Visitor Payback Tool Review

Incentives Tools

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">TABLES Project 2012: Mini reviews</td></tr>
<tr><td>Guidance</td><td>Using your experience and expertise, consider the following tasks in relation to the tool. It may not be possible to complete all tasks for each tool due to a lack of available information, the task not applying to the tool, etc. Please note where this is the case by writing in the reason in the space provided. Please use a maximum of 6 pages of A4 (excluding diagrams and appendices). Your responses are required in the white spaces.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Task 1: Basic information</td></tr>
<tr><td>Name of the tool</td><td>Visitor payback</td></tr>
<tr><td>Type of tool (list all that apply)</td><td>Learning, participatory, voluntary, financial</td></tr>
<tr><td>Group members</td><td>1.   Alister Scott</td></tr>
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Please provide a brief synopsis of the tool	Visitor Payback (VP) involves the *voluntary* process of visitors choosing to give money (or other help) to assist in the conservation or management of places they visit. A variety of techniques can be used in the pursuit of VP (donations, opt out/opt in, merchandising, membership, participation, fundraising, sponsorship and loyalty cards). VP is therefore an entirely voluntary payment that directly connects the visitor to conservation projects in that area, thereby heightening their own tourist experience (Jackson, 2001; Warren, 2001). The package of measures also has an important aspect of social learning through participation of businesses and enterprise in the scheme and allows important messages about the environment , sustainability and environmental benefits to be promoted. VP differs significantly from the compulsory tourist or bed tax practised in other countries. Attention has recently focused on this technique as a means to supplement the limited funds available for conservation work. However, whilst there are several schemes operating in the UK, there is a dearth of published research that has critically reviewed the concept and operationalization of VP. In what research there is (e.g. Scott et al., 2003), the findings reveal that VP is a complex concept to evaluate, both in theory and practice, involving a range of benefits and disbenefits. Financial benefits appear less prevalent than the more esoteric 'feel good' factor, increased awareness about conservation and partnerships that are evident in payback schemes. Support for VP varies considerably with visitors strongly receptive, whilst the tourism business interests are more cautious. It appears that the lack of significant income, together with high administration costs militates against the wider adoption of such schemes across the UK. By a more tangible expression of the environmental, educational and quality of life benefits from such schemes there is considerable potential to increase the spread of these schemes.

Task 2: Use of the tool

Stage	Currently used	Could be used	
Ideas			Please add any further comments
Survey			
Assess			
Policy / decision	Y		
Implement	Y		
Evaluate	Y		

here: This is somewhat difficult to answer. VP does not help decisions or policy per se: it helps promote better understanding and raises income for certain conservation projects. Therefore, it tends to be more about delivering environmental benefits and can therefore exist outside the policy decision making model. This flexibility is perhaps important.

Task 3: Existing literature about the tool

Are you aware of any KEY policy and /	Chapman, C. (2008) visitor payback development and implementing effective schemes, *Tourism Insights* http://www.insights.org.uk/articleitem.aspx?title=Visitor%20Payback%20%E2%80%93%20Developing%20and%20Implementing%20Effective%20Schemes accessed 21/09/12

or academic literature evaluating your tool?	Denman, R. & Ashcroft, P. (1997) *Visitor Payback; Encouraging Tourists to Give Money Voluntarily to Conserve the Places They Visit* (Ledbury, Tourism Company). EETB (2000) *Visitor Payback in the East of England*. Summary report (Hadleight, East England Tourist Board). Exmoor Paths Partnership (2001) *A Paths Improvement Scheme with Tourism Support* _http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/Projects/EPP/epp.htm_15 October 2001, accessed 16 December 2001. Friends of the Ionian (2002) _http://www.foi.org.uk/_accessed 11 July 2002. Island 2000 Trust (2012) *Gift to Nature,* http://www.gifttonature.org.uk/ Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership (2000) *Case Studies* (Lake District, Cumbria). Scott, A.J. & Christie, M. (2002) *Charging for Conservation: Visitor Payback.* Report submitted to the Countryside Council for Wales (Bangor, Countryside Council for Wales). Tarka Project (2001) *Visitor payback project*. _http://www.tarka-country.co.uk/tarkaproject/ contents.html_accessed 1 December 2001. Warren, N. (2001) Visitor payback, looking at the realities behind the success stories, *Countryside Recreation*, 9(2), pp. 4–7. Visit England (2012) developing a visitor payback scheme http://www.visitengland.org/england-tourism-industry/DestinationManagerToolkit/Destinationdevelopment/2ESettingupaVisitorPaybackScheme.aspx?title=2E:%20Setting%20up%20a%20Visitor%20Payback%20Scheme
Task 4: Your experience of working on the tool	
Have you done any research/consultancy work on this tool in terms of its development, testing and/or evaluation?	I led a CCW project on developing a VP scheme in 2002. We conducted interviews with a range of existing schemes and focus groups with businesses and visitors to examine the potential and develop a tool kit. Our results highlighted the need to invest in schemes and build effective partnerships; many were predicated on one of funding sources which threaten long term resilience. It was clear that the feel good issues from participation and education aspects from both visitor and business aspects were consistently underestimated by policy makers where income potential was seen as the be all and end all. Other findings pointed to caution with the over commercialisation of the countryside and to ensure that any VP projects were distinct and secured long term commitment. There was a clear perception that these schemes might be a short cut to address shrinking budgets in conservation which are largely funded by the public purse anyway. Hence there was a need to identify projects that would not necessarily qualify for statutory funding from the organisations.
Guidance	For Tasks 5-7, please also try to consider the **future** development and application of this tool in the TABLES project in your answers.
Task 5: Incorporating the ecosystem approach (EA) and ecosystem services (ES) ***Please refer to the summary text about ES for concept clarification at the end of this template (appendix)***	
Using examples (from practice, research or	At present the use of ES and EA explicitly in the schemes is limited. Current schemes make reference to environmental benefits etc. but actually fail to accurately assess all the benefits in line with ES thinking.

consultancy), explain how EA and/or ES are currently incorporated in/by the tool	
How <u>could</u> the ecosystem approach and/or ecosystem services be (further) incorporated within the existing tool?	There is an opportunity to carry out ES assessments of existing VP schemes and quantify and qualify the benefits they currently deliver as a baseline in order to proceed. In some cases a time series might be feasible (e.g. Lake District and Isle of Wight). New schemes could be designed using the ecosystem approach and linked with the notion of Payments for Ecosystem Services. In this way visitors are paying voluntarily for the maintenance and enhancement of particular ecosystem services which are valued by businesses, conservation organisations and visitors. The results of ecosystem assessments could then be used to prioritise the schemes for investment in a way that goes beyond the populist or "furry animal" approach. As such they would need to be highly visible in order not to get lost in the funding schemes that exist. Moreover, they need to present additionality rather than simply subsidise the lack of investment in conservation. BCU have their own funding to develop a VP scheme using Payments for Ecosystem Services. There is potential to use new technology including mobile applications, or 'apps', to help improve visitors experience and understanding of the ecosystem services in a particular area. Linked to this a payment can be made to benefit a particular project. This forms part of a current DEFRA pilot.

Task 6: Situating the tool within priority questions/criteria arising from the scoping interviews		
Explain how the tool can be situated within the priority questions/criteria that arose in the scoping interviews	Priority question/criteria	Does your tool address/implement this question/criteria? *If yes, please explain how.*
	Language and communication	
	1. Contribution to aiding the development of shared vocabulary within which principles of EA and ES can be shared with multiple stakeholders across built and/or natural environment	Very strong: the philosophy of VP is a perfect match for ecosystem approach. The core components of partnership, inclusion, support and learning provide a fertile agenda for development.
	2. Capacity of the tool to develop shared understandings of the many identities and values of places from the perspectives of multiple visitors, residents and businesses	This is a very strong component. The identification and development of a project in partnership and the involvement of publics helps generate improved understanding about value of environmental assets. Hence it is a perfect tool for promoting EA and ES.
	3. Capacity of the tool to improve or enable engagement across different publics so avoiding the usual suspect problem	Another main strength of the tool: the engagement via visitors and businesses does offer a new way to engage across unusual suspects.
	Learning from experience/pedagogy	
	4. Capacity of the tool to help reveal and value 'hidden' assets that are not recognised by communities or publics that use them	This has massive potential as some features that are real value are not always appreciated by wider publics particularly their multiple functions. Black Country Geopark and the Cotswold /High Weald AONBs provide potential examples here.
	5. Extent to which tool is building on other tools or EA/ES progress	The potential for VP incorporating ES/EA links well with progress made from PES.
	6. Extent to which tool is locally derived or grounded or can be adjusted to closely reflect 'local' context. Is the tool suitable for an open source approach?	VP is suitable for an open source approach. The key phases of selecting the project and providing information beyond the initial experience.
	7. Extent to which the tool is open to interpretation and application in a variety of forms (that reflect 'cultural' differences)	VP has clear guidelines but its beauty is its ability to be adapted to the particular culture. It is used Europe-wide with much success.
	Developing and selecting tools	
	8. Is the tool dependent on a specific funding source? How onerous is the application procedure? What are the chances of success?	It varies: most of the development of VP schemes originates from one off grants. Key issue is lack of funding for continuity. It is no longer innovative so raises real issue of how to secure admin funding. Needs to be embedded in delivery of tourism, conservation and economic policy. Currently only pursued in one silo. LEPs funding recently announced

		or the regional growth scheme offer good routes for funding.
9.	Does skills development (essential or optional?) and support exist for the tool or is there a body to ensure the optimal and correct use of it?	VP is poorly understood in policy and practice. The focus on financial outcomes tend to mask the potential; for strong partnerships that can help deliver joined up conservation and economic development programmes. Training is required to see the big opportunities for public buy in here.
10.	Extent to which current statutory hooks can be exploited by the tool or will benefit the quality or application of the tool (e.g. NNPF's duty to cooperate, SUDS, ecol. networks)	The benefit of VP is that it is voluntary.

Informing resultant policies effectively

11.	Extent to which the tool informs or improves policies/decisions. What does the tool cover? (full range of positive and negative economic, social and environment impacts / tradeoffs?)	The tool helps develop peoples understanding and benefits of a particular environmental project. The tools is flexible and can take many forms.
12.	How does the tool link into the planning system (applications and processes). At what cost / extra burden?	It does not.

Delivering management objectives

13.	Suitability or capacity of the tool to assist with managing visitor needs and pressures within protected areas / the considered area? How?	Huge. This is the raison d'etre of the tool. It helps visitors appreciate their impact and may well be a behavioural change tool. However this will take time and research has not measured the effectiveness of schemes in any real detail.

Local ownership/new governance

14.	To what extent can the tool assist in developing statutory plans (local and management plans) and improve ownership and use by publics?	The tool helps promote wider public involvement if developed using principles of good practice. Assists both on the point of the businesses who work with the project and also the visitors who participate. It should form an essential component of management plans where possible.
15.	To what extent does/could the tool contribute to a new form of community governance in management of the environment?	This may occur if the community actually takes ownership of the VP scheme.

Improved tools: understanding flows, interconnections and spatial issues

16.	Capacity to improve spatial understandings of the flows and interactions of various	Depending on the project the information associated with the scheme can help to do this. However visitors do not want information overload. Nevertheless,

	ecosystem services between sectors and at different scales	understanding the habitat requirements for red kites or otters (Tarka trail VP) or red squirrels Isle of Wight VP) or erosion on Helvellyn (Lake District VP) helps to illustrate the interrelationships that go beyond the site itself.
	17. Capacity of the tool to reconcile assessments of options and benefits across different scales (and sectors)	The VP scheme can do this but it does vary.
	18. Extent to which the tools is capable or can be manipulated to work across sectoral and administrative boundaries	It is flexible to work across boundaries and this is important when looking at tourism catchments. .
	19. Extent to which the tool can handle data shortages and gaps (or is effectiveness considerably compromised?)	This is not a major limitation. However some VP schemes can actually use visitors or locals to collect information and evidence. Not all VP schemes are based on financial aspects.
	20. To what extent has/could the tool put landscape/nature conservation and designated species/sites on the radar (positively or resulting in resentment?)	Very High: the whole purpose of VP is to promote social learning about particular environmental assets. However there is a risk that over commercialisation of a popular tourist area may lead to resentment at the over commercialisation of the countryside.
	Please add any further comments here:	

Task 7: A SWOT analysis of the tool

Referring back to the relevant policy and academic literature (listed in Task 3), plus your own expertise (listed in Task 4) and the way in which the tool is situated within the priority questions/criteria (listed in Task 6), please complete a summary SWOT analysis ensuring that each point is well justified *Where possible, this analysis should reflect the tool's past and current application, as well as its effectiveness in policy and decision making*	**Strengths** *(of the tool in delivering intended outcomes)* • Promotes partnerships across business, environment and visitors in a way that crosses usual boundaries. • Promotes wider learning and understanding related to a particular VP project. • Involves unusual suspects • Flexibility to select most appropriate combination of tools to suit local opportunities. • Potential tool that delivers multiple benefits.
	Weaknesses *(factors that detract from the tool's ability to deliver intended outcomes)* • The name or term implies something negative (I personally prefer the term 'visitor investment scheme'). • Seen as a tool to generate extra financial income. • Development of schemes reliant on one off grant aid with little funding to support long term viability of scheme. • Public see some VP seen as cheap and tacky. • High administration costs to deliver good schemes. • Businesses are sometimes reluctant to get involved.
	Opportunities *(consider opportunities for application of the ecosystem approach and services)*

processes	• Promote as visitor investment scheme not VP in order to improve the way the public see the scheme. Payback implies visitors cause damage and tit is compensation when in fact it is far more about people investing in an area perhaps to return. • Carry out ecosystem service assessments on existing schemes. • Could carry out ES assessments of potential schemes to identify priority projects • Use new technology and apps to help improve visitors experience and understanding of the ecosystem services in a particular area • Promote more interdisciplinary initiatives that develop VP in key areas across sectors and scales: e.g. Black Country, Cotswolds and High Weald as part of the TABLES projects. Role of LEPS is seen as important here in England.

Threats *(factors which negatively affect the tool and its outcomes)*

Threat	Seriousness (high, medium, low)	Probability of occurrence (high, medium, low)
Economic development pursued at any cost	High	High
High costs of administration jeopardise maintenance of schemes	High	High
Statutory functions of businesses means that these more voluntary initiatives fall by the wayside	Medium	Medium
Public resent over commercialisation of countryside projects if VP schemes are over applied in particular areas.		
Lack of buy in from businesses who are under pressure.		
Imposition of tourism tax.		

Please add further comments here:

Guidance	*Please now use the remainder of the document (box below) to make any general comments, observations or analyses of the tool*
Further comments	**Common factors** • The negative perception of the term "visitor payback" with support for its re-badging as "visitor investment". • The importance of the "feel good factor" to encourage visitors to donate. • The need for clear aims and objectives and effective information in a visitor payback project. • The need to have a meaningful partnership between the tourism industry, environmentalists and visitors. • The need to channel visitor donations directly into conservation projects without incurring unnecessary administrative costs. • The need to develop sustainable payback projects. • The need for a lead organisation that can command legitimacy and public support.

Distinctive factors
- Clear differences in perception of preferred visitor payback techniques from visitors (donations and opt in /opt out) and businesses (merchandising, membership) focus groups.
- Significant polarisation between the case studies and focus groups in terms of the needs for administration and management costs (case studies: high; focus groups low).
- Reluctance among tourist business interests to support visitor payback concept because of increased price and tax concerns which might limit competitiveness.
- Willingness amongst visitors to participate in visitor payback schemes.

Opportunities for developing visitor investment (payback) schemes
- To replace 'visitor payback' with 'visitor investment'.
- To develop and pilot test schemes that are simple yet attractive to industry and the visitor.
- To increase awareness amongst visitors and businesses of the need for conservation.
- To investigate the potential of opt in/opt out schemes (preferred visitor focus group mechanisms) as a legitimate strategy for businesses.
- To alert businesses to the financial and PR advantages of being associated with environmental initiatives.
- To alert all participating interests of the concept of additionality in visitor payback schemes.

Barriers to developing visitor payback scheme in Wales
- Visitor payback does not provide a means of making income or delivering substantive conservation projects.
- The reluctance of tourists to take up of visitor payback schemes (particularly among small tourist businesses).
- The lack of research on visitor willingness to pay on different visitor payback schemes.
- The potential over commercialisation of the countryside, possibly leading to a public backlash particularly where significant cumulative impact of visitor payback schemes occurs.
- Securing funding to accommodate the administrative requirements to manage a successful scheme.