

Programme and Resources Committee Meeting – 6 December 2019

APPENDIX 1

Hope Valley Explorer 2019 – operational and passenger feedback

The Hope Valley Explorer (HVE) ran for 42 consecutive days, Sunday 21 July to Saturday 31 August 2019. Stagecoach provided two Optare Solos on the service, with two route variations - H1 and H2.

General operational feedback

- Around 2,600 passenger journeys were recorded
- The most popular initial boarding point was Castleton, followed by Fairholmes and Edale
- Passenger numbers were highest at the weekends; Saturday averaging more than Sunday
- A positive trend of passenger numbers occurred over the six weeks of operation

Visitor Centre Feedback

The Visitor Centres (VC's) at Edale, Castleton and Fairholmes provided very positive feedback on the Hope Valley Explorer. Visitor Centre staff said they were pleased to have a new 'product' to promote and said they found it very rewarding.

A number of potential passengers made comments to VC staff that HVE was something that the area has been calling out for.

There were initially some grumbles to VC staff over initial problems with the ticket machine setup / pricing issues and bus reliability, but these issues were resolved. Apart from this the VC's reported nothing but positive responses. The most noteworthy were recorded by Castleton and Edale VC's:

From Castleton VC:

"I have just had a couple in who have been using the Hope Valley Explorer. They were very impressed, especially with the commentary which they gave 10 out of 10 for."

"The gentleman said he likes to pick holes in things but couldn't with the commentary on the bus and whoever had done it certainly knew their stuff. As the trains on the Hope Valley line are not running at the moment, it is brilliant we have the Hope Valley Explorer, so hopefully it will be used more frequently."

From Edale VC:

"I have had a couple in from Chesterfield who are highly delighted with the Hope Valley Explorer, they have used it quite a few times and will continue to do so. They do not use the internet, but wanted to pass on their gratitude for the bus service being available. Especially as they can no longer walk up the hills, they found it delightful to be able to go up Winnats Pass to Blue John Cavern."

Local business feedback

- One B&B owner emailed to say they thought it was a great idea for their guests. They asked if B&B's throughout Hope could be notified and have leaflets (for next year).
- The owners of a number of popular Castleton shops and attractions were very supportive and supported the Hope Valley Explorer by displaying leaflets and posters.
- One of the Castleton attractions enquired about having bus stops for the HVE. They are very keen for this and there is a discussion to be held regarding joint marketing.

Community Feedback

- In Castleton they wanted to have more information for local residents. Some would like to use the service as well as visitors. They asked if information could be spread to residents earlier next year, perhaps through the local newsletter. The church was suggested too.

HVE Passenger Questionnaire (online form on the PDNPA website)

Below represents a sample from the 14 questions posed by the online feedback form:

Qu. 5. What did you like best about your journey on the Hope Valley Explorer?

- A useful bus service route for visitors to the Peak District
- Helpful driver, the views and informative audio, discount on cycle hire.
- It took us to places we hadn't been before saving us on car park fares and stopping us getting lost - Castleton and Ladybower.
- Reliable and excellent alternative to car....or walking

Qu. 6. Are there any improvements that we could make to the Hope Valley Explorer?

- Ability to carry bikes; Lower fare of £4 or £5 day ticket - £6 per adult is not good against cost of parking; Services on every weekend and school holiday period; Full refund of fare on bike hire; Connection to Stockport/High Peak area rather than Chesterfield
- More inclusive group tickets/discounts available because not all families are 2 adults and 2 children.
- Extend route to cover route of late, lamented 222 bus to King's Tree beyond Fairholmes which would open up access to the moors and alleviate pressure on the 'honeypot'. Would also be excellent for disabled and older walkers who want a taste of the wilderness.

Qu. 7. Do you think that the Hope Valley Explorer is good value for money?

- 20% responded Excellent; 40% Yes; 20% Average; 20% Poor

Qu. 8. Did you find the audio commentary useful and informative?

- 40% responded Excellent; 40% Average; 20% Poor

Qu. 11. Would you use a similar service elsewhere in the Peak District if it were available?

- 100% said yes

Marketing included

- 3,000 leaflets dropped off at various outlets – **tabled copies available for the meeting**
- 2 Vinyl posters on stations – Edale, Hope, Bamford
- A4 & A3 posters
- Pull up banners
- Social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter
- PDNPA website page <https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/visiting/publictransport/hope-valley-explorer>