



DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

DORCHESTER HERITAGE JOINT COMMITTEE

Governance and Delivery Structures

How To Make The Strategy Real

Background

The successful delivery of the strategy is dependent on having the correct governance structures to oversee and guide the delivery of the action plan, the acquisition, prioritisation of and allocation of resources, and to be the champion for Heritage Tourism in the town.

This paper has been prepared following approaches made to the local council, business improvement district and/or tourism group leading town promotion in over 40 market town or heritage destinations, and from subsequent correspondence or discussions with more than 30 locations as follows:

Banbury, Barnstaple, Bradford on Avon, Bridport, Bury St Edmunds, Canterbury, Cheltenham, Chester, Chichester, Corsham, Dartmouth, Eastwood (DH Lawrence), Falmouth, Frome, Greenwich, Haworth, Leamington Spa, Leominster, Ludlow, Lynton & Lynmouth, Malvern, Pershore, Rye, Salisbury, Shaftesbury, Sherborne, Tavistock, Thirsk, Totnes, Wimborne, Witney, York.

Evidence

Each town (or city) destination has taken its own approach to structure, relationships with other organisations, activities delivered and funding.

From the email exchanges or telephone discussions with town destinations:

23 consider themselves involved in management and development of tourism in their town, or are developing plans to become involved

18 are actively involved in maintaining a destination website, 8 of which also continue with printed guides and leaflets

5 destinations, mostly smaller locations, engaged in web promotion fully fund the activity because:

- a) There is an insufficient number of potential advertisers to make a difference or
- b) justify and offset the collection costs for the likely revenue raised

Of the 11 destinations charging membership fees, charges can be as low as £25 in smaller destinations while the larger destinations and cities have significant numbers of larger businesses and also attract sponsorship (both cash and kind) from such as major hotel chains and transport providers.

10 of the destinations also note having a live Business Improvement District in their town, and in 5 towns, the BID and town Council work proactively and collaboratively together on destination promotion, in some cases sharing staff, costs and premises.

A few destinations describe local activity as being fragmented or not coordinated, while others have set up groups or taken positive action because of an historic lack of coordination amongst multiple groups locally.

Only 3 of the destinations have established a legal entity to manage destination promotion. These are the largest destinations and other services such as Inward Investment promotion are included. None have identified any benefit from having an arm's length CIC or Co. Ltd by Guarantee as a benefit in attracting or securing external grant funding.

3 larger destinations consider themselves to be the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) for the area, 4 smaller destinations pay into their local DMO marketing activity (although none perceive there to be any any notable benefit), while one destination received a grant towards it's activity for its DMO.

All Councils actively engaged or committed to developing or supporting its tourism industry have allocated staff to enable delivery, often part time or included within other roles in the council.

Conclusions

The organisational structure to take the strategy forward should be appropriate to the scale of the local tourism sector and the capacity to fund and deliver. It is clear that no one size fits all, and that activity, structure and funding are dependent on the local situation, ambition and political aspiration to get involved. It is also clear that where there is intent to deliver support for tourism (marketing, product development, events coordination etc) the council has allocated staff resource to enable delivery.

Larger destinations have established CICs or Companies Limited by Guarantee. These are often supported by some large regional private sector organisations such as hotel groups, or regional transport bodies, and are often established to deliver several services (such as Inward Investment or sports facilities) or to act in a commercial trading environment. They all charge significant membership fees and have a large sector base from which to draw memberships and income. None researched have identified an advantage in their private sector status in securing grant funding as a result of their status.

Several smaller destinations work alone without any engagement with the private sector, while others work to a greater or lesser extent in partnerships.

Given the small size of the tourism sector in the town, and the existence of a Business Improvement District already charging a compulsory levy on most town centre businesses, the establishment of a private sector membership body to lead and deliver the strategy is not proposed in this strategy.

In a town the size of Dorchester, and in common with many of the smaller proactive destinations across the country, it may be appropriate to take a less formal structured approach to the governance and delivery of the strategy through the establishment of a town tourism partnership.