

Tourism Network Meeting

30th January 2017

Meeting Notes

Present: Mike Studden (Berkeley Community Trust)
Councillor Suzi Abraham (Dursley Town Council)
Leah Wellings (Dursley Town Council)
Heidi Westerlage (Dursley Resident)
Helen Patrick (Dursley Resident)
Jeff Walshe (Wotton Heritage/Visitor Centre)
Jill Stubbs (Wotton Heritage/Visitor Centre)
Vicky Parr (Berkeley Resident/Tourism Consultant)
Robert Jewell (St Augustine's Farm, Arlingham)
Elaine Jewell (St Augustine's Farm, Arlingham)
Andy Barton (Dursley Heritage Centre)
Councillor Liz Ashton (Berkeley Town Council)
Councillor Nick James (Hinton Parish Council)
Melanie Mann (Shearings Leisure Group Prince of Wales Hotel)
Harri Chiba (Vale of Berkeley Guest House)
District Councillor Gordon Craig
Michael Quinion (Vale of Berkeley Railway)
Councillor Julie Brindle (Alkington Parish Council/Meadowside B&B)
Councillor Mike Grimshaw (Cam Parish Council)
Vicky Jennings (Foresters B&B)
Jenny Walkley (Cam Parish Council)
Hilary Mann (Waterend Farm)
Jon Harris (Harris Ethical)
Sandy Moller (Harris Ethical)

Apologies: Julie Davies (Dursley Library)
Councillor Symon Ackroyd (Dursley Town Council)
Owen Gower (Dr Jenner's House, Museum & Garden)
District Councillor Ken Tucker (Wotton-Under-Edge)
County Councillor John Cordwell (Wotton-Under-Edge)
Rose Sutton (Dursley Heritage Centre)
Jackie Pennington (Berkeley Castle)
Shirley Wood (Stroud District Council)

Councillor Suzi Abraham chaired the meeting until the Chair, Mike Studden, arrived.

1. Welcome

Councillor Suzi Abraham welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

As above.

3. Introductions

As above.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Suzi Abraham, summarised the notes from the last tourism meeting held on 26th October 2016 (circulated with the invitation).

Under item 5, it was noted that Vicky Parr is a member of the 'Cotswolds Attractions Group' and not the 'Cotswold Visitor Network' as stated in the minutes.

5. Presentation on the Cam and Dursley Station Travel Plan by Sandy Moller (Project Officer) and Jon Harris (Managing Director) of Harris Ethical

The above presentation by Sandy Moller and Jon Harris outlined the Cam and Dursley Station Travel Plan.

The link to the full presentation is:

http://prezi.com/lrxd3yiucvto/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy

During the presentation key observations were highlighted including a 41% rise in patronage figures between 2009 and 2016. Key issues and actions were also outlined including the following:

- Bus and rail timetables are not co-ordinating. It was noted that there are ongoing discussions regarding the bus and rail timetable issues.
- Quality of transport links to and from station to surrounding area is a weakness.
- Finding travel information is in need of improvement - before you get to the station and on arrival (e.g. travel planning, directional signage, locality map/guide and wayfinding to key attractions, what's on).
- Waiting facilities at the station could be improved e.g. wi-fi connection/seating.
- Interventions were needed to improve travel corridors for pedestrians and cyclists to and from the station (e.g. Cam & Dursley Greenway)
- There is a chronic car parking problem; cars park everywhere on the side of the roads as parking provision is limited. This can adversely impact tourist impressions on arrival at station.

The group were made aware of a Thinktravel leaflet called 'Locality Map and Guide'. The guide has been produced for other areas (e.g. Churchdown & Innsworth) and includes information on key shops and services, public transport, walking and cycling, community facilities as well as opening up into a large map. The guide could be produced to cover our area in print and pdf and is just one tool available.

In relation to 'what could be done to support/link with tourism?' it was agreed that the station is a tourist gateway to the local area; there are different stages to address when looking at the links to tourism:

- Is planning the journey itself from start to finish easy for visitors?
- Could awareness/visibility of attractions be improved?
- How do tourists get to attractions from the station, is it easy?
- Experience of arriving at station.

Other points raised during the discussion that followed the presentation included the following:

- There are useful tools that have been produced for the Severnside Community Rail Partnership, Severn Valley Railway and also Devon and Cornwall Rail, these could be copied and tweaked.
- Leaflets could include advertising space.
- Links could be made to useful websites.

- It can be hard to access and find information (e.g. cycle routes). It's nice to be able to display information in guest rooms/give out useful maps and websites.
- There are organisations that plan cycle/walking routes for people or clubs. These organisations could branch out into our area. For example, there's a cycling company in Nailsworth that plan local routes (Black8Bike), there could be others.
- There is a desire to support local businesses, if there is a demand they could step in to meet the need e.g. taxi companies willing to do runs from station.
- Transport relies on infrastructure being in place e.g. buses, trains, routes.

It was noted that the Thinktravel website has a 'my community' section on the website (www.thinktravel.info/my-community). It includes the information in the 'Locality Map and Guide' (see above) which can also be downloaded. This could be built up to cover our area. Raw information can be sent into Gloucestershire County Council for them to upload to the website.

Jon explained that it is hoped that the work being carried out on the Thinktravel project can be continued into the future by a Community Interest Company, this is being explored. The work is currently funded by the Department for Transport via Gloucestershire County Council (GCC). It started in 2011 and runs out in April 2017. GCC are already committed to continuing the Thinktravel website, there is a bid in to continue the Parish Lift project, which is an online car sharing service.

Jon informed the group that some funds are available until April to assist groups like the tourism network to carry out relevant research, it could be site work or technical work. Help could be given to develop a 'quick win' measure e.g. flyer for venues/accommodation for example. **It was suggested that the group might like to consider any research needs e.g. would it be useful to survey key attractions in the area to see what travel information they currently provide for visitors to get a benchmark? (Jon agreed to forward some ideas that the Steering Group could consider).**

Mike Studden chaired the remaining part of the meeting.

6. Updates on the following areas of work:

Appendix 1 was circulated to all those present. The paper outlines contact details for the volunteers who have put themselves forward to help with the Strategy Steering Group, Interest groups and the information template. **Volunteers are still required for the different areas of work.**

a) Draft Tourism Strategy & Steering Group

Appendix 2 was circulated to all those present. The paper was drawn up after the October meeting to help summarise the suggested approach to the Strategy.

Mike explained that the network is taking a planned and structured approach to this work so that improvements are undertaken in a sustainable way; as a result this work would take time. Mike encouraged anyone who had concerns about the approach, direction and timescales to speak to him; there was a desire to avoid frustration and losing momentum.

The list of volunteers to sit on the Strategy Steering Group was noted; **a meeting would be organised to take place in the coming weeks.**

b) Interest Groups (accommodation, heritage, walking & cycling)

Helen Patrick gave an update on accommodation and her work looking at the existing list of providers and the information available.

It was noted that there are Airbnb suppliers in the area which aren't listed; **a volunteer is sought to help with pulling all the information together using a suitable computer package.**

c) Information Template

It was noted that the information template had been circulated for use amongst network members. More work would be done on this and volunteers were sought to help fill it in.

The group discussed what the network was going to do with the information when it had been collated. It was agreed that in the short term the information would give the network a greater idea of the scale and size of the tourism offering in the area and longer term it could be feed into existing mechanisms to sell our area and support future funding projects.

Once the information is gathered and organised it would need to be stitched together to create the brand and potential packages that longer term may make it more viable for us to attract new business or a new bus service, for example.

Julie Brindle from Meadowside B&B shared her own experience in trying to make connections and gather information; there is a lot going on and businesses can support each other but it does take a lot of leg work to pull information together and when seeking help from Stroud District Council it wasn't easy.

Councillor Gordon Craig suggested that we amend the template to include a heading for entertainment venues; the Hamfields Leisure in Berkeley holds regular events that bring in hundreds of visitors (700/800 people).

The www.strollinginstrouddistrict.org link was shared. The website contains lots of local walking routes.

Jon Harris offered to supply information on wider transport and access covering the area – taxi/rail services. Leah agreed to send the map and template to Jon.

d) Funding letter to parishes

It was recognised that the network would require support from parishes and funding for potential projects in the future.

It was agreed that Mike would send a letter to parishes with the aim of letting parishes know that the network exists, that a tourism strategy for the area is being developed by the group, that help and involvement from parishes is requested, that funding opportunities would be sought in the future for tourism work across the area and any support is welcome.

It was agreed that the letter would be sent to the LEP as they may be open to providing some funding.

e) Brand name

It was noted that the brand name had not yet been agreed; members were reminded that the result of the online survey had put Cotswold Edge & Severn Vale on top with Cotswold Edge & Vale a close second, Cotswold Severnside had also been popular.

There was a general feeling that a decision should be made on the name to settle the issue. (Also see agenda item 7 for ongoing discussion regarding issue of name).

It was agreed that the Steering Group/Executive Committee should make a decision and present a final recommendation to the network.

7. Royal Gloucestershire Tourism – Facebook Page

Councillor Gordon Craig outlined the new Facebook page above that he had set up to promote the area. He raised the following points:

- The Berkeley and Slimbridge vale area is the biggest tourism ward in the district. Berkeley is second place to Gloucester Cathedral when it comes to tourism with the Castle, Cattle County and Dr Jenner's House together attracting large numbers.
- Our area needs to strengthen data collection so that people believe us when we say we draw large numbers in!!!
- He has been pushing Stroud District Council since May to focus more on our area.
- The 'Royal Gloucestershire' name was used as a 'hook' to attract a wider audience, and once hooked the focus can be directed to our area which has lots of royal connections e.g. the Castle, royal households, history.
- People all over the world are interested in the royal family and history, there's currently too much focus on the 'Cotswolds'.

Reference was made to the new promotional film showcasing the Stroud District area, to be launched on 7th February 2017. Tickets are still available if interested. Stroud District Council tourism department were urged to call the film 'Stroud District' and not just 'Stroud'.

There was some discussion and difference of opinion over the use of 'Royal Gloucestershire' and not 'Cotswolds' in the Facebook name. The point was made that we could still work with and link into Cotswold Tourism and have our own identity.

Jeff Walshe reported that he had attended a recent meeting in Stroud and the Cotswold Tourism Partnership was ready to work with us whenever we are ready.

Melanie Mann reported that the Prince of Wales Hotel averages 150 people a week and these people come here because of the Cotswolds. They come via organised coach trips and on their own by car. It would be useful to have a 'What's on' for the area.

Julie Brindle reported the need to cater for a variety of people, not everyone wants to visit the 'Cotswolds' many come from all over the world to seek out relatives and explore the historical side of Gloucestershire. Many have individual packages.

Members of the network were encouraged to go to Facebook and have a look at 'Royal Gloucestershire Tourism', the page has posts featuring events, local accommodation providers as well as other information promoting the area. Councillor Craig is happy to share editorial rights, those wanting to put information on should contact him first.

The group discussed the free T-Stats data collection tool and the importance of building up data in our area. **Local tourism related businesses would be encouraged to sign up and use it. Jeff agreed to share the link and T-Stats information with members.**

Councillor Craig reported that Stroud District Council is undertaking a tourism review; a review of the Sub Rooms, which includes the TIC, is currently ongoing. This should be closely watched, depending on the outcome there could be an opportunity for tourism related budgets to be spread out to the wider area in the future (e.g. Dursley, Berkeley, Wotton); areas considering providing TIC services locally should look at what systems could be put in place (e.g. Town Hall acting as TIC) to be ready to attract funding if it becomes available in the future.

8. Date and venue for next meeting

It was agreed that the next Network meeting should take place in April 2017 (not 3rd).

Councillor Liz Ashton offered use of Berkeley Town Hall subject to availability; a Wednesday is preferred to avoid clashes.

Thanks were given to Jon Harris and Sandy Moller for the informative presentation and also to Melanie Mann for hosting the meeting at the Prince of Wales Hotel.

The meeting closed at 20:40.

APPENDIX 1

Tourism Network Meeting - 30th January 2017

Agenda item 6. a), b) & c)

Strategy Steering Group Volunteers:

Mike Studden	Berkeley Community Trust	michael.studden@gmail.com
Owen Gower	Jenner Museum	events@edwardjenner.co.uk
Jeff Walshe	Wotton Under Edge Heritage Centre	jeff@fairmech.freeserve.co.uk
Cllr Nick James	Hinton Parish Council	nick.james1@btinternet.com
John Roberts	Dursley Welcomes Walkers	jsrjsr1000@gmail.com
Cllr Fiona Firth	Dursley Town Council	fiona.firth@dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk

Interest Groups Volunteers:

Heritage:

Andy Barton	Dursley Heritage Centre	dursley@dursleyglos.plus.com
Heidi Westerlage	Dursley Resident	h.westerlage@hotmail.co.uk

Accommodation:

Helen Patrick	Dursley Resident & Airbnb	helenpatrick@hotmail.co.uk

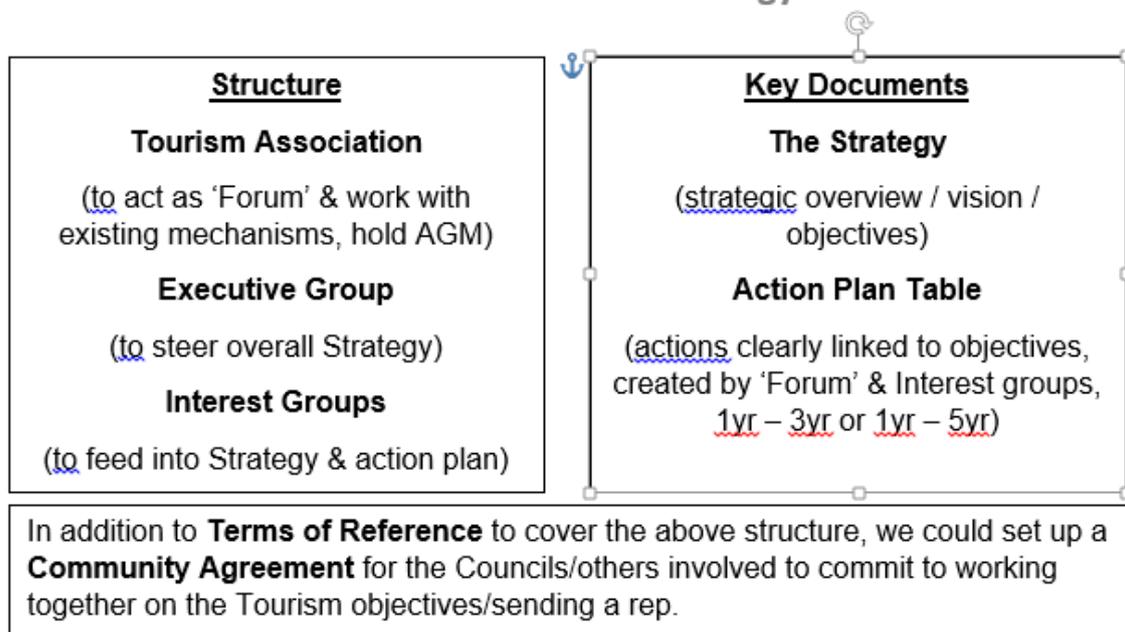
Walking/Cycling:

John Roberts	Dursley Welcomes Walkers	jsrjsr1000@gmail.com

Information Template Volunteers:

Cllr Liz Ashton	For Berkeley/Sharpness area	lizzie.ashton123@btinternet.com

Draft Tourism Strategy



Setting Objectives to allow for Future Funding Opportunities

If our strategic objectives are closely aligned with that of local, district, county, regional and national plans/groups we will be better able to 'sell' what we are doing to potential funders.

