

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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A Summer to Remember?

Undoubtedly the weather this summer was unrivalled and some areas locally reported temperatures in excess of those being experienced in Mediterranean countries. A great opportunity to showcase what we have to offer in this beautiful part of the country!

The annual rush to the sun and foreign parts was reportedly eclipsed by visitors choosing to remain in the UK, bringing a welcome boost to tourism businesses and highlighting the main reason that the UK is no longer the number one choice for family holidays – our normally unpredictable weather.

It was hard not to notice the number of overseas visitors to the local area this year, which is testament to the work being done by the national and regional tourism organisations Visit England, Cotswold Tourism and our own members. Added to that, the weak pound and currency fluctuation have opened doors to new markets.

Looking ahead to 2019 it would be over optimistic to expect a repeat but why not?

The task in hand during the close season this year is to set about building on the working relationships that have been established since we started on the road together, to ensure that we have an attractive offering that can be promoted by our national, regional and local tourist bodies.

What's the problem?

We still need to work together more closely, for example, booking accommodation recently in a small country pub and hotel on the Isle of Wight we were offered the choice of having ferry tickets added to our package for the journey to and from the mainland, all arranged by our host.

Similarly, an inclusive offer of flights and accommodation for a short break in Edinburgh was a breath of fresh air.

We will be exploring ties like these in the coming months and hope you join us for our **Network Meeting and Workshop on 12th December 2018, 7pm at The Barn at Berkeley (Cattle Country).**

*Mike Studden, Chairman
Cotswold Edge & Severn Vale Tourism Network*



Driving
Tourism and
Economic
Development

The Cotswold Edge & Severn Vale

NEWS UPDATE

Cotswold AONB Hare Trail 2018

Our area hosted a total of 17 Cotswold Hares as part of the 2018 trail. Hares were located in Dursley, Wotton-under-Edge, Ozelworth, Berkeley, Slimbridge and Frampton-on-Severn, highlighting some of the fantastic local tourist attractions we have in our area.



Dursley Walking Festival 2018

This successful Festival took place from 3rd October to 7th October and is growing year on year. The Festival featured 37 walks crossing beautiful countryside & woodlands located in Dursley, Cam, Frocester, Uley, Kingscote, Nymphsfield, Woodchester Park, Owlpen Manor Estate, Breadstone, Coaley, Ashen Plains Campsite, Slimbridge Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Wotton-under-Edge and Berkeley.



Dursley Welcomes Walkers worked with many local establishments & venues across our area to put together this fantastic package.

www.dursleywelcomeswalkers.org

Behind the Scenes

The Network hasn't convened since our successful Christmas get together last year at Berkeley Castle. We felt it better to stay out of your way in the build up and run in to the visitor season. However, we haven't been standing still.

Lobbying

An important part of what we do is to provide a strong voice to air the issues which are important to our Members.

Earlier in the year many of you contacted the Network Steering Group to voice concern about Stroud District Council's publication of a **Guide to Stroud and the Five Valleys** which was quite specific geographically to the eastern side of the district. One of the driving factors behind the establishment of the Network was the feeling that there was a lack of such public investment in the Cotswold Edge and Severn Vale.

So, we wrote on your behalf to the Chief Executive of Stroud District, highlighting our organisation and its role in the south western part of the Council's area and seeking to find out why a similar publication had not been canvassed amongst our members.

The response was interesting and to some extent, even encouraging. It would seem that there had been significant demand for a tourist map of Stroud and the Five Valleys, originating from visitors to the Stroud Tourist Information Centre.

The District Council had acted as a catalyst and responded by producing the map on the condition that

outlets in that area would stock and sell it on behalf of the local authority.

The same arrangement was originally offered to ourselves by the then Chief Executive, David Hagg, but this has unfortunately since been withdrawn due to significant changes at Stroud District Council.

The Council has made the Tourism Officers who prepared the Stroud and Five Valleys publication, together with the Council's Economic Development Officer, redundant as part of the workforce plan review of all services.

The Council is in the process of making a 20% reduction in staff to stabilise the Council's finances and news of the loss of the tourism and economic development functions is of great concern to the Network.

The new Chief Executive, Kathy O'Leary, is starting in November and we plan to continue discussions with the Council regarding these changes, the implications and moving forward.

If you have any specific thoughts on the viability of a tourist map for the Cotswold Edge and Severn Vale, don't hesitate to voice your opinion.

Coordinating & driving awareness

Right from the outset we have recognised that a major part of our problem in promoting and 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 we exist and are ready to do business.

Our 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.

We recently attended a meeting of the **Cotswold Tourist Information Centre (TIC) Managers**, through the kind invitation of our colleagues in the Wotton Heritage Centre who also provide tourist information.

The opportunity to introduce our Network and its mission was useful but more relevant was the feedback on TIC issues around the Cotswolds.

The technology age is undoubtedly changing the way in which visitors access information and research the elements of their trip, before leaving home. Hopefully we can now play a part in the group and help to address this key issue.

Earlier in the year we were called to give evidence to a **Task and Finish Group** established by Stroud District Council to examine the arrangements for promotion of tourism. The group is still taking evidence and is planning to publish its conclusions in December.

We also responded to the Council's consultation paper **Valuing our Historic Environment and Assets – A Heritage Strategy for Stroud District**. As well as establishing our identity with the Council we were able to point out the importance of using the Heritage framework to catalogue and promote the historic buildings and assets of the area for promotion and development of tourism industry.



Moving Forward

You might recall 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 locale. We already have a number of these completed and online (see contacts below).

We also established a number of topics that will be used to develop similar data sets of information for 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

We recognise that one of the most important elements of any visitor experience is accessibility of good quality food and drinking establishments.

We are helping to develop a free map and visitor leaflet highlighting key businesses in our area catering for tourists and locals alike, which will be distributed widely through the district in tourist information centres, libraries, council offices, leisure centres, B&B's and most importantly in the restaurants, pubs, shops, eateries and hospitality premises themselves.

If you are interested in the map please get in touch.

Gfirst LEP - Visitor Economy & Tourism Business Group

On 12th November 2018 we will represent the Network at the new Visitor Economy & Tourism Business Group meeting organised by the Gfirst LEP.

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

New Boards at Cam & Dursley Railway

The Cam and Dursley Transportation Group now have new notice boards and frames at the Rail Station entrance and on the platform. The boards will be used to display information about the area and photos. This is great news for our area and for visitors using the Station.

The Network will be working with the group to make suggestions about the information on display and will be putting forward ideas.

We would encourage all businesses in the Cotswold Edge and Severn Vale area to review the travel information they have on their own websites for visitors, to make sure it is appropriate and up to date.

Funding Opportunities

We have yet to hear if any projects in our area have been successful in getting a share of the RDPE Growth Programme and LEADER programme funding. The Growth Programme grants on offer for tourism infrastructure projects, ranged from £35,000 up to £170,000 (applications are now closed).

The Network NEEDS YOU!

We're still short of volunteers to help the Network Steering Group. If you think you could spare a few evenings to help out please get in touch.

What's coming up

Network Meeting & Workshop 12th December 2018, 7pm The Barn at Berkeley (Cattle Country)

The meeting will include an update from Cotswold Tourism Staff to bring members up to date on the promotional work of the wider Cotswolds area and some key 'Discover England' projects.

There will also be an informal Workshop session focusing on how we can work and link together to create packages to boost visitor numbers to our area, in turn supporting our local economies.

Don't Miss Out!

Email to book your free place:
deputy@dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk

The Cotswold Edge & Severn Vale

NEWS UPDATE Changes at Stroud District Council

We are aware of recent changes at Stroud District Council, including the loss of the Tourism Officer positions.

We will continue discussions to find out more about these changes, the implications and moving forward.

Together for Jenner

The team at Dr Jenner's House, Museum and Garden have launched a campaign to save the Museum from closure.

If £20,000 is not raised by March 2019 it will have to shut its doors.

The Museum welcomes over 5000 visitors a year and its closure would be a great loss to the area and our tourism offering.

This is the site of one of the pivotal events in world history.



Anyone who would like to donate can do so via:
jennermuseum.com/together
or by sending a cheque to the museum, payable to The Jenner Trust.

St Augustines Celebrates

On 25th August 2018 St Augustines Farm had a 30th Birthday party. The family run farm attraction has been welcoming families and schools since 1988.