

Visitor information centres grant review Annex C

Each Visitor Information Centre (“VIC”) was asked to consider how it could look to support the Council and Cotswold Tourism priorities going forward as well as assist visitors both prior to and during their visit. With the local knowledge and connections each VIC has with businesses in their area, it was vital to consider how communications, promoting digitally and data could be improved and the supporting role the centres can play for businesses as well. Longer term this can form the basis of a grant being criteria led with realistic targets whilst retaining this service for visitors and local businesses.

Key priorities listed in the current Cotswolds Tourism Destination Management Plan (DMP”) are listed below:

1. Partnership working
2. Product - enhancing the visitor experience
3. Marketing
4. Knowledge/data
5. Performance through networking and collaboration

With a review of the DMP currently underway the following were also highlighted.

- sustainability/green tourism
- accessibility/inclusiveness
- Move to digital/digital skills
- Coaches & management

Specifically the VICS were asked to consider how they can help with these objectives:

1. Communication with local businesses/residents/tourism team
2. Better local information
 - Events
 - Openings/closings/redevelopments
 - Other relevant news
3. Social media coverage
4. Sustainable tourism
 - Local ideas for car free days
 - Bike hire
 - Collection by tour operators
 - Public transport information and ideas
 - Local walks & cycle rides
 - Local shops
5. Dispersal of visitors within locality and the wider Cotswolds
6. Data collection & provision
7. Support for enquiries to the wider tourism service

Each VIC gave a detailed response with all at different stages of the drive to reach businesses, locals and visitors digitally as well as encompass a focus on sustainability, accessibility and data. The following are key elements that each centre highlighted for their own location:

Bourton on the Water

“We are taking significant steps and continue to explore avenues of improving our media presence. The revamp of [our website](#) with the introduction of on-line sales is a major step forward and we will expand the ranges available. We continue to use Twitter to promote offers and events. The new Facebook site will give our VIC extensive coverage across this media channel.

We rent out space on shelves and in showcases for local businesses to display their products and have recently introduced a local artist range.

We are currently investigating a local passport scheme to enhance our income and promote local attractions at a discounted price.

We are looking into an information gathering meeting with local businesses and shops including the main attractions to improve networking between us all.

We give free advertising to local events e.g., village fetes, musical evenings, charitable events both in Bourton and surrounding areas in displaying posters and leaflets often selling tickets for these events. Many of these small community activities do not have a website presence We produce, print and sell our own walking and cycling maps which encourage visitors to go to smaller villages and shops in surrounding areas”.

Chipping Campden

“A detailed proposal was submitted with key aims and objectives for Chipping Campden VIC which is the operating arm of Cotswold Edge Enterprise Ltd., a not for profit Community Interest Company (CIC) supported by many local volunteers, businesses and organisations including the Town Council. Listed below are some of the key objectives for the future.

With our ticketing sales being a major source of income, working in partnership with many organisations to mutual advantage, we have been selling their products mainly through personal contact with potential customers in the “shop”. We are now in the process of taking this into the online market through www.campdenonline.org

There is also intention of developing and promoting Chipping Campden as a Hub/base for multiple activities and experiences including walking.

Future plans include offering suppliers – and other local businesses – franchise style space in the VIC Online Shop and/or standalone space on the Shops/Campden Online Commercial Platform.

The Digital Town Walk, which has just completed beta testing, provides a Smartphone guided visual and multi language audio tour of all the major buildings and places of interest around the town. Further Walks and Themed Tours (eg Campden History, Arts & Crafts) are planned. It is anticipated this will also be a significant revenue generator in the coming years.

Plans for Marketing for the 2022 Season are currently being developed, with input from Shuttlefish a local digital marketing agency and these will include a significant increase in the use of Social Media and in proactive/push based initiatives incorporating new themed and targeted content/regular blogs and incentivised registrations to create broad interest based communities. Improved data capture is also planned. Discussions are currently taking place

with Chipping Campden Academy about getting a student who is studying social media to help significantly extend the use of these services.

In addition, leveraging the knowledge and experience of the CEE Ltd Board, a specific North American Marketing initiative is being planned for 2022.

To support data provision, plans are in hand for a questionnaire for the 2022 season to provide a demographic snapshot of our visitor. Presently, due to Covid, visitors are predominantly UK based; however the VIC has just begun to see the return of a few North American tourists. Historically, they comprised 60% of overseas visitors using the VIC services”.

Stow on the Wold

“GCC has a very good working relationship with Stow Town Council (STC) although with Covid everything stopped & changes of staff, has meant the relationship has now been re-established and regular meetings are being scheduled. VIC staff have agreed to organise a shop window display competition asking the business owners to decorate their windows with a “Royal Theme” for Queen Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in June 2022. This is a perfect opportunity for the staff to engage again with the local businesses and continue to build relationships.

STC is currently trying to encourage the local traders to set up a Business Association especially as attitudes have changed since the pandemic. It is hoped local traders/businesses are more likely to see the benefits of working as a team.

GCC could produce more signage and branding to make users aware of the information the VIC holds on local businesses, events, walks etc. and this will be looked into.

STC has a VIC dedicated website www.stowinfo.co.uk but since lockdown this needs updating and expanding the information. All options will be considered including bringing back under Town Council website with a view to updating content.

STC also needs to look at an overall strategic plan for coaches visiting the town with a view that the VIC will contact the local tour companies, explaining the town’s approach to the parking of coaches and offering them information about the VIC and the opportunity to arrange for their passengers to have a “Meet and Greet” experience. This was planned to be set up ahead of lockdown.

For data, GCC will start recording location of origin during every interaction and run quarterly sample surveys over a period of a week, which would have more detailed queries to analyse why visitors come to the town.

STC has carried out an Accessibility Survey for the town centre and nearby streets and is working with GCC in relation to the results to see what can be achieved to improve the accessibility issues.

Libraries are delivering a Green Initiative, which fits with the objective. GCC will be looking for local businesses that have a good green approach and flagging up organisations in the local area who make use of products attractive to tourists in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner”.

Tetbury

“We are looking at ways to improve the customer experience through our product & promotion of our product e.g., bespoke itinerary signage accessibility and maps, electric charge points, value for money car parking. Product messages will be delivered via social media, the VIC and through stake holders’ messages, will centre around authenticity experience and USP

‘Visit Tetbury’ is very active on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook and benefits wide social media coverage. Moving forward our aim is to ascertain advertising equivalent value of this.

‘Visit Tetbury’ is working with the community to develop a list of personalities to support PR enquires.

‘Visit Tetbury’ have strong links with Greening Tetbury and have undertaken joint initiatives that include walking maps, bike hire and work with sustainable business-like Wild Carrot.

Marketing to promote off-peak travel and events is extremely important; we will promote product drivers to entice people to Tetbury and disperse them around the town.

Liaison with partners within the town to create a portfolio of unique experiences for Tetbury and a database of key personalities to help bring the brand to life business”.