



# Hidden Britain

...Leading the way in discovering and developing responsible rural tourism

## Tourism Development in Dursley

May 2014

## **Part 1 - Introduction**

This document is designed to provide a guiding framework that Dursley as a destination can draw on to develop and manage its visitor and tourism activities. It provides the starting points, themes, vision and principal understanding of tourism in Dursley, and by doing so aims to identify the priorities for action and elaborate on what needs to be done in the short and medium term to ensure Dursley punches above its weight in terms of tourism. It has been developed by Hidden Britain, in conjunction with local stakeholders.

More specifically this document is intended to enable Dursley to:

1. Develop a common goal and vision
2. Understand the destination and its offer
3. Identify the areas of priority for action
4. Decide on and prioritise potential projects and ideas

A key principle of the approach is that we consider Dursley as greater than the sum of its parts, as a destination rather than a collection of businesses and experiences, and that all the interests should work alongside one another for mutual benefit. By bringing all these strands together we ensure not only a positive visitor experience but also enhance and protect the environment while supporting the interests of the communities and businesses within it. It should be stressed that this approach is not just about marketing. The scope includes developing the local tourism structure, gaining insight into visitors and audiences as well as maintaining and enhancing the experience.

The following pages will not comprise thousands of words describing the process and methodology used to arrive at the recommendations. Instead, it will be a useful, working tool for the businesses and organisations within Dursley.

### **Why do we need to address tourism?**

Simply put, tourism matters. Nationally tourism is worth in the region of £97 billion to the UK economy. It also supports direct jobs, indirect jobs and, in the case of rural areas and market towns, makes a significant contribution to the retention of services, viability of businesses, the conservation of tradition and heritage as well as keeping communities vibrant and enticing places to live and work.

Of course one of the big challenges is that this is a crowded market space and a seat at the table is not guaranteed by any means. There are some big challenges facing the smaller and off the beaten track destinations; visitors are increasingly deluged with choices and options, the larger honeypots shout louder, information is often scarce and the inherent characteristics of villages and market towns mean they all too often offer exactly the same thing.

So what can we do? Fundamentally it's about: having a proactive, coordinated, realistic and well planned approach, understanding your destination and your audiences, and ultimately making it simple for visitors to find you, choose you, experience the best you have, return time and again and, in short, make a difference. And by difference we mean more covers at the restaurants, more people attending local festivals, more footfall on the high street, more people using footpaths and local services, learning about the heritage and experiencing the rural idyll, things that matter to the bottom line.

## The key stages of the process

<b>Understanding</b>	<p>The Destination's context both:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Internally</i> – understanding of importance of tourism to the destination, what the destination is (in terms of physicality as well what it offers), what it wants and needs, who its key stakeholders are; and how their wants and needs interact, past performance and benchmarking, where its strengths and weaknesses lie.</li><li>• <i>Externally</i> – understanding the tourism landscape, wider trends, and issues. Audiences, their needs and expectations.</li></ul>
<b>Partnership</b>	<p>Who is behind the management of the destination? How do the various stakeholders work together?</p>
<b>Agreement</b>	<p>Agreeing the destination offer, the common vision, priorities, objectives and targets.</p>
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Planning and delivering action to achieve the above. This stage takes everything laid out so far and asks "so ...what do we do now?" Each action needs to be aligned to the vision and objectives, and has a specified timescale, budget, success measure and ownership.</p>
<b>Review</b>	<p>How is progress assessed and tracked? When should review take place and by who? How will ongoing partnership engagement work?</p>

## **Setting the scene in Dursley**

Dursley contacted Hidden Britain to come and work with a group of local stakeholders to review Dursley's situation, make recommendations and help Dursley itself to sustainably develop tourism moving forward. To do this Hidden Britain undertook a marketing audit and mystery visit to the town and also led a workshop session with the stakeholders in April 2014, which led to the compilation of this document.

## **Part 2 - Understanding Dursley**

The first step in looking at tourism in Dursley is to answer some key questions to cement our understanding of the destination. Only by doing so with all these answers in mind can we ensure we take forward ideas that will make a difference. To start with, the key questions are:

- 1. What is Dursley?**
- 2. What are Dursley's strengths?**
- 3. What does existing research tell us?**
- 4. What do we want to achieve?**
- 5. Who do we want to attract?**
- 6. Who is our competition?**

The answers to these help us to develop direction, understanding and prioritise areas of work and activity in order to take tourism in Dursley forward.



## What does existing research tell us?

There is limited dedicated visitor research for Dursley and this represents an ongoing priority for the future.

Hidden Britain conducted a mystery visitor study of the town which evaluated the experience on the ground for a visitor.

This study concluded:

- Free long stay car parking which is easy to find and close to the centre of town
- Shopping and catering facilities offered excellent value for money – friendly service at reasonable prices
- Well maintained public spaces with attractive floral displays
- Attractive historic centre around Market Place and St James Church
- Good public amenities with modern library and large leisure pool
  
- Lack of visitor welcome and information at key arrival points (e.g. long stay car parks)
- Lack of interpretation and signage to orientate visitors around/in the town – this would help to join up the visitor offer
- No dedicated TIC. Lack of dedicated Dursley print/visitor information in the library. This and the Heritage Centre are under-exploited assets
- Disconnect between Sainsbury's/Pool focal point and "hidden" town centre offer
- Aspects of the core tourism product (e.g. town hotels) are in need of development
- Limited public toilet provision.



Hidden Britain also conducted an audit of Dursley's external marketing which evaluated the visitor journey prior to a visit. This study concluded:

- Dursley is well represented on search engines. The domain name clearly references the place.
- There are a variety of partner and third party websites which convey a positive, attractive image.
  
- It is not clear which is the "official" visitor website for the town. The existence of multiple sites with related information makes it hard for the visitor to find a comprehensive source.
- There is no clearly articulated, coordinated visitor offer online.
- There is a need for a dedicated visitor page from the Town Council's website/home page.
- The town is currently reliant on a range of third party websites to reach visitors. Often these present Dursley as part of a wider offer, so there is little dedicated focus on the town itself.
- Publications and visitor information is not available to view and download online other than through partner sites.
- There is no social media presence.
- A lack of reciprocal weblinks with local tourism businesses and relevant tourism third party sites.

Overall this evidence points to a lot of positives for Dursley in terms of how visitors perceive the town both before and on arrival. However it also highlights some significant issues that need to be addressed as priorities.

## What are Dursley's weaknesses?

Considering the research has highlighted some issues, the next step is to look critically at Dursley as a destination and being honest with ourselves look at the gaps and weaknesses in provision.

The word cloud here highlights the key weaknesses developed during the stakeholder workshop.

Summarising this we can define Dursley's main weaknesses as:

1. **Information** – TIC, maps and interpretative boards are lacking
2. **Accommodation** – too few rooms in town and no hotel provision
3. **Marketing**
4. **Visitor offer** – some gaps in evening eating, indoor attractions, Heritage Centre opening hours, bike parking, etc.



These weaknesses are useful in highlighting areas for potential action. However some may also be issues or practicalities that cannot be solved easily and need to be taken into account with the way we develop the offer and the things we say to visitors. No weakness should be a barrier to action, they simply inform and direct the course of the action.



## What do we want to achieve?

The next step is to look at what we as Dursley are looking to achieve. Tourism needs to balance our needs with the needs of the market or audience.

The word cloud here highlights the key priorities developed during the stakeholder workshop.

Summarising this we can define Dursley's key priorities as:

1. **Improving the product and visitor offer**
2. **Boosting civic pride**
3. **Enhancing the town's image and reputation**
4. **Generating more business to sustain jobs and income**
5. **Working together to improve coordination**

These priorities will now to a large extent direct the actions we aim to achieve, as each and every one needs to be aligned to help deliver or address these priorities. However we should not forget that our needs must as stated also be balanced by the needs and wants of the visitor, so understanding this needs to be added to the mix.



## Who do we want to attract?

The penultimate step is to look at who we perceive to be our prime audiences. Who are the people Dursley already attracts, who it could appeal to and who will deliver the kind of behaviour to help us meet our priorities.

The word cloud here highlights the key audiences identified during the stakeholder workshop.

Summarising this and applying some additional thinking we can define Dursley's key audiences as:



1. **Outdoor enthusiasts** – walkers on the Cotswold Way and cyclists – singles, couples and groups from near and far
2. **Touring campers and caravaners** – families and older people staying locally
3. **Day visitors** – families and retired people
4. **Staying visitors** – often retired couples and older groups
5. **Visitors with Listers connections** – friends, family and former employees with an interest in heritage, both from this country and overseas.

These audiences represent our assumptions and thinking about who would be interested and who would be the kind of visitors we want. They represent our starting point but further research should be undertaken before solely pursuing these audiences.

## Who is our competition?

We now have a fair picture of Dursley, what its strengths are, where its weaknesses lie, what it aims to achieve through tourism, who it aims to attract and the facts and research that back up some of these assertions. However the analysis so far has focused mostly internally looking at what we think and are or are not doing. To complete the critical look at the destination we need to identify some of the other destinations who function as Dursley's competition.

Competitor analysis allows us to:

- Learn who else is potentially attracting our audiences
- Evaluate our offer and see how we measure up against them
- Review and evaluate the experience and strategies others use to attract and retain those audiences
- Identify potential partners for joined up action

In the case of Dursley we are looking for destinations with the following characteristics:

- Other market towns on the Cotswold Way with a good range of amenities
- Countryside setting which attracts outdoor enthusiasts
- Convenient base for touring around the Cotswolds and surrounding areas
- A distinctive heritage story which requires “discovering”.

This list allows us to identify a range of potential competitors who could be useful to analyse our offer against:

**Chipping Campden**

**Chipping Sodbury**

**Cirencester**

**Nailsworth**

**Winchcombe**

**Malmesbury**

**Tetbury**

**Stroud**

## **Part 3 - Activity**

Based on the work so far we have identified four key priority areas:

### **1. Visitor welcome**

To improve the quality of information and welcome services within the town

### **2. Marketing and promotion**

To improve knowledge of Dursley's visitors and market the town more effectively

### **3. Coordination**

To co-ordinate tourism activity in Dursley effectively so that all stakeholders work together as a destination

### **4. Developing the product**

To improve the range and quality of our visitor offer

These are still broad areas, and further work will need to be done to specify the actions required to deliver these priorities and in turn contribute to the overall needs of Dursley as a destination. Based on the work so far, we have set out some recommendations for action in table 1 below. The detail in the grid is for completion by stakeholders. These actions are not intended to be an exhaustive list; rather they are a starting point to address the main issues under each priority. It is envisaged that this list will change and evolve as Dursley takes tourism forward.

However all activities both those specified now and those developed in the future must:

- Achieve our aims
- Convey our values and strengths
- Mitigate or circumvent any weaknesses or gaps in our offer and product
- Appeal to our target audiences and inspire them to act

<b>TABLE 1: Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Priority (L/M/H)</b>
<b>1.1 Visitor welcome</b>				
Audit existing signs from car parks/main entry points and define priority sites for signage/interpretation panels to improve visitor orientation				
Consider a new archway welcome sign to encourage visitors to the town centre shops from Sainsbury's/swimming pool car park				
Consider new trails/interpretation to encourage wider exploration of the town, e.g. the story of Pedersen and Listers?				
Improve visitor information on existing town noticeboards and around key Council buildings/Market House				
Review opportunities to improve the library's visitor information service				
Review opportunities to extend Heritage Centre opening hours and information service				
Audit current leaflets to identify the main gaps				
Consider an "Explore Dursley" visitor map to attract visitors to see more and stay longer (and can be made available on line)				
Encourage familiarisation trips for local businesses and their staff so they can become confident advocates of the town's key attractions				
Encourage venues to host community events so that local people know what's available for visitors and can become ambassadors for the town				
<b>2.1 Market knowledge</b>				
Compile a product audit of the destination's assets, no. of bedspaces etc. to that everyone in the town knows what Dursley has to offer				
Review existing data and conduct a visitor survey (minimum 200) to improve knowledge of key visitor types, needs and behaviour				
Liaise with businesses to encourage the sharing of data				
Undertake business surveys to benchmark performance/measure success				
<b>2.2 Branding and identity</b>				
Workshop with stakeholders to develop a consistent brand for Dursley				
Develop visual style and identity				
Provide simple guidelines to all stakeholders to encourage them to use the brand and communicate the same message				
<b>2.3 Promotion</b>				
Agree a plan with stakeholders to define priorities for promotional activity – who does what and when				

Action Cont'd...	Timescale	Budget	Who?	Priority (L/M/H)
Build a dedicated "Visit Dursley" site and/or section of the Town Council site to boost the town's profile and to showcase distinctive strengths				
Review Hidden Britain marketing audit findings to improve site contents and build external links with partners				
Consider a visitor mini-guide/map to promote Dursley's highlights				
Improve the availability of web-based pre-arrival information, e.g. social media aimed at visitors and downloadable print (e.g. walks/visitor guide)				
Consider running a social media workshop with local businesses to encourage more dialogue with visitors and repeat visits				
Connect with local businesses to encourage reciprocal weblinks				
Help and encourage local stakeholders to use the Dursley brand, info and images so that they can sell the destination through their sites				
<b>3.1 Coordination</b>				
Review the draft strategy and findings from this report and decide how best to engage all stakeholders to help take it forward				
Consider arranging a further workshop to share the report's findings, identify priorities and get buy-in on how to deliver the action plan				
Set up a tourism steering group to oversee the work programme and lead on co-ordinating activity – the Town Council?				
Work with stakeholders to identify the best financial model to support ongoing activity and appoint project teams as necessary				
<b>3.2 Engaging stakeholders</b>				
Develop an email group, social media channel, or other form of contact to build communication between all interests				
Circulate notes and outcomes from workshop and strategy to all stakeholders to ask for support in the process				
Develop a regular forum for stakeholders to network and interact face-to-face				
Develop relationships with SDC, GCC, Cotswolds Tourism and other key players to encourage joint working				
<b>4.1 Developing the product</b>				
Consider opportunities to improve visitor access to key attractions such as the Heritage Centre, Market House and develop Chantry Centre events				
Consider options to expand existing events and create new ones, e.g. Dursley Walking Festival, Food and Drink Festival				

<b>Action Cont'd...</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Priority (L/M/H)</b>
Implement physical improvements, such as toilet upgrades, litter picks and incentives to smarten up the street scene				
Work with Council partners to prioritise and target the new services and business investment required in the town (e.g. hotel, cinema, museum and facilities for bicycle parking)				
Develop themed packages which tell some of Dursley's distinctive stories (e.g. Pedersen bikes, Listers' heritage) to link attractions and enhance the visitor experience				
Audit local skills to identify training needs and facilitate training in key areas, e.g. web marketing and social media				

### Part 4 - Next Steps

The action plan will enable a lot of progress in developing tourism. However, it contains a lot of actions and potential areas of work. Therefore the following section highlights the key areas which in our opinion need to be addressed as early priorities in order to ensure this approach is effective.

#### Visitor welcome

**Description:** Day visitors and walkers passing through are a key audience for Dursley, so making sure there is adequate information in the town will be essential to encourage people to stay longer and spend more. This means taking forward ideas to improve in-situ information and interpretation. The need to link the Pool/Sainsbury's car park with the town shops through signs, trails and welcome maps is a particular priority. Currently, the town's noticeboards have little to attract the visitor's attention. We would urge you to audit your current provision of signage and interpretation to make it easier for visitors to discover what Dursley has to offer. The heritage centre and library are potentially major assets, but punching well below their weight at present.

#### Product audit

**Description:** To get a full picture of the destination and what it has to offer a product audit of all the potential assets and facilities a visitor would utilise or come into contact with is needed. This includes: accommodation, food, attractions & sights, events & activities, retail & producers, transport, visitor info sources and venues. In addition, this should attempt to catalogue all of the elements of hidden history and points of interest within Dursley. This is effectively a cataloguing exercise but could easily be shared out amongst a group of volunteers.

### Visitor survey

Description: To understand how existing visitors use the town, what motivated them to come, how they behave and their perceptions of it. This is important in testing our assumptions and building solid justification for further action. This is best conducted face-to-face by trained researchers at key visitor points in Dursley, but additional data could be collected online. In any event it is best to seek advice before constructing the survey to ensure it will cover everything that's needed.

### Branding and identity

Description: This involves identifying the key assets, values and benefits Dursley offers, developing a clear differentiating reason for people to come, clearly articulating the brand and developing the core messages, and developing a visual identity. You may already have done work on this, so this is about pulling together all the branding work done so far and compiling the tools necessary to communicate it. If there are experts available locally who can advise and develop these tools then it could be done on a shoestring. However this is a particularly vital piece of the jigsaw so professional help is recommended. This does not mean however that all work done to date and all existing identity work is screwed up and thrown away, rather it means a careful consideration of what exists and what can be rolled forward consistently by all the stakeholders.

### Website

Description: The marketing audit provides some useful pointers as to how the Dursley website can become even more useful to visitors. There is work to be done to improve the content and articulate the highlights of the visitor offer more clearly. There needs to be more interlinking and interaction between other sites visitors will come across locally and there are opportunities to boost visibility by linking to local business sites and Cotswolds Tourism. There are two important gaps to address: the lack of social media activity with visitors and downloadable print.

### Coordination and engaging stakeholders

Description: The actions detailed under these headings are vital to develop a broad base of support and aspiration, with everyone working together for a common goal. Of particular importance is identifying the body that will ultimately lead and coordinate the overall approach. Whichever body is chosen, the decision should be taken as soon as possible and communicated widely. It is key that this body takes an inclusive approach to tourism in Dursley, engaging all the town's stakeholders. We particularly need to encourage businesses to take an active role so it is not all public sector and volunteers.



## **Part 5 - Conclusion**

This document sets out the basic framework to develop and improve the contribution tourism makes to Dursley. Rather than a radical departure from existing work, it seeks to build on and improve the methods and activities Dursley takes within tourism for the benefit of visitors, residents and business across the Town and its surrounding areas.

Mechanisms for monitoring each of the activities should also be built in, even if that is as simple as logging visitor numbers at events, take up of publications, web stats etc. All go towards helping us to understand the contribution each makes and their individual effectiveness. This does not have to be incredibly elaborate, there just needs to be the question asked for each action “how will we know if this works” and review mechanisms added in.

### **About Hidden Britain**

Hidden Britain is a community-focused, not-for-profit organisation with rural tourism expertise. We help people turn their ideas for developing tourism in their areas into credible projects that promote responsible, sustainable tourism and can really make a difference for the benefit of the whole community. We help create strategies to attract visitors, promote places and experiences, offer social media and other training, help groups to find funding and deliver their tourism projects. In a nutshell, we help people share what they love about where they live for long-term, sustainable financial and social benefit.

### **Contact**

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