

Herefordshire Sustainable Food and Tourism Partnership, 7th November 2016

Present: Jenny Beard (JB), David Curtis (DC), Andy Black (AB), Martyn Hammond (MH), Clare Greener (CG), Nick Read (NR), Matt Smith (MS), Cathy Meredith (CM)

Apologies: Christine Hope (CH), Rachel Jones (RJ)

Andy Black, the new Tourism Officer for Herefordshire, was welcomed to the meeting.

Previous meeting notes

The notes from the meeting held on 2nd September were approved as accurate

EFRA Select Committee

JB reported that the Select Committee had acknowledged receipt of the submission drafted by Rachel.

Fastershire

- MS brought maps of the connectivity enjoyed within Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. Although Gloucestershire had a higher proportion of its premises connected, Herefordshire had achieved much better geographical cover. Contracts had been put out to tender to extend coverage targeting the west of Herefordshire and the Cotswolds. After this there would be bespoke targeting to plug any remaining gaps. Herefordshire were anxious to retain EAFRD funding and were discussing this with Defra (currently £3m for the Marches and Gloucestershire). Funding was still available though clearly at risk post Brexit.
- An online survey had been launched and would run until the end of November. Responses had numbered over 2,000 split 50:50 between those connected and unconnected.
- JB reported on a government initiative that all businesses with a turnover > £10k would be required to file tax returns online from 2019 (digital taxation)

Herefordshire Community Network CIC

DC reported on the background to the project which had connected 28 businesses to superfast broadband as a community initiative. Those businesses were now saving money as they also ran their TVs and phones through the connection. They had begun to meet monthly as a user group to discuss the best ways of capitalising on the connections. MS was thanked for his support for the project.

LEADER

CM reported that funding will continue until 2020. £1.3m was available for Herefordshire but, after a year, only one project had successfully completed an appraisal and been awarded a grant. The fault partly lay with the appraisal process which was onerous and demanded high input from the volunteer members of the LAG, but the quality of applications submitted by agents was also felt to be generally poor.

Destination Plan

NR reported that although a decision had been made to withdraw the application to the Growth programme, because the revenue project did not fit readily into an application form designed for capital grants, the RPA had suggested proceeding anyway so the bid had been re-submitted. He was doubtful whether we would get a response this side of 2017. It was felt important to ensure that the

Destination Plan was supported by the Herefordshire Economic Master Plan which had been produced for comment.

Visit Herefordshire

- MH reported on VH's restructuring and introduced AB as the new Tourism Officer for Herefordshire.
- The new website had been launched attracted 25k visitors in September.
- The tourism awards for Herefordshire and Worcestershire, hosted at Eastnor Castle, had attracted 51 entries from Herefordshire. Sponsorship categories existed and a digital tourism category was suggested. Liz Hill of Rural Concierge had won a CLA Rural Business Award and Green Cow Kitchen was highly commended.

Herefordshire's Economic Master Plan

A draft had been circulated for consultation and was discussed at the meeting. JB undertook to produce a response on behalf of the Partnership.

Any Other Business

- Was there a need for a Herefordshire Brand to support local food?
- We should refresh the local food strategy, the original version was now out of date and really needed to be recast.
- It was noted that the Defra Great British Food Campaign would continue

Future meetings

- Herefordshire City Tourism Group would be invited to attend and report on activities.
- NR would invite Roger Morgan to talk about the City of Culture bid

The next meeting was scheduled for 10.00am on Monday 9th January at Plough Lane