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Rural Tourism and Rural Railways :
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The first steam powered passenger train service opened in the UK in 1830, linking the cities of Manchester and Liverpool. Steam railways soon became central to the global progress of the Industrial Revolution. The first steam railway in Japan opened in 1872. Steam railways helped the industrialisation of Japan to take place, largely on the main island, Honshu. Railways lines soon spread across much of Japan, including rural areas : by 1888, there were railways on the island of Shikoku. In recent years, however, increasing car ownership, and road transport in general, has reduced demand for rural railways in Japan (and worldwide), often leading to rural railway service reductions and closures and eventually railway line abandonment. But now, through the strange evolution of history, in 2017, railways, including steam powered railways, are beginning to be important again in rural areas around the world. The railways that created industrial areas in the nineteenth century are finding new roles as heritage tourism attractions, and as important parts of wider sustainable tourism strategy planning, in the rural revolution of the twenty-first century. Beyond their role in the tourism industry, rural railways

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are also recognised as useful because they offer mobility to the rising numbers of older people who are unable to drive because of physical or financial disabilities.

Rural Tourism

Rural economies are increasingly based on tourism. Tourism is one of many new activities introduced to the countryside, to diversify, support and strengthen the local economy. In many rural areas in the UK, tourism is more important in economic and employment terms than agriculture (Sharpley & Craven, 2001). Rural tourism across Europe has grown rapidly: by 2008 it supported at least 900,000 direct and indirect jobs in Europe, and generated €150 billion in gross income in that year (Lane, B., Weston, R., Davies, N., Kastenholtz, E., Lima, J., & Majewski, J., 2013). It has now spread in the west to the USA (Gartner, 2004), in the east to China, (Gao, Huang, & Huang, 2009) and to many parts of Australia and New Zealand (Australia: Department of Tourism, 1994; Warren & Taylor, 1999). Japan began its development of rural tourism in the late 1980s (Aoki, Oyama, & Lane, 2006). Tourism in rural areas across the developed world was recognised by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as long ago as 1994 (OECD, 1994).

Rural tourism is not just tourism in rural areas. It is usually a very special form of tourism, and it is the special nature of rural tourism that has both made it successful as an experience, and given it potential to act as an agent of rural regeneration in a social and economic sense, with the added potential to encourage, valorise and support both environmental and man-made heritage conservation. Kaltenborn, Thomassen, Wold, Linnell, and Skar, (2013) provide a basic but valuable case study of those twin processes in action.

The OECD (1994, p. 19) report on tourism strategies and rural development defines rural tourism as :

- (1) Located in rural areas.
- (2) Functionally rural – built upon the rural world’s special features of small-scale enterprise, open space, contact with nature and the natural world, heritage, ‘traditional’ societies and ‘traditional’ practices.
- (3) Rural in scale – both in terms of buildings and settlements – and, therefore, usually – but not always – small-scale.
- (4) Traditional in character, growing slowly and organically, and connected with local families. It will often – but not always – be largely controlled locally and developed for the long-term good of the area.
- (5) Sustainable – in the sense that its development should help sustain the special rural character of an area, and in the sense that its development should be sustainable in its use of resources. Rural tourism should be seen as a potential tool for conservation and sustainability, rather than as an urbanizing and development tool.
- (6) Of many different kinds, representing the complex pattern of rural environment, economy, history and location in which it takes place.

Rural tourism has grown for many reasons (Lane, 1994)

- (1) On the demand side, the number of people keen and able to use rural areas for tourism purposes has risen enormously. Better transport, communications, the mass media, education and changing life styles and rising spending power have combined to democratise rural tourism. It is no longer a pleasure for a few wealthy people but for the many. Rural tourism has become a fashionable leisure activity.
- (2) On the supply side, rural tourism is no longer a peripheral activity, secondary to agriculture, forestry and physical resource extraction (Sharpley & Craven, 2001 ; Lane, Weston, Davies, Kastenholz, Lima, & Majewski,

2013). In many European countries it is a major and often necessary economic activity increasingly central to maintaining rural families and whole communities, and to support – directly and indirectly – vital rural services and the heritage features of the countryside.

- (3) Rural tourism was once a small niche market activity based on farm tourism, and scenic drives to view landscapes. It has expanded its product range and now has multiple market appeal. It is seeking to develop special products for the fast growing over-60s market (Eurogites, 2016), an age group that is especially valuable because it can travel in the low and shoulder seasons. New types of accommodation are now offered to suit various markets. Farm Bed & Breakfasts have been joined by glamping (glamorous camping – see <http://www.canopyandstars.co.uk/glamping>), stone tents/camping barns (see www.yha.org.uk/staying-yha/our-accommodation-facilities), boutique hotels, “gypsy” caravans, and many other innovative rural accommodation products. The arrival of Airbnb has further broadened the offer (Guttentag, 2015). In parallel with the development of a wider palette of rural tourism accommodation, there are a growing number of rural attraction types. Examples include cycle tourism (Lumsdon, 2000); food tourism (Sidali, Kastenholz & Bianchi, 2015; Hall & Gössling, 2016); slow tourism (Fullagar, Markwell & Wilson, 2012); heritage rail tourism (Lane, 2016), dark sky tourism (Rodrigues, Rodrigues, & Peroff, 2015) and indigenous language tourism (Whitney-Squire, Wright & Alsop, 2017).

Lane and Kastenholz (2015) divide the development of rural tourism into three phases. *The first phase* was one of emergence, beginning in Europe in the 1950s, gathering speed and beginning to spread worldwide in the 1970s. Growing car ownership was an important development factor, as was the need to diversify

farm incomes. *The second phase* was one of consolidated growth, beginning in the mid 1980s when rural tourism became a norm in many countries rather than a novelty. Both of these phases were rarely planned or co-ordinated whether at single enterprise or at community, regional or national levels. But gradually, rural tourism began to develop a greater importance than just supporting local enterprises. It found a role as a rural regeneration *and* conservation mechanism : it became much more than just a farm diversification tool. It also became part of the innovative concept known as Sustainable Tourism. Research papers on the subject grew in numbers and variety (Lane and Kastenholtz, 2015). The same authors envisage *the third phase* of rural tourism development becoming “New Generation Rural Tourism”, governed more professionally, part of a carefully conceived proactive and holistic series of changes, instead of an activity that was previously marked only by adventurous homespun management and entrepreneurialism. Partnership governance, inputs from life-style entrepreneurs from urban areas, growing influence from protected area managements, and the use of web based and social media marketing are all important in the creation of new generation rural tourism.

It is this new era of fashionable rural tourism with a wide market and product base that has made possible a re-evaluation of the role of the rural railway.

Rural life and rural landscapes are increasingly popular because they often represent the past, and they also are seen as representing continuity and emotional security (Jepson & Sharpley, 2015). They offer escapism from a modern, city-based way of life. They also offer a series of special experiences many of which are heritage based. Rural tourism is part of the new experience economy (see Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Rural railways can be part of the same and growing trend towards valuing and enjoying heritage experiences. They offer escape into almost forgotten ways of life,

far removed from busy Tokyo commuter trains or the inter-city Shinkansen.

The special nature of a rural rail journey, providing elevated vistas across the countryside and its landscapes and buildings, was noted by Hoskins (1955), the doyen of the scholarly study of the English landscape :

“the railway has been absorbed into the landscape, and one can enjoy the consequent pleasure of trundling through (the countryside) in a stopping-train on a fine summer morning : the barley fields shaking in the wind, the slow sedgy streams with their willows shading meditative cattle. The elegant ... stone (church) spires across the meadows ... the warm brown roofs of villages half buried in the trees, and the summer light flashing everywhere” (Hoskins, 1955, p. 206).

Hoskins, writing in 1955, could not have known that 60 years later his words would fit the promotional agendas of the slow travel advocates, who find slow travel to be both environmentally friendly and psychologically beneficial for its users (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). And that the trends towards modernisation in transport, with an emphasis on speed so common in the period 1950-1980, would be reversed in more recent years to encompass heritage travel, cruise ship and canal holidays, along with walking and cycling. Heritage travel, especially by rail, uses slow speed as an opportunity to enjoy the scenery, and offers the unique selling point of a railway journey that can transport visitors not just to new places, but also to old times.

The rising popularity of the heritage railway

The post Second World War period has seen the emergence of the concept of the heritage railway, and the emergence of at least two new business and operational

management models capable of supporting rural heritage railways. In recent years, the emergence of rural tourism – and the concept of sustainable tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 1993) – has created strong potential synergies between rural railways and rural tourism. Many of those synergies are yet to be fulfilled, but a range of factors are now able to assist mutual progress to bring railways and tourism together in many rural areas. The UK, much of Europe, and North America have moved rapidly to grow rural tourism; Japan was a little slower in encouraging and supporting it. Japan has been very slow to recognise heritage railways. In contrast, in Europe, the European Federation of Museum and Tourist Railways has 653 members, 268 of which are in the UK, with the remainder spread across 23 other European countries (http://www.fedecrail.org/en/index_en.html). Of those 653 members, c. 400 are directly involved in rural heritage railways. In 2005, the European Federation published the comprehensive Riga Charter (see web site above) on the conservation and operation of heritage railways, the majority of which are in rural areas. In addition, in the UK, Sweden and Germany there are many rural railways owned by conventional railway companies but working with community partnerships to ensure their survival and development (see below for a discussion of business models, and see also <https://acorp.uk.com/>, the web site of the UK's Association of Community Rail Partnerships, with over 50 largely rural railway community rail partnerships). In the USA, there are c. 150 rural heritage railways, with another 20 in Canada. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_heritage_railroads_in_the_United_States ; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_heritage_railways_in_Canada).

The Wikipedia list of heritage railways in Japan records only two examples, although there are a number of other cases where heritage trains are operated seasonally on conventional railways.

Why conserve rural railways ?

Several major reasons can be put forward :

- (1) They have intrinsic heritage value and significance at national, regional and local levels. They are tangible examples of the nineteenth and early twentieth century history of rural life and society in Japan and elsewhere, a period of rapid and significant change.
- (2) They consist of numerous historic buildings, bridges, earthworks and rights of way, many of which would be lost if the railways were closed.
- (3) They are of great value for all those people who cannot drive or do not have the use of a car. They include young people, typically under the age of c. 20 years, and the world's growing elderly population who no longer drive or have the use of a car. This has special relevance to Japan. In 2015, the percentage of the population 65 and older in Japan was 26.7%, exceeding that of the U. S. (14.8%), France (19.1%), Sweden (19.9%), and Italy (22.4%), indicating that the aging of society in Japan is progressing rapidly (Statistics Japan, 2016). UK newspapers and the BBC report that Japan's Health and Welfare Ministry has estimated that over-65s could account for 40% of the population by 2060.
- (4) Rural railways have strong social importance. They offer a sense of travel security, even if they are little used, especially in remote regions (Lane, 1964). In addition some heritage railway business models (see below) offer many opportunities for volunteering, especially for older people. Research shows that there are considerable health benefits from volunteering (Lum & Lightfoot, 2005 ; Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development, 2007).
- (5) Heritage Railways can inject part and full time paid jobs into communities,

as well as bringing indirect benefits from tourist spending. A recent report on the social and economic value of heritage railways by the British All Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail, published in 2013, showed that heritage railways had a gross national value to the UK in excess of £248 million in 2011, employed 3,700 paid staff, and had over 18,000 volunteers. The report concluded that the railways were successful without significant direct public subsidy, and a valuable part of the UK tourist industry.

- (6) Local examples show the value of individual railways in detail and record other benefits such as offering skills training in many forms (Lane, Weston, Davies, Kastenholz, Lima, & Majewski, 2013).
- (7) They offer opportunities for car free tourism, reducing car created pollution, and potential benefits in slowing the trend towards climate change (Scott, Hall & Gössling, 2016) and assisting behavioural change in tourist habits.

And, as will be shown below, they can, in partnership with tourism stakeholders, create effective synergies towards creating a new type of sustainable tourism destination, the slow tourism corridor or region.

What is the case for bringing tourism and railways together ?

There are three overarching reasons :

- (1) Because each would benefit from working together.
- (2) Because together they can produce a valuable new form of tourism, and assist both heritage conservation and local economies.
- (3) Because the rural tourism market is, like rural heritage railways, firmly based on heritage of many kinds, not least on a form of escapism from the threats of the present and the future.

The railway can become more than a transport system : it can become a tourism product, and an experience in its own right. It can also become a tool for sustainable development. The built and cultural heritage of the railway can be both conserved and its secrets unlocked. The future of many relatively unviable railway lines can be secured. Those processes can conserve the financial, cultural and built heritage value of the railway's capital.

Tourism can become a stronger tool for local and global conservation, reducing its fuel burn and its emissions by encouraging railway use, and associated walking and cycling. It can help tourism's transformational qualities (Wolf, Ainsworth & Crowley, 2017), transforming the lives of tourists using tourism that encourages physical movement, and mental activity. It can display social responsibilities for communities and for all those who rely on public transport, because of age, economics, or preference. We can move towards a more thoughtful, slowly savoured tourism experience, shown to be especially attractive to a growing range of niche markets.

But how can all these good things be gained ?

The Partnership Concept

One of the key concepts in sustainable tourism is that of partnership development and working (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). The concept has been shown to be valuable in political, economic, and environmental terms. Its pros and cons are well known, as are partnership creation and management techniques. The idea of partnerships between railways of all types, tourism management, and heritage management is, however, virtually unknown. That point was made very clearly in a recent report to the European parliament on Industrial Heritage and Agri/Rural Tourism (Lane, Weston, Davies, Kastenholz, Lima & Majewski, 2013).

Using a partnership approach for product development, for developing market

knowledge, for marketing and especially for branding and lobbying can be very effective (for a transport-tourism partnership review, see Stanford & Guiver, 2016 and Scuttari, Volger & Pechlaner, 2016). The need for railways, whether conventional or volunteer led, to develop stronger knowledge of their markets and marketing, is especially important : tourism has always been relatively marketing-led, while railways tend to be led by people skilled in railway operation. The need for skills in marketing is especially great because marketing technologies and methods have changed rapidly in recent years (Gössling, 2017). Printed leaflets are no longer enough.

One of the most important aspects of partnership development from the railways point of view is that it can help railways gain access to regional development, and heritage conservation, funding. For tourism related businesses and agencies, it brings the prospect of a unique selling point for their destination, new forms of product, and entry into the increasingly fashionable realms of slow tourism, sustainable tourism, and heritage tourism.

Why should railway/tourism partnerships be developed ?

- A partnership brings all partners together to learn about the issues that the others members face, increasing understanding, examining opportunities for product development and marketing, and building positive business and operational links.
- Partnerships can help devise answers to both railway and tourism problems.
- They allow joint and cost effective research to provide market information, branding, creating unique selling points, and can create new niche market products helping both tourism and transport providers, while sharing marketing costs. They are useful for both political lobbying and generating local goodwill.

- They can allow the private and the not-for-profit sector to create new and productive relationships with the public sector, locally and regionally, and vice versa.
- They can be used to encourage links with similar partnerships in other parts of one country, and in other countries, spreading ideas, creating learning networks and, importantly, gaining media attention and coverage

What specific techniques could a rural rail/tourism partnership develop ?

There are two types of techniques : simple “one-off” practises, typically railway based, which can be used alone, or in partnership contexts, and secondly, the more complex, innovative and potentially more rewarding creation of slow tourism/heritage tourism/slow travel destinations in the form of rail corridors or regions.

One-off Practices : a sample

- (1) Brand naming rail lines
- (2) Signing and marketing self guided walks based on intermediate stations
- (3) Signing and marketing guided walks based on intermediate stations
- (4) Starting a “Friends of the Line” group, to lobby for the railway, to assist on festival/gala days, to act as on-train and at station hosts.
- (5) Setting up “Adopt-a Station” schemes to clean, paint, improve and care for stations.
- (6) Encourage the use of station buildings for office development, café/retail use, and as community hubs. Automation of many station tasks and activities has led to redundant space being available. Retaining that space in “public” use retains the perceived importance of the railway, attracts income and has marketing potential.

- (7) Creating rail based festivals/gala days to boost visitation and ridership in low and shoulder seasons.
- (8) Running Music Trains
- (9) Rail/Ale Trails to Inns etc
- (10) Links between accommodation providers – in marketing terms – and in offering passenger/luggage pick-ups at stations.
- (11) Setting up rail partnerships involving local governments along the line, to improve marketing, signage, and local knowledge of the railway.
- (12) Developing on train landscape/local history interpretation, by print publication, by loudspeaker, by QR codes or using Mobile Phone Apps. Amtrak's experience here, following work by Susan Scott of Texas A&M University, and James Miculka of the US National Park Service is instructive. (Amtrak Rails and Trails/ US National Park Service, no date)
- (13) Special Rover and other Ticket offers
- (14) Celebrity Endorsement

The above ideas can typically applied to any railway, and, where applicable, to any trains on any railway. Many do not need cooperation with tourism stakeholders, but most would benefit from cooperation.

Business Models for Heritage Railways

There are two basic business models for heritage railways (Lane, 2016), both of which are applicable in Japan, but on Shikoku, the first of those cited below is almost certainly the one most suitable at this stage.

The Conventional Community Railway

Conventional forms of either private or public ownership normally apply to

these railways. Economic viability remains their central goal, but they encourage and involve a range of non-railway stakeholders, including local communities, local governments, protected area managements, local tourism groups, national countryside agencies, and sometimes rail traveller groups, in management discussions, and to assist in some management and other tasks. This broadening of management inputs allows the concepts of sustainable rural tourism to be developed using partnership techniques (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). It reflects a growing interest in localism generally, and especially localism in railway transport (Chapman, 2015). It also reflects a new enlightenment and opportunism across railway managements. Most conventional community railways have an interest in rural tourism; all also serve non-recreational passengers, going about their everyday lives. That sets them apart from the volunteer operated heritage railways discussed below, which only rarely run regular services for people other than tourists.

In the UK, the development of community linked rural railways dates back to the mid 1980s, with its origins shared between the Settle and Carlisle railway, a 72 mile long rural trunk railway through a remote, sparsely populated upland part of northern England, (The Settle-Carlisle Partnership, 2012; The Settle-Carlisle Railway, 2015) and a group of six short rural branch lines in the south-western counties in Devon and Cornwall (Charlton, 1998).

Both of the above pioneered rural railway partnerships that brought other stakeholders into partnership with train operators because of fears of total railway closure. Railways are very public forms of heritage and the prospect of closure, the need to act to “save” heritage, can galvanise non-railway stakeholders, including communities and local politicians, into action much more powerfully than the prospect of sustainable development. Both of the partnerships above have evolved into rail partnerships with extensive community links. And both have used volunteers extensively to assist their work.

Heritage Railways

Heritage Railways are a modern invention. Unknown until c.post-1950, they have become very popular tourist attractions, and post retirement hobby/volunteering opportunities for many skilled people. Their largely volunteer labour forces mean that they rarely operate services outside the holiday seasons – typically Easter until late October, plus Christmas season Santa Specials. Few can, or do, provide services for local passengers on everyday journeys. They are typically owned by groups of rail enthusiasts, many of whom live far from their railways, and usually those groups own the railways because conventional private or public sector railways have failed to be economically viable, even with public subsidies.

As with conventional railways, considerable amounts of money come from passenger fares. But in recent years, many heritage railways have evolved new ways to raise capital, and to raise operational revenues. Membership fees, from the railway enthusiasts who own the heritage railway, maintain advanced cash flow. Share issues are now common place, with free rides offered, or other benefits, as an alternative to dividends. Heritage and other agencies fund conservation and other capital works. Sponsorship by companies, community groups and by physical challenge events takes place. Learn to drive courses are popular. Hiring out trains, and stations, to film and TV companies is common. Retailing and catering raise further cash, as does on station/train advertising.

While most conventional community partnership railways operate modern diesel trains, with some steam traction for festivals or high tourism seasons, heritage railways operate either largely historic steam locomotives, or a mix of steam and diesel motive power. Heritage railways are typically slow. Slow travel is marketed as a positive feature, increasing landscape viewing opportunities,

lengthening the heritage travel experience.

The Slow Tourism Corridor concept

This idea brings together market trends and globally developing concepts to make a railway's weakness (it can be slow, and it is a fixed, perhaps old fashioned, asset) into a strength. The concept of slow tourism is a spin off from the slow food movement, and the concept of slow cities (Hall, 2006 ; Nilsson, Svård, Widarsson & Wirell, 2011 ; Fullagar, Markwell & Wilson, 2012). It has been characterised as being: "about slowing down, travelling shorter distances and enriching the travel experience both en route to, and at, the destination. There is also a potential environmental gain from slow travel" (Lumsdon & McGrath, 2011, p.266). It helps the quest for "carbon-neutral tourism" (see Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010).

In practise, a slow tourism corridor would typically be based on leisure walking routes from stations along a railway, through rural landscapes, stopping off at villages and towns en route. Research shows leisure walking to be a growing activity, with health benefits, and active media attention. Exmoor National Park research in the UK shows that walking is one of the most popular activities undertaken by visitors, with 78% undertaking walks of up to two hours duration, and 39% taking walks of longer than two hours. (Exmoor National Park, 2011-6) At least two walking routes from each station would be devised in most cases, with a local short walk, a longer circular walk of c.2 hours duration, plus in some cases a route between stations. (Countryside Commission, 1985). These would take into account the experience of the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership (<http://greatscenicrailways.co.uk/>), and the Heart of Wessex Line (<http://www.heartofwessex.org.uk/> ..

Exmoor National Park research also shows that 41% of all visitors are

interested in heritage. Interest in heritage is growing. Interpretation facilities – written, audio and by smart phone would be developed for corridor/regional heritage features, as would information on retail opportunities, overnight stays, food and beverage availability and, of great importance, bus, as well as train, connections.

The slow tourism corridor concept can also include cycling routes. Leisure cycling is a growing activity. There is considerable expertise available on cycle route planning, development and management (see www.sustrans.org.uk ; http://www.viasverdes.com/en/about_us.asp ; www.railstotrails.org). Equally, the slow tourism corridor concept is especially valid for a further growing market area : the rapidly rising number of over 60s visitors who seek less strenuous walking and recreational possibilities (see Wolf, Stricker & Hagenloh, 2015).

Finally, slow tourism corridors and regions can be a useful planning device to steer visitors away from areas experiencing pressure from visitor numbers, and equally can be used to attract visitors to communities and areas which need additional customers to retain their shops, pubs, bus and train services – and help to support local accommodation providers. The Slow Tourism region is based on the Canadian concept of Heritage Regions (see Brown, 1996).

Few formal agreements and partnerships on slow travel corridors are in place, although several are under discussion.

Could Shikoku create and maintain Slow Tourism Corridors ?

Shikoku has many opportunities to create useful slow tourism corridors. It has at least six suitable railways :

The Shikoku Railway Company, part of Japan Railways, has the major circular railway linking all the lines below, plus others, and is very aware of its tourism strengths (<http://www.jr-shikoku.co.jp/global/en/>).

The Iyo Railway Co.Ltd.has several potential but short lines (<http://www.>

iyotetsu.co.jp/rosen/map/routemap/routemap_rail.pdf).

The Tosaden Kotsu has both buses and electric tram routes (<http://www.tosaden.co.jp/>).

The Tosa Kuroshio Railway Co., Ltd. has services through outstanding scenery (http://www.tosakuro.co.jp/tosakuro/top_E.html).

The Asa Kaigan Railway is only 8.5 kms long, but appears to have niche market rural tourism potential (<http://www.asatetu.com/>).

The Takamatsu-Kotohira Railway is what would be termed in the USA an inter-urban electric tramway, but runs through areas with strong tourism potential, and has valuable historic trams (<http://www.kotoden.co.jp>).

Tourism

The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) promotes Shikoku as a place for pilgrimage, but also notes its scenic and cycling opportunities. Those latter activities would fit well with the Slow Tourism Corridor/Region concept. The island's population (c. 4 millions) would be enough to launch the idea, with visitor flows likely to increase if well marketed. JNTO may be interested in helping to establish a prototype slow tourism area, which could then be used in other parts of Japan. The Japan Times reported in 2016 that several rural railways in Hokkaido had financial difficulties because of low passenger numbers. (<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/11/19/business/jr-hokkaido-says-cant-maintain-half-railways/#.WWy5Rojyvcv>). It is unlikely that Hokkaido is alone in that problem.

The role of Universities

Shikoku has a number of Universities. A recent paper, Higuchi and Yamanaka (2017), has highlighted the importance and the ground rules for University researchers working closely with the tourism – and other – industries, with special

relevance to Japan. There are many ways that Shikoku's railways could work with Universities to devise and implement Slow Tourism Corridors :

- Market research : see Dallen, 2007 for a relevant example. Typically market knowledge and marketing is not a railway strength. See Font and McCabe (2017).
- Working with Communities : University staff can be very effective in working with communities to create self help groups in rural tourism development. See Idziak, Majewski. & Zmyślony (2015).
- Networking : Many University staff working in community development, rural tourism and heritage are in personal touch with leaders in the field worldwide, and can supply new ideas, and a huge network of contacts. For example, a recent book on Railway Heritage and Tourism (Conlin & Bird, 2014) had 29 contributing authors who had worked on heritage railways.
- Brokering and Facilitating : University staff can prove to be excellent brokers between stakeholders in tourism, government and railway stakeholders. They also have neutral premises in which to hold meetings. Two major rural railway partnerships in the UK were devised, developed and maintained by Universities (Austin, 2014).

Conclusion

Rural Tourism and Rural Railways are innovative fields of study for many Universities, offering profitable innovative ideas for many communities and railway companies, and valuable support for countryside conservation and planning. Japan could be poised to learn from others in this field ; Shikoku and its Universities could take the lead in carrying out research into markets, marketing, partnership development and governance, helping create best practice over the coming years.

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