

## **Redesigning Tourism Sector Support - June 2015 – Briefing Note**

Tourism is a significant and important sector within the Shropshire economy. Valued at £501million in 2011 and supporting just over 14,500 jobs, it is highlighted in the Shropshire, LEP and ESIF strategies as an investment priority.

The tourism sector is active in self-promotion with the long standing work of organisations and businesses such as the tourism associations and Shropshire Tourism. Local Authorities also play an intrinsic role in delivery of the tourism product by providing signage, information, car parking, the rights of way network, visitor centres, museums, arts and theatres and have a strong legacy of supporting the sector as part of their role in delivering economic growth and job creation strategies.

Since 2009 Shropshire Council has employed 2 dedicated tourism officers and part of the Visitor Economy Service Manager post also works at a strategic level as a part of the wider Service, providing the following activities to develop and grow the sector:

- Strategy and plan development – driving the development, industry engagement and delivery of strategies, which are critical to achieving area wide benefits, accessing external funding and making effective use of resources.
- Support to the tourism sector in Shropshire ranging from provision of shared marketing resources (free to use destination photos; visitor itineraries); commissioning and sharing strategic research to inform marketing and support development; helping to shape future funding opportunities by working with The Marches LEP and Government Departments and then advising the sector how to access funding by coordinating activities and providing evidence; seeking and responding to media opportunities by arranging journalist visits, finding out Shropshire connections, developing product and content.
- Creating and supporting structures to develop closer partnership working between a diverse range of organisations such as tourism associations, public sector and individual businesses. Supporting new initiatives such as the Shrewsbury BID to maximise benefit to the visitor economy.
- Responding to major opportunities such as Much Wenlock's association with the Olympic Games. Coordination of Visitor Information Centres and helping to shape future provision. Providing specialist advice and support to Shropshire Councillors and officers. Supporting inter-departmental collaboration on economic issues. Providing expertise to promote the Council's own visitor attractions to maximise income through visits.
- Providing a general tourism support service from niche enquiries such as film/TV locations to business start-ups and expansions.

As part of the review of services and redesign, Shropshire Council will be changing the way it supports the tourism sector and our focus and direction will move from 'hands on delivery' to a more strategic role. This shift has already been evolving for some time with the work of the team focusing on developing sustainable partnerships and strategies for the sector to fulfil its own growth potential.

The Council is also responding to what we anticipate to be further permanent reductions in central funding by redesigning everything we do. This is to play to the already resilient and self-reliant sector strengths, but also realistically anticipating a near-future in which minimal levels of central government funding are available to underpin our public services.

Tourism is a significant and important sector within the Shropshire economy. However, reductions in funding mean we have to make very difficult choices about prioritising the work we do.

The proposed change of approach will result in one new post, which will focus on a number of areas:

- Concentrate on developing the impact and sustainability of the Council's own facilities such as Museums on the tourism sector.
- continue to support the sector at a strategic level and
- continue to ensure Shropshire benefits from new strategic funding opportunities

Principle duties of the new post will be to:

1. Manage the contractual relationship between Shropshire Council and other organisations commissioned to run Visitor Information Centres at various locations in the County.
2. Act as a strategic point of contact for key regional or national stakeholders e.g. Visit England and maintain communications with key sector stakeholders.
3. Actively engage with the LEP to ensure recognition and investment in the Sector through the Tourism Working Group.
4. Provide basic online sector support information (through the new Growth Hub) providing signposting to data/research/intelligence reports, business support, grants and Tourism Organisations.
5. Play a key role in strategic bid development to maximise marketing, investment and growth of the sector.
6. Deliver strategic and County wide press and PR support.

The Local Enterprise Partnership and Shropshire Council are developing a new Business Growth Hub that will provide a one stop shop for businesses with support, signposting and grant information.

The work of the team to date has put the sector in a strong position to continue to grow. By investing in the development of strong partnerships at a Destination or Town level, with appropriate strategies and action plans in place, businesses, existing tourism organisations and communities can continue to work together to attract new external funding opportunities available to rural areas, whilst in Shrewsbury the BID will market our County Town as a premier tourism destination.

Shropshire Council will continue to invest in the sector by either direct delivery of the Visitor Information Service, for example, in Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth where the service is part of other joint service delivery or by commissioning the delivery of Visitor Information as in Ludlow, Church Stretton and Mile End.

Investment into our Museums, Archives, Theatre and Outdoor Recreation services will continue all of which form a vital part of the visitor's experience to Shropshire.

