

1 Project information			
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Title	Business and Environment linked through Small-Scale Tourism		
Acronym	BESST	Measure	1.3
Lead Partner Name	Peak District National Park Authority	Country	United Kingdom
Project number	1-16-31-7-20-03	ERDF	€ 1050000

2 Certification by Lead Partner	
Name	Ken Parker
Position	Director of National Projects Peak District NPA
Signature	
Date	8 February 2006

3 Time period
This Activity report covers the time period from: 1 July 2005 until: 31 December 2005

NB: In this section you should only report on major deviations from the application. Minor changes should be reported on in the standard activity report.

4 Are there major changes in the project set-up (e.g. partnership, schedule, activities) compared to how they were outlined in the Application Form?

The project activities are proceeding as set out in the application form. As anticipated when the application was made there have been numerous minor adjustments to the detail of the project or to the timing of individual elements of it but this has to be expected in a demonstration project trying new approaches and testing out new concepts in on-the-ground 'real-life' activity.

Changes in the ways in which the project is being implemented were the subject of discussion with the Secretariat and a formal request for budget amendments was made on 18 October 2005. This related to two main issues 1). The timescale for implementing some of the BESST Development Fund Projects which was leading to underspending in 2005 and 2). The method of charging staff-time in the budget lines where the original application had charged time against activity in several cases. Following the Secretariat's response received 15 December a further revised 'Working Budget' is attached to this Activity Report. The Secretariat's formal approval is requested.

The Partner Lead Officer for Hylte Kommun changed to Bitte Rosen-Nilsson (it was Susanne Svensson). The Partner Lead Officer for the University of Derby changed to Sue Prince (it was originally Jill DeNardo).

NB: In this section you should only report on the time period covered by this short activity Report. It is not necessary to fill in an indicator sheet. Please keep this section within 2 pages.

5 Describe the main activities, outputs and results since last report.

1. The fourth Project Team meeting and the linked Business-to Business exchange was held 1 - 6 November 2005. New businesses from all three partner areas were involved in what was the first of the second round of business meetings. Most of these 'second round' businesses are also expecting to attend the Team Meeting in Fyresdal in May 2006. The Hylte meeting visited three projects which have made use of the BESST Development Fund – a forest trail at Brunnsbackaladen, the Information Octagon and the related 'yellow trail' at Femsjo and the car park for the locomotive roundhouse at Landeryd. A photo-album on this meeting and other BESST Activity in the period covered by this report has been produced (see attachment). It will be added to the BESST website under the 'Managing BESST' section. Feedback on the event was supplied by businesses from both Hylte and Fyresdal. It was evident that Hylte businesses are now taking a real pride in the environment and culture of their area and in each other as BESST businesses. This means they are more confident in promoting their area to visitors as a special place with businesses that have 'something special' to offer.
2. The focus of the discussions at Hylte was on practical action to translate the BESST concept into reality. Work sessions included 'Making use of the BESST website' and 'Developing Holiday Offers'. Businesses from all three partner areas committed themselves to producing new holiday offers for 2006, several of which will make use of the BESST Development Fund projects. When these offers are available they will be promoted on the BESST website (without price information) and there will be links to the businesses' own websites where prices will be available and bookings can be made. This method of operation was confirmed with Christian Byrith, the Deputy Programme Manager at the Secretariat in a letter dated 23 November 2005 (copy attached).
3. The Hylte meeting also agreed on the format for revised BESST promotional literature. There will be one leaflet for each area but all three leaflets will use a common design format and each will also promote the other two partner areas. The philosophy of the BESST project and the EU funding will be explained. In addition there will be a simple 'BESST postcard' with basic information on the project and the three partner areas that will be made widely available as a promotional tool. It will not have to be literally used as a postcard although that is one use. In December a contract was let to a designer to produce the templates for these new promotional materials and this was made available to all the partners to add in their own text.
4. The aim is to have offers from all three countries available in early 2006 linked to an improved BESST website (see 12 below) and a promotional campaign. This will be designed to interest customers in visiting the partner areas as customers of BESST businesses.
5. The Hylte meeting also heard about the progress of BESST in Hylte. There are now 14 registered Hylte BESST businesses (in June 2005 there were 11) and they meet regularly. A 'BESST certificate' has been produced for businesses to use (a copy is enclosed). Several accommodation businesses had framed their certificate and put it on display in their entrance area alongside a schedule of the other BESST businesses in the area. This idea is being considered by Fyresdal and the Peak District.
6. In Fyresdal the first two BESST publications have now been published - a walking guide ('Vandreruter Fyresdal') and a Wilderness Fishing Guide ('Fiskeguide for Fyresdal'). Copies of both are enclosed. These new publications are being made available free of charge to local businesses to use. It is expected that several Fyresdal businesses will make use of these publications in new holiday offers (see 2 above).
7. In Fyresdal there are now 15 BESST businesses (in June 2005 there were 13) and meetings are held regularly to co-ordinate BEST activity. The first Fyresdal BESST newsletter was produced in December 2005 (copy attached). The BESST philosophy has now been adopted more widely in the area and other investments are being actively considered applying BESST principles but not using BESST funding. Examples are ideas for a new milk processing facility and a new abattoir.
8. In the Peak District the formal 'Association of BESST Businesses' has now held two meetings to discuss BESST progress generally, to encourage businesses to enter their details on the BESST website and to explain the progress on the BESST Development Fund projects. A newsletter is being distributed to all registered BESST businesses which are mainly concentrated in the Heritage Walks area. Three editions of the Newsletter were issued in the six months covered by this report (copies attached).

9. In the Peak District the text and illustrations for the Heritage Walks book was finalised and given to the designer in November. Making this complex information work in a user-friendly hand-held book is proving a major challenge. The aim is to finalise the design in time for the book to be published at the end of March 2006. It will be a guide to the history of the area as revealed by features that can be seen in the landscape of today. This will be developed through detailed route guides to ten different walks.

10. By November negotiations for the Peak District's BESST cycle-route had reached the point where the Highway Authority, the County Council's Countryside Service (who will maintain the route once created) and English Nature (the national wildlife conservation body) were all content with the route. Negotiations with the landowners were also necessary because they have to agree to the construction of various sections of new path crossing their land. This has proved to be a very long process, taking 15 months so far. Planning applications were submitted in November and decisions are expected from the planning authority (Derbyshire Dales District Council) in February 2006. Formal Legal Agreements will also be required with the four landowners and solicitors are now working on the draft text.

11. The aim is to go out to tender for the construction of the cycle-route in February. Traffic calming measures will be needed on the sections of the route which are also public roads. The aim is to complete the construction sufficiently so that the route can be in use this summer. During spring 2006 we will also be discussing the BESST project with local businesses with the aim that they will develop their own cycle-touring holiday offers. We hope businesses and visitors will have two full summers' experience and the impact of the new Trails Triangle' can be reported in the BESST project report in 2008.

12. There have been difficulties with the University of Derby (the fourth BESST partner) which were finally resolved at a meeting with the Director. The University has now allocated new staff resources to the project and a new Project Manager has also been appointed. The first priority has been to resolve outstanding issues on the website and to attend the BESST Project Team meeting in Hylte where the new University Project Manager led the website workshop. Ideas for a business survey were also discussed.

13. Businesses from both Hylte and Fyresdal attended The Great Peak District Fair in October and thoroughly enjoyed the experience (see photo-album). The Fair celebrates the artists, craftspeople and food producers in the Peak District and this year there were 101 exhibitors and 19,700 visitors attending.

14. In July Sue Prince from the Peak District gave a course in Unnaryd Museum in Hylte on the technique of Bonad painting. Sue is an artist who had attended the first BESST Team meeting and Business Exchange in Hylte in April 2004. She was entranced by this local tradition of naïve painting using simple materials and techniques which is the main feature of the Museum and had met the last surviving Bonad painter. Sue then produced her own version of the bonad style telling the story of the first three BESST meetings. Seeing what could be done with their own tradition the people of Unnaryd invited Sue to give a 3-day training event in bonad painting in July 2005. 13 people attended, mostly local people but including one tourist who extended her stay specially so that she could attend the course. Sue is being invited to organise a similar event in 2006 linked to one of the Hylte tourism offers.

15. While she was in Sweden, Sue also attended the Bolmen Day (a village fair) in Hylte and, together with Mark Dennison (a Peak District honey producer), they had a Peak District stand. The Fair had 10 other businesses from Hylte and was attended by 2,000 people. After they had visited Hylte, Mark and his family took a holiday in Scandinavia and they also stayed with another BESST family (the Aketuns) in Fyresdal.

16. Mandy Dennison (Mark's wife) is exploring the possibilities of establishing a twinning arrangement between the Peak District school where she is a teacher and schools in Hylte and Fyresdal. The Wilderness School in Hylte is organising student placements with Fyresdal Event (an outdoor experience company). These are interesting examples of the spin-off effects that BESST is creating.

17. The response of the Secretariat to Activity Report 4 was not received until 15 December 2005 – over four months after it was submitted. At the end of December payment was still awaited and this delay is causing concern to the BESST partners. A response to the points in the Secretariat's letter is attached.

Conclusion. The BESST project has continued to gain momentum. The next key stage will be the completion of the major BESST Development Fund projects and the development by businesses of new holiday offers. 2006 should see major progress and an active promotion of BESST to potential visitors to the partner areas. The formal approval by the Secretariat of the revised 'Working Budget' attached will enable us to proceed with more certainty.

