

# COTSWOLD EDGE AND SEVERN VALE TOURISM NETWORK

## The Cotswold Edge & Severn Vale Tourism Network

Tourism in Gloucestershire is worth an estimated £1 billion annually to the local economy and attracts in excess of 16 million visitors.

Established in 2016 in response to the growing need to provide a focus for all tourism related organisations in the area, create a specific marketable tourism product to support and reach new markets and broaden the range of opportunities for tourist businesses to attract more visitors to the area and extend the visitor season, the Network now has over 50 members.

### Who are we?

Membership is open to any organisation with a role in developing or promoting tourism including local businesses, local councils and individuals involved in running, supporting, training and marketing the tourism offering.



Dursley Town Council kindly provide admin support for the Network.



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## Government Industrial Strategy Tourism Deal

The recently published Industrial Strategy Tourism Deal has created a wave of excitement and anticipation, right across the tourism and visitor economy sector.

What is the Tourism Deal, I hear you ask? In fact, what is the Industrial Strategy? The Strategy was launched by the grandly named Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in November 2017 as a vision to transform the UK economy by building on the “significant economic strengths, improving productivity and making the most of the UK’s untapped potential in innovation, one of Britain’s greatest historic legacies”.

More on the Strategy can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/the-uks-industrial-strategy>

So what is the Tourism Deal? In order to deliver the Strategy, Government proposed the establishment of a raft of partnerships between themselves and the industries, on sector – specific issues to create significant opportunities to boost productivity, employment, innovation and skills.

Tourism is the latest of the industrial sector deals to be published.

The full text of the Tourism Sector Deal is at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tourism-sector-deal>

So, what does it mean for us? When we began to develop our own Tourism Strategy some 3 years ago, our biggest challenge was the fragmented nature of tourism at every level, from individual businesses right through to the local councils, tourism and destination management bodies and even the national organisations. As a local Network we’ve tried to build partnerships and relationships across all of these diverse interests to gather strength from working together to deliver a better visitor experience.

Surprise, surprise the main thrust of the Tourism Deal is just that. However, there are some important new initiatives including the rollout of two new T level courses to help deliver the hospitality and tourism workers of the future and creation of 5 new pilot “Tourism Zones” to address the “failure of local markets in the visitor economy”.

We’ll be focussing on the detail of the Deal at our next Network Event in September.



Driving Tourism and  
Economic Development

## The Cotswold Edge & Severn Vale

### NEWS UPDATE

## Wotton Walking Festival 2019

The 3rd Wotton Walking Festival was held from 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> May. The walkers enjoyed great weather, with one travelling 100 miles to take part! The walks, which varied in interest, length and difficulty, took place in and around Wotton and the surrounding villages and towns.

The next Festival will take place 15<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

[www.wottonwalkingfestival.com](http://www.wottonwalkingfestival.com)



The Dursley Walking Festival 2019 is taking place on 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> October. Details at:

[www.dursleywelcomeswalkers.org](http://www.dursleywelcomeswalkers.org)

## Cotswold Gateway Towns

Wotton and Dursley are set to become Cotswold Gateway Towns. This follows successful bids for inclusion in the Cotswold Gateway Project, which is being coordinated by the Cotswold Conservation Board and funded by the Rural Development Programme for England.

This is great news for our area as there will be a selection of high quality, waymarked, circular walking and cycling routes with which residents and visitors can explore the area.

## New Car Park in Dursley

A new free long stay car park has opened in Dursley, benefitting shoppers and visitors. It is situated on Long Street, on the Cotswold Way.

## The Network Event at Cattle County

Our December Network Meeting last year at Cattle County near Berkeley, was well attended and despite the inclement weather attracted a large number of new and existing Members.

Our focus was to create new partnerships around the area, to enhance and broaden the visitor experience through joined up working. Some exciting ideas were put forward and by introducing businesses to our embryo local hubs, we were able to generate specific and very practical proposals for development during the coming months.

In theory, the local hubs will put you in touch with businesses and other organisations close to your location, to share information, ideas and visitor feedback and critically to offer wider access to those businesses.

We see this informal structure perhaps leading to "local networks" and this will be followed up at the next Network Meeting in September.

## Lobbying

Last year we reported on our invitation to give evidence to Stroud District Council's task and finish group on the future of tourism support. The Group completed its evidence gathering phase and reported to the full council in December 2018.

## Behind the Scenes

The decision to close the only Council funded Visitor Information Centre at the Subscription Rooms in Stroud, was a blow to maintaining, developing and promoting tourism.

Closure was apparently linked to the decision to transfer the running of the Subscription Rooms to Stroud Town Council, saving £500,000.

As a token gesture, in March the Market Towns in the district were given the opportunity to apply for a one off grant payment of £2,000 for the development of tourist information.

In our area Dursley, Berkeley and Wotton-under-Edge have all been awarded the grant payment following successful applications.

Critically, however, the shared tourism officer post at the District has been deleted and the postholders made redundant.

This leaves us with no focal point for tourism at Stroud and uncertainty as to how the District will maintain the website pages and profiles of the towns and villages around the area, which is a key source of information for potential visitors.

We are currently seeking to clarify the situation with the District Council.

## Coordinating & Driving Awareness

From the outset we recognised that a major part of our problem in developing tourism in our area is that we don't promote ourselves very well.

If we are to succeed then we need to make the world out there know that we exist and are ready to do business.

Our Business Strategy recognises that there are countless organisations and individuals involved in the tourism industry and seeks to create channels through which we can work together with others toward common aims.

The uncertainty over the future role of Stroud District Council in driving the tourism and visitor economy locally is of grave concern.

However, Gloucestershire First Local Economic Partnership (GFirst LEP) has now established a Tourism and Visitor Economy Business Group with clear objectives to *ensure Gloucestershire is a vibrant year round destination for visitors of all ages both global and domestic, offering a variety of activities and experiences, so that tourism makes a significant contribution to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the Gloucestershire economy*".



## GFirst LEP Tourism & Visitor Economy Business Group

Whilst the remit of the new Business Group encompasses the whole of the County of Gloucester it was felt that we should be able to represent the interests of our Network Area and we've successfully lobbied for a voice in the Group. Network Chairman, Mike Studden and Stroud District Councillor Gordon Craig, who is also a Member of the Network, represent your interests.

The working model for the Business Group emulates the successful development of strategies for other industrial groups such as manufacturing and education, which focus on bringing together funds and resources from local and central government and funnelling them to key areas to stimulate action.

The last meeting took place in mid June, the first of a number of joint meetings with the Retail and High Street Board. Tourism brings footfall to ailing high streets so there's a natural connection. With the publication of the Tourism Sector Deal and the prospect of bidding for Tourism Zone status, this will become an important partnership.

## Network Projects Profiling Our Area

Right at the outset of the Network, we set out to create profiles for all of the main towns and villages in the area to highlight the many hidden offerings and secret attractions to draw visitors to our local area. We already have a number of these completed and on line (see the 'contacting us' section).

We also established a number of topics that will be used to develop similar data sets of information for future publicity and promotion. These include heritage and history, accommodation, attractions and pursuits and similar fields to attract the unsuspecting visitor and help to plan trips to the area.

There are lots of hidden gems in our area which if judiciously promoted would bring in new visitors and help to establish longer stays through themed breaks and other offers.

## Eating & Drinking Map

Last year the Network Steering Group considered a proposal to support the development of a visitor map of eating and drinking venues in the area for distribution locally.

Since the Network functions without funds and relies on the goodwill of Members for meeting venues and administrative support, it was agreed that it could only be delivered as a self funding project with costs covered by advertising on the map itself.

The map has been designed by a local artist and sales of advertising space have commenced well. A draft has been passed to the printer for mocking up and will soon be ready for print and distribution.

If you are interested in the project the contact is Vicky Jennings [foresters@freeuk.com](mailto:foresters@freeuk.com) 01453 549996 / 07973 890477.

## What's coming up

### Network Meeting Event 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019, 7pm Kingshill House, Dursley

Marketing Gloucester will be attending to give a presentation on their work and Digital Marketing. There will also be information on the new Industrial Strategy and Tourism Deal – how do we benefit? and also Visit England's latest business to business online platform launch. **Don't Miss Out!** Email to book your free place: [deputy@dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:deputy@dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk)

### Contacting us.

Find Network information and documents at: <http://www.dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk/documents.html?tag=tourism>

To join the Network or comment on issues raised ring Dursley Town Council on 01453 547758 or Email: [deputy@dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:deputy@dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk)

## The Cotswold Edge & Severn Vale

## NEWS UPDATE Market Town Grants

Following Stroud District Council's review of the Tourism Service, all of the Market Town Councils in the district were given the opportunity to apply for a one off grant payment of £2000 for the development of tourist information. In our area Dursley, Berkeley and Wotton-under-Edge have all been awarded the grant payment.

## Passenger Information

Gloucestershire County Council is currently looking into installing a real time passenger information system (RTPI) at Cam and Dursley rail station and the May Lane bus station at Dursley.

This news was welcomed by the Cam and Dursley Transportation Group who have been seeking improvements to transport facilities and services in the area.



The group successfully worked with Great Western Rail, Rednock photography students and Councils to get new boards featuring 9 local scenic views which are now on display at the station to welcome visitors.

## Berkeley Heritage Railway

In April 2019 the Vale of Berkeley Railway Project was featured in the Steam Railway magazine, new fund raising activities have also recently been launched. For news see [www.valeofberkeleyrailway.co.uk](http://www.valeofberkeleyrailway.co.uk)

# Marketing on a Budget – Part 1

Behind the setting up of the Cotswold Edge and Severn Vale Tourism Network, some 3 years ago, was the clear understanding that we needed to get out there and set out our stall for the visitors that we rely on to bring in the income. The process of marketing is a thoroughly well grounded industry worth billions globally.

For small businesses, especially in tourism and hospitality, the process can be daunting and the cost of doing it professionally and efficiently can be beyond the capacity of the budget, especially in early years as income is grown.

This short piece aims to set out some of the options, starting with self help and touches on other options for established businesses.



In essence, the first step is identifying our market, getting to potential customers and setting out what you are offering them.

Having decided who we're trying to reach out to, we need to look at the conduits for getting the message out there.

## So how do we try and get that message out?

**Word of mouth** works well for a truly local audience since there's nothing better than recommendations from a satisfied customer, telling the next door neighbor or work colleagues.

However, the visitor business relies much more on footfall from further afield.

Social media has now been accepted as a cheap and effective means of spreading the word. There are however limitations to the accessibility of potential customers and the need to effectively manage the comments that it can generate from users.

**Facebook** is freely open to anyone and in its searchable form, the starting point for reaching out to the masses.

The limitation however, is in the ability of users to see your posting in that they have to be part of your "group" or friend circle. Last year Gordon Craig, one of our Network Members, set up a trial Facebook page with the descriptor Royal Gloucestershire Tourism to demonstrate the process. His first principle was to use a title that would be thrown up widely in searches, hence the "Royal" post script. In its first year the page had thousands of hits from around the UK. Whilst not yet commercial, its been used to highlight events throughout our area.

Another splendid illustration of the power of Facebook is the Berkeley Castle pages and they thrive on the key principle that there's got to be something new to attract viewers which means updating the page daily in season and frequently at other times. Bit of effort required there but well worth the time.

**Instagram** is another social media tool that is free and easy to use. The platform is a visual one so all you have to do is set up a public profile and start by uploading some good photos and searchable hashtags. As with Facebook it needs a regular supply of posts.

It has a worldwide reach and is used daily by 500 million people, 1 billion every month. Ideal for the tourism industry when promoting an area or place to visit. More and more of our local businesses are using it in their marketing tool box e.g. *Cattle Country, Woodchester Valley Vineyards, The Berkeley Tea Rooms, Owlpen Manor.*

Setting up a dedicated **website** for your business is also a very effective means of getting to your potential customers.

There are costs involved and content needs to be kept up to date, but a simple site can grow into something more sophisticated as income increases.

**Hard copy brochures** can also still provide a shop window for your wares but obviously have a much more local distribution in some cases. For example "What's on in Cam, Dursley & District" is distributed free to households in the area by Vale Vision Development Trust Ltd ([www.valevision.org.uk](http://www.valevision.org.uk)) and is published quarterly. A mixture of information and paid advertising, it also appears on the information point at many venues.

Another commercial publication, "The Local Answer" is distributed throughout Gloucestershire, Cheltenham, Cotswolds and Gloucester City and reaches an audience of over 150,000 households. Find out more at [www.TheLocalAnswer.co.uk](http://www.TheLocalAnswer.co.uk)

**Online**, the SoGlos Newsletter is a weekly email offering a mix of events, reviews, news and advertising and goes out weekly to subscribers. Have a look at <https://sopublishing.com/tag/newsletter/>

The websites for some of our local Town and Parish Councils also have useful calendar and 'What's on' pages for local events e.g. <https://www.dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk/local-events.html>

**In the next edition we'll cover Cotswold Tourism and look at niche marketing.**