

Developing a tourism strategy for your town

THE CHALLENGE

The historic market town of Tetbury has much to offer visitors.

Elegant Cotswold stone buildings, an army of antiques dealers, several independent and specialist shops, a range of hotels, restaurants and tea rooms and thriving arts and crafts and business communities – not to mention royal connections in the shape of the Prince of Wales and easy links with the M4 and M5 – all contribute to its appeal.

The importance of tourism to the local economy cannot be underestimated: up to 75% of local employment depends on high visitor numbers, both directly and indirectly.

This fact is not lost on **Tetbury Town Council** which has long funded its own tourist information centre.

But a **Market Town Healthcheck** carried out in 2006 highlighted that while Tetbury's tourist industry was busy at weekends and during the summer months, especially with wedding guests, work was needed to attract more people into the town all year round.

It was apparent that local businesses were missing out on revenue from potential visitors who were driving through the town to get to other attractions in the area, such as the nationally renowned Westonbirt Arboretum, but not stopping in Tetbury itself to sample what it had to offer.

Now with its own brand and a new website, Tetbury is regarded by tourism industry experts as a town that is punching above its weight.

DEVELOPING THE IDEA

The issues brought to light by the healthcheck led to the formation of the **Tetbury Partnership Tourism Group (TPTG)**.

The Partnership, which met once a month, brought together Tetbury Town Council, the local chamber of commerce, history society and tourism-related businesses including hoteliers, restaurateurs and owners of bed and breakfast establishments and tearooms along with other interested groups.

The early meetings of TPTG were facilitated by Peter Street, the **Gloucestershire Market Town Forum's business development officer**.

He helped partnership members to carry out consultations to identify Tetbury's key selling points, as well as areas for improvement, and to draw up an action plan.



The consultation revealed a general feeling that there was no cohesion in the way Tetbury was marketed and that particular organisations were only as good as the person in charge at any one time.

With this in mind TPTG decided to seek the help of a company that specialised in the type of work it wanted to do.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Peter Street helped TPTG to secure £15,000 worth of sponsorship from the **Small Projects Investment Fund** (SPIF), of **The Gloucestershire Rural Renaissance initiative**.

The scheme, managed by **Gloucestershire First**, is investing £8 million in projects across the county to boost the rural economy. Half of this money is funded by the **South West Regional Development Agency**.

The SPIF funding was given after the Town Council and local businesses were able to prove that they were working in close partnership.

One of the conditions of the funding was that TPTG's work complemented the **Destination Management Organisation's** (DMO) objectives being developed for the Cotswolds by **Gloucestershire Tourism** working in partnership with district councils and other organisations.

In addition, TPTG was also given £2,500 from GMTF's **Development Fund**. The money paid for the time of a specialist marketing and public relations company to provide expert help in developing a tourism strategy tailored to Tetbury.

The company, Cheltenham-based **apt marketing and PR**, worked to develop a recognisable brand – "Visit Tetbury" – to promote the town to both local and international visitors. The placing of the word "Visit" first reflected the national tourism campaign "Visit Britain" which is now widely known around the world.

Within this concept they split Tetbury's key selling points into sub sections:

- Business Tetbury – selling points included the town's "Walled Garden" which is a wireless networking facility that enables visitors to plug in their computers or telephones to access information about Tetbury, such as the best places to eat. The network was developed through Business Link Gloucestershire, Tetbury Chamber of Commerce and TPTG.
- Antique Tetbury – this draws on Tetbury's reputation as one of the finest centres for antiques in the UK. The town is used as a base by scores of antiques dealers.
- Royal Tetbury – HRH The Prince of Wales bought his Highgrove estate on the edge of Tetbury more than a quarter of a century ago. His Duchy Home Farm is regarded as a model of good organic practice.

- Shop Tetbury – this reflects the town’s wide variety of shops, including food, clothing and children’s toys.
- Taste Tetbury – the town and immediate surroundings offer everything from tea rooms to award-winning restaurants.
- Stay Tetbury – there are 70 hotels, inns, guest houses, bed and breakfasts and self-catering accommodations around the town offering a total of 719 beds.

The thinking behind breaking down Tetbury’s overall offer into sections was to give each distinct area an identity within the Visit Tetbury banner, enabling businesses to undertake their own promotions and initiatives under each section.

The marketing consultants were keen for local businesses to “buy into” the concept and to build up a global interest in Tetbury as a desirable destination on several levels.

Tetbury is to be marketed to tourists and visitors through a new website www.visittetbury.co.uk, and a new leaflet which has been placed in key outlets and is being widely distributed.

KEEPING IT GOING

The Visit Tetbury campaign was launched at a glittering ceremony at the Calcot Manor Hotel. The idea behind the launch was to encourage local business people to be excited about Tetbury’s new branding and to **support it financially** to keep it going into the future.

Guests were also urged to voice their opinions and contribute to the debate.

Various future initiatives being planned to promote Tetbury include:

- Running antiques auctions on the Visit Tetbury website. It is hoped this will raise awareness of Tetbury as a centre for antiques around the world and generate a lot of positive PR. The site could also be used to auction breaks or meals every week which is seen as something that would appeal to local people as well as visitors from further afield.
- A food and drink festival. This event, which is planned for 2007, is being developed by TPTG and FAB, a company specialising in food festivals from nearby Brinkworth.
- Translating the Visit Tetbury website into Japanese or having a page in Japanese: The DMO has identified Japan as a target audience for the Cotswolds.
- Working with the Duchy of Cornwall to promote Tetbury. Several local restaurants use ingredients from Duchy Home Farm in their meals.

TOP TIPS

- **Employ experts:** Specialist companies have the expertise and the time to develop strategies and frameworks that work. Using these companies takes pressure off partnership members who are already work full time within their own businesses. Outside companies work from a non-emotional standpoint; their decisions are made on the basis of what is right in a commercial and sustainable sense rather than what is desired. When seeking to employ specialists, look for a company with a proven track record.
- **Consult everybody:** Involve as many people as possible all the way through a project. No council or organisation can know all the answers. Ensure that interested organisations are kept informed of what is happening at every stage of a project and that they support what you are doing.
- **Join forces:** Find out about related work within your county or region and ensure that other organisations know what you are doing. TPTG is working closely with the new destination management organisation for the Cotswolds formed by Gloucestershire Tourism. It is also joining forces with neighbouring attractions such as Westonbirt Arboretum to ensure visitors there know what Tetbury has to offer, and vice versa. Working with other organisations makes maximum use of money available for marketing.
- **Identify your town's strengths:** Build on existing experience so that you don't have a cold start. Tetbury already had a good tourism industry and retail sector.
- **Identify your town's attributes and shout about them!** Look at all the good things your town has to offer. From there you can target how you market your town. Use websites and brochures to tell the world about what is going on in your town. Don't forget to include events such as the annual woolsack races and music festival in Tetbury.
- **Take things step by step:** Do not take on too much too quickly. Aim to carry out projects properly, even if this means that things take longer.
- **Be thorough:** Have a vision of what you want to achieve and be sure of your facts when applying for grants.
- **Look at what is achievable:** Take ambitious ideas and look at how they can be achieved within the facilities available in the town. For example, it may not be possible to hold a live concert in the open air but a church may provide an acceptable venue.
- **Accept any help that is offered:** Tetbury received invaluable help from Peter Street from the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum who was able to draw on the experiences of other market towns to help TPTG get off the ground.



CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit Tetbury website

www.visittetbury.co.uk

Tetbury Town Council

Tel: 01666 504670

www.tetbury.gov.uk

Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum

Tel: 01452 425953 • E-mail: daniel.judges@gloucestershire.gov.uk

www.town2town.org.uk

Gloucestershire Tourism (Destination Management Organisation)

Tel 01452 425657 • E-mail: chris.dee@gloucestershire.gov.uk

www.cotswolds.com

Market and Coastal Towns Association

www.mcti.org.uk

South West Regional Development Agency

www.southwestrda.org.uk

Gloucestershire Rural Community Council

Tel: 01452 528491

www.grcc.org.uk

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'Developing a tourism strategy for your town' is one in a series of case studies, sponsored by the Market and Coastal Towns Association. each spotlighting an issue or challenge faced by a GMTF member town.

Each case study presents:

- the **initial challenge** or issue faced by the town
- how a **solution** was developed
- how it was **rolled out**
- how it is being **sustained**
- **top tips** – useful information and advice to other communities which may be facing similar issues
- **contact details** to help you find out more

