

Tourism Partnership Meeting

Meeting Minutes

December 14, 2015

Present: Councillors Eleanor Cohen [Chair] and Rosie Adams (Totnes Town Council), Katie Tokus (Sharpham Trust), Richard Ayres (Dart Harbour Navigation Authority), David Tinker and Lindsay Garner (Totnes Chamber of Commerce), Karen Jonas and Jo Atkey (Dartington), Matt Bulford and Kate Davies (English Heritage), Keith Barnes (Totnes Image Bank), Amanda Richards (Totnes Information Centre), Chantelle Norton (Transition Town Totnes and Totnes Pound), Maureen McAllister (McAllister & Co) and Helen Nathanson [Minutes] (Totnes Town Council)

Apologies: Frances Northrop (Town Team), Stephanie Cherrett (Visit South Devon), Royal Seven Stars Hotel

Next meeting: *Tuesday 5th January at 2pm in the Guildhall, Totnes*

I. Introduction and Welcome from the Chair

The Chair, Councillor Eleanor Cohen, welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the intention to explore a tourism partnership with key businesses and organisations in and around Totnes. The Totnes Tourism Report by McAllister and Co formed the basis of this decision and discussion.

II. Introductions from around the room: an opportunity to gather everyone's expectations of the meeting and of the potential partnership

The following introduced themselves and a summary of their comments is given:

Matt Bulford, Area Manager for English Heritage – they are keen to encourage people to the area; to maximise the potential of the rich cultural establishments in the area; and are interested in holding cultural events at the Castle.

Jo Atkey and Karen Jonas – Dartington is keen to contribute to future activity in the area and to engage with events which will enhance the visitor experience.

Totnes Chamber of Commerce – they would like to promote the market town aspect and increase visitors. They have already discussed production of a leaflet to advertise the town but will hold this pending further work with the Partnership.

Totnes Image Bank – they are keen to use their resources to help promote the town.

Totnes Information Centre – they would like to see a closer and more dynamic relationship between bodies in the town.

Sharpham – they would like to engage more closely with the community and with any umbrella organisation looking at destination management.

Transition Town Totnes – they have lots of enquiries from Transition “Pilgrims” and feel there is potential to do more to engage such visitors with courses and tours.

Totnes Pound – they are keen to use the Totnes Pound to help promote the town and attract visitors.

Dart Harbour Navigation Authority – they have just completed a 5-year strategy to encourage more people to use the river and would like to be involved in the Partnership because the link between Totnes and the River is very important and could be improved.

III. Destination Management in Totnes

Discussion took place about current provision and the following points were made:

Totnes Chamber of Commerce feels that Totnes needs to be advertised more widely outside of the town and stressed that they would like such advertising to be for the collective good and not just individual businesses.

The Totnes Guide, which is produced by the Town Council, is sent to TICs in the local area and to members of the public on request but a lack of resources prevents wider distribution.

The Town Council has made the decision to reinvigorate the town as a priority and support for tourism is a key part of this.

Transport and levels of traffic are key issues – we need to consider trains, river, cycle tracks etc and the broader ethos of Totnes, encouraging people to use other methods to get here rather than cars.

Cruise ships – up to 14 cruise ships will be visiting Dartmouth next year and others will visit Plymouth and Torbay. At present there is no organised attempt to get those people to the Totnes area and we need to have proper marketing well in advance of such visits.

The first priority of the Partnership needs to cover how well Totnes is represented in the outside world. For example, if we are going to put leaflets out we need to be clear about who and where we are targeting and ensure that this is backed up by press, PR, website, welcome, car parking etc. The Partnership needs to develop the offer before promoting it.

We need to identify some quick wins and projects that we can deliver together such as establishing links between local websites.

Any Partnership needs to have teeth: a group of this size with such credible businesses involved has a very good chance of success. It was agreed that there was a good deal of passion and creativity around the room and that we should channel this by establishing a clear set of priorities and terms of reference for the group.

IV. Next Steps

All present were asked to speak to their individual organisations and to confirm their participation by 4th January 2016. It was agreed that we should also invite the following key businesses to subsequent meetings: Totnes Rare Breeds Farm; Dartmouth Steam Railway and Riverboat Company; South Devon Railway. The Totnes Image Bank will not be participating further.

Discussion was held about how to involve all interested parties and it was agreed that we would need to set up different levels of involvement perhaps ranging from Strategic Partners, Board Members and then Members. Maureen McAllister agreed to share with us the details of how her Tourism Partnership in the Forest of Dean operates so that we can get some ideas.

V. Grant Funding

It was agreed that we need to think about how this will be sustained from the outset without reliance on grants or the Council. However, grant funding is open via the Heart of the South West LEP for Tourism Cooperation Grants. Our proposed Partnership fits the criteria and it was agreed that we would submit an outline application. The Town Clerk will draft this in advance and all are invited to a meeting to finalise the application.

It might be necessary to set ourselves up as a limited company or Community Interest Company in order to maximise our grant funding potential.

The next meeting will be at **2pm on Tuesday 5th January** at the Guildhall, Totnes.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and for their positive contributions.

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