

Tourism Network Meeting

4th July 2016

Dr Jenner's House, Museum & Garden, The Chantry,
Church Lane, Berkeley, GL13 9BN

Meeting Notes

Present: Mike Studden (Berkeley Community Trust)
Councillor Symon Ackroyd (Dursley Town Council)
Leah Wellings (Dursley Town Council)
Katharine Majer (Dr Jenner's House, Museum & Garden)
Owen Gower (Dr Jenner's House, Museum & Garden)
Julie Davies (Dursley Library)
Andy Barton (Dursley Heritage Centre)
Chris Cherry (Dursley Welcomes Walkers)
Harri Chiba (Vale of Berkeley Guest House)
Councillor Liz Ashton (Berkeley Town Council)
District Councillor Gordon Craig (Stroud District Council)
Councillor Nick James (Hinton Parish Council)
Heidi Westerlage (Dursley Resident)

Apologies: Councillor Suzi Abraham (Dursley Town Council & Dursley Business Inclusive),
Rose Sutton (Dursley Heritage Centre), John Roberts (Dursley Welcomes
Walkers)

1. Welcome

Mike Studden welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

As above.

3. Introductions

As above.

4. Background & Minutes of the last meeting

Mike Studden, summarised the notes from the last tourism meeting held on 25th April 2016 (circulated with the invitation).

5. Map the geographical area of focus for the group

An amended map of the geographical area of focus for the groups work was given out.

The area identified includes places along the River Severn stretching from Stone to Frampton on Severn/Saul area. It includes Kingswood, Nymphsfield and Eastington (see map for details and area).

The group agreed it was a starting point and that the geographical area of focus could be adapted moving forward and would depend on the areas being interested or not.

District Councillor Craig outlined his interest in the group and his main objective which is to ensure that accurate visitor/tourist numbers are being used to make important financial decisions for the area (etc. highways improvements, pothole priority). At the moment he believed that the numbers were incorrect and large numbers were not being recorded and used effectively. Tourist and visitor attractions like Slimbridge, Cattle Country, the canals and regular concerts in the area e.g. Hamfields Leisure attract large numbers of people; it is very important that this is recorded and recognised in the decision making process at district and county level.

District Councillor Craig recognised that Stroud District Council relies heavily on the Cotswold partnership and that our area was often forgotten; he had asked to be a representative on the Cotswold Tourist Board.

6. Ideas and suggestions for a brand name

The group considered the following ideas and brand names (contained on handout):

- The Southwolds
- The Hidden Cotswolds (area names)
- The Hidden Cotswolds & Vale
- Cotswold Edge & Vale of Berkeley
- Cotswold Edge & Severn Vale
- Cotswold Edge & Vale

Cotswold Edge & Vale was the favourite. It brings the uniqueness of this part of the Cotswolds and its association to the Vale together. 'Cotswold' is internationally recognised, 'Edge' identifies those areas right under the escarpment and 'Vale' highlights the important area between the escarpment and the River Severn.

7. Online presence – a quick look at websites/branding

It was recognised that it was difficult for visitors to find a comprehensive source of official 'visitor' information in one place online; no single site offers all the key information for our area.

Leah gave a brief overview of existing websites and branding used by other areas. The group looked at the following:

- <http://www.cotswolds.com/> (promoted by Stroud District Council)
- <http://www.bourtoninfo.com> ('Venice of the Cotswolds' brand, site produced by members of the local community)
- <http://www.go-stow.co.uk/> (information centre style site for Stow on the Wold)

- <http://www.visitpeakdistrict.com/> (for focus on industrial heritage, good use of photographs)
- <http://www.lewesbandb.co.uk/> (B&B focused)
- <https://www.visitcornwall.com/> (for use of videos/aerial photographs)

Concerns were raised about the high costs associated with using <http://www.cotswolds.com/> smaller places and venues often do not have the budget. It was felt that Stroud District Council's focus was very much on the main Cotswold areas, towns and villages on the edge and in the Vale, which have a lot to offer, were often forgotten.

During the discussion the following questions and points were raised:

- What is our audience? What are they looking for?
- Do we want a one stop shop approach? It should include everything a visitor may want to know.
- We could look at templates – what works in other areas?
- Berkeley Community Trust has £500 to develop a website.
- Look at grants to set up and run websites, funding options, sponsorship.
- We need to consider ongoing maintenance – annual costs, hosting, ongoing funds to keep alive.
- Keeping a website up to date is vital and can be very challenging.
- Event information needs to be current and up to date.
- Who would be responsible for running it?
- How do existing websites manage themselves?
- We would need a clear policy for managing a website.
- Could have different levels – umbrella site?

It was agreed that development of a website requires careful thought and should not be rushed.

Councillor Nick James pointed out that detailed discussion of a website was premature until such time as the coverage and strategy of the network is agreed and the means of funding its set-up and ongoing upkeep is established.

8. Sharing Key information

a) Dr Jenner's House B&B Event

Owen reported on the above event. B&B owners in the area had been invited to visit the museum for free with the purpose of building up local knowledge of the venue so that this could be shared with B&B visitors in the hope that they would then visit the museum.

The numbers on the day were disappointing; many signed up to say that they would be attending but only Harri and Clare from the Vale of Berkeley Guest House did so. No feedback on nonattendance was given.

There are no current plans to run the event again. It was suggested that personal 'face to face' invitations to similar events in the future may help secure numbers.

b) Collating the B&B Accommodation List – Update

It was agreed that a general B&B list for the area would be useful. Dursley Town Council have a basic list which could be built upon (*No responsibility is taken for inclusion or non-inclusion of any entry on the list and no recommendation is implied by inclusion of any entry*).

Leah agreed to attempt to work with other town/parish councils in the area to try and pull a wider B&B list together.

c) Events & Links to Share Information – handout & updates from the floor

Leah circulated a draft list of annual events in the area (attached). The list was an attempt to start to build a picture and awareness of local key events in our geographical area over the year. The knowledge could help areas link up and work together to draw in visitors and keep them in the area for longer. The handout also included existing links to share information.

Harri gave a short introduction to the Vale of Berkeley Guest House events calendar and explained how it could be set up, maintained and used very easily.

It was agreed that other events and relevant information should be sent to Leah for inclusion on the list.

It was suggested that moving forward the group could make connections aboard e.g. Pederson link, America, Sweden (similar walks).

It was noted that Redbull had started to hold extreme events in the area. The 'Redbull Outrow' event took place on the River Severn in July 2014 and again in August 2015. The event has been being built up over the last 2 years and is not advertised widely yet. It is expected to become an annual event.

9. **Moving Forward**

a) Formalising the Group – allocating roles

Those around the table agreed that there was shared interest in continuing to build the group and work together.

Heidi informed the group that Breakheart Quarry were very interested in the group.

Owen expressed concern about the lack of interest from other attractions and how it is vital the group secure interest from other venues and attractions to make it worthwhile. If such interest and engagement was not forthcoming the Jenner Museum would need to take a back seat role.

It was noted that although B&B's and other attractions had expressed interest, this had not resulted in attendance at meetings.

- We need to be clear on the group's role.
- People need to see something of value e.g. get more visitors.
- What do we want them to do?
- How do we capture enthusiasm?
- Work is required on specific areas – B&Bs, Venues, History.
- What are the key outcomes?
- We could use a questionnaire approach or 'face to face' discussions to ascertain levels of interest and get opinions.
- Could we offer a better value option for our area than the Cotswold partnership?
Could some of the district's tourism fund be diverted into a new partnership for our area?

It was agreed that the group would maintain a Steering Committee with current members and would attempt to attract representatives from different groups and interested people. Numbers would not be restricted at this time.

It was agreed that Mike Studden, Berkeley Community Trust, would be the Chair of the group.

b) Actions & Steps to Develop a Strategy

It was agreed that the group need a clear Strategy and Action Plan. Consideration needed to be given to whether it is driven by local authorities, businesses or individuals from the community.

Mike agreed to make a start and draft an outline Strategy and Action Plan which would be emailed out before the next meeting for comments.

It was agreed that members of the group would use their contacts to seek other interested groups and people to get involved.

c) Date & Venue for Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Monday 5th September 2016 6:45pm at Dursley Library.