

**Tourism Network Meeting**  
**5<sup>th</sup> September 2016**  
**The Library, May Lane, Dursley**

**Meeting Notes**

**Present:** Mike Studden (Berkeley Community Trust)  
Councillor Symon Ackroyd (Dursley Town Council)  
Leah Wellings (Dursley Town Council)  
Owen Gower (Dr Jenner's House, Museum & Garden)  
Julie Davies (Dursley Library)  
Rose Sutton (Dursley Heritage Centre)  
John Roberts (Dursley Welcomes Walkers)  
Councillor Liz Ashton (Berkeley Town Council)  
Councillor Nick James (Hinton Parish Council)  
Heidi Westerlage (Dursley Resident)  
Ray Pekala (Breakheart Community Project)  
Melanie Mann (Shearings Group Prince of Wales Hotel)  
Councillor Jerry Fowler (Ham Fallow Parish Council)  
Nicky Warren (Wild Goose Lodge Slimbridge)  
Jeff Walshe (Wotton Heritage/Visitor Centre)  
Janet Walshe (Wotton Heritage/Visitor Centre)  
Jackie Pennington (Berkeley Castle)

**Apologies:** Councillor Suzi Abraham (Dursley Town Council & Dursley Business Inclusive),  
Andy Barton (Dursley Heritage Centre)

**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 4<sup>th</sup> July 2016 (circulated with the invitation). A correction was made to item 8 c), 'aboard' was changed to 'abroad'.

John Roberts sought clarification regarding District Councillor Craig's comments on 'the Cotswold partnership' under item 5; it was noted that 'the Cotswold partnership' is an organisation providing business advice and if Councillor Craig was making reference to 'the Cotswold Tourism Partnership' it should be changed for the benefit of the minutes. This would be checked and changed if necessary.

**5. The Draft Strategy**

It was noted that at the July meeting Mike had agreed to make a start and draft an outline Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for the group to consider before the September meeting. Mike apologised for not having a draft ready for comments at this meeting due to other commitment time constraints.

**Action:** It was agreed that Mike would endeavour to circulate a draft strategy for comment in the next 2 weeks and that a network meeting would be held in October to discuss the document as a group.

## **6. The Brand Name – More Suggestions**

It was noted that at the July meeting those present had liked the name 'Cotswold Edge & Vale'. The group considered this along with further suggestions put forward including 'Dursley Dale & Severn Vale', 'The Severnside Cotswolds' and 'Cotswold Severnside'.

A paper was circulated with Councillor Nick James' suggestion of 'The Severnside Cotswolds' and also comments from Andy Barton regarding his support of 'Cotswold Edge & Vale'.

It was suggested that the group carry out some market testing. It was recognised that whilst choosing a name that had 'local buy-in' was important, the overriding factor is the area's ability to attract visitors in, therefore the view of those outside of the area are very important.

Nicky Warren (Wild Goose Lodge) commented that she had recently relocated from Somerset to Slimbridge and had no idea what the 'Cotswold Edge' meant; she has found that our area has a great deal to offer and she is still making discoveries and passing this information to visitors.

Jeff and Janet Walshe shared the experience of the Wotton-under-Edge Visitor Information Centre. It was noted that 25,000 'Visit Wotton-under Edge' leaflets are distributed across the country to promote the town which has been a very effective strategy; the Centre finds that it often has to convince visitors that the area has lots to do and see even though it's not a typical 'chocolate box' Cotswold location.

The following points were recognised/raised during discussion about the brand name and the area generally:

- Both the Severn Vale and Cotswold areas are geographically large.
- The 'Cotswolds' is important as it already features heavily in tourism.
- We shouldn't be specific on a particular town within the brand name.
- Our area is unique to the rest of the Cotswolds and diverse in its offering.
- Every town is different with its own history.
- The area has a lot to offer in terms of heritage, walks and countryside.
- We have the biggest attractions in Gloucestershire e.g. Berkeley Castle, Cattle Country, Slimbridge WWT - how can we capitalise on this and keep people in the area?
- Pressure should be put on the County Council to provide transport in our area e.g. hop-on hop-off bus service.
- Feedback has shown that visitors to Berkeley Castle often arrive at the Cam and Dursley Rail Station and do not know how to get from the station to the Castle.

The group discussed strategy in general and the use of promotional leaflets. The following points were raised:

- Jeff and Janet Walshe had spoken to Nailsworth TIC about their strategy and reported that Tetbury TIC are also keen to network (Tetbury get masses of visitors looking for places to visit). They had found that the emphasis should very much be on the visitor economy. Wotton-under-Edge promote the pool, cinema and local heritage recognising that shops alone are not enough to bring people in, especially if retail is decreasing in an area. Getting the visitors in supports the local economy and keeps it alive.
- Lack of transport (e.g. to/from Slimbridge) and parking issues in towns (e.g. Wotton-under-Edge and Dursley).

- Visitors to the Wild Goose Lodge often book for 2-3 days, they go to Slimbridge WWT, Gloucester Quays, the Pub and then home; they often have no idea what to do in addition to this and that the area has a lot more to offer and could be enjoyed for longer.
- Leaflets are popular with visitors to the Prince of Wales Hotel. Wild Goose Lodge and Wotton's Visitor Information Centre has also found that visitors like to have one leaflet with everything in; they pick the big leaflets and those with large maps that include everything.
- Having a map of our area with everything on it may be a good promotional tool, it could include vouchers and tokens around the edge e.g. free coffee/discounts.
- Dr Jenner's House, Museum and Garden use the 'Explore Gloucestershire' leaflet to advertise as the cost is reasonable. It was noted that the official 'Cotswolds' tourism leaflets are very expensive to use and are geared more towards the Tewkesbury and Oxford areas.

The group considered the process for market testing brand names.

**Action:** It was agreed that a quick limited sample survey is required with the help of volunteer accommodation providers and venues (*Tudor Caravan Park / Wild Goose Lodge, Wotton under Edge Visitor Information Centre, Berkeley Castle and the Jenner Museum all volunteered at the meeting to help*). Visitors would be asked their opinion about the brand names: The Severnside Cotswolds, Cotswold Edge & Vale and Cotswold Edge & Severn Vale. Mike agreed to work with the above to compile a simple questionnaire. Any other feedback about what attracted them to the area would be welcome.

**Action:** Berkeley Castle and the Dr Jenner's House, Museum and Garden agreed to carry out an online Twitter survey for the brand name.

It was suggested that the name should be short and sharp (people look at the top 2 words) and printed in bright eye catching colours, so that it can be seen quickly and clearly.

## 7. Sharing Key Information

### The Annual Events List

It was noted that at the July meeting members had started to compile a list of annual events in the area. The list attempts 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.

**Action:** Members were reminded to send annual events to Leah for inclusion on the list.

It was suggested that the group undertake a parish by parish inventory to record potential unique selling points relating to an area and what it has to offer for example:

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| • Industrial heritage (e.g. mills, canals, sites) | • Specialist food/drink          |
| • Historic/famous buildings                       | • Anecdotes (historical/current) |
| • Sites of interest/monuments                     | • Pubs                           |
| • Walks/cycling routes                            | • Wildlife                       |

**Action:** It was agreed that a letter would go to relevant Parish and Town Councils, asking them to get involved and use local knowledge to fill in a template providing information under grouped headings (*above*). Suggested timescale - 30 days.

### Wotton- Under-Edge

Jeff and Janet Walshe gave an overview of the Heritage and Visitor Information Centre in Wotton-under-Edge and their experience applying for grant funding.

It was noted that the work of the Heritage Centre, which is run by volunteers, had extended and now incorporates a Visitor Information Centre which provides information to promote the town, its

leisure facilities and retail outlets. The centre makes effective use of technology (incl. iPads) and has found using social media (Facebook and Twitter) very successful in getting information out to people without relying on them to use or find a website.

In the case of grant applications they suggested that framing the case correctly was very important; it should have a clear beginning, middle and end. They had been successful in gaining funding from the Town Council for running costs because they had sold the idea to them by focusing on providing a proactive service that would benefit the town for example, they undertook an audit of all the shops; taking pictures of the flowers and hanging baskets had not only enabled them to promote the attractiveness of the town, it also encouraged shops to get frontages up together. The centre also works closely with the Town Council Regeneration Committee Partnership.

It was noted that the Cinema is commercially run with the help of some paid staff and volunteers.

### Car Parking

It was recognised that parking is an issue in both Dursley and Wotton-under-Edge and seems to be in most places generally.

There is currently a proposed development in Wotton that includes a car park but there is some unhappiness within the community about this.

It was recognised that use of school car parks for visitors during the summer holiday (e.g. Rednock) are generally not an option due to security and insurance issues.

### Breakheart Community Project

Ray Pekala gave an overview of the Breakheart Community Project.

It was noted that the project is a registered charity whose trustees are volunteers drawn from the local community. The project's 55 acre site is open 365 days of the year and is a free recreational and educational area complete with a visitor centre (which advertises all local attractions/venues).

The site can be used for events, as a venue, for active play, walking, bird watching, bike trials, training and more.

The project has parking for 500 cars and attracts visitors from far and wide (incl. London, Oxford and Yorkshire), averaging 150 per day on a weekend. The site is run from donations, the hall on site can be hired for a £35 donation. Advertising is via word of mouth, but they do have a leaflet distributed via Glide Media. The project has been successful in building itself from the roots up to become sustainable.

The project also has a website and uses social media (Facebook). Ray encouraged people to be cautious when using Facebook to promote and share information; one bad piece of publicity can snowball and cause considerable damage.

### B&B Accommodation List

It was agreed at the July meeting that a general B&B list for the area would be useful.

Leah Wellings had agreed to try and pull a wider B&B list together using the basic list Dursley Town Council have (*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*). This work is currently ongoing.

### Other Information

Ray stressed the importance of children and children's activities. The focus should not all be on adults and money. Bournestream the adventure play and picnic area for disabled children, close to Wotton-under-Edge, was mentioned as a fantastic site to visit.

It was recognised that much of the tourism industry focuses on the 'grey pound' as this is a large market; Gloucestershire LEP has a focus on getting foreign tourists to visit the area.

Mike encouraged members to speak up if they felt the Tourism Network group was not making sufficient progress; it is important that it is kept alive and relevant

Concerns were raised about funding and where the money was going to come from to pay for this tourism work. In response the following points were noted:

- Wotton-under-Edge had experience of going for grants and opportunities are available; the cinema took 3 years to open and had been turned down by grant providers initially but learnt from this experience.
- Breakheart Community Project had been able to become self sufficient by working from the roots upwards; at the start of the project they went too big too fast and it didn't work out but they learnt from this experience.
- Berkeley Community Trust, Dr Jenners and Berkeley Castle recently went for a Leader grant opportunity but unfortunately this was unsuccessful.
- The Tourism Strategy could be fed into local council budget setting processes and be shared with potential funders via grant applications.

The group were made aware of the following events:

- Heidi Westerlage made the group aware of the 'Hidden Stroud' event on a Sunday. There may be lots of hidden areas in our area that we could promote.
- The Dads Army Tour, Wotton-under-Edge.

Recent feedback from tourists in relation to the Cotswold Way and Dursley was given out on a handout (supplied by Heidi & Leah).

## **9. Moving Forward**

### **a) Actions & Steps to Develop a Strategy**

As per item 5 above, Mike would endeavour to circulate a draft Tourism Strategy for comment in the next 2 weeks

It was agreed that the October meeting would focus on the draft Tourism Strategy. The group would also decide on the name.

### **b) Date & Venue for Next Meeting**

Jeff and Janet Walshe offered to host a meeting at the Civic Centre, Wotton-under-Edge.

The next meeting was provisionally scheduled to take place on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2016 6:45pm at the Civic Centre, Wotton-under-Edge. Group members can visit the Heritage and Visitor Information Centre at 6pm before the meeting starts.

Melanie Mann also offered to host a future meeting at The Prince of Wales Hotel.