

# Community Led Tourism Group

**14<sup>th</sup> September 2015**  
**Waterend Farm, Coaley, Glos**

## Meeting Notes

**Present:** Dursley Town Mayor Clare Nelmes (Dursley Town Council)  
Hilary Mann (Waterend Farm B&B, Coaley)  
Richard Mann (Waterend Farm B&B, Coaley)  
Michael Chaplin (Inspirational World & Dursley Traders Group)  
Owen Gower (Jenner Museum)  
Julie Davies (Dursley Library)  
Councillor Liz Ashton (Berkeley Town Council)  
Chris Lambert (Chantry Centre)  
Jackie Pennington (Operations Manager – Berkeley Castle)  
Shirley Wood (Stroud District Council)  
Mayor of Berkeley Mike Studden (Berkeley Town Council)  
Pat (Meadowside B&B)

**Apologies:** Miranda Clifton (Vale Vision & Cam Parish Council)  
Chris Cherry (Vale Vision & Dursley Welcomes Walkers)  
Andy Barton (Dursley Heritage)  
Councillor Fiona Firth (Dursley Town Council)

### 1. Welcome

Dursley Town Mayor, Clare Nelmes, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 2. Apologies

As above.

### 3. Introductions

As above.

### 4. Background

Dursley Town Mayor, Clare Nelmes, summarised the notes from the first tourism meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015; the meeting had been set up by Dursley Town Council in light of the research undertaken by Hidden Britain in 2014.

Chris Lambert gave out an issue and action list compiled from the meeting notes and the Hidden Britain report. It was recognised that tourism activity needs to focus on the surrounding area, not just Dursley.

## 5. Presentation by Shirley Wood, the Regeneration Officer (Tourism) at Stroud District Council

Shirley Wood's presentation gave an overview of tourism work in the area and covered the following:

- Use of the website **Cotswold.com** to promote the Stroud district. 350 members have signed up and the website offers Gold, Silver and Bronze levels of service. Want to encourage use of the website to push it forward.
- **Free** services offered by the Council's Tourism team. They can help to promote events and stories via their links, the website and their Twitter feed (please send your press release/info to them).
- Publications/leaflets available incl. walking guides, 7 day circular cycling guide, attraction and events guide, gardens guide and free downloadable info. The **Visitor Guide** has a 70k distribution list (national and international).
- Work with **Visit England** and **Visit Britain**. They are always putting calls out for stories, attractions and venues; use of the branding has benefits because it is nationally /internationally recognised so you get greater coverage.
- Work with journalists to set up press trips.
- Establishing links with **Creative England** to register properties for use by film crews (*Creative England Contact - Ellie*). The push to get films made in the area.
- The **Cotswold Tourism Awards** (e.g. best small/large venue, best B&B).

Shirley explained that they are trying to encourage everyone to work together and use the links, existing branding and the contacts available. The more the team know about local activities, the more they can help with promotion and marketing.

### Ideas/responses from the floor:

- Maps for local areas – cafes etc.
- Work together to create packages that can keep people in the area for longer – whole weekend.
- Publicise the fact that we are ideally located for large attractions in the surrounding area.
- Link with **Destination Bristol** and tour operators for cruise ships docking at Bristol.
- **Berkeley Castle** are keen to link up with more pubs and B&Bs; being able to suggest places to eat and stay helps them to promote the Castle as a wedding venue.
- The **Dursley Welcomes Walkers** group is establishing new national and international walking links. The group recently hosted a visit from a small group of people from Japan and have set up a similar visit with a group from Sweden. (22/9/15).
- Cycling and walking links could be established with B&Bs and Pubs (places to stop on route).
- **Dursley Library** are keen to hold/give out leaflets.
- How can we connect with pubs and restaurants? Links are often difficult to establish. It may be better to visit them individually to make the initial contact.

- Social media is a good promotion tool. Having an awareness of how quickly bad stories can circulate and impact on the reputation of an area is important.
- Could set up a small B&B/accommodation group for our area. Jackie Pennington offered to host a B&B/accommodation provider meeting at Berkeley Castle.
- Some B&Bs are keen to have a local group which links to local attractions.
- Venues that could be part of package/s? Slimbridge WWT, Cattle Country, Berkeley Castle, Woodchester Mansion, Westonbirt, Purton Hulks.
- Tourism can be complex because of the different stakeholders involved, we need to try and make this simple. From grass roots up. Could have number of different topic groups? Private business and Councils have different parts to play.
- There is a perception that 'the Cotswolds' doesn't include 'the Vale'. This needs to be overcome. Visitors see the Cotswolds as being hills, 'the Vale' needs to be promoted.
- TIC information has no single focus in Dursley (info available in Town Council office, Library, Pool and Heritage Centre), Berkeley also needs to signpost TIC services.
- Concerns raised about TIC booking fees. 10% is considered excessive for small businesses; B&Bs are not always keen to take bookings because of this.

## 6. Grant Funding Opportunities for Tourism projects

The following GFirst call for applications were discussed:

- **11RD15TO001** to support investments in visitor attractions, tourism information and recreational and small scale infrastructure, and
- **11RD15TO0002** to support investments in new and existing rural micro and small businesses in the tourism sector.

*(deadlines for submissions 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015)*

Shirley Wood had mentioned earlier that Westley Farm, Stroud, are currently looking at ideas for a bid including the creation of a natural pond swimming pool.

Berkeley Mayor, Mike Studden, made the group aware of a submission being made by a business led tourism group in Berkeley. They are currently looking at ideas for the submission e.g. signage improvements and creating a brand for the Berkeley Vale area, development of a visitor centre, electronic guided walks and tours.

The value of 'working together where possible' was recognised. It was felt that Dursley and Berkeley could talk about the grant funding and investigate whether it would be possible to work together on a joint bid for funding to support investments in visitor attractions, tourism information and recreational and small scale infrastructure (**11RD15TO0001**); the deadline for submissions is very tight.

## 7. Ideas from the floor (also see 5 above)

- Signage needs to be improved (incl. motorway signs).
- Packages that offer people a break in their journey.
- Walking packages.
- Links to the Great Outdoors webpage, phone and walking apps.
- What is our Unique Selling Point? Heritage, Industrial Archaeology – mills, canals etc.? Original thinking.
- How can we capitalise on our rich history e.g. Edward Jenner?
- Training in tourism, customer care for local pubs, restaurants, B&B etc. – to ensure high standards in our area.
- Local discount and incentive packages and schemes e.g. use of gift vouchers for B&B stays. Berkeley Castle interested, B&B group to look at. Create suitable scheme/packages together, set standards and control locally. It was felt that Groupon devalues a brand as people don't want to spend more.
- Set up a B&B and local attractions group, establish a link with Shirley Wood (Stroud District Council).

## 8. Moving forward

The following points/actions were agreed:

- Hold Community Led Tourism Group meetings every 6 months to network and share information. Dursley Town Council to facilitate the meetings (invitations and notetaking).
- The geographical area of focus: Dursley area and surrounding Vale area.
- Dursley Town Council to discuss Gfirst grant opportunity **11RD15TO0001** with Berkeley. Future tourism improvements may be possible with or without grant funding (grant updates/correspondence can be emailed to the group as a network)
- Hold first B&B group meeting at Berkeley Castle. Hilary Mann, Waterend Farm, to organise.