

Herefordshire Sustainable Food & Tourism Partnership: Annual Report 2015

The Sustainable Food and Tourism Partnership was formed in 2014 as a merger between the Herefordshire Sustainable Food Partnership and a new, grassroots led, tourism group.

The Partnership's Terms of Reference are to:

- Provide strategic oversight for the development and implementation of a sustainable strategy and action plan for Food & Tourism in the County of Herefordshire.
- Link with key strategic bodies and organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors to promote a sustainable food and tourism strategy and its implementation.
- Develop collaborative food and tourism actions/activities that act as a 'showcase' for authentic, real and genuine '*experiences that delight*' the consumer.
- Integrate consumers with the local economy, and enhance their health and well-being; whether they are visitors to the County or those living and/or working in Herefordshire.

It is a coalition of key individuals, organisations and networks committed to providing strategic oversight including consultants, private businesses, the Duchy of Cornwall, National Farmers Union, Visit Herefordshire, the National Trust, Herefordshire Rural Hub, the Rural and Farming Network, Herefordshire Council and the Bulmer Foundation.

The activities of the Partnership during 2015 have included:

1. Meetings/briefings with key people

These are people able to influence the development of the food and tourism sectors in Herefordshire, including:

- Gill Hamer, CEO of the Marches LEP
- Dr David Llewellyn, Principal of Harper Adams, leading the agri-tech group for the region.
- Karen Usher, of the New University for Herefordshire
- Jesse Norman MP
- Cllr Graham Powell, Herefordshire Council
- Tessa Lukehurst, Coventry University Enterprises Ltd

2. Project and developmental work

- A major piece of work during 2015 was the launch of a report, supported by HSFTP, looking at the potential for community broadband schemes in Herefordshire. A survey of local tourism associations and businesses had highlighted poor broadband and mobile phone connectivity as a key barrier to promoting growth in tourism in Herefordshire. HSFTP commissioned Wansdyke Ltd to write a report which was circulated to a wide group of opinion formers and organisations in the county. This led to meetings with key agencies and personnel connected with the Fastershire project and Matt Smith became a member of the HSFTP. Jesse Norman MP raised the issue in Parliament and data was fed into two parliamentary select committees.
- The Rural Hub and NFU were able to secure funding to host a Rural Digital Support Centre, providing assistance to rural businesses from the land based sector. The initiative was launched on 3rd February 2015 and workshops were held for rural businesses.

- Supporting the development of a Community Asset Transfer proposal for Hereford Buttermarket as a means of promoting local food within the city. The bid with which the partnership was connected was invited to submit a full business proposal in 2015. Although shortlisted to the final two contenders, the bid was ultimately unsuccessful.
 - Work started in late 2015 to submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) on behalf of a wide consortium of tourism bodies to secure funding to write a Destination Plan for Herefordshire. The EoI was to be submitted in January 2016.
 - HSFTP supported the development of Herefordshire Community Network CiC to promote community broadband schemes within parts of Herefordshire.
3. **Participation in strategic partnerships**, including:
- Hereford Business Board
 - The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (MLEP) tourism sub group.
 - The Rural and Farming Network “Rural Business Day” in Hereford in November 2015.
 - Herefordshire LEADER Local Action Group (LAG).