



Westerham

“ Welcome to inspiring history, fresh air, stunning views and great food. Welcome to a different pace of life, a real escape to the country and tradition with a modern twist. Welcome to Westerham. ”



Need for the Project

Westerham Parish Council and a group of local volunteers began the Healthcheck process in August 2008 with community-wide consultation. This consultation bore out a strong desire to keep and preserve the shops and services for the community, with a strong realisation of the role visitors and tourism could play.

As a result of this research the Parish Council set up a Tourism Working Party to bring together the stakeholders and try and address the key issues around Tourism in Westerham. Hidden Britain was invited to join the group and in doing so helped identify several key aims to begin working on:

- Defining & communicating the Westerham offer
- Providing better information on the town and area
- Improving the visitor experience.

Key Facts	
County:	Kent
District:	Sevenoaks
Population:	5000
Project Started:	2009



The Process

The Tourism Working Party had some initial ideas of their own to meet these aims, chiefly to institute a yearly event in Westerham, using the 2009 anniversary of the battle of Quebec to highlight the local connection with

General Wolfe, which was led by two of the large local attractions.

In addition the group were keen to look at the branding of Westerham, having seen the work undertaken in the Eden Valley, and as it was clear that there was little cohesive voice or consistent message that the town was projecting. Working with HBSE the group undertook to get views from all the key stakeholders and the community on what made Westerham special. With this information on board an open competition was run to design and develop the visual elements, which were then developed into the final brand.

In tandem several volunteers expressed a interest in developing a Westerham website, that could be utilised not only for promoting the town to visitors, but also to showcase the healthcheck progress and have benefit to the community as a whole as well. With assistance from HBSE and the technical expertise of several dedicated volunteers the website was developed as the chief vehicle to promote Westerham.

What is Hidden Britain South East?

Hidden Britain South East offers support to rural communities to help them uncover the fascinating wealth of landscape, history and culture within Britain's countryside. What's really special is that the local communities themselves, develop truly unique and distinctive experiences for people who visit their towns and villages.

Hidden Britain has been working in the South East since 2004 to encourage tourism at a locally managed level. The project aims to facilitate rural regeneration and community development where it is needed most. The project is funded by SEEDA through the Rural Development Programme for England.



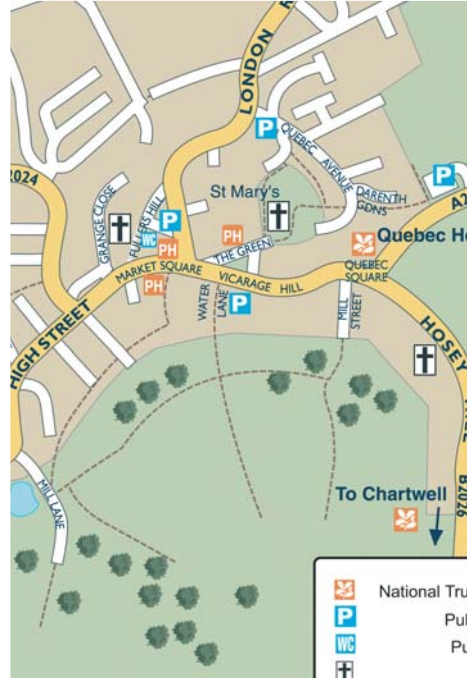
Hidden Britain

Progress to date

Who is Involved?

The lion's share of the work involved in undertaking these projects has been taken on by a small group of willing and dedicated local volunteers; chiefly Stuart Merrylees, Debra Edwards, Peter Cashmore, Jenny Smith and Alan Edney. They have been supported throughout by Hidden Britain South East.

The wider Tourism Working Party, comprising local businesses, the Parish Council, the National Trust and Sevenoaks District Council has supported and had input into the various projects as well as continuing to look at ways to develop tourism in the town, again in conjunction with Hidden Britain.



Project Outputs

- ▶ A revised Westerham map was produced
- ▶ The Westerham brand and logo was developed to provide consistency in promoting the destination. The key messages were set down in a branding document made available to all stakeholders.
- ▶ The Westerham website at www.westerhamkent.org.uk has been developed and is currently maintained and updated by local volunteers.
- ▶ A funding bid has been submitted for a new project to create a booklet of walks guides to better interpret the wealth of history in the town, and increase access to the surrounding countryside and landscape.

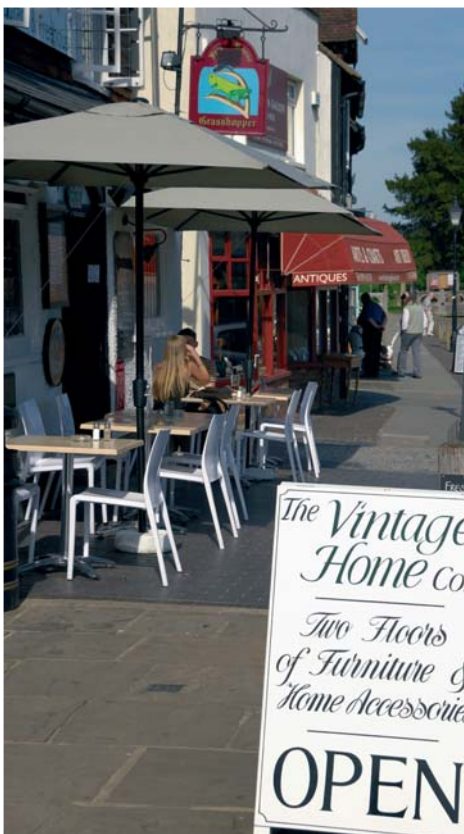
Status of Funding

Because of the high level of local energy, goodwill and skills there has so far been no need to obtain external funding to deliver the projects to date.

A local designer (Helen Brown of HMB design) won the competition to design the logo and was kind enough to work with the group free of charge to develop it to its finished format.

With help from Hidden Britain in developing the website design, local volunteers have created all the content themselves and have arranged for the site to be hosted by a local company on their server.

However with the group now looking at larger scale projects they have begun looking at potential sources of funding both external and within Westerham





Project Achievements

► Businesses engaged (70)

The group has worked hard to raise the profile of the project with the businesses, and has sought to include them at every step. At present there is no charge levied for entry onto the website which has allowed all the businesses in the town to be involved. Several key businesses have been part of the Tourism Working Party and have had more direct input.



► No. of volunteers involved (est. 5)

Although the wider working party have had involvement, there has only been a small core group of active volunteers working on the project. However this group has been well supported and have had no difficulty getting more people and businesses on board when necessary.

► Skills & training accessed

Whilst no formal training has been arranged as part of the project, volunteers have gained skills and experience in various areas, most particularly in; obtaining funding, project planning and management, destination management, commissioning and working with designers and printers, marketing, and web design and build.

► Marketing support provided

HBSE has assisted Westerham in development of content for Ruralways and several other destination websites, both regionally and nationally, as well as enabling their participation at the Bleriot event in July 2009.



Hidden Britain Input

It was Hidden Britain's previous work in Edenbridge and the Eden Valley that facilitated the initial approach from Westerham Parish Council and the invitation to join the working party. Since then HBSE has assisted in various elements of the project and has provided continual advice and support where needed.

More specifically HBSE; created the new Westerham map from a base data set provided by Sevenoaks District Council, led the branding consultation exercise, prepared and created the final branding guidelines document, developed the initial website template, design and graphics, helped co-ordinate the initial content development, and also is now looking at a redesign for the site in line with the recently completed branding exercise.

More recently HBSE has supported the group in developing the new walks project, and in planning and submitting a funding application for this new project.



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Going Forward

- ▶ The group is currently awaiting a decision on their funding application for the walks project. If successful they will produce 20,000 booklets and install way markers on all the promoted routes, these will hopefully be in place by late summer 2010
- ▶ Members of the group are working to establish a Farmers Market on the green in Westerham, bringing extra visitors into the very heart of the town.
- ▶ The tourism working party are putting together plans to build on the success of last year's "Wolfe Weekend" by developing a new food themed festival scheduled for early September.
- ▶ The group are also looking into the possibility of a general promotional leaflet or flyer that can be spread widely and help draw more visitors in.



Lessons Learned

- ▶ You don't necessarily need funding to implement a project. Look at the skills and resources available to you, there are often ways to make things happen for minimal cost, and you may be surprised what businesses and organisations can offer for free to support you.
- ▶ When creating something like a website it pays to really take time to make businesses aware of it, it's a great tool to get them engaged.
- ▶ A dedicated and enthusiastic team of

volunteers is a resource that can't be underestimated.

- ▶ Quick wins are vital, there is often too long a lag between planning and implementing. Making things happen is the best way to capture and sustain enthusiasm.

“ Hidden Britain was just a name to most of us until this year. James has now added a face and a personality. His engaging manner helps to motivate and his well-structured advice has been a great asset.

Stuart Merrylees, Secretary
Westerham Town Partnership

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This case study forms part of a series evaluating the impacts and benefits of the Hidden Britain South East Project across the region. The Project is managed by the South East Rural Community Councils (SERCC) in partnership with Tourism South East. The Hidden Britain South East Project is funded by SEEDA through the Rural Development Programme for England



Further Information
www.westerhamkent.org.uk
www.hiddenbritainse.org.uk
www.sercc.org.uk
www.tourismse.com
www.seeda.co.uk/rdpe

