

Tourism Network Meeting 6th July 2017

Meeting Notes

Present: Mike Studden (Berkeley Community Trust)
Leah Wellings (Dursley Town Council)
Heidi Westerlage (Dursley Resident)
Jeff Walshe (Wotton Heritage/Visitor Centre)
Janet Walshe (Wotton Heritage/Visitor Centre)
Councillor Symon Ackroyd (Dursley Town Council)
Robert Jewell (St Augustine's Farm, Arlingham)
Kate Thompson (Cotswold Guided Walks)
Keith Jones (Westend Farm Arlingham)
District Councillor Gordon Craig
Michael Quinion (Vale of Berkeley Railway)
Howard Parker (Vale of Berkeley Railway)
Councillor Mike Grimshaw (Cam Parish Council)
Mark Grimshaw (Indoor/Outdoor Cam)
Vicky Jennings (Foresters B&B)
Jenny Walkley (Cam Parish Council)
Sandy Moller (Harris Ethical)
Mick Thorpe (Dursley Welcomes Walkers)
Councillor Fiona Firth (Dursley Town Council)
Angela Gillingham (Pulse, Dursley)
Isobel Milne (Dursley Resident & Chair of Glos. TIC Managers Meeting)

Apologies: John Roberts (Dursley Welcomes Walkers)
Julie Davies (Dursley Library)
Helen Patrick (Dursley Resident)
Andy Barton (Dursley Heritage Centre)
Owen Gower (Dr Jenner's House, Museum & Garden)
Rose Sutton (Dursley Heritage Centre)
Shirley Wood (Stroud District Council)
Councillor Liz Ashton (Berkeley Town Council)
Sandy Moller/Jon Harris (Harris Ethical)

1. Welcome & Introduction

Mike Studden welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Apologies

As above.

4. Background

Mike briefly outlined background to the network.

Mike emphasised that while the network do not want to get tied up with administration there was recognition that having a written strategy and action plan was essential for getting decision makers, including funders, on board.

The agenda was re-ordered to take the following presentation before the minutes of the last meeting.

5. **Presentation on the Vale of Berkeley Railway by Howard Parker**

Howard Parker from the Vale of Berkeley Railway project gave an interesting and informative presentation.

The link to the full presentation is: <http://www.dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk/uploads/vbr.pdf>

The project has been going for 2 years and offers some exciting opportunities for tourism in the area. Not only will the area have its very own heritage railway, and access to the benefits this can bring, but it also offers the opportunity to link the railway up with the canal and other key local attractions (e.g. marina, WWT and cattle country), improving the local tourism offer. There are also plans to build a substantial and significant museum site dedicated to the railway, canal, maritime and community history of the area. The project already has access to a significant collection of artefacts.

Other key points outlined during the presentation and questions included the following:

- The project aims to bring back steam trains to Sharpness and Berkeley by 2020.
- An ecology survey is nearly complete.
- Lots of help is needed. 1000 volunteer hours are worked every month. Membership is available. Any help is welcomed – big or small. Lots of opportunities to get involved in different ways – heritage, ecology, engineering and general help.
- The project want to work with local schools, the community and colleges.
- The project is exploring opportunities to reconnect rail services from Sharpness and Berkeley with the mainline, the national railway connection is already there. Negotiations are currently taking place with Network Rail and DRS; DRS are being very helpful with the process.
- The line itself is 4.5 miles long. The project aims to rebuild Sharpness, Berkeley and Berkeley Road stations, build a Halt at 'Cattle Country' and by the Severn close to the canal.
- The project is working with someone who already provides a railway support service and has the second best collection of heritage trains in the country.
- The project is looking into whether the project should be a charity, social enterprise or company.
- Heritage Railways are very popular with tourists, the economic benefits to tourism would be significant.
- Projects requiring funding include – signalling, carriages, wagons. Funding applications will be made e.g. Magnox have a socio economic fund.

It was noted that the Sharpness Engine Shed is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays 10.00 - 4.00. People can come along and ask for a tour of the facilities and chat and a cuppa!

**www.Valeofberkeleyrailway.co.uk
valeofberkeleyrailway@gmail.com**

6. **Minutes from the Last Meeting (Jan 2017)**

The minutes of the Tourism Network meeting held on 30th January 2017 were reviewed, no amendments were put forward.

The following matters arising were discussed:

News Update

Mike picked up on the News Update bulletin that had been circulated to network members prior to the July meeting. The bulletin covered updates on Steering Group activities, the parish inventory template, research projects and news from Stroud District Council. It was hoped that the bulletin would become a regular occurrence, to keep everyone up to date.

Stroud Tourism Review

District Councillor Gordon Craig gave an update on the Stroud tourism review process which he had argued for. Stroud have agreed to carry out the review which is looking at whether the district's tourism resource is being spent and targeted where it should be. There was a fear that the tourism focus was moving even further away from our area towards West Oxford.

It was noted that Stroud District Council are undertaking a separate review of the Subscription Rooms which includes the fully funded Tourist Information Centre.

Councillor Craig is chairing the Tourism Review and a first meeting will be held soon, this first meeting will focus on outlining the direction of travel for the review process. The process will look at whether the tourism focus is in right place, if not can we reset it? There are no set ideas and the process is completely open. It is expected that groups/clusters of parish councils would be invited to come in and tell the review team what the problems are, how they can be helped, what could be done, ideas and how the Council might be able to help them. There will be regular updates on this work.

It was noted that the GFirst LEP is charged with increasing business, tourism is a part of this but it is currently under exploited.

It was commented that the Stroud District Council website www.stroud.gov.uk is not very good at all, it has no clear links to tourism/visitor information from the front page. This needs to be addressed.

It was agreed that we need to tell people what the Cotswold Edge and Severn Vale area has – industrial heritage, rich history, great businesses, magnificent views and landscape.

Brand Name

It was accepted that the network would use the name Cotswold Edge and Severn Vale, a review of this would be undertaken in October time.

Parish Information Templates

So far the network has completed templates from Dursley, Cam and Wotton-under-Edge. Areas who have not yet submitted templates need to be approached.

Future of Town Centres

It was noted that Stroud District Council is currently undertaking a consultation exercise which seeks stakeholder engagement in the development of the document 'FUTURE OF TOWN CENTRES, STROUD, NAILSWORTH, STONEHOUSE, DURSLEY AND WOTTON UNDER EDGE', the contact is David Lowin MRTPI. Dursley and Wotton have both had meetings as part of this exercise in recent months. The document will be ready toward the end of the year and there has been some indication that a small pot of money might become available in the near future for suitable town centre projects.

7. The Draft Strategy

The draft strategy had been circulated to Network members before the meeting.

Mike gave an overview of the document and the vision.

It was reiterated that the Network would use the 'Cotswold Edge and Severn Vale' brand name for the time being to see how it goes, a review of this would be undertaken in October time. Concerns were expressed that some local businesses use the 'Cotswold Edge' name so it could be duplication. It was pointed out by Isobel Milne, that in her experience working in the local tourism sector, this could actually be a good thing as it ties in with something already being used locally, it's recognisable, the more using it in the area the better.

The group considered the following questions during the discussion:

Do you agree with the Vision and Objectives?

Do you want to add anything to the SWOT analysis on pages 4&5?

Do you have any ideas about how we can fund the Network in the future?

Do you have any comments about the Structure of the Network or Constitution?

The following points/ideas were put forward for further consideration by the Steering Group:

- The Severn Way should be mentioned it is a strength and opportunity.
- The airport mileage on page 4 is incorrect and needs to be amended.
- There should be more of a focus on the Severn Vale.
- Section 4.3 gives the impression that this document is a discussion document rather than a Strategy. It needs to be clear. It was noted that the document is part strategy, part discussion.
- Not clear how Cotswold area is funded - how much of that should be spent in this area.
- Need to lobby to get right amount of money here.
- Do we need a strategy or do we just need to lobby?
- How much funding is available?
- Cirencester work with Cotswold Tourism, which is being run on membership fees.
- GFirst have no money for tourism. LEP mentions it but doesn't give any money, they don't want to know.
- Money is coming from industries.
- There is money available from RDEA funding – this covers rural areas (Berkeley and Wotton-under-edge are eligible).
- We need to shout a bit louder, make what's there already work for us.
- Page 5 – Links to Chocolate trade via the waterways is an opportunity, Heidi has some information.
- Page 4 – We need a brand identify to sell. A logo should be part of this.
- Stroud Tourism Officers are keen for us to link into and use the 'Undiscovered Cotswold' Brand. They have also suggested we might have a section on their website.
- Could use a pyramid style funding structure which involves local investment from bigger attractions (those with big budgets), helping to support smaller attractions/businesses enabling them to build themselves up and go on to contribute.
- Sponsorship is an option, the money doesn't necessarily have to come from tourism businesses, it could be from successful businesses in the locality e.g. solicitors, estate agents, they are often the ones with money and many have a willingness to invest in the community.
- Attractions and accommodation could work together to offer packages –e.g. tickets part of stay.
- Having packages to market is very important.
- Cotswold Tourism have different levels of membership to fund their activities.

- Don't want to levy businesses. There are economic benefits to tourism, Councils should provide seed funding.
- Nailsworth created an eating and drinking map, it had small adverts around the edges to help fund the development and printing costs, which were around £2500. The leaflets were given to accommodation providers as they are always being asked "where can we eat?"
- A map for the area would be good. Other map ideas included trails and cycles maps which could be available to buy? (some are more successful than others)
- Some companies that produce maps will do everything for you e.g. Blue Guides, it would be interesting to know the costings. It was felt that we could do the work ourselves and retain control of the content. One of the challenges to such leaflets is that companies are not always up to date. Ironbridge have a good map/guide. We could use technology to help us, people now use apps etc.
- Creating a community culture that supports tourism and visitors is important – many areas are without formal visitor information points/centres and visitors often look lost and can often struggle to get information.
- Dursley is currently exploring options for a formal visitor information point.
- QR codes could be used for historical points. We should have information points in all areas across the Cotswold Edge and Severn Vale.
- We have to be clear about what we want on our 'wish list' (action plan), how it can be delivered – help and effort is required to get things up and going.

8. The Action Plan

The draft Action Plan (Appendix 5 of the Strategy) had been circulated to Network members before the meeting.

The group considered the following questions during the discussion:

What do you think about the Action Plan for 2017/18?

Looking at the recent Taxi Feasibility Study Report, which recommendations should be actioned?

Which project/s should we focus on initially?

The following points/ideas were put forward for further consideration by the Steering Group:

- The next stage should be to start to talk to partners, we need to communicate and meet with them.
- Experience of GFirst/LEP is that they like to see a strong driving force, if funds aren't forthcoming from them, they might know of other sources.
- Funders are more open if you use key phrases such as 'regeneration' and 'economy', we shouldn't give up easily when approaching them. If funds aren't available they may be able to give time and focus – taxi feasibility study if just one example of the type of projects we can get without cost to us.
- Creating some packages is important.
- Creating branding, including a logo is important but difficult – we could run a competition to help with this process.
- The word 'Undiscovered' is negative. 'Cotswolds Edge' is not 'Cotswolds'.
- We need some brand values – what the name stands for.
- Having regular newsletter updates is useful.

The group discussed the Taxi Feasibility Study:

- Bainton Bikes operate in some areas e.g. some train stations incl. Kemble, they may be interested in the Cam and Dursley station and our area.

- There could be opportunities to link with buses.
- All the recommendations may be possible.

It was agreed that we should explore all of the recommendations highlighted by the study in the first instance, discussing with relevant people to see what is possible, identify opportunities and which ones we can take forward to fruition.

The group discussed the Locality Guide project:

- It was noted that certain information including adverts and dates can go out of date quickly.
- The guide could have 1 key sponsor?
- Look at having one guide for the whole Cotswold Edge and Severn Vale area, if not possible just start with one part of the area.
- Since the original meeting with Harris Ethical, they had put forward costings for the project (£3000). It was made clear to them that the network does not have the time or funds available to cover this cost. On questioning Harris Ethical have said that, without cost to the network, they could talk to key attractions in the area on our behalf to discuss with them the proposal for a Locality Map to ascertain interest in the project. Attractions would be asked for a set sum to have a panel in the guide which would help to fund design and print. B&B's and other attractions etc. in the area may be interested in a 'line promotion' for a nominal fee (£25).

It was agreed that feedback would be given to Harris Ethical and that they could go ahead and explore this guide based on their proposal.

Tourism Network information is available to view and download at:

<http://www.dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk/cotswold-edge-and-severn-vale-to1.html>

This will be kept as up to date as it can be, until other mechanisms are developed. Network members are encouraged to go on have a look and provide information and support where they can.

9. Review membership of Steering Group & Interest Groups

Those interested in getting involved in the Steering Group and Interest Groups should let Mike or Leah know.

10. Date and venue for the next meeting

It was agreed that the next Network meeting should take place at the end of September 2017. Monday is a good day. The date will be confirmed.

Jenny Walkley, Deputy Parish Clerk at Cam Parish Council, offered use of a suitable venue in Cam, subject to availability.

The Vale of Berkeley Project offered to give a tour on their site should members be interested.

The meeting closed at 21:25.