

**Hope Valley Climate Action
Safe Roads, Green Villages
National sustainable travel demonstration proposal
October 2020**

Hope Valley Climate Action [HVCA] proposes the Hope Valley for a national sustainable travel demonstration project, building on changes resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. Solutions would benefit the local area and the wider Peak District National Park, and could be replicated across the country. The many visitors would see that sustainable travel can work.



Hope Valley in winter

There are many good examples of sustainable travel initiatives in rural Britain. However, these are often stand-alone projects, not fully integrated with other sustainable transport measures, or not covering needs of both locals and visitors. HVCA proposed a fully integrated approach to sustainable travel, with three linked objectives of encouraging active travel, reducing the use of private motor vehicles, and increasing the uptake of excellent public transport.

HVCA, based in the heart of the Peak District, aims to reduce carbon emissions through awareness raising, local action and public policy change. As elsewhere, transport is one of the biggest sources of emissions. With over 350 members, HVCA is one of the largest community groups in the Valley.

The Hope Valley has a local population of around 9,000. But it is within one hour's drive of 16 million people, and receives between three to five million visitors per year. The Peak District is historically the 'People's Park', serving the recreational needs of the surrounding cities. Most journeys in the Valley, by local people and visitors, are made by car. At a rough estimate, visitor car trips outnumber local trips by a ratio of 2:1 or 3:1. At busy times, there are serious problems of speeding, congestion, anti-social parking, and lack of safety.



The Hope Valley : Edale and Castleton to Grindleford

The national demonstration would show what is possible, in terms of:

- Encouraging active travel (walking and cycling) by local people and visitors, for everyday as well as recreational purposes; for example by providing a separated walking and cycling route linking the main villages by extending an existing cycle path.
- Reducing use of private vehicles powered by fossil fuels; for example by promoting electric vehicles [cars and bikes] and encouraging sharing and hire schemes.
- Introducing 20 mph speed limits in villages and on minor roads.
- Tackling anti-social parking.
- Investigating new solutions to traffic management in much-visited rural areas: for example the potential for a congestion charge, and car free days and zones.
- Developing use of a high quality, integrated public transport system, building on the current hourly Manchester-Sheffield train service, the hourly bus service to Sheffield, and on experimental schemes for demand responsive and other shared transport.
- Integrating sustainable travel modes; for example, by providing e-bike hire close to train stations, by linking buses with trains and by extending Park and Ride schemes.
- Generating local and visitor support for sustainable travel, monitoring progress including what works, and publicising the results. HVCA has recently organised a survey of public attitudes to sustainable travel, completed by over 450 people, held a successful “Try an e-bike” event and arranged a Bike Bus to the local secondary school.

The main outcomes of the demonstration would be:

- Cut in carbon emissions, with potential for further reductions through replication elsewhere
- Hope Valley established as an example of good practice in the development of integrated low carbon travel in popular rural areas, with lessons for other places.

Other benefits include:

- Public health and safety: more walking and cycling, fewer vehicles, lower speeds
- Improved quality of life for local people: quieter, safer, villages
- Improved visitor experience
- New economic opportunities: bicycle and e-bike sales, hire and repair, electric vehicle support, increased potential for staying as well as day visitors

This proposal feeds into other initiatives. The Glover Review of National Landscapes (Defra, 2019) recommended pilot sustainable travel projects in National Parks, with new arrangements for co-ordinating traffic management and public transport. A Peak District project could have the Hope Valley at its core.

The Peak District National Park includes among its objectives the “quiet enjoyment” of the “special qualities” of the area. The Park Management Plan aims to “initiate an ambitious low carbon rural transport scheme that is environmentally and economically sustainable.” It proposes a pilot in 2021. This is what HVCA proposes.

The ambition of the Derbyshire Cycling Plan is that “By 2030, Derbyshire will be the most connected and integrated county for cycling in England, recognised as a world class cycling destination for all”. HVCA has worked with Derbyshire County Council on a bid to the Rural Mobility Fund for a Demand Responsive Transport scheme.

Our proposal sits squarely within the Department for Transport’s vision for sustainable travel set out in ‘Decarbonising Transport’ (March 2020) and the Secretary of State’s call for “transformative change” following Covid-19. It provides an opportunity to try out in a popular rural area the proposals in the Government’s new ‘Change Gear’ active travel strategy. A national demonstration would require support and commitment from the Department.

The area initially proposed for the demonstration is the Hope Valley, from Edale and Castleton at the west end to Grindleford in the south east. The area is 10-15 miles from the centre of Sheffield and easily accessible from the Manchester conurbation. Hope Valley Climate Action is open to the possibility of being part of a wide Peak District project

A national demonstration would help achieve the essential coordination between different stakeholders. To deliver the project, a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach will be required, including, as a minimum:

Derbyshire County Council
South Yorkshire PTE
Greater Manchester PTE
Peak District National Park Authority
Rail and bus operators
Local community leadership.

The project will be community-led, working from the grass roots. It will need a small dedicated staff team, based in the area for a five-year period. Their job would be to catalyse contributions from the public and private bodies who could contribute to success, to engage local people and visitors, and to evaluate the outcome of the demonstration. They would require a budget for innovation. Funding might come from the National Lottery Climate Action Fund and from the Department for Transport. We envisage an initial feasibility or development phase, followed by an implementation phase.