

Notes of Brand Protection Group Meeting – 19th September 2012

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Title:	Notes of Brand Protection Group meeting held on 19 th September, The Copeland Centre, Whitehaven
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Present:

Rob Johnston, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce (Chair)
Ian Stephens, Cumbria Tourism
Steve Smith, Copeland Borough Council
Cllr Elaine Woodburn, Copeland Borough Council
Richard Griffin, Cumbria County Council
Rob Allison, Lake District National Park Authority
Charles Holmes, Allerdale Borough Council
Paul Gardner, Osprey Communications
Rhuari Bennett, 3KQ

The meeting was held in two halves: John Dalton and Bruce Cairns from DECC joined for the second half.

Principles, or Points of Agreement

The draft brand management plan was discussed, with emphasis on the points that were particularly important for attendees. It was intended that these form the focus of discussion with DECC to try and identify where the conversation needed to be focussed.

- 1 - There is a potential risk to the brand of the area (could be large, could be small).
- 2 – Since this is a national process, the Government and not the local community should bear the risks and the associated costs of mitigating any impacts, including on the brand.
- 3 – It is not possible at this point to accurately forecast the impact on the brand.
- 4 – Where an impact can be foreseen, it should be mitigated in advance rather than left until any damage is done, even if this means operating without a definitive evidence base (as the impacts will not have yet occurred, so are essentially indefinable).
- 5 – A budget and a plan for mitigation needs agreeing by a decision about participation (currently planned for 11th October 2012).

Assuming DECC is content with the above points the outstanding question that is likely to be crucial with DECC is 'What is the basis upon which a budget should be agreed for advance mitigation?'

DECC joined the meeting at this point.

DECC provided an update, which touched on:

- Their agreement that communications around MRWS to provide prompt accurate information would be necessary, if a DtP was taken. This is Strand 1 of the draft plan.
- Their agreement that good quality research would be required to try and track any impacts and quantify them wherever possible. This would start to establish more of an evidence base to work with. This is Strand 2 of the draft plan.
- Their discomfort with the current description of Strand 3, which is the advertising campaign for the area in order to offset any negative impacts on the brand. The key discomfort here is operating without the evidence to accurately predict and characterise the impact that might arise. The benefits and outcomes of a campaign are not yet clear enough to easily fund the work.

Strand 1 (communications) is anticipated to be a routine part of any Engagement Package in a Stage 4.

Strand 2 (research) could be negotiated as part of an Engagement Package also.

There was some discussion around the extent to which DECC agreed with the idea and principle of Strand 3. The ideas covered in the first part of the meeting were discussed and, although the specific text was not formally agreed, DECC did agree that they had a role in assisting the local community to address this risk of impact on the brand. The key question for DECC was 'How much funding is proportionate and reasonable?' A follow-up meeting was scheduled to discuss this question further.

Action: Next meeting at DECC offices in London, 26th September 2012 at 09.30-11.30