

Reflections on Hope Valley Climate Action's Mini Switzerland Pilot

“Our goal is to show how rural areas like ours can have dependable, joined-up bus and rail services, linked with safe walking and cycling routes”.

“Switzerland has one of the best public transport systems in the world – even its rural villages enjoy frequent, reliable, integrated services. Inspired by that model, we want to bring the same ambition to the UK countryside with the Switzerland in the Peak District pilot here in the Hope Valley.” (HVCA website)

Some Useful Websites

Switzerland in the Hope Valley

<https://hopevalleyclimateaction.org.uk/mini-switzerland-pilot-here-in-the-hope-valley/>

Swiss Federal Railways / Schweizerische Bundesbahnen AG

<https://www.sbb.ch/en>

Bern-Lötschberg-Simplon Line / Bern- Lötschberg- Simplon Bahn (BLS AG)

<https://www.bls.ch/en>

Swiss Southeast Rail / Die Schweizerische Südostbahn AG (SOB)

<https://www.sob.ch/>

Postbus / Postauto

<https://www.postauto.ch/en>

My Switzerland (National Tourist Marketing)

<https://www.myswitzerland.com/en-gb/>

Visit Peak District & Derbyshire

<https://visitpeakdistrict.com/>

High Peak and Hope Valley Community Rail Partnership

<https://peakdistrictbytrain.org/>

Some points of interest from the websites of SBB, BLS, SOB & Postauto

Ticket machines

- Helpline staff can operate the machines **remotely**, helping passengers if there is any uncertainty.
- Every ticket machine meets the requirements of the Swiss Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The number of the free helpline is displayed in relief lettering on all machines

- In cooperation with '[rundum mobil](#)', courses on how to use the ticket machines are offered for senior citizens

Rail Passes for International Visitors to Switzerland

In common with Switzerland, the Hope Valley, and generally the Peak District, are all-year-round destinations for both home and international visitors, especially as regards outdoor pursuits, the attractiveness of the natural environment and their culture and history.

In Switzerland the SBB travel pass gives the overseas visitor:-

- Unlimited travel by train, bus and boat
- Unlimited travel on premium panorama trains (seat reservation fees and/or surcharges apply)
- Unlimited use of public transport in more than 90 towns & cities
- Free admission to more than [500 museums](#)[Link opens in new window.](#)
- Mountain excursions included: Rigi, Stanserhorn and Stoos
- Discount of up to 50% on other mountain excursions
- Discount of up to 50% on leisure travel offers
- With the Swiss Family Card, children aged at least 6 and under 16 travel free of charge when accompanied by a parent with a valid Swiss Travel Pass.
- The Swiss Travel Pass Youth gives young persons under 25 a 30% discount on the Swiss Travel Pass. It offers the same validity.

In the UK a number of BritRail passes are available:-

These are available for overseas visitors from [ACP Rail](#) and offer “unlimited train trips on each travel day as you journey across England, Scotland and Wales.”

There are however significant restrictions on use as BritRail passes are only valid on National Rail services. Britrail passes are not valid on:-

- Eurostar services;
- services in Northern Ireland
- the Tyne and Wear Metro (Newcastle-upon-Tyne area); Glasgow Underground trains, Manchester Metrolink or other tram networks; Docklands Light Railway;
- road or light rail links between airports and railway stations;
- special rail excursions, privately owned railways, steam services, heritage, tourist or other leisure railways;
- London Underground trains and buses;
- ships, hovercraft, nor any other services not mentioned

As regards learning from Switzerland, it is the restrictions of BritRail passes for overseas visitors on a whole range of UK transport systems which immediately stand out - and the non-availability of any free access to museums etc

Internationalism

What can be learned from Swiss practice as regards the way in which overseas visitors who do not speak any of Switzerland's official languages ([German](#), [French](#), [Italian](#), [Romansch](#)) are catered for?

As regards transport, the websites of the SBB, BLS, SOB and Postauto are all available in English/French/German/Italian, and information about travelling around Switzerland on the official Swiss tourist information website can be read in 14 different languages.

This kind of internationalism can be assumed in Switzerland - whereas the way in which an overseas visitor with limited English may be catered for in the UK is very random.

Ticket machines on the Northern Railway have information in a number of languages eg German, Polish, French, Spanish - but the app and the [website](#) are only available in English. The same applies to the East Midland Railway and also to TransPennine Express.

The official tourist website for [Visit Peak District and Derbyshire](#) is only available in English as is the website of [Visit the Peak District by Train](#)

Bikes on trains and buses

Northern Railway have produced very clear information about combining travel by bike and train ([click here](#)) – if you are hoping to travel by bike and bus however, careful research, both in the UK and in Switzerland is needed.

On SBB, BLS, SOB and Postauto services, information is provided on websites and timetables as to where/when reservation is required (particularly on some popular routes in summer where a bike symbol shows this), and all relevant requirements are clearly explained on the SBB website ([here](#))

One initiative that could be emulated in the UK is the cycle transit bag that has been officially adopted on Swiss railways - [the TranZbag](#). This bag counts as an item of hand luggage and as such circumvents any restrictions on taking your bike onboard !

The TranZbag (Der TranZbag) is described as follows by Swiss Federal railways:

“ Taking your bike with you is easy: simply pack your touring, racing or mountain bike into the TranZbag and take it on the train for free as an item of luggage.

The practical TranZbag is SBB's official bike transport bag. Pack your bike into the TranZbag and take it for free as hand luggage on trains, postbuses and boats. Now even

large bikes with 29-inch wheels can fit in the TranZbag. You can buy the practical TranZbag in the SBB Shop for 119 Swiss francs”.

Buses and Bike Trailers – why not?

Imaginative solutions to the issue of making bus + bike travel compatible have been developed in many locations.

In Switzerland, bike trailers on buses are a common sight ([see the picture here](#)) and interestingly a similar arrangement is also seen in one major German city, Stuttgart, where a large trailer is attached to the back of the rack-and-pinion railway which negotiates a steep slope out of the city centre from Marienplatz to Degerloch. [Click here !](#)

In the UK, there is good practice to be found - the Alexander Dennis bike-friendly bus configuration has been in use for several years now and would suit the Hope Valley admirably.

Buses with this coachwork are in use in various areas of Scotland, the North East and also in East Yorkshire on the X46 Hull to York service.

For further information click [here](#) and [here](#) and also the manufacturer’s page [here](#)

A bike rider’s experience is well documented [here](#)

Essentials

Drawing together common themes from the examples given above, even if the focus of study is just one particular area eg the Hope Valley, there is a wealth of good Swiss practice that can inform and inspire anyone and everyone that has a role in developing transport systems.

- Integration of different modes of transport - and integrated ticketing - is an essential component of a sustainable public transport system
- A clear focus on meeting the needs of the customer will lead to imaginative, successful practice.

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