes, special collection boxes or by adding a small, optional supplement to the accommodation bill. All of the money raised through 'Gift To Nature' is spent on the Isle of Wight on local conservation/environmental projects.

During 2000, money was raised to improve habitats for the rare wall lizard in Ventnor. Other projects include; the construction of a red squirrel viewing hide in an Island forest so that visitors can enjoy seeing and understanding these elusive creatures. Businesses are invited to get involved by starting VPS in their operations or by sponsoring the scheme to help cover

publicity material costs. Visitors are encouraged to support participating businesses on the Isle of Wight or to make a postal donation direct to the trust.

4.2.4 South Hams DC – “On the Right Tracks” Scheme

“On the Right Tracks” is a VPS set up in 2003 by South Hams District Council, in which tourism businesses were encouraged to raise money to help restore the unique network of green lanes in the South Hams, by placing a voluntary levy on key products or, by asking for a small donation in return for the use of a particular service, such as tickets, accommodation, food and drink.

More than 30 assorted tourism businesses were involved with the project which raised about £17,000 in the first year. Money was raised via a variety of methods including for example; a donation of 50p from every visitor bringing a dog by one self catering establishment, an opt-out levy of £1 for every person ordering a Dartmouth pie by one hotel. Proof that such small contributions can add up to worthwhile sums very quickly is shown by the example of the Venus Company, a chain of three beach cafés and shops located in South Hams where customers are encouraged to support ‘On the Right Tracks’ through voluntary opt-out levy of 5p placed on the price of a cup of tea and an ice cream flake; by 2005 Venus company and its customers had raised over £12,000.

4.3 Visitor Payback in Cornwall

In Cornwall attention is focusing on VPS as a means to supplement the limited funds available for conservation work, after the success of a number of small schemes rolled out in 2005 by private tourism businesses to support local environmental and community projects and help raise their 'green profile'. These schemes have all evolved independently of one another and to date are not centrally managed. However, this is how the scheme in the Lake District started out and there are a number of district councils and charitable organisations already exploring the concept of centrally managed VPS 'themes' that businesses in specific areas can support.

Below are some best practice case studies from CoaST members which highlight a variety of different ways VPS is already operating in Cornwall:

4.3.1 Business: The Primrose Valley Hotel

Type of VPS: 1.) Voluntary, opt in/opt out, supplement added to overnight stay.

2.) Sale of special local product (i.e. jute bag) that donates a % of £'s.

The Primrose Valley Hotel, St Ives, launched their first visitor payback scheme on 24th March 2005, whereby a voluntary donation of one pound per room per night goes directly to the Marine Conservation Society (MCS). MCS is the UK charity dedicated to protecting our seas and the life within them and helps maintain Porthminster Beach, the blue flag beach next to the hotel. "With eight bedrooms, £1 per room per night soon adds up!" In the first 14 days of operation £73 was raised. And in the first full month of operation just over £110 was raised for MCS. This year (2006) Primrose Valley Hotel has started a second VPS and joined forces with the Cornwall Wildlife Trust to produce Jute bags that carry the MCS, CWT and hotel logo. 50% from all bags sold go directly to the CWT.

4.3.2 Business: Venus Café

Type of VPS: Voluntary, opt in/opt out, supplement added to drinks/flakes.

Mike Smith, of Venus Cafes in Devon and now also in Newquay, has been heavily involved in the huge success of the "On The Right Tracks" VPS in South Hams, a scheme managed by South Hams District Council. Venus Café raised over £10,000 in 3 years by putting 5p on every cup of tea and every flake he sold in his cafe.

Having expanded into Cornwall with a Venus café and shop recently opening at Tolcarne Beach, Newquay, Mike was keen to set a similar scheme in place. Unable to find a centrally managed scheme to support, Venus is currently supporting two projects, the first is the

Children of Sumatra 'Aceh fund', by raising 5p per filter coffee sold. *“Our filter coffee is a single estate, organic, fair trade coffee from Aceh region & we wanted to help long term for the orphans in Aceh. Money goes direct to Aceh no intermediaries.”*

The second is through a partnership with the Cornwall Wildlife Trust that aims to raise awareness and help practical conservation of the flora and fauna that inhabit Tolcarne Beach at Newquay. The Venus Beach Wildlife Fund, allows customers to support the Venus ethos of 'Loving the Beach'; *“This ensures present & future generations enjoyment of the beach”* explained Michael Smith, Venus Managing Director. *“For the next 5 years, we will donate 5p on their behalf for every cup of tea and flake bought. We plan to raise over £5,000 towards care and education of the beach wildlife habitats, home to many different marine flora and fauna species. We are delighted to be working with Cornwall Wildlife Trust to achieve this.”*

4.3.3 Business: Elemental Marine Tours

Type of VPS: 1.) Voluntary, opt in/opt out, supplement added to a tour.

2.) Participation in an activity (recording species).

Elemental Tours, and registered charity Marine Connection joined forces in 2005 to raise awareness and money to support marine life around Cornwall's coastline. A percentage of every boat trip purchased with Elemental Tours goes directly to the charity. Passengers are also encouraged to assist with recording species seen on the trips and all records are passed on to the Trust, to help with research and conservation – another way to get visitors to contribute to local conservation efforts.

Elemental tours also trialed a short, focused VPS for National Marine Week where two special boat trips operated where the same amount was also donated to the Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Cetacean Stranding Fund. This highlighted that VPS can be focused to compliment specific events and awareness raising activities going on at any given time.

4.3.4 Business: Eden B&B

Type of VPS: Participation in an activity.

Eden B&B in Mevagissey took a very different approach to VPS in 2005. Instead of asking visitors for a monetary contribution Eden B&B asked guests to leave their signature; Eden B&B linked up with the Cornwall Wildlife Trust, using their “Save the Sea” postcards to campaign for more protection for the marine environment.

4.3.5 Business: Penwarren Guest House

Type of VPS: Sale of special local product (i.e. jam/fudge) that donates a % of £'s.

Penwarren Guest House, offers guests the opportunity to purchase the same Cornish jams served at breakfast *and* contribute to the conservation of the Helford River at the same time. 50 pence from every pot of jam sold goes directly to the Helford Voluntary Marine Conservation Area (HVMCA).

4.3.6 Business: Lizard Peninsula Holiday Cottages

Type of VPS: One-off pledge to sponsor a project when booking holiday.

In 2006, Lizard Peninsula Holiday Cottages (a holiday cottage agency) started donating £5 from every short break booking, and £10 for every two week booking, taken on their cottages in Coverack to the Lambeage Village Hall (in Coverack). *"The Village Hall is a very important venue for village life; it plays host to the AmDram Society, numerous talks and parties and also the Coverack Art Society, to name but a few events."* Lizard Peninsula Holiday Cottages anticipate a total donation of somewhere in the region of £400-500 per year. Each year they plan to review the cause in the village, so in 2007 it may be the playground or the Christmas Lights.

The director of Lizard Peninsula Holiday Cottages believes that VPS has enormous potential for some of the larger letting agencies; *"With an average of 20 bookings per year x 500 properties (each) they could raise in the region of £50,000 per year per large agency. They could set up a trust and do some wonderful things for some local projects! I can just see a new logo in there brochures indicating which properties are donors to which projects. Everyone's a winner!"*

4.3.7 Business: Archie Browns Café

Type of VPS: 1.) Additional charge on 'unsustainable' items i.e. plastic carrier bags.

2.) Participation in an activity (i.e. using re-usable bags).

Archie Browns Café in Penzance placed a 10p surcharge on carrier bags used in their Health Food Store. Archie Browns then went on to produce jute bags for sale with the aim of encouraging visitors to re-use bags or use a 'bag for life'. All moneys raised go toward Friends of the Earth.

4.3.8 Business: Bedruthan Steps Hotel

Type of VPS: 1.) Charitable donations.

2.) Voluntary, opt in/opt out, supplement added to a tour.

Bedruthan

an's charitable donations are generally local, as they work to create a culture to encourage both the business, and individual staff members, to support local causes. They support various local fund raising efforts e.g. a casino evening was held to raise money for the local primary school and Bedruthan frequently donate prizes to local events. The hotel match funds staff fund raising efforts to encourage all to work to benefit the community. For example, the housekeeping team decided to donate their departmental tips to CLIC (Children's Leukaemia in Cornwall) last year and the hotel doubled the donation. They also help raise money for local causes such as the Emma Appeal which improved the access and safety to Mawgan Porth Beach.

"One of our frustrations has been that there are no specific charities local to our area so we are currently investigating setting up a trust fund that would enable us to contribute to community projects in conjunction with the parish council and the local community. We hope that this will be able to fund a number of local projects that would otherwise never happen. Our plan is to launch this with an open day at the hotel when local people can put in suggestions for projects up to a certain budget. Watch this space."

In 2006, the Bedruthan Steps Hotel put in place another VPS to start to neutralise their carbon dioxide emissions by helping visitors offset the CO₂ emitted in their journey to the hotel. This scheme also encourages visitors to think about their impact on the local and global environment. A voluntary donation of £10 pound per room stay goes onto the bill – visitors can opt out of this scheme if they so choose; for each £10 that is donated a tree is planted that will be allowed to grow for 100 years, feeding oxygen back into the atmosphere and supporting innumerable insects and other creatures. Guests receive a certificate printed on 100% recycled paper using renewable electricity to thank them for their donation.

4.3.9 Business: Skinner's Brewery

Type of VPS: Sale of special local product (i.e. locally brewed beer) that donates a % of £'s.

Skinner's Brewery have a number of Cornish Ales that contribute a percentage of every bottle or pint sold to local charities. Each pint or bottle sold is converted to barrels (72 pints in a 9 gallon barrel), the total totted up at the end of each month and the money raised is donated to the chosen charity. For example;

- Poppy Ale, a classic, Cornish Bitter, is commissioned by and brewed in support of The Royal British Legion. The Royal British Legion is one of the country's leading ex-service charities, best known for its role as the nation's custodian of remembrance for the Poppy Appeal which is organised annually. Available all year round a percentage (10p) of every pint or bottle of Poppy Ale goes to help the Cornish Arm of this charity.
- Cornish Blonde, is the official sponsor of Surfers Against Sewage (SAS). Again 10p of every bottle of pint sold goes directly to SAS in Cornwall to make sure Cornwall's beaches and surfing waters are kept clean.
- For every pint of Davy Jones Knocker sold, 5p goes directly to the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) and Beach Lifeguard Training in Cornwall.

4.4 Case Study Summary

The above case studies identify that there are many differing concepts of what VPS can be, including financial contribution, in-kind support, and visitor engagement in relevant issues eg local campaigns and promotion of local goods and services.

This highlights that there are many different ways visitors can donate or contribute to VPS, including:

- Internet opportunities to donate to a cause when holidays are being booked.
- One-off pledges or sponsorship of projects.
- Project specific fundraising involvement.
- Loyalty cards that encourage, for example, purchasing of local produce.
- Membership schemes i.e. National Trust membership.
- Donation Boxes strategically placed in tourism businesses, car parks etc.
- Voluntary, opt in/opt out, supplement added to a drink, activity or overnight stay i.e. 5p added to a cup of tea/coffee; 50p on boat trip or £1-10 on final hotel bill etc
- Through merchandising - buying special local products that donate a % of £'s.
- Participation in an activity rather than a cash donation. i.e. helping with a beach clean/footpath restoration.

The case studies also highlight that schemes can be independent of one another or can take a more centralised form, lead by an agency responsible for the schemes co-ordination, marketing, administration and management. Although such centrally lead schemes will incur costs to manage they have the benefit of focusing money collected on needy areas by creating 'themes' that businesses and visitors can support. This has the extra benefit of allowing visitors to see the real impacts of the money they donate. It is also clear that VPS, in practice, has a wider definition than simply supporting the environmental "conservation management" of destinations, as many of the above schemes support community based, social projects as well as environmental ones. i.e. local village halls, the Royal British Legion, the RNLI.

The following chapter goes on to research further attitudes to VPS (agency, business & visitor) and to explore in more detail the preferred mechanisms for VPS operations. It also examines the kind of projects in Cornwall that will be easily able to attract further support from such schemes.

5.0 Survey Results

Further research was carried out to explore Cornwall's business attitudes to VPS, to demystify the tourism business resistance to VPS and find out exactly what the barriers are to business involvement in such schemes; until this barrier can be overcome the potential of VPS will remain constrained. Research was also carried out with environment agencies to understand how VPS could compliment their work activities and also with visitors to Cornwall to assess visitor attitudes to VPS and their willingness to contribute.

The respondents were split into five types: businesses who were currently operating VPS; businesses who were not (to understand a little of how perceptions are actually played out in real life); agencies, or organisations, already involved in VPS; agencies, or organisations, not already involved in VPS; and visitors.

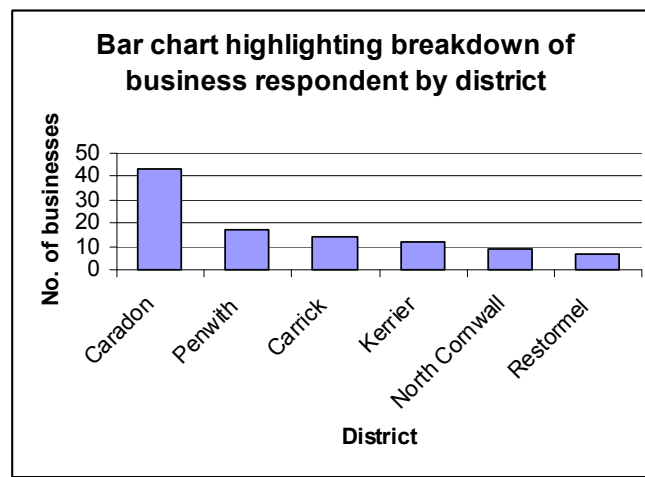
The analysis below attempts to compare the responses amongst all five types. CoaST as an agency has not filled in the survey, but comments as appropriate are fed through into the analysis where appropriate.

5.1 Respondents

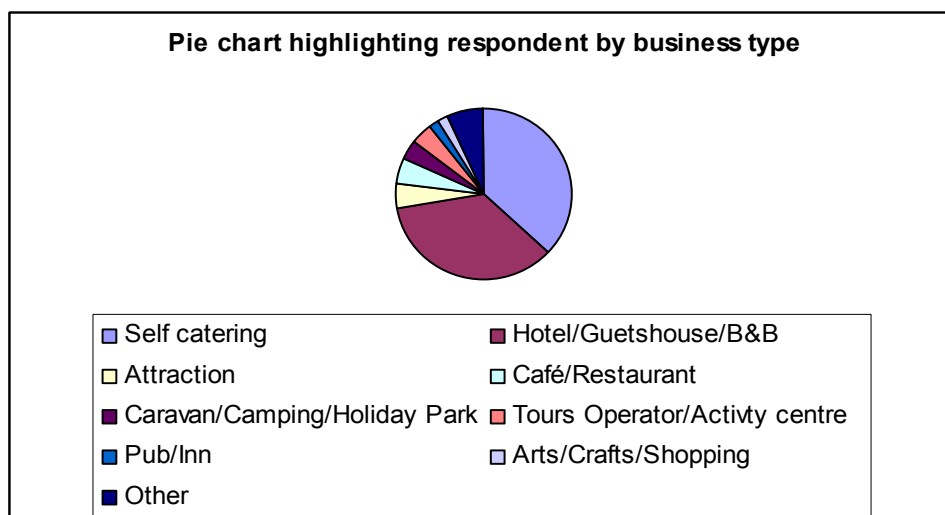
To give an insight into who was participating in the survey some back ground information was sought.

5.1.1 Business:

Contact was made via email survey, sent out across the CoaST network and beyond, with businesses in Cornwall. **103** businesses responded; 43 from Caradon, 17 from Penwith, 14 from Carrick, 12 from Kerrier, 9 from north Cornwall and 7 from Restormel.



Of the 103 businesses that responded the majority (69%) were accommodation providers with 38 respondents representing self catering properties/agencies and 36 representing Hotels/Guesthouses/B&B's. The other 29 respondents were; 5 attractions, 5 café/restaurants, 4 caravan/camping/holiday parks, 4 tour operators/activity centres, 2 pubs/inns and 2 arts/crafts/shopping. 'Other' respondents included 2 print/web designers, a youth hostel, a conservation charity, a destination manager, a local authority representative, and an environmental consultant.



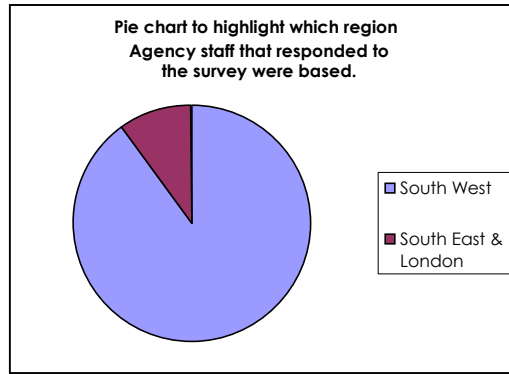
92% of the businesses knew whether their business was in or near a site of environmental significance, whether that be a National Nature Reserve (NNR), a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Some went on to highlight other sites that had not been listed or to comment 'whether they were in a designated site or not' they felt they were in an area of "great landscape value" and near a "beautiful coastline". This highlights that the businesses that responded appeared to have a fair knowledge of designated sites in Cornwall or at least appreciated that they had businesses in areas of some environmental importance or beauty.

5.1.2 Agency:

CoaST was invited by EN to present an overview of the tourism deliverables of the HEATH project at a SW Site Staff Network Meeting, held in Cornwall in June 2006, to share best practice case studies and raise awareness of the project. When focusing on the visitor payback component of the project, it became evident that most of the conference attendees were not familiar with the term VPS or familiar with VPS as a way to raise money; some interesting views, concerns and perspectives started to emerge. To capture these views a questionnaire was sent to all conference attendees with the request that they circulate it to other agency staff that may have something to say about VPS.

One of the respondents, the National Trust's (NT) Comms & Marketing Manager in Devon & Cornwall, having completed the questionnaire e-mailed CoaST with insights of how successful a VPS in the Lake District (see section 4.2.1 for details of this scheme) had been; *"I used to have a similar post with the NT in the Lake District, where I worked with the Lake District Tourism & Conservation Partnership, which is possibly **the** example of visitor payback best practice in Britain. Interestingly their, it was focused on visitor payback through accommodation providers and benefiting a number of National Trust nature conservation and countryside access (footpath restoration/creation) schemes, so I guess if you asked environmental staff from that region, they would be positive!"* This is an assumption that CoaST had also held but the feedback from the SW Site Staff Network Meeting highlighted that this supposition needed to be examined carefully, as it would appear some site managers have concerns and identify dis-benefits from VPS that need to be explored.

20 surveys were completed; responses came from 5 site managers, 5 conservation officers, 4 regional team/project managers, 2 heads of marketing/communications/PR, an assistant site manager, a team manager, a member of admin staff and 1 volunteer. 90% of responses were from the South West the other 10% were from staff based in the South East & London.

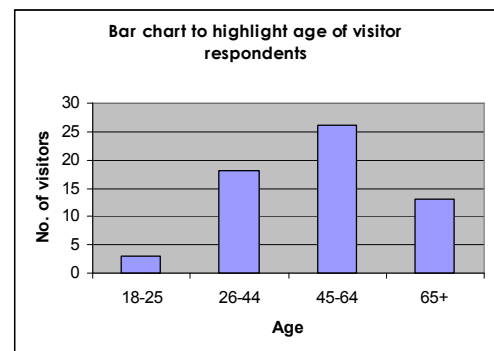
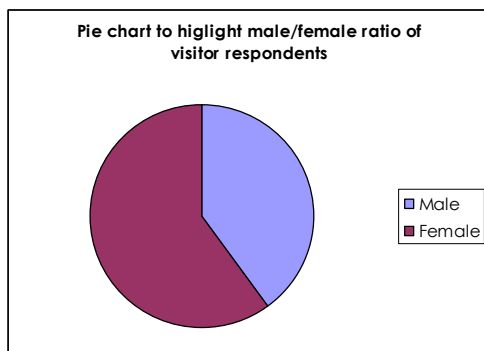


Although no firm conclusions can be drawn from such a small sample, the responses do give a detailed insight into some concerns site managers and agency staff have about VPS.

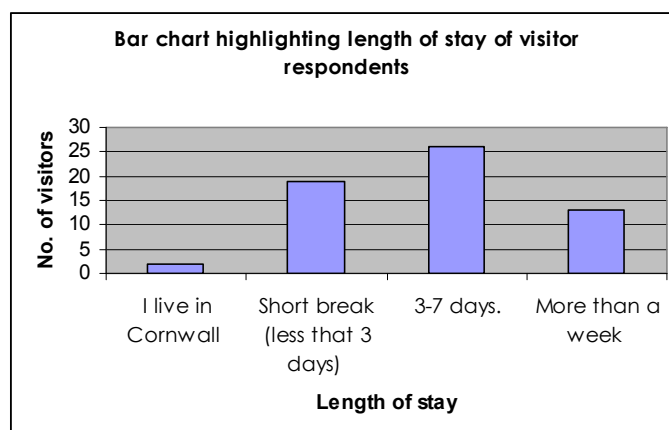
5.1.3 Visitor:

A visitor questionnaire was e-mailed to 10 CoaST member businesses to print out and invite their visitors to fill in. **60** surveys were completed and posted back to CoaST for analysis.

Of these 60 respondents 60% were female, 40% male. The majority (26) of respondents were aged 45-64. 18 were in the 26-44 year brackets, 13 were over 65 years. Only 3 were 18-25 years.



Of the 60 visitors that responded 43% were visiting Cornwall for 3-7 days, 31% for less than 3 days. Only 22% were visiting Cornwall for more than a week. 3% lived in Cornwall but were visiting other areas.

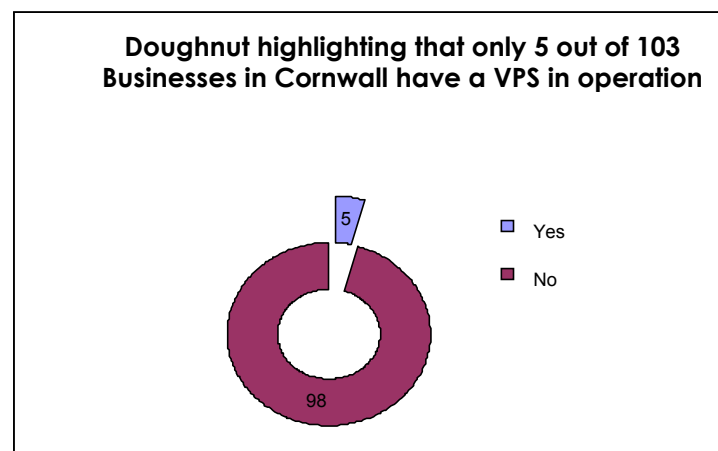


5.2 VPS in action

Businesses and agencies were asked if they or their site area had a VPS in operation already.

5.2.1 Business:

Only 5 of the 103 businesses surveyed had a VPS in operation already highlighting that VPS are not widespread in Cornwall. One of the other 98 businesses that did not have VPS, did state mention a VPS that was in the pipeline; "I have already decided that next year I will invite my guests to help restore the Leach Pottery in St. Ives by adding a £5 donation to each week's fee with an opt out clause."

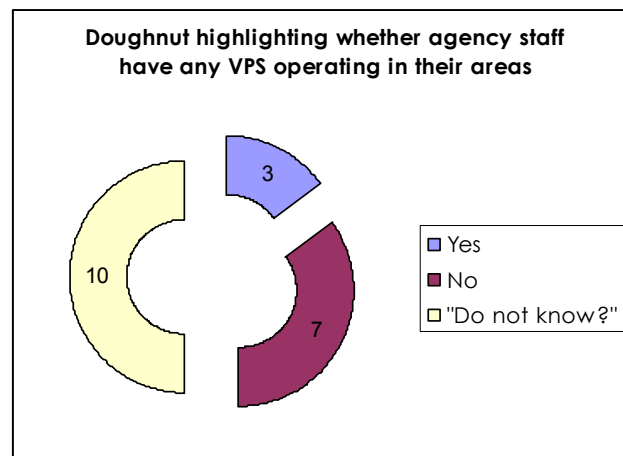


Details of these 5 VPS were given (3 of these VPS examples are case studies highlighted in section 4.3):

1. "We raised a total of £85 last year and to date since April have raised £45 selling local jam/fudge and having a % of the price as VPS– not huge amount but HVMCA appreciated it!" (See section 4.3.5)
2. "£1 voluntary donation from every guest goes towards RNLI, beach cleaning and beach education at Watergate bay."
3. "Since March 2005, £1 per room per night voluntary opt out scheme. 100% of which goes to MCS. We also sell jute bags of which 50% goes to CWT." (See section 4.3.1)
4. "Increase in tea and coffee prices of 5p so that we can pay a beach cleaner all year – also making our own postcards which all proceeds will go towards the beach cleaner and other duties."
5. "We (a holiday cottage agency) donate £5 from every booking we receive to a local village charity. This applied for short breaks and for two week breaks it becomes £10. Its surprising how quickly the donation mounts up." (See section 4.3.6)

5.2.2 Agency:

Of the 20 agency staff that responded only **3** said "yes" their area had a VPS in operation, while half (10) said they "do not know". 7 said "no" their areas did not have VPS in operation.



Details of the 3 VPS were given:

1. "I think it is a hotel in St. Ives and the money goes to the Wildlife Trust."
2. "One in operation in South Hams administered by South Hams DC."
3. "Hotel giving us money from Jute bag sales; Café giving us money from coffee and flakes; timeshare giving us money from tours."

50% of the agency respondents were unsure as to whether there was a VPS in operation in their area. This highlights that agency staff in general do not have a close relationship with tourism businesses in their area. This fact was emphasised in communications with the Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT); CoaST has at least 2 member tourism businesses that have partnered with the CWT to support marine conservation, but when the marine conservation officer was asked about these schemes there was no real knowledge about the businesses or the scheme in place as all dealings with the businesses had been done by the marketing manager. This is a missed opportunity for both the businesses and the agencies and highlights the need for the profile of VPS to be raised with agency staff. If an agency has businesses supporting it through VPS all staff should be made aware of this as a case study to be shared at every opportunity.

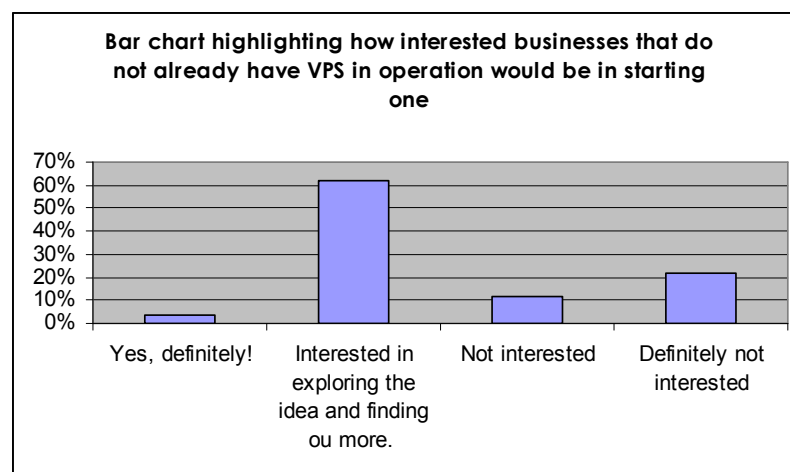
5.3 Barriers to VPS

Those businesses and agencies that did not have a VPS in place were asked if they would be interested in starting one or, if an agency, whether they would be interested in working with local business to start a scheme. The options were:

- Yes, definitely!
- Interested in exploring the idea and finding out more.
- Not interested.
- Definitely not interested – if this option was ticked they were asked to give reasons. . .

5.3.1 Businesses:

98 of the 103 businesses that responded did not have a VPS in place, but when asked whether they would be interested in starting a VPS 62% of them said they would “Definitely be interested in exploring the idea and finding out more” and 4% said “Yes, definitely!” This highlights that businesses in general do not understand the concept of VPS, and that if more information could be provided to help them understand more fully, a large number would be interested at looking into starting a scheme.



12% were “Not interested” and 22% were “Definitely not interested”. A detailed analysis of the reasons these respondents give reveals some interesting points and clearly highlights the key barriers businesses have about VPS;

5.3.1.1 Barrier 1: Lack of awareness/understanding about VPS

With 62% of businesses highlighting they would “Definitely be interested in exploring the idea and finding out more it is safe to assume these businesses did not have enough information about VPS to confidently embrace such a scheme in their businesses. Others went on to explicitly state “I don't know enough about them myself yet!” while another asked “Are there any good examples of where this sort of scheme works well?”

5.3.1.2 Barrier 2: Not visitor responsibility to support the local environment!

Many businesses did simply not feel it was visitors responsibility to support the local environment and that there should be other sources of funding available to do this.

"I feel guests are already paying for the cost of their holiday which then goes to pay business rates which then are paid to government, who should then pay to support the local environment. Really the business rates should be spent locally or at least an open and clear percentage. Why should guests be charged again - they pay the highest rate of VAT in Europe for accommodation already for some of the most bureaucratic agencies to do this job already. Come on English Nature, Defra etc etc". . .

"It would be better to pressure for reforms of local government funding so that all business rates go directly to local councils so that they can do the job properly. Similarly the biggest threat to Cornwall is the appalling planning process where permission is given for all sorts of activities in the name of promoting tourism that actually destroy the countryside. Why aren't you lobbying for all planning applications to be looked at from the view of how their implementation could have an adverse effect on the countryside."

"Shouldn't we manage the county better without having to make visitors feel guilty?"

"I am not sure it is really down to the visitors to fund the local environment. It should be down to local councils and residents of the areas if they want tourists to come to Cornwall!"

"I believe that we have to be very careful when asking our visitors for additional money. They feel that they are already contributing to the local economy by coming here. The case for asking for funds must be a very persuasive one and must explain why these funds cannot be found out of normal taxation."

"Not sure we should be increasing the apparent cost of holidays in Cornwall, even on a voluntary basis. We should run the country and county in a way that covers these areas from general taxation, and that does not mean a bed tax."

The above comments highlight a frustration that there is not already sufficient funding to cover the costs of looking after the environment and suggests a lack of real understanding about how funding is distributed and prioritised. Businesses need to understand more fully why environment and conservation agency budgets are so stretched. The final comments also indicate confusion about the difference between VPS and 'tourism tax', again highlighting that businesses need more clear/concise information about VPS.

5.3.1.3 Barrier 2: Visitor pay enough already!

The current marketing drive to push up the quality of Cornwall as a tourism destination has made many businesses fearful that increased quality will mean increased prices, which will essentially out-price Cornwall as a holiday destination for many people. Businesses are therefore sensitive to the fact that Cornwall is becoming an increasingly expensive palce to visit.

"I feel that coming to Cornwall in itself is expensive and asking for charitable contributions may put the guest under indirect pressure to participate, especially regular guests with whom we have a good relationship. I would rather see charity collection boxes in trade outlets so that it can be a conscious decision by the visitor to participate."

"Personally I feel very awkward about asking for extra money from people who are already paying quite a lot. This area is deemed an expensive area to visit, the fuel to get here, the restaurants are quite often quoted as being 'London prices', let alone the very high car parking charges in comparison to other holiday areas. I fully understand the need for such a scheme but I think our visitors already feel they pay enough for the privilege of being here."

"I wouldn't say that I was "definitely" not interested but I would certainly want to know more as to how the visitor felt before participating in such a scheme. I feel that Cornwall is already a very overpriced holiday destination and that the visitor is more likely to think that the county or even country should pay for the upkeep out of the tourist spend itself."

"My guests pay 50% of their income in taxes (income tax, NI, VAT, IHT CGT etc etc). I think that's enough, and as the poorest county in England, some of that tax revenue should be coming here to encourage tourists to visit and boost the average wage."

"The campers that come to our site are coppering up to pay for their camping, so it would be very difficult to do a visitor payback scheme as every penny counts to them."

"It is important that visitors are not made to feel that they have to put their hands in their pockets any more than is necessary – I constantly have complaints about the cost of car parking in Cornwall."

"Our guests already pay enough for B&B, see prices in local shops double in the summer, pay top prices for petrol. Any money squeezed out of them to maintain local amenities will be given grudgingly, and with the thought that they never have to make this sort of payment when visiting tourist resorts anywhere else in the world!!"

5.3.1.4 Barrier 3: Bad for Business.

As cheap air flights and package holidays have greatly reduced the price of a holiday overseas, businesses are more conscious than ever before that their visitors are spending a lot to get to and enjoy Cornwall. There is fear that any additional expense would deter visitors from coming to Cornwall and that business will be lost.

"As we remove a substantial sum of money from our visitors for their accommodation and do not have a "single site" to promote I feel asking a visitor for additional sums could only be bad for business."

"We cannot compete on price with foreign holidays. By even suggesting a voluntary contribution this will start to deter our home visitors and could easily become a "bed tax".

"In hotels this would be seen as yet another tax – not good!"

"Difficult to introduce such schemes via accommodation providers without the appearance of it being yet another kind of 'bed tax'".

"This is a very poor idea- we need to be as competitive as possible and taxing the customer would be a good way of persuading them to go elsewhere."

"I believe that it would put visitors off coming to the area. I agree with voluntary contributions but not an expected one. If I am away I do not want to be forced to give any contributions unless it is a mandatory regulation or tax."

"I think we should be asking for such cooperation at the end rather than BEFORE their visit to Cornwall. There is enough talk about bed taxes for small hotels and guest house owners to be very wary about including any more 'overheads' built into our tariff. So I do not support upfront solicitation, rather people should be encouraged to donate after their experience in Cornwall, very much as you would expect to reward good service after a meal - not be asked to pay upfront."

"Although others have said they have not had any bad comments about schemes I am still hesitant to ask guests for money on the basis that they would already donate if they wanted to."

"Would not wish to pressurise any visitor to contribute - there are many areas of the UK in a similar situation!"

"I regard them as a good way of driving custom away."

Again these comments highlight a general misunderstanding about VPS and the assumption that it is a 'tourism/bed tax'. Businesses need more clear/concise information about VPS to rectify this misinterpretation.

5.3.1.5 Barrier 4: Would rather ask for action not £'s!

Some businesses feel raising awareness and changing behaviour is more important or appropriate than asking for £'s.

"I offer peace and would not want to add any form of even polite requests for money. Instead I'm hoping to encourage recycling etc as a way of lessening impact."

"Visitors stay with us for a quiet break, not to have sponsorship forms etc thrust in front of them. The awareness and opportunity approach is best."

5.3.1.6 Barrier 5: Would rather it was an automatic tax.

A handful of business indicated that they would like the responsibility of requesting a donation removed from their shoulders and, interestingly, felt a 'tourism tax' was a more appropriate method of getting visitors to contribute.

"I feel it should be an automatic tourist tax. I would feel most uncomfortable asking visitors for extra money."

"I'd rather see a system similar to those implemented by the German, Swiss and maybe other local tourist boards, ie. a local tax applicable on all overnight stay charges. Seems more equitable."

"I'm sure visitors would not object to paying, say, £1 per night as an automatic tourist tax -- after all we do this when we go abroad in France or Spain. However, to be asked to give voluntarily would cause the same sort of 'paying up resentfully' that one does when asked to buy raffle tickets or buy a flag for a cause that one doesn't support. It embarrasses both the one asking & the one paying."

5.3.1.7 Barrier 6: What about the locals?!

A lot of businesses are aware that their trade is made up of local people and are concerned that additional charges may be a burden to a local population. Others felt that VPS should not just be aimed at visitors and that local people, who live in and benefit from the local environment all year round, should be asked to contribute in some way too:

“Would have liked to tick 'Interested in exploring....' Not sure it will be relevant to my business, as all my customers are locals - but would like to find out if I could do something...”

“The majority of our customers live locally. Although they have the benefit of living here all the year round they do not view themselves as visitors to the County.”

“Bit controversial, but is any thought going to 'Locals Payback Schemes'? We also use and value the environment in which we live and work.”

Some other interesting comments that were made were *“We just do not get enough visitors to make it worthwhile”* highlighting that some micro business may feel that they are simply too small to be able to make much of a contribution; a point that can be disproved by several micro CoaST members that have VPS in operation and have raised significant amounts of money (see section 4.3). One respondent commented that *“I don't have any visitors ... all my clients are online”*. . . suggesting a lack of appreciation for an online method of donation which has been used in Cornwall and elsewhere, as a very successful way to get guests involved in issues of concern.

5.3.1.8 Summary of Business Barriers

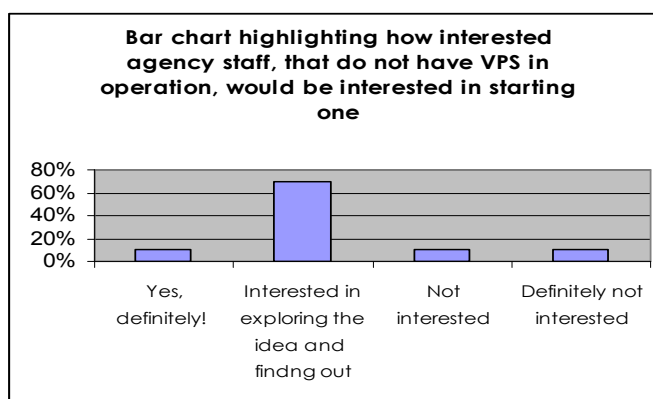
The following conclusions can be drawn from the above responses:

1. There is a general misunderstanding amongst businesses that VPS is a voluntary opt in or opt our scheme – not a tourism tax.
2. Frustration and/or a lack of understanding about how the management of the environment is funded in the UK.
3. Businesses are fearful that they will lose business as visitors will be put off by VPS –this contradicts all research to date that clearly highlights that visitors are very receptive to VPS.
4. The fact that VPS can be a successful tool for raising awareness is overlooked.
5. There is acknowledgement that VPS does not have to be a voluntary contribution – it can also be asking guests to participate in an activity i.e. recycling.
6. Fear that local people will be negatively affected by increased costs.
7. Acknowledgment that the environment is local people's responsibility, not just visitors.

5.3.2 Agency:

17 out of 20 agency representatives that responded did not have, or did not know if they had a VPS in place, but when asked whether they would be interested in starting a VPS 70% of them said they would *“Definitely be interested in exploring the idea and finding out more”*

and 10% said “Yes, definitely!” This highlights that agency staff in general do not understand the concept of VPS, and that if more information could be provided to help them understand more fully, a large number would be interested at looking into starting a scheme.



10% were “Not interested” and 10% were “Definitely not interested”. A detailed analysis of the reasons these respondents give reveals some interesting points and clearly highlights the key concerns agency staff have about VPS;

5.3.2.1 Concern 1: Site owners already well subsidised.

Concern 2: VPS could interfere with visitor zoning/management.

“One of our SSSI owners has been looking for a number of years at introducing charges to car parks which they own and maintain on a big area of heathland which they also own and which has open access. They haven’t yet because of the associated problems of people parking along the roads and verges instead of paying to park. If they were seriously out of pocket I would be more inclined to work with them on trying to get a scheme off the ground but they get so much money from the CSS and THH that I don’t think they “need” any more income from the site.”

5.3.2.3 Concern 3: VPS £’s too small.

“Amounts of money raised would simply be too small and unreliable - would rather spend time/energy tapping into bigger pots of funding.”

5.3.2.4 Concern 4: Visitors already payback.

“When charging for membership or to use a NT car park we already state that the money raised is going back into the management of NT sites – therefore unsure if asking for more money on other items, i.e. a supplement on tea in NT cafes or a supplement on bed night at NT property would seem greedy!”

5.3.2.5 Summary of Agency Concerns

These concerns highlight that agency staffs do not fully understand the concept of VPS and that there is a need to raise awareness of how VPS operates in practice and of the schemes

benefits. For example, experience in Cornwall shows that even a small amount of money raised can help offset small projects that often get overlooked by large funding pots. The concerns above also show that each site is different and that site managers need to be brought on board and engaged in a dialogue about VPS to ensure that issues such as visitor management are taken into account, as highlighted by the car-parking concern above.

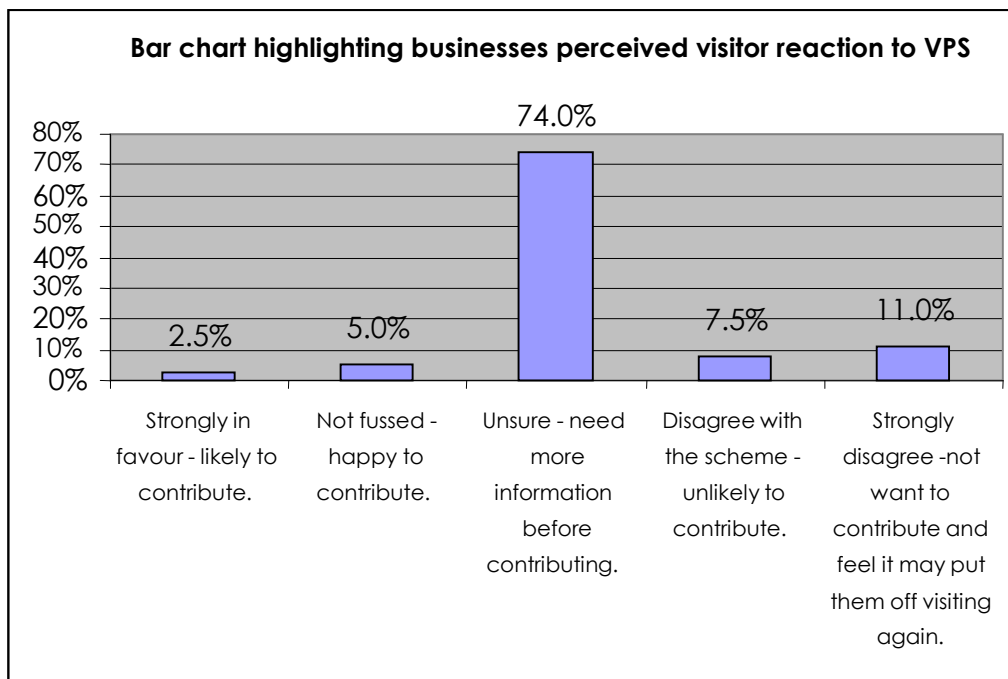
5.4 Visitor reaction to VPS

Businesses and agency staff that were not already involved in VPS were asked how they felt their visitors would react to VPS which invited them to make a voluntary contribution or action to maintain, protect and/or enhance the natural environment of Cornwall. These responses were compared to those from businesses and agency staff that did already have a VPS in operation to understand a little of how perceptions are actually played out in. Visitors were then asked what they really felt about VPS. All were given the following options to select from. Visitor would. .

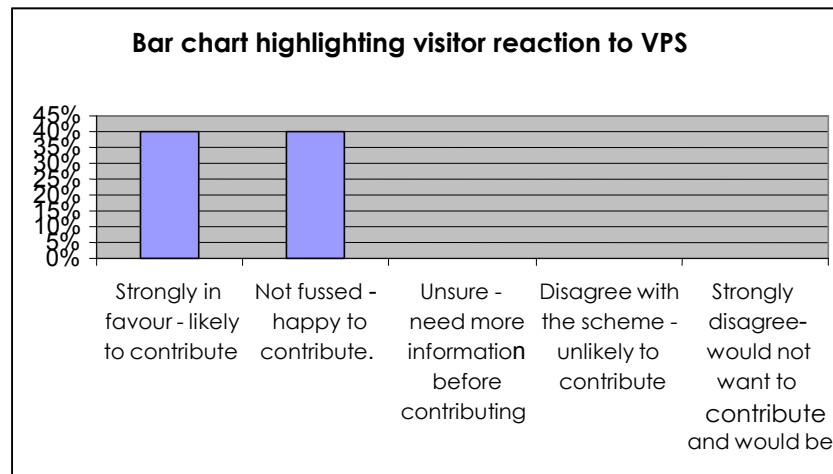
- Be strongly in favour of the scheme and likely to contribute.
- Not be fussed but happy to contribute.
- Be unsure and need more information of what the money was being spent on before contributing.
- Disagree with the scheme and unlikely to contribute.
- Strongly disagree with the scheme, not want to contribute and feel it may put them off visiting again.

5.4.1 Businesses:

Of the 98 businesses that are not already operating VPS, 80 answered the question and 18 skipped the question. An overwhelming 74% felt that visitors would “be unsure and need more information of what the money was being spent on before contributing.”



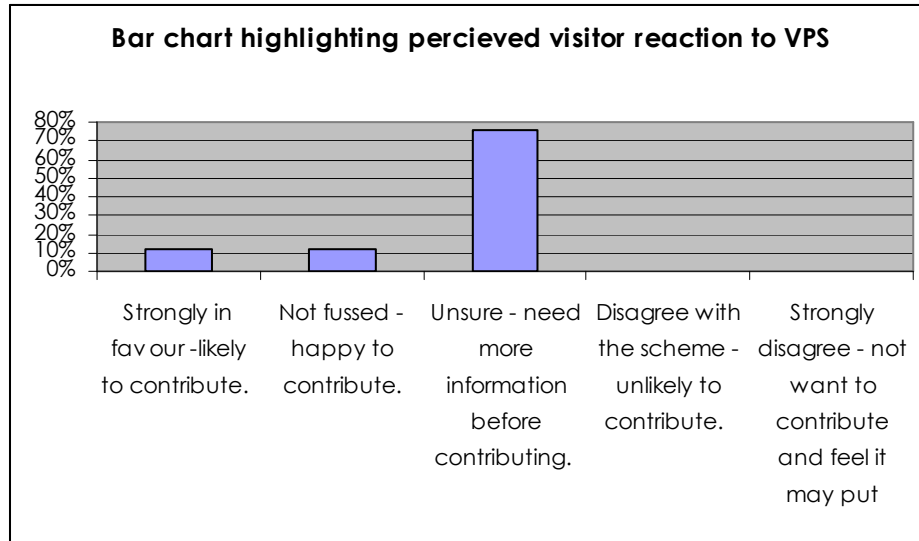
When compared to the responses from businesses already operating VPS it is clear to see that visitors react more positively to VPS than businesses with no experience of such schemes perceive they will.



According to the 5 businesses operating VPS, their visitors responded well to the schemes; 40% of the businesses that had a VPS in place felt their visitors had been “strongly in favour of the scheme and happy to contribute” and 40% felt their visitors had simply been “not fussed but happy to contribute”. The remaining business selected the “other” box and went on to say “our visitors don’t get a choice, its bedded into our prices. They are told about it though and the scheme always gets approval when discussed!” These findings support the dearth of research already done on VPS that highlights the general consensus; that visitors are strongly receptive to VPS, whilst the tourism businesses are more cautious. This can clearly be seen here in the fact that businesses that did not have a VPS scheme in place perceived visitor response to be wary, where as businesses already running VPS had found visitors very receptive and happy to contribute.

5.4.2 Agency:

Of the 17 agencies that are not already operating, or do not know, if they are operating VPS in their areas, 16 answered the question and 1 skipped the question. An overwhelming 76% felt that visitors would “be unsure and need more information of what the money was being spent on before contributing.” 12% felt visitors would “not be fussed but happy to contribute” and the other 12% felt visitors would be “strongly in favour of the scheme and likely to contribute”.



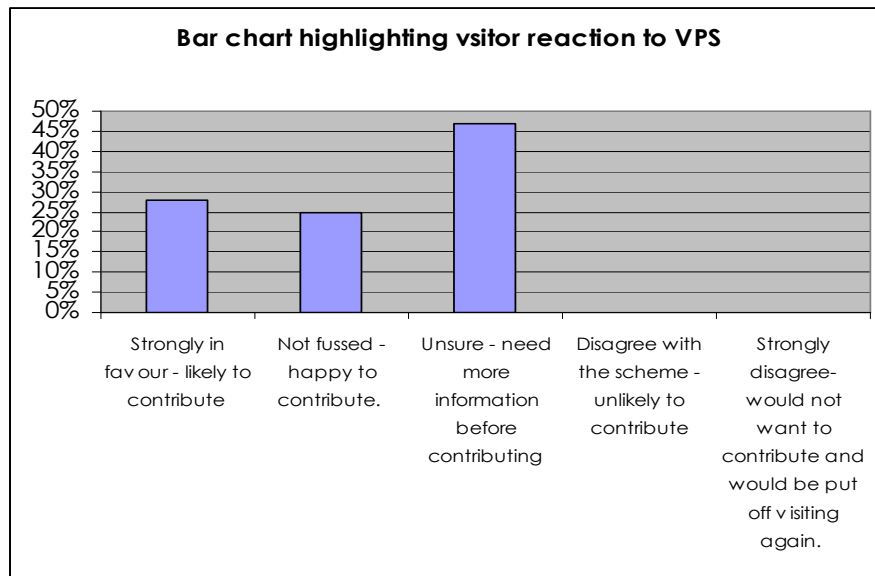
This highlights that agency staff, on the whole, are more optimistic than businesses about how visitor will react to VPS - this may be because agency staff do not have the same level of dependence on visitor numbers as businesses do; businesses are sensitive to loss of customers as it directly affects their profit margin. One agency respondent did go on to comment *“perhaps the name could be changed to Visitor Environmental Support fund or something else that was not quite so Schwartzenegger-ish. ‘It’s payback time’ is a bit negative and off putting”*.

The 3 agency staff that did know of VPS operating in their areas all selected “other” option and went on to say that they *“did not know”* how visitors reacted to the schemes. This highlights a real gap between the businesses implementing VPS to raise monies and the agency managing the environment in that area – even agencies that were directly benefiting from the money being generated appeared to have no relationship with the businesses supporting them and therefore no knowledge of how the schemes were being run, how successful they were or how visitors were reacting to them.

5.4.3 Visitor:

Of the 60 visitors that responded the majority (47%) felt that they would ‘be unsure and need more information on what the money was being spent on before contributing’. One respondent went on to say *“It really depends on how the idea is sold, I would probably contribute as I would think it worthy but I know that many people requested to make voluntary contributions when they don’t perceive to be getting anything back for their money would decline to contribute. For example, Porthallow car park – people obviously consider parking their car to be innocuous to not deserve a fee and therefore to not put money in the honesty box.”*

However the remaining 53% stated that they would either 'be strongly in favor of the scheme and likely to contribute' (28%) or 'not be fussed or happy to contribute' (25%).



It is important to note that not one respondent disagreed with VPS or felt that they would be unlikely to contribute. Again this supports the dearth of research already done on VPS that highlights the general consensus; that visitors are strongly receptive to VPS provided they have enough information to understand fully where and how their contribution will help.

5.5 Landscape Selection

Businesses and visitors were asked which landscape they would prefer to support via VPS. The aim of this question was to understand whether the heathland has a strong enough identity in businesses and visitors minds, to be a landscape they would choose to support. The landscape options were based on the 7 habitat types highlighted in the 'Xploring Wild Cornwall' publication which was produced with support from Defra, English Nature and the Eden Project; Dunes & Cliffs, Beaches & Estuaries, Heathland, Industrial, Woodlands, Freshwater rivers and Wetlands or Hedges, fields and lanes.

5.5.1 Businesses:

Businesses that were not already involved in VPS's were asked to rank 1-7 (with 1 being first choice) which landscape they would prefer to support if they were to consider setting up VPS.

	1 st Choice	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th
Dunes & Cliffs	20%	30%	12%	10%	20%	6%	2%
Beaches & Estuaries	54%	18%	6%	4%	6%	10%	2%
Heathland	6%	6%	15%	23%	19%	29%	2%
Industrial	4%	4%	0%	8%	2%	6%	76%
Woodlands	10%	16%	27%	18%	18%	10%	0%
Freshwater rivers & wetlands	4%	12%	31%	10%	20%	18%	4%
Hedges, fields & lanes	8%	20%	12%	27%	10%	16%	6%

Beaches and estuaries was the most popular first choice, Dunes and cliffs 2nd with freshwater rivers and wetlands coming 3rd. Hedges, fields and lanes made it into 4th place and woodlands in 5th. The Heathland ranked 6th in business respondents minds, just one step ahead of the industrial landscape; this suggests that businesses do not identify closely with the heathland landscape. This brings up the issue of branding of the landscape, as one business commented "Your list of areas should contain the ocean which is probably the biggest reason people come to Cornwall". Heathlands presently do not stand out in peoples mind as a reason people would come to Cornwall or as a landscape that is important to Cornwall.

These findings were complimented by the results from the 5 businesses that already had a VPS in operation. When asked which landscape their schemes contributed to, 3 businesses were already supporting beaches and estuaries, 1 freshwater rivers and wetlands and 1 hedges, fields and lanes. Interestingly one business went on to comment that they were "surprised you have assumed its just a geographical debate. Visitor payback should apply to any worthwhile charitable cause in Cornwall. What about disabled kids etc. . . ?"

Again this highlights, (as has already been discussed in section 4.4) that the definition of VPS needs widening to include community/social projects as well as environmental projects.

5.5.2 Visitor:

Visitors were asked to rank 1-7 (with 1 being first choice) which landscape they would prefer to support if they were to participate in VPS:

	1 st Choice	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th
Dunes & Cliffs	21%	28%	16%	10%	18%	11%	5%
Beaches & Estuaries	28%	21%	8%	10%	21%	11%	0%
Heathland	7%	7%	18%	21%	11%	36%	0%
Industrial	5%	0%	2%	5%	7%	0%	82%
Woodlands	25%	15%	16%	23%	11%	7%	3%
Freshwater rivers & wetlands	11%	15%	21%	18%	15%	15%	5%
Hedges, fields & lanes	13%	13%	16%	13%	25%	16%	3%

One respondent did not rank them, instead wrote “they all need protecting don’t they?” For the other respondents, beaches and estuaries were the most popular first choice, Dunes and cliffs 2nd with freshwater rivers and wetlands coming 3rd – this is exactly the same order of preference businesses selected. Woodlands made it into 4th place and Hedges, fields and lanes in 5th - businesses had ranked these the other way round. Once again the Heathland ranked 6th in visitor respondents minds, just one step ahead of the industrial landscape. This suggests that visitors do not identify closely with the heathland landscape either.

From these results it is possible to conclude that heathlands presently do not stand out in people’s mind as a landscape that is of international importance or important to Cornwall; the heathland as a landscape is grossly undervalued by businesses and visitors. It also indicates that when starting up a VPS, the heathland is not the landscape of choice to support. Unless this issue can be overcome through an intensive awareness raising campaign, to bring the heathland to the fore of business and visitors minds and make them a landscape people are interested in and want to protect, another way of tapping into VPS for heathland management is going to be necessary.

5.6 Activity Selection

Businesses, agencies & visitors were asked what type of activity they would like to see money raised from VPS support, on a scale of A must!/ High priority / priority / low priority/ not important. Options were:

- Keeping footpaths well maintained and improving access to sites
- Providing greater information to visitors on the area via low impact signage
- Improving service facilities i.e recycling facilities/dog bins/toilets etc.
- Supporting community projects
- Restoring landscapes and safe guarding features such as ancient sites and monuments
- Habitat restoration and conservation
- Wildlife conservation

5.6.1 Business:

Businesses that were not already involved in VPS were asked which activities they would like to see a VPS support:

	A must!	High Priority	Priority	Low Priority	Not Important
Keeping footpaths well maintained & improving access to sites.	33%	33%	33%	2%	0%
Providing greater info to visitors via low impact signage	19%	23%	40%	17%	2%
Improving service facilities i.e. recycling facilities/ dog bins/toilets etc	40%	12%	31%	17%	0%
Supporting community projects	15%	17%	29%	38%	2%
Restoring landscapes and safeguarding features such as ancient sites and monuments	21%	27%	44%	8%	0%
Habitat restoration and conservation	31%	47%	20%	2%	0%
Wildlife Conservation	39%	39%	22%	0%	0%

Improving service facilities i.e. recycling facilities/dog bins/toilets was rated 'A must!' for 40% of the businesses, just 1% ahead of wildlife conservation; this may be because businesses know that such facilities will improve the area as a living environment or because businesses feel that improved service facilities will improve visitor experience and help guarantee repeat visitation. The fact that 40% of businesses were keen to improve the signage for visitors highlights that businesses were thinking about visitor experience and wanting to improve this.

Habitat restoration was a 'high priority' for 47% of people, again not far ahead of wildlife conservation (39% thought this was a 'high priority'). Restoring landscapes and safeguarding features such as ancient sites and monuments was a 'priority' for 44%.

It is important to note that very few businesses felt that any of the issues were 'Not important' but 38% of businesses did feel that supporting community projects was 'a low priority' compared to the environmental issues. This shows that VPS is perceived by the majority of businesses surveyed to be about the environment. As this is the very thing the tourism product is dependent upon it could be that businesses recognise that supporting wildlife/habitat conservation will be an easy way to get visitors excited about participating. Environment organisations often use flagship species to raise the profile of a project and it may be the case that many businesses see an opportunity to highlight a species of interest to raise their profile too.

The 5 business that already had VPS in operation were asked the same question and given the freedom to elect more than one box. 50% of respondents had chosen to support wildlife conservation with one respondent going onto explain that this was done by supporting the work of the Marine Conservation Society; 33% were ensuring their money went towards improving service facilities i.e. recycling bins/dog bins/toilets etc. One respondent went on to explain that they were doing this by supporting the RNLI, beach education and beach cleaning. Habitat restoration, footpath maintenance and restoring landscapes and monuments had all been selected once. This highlights that by supporting one charity, a range of activities can be supported at the same time.

The issue of looking beyond environmental projects to support community projects was highlighted as a respondent observed *"again, I am surprised at the narrow mindedness of these choices. The answer is none. We support our local village hall which is falling down and acts as an important focal point in our village for locals and visitors alike. In this way our visitors really feel like their money is having direct positive effect on the village they are staying in."* This show that as long as the business is supporting a project they believe in, environmental or social, visitors can be encouraged to participate; it is not so much the project/activity being supported that makes the difference to whether a visitor will contribute but rather it is about the integrity and transparency of the scheme and the passion with which it is communicated by the business and sold to visitors.

This point was emphasised by the Primrose Valley Hotel, when asked about their experience and the observations they would make about how and why they had chosen the charity they supported and what made people contribute to this charity;

“We chose a charity that reflected the environment in which our business is set; in truth we could have picked any charity as long as it fitted in with the aim of conserving the local environment or local community.”

Managing Director, Andrew Biss, went on to highlight what he felt made visitors engage with their scheme:

- It is vital that the payback scheme is perceived as integral to the ethos/philosophy of the operation of the business. This was backed up by another business that had a VPS running *“A word of warning. You cannot simply introduce a scheme and expect guests to participate. It has to fit with the whole company ethos and be backed up in other areas, ie we only buy fish from sustainable stocks etc and virtually all our suppliers are local etc.”*
- The beneficiary should be non-political, non-government and non-religious, non-controversial, locally relevant and have credibility. That is not to say that the Charity has to be locally based, just contributing to the locality's well being in some way.
- Guests should feel that their donation will directly benefit the area that they themselves are benefiting from.
- It is important that the details of the scheme are fully integrated into literature ie. Tariff, room information, website.
- The donation should be entirely voluntary and it should be explained clearly that a guest can have it removed from their bill, or not pay it, without any reason. You want to avoid any chance of a satisfied guest (a future booking) having the final moments of their stay soured over the matter of a few pounds. We are still a business at the end of the day.
- Most importantly the guest/customer has to feel that what ever the level of spend that they have had value for money/great experience; otherwise the additional donation could easily be seen as a cynical attempt to simply take more money.
- Trust. It is vital that you are trusted to pass the donation (100%) on.

5.6.2 Agency:

Agencies that were not already involved in VPS were asked which activities they would like to see a VPS support. They were asked to highlighting whether the activity was 'A must!'/High Priority/Priority/Low Priority/Not important.

	A must!	High Priority	Priority	Low Priority	Not Important
Keeping footpaths well maintained & improving access to sites.	27%	43%	10%	7%	13%
Providing greater info to visitors via low impact signage	11%	33%	45%	11%	%
Improving service facilities i.e. recycling facilities/ dog bins/toilets etc	22%	22%	22%	11%	23%
Supporting community projects	0%	22%	22%	45%	11%
Restoring landscapes and safeguarding features such as ancient sites and monuments	22%	44%	34%	0%	0%
Habitat restoration and conservation	56%	33%	0%	11%	0%
Wildlife Conservation	56%	11%	33%	0%	0%

'Habitat restoration & conservation' and 'Wildlife conservation' was "A must" for all of the agency representatives that responded. Bearing in mind that over half of the 20 respondents were site managers of conservation officers involved working in the field, this is not surprising. 'Keeping footpaths well maintained & improving access to sites' and 'restoring landscapes and safeguarding features such as ancient sites and monuments' were both seen to be high priority – again not surprising as for many site managers this falls within their remit of work. It is interesting however that 'Improving service facilities i.e. recycling facilities/ dog bins/toilets etc' got a fairly mixed response with 23% seeing it as 'not important' – this could be because it is seen to be a statutory duty and not the responsibility of environment conservation agencies.

5.6.2 Visitor:

Visitors were asked which activities they would like to see a VPS support.

	A must!	High Priority	Priority	Low Priority	Not Important
Keeping footpaths well maintained & improving access to sites.	58%	22%	20%	0%	0%
Providing greater info to visitors via low impact signage	8%	18%	20%	45%	9%
Improving service facilities i.e. recycling facilities/ dog bins/toilets etc	20%	27%	35%	15%	13%
Supporting community projects	20%	27%	39%	4%	10%
Restoring landscapes and safeguarding features such as ancient sites and monuments	24%	26%	25%	11%	14%
Habitat restoration and conservation	57%	30%	14%	5%	0%
Wildlife Conservation	61%	24%	15%	0%	0%

61% of visitors felt 'Wildlife Conservation' was 'A Must!' to support. While 'Keeping footpaths well maintained & improving access to sites' and 'habitat restoration and conservation' were both felt to be 'A must!' for 58/57% of visitors. This emphasises that visitors identify with the natural environment, and that their holiday is dependent on enjoying this environment, and that they would like to see these themes supported. The SW coast path is also one of Cornwall's biggest attractions so it is not surprising to see so many visitors want to see money spent to maintain the footpaths.

It is interesting that 45% of visitors thought 'providing greater info to visitors via low impact signage' was a low priority – this contrasts sharply with what businesses think that visitors want; 45% of agencies and 40% of businesses thought that improving signage should be a priority. The same level of misunderstanding is evident for 'supporting community projects' – the majority of businesses (38%) and agency (45%) respondents thought that this was a 'low priority', more than likely because they thought it would not be something visitors would want to support, yet 39% of visitors felt that 'supporting community projects' was a priority.

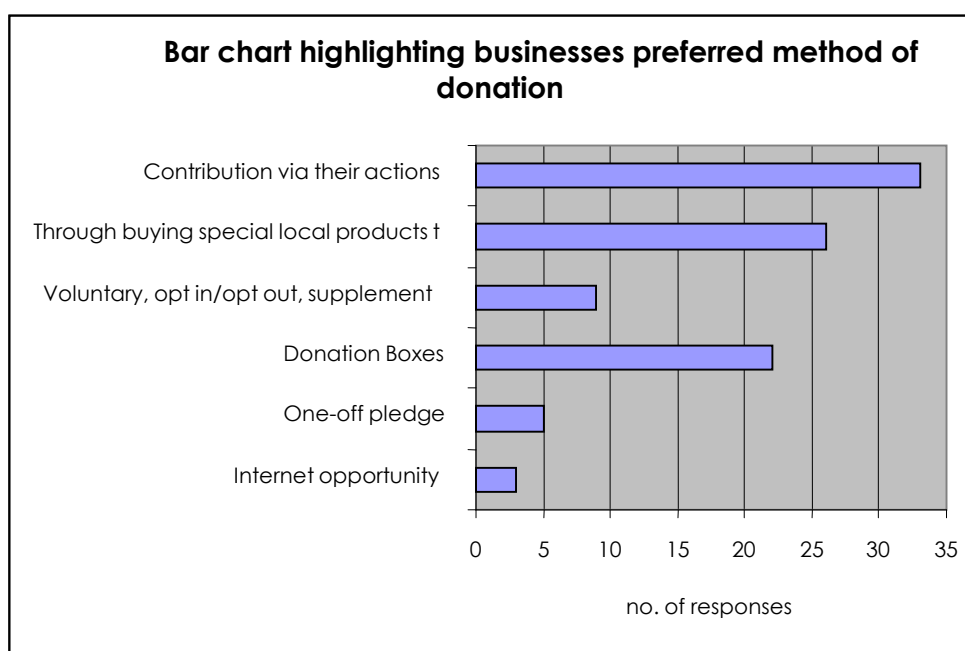
5.7 Method of donation

Businesses, agencies and visitors were asked what their preferred method of donation would be. Options were:

- Internet opportunity to donate to a cause when booking holiday
- One-off pledge or sponsorship of a project
- Donation Boxes in tourism businesses or car parks
- Voluntary, opt in/opt out, supplement added to a drink, activity or overnight stay i.e. 5p added to a cup of tea/coffee; 50p on boat trip or £1-10 on final hotel bill etc
- Through buying special local products that donate a % of £'s already
- Contribution via their actions, i.e. Buying local produce, using sustainable transport, recycling, signing local petitions, helping with a beach clean/footpath restoration

5.7.1 Business:

Businesses that were not already involved in VPS were asked, if they were to set up a VPS which would be their preferred method of donation.



33 businesses felt that the best way for visitors to contribute was 'via their actions, i.e. Buying local produce, using sustainable transport, recycling, signing local petitions, helping with a beach clean/footpath restoration'. This highlights the business resistance to ask visitors for extra cash donations.

26 businesses felt visitors would be best placed to contribute by 'buying special local products that donate a % of £'s already'. Again this highlights that businesses are more comfortable if the donation is already embedded in a product or service the visitor would purchase anyway,

rather than asking for more cash. *“We think that to encourage visitors to buy the right products locally will be more acceptable as they are simply channeling money they would have spent anyway in a more appropriate direction. Is it possible to have a gift shop selling books and E.N. gifts etc somewhere on The Lizard which we would happily promote?”*

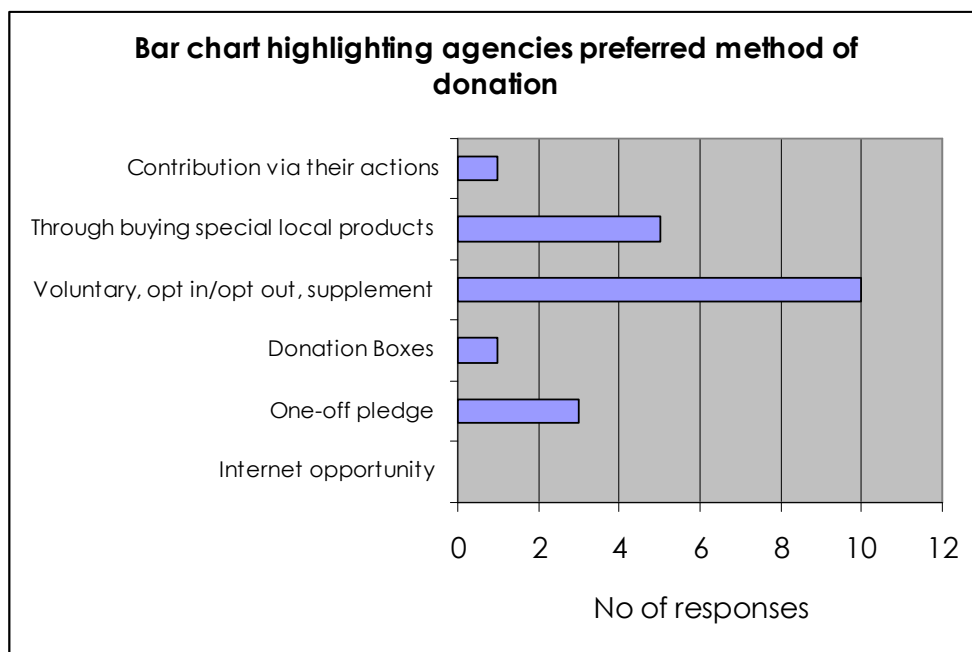
22 businesses felt 'donation Boxes in tourism businesses or car parks' were the best method. One respondent commented that they *“would feel more comfortable with a collecting box because it is purely voluntary. Because if more and more people implement payback schemes people are going to get very fed up and will get used to opting out unless they have a real affinity with the charity or project chosen.”*

Of the 5 businesses already operating VPS, 2 encouraged guests to buy special local products that already donated a % to a “cause”, 2 others used the voluntary, opt in/opt out, supplement added to a drink, activity or overnight stay etc. The fifth businesses had embedded the donation into their prices; *“we simply tell guests that for every booking we receive, we will donate £5 to a local charity. The donation is embedded into the prices.”*

These findings show that businesses need to have more faith that visitors will not react negatively to VPS, no matter which donation method they should choose.

5.7.2 Agency:

Agency staff that were not already involved in VPS were asked, if they were to set up a VPS which would be their preferred methods of donation.



It is clear that the agency respondents preferred method of donation was a “voluntary opt in/opt out supplement added to a drink, activity or overnight stay” with 10 out of 20 agencies selecting this method; ranking second, with 5 responses, was “encouraging guests to buy a special local product that donates a % already” and third, with 3 responses, was encouraging visitors to give a “one-off pledge or sponsorship”.

This suggests that agencies would be more comfortable embedding VPS into existing products and businesses than trying to install mechanisms to get visitors to part with cash from scratch. Donation boxes were not popular at all with agency staff; an interview with a National Trust manager explained why *“donation boxes are an expensive way to collect such small amounts of cash – they require considerable effort and promotion, not to mention maintenance, but really only bring in very small amounts of money”*.

The findings highlight that better links are needed between environment agencies and businesses than presently exist in Cornwall, if they are to work more closely together to raise money. For example giving businesses the opportunity to learn more about projects and initiatives the environment conservation organisations are carrying out in businesses areas and then suggesting ways businesses could contribute to such projects would be one way for both to fully appreciate how working in partnership would be of mutual benefit. Businesses would get the opportunity to understand more fully how the money raised from their VPS would be benefiting the local environment and able to pass this message onto their visitors more effectively, improving how they market their business – while agencies would know that their conservation messages were spreading to a wider audience and they were tapping into visitor spend.

Work to engage business in biodiversity issues is a key feature of the UK Government's international biodiversity delivery plan, as part of its World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) commitment to significantly reducing the loss of biodiversity by 2010. A news release, published by DEFRA on 29th March 2006 highlights this commitment;

“Business must work in partnership to protect natural resources” . . .

The UK and Brazilian governments joined together this morning to strongly encourage businesses to engage in biodiversity issues.

essential that there is more engagement with business at both international and national levels, aiming to reduce business impacts on the natural environment.

Co-hosting a business and biodiversity breakfast in Curitiba earlier today, UK Biodiversity Minister, Jim Knight, said it is

“Our biodiversity and natural resources are the world’s greatest asset and they are declining rapidly. Business must play a part

in helping us reach the 2010 target for halting the loss of biodiversity; we cannot hope to achieve our aims otherwise. I believe that we achieve more collectively than individually and I don't think that unity across government is enough. We need unity of purpose across all sectors – public, voluntary and private."

Speaking to government and business representatives, Mr Knight said: "There is a growing commitment by governments around the world in encouraging companies to adopt best practice on the management of biodiversity. I have found an increasing number of business people willing to sit down and talk about the importance of biodiversity, and to turn that talk into action.

"The potential impact of business on biodiversity is huge, as a user of vital ecosystem services but also as a contributor to ecosystem change. It follows that business has an important role to play in addressing the challenge of biodiversity loss.

"Governments must provide encouragement for companies to engage on these issues. We need to put ourselves in the minds of the profit making sector. This is about asking not what business can do for biodiversity but what biodiversity can do for business.

"By understanding supply chains, by understanding how brands like Fair Trade have added value for producers, by

The time is ripe for partnerships between tourism businesses and environment agencies to be explored and for businesses to be encouraged to engage in and support biodiversity conservation.

understanding the commercial drivers, we can develop some currency in then asking business to do more for biodiversity."

Mr Knight said that many people still see business's main role as providing additional funding for biodiversity projects. "We need to change this view and highlight the mutual benefits which can be realised by better business management of biodiversity in their operations and products.

"I believe there is a growing recognition by companies of the business case for managing their impacts on biodiversity as part of their approach to managing business risks in general, but particularly their performance and reputation.

"The efforts that many companies are making to improve their performance on biodiversity is welcome, but we need to draw others into the circle. I strongly encourage business to get the message across to colleagues in other companies."

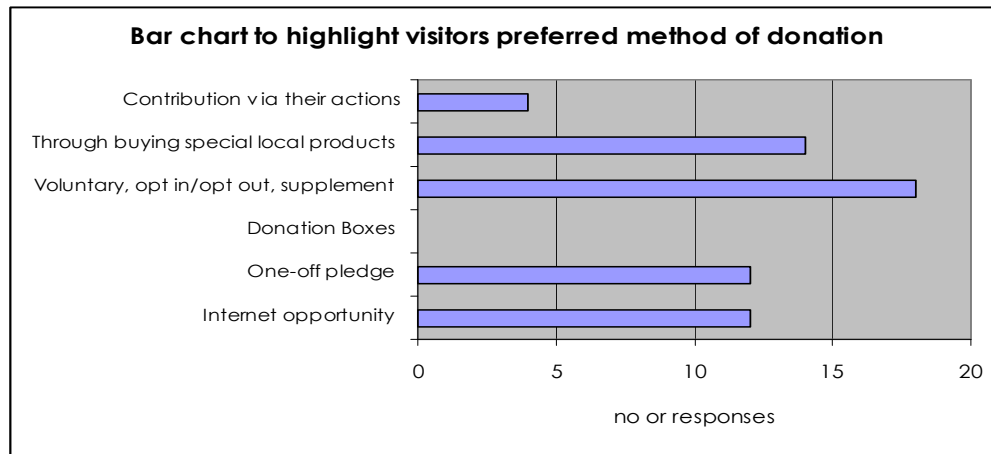
Mr Knight applauded the efforts and involvement shown by the business community so far.

"It is our job to spread this message to colleagues around the world to ensure the widest possible audience for our important message. It is our job to ensure our natural environment is protected and sustainably used for future generations."

(DEFRA, 29th March 2006)

5.7.3 Visitors:

Visitors were then asked, if they were to contribute to VPS which would be their preferred method of donation.



'Voluntary, opt in/opt out, supplement added to a drink, activity or overnight stay i.e. 5p added to a cup of tea/coffee; 50p on boat trip or £1-10 on final hotel bill etc' was the most popular method of donation with 18 out of 60 businesses selecting this as their preferred method of donation. This contrasts with businesses opinions; the majority did not rate this method highly at all. 'Buying special local products that donate a % of £'s already' was the 2nd most popular choice, selected by 14 respondents – this was also businesses 2nd most popular choice. 'Internet opportunity to donate to a cause when booking holiday' and 'One-off pledge or sponsorship of a project' ranked joint 3rd.

Not one visitor out of 60 selected 'Donation Boxes in tourism businesses or car parks' – this conflicts heavily with tourism businesses, (22 out of 98 chose them as their preferred method – which put them in 3rd place as businesses preferred method of donation) but backs up agency views that donation boxes are not well used as they only bring in small amounts of money. This emphasises that even if a businesses puts a VPS in place, unless it is in a format that visitors will engage with, it will not be very successful. Businesses need to understand research carried out with visitors and be brave enough to try methods of VPS they are unsure about such as voluntary, opt in/opt out, supplements. The one method that is ranked quite highly by all (groups, businesses, agencies and visitors) is 'through buying special local products'.

This point was taken to a whole other level by one visitor who felt that getting visitors to choose to spend their money with "green" businesses would be the ultimate VPS. *"Firstly I would like to say that Cornwall's approach to managing the environmental impact of tourists is the most progressive I have come across. The place I am staying*

in is particularly impressive and it seems to me that if the service providers deal with the impact of tourists responsibly (encouraging recycling, reducing their own purchasing of environmentally questionable products, buying local produce, using environmentally friendly cleaning products, reducing the energy consumption within their business by whatever means necessary). Doing all this and raising awareness of these issues with visitors will have far greater impact on maintaining the environment than charging a fee for something that many may choose not to bother with (if it is indeed voluntary). The ultimate VPS would be for all visitors to choose to stay with or support "green" businesses that are contributing to the environment by doing all they can to care for it. "

Another business hinted at the same thought "I think if all businesses were to add a little extra to their bill it would get annoying – far better to consider the costs the customer is incurring and make it part of the price of the product and then deal responsibly with your own contribution to the environmental degradation by being the best, greenest, service provider."

5.8 Final thoughts

Businesses, agencies and visitors were given the opportunity to give any concluding thoughts on VPS. Three main thoughts emerged; the importance of effective policing of VPS; communication of VPS; and VPS as tool for education and awareness raising.

5.8.1 Policing VPS

Businesses' not already operating VPS felt policing was important to ensure transparency of VPS:

"The idea is a good one. However, I think visitors would need reassurance that any money they gave went to a specific project. Otherwise they may feel it is just another way for the local business to relieve them of their money without any true benefit to the environment. How would you 'police' the scheme to make sure each business handed over the donations?"

"I think it's a very good idea but implementing it will have to be very carefully done as we don't want to make it look like we are forcing visitors into this and need to show them we are doing it for the good of Cornwall and not trying to line our own pockets!"

"Who is deciding how to spend the money and how are you going to persuade visitors that is spent wisely. The local district authorities have a proven track record of ineptitude with running services for tourism. What makes anyone believe they will not squander away the donations? If there was a clearly defined project to improve a specific need then they would be more easily persuaded, but it would have to be a project that could not receive funds in any other way."

5.8.2 Communication is key!

Businesses not already operating VPS felt communication was at the core of making such schemes work as well as ensuring they were not just appealing to the 'green' visitor:

"I think they have a very valuable place but the communication of the op- out and the correlation of the project to being very local to the visitor, must be at the core."

"I would be concerned that the message will appeal only to a 'green' visitor profile who are already ethically sensitive to such environmental issues. For these people, voluntary contributions and sponsorships may be successful."

"If marketed well such schemes could engage visitors more with the region & improve return visit chances."

Businesses already operating VPS all felt that communication was the key to their success!

"I find if we talk about it guests buy if not they do not"

"It is successful as long as your guests/clients are totally aware of where their money goes and if they can actually see it being put into practice when they visit the location. Many guests have donated more than suggested."

5.8.3 VPS as tool for education and awareness raising.

Several visitors highlighted that raising awareness about issues and educating visitors to change their behaviour is as important as getting them to donate £'s.

"I think educating tourists is as worthwhile as getting them to give money– getting them to consider what happens to all the drink bottles and ice cream wrappers they purchase; encouraging them to get out of their cars and walk around or take the very convenient already running bus to get where they want to go etc. If the scheme can educate visitors at the same time then that would be best"

"Encourage government to spend more on positive projects that enable people to feel their tax dollar is being usefully spent (on better pathways, recycling systems, alternative energy etc.) than on war mongering. Tourists could be encouraged to sign petitions about local problems and generally lobby the government to itself behave responsibly. All this of course takes someone to organise it – which gets back to the service providers and educating tourists. . ."

6.0 Summary of findings

The following conclusions can be drawn from the above research:

6.1 VPS & Managing Heathland

Sufficient resource allocation is essential if nature targets and responsibilities are to be met. In the UK however, adequate resources are not currently allocated for nature conservation. Those responsible for managing the environment in the UK are facing depleted budgets and keen to find ways to tap into visitor spend, this is especially true for those managing heathland. VPS could therefore be a real solution to the problem of dwindling resources for heathland management in the UK.

VPS is essentially a voluntary opt in or opt out payment made by visitors to assist the conservation management of places they visit, differing significantly from the compulsory tourist or bed tax practiced in other countries. There is a dearth of published research and case studies, from around the UK and beyond, that have critically reviewed the concept and operationalisation of VPS; all highlight that VPS is a complex concept to evaluate, both in theory and practice, involving a range of benefits and dis-benefits. The general consensus however has been that support for VPS varies considerably, with visitors on the whole being strongly receptive, whilst tourism business interests are more cautious. The financial benefits can be immense but raising awareness about issues and educating visitors to change their behaviour is as important as getting them to donate £'s.

6.2 VPS in practice

- ❖ There are many differing concepts of what VPS can be, including financial contribution, in-kind support, and visitor engagement in relevant issues eg local campaigns and promotion of local goods and services. Therefore there are many different ways visitors can donate or contribute to VPS.
- ❖ Schemes can be independent of one another or can take a more centralised form, lead by an agency responsible for the schemes co-ordination, marketing, administration and management. Although such centrally lead schemes will incur costs to manage they have the benefit of focusing money collected on needy areas by creating 'themes' that businesses and visitors can support. This has the extra benefit of allowing visitors to see the real impacts of the money they donate.

- ❖ VPS also has a wider definition than simply supporting the environmental “conservation management” of destinations, as schemes can also support community based, social projects.
- ❖ VPS must ensure that they generate additionally – it is vital they are not used or seen as a substitute for statutory functions of organisations.

6.3 Barriers to VPS

- ❖ There is general frustration and/or a lack of understanding about how the management of the environment is funded in the UK.
- ❖ There is a general misunderstanding amongst businesses that VPS is a voluntary opt in or opt out scheme – not a tourism tax.
- ❖ Agency staff do not fully understand the concept of VPS - how VPS operates in practice or the schemes benefits.
- ❖ The fact that VPS can be a successful tool for raising awareness is often overlooked.
- ❖ There is a real gap between the businesses implementing VPS to raise monies and the agency managing the environment in that area – even agencies that were directly benefiting from the money being generated appeared to have no relationship with the businesses supporting them and therefore no knowledge of how the schemes were being run, how successful they were or how visitors were reacting to them.

6.4 Reactions to VPS

- ❖ The findings support the dearth of research already done on VPS that highlights the general consensus; that visitors are strongly receptive to VPS, whilst the tourism businesses are more cautious.
- ❖ Visitors are willing to pay, but only if they know exactly what the money is being spent on and by whom. But as Warren (2001) goes onto highlight “visitors’ perception of whether they are receiving value for money during

their stay has a significant impact on their willingness to make a voluntary donation.

- ❖ Agency staff, on the whole, are more optimistic than businesses about how visitors will react to VPS .
- ❖ Businesses need to feel that participation in VPS will deliver tangible image and marketing benefits.
- ❖ There is acknowledgement that VPS does not have to be a voluntary contribution – it can also be asking guests to participate in an activity i.e. recycling.
- ❖ Fear that local people will be negatively affected by increased costs, but at the same time there is general acknowledgment that the environment is local people's responsibility, not just visitors.

6.5 Landscape Selection

- ❖ The heathland does not presently stand out in peoples mind as a landscape that is of international importance or important to Cornwall.
- ❖ The heathland as a landscape is grossly undervalued by businesses and visitors.
- ❖ The heathland is not the landscape of choice for businesses or visitors to support through VPS.

6.6 Activity Selection

- ❖ VPS is perceived by the majority of businesses and visitors surveyed to be about the environment.
- ❖ As long as the business is supporting a project they believe in, environmental or social, visitors can be encouraged to participate; it is not so much the project/activity being supported that makes the difference to whether a visitor will contribute but rather it is about the integrity and transparency of the

scheme and the passion with which it is communicated by the business and sold to visitors.

6.7 Method of donation

- ❖ Even if a business puts a VPS in place, unless it is in a format that visitors will engage with, it will not be very successful – i.e. lots of businesses assume donation boxes are the best method but visitors highlight that these are not a method they would support.
- ❖ Businesses need to understand research carried out with visitors and be brave enough to try methods of VPS they are unsure about, such as voluntary, opt in/opt out, supplements. Businesses need to have more faith that visitors will not react negatively to VPS that are asking for a monetary donation.
- ❖ Agencies would be more comfortable embedding VPS into existing products and businesses than trying to install mechanisms to get visitors to part with cash from scratch.
- ❖ Efforts should be concentrated on promoting the easiest and most favoured methods of VPS such as opt-out schemes or contribution through products that have a % embedded in the price already. The method was also ranked quite highly by all groups, (businesses, agencies and visitors).
- ❖ VPS must be simple to administer and transparent.
- ❖ VPS monies must go towards traceable, tangible projects.
- ❖ Policing is important to ensure transparency of VPS.
- ❖ VPS need to ensure they are conveyed in positive terms as a 'visitor investment scheme' where conservation takes precedence over financial considerations.
- ❖ Communication is the key to a successful VPS.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Conduct a public relations exercise to boost public understanding and appreciation of heathland sites.

Opposition to management on heathland sites in the UK, particularly to tree felling and grazing, is indicative of low levels of understanding and appreciation of heathland. For VPS to contribute directly to Heathland management, businesses and visitors need to understand why the heathland is so important to Cornwall and internationally. It would be useful for EN to conduct a public relations exercise to boost public understanding and appreciation of heathland sites.

7.2 Raise awareness and understanding of VPS with agency staff.

The majority of EN, and other agency staff, do not currently understand the concept of VPS let alone the benefits. Even staffs at agencies that have a VPS in place are not fully aware of how the schemes are being operated. If an agency does have a VPS scheme in operation or is working with businesses in the local area to tap into VPS, all staff need to be aware of the schemes. Case studies that can then be communicated within the agency and beyond would be beneficial; firstly, to support the business by raising awareness of the efforts they are making; secondly, to raise awareness of the issues and projects the VPS is supporting; and finally, to use a model to recruit other businesses/visitors that would like to contribute.

7.3 Raise awareness and understanding of VPS with businesses.

Businesses do not currently understand fully the concept of VPS let alone the benefits that operating such a scheme could have for their business and the local environment. Many barriers exist that are based on mis-interpretation of what a VPS really is and a mis-understanding of how VPS work.

CoaST has already been working with the first wave of businesses interested in VPS in Cornwall and is now in a position to help other interested businesses, agencies and areas, understand more about VPS and how to get involved further; EN should work with CoaST to raise awareness of VPS. This could be done through case studies and sharing models of best practice. Getting businesses already operating VPS to spread the word is possibly the most effective way as can be seen from one CoaST members recommendations; *“The visitor payback scheme is so important, its all about*

maintaining the area that visitors to the South West are so interested in, and leaving that area in pristine condition for the locals. I believe the payback scheme is more than worth the initial outset of putting schemes in place and feel other businesses should have a go."

7.4 Encourage more/better communication between EN staff and local businesses.

Businesses and agency staff do not currently understand or appreciate how they could forge partnerships that would be mutually beneficial, but for VPS to work it is essential that a better understanding and a mechanism for communication is developed.

As part of the HEATH project, CoaST in partnership with the Tourism Skills Network and English Nature, held a workshop on the Lizard in March 2006. It was an opportunity to invite a number of local tourism businesses to find out more about the HEATH project and the environmental conservation work going on in their areas, to see if businesses had any ideas/suggestions about how they could get further involved. The response was overwhelming. For most of the businesses it was the first opportunity they had had to find out how exactly how their local environment was being managed and by whom and many wanted more information that they could pass in to their visitors. Others were keen to explore ways that they could assist with these efforts and several businesses are now exploring VPS with CoaST to support the environmental projects going on in their area. All agency staff present were inspired by the overwhelming support and hoped to tap into the offers and enthusiasm to forge partnership projects that will benefit the natural environment.

EN and other agencies should take every opportunity possible to do more of the same; host or participate in workshops or gatherings of local tourism businesses to forge relationships and partnerships and identify opportunities for VPS. This is also a great way to communicate specific issues or projects to wide range of people; once the businesses knows about an issue they can be encouraged to pass the information onto visitors. This can be taken a step further by producing information for accommodation providers visitor packs – this will ensure the message passed on is accurate and has adequate detail.

7.5 Develop a programme of themes businesses can support.

As the heathland does not have a strong identity in people minds it will be best to tap into 'themes' that businesses and visitors can choose to support; through these 'themes' agencies can tap into money that can then be spent in/on any habitat. This is how the scheme in The Lake District has evolved to great success.

Some 'theme' examples/suggestions:

- 61% of visitors felt 'Wildlife Conservation' was 'A Must!' to support – picking a species of concern such as the 'grayling butterfly' or the 'bog bush cricket', both species that rely on the heathland for their survival, can allow money to be raised that can then be spent on the habitat these creatures live in. Usually the sexier the species the better, so for example money could be raised to support the 'Cornish Chough', this money could then go into the general conservation of the choughs primary habitat in Cornwall – the Lizard – one of the focus areas for heathland management.
- 58 % of visitors felt that 'Keeping footpaths well maintained & improving access to sites' was 'A must!' – Money could be raised for this 'theme' and then invested in specific footpath/access projects in the heathland sites.
- 'Habitat restoration and conservation' were also both felt to be 'A must!' by 57% of visitors. Tapping into appeals such as the Cornwall Wildlife Trusts appeal to support National Nature Reserves (NNR's) could be an option – money could then be prioritised for NNR's that host heathland.

Carrick DC has already compiled a list of 'marine themes' for businesses in the district to support, after a VPS workshop was held with local businesses in 2005. The aim of the workshop was to explore whether businesses would like to cluster together to develop a centrally managed scheme in Carrick or whether they would rather keep pursuing individual VPS. The outcome of the workshop was that all businesses were content to pursue individual VPS but as all were looking for marine based charities to support they requested the Cornwall Marine Conservation Officer compile a list of projects/charities they could choose to donate to. Although the scheme is not being managed centrally, it has helped businesses focus their VPS onto a number of recommended projects.

One business already operating a VPS feels centrally managed 'themes' are the future of VPS in Cornwall: *"From the outset I have been a huge fan of the concept of visitor payback. We are only a tiddly little holiday cottage agency, but imagine if the*

likes of Classic Cottages and Cornish Cottage Holidays were to come on board. I could see the cottages participating in such schemes having a green leaf logo in these holiday cottage brochures. I could see some cottages not wishing to partake, but those that do standing out with their green leaf logos. All the agencies need to do is bump their prices up a tad and pass the donations on. I could see each agency setting up its own charitable trust and really making a difference to Cornwall. I could see Visitor payback not just applying to the environment, but to hospitals, playgrounds, air-ambulance etc etc. Maybe the larger agencies could club together and form one large charitable trust. I've always seen visitor payback as a win:win:win. It makes the customers feel like they are contributing to one of their most favourite places in the world.....and it makes your business look good too.....and Cornwall benefits too!"

7.6 Pilot a county wide VPS campaign that would have maximum visible impact.

Using the 'On the right tracks' scheme operating in the South Hams as a model (section 4.2.4), or the Isle of Wight 'Gift to nature' scheme as a model (section 4.2.3), a centrally managed scheme could be kick started in Cornwall. This scheme could take the heathland as its 'theme' and could be combined with recommendation 7.1, 'the public relations campaign'. Information would need to be produced to raise awareness of the importance of the heathland to Cornwall; an invitation produced and distributed to businesses inviting them to participate to the management of the heathland through VPS; and then a public awareness campaign asking visitors to contribute to conservation of the heathland by supporting businesses participating in the VPS. The scheme would need to be softly branded with an engaging title that would highlight that by participating businesses and visitors were quite literally 'helping the heathland'.

It is not expected that English Nature (soon to be Natural England) carry out all these recommendations alone, it is suggested that it works in partnership with others to facilitate their implementation. In doing so, many English Nature objectives will be realised. These include; promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity; conserving and enhancing the English landscape; securing the provision and improvement of facilities for the study, understanding and enjoyment of nature; promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open-air recreation; and contributing in other ways to social and economic well-being through management of the natural environment (English Nature 2006).

8.0 References

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