

**Project 2: Visitor services**

**End of season monitoring summary 2015**



**November 2015**

### **Introduction**

In July 2014, £999,000 of revenue funding was secured for 2015/16 from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) through a partnership bid between the County Council and the Lake District National Park Authority.

See More Cumbria and the Lake District is a programme of work being delivered by Cumbria County Council, The Lake District National Park Authority and Cumbria Tourism which will maximise the economic benefit of travel in the county by focussing on the quality of visitor travel to Cumbria's international destinations, particularly the Lake District.

This report is a summary of the monitoring carried out on the seven bus, coach and boat tours which received support from the See More Cumbria and the Lake District.

At the outset of the programme project 2 objectives were defined as follows:

#### Project 2, Visitor Services summary

The Visitor Services Project will kick start service developments to provide high quality travel options suitable for international visitors. This will be done through grant aiding tours in the four project corridors and providing funding to operators to start new or enhanced quality transfer bus or boat services and tours, with the aim of the routes becoming self-sustaining in 2016 and beyond, to offer enhanced travel opportunities without the need of the car.

Project Objectives: -

- a) To identify existing visitor services provision in each of the four corridors;
- b) To work with existing transport services operators to identify opportunities for improvements;
- c) To assess the improvement ideas and prioritise for allocation of funding;
- d) To work with operators to implement the visitor services;
- e) To support funded services with marketing and information to maximise the change of the services and tours becoming self-sustaining post See More;
- f) To work with service providers to secure a legacy beyond the See More programme.

### **Services**

Following detailed scoring of the expressions of interest received from the operators the following services were supported through See More Cumbria and the Lake District over summer 2015:

- a. Hadrian's Wall Tours. Operated by Open Book Visitor Guiding, tours from Carlisle Railway Station and Tullie House Museum to Birdoswald, Vindolanda and Housesteads on Hadrian's Wall.
- b. Best of Lakes tour. Operated by Mountain Goat, a one-day whistle-stop tour of the Lake District.
- c. Honister Rambler. Enhancement to the service from Keswick over Honister Pass to increase frequency and capacity on the afternoon journeys. Operated by Stagecoach.



- d. Keswick and Ullswater tours. Operated by Alba Travel, these will pick up from Keswick and Penrith Railway Station to take visitors on quality tours around the northern part of the Lake District.
- e. Cross Lakes/Wray Castle service. An extension to the Cross Lakes Experience to take visitors to Tarn Hows and Wray Castle.
- f. Ullswater 508 bus. Link from Penrith station to Glenridding to enhance frequency and introduce open-top double deck vehicles. Operated by Stagecoach.
- g. Ullswater steamers. An evening cruise from Pooley Bridge to Howtown.

### **Monitoring methodology**

The three key sources of monitoring information used were:

- a) Passenger and revenue returns from the operator on a day by day and in some cases journey by journey basis. On public passenger services (c, e and f) this data is taken directly from the on-board ticket machines.
- b) On-board monitoring forms. These were distributed by the driver or handed out by a member of staff on board. The form is included in Appendix A.
- c) Monitoring visits. Staff from the See More team travelled on all of the services/tours while operating and reported back qualitative information regarding the passenger experience.

### Passenger figures

	No. days operated	Dates operated	Total passenger numbers	Passengers per journey	Passengers per day
2a Hadrian's Wall Tours	43 days	4 tours per week, 22 Jul -3 Sept	312	n/a	7.3
2b Best of Lakes tour	83 days	23 May- 1 Nov	689	n/a	8.3
2c Honister Rambler	219	Daily 28 Mar – 1 Nov	5160	14 per day on the 16:00 and 8 on the 17:30.	average of 22/day.
2d Keswick and Ullswater tours	16 days,	23 May – 1 Nov	270	n/a	16.8
2e Cross Lakes/Wray Castle service	110	28 Mar – 1 Nov. Holidays/weekends	1099	2.5	10
2f Ullswater 508 bus	69	23 May – 6 Sept	5430	8	79
2g Ullswater steamers	15	24 May – 4 Sept, Thursdays	615	n/a	41.6

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### Monitoring forms

The form shown in appendix A was agreed and circulated to operators to hand out to passengers. The numbers returned were variable and so some additional on the spot surveys were carried out by Cumbria County Council's Passenger Transport Monitoring Officer.

Below are a summary of key statistics obtained from the route monitoring forms.

- On the Hadrian's Wall Tour Bus visitors originated from 26 different countries with USA, Australia, Italy, Germany, Japan, China and Canada being the most frequent and 97% of the visitors rated it 'Very Good' or 'Good'.
- On the Cross lakes Experience all the passengers would recommend it to a friend.
- On the 508 Ullswater service 95% of passengers rated the experience as 'very good' or 'good'. 34% had heard about it through timetables, 15% had travelled before, 13% had heard through word of mouth and 11% through the internet.
- On the Honister Rambler service 94% rated the experience as 'very good' with the other 6% 'good'

Comments included:

- 'Great to take family on.'
- 'Impressed by the drivers!'
- 'Friendly and helpful.'
- 'Very good service giving access to a lot of walks.'
- 'Open top particularly enjoyable despite the weather!'
- 'Delighted this service is operating.'
- 'More publicity needed, including links from other websites.'
- 'Good way of getting around the Lakes.'
- 'Drivers excellent under often stressful conditions.'
- 'Views from the top deck spectacular.'
- 'It can't be better.'
- 'Everything is perfect to me.'
- 'More time to explore sites.'
- 'The guide was brilliant, providing us with both insightful and witty comments.'
- 'Thank you I enjoyed excellent scenes and was impressed with ruins of 1900+ years.'

The sample sizes were not large enough to undertake more detailed statistical analysis, but give a useful snapshot of passengers travelling and their experiences and ideas for improvement.

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### Monitoring Visits

	Date/member of staff	Operational Comments	Passenger Feedback
2a Hadrian's Wall Tours	Tracey Chaplin	Guide very engaging and knowledgeable. Plenty of interest along the way.	Very enthusiastic and engaged by the guiding experience. More to see on Hadrian's Wall than expected, wish had more time.
2b Best of Lakes tour	14/10/15 Emma Moody	Excellent driver/ guide. Huge amount fitted into one day, perhaps tweak to give a little more time?	Astounded by the variety of scenery encountered and inspired by the landscape. Impressed by driving on tricky roads, wouldn't want to drive themselves.
2c Honister Rambler	11/10/15 Emma Moody	Amazing route with spectacular views. Busy service even in October, bus almost full at times.	Wouldn't want to drive on these roads. Scenery amazing. High number of overseas visitors and walkers.
2d Keswick and Ullswater tours	Not possible due to lack of information	n/a	n/a
2e Cross Lakes/Wray Castle service	04/10/15 Emma Moody	Road to Tarn Hows tortuous due to other traffic, can delay service. Very scenic route.	High proportion of overseas visitors, love the Beatrix Potter connection.
2f Ullswater 508 bus	23/05/15 Emma Moody	Overhanging branches too low (being tackled with CCC). Open top gives great views.	Open top has transformed route. More frequent services welcomed.
2g Ullswater steamers	28/05/15 Emma Moody	Very efficient operation with helpful staff. Huge capacity of vessels not utilised.	Great to go out in evening for different views and light for photographs (rainbow on date of visit).

Photos taken on the monitoring visits are included in Appendix B.

### Lessons learnt

The self completion forms required additional staff input to ensure completion.

Obtaining figures from operators can be time consuming, even though it was included within the contract.

Staff monitoring visits were worthwhile, picked up detail that would have been missed otherwise. It may have been useful to carry them all out earlier in the season.

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### Legacy

See More Cumbria and the Lake District is a one-year programme. The services were evaluated with a view to their long term commercial sustainability after the one year 'kick start' funding. At the present time there are still decisions to be made by some operators, but the continuation of most of the services looks encouraging.

Service	Likely legacy for 2016 season and beyond
2a Hadrian's Wall Tours	Open Book Visitor Guiding is already planning dates and times for 2016 season and plans to run through the main season, with a few minor changes to timings. Working to help increase marketing reach to generate growth to secure longer term future.
2b Best of Lakes tour	Mountain Goat Tours are happy with initial year and will run again in 2016 with minor changes to the itinerary.
2c Honister Rambler	Stagecoach is encouraged by the numbers and it is looking positive. Planning to undertake further analysis and will make decision in January.
2d Keswick and Ullswater tours	Alba Travel plan to run again in 2016 and develop marketing and service.
2e Cross Lakes/Wray Castle service	Extension to Tarn Hows and Wray Castle looking unlikely to continue on a purely commercial basis. Meeting of partners in service planned to explore options.
2f Ullswater 508 bus	Stagecoach is encouraged by the numbers and it is looking positive. Planning to undertake further analysis and will make decision in January.
2g Ullswater steamers	Ullswater Steamers feel their vessel and staff resources will be better used to extend the season of the Aira Jetty service. It is felt this also meets See More objectives better.

### Conclusion

The transfer services supported with See More funding met their objectives in providing important links for visitor travel, and carried good numbers of passengers considering they are new services. It is encouraging that most of them will continue into 2016 without any public funding, leaving a long term legacy of improved visitor travel.

# See More Cumbria and the Lake District 2015/16

## Appendix A

Sample monitoring form



### Service XXX – passenger questionnaire

*To help us find out more about this bus and plan for the future please can you quickly fill in this form?  
It is for research only and you will not be added onto any future mailing lists.*

Date .....

In which country do you live? ..... If in the UK, postcode .....

How do you rate this bus? Very Good / Good / OK / Poor / Very poor

Would you recommend this journey to a friend? Yes / Maybe / No

How did you find out about it? .....

How could we make this bus better?.....

Are you travelling with friends / with a partner / with family / on my own

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

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## Appendix B

Photos from Monitoring visits



Cross Lakes Experience at Drunken Duck



Honister Rambler 77/77A in Buttermere



Best of the Lakes Tour on Hardknott Pass

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Hadrian's Wall Coach Tour at Lanercost



First day of Ullswater Cruise



First day of Ullswater open top service

*Emma Moody, 10 December 2015*