



DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR TUNBRIDGE WELLS 2014-2017

ACTION PLAN

APRIL 2014

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1 INTRODUCTION

Early in 2013 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council commissioned the development of a Destination Management Plan (DMP) in order to identify the objectives and priorities for managing, developing and promoting tourism in the Borough. This **Action Plan** is to advise how the recommendations of the DMP can be implemented.

The tourism sector is made up of many types of businesses and organisations, from accommodation and attractions, to cultural venues, outdoor activities, restaurants, food producers and transport providers. The DMP provides guidance for the sector as a whole and its implementation will call on many organisations and businesses to work together.

This Action Plan has been developed following an Action Planning Workshop in September 2013 attended by industry and public sector representatives. An important conclusion of that workshop was that a Destination Management Plan Steering Group should be formed to guide and assist the implementation of the recommended actions.

The **Objectives of the Destination Management Plan** are summarised below:

1. To identify and communicate the essence of the place – a contemporary historic town, deep in its High Weald and Garden of Kent setting.
2. To develop the all-round offer to visitors, so they are inspired by the experience.
3. To embrace a modern visitor information plan.
4. To strengthen the networks of collaboration and innovation in the tourism sector.

2 IDENTIFY AND COMMUNICATE THE ESSENCE OF THE PLACE

The first objective of the Destination Management Plan is to identify and communicate the essence of the place as a contemporary historic town, deep in its High Weald and Garden of Kent setting. A workshop held with public and private sector tourism representatives in July 2013 considered what is special and different about Tunbridge Wells that helps it to stand out as a visitor destination.

Actions	Delivery by...	Resources	Timeframe
The Shared Story			
Develop a Shared Story toolkit (see note below) to guide and encourage use by all sections of the tourism industry; make it available online on the visittunbridgewells website	TWBC	Staff time	As soon as possible
Collect from industry partners (and if necessary commission) a suite of copyright free photographs for use by businesses, made available online	Destination Management Plan Steering Group	Budget to commission photographs if necessary	By Easter 2014 – and then updated periodically
Use elements and words from the Shared Story in the Interpretation Strategy (see Section 2 below)	Interpretation Strategy Steering Group	Included in Interpretation Strategy	2015-16
Publicise the Shared Story and images through local media and partner organisations such as the Retail Group, Chambers of Commerce etc.	TWBC, partner organisations	Staff time	As soon as the Toolkit is ready

Note: It is envisaged that the toolkit would include

- ▶ The thinking behind the Shared Story
- ▶ The Shared Story, annotated
- ▶ The Story in a Paragraph ... The Story in a Sentence
- ▶ Examples of how to use the Story/copy to develop your product as well as your marketing
- ▶ Advice on tone of voice and imagery style
- ▶ Downloadable copy bank - different lengths of copy, different content & tone for different markets
- ▶ Image library available and downloadable online

3 DEVELOP THE ALL-ROUND OFFER TO VISITORS

This objective is to enhance and make the most of the special experiences that Tunbridge Wells can offer visitors. Collaboration between tourism businesses and organisations to package and present the offer in appealing ways is an important requirement.

Actions	Delivery by...	Resources	Timeframe
Interpretation Strategy – Royal Tunbridge Wells			
Bring an Interpretation Strategy Steering Group together to establish objectives, outline stories to be told in the Plan, identify information sources, and consider concept for an HLF bid (cf Malvern Hills interpretation project).	TWBC and KCC staff with input from private sector reps on Destination Management Plan Steering Group	Staff & private sector Rep Time	As soon as possible
Discuss prospect of an HLF bid for a scheme with HLF Regional Office.	Interpretation Strategy Steering Group	Steering Group Time	As soon as possible
If HLF supports in principle, develop a scheme following the required process.	Consultants as necessary to outline the HLF scheme concept and the pedestrian signage/orientation project	Steering Group Time; Consultant’s fees; Potential match funding requirement from public & private sector	6-9 months in 2014
Brief consultants to assist/develop the Interpretation Strategy, to outline the pedestrian signage and orientation approach, to include digital media e.g. hand held devices, Virtual Reality, downloadable pdfs, and to assist development of the HLF Stage 1 if applicable. Consult Civic Society and Local History Group, Retail Group, local authority planning.	Interpretation Strategy Steering Group	Steering Group Time; Consultancy fees for scheme development	6-9 months in 2014
Secure approvals (planning, conservation area) and funding (HLF, local authority, private sector contributions) and implement.	Interpretation Strategy Steering Group	Steering Group time; Capital funding for scheme and/or to match HLF contribution	2015-16

Actions	Delivery by...	Resources	Timeframe
Promoting the Shopping Offer			
Explore options to promote Royal Tunbridge Wells' retail offer, building on 2013 Christmas brochure, and covering other key times e.g. Easter and school holidays.	Retailers Group including TWBC	Use advertising revenue	2014
Update and develop retail section on visittunbridgewells.	Retailers Group including TWBC	Staff time, retailers' advertising budgets	Ongoing
Explore options for shopping festivals e.g. wedding theme.	Retailers Group including TWBC	Partner time	2014 onwards
Explore the option of a Business Improvement District for Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre.	Retailers Group including TWBC	TWBC Staff time	2014-16
Quality of the Public Realm			
Decluttering and paving material trials at Fiveways in Royal Tunbridge Wells.	TWBC, KCC	TWBC and KCC staff time, TWBC	2013 – early 2014
Phase 1 – implementation of shared space hard landscaping at Fiveways in Royal Tunbridge Wells.	TWBC, KCC	TWBC and KCC staff time, funding still to be agreed	2014
Explore options for further public realm improvements in Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre.	TWBC, KCC	TWBC and KCC staff time	2014 onwards
Cultural Strategy			
Prepare a Feasibility Study for the Cultural Hub.	TWBC, KCC	Consultants fees; Staff time	2013
Develop an Implementation Plan for the Cultural Hub including HLF bid.	TWBC, KCC	Consultants fees; Staff time	2014

Actions	Delivery by...	Resources	Timeframe
Preparing Itineraries			
Identify one or more of the strongest themes for programme of itinerary preparation e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Houses and gardens ▶ Nature conservation ▶ Food and drink ▶ Walking ▶ Luxury and pampering ▶ Outdoor activities – golf, climbing 	Destination Management Plan Steering Group	DMP Group Time: call on themes of Shared Story	Early 2014
Prepare 48 or 72 hour itineraries for those themes.	TWBC, Visit Kent, Destination Management Plan Steering Group	Staff time; DMP Group time	Itineraries described and publicised on vtw for Easter 2014
Engage organisations and businesses to add value to the itineraries by, for example, joint tickets, upgrades, vouchers, behind the scenes tours. Agree and implement ways to take the itineraries to market e.g. via websites, Visitor Guide, web advertising, PR activity targeting relevant publications, media visits, Group Travel channels.	TWBC, Visit Kent, Destination Management Plan Steering Group with attractions, accommodation and hospitality providers, Retail Group, KHWP	Time of staff and businesses. Some will be existing channels at no additional cost; others will require business contributions	Aim for at least one itinerary with added value available and promoted for summer 2014 onwards
Countryside access and interpretation			
Create strong walking and cycling pages on web sites plus downloadable leaflets, especially circular routes and those that cover the towns and villages as well as the countryside; list and provide links to guided walks.	TWBC, Explore Kent, Destination Management Plan Steering Group, National Trust, Wildlife Trust, KHWP	Already a lot of 'product' available – needs staff time to compile and present	Start made for summer 2014
Events and Festivals			
TWBC to consider small grants for local events and allocate appropriately.	Portfolio Holder	Staff time to assess grant applications; Existing ED budget	April 2014

Actions	Delivery by...	Resources	Timeframe
Create an Online Events Resource for business/community groups wishing to run events themselves.	TWBC in partnership with Maidstone and Swale BCs	Staff time	Spring 2014
Initiate discussions with businesses and organisations in the tourism, hospitality and retail sectors to review opportunities for extending or consolidating festivals and events, particularly building on music and food, fashion and festive season themes.	Destination Management Plan Steering Group with TWBC working with partner organisations including retailers	TWBC time and advice. KHWP/AONB Unit Grants - KCC, ACE, HLF Sponsorship Volunteers Crowd funding from participating organisations	Ongoing

4 EMBRACE A MODERN VISITOR INFORMATION PLAN

The Destination Management Plan stresses that visitors need good information both at the planning stage and during their visit.

Actions	Delivery by...	Resources	Timeframe
Digital Information			
Refresh the visitkentbridgewells website; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ make links to other sites such as Visit Kent and Tourism South East; ▶ ensure search engine optimisation for key words from Shared Story. 	TWBC	Existing TWBC budgets	Spring 2014
Ensure the visitkentbridgewells website, or a mobile version, is easily accessible and navigable on smartphones and mobile devices and has social media functionality.	TWBC	Existing TWBC budgets	Spring 2014
Ensure strong presence on 3 rd party and social media sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ provide TripAdvisor and Google etc with profile information ▶ Identify and support local bloggers with updates on events and developments. 	TWBC and businesses and organisations	Staff time	Ongoing
Provide guidelines and training for businesses on social media including handling negative reviews.	Visit Kent and TWBC	Venue and training costs	2014
Printed Information			
Review the Weald of Kent Visitor Guide to improve editorial content to reflect Shared Story, maps, itineraries.	TWBC and Maidstone BC	Staff time	2013 onwards
Audit and review the production of brochures and leaflets in the Weald of Kent and East Sussex area and agree a cost effective way forward.	Visit Kent with TWBC and destinations in the Weald and East Sussex area	Staff time and partner time	2014

Actions	Delivery by...	Resources	Timeframe
Signage & maps			
Consider a full wayfinding strategy for Royal Tunbridge Wells (along the lines of the Legible London approach, featuring places to visit with walking times). Maps at arrival and other key points. This to be tied into the Interpretation Strategy.	TWBC/ KCC	Significant capital cost; subsequent maintenance costs	2015-16
Ask businesses to support (through advertising or sponsorship) creation and distribution of a simple, free map of the town and wider area, widely available through hotels, cafés, information points etc;	TWBC and tourism partners	Cost of design and production – needs £1000 advertising revenue	2014
Promote opportunities to visit the area by non-car modes including bus map for visitors. Link to walking and cycling information above.	TWBC working with transport operators	Staff time and preparation of printed material	2014
Create a network of Tourist Information Points across the Borough. Explore with retailers, accommodation providers and others the opportunity to have information points in key outlets.	TWBC and tourism partners	Staff/partner time to arrange. Costs of signage and set-up. Training for staff	2014-2016

5 STRENGTHEN THE NETWORKS OF COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

Actions	Delivery by...	Resources	Timeframe
DMP Steering Group			
Invite interested people from sectors of the industry, cultural organisations and the local authority to form the Destination Management Plan Group	TWBC	Staff time	January 2014
TWBC to chair the first meeting; the Group to select its own Chairperson thereafter	TWBC; Destination Management Plan Steering Group	Time of participants	February 2014
First meeting to agree aspects of the Action Plan and Destination Management Plan to take forward immediately.	Destination Management Plan Steering Group	Time of participants	February 2014
Communicate the establishment and purposes of the Destination Management Group to the tourism industry by email newsletter and press releases.	Destination Management Plan Steering Group	Time of participants	February 2014
Sector Networking			
Develop a 'business to business' web section on visittunbridgewells to provide information about events and activities, training opportunities, marketing opportunities, the Shared Story etc, with access for signed-up businesses to the Image Library and a discussion forum.	TWBC with advice from the Destination Management Plan Steering Group and Visit Kent	Using existing resource for refresh of the website	Spring 2014

Actions	Delivery by...	Resources	Timeframe
Circulate a quarterly email newsletter to tourism businesses with information about events and activities etc	TWBC with the Destination Management Plan Steering Group	Staff time	Beginning 2014 to announce the Destination Management Group
Hold periodic or annual tourism networking meetings to encourage collaboration in the sector.	Destination Management Plan Steering Group	Cost of venue hire and hospitality; might be sponsored by a venue or a charge made for attendance.	Ongoing
Build contacts with tourism organisations and businesses beyond the Tunbridge Wells Borough boundaries to facilitate joint activity.	Destination Management Plan Steering Group, TWBC, VisitKent	Staff time	Ongoing