

Tourism Network Steering Group Meeting

23rd October 2017

Meeting Notes

Present: Mike Studden (Berkeley Community Trust)
Leah Wellings (Dursley Town Council)
Vicky Jennings (Foresters B&B)

Apologies: John Roberts (Dursley Welcomes Walkers)
Owen Gower (Dr Jenner's House, Museum & Garden)
Councillor Fiona Firth (Dursley Town Council)

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting & Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting dated 15th August 2017 were reviewed and accepted.

Leah reported that the Clerks of local Market Town Councils had attended a tourism meeting with the Tourism Officers at Stroud District Council. The meeting had been very useful and much of the feedback given to the officers was similar to the concerns raised by the Network e.g. too much focus on the Cotswolds, need to improve website.

It was noted that the Network's formal response to the Heritage Strategy Consultation had been submitted to Stroud District Council.

Mike reported that he had liaised with Cam Parish Council on the GWR Customer & Communities Improvement Fund Year 3 opportunity; he had undertaken some research into supplier costs for a circular service but unfortunately, from the Networks position, it was just too short notice to get everything together to co-ordinate submit an application. The fund would be monitored for future opportunities.

3. Action Plan Review & Update

The group worked through the Action Plan, **updates to completion dates/comments would be made were relevant and recirculated.**

The main points raised during the discussion are outlined below:

Steering Group -

The Steering Group is struggling with capacity due to low numbers, this should be addressed at the next Network meeting to encourage people to get more involved.

Meetings -

Chairman's letter to parishes is on agenda and will include offer of attendance at meetings.
Update on meeting with Stroud District Council Tourism Task & Finish Group is on the agenda.
Network still need to set up meetings with Cotswold Tourism and LEP.

Mike has booked an appointment with County Councillor Brian Tipper to discuss issues relating to highways/transportation e.g. circular route. It was noted that the County are cash strapped.

Bainton Bikes & Taxi Feasibility Study Recommendations -

Need to get an update on this project and revisit other recommendations.

It was noted that the Transportation group had been given a grant by Dursley Town Council towards a noticeboard at the station.

Parish Information Template -

Many still need to be completed. This work is mentioned in the chairman's letter to parishes.

Interest Groups -

The interest groups have not really taken off as we first envisaged. They may come together when people can see the profile information and make the connections.

Press/Media -

It was suggested that the first release should be catchy to get attention. Members of the group would have a think and careful plans would be put in place.

Social Media (Masterclass)-

Leah had spoken to the Officers at Stroud District Council in an attempt to get a speaker on social media, efforts would continue, the LEP might be able to help. Vicky agreed to approach one of her contacts to see if they could help out.

Eating & Drinking Map idea -

Vicky discussed the possibility of developing an Eating & Drinking Map for the area. The map could include locations, numbers and box adverts.

Vicky would be happy to carry out the research and co-ordination work, having done something similar for another area, but would need to make a charge for doing so, due to the amount of work involved. Costs could be covered by a % of the fee it earns.

It would be good to see an example of what it could look like. It was suggested that the Network would need to consider the idea and make a decision on whether an Eating and Drinking map should be developed/commissioned on behalf of the Network.

Logo -

It was suggested that if the Network is to develop maps and leaflets in the future it needs a logo or some simple way of branding the information so that it can be recognised. This should be brought forward as a project sooner rather than later.

A specification would be required to go out to local designers to come up with ideas. (Dursley NDP went through a similar process to get their logo/branding).

4. Chairman's draft letter

The group considered the latest updated draft letter to be sent to the Clerks of parish/town councils in the area.

John had suggested that the Network invite each council to produce a tourism development plan. This could be a pretty simple outline of stages and priorities and targets. The Network could then assist in bringing some coherence to the several plans and assisting in integrating them into an overall strategy (or invite them to work within our existing one).

It was felt that this might be the next stage down the line and that the priority should be getting initial buy in from parishes and a commitment to work together.

No further amendments were put forward. **It was agreed that the letter should be sent and Mike follow up with a call.**

5. Arrangement for Next Network Meeting

The following points were agreed:

- The next wider Network meeting would take place on Wednesday 13th December 2017 at 6pm (onwards) with mince pies (exact timings TBA)
- The meeting would include the opportunity to network and share information as well as attend master classes. Master class ideas put forward were social media and how to work together and complete the profile information template. Could be some opportunities to look at completed profiles and start to build packages/make connections/maps.
- The meeting could include stalls/picture boards and space for business cards and flyers to be given out.
- Mike agreed to speak with Berkeley Castle to see if they can provide the venue. If not possible the previous venue offer from Cam Parish Council will be taken up.
- Vicky agreed to speak to a contact regarding a social media speaker. Mike agreed to speak with Jackie Pennington about a possible speaker. Leah agreed to speak with the Tourism Officers.
- The networking side of the meeting would be followed by a short business meeting.

6. Autumn Newsletter

Mike agreed to draft the Autumn update newsletter and send to Leah for formatting, including the following:

- Accommodation list now on the web page for information.
- Response to the Heritage Strategy.

7. Feedback from Stroud District Council Tourism Review Group

Mike reported back following his attendance at the Stroud District Council Tourism Review meeting; the Network had been invited to send a rep to share comment and feedback regarding the District Council's tourism activities.

The following points were noted/raised:

- Only 2 District Councillors were present at the meeting on the night due to a clash with another Council meeting.
- The meeting format was held in a select committee style; the group has been tasked with coming up with recommendations for the District Council to consider.
- The review does not include the Stroud TIC service.

- On behalf of the Network Mike shared the main elements of the Tourism Strategy, reported on concerns regarding the District's websites/facebook (*i.e. the main website (www.stroud.gov.uk) is really poor at welcoming and redirecting Visitors/Tourists to information and the Stroud District tourism website (www.visitthecotswolds.org.uk), which itself is very 'Cotswold' focused, while @discoverstroud gives the initial impression it's focused on Stroud town*) and the limitations of only having 1 Tourism Officer position.
- The initial feedback garnered by Mike from the meeting was that the Network was heading in the right direction.
- Notes taken by the group at the meeting would be shared with the Network when ready.
- The review process is expected to conclude at the end of the year.

8. Tourism Infrastructure Funds – Expressions of interest

The group considered the above funding opportunity; the deadline for expressions of interest is 31 January 2018.

The group agreed that the network itself does not have the capacity or constitution at this point to apply for funding as a body, it was recognised however that there are individual network members and other projects that might fit the criteria and be in a position to apply.

It was agreed that the Network would approach the following projects/organisations to encourage them to consider the ideas listed and the funding opportunity on offer, given the potential links and benefits to tourism for the area:

Organisation/group	Ideas/Project
Canal & Rivers Trust	The need for improvements to the Sharpness/Purton end of the canal which the group felt is woefully under-exploited, given its unusual character and suitability for walking, cycling, photography, industrial archaeology etc. A funding application could be made for an info centre/cafe, for example; info trails and routes, bike hire (disabled access?). This would help to redress the balance in terms of offer and activities when compared to the facilities and offerings of the Frampton/ Saul stretch of canal for example.
Cam, Dursley & Uley Greenway	The Cam, Dursley and Uley Greenway Project to link the settlements by way of a safe pedestrian/cycle route, along with the station and in the future, the national cycle route, may fit the criteria as it is new access infrastructure.
Vale of Berkeley Railway	Work to reopen the Sharpness branch line to passengers as a heritage railway tourist attraction and rebuilding some of the key structures that once adorned this historical joint GWR & LMS Severn & Wye Railway has obvious benefits, it links to infrastructure criteria, would be a new attraction, could create jobs and bring in large visitor numbers.
Stinchcombe Hill Trust & Dursley Welcomes Walkers	A path suitable for wheelchairs could be created on Stinchcombe Hill. We believe that Dursley Welcomes Walkers has already given some thought to this idea as it fits with the general prioritisation of 'walking' and low impact recreation in the area. It would create new access infrastructure and potentially bring in more visitors.
Berkeley Community Trust	The trust previously went for funding and this project could be revisited/resubmitted. (Mike to raise it with the Trust).

The meeting closed.