



## Thame

“  
*Historic yet contemporary, with superb shops and surrounded by Oxfordshire's exquisite countryside, Thame offers the quintessential market town experience.*  
”



### Need for the Project

Thame undertook the Market Towns Healthcheck process in 2003/4. The Healthcheck consultation highlighted the importance of sustaining the economic vibrancy of Thame for visitors and residents alike and identified a real need to improve the visitor information on offer.

The key themes identified with relevance to tourism were:

- To increase the vitality of the town
- To conserve and promote the town's heritage
- To protect and enhance the town's natural environment

The Thame partnership was setup in late 2004 to take on the responsibility of implementing Action Plan projects that have evolved from the Market Town Healthcheck process.

### Key Facts

County:	Oxfordshire
District:	South Oxfordshire
Population:	11 000
Project Started:	2008



### The Process

The Thame Town Partnership (also known as 21st Century Thame) developed an action plan based on the Healthcheck findings and set up working groups to look at each section.

Overall the partnership has delivered on several tourism related projects to date. The economy working group which has the main remit for tourism created the Thame shopping guide of which some 22,000 have been distributed with a reprint underway.

The environment group worked on a Thame Walking and Cycling map to encourage better usage of these forms of transport for residents and visitors. The map has been circulated widely throughout the town and surrounding area, including two waterproof leaflet holders located at key access points on the Phoenix trail path.

At this juncture 21st century Thame contacted Hidden Britain for advice and guidance on marketing and developing their next planned project of the historic town trail. HBSE worked with a group of volunteers and enthusiasts to develop the content, plan the route and the scope of the publication.

The first Town Trail Leaflet was produced in September 2009 and based on the success of this publication two further trails incorporating different aspects of the local heritage were developed over the next 18 months.

### 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

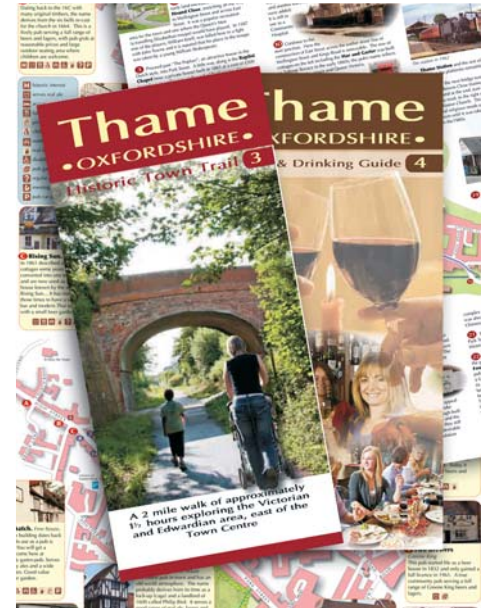
## Progress to date

### Who is Involved?

Volunteers from the Environment Group of the Thame Town Partnership have developed the historic trails project and although they have drawn in further support where necessary, it is this small group of able volunteers that have made things happen.

Key members of the group were; Alison Isherwood, David Bretherton, David Laver, Christine Dyrhoff and Tony Clark.

The group was supported initially by Hidden Britain South East, but also gained support from both Thame Town Council and South Oxfordshire District Council.



### Project Outputs

▶ The group have produced three "Historic Town Trail" self guided walks leaflets each providing interpretation on a different aspect of Thame's history and heritage for visitors:

- Trail 1 – Historic buildings of the town centre
- Trail 2 – The older areas of town and Cuttlebrook nature reserve
- Trail 3 – Victorian and Edwardian Thame

### Status of Funding

The initial leaflet was kindly funded by South Oxfordshire District Council who also provided funds for the second in the series.

The third trail leaflet was funded by Thame Town Council.





## Project Achievements

### ► Businesses engaged (51)

The group have had little direct business engagement in the development process, however plenty of the businesses have been very keen on the finished products. In addition the group are not charging businesses for any of the marketing opportunities created through the project to try and ensure fair inclusion for all.



### ► No. of volunteers involved (est. 5)

The core group of volunteers has been wholly responsible for the production of the three leaflets, although they have drawn in extra support when needed.

### ► 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; project planning, heritage interpretation, writing for the visitor market, commissioning and working with designers and printers, distribution and marketing.

### ► Marketing support provided

HBSE has assisted Thame in development of content for Ruralways and several other destination websites, both regionally and nationally.



## Hidden Britain Input

21st Century Thame approached the now defunct National Hidden Britain project, then administered by the Arthur Rank Centre for support in helping to promote the town. They were referred onto Hidden Britain South East who were invited to come along and discuss the development of the historic trails.

HBSE worked with the volunteers and provided advice and guidance on how to develop the format and content for the publication, its distribution and how to progress the project further. The group however were very pro-active and undertook the project with minimal input from HBSE, only coming back for advice and guidance when particularly needed.

HBSE also worked with the group on an informal branding exercise to develop the key messages to use in promoting Thame via Ruralways and other destination websites.



## Thame

### Going Forward

- ▶ The group is currently promoting the three leaflets widely.
- ▶ They have used a similar look and format to develop the “Thame Eating & Drinking Guide” highlighting the best of hospitality available in Thame.
- ▶ They are considering preparing a further extension of the heritage trail project incorporating waymarking and further trails.
- ▶ 21st Century Thame are also developing a new project aimed at developing a strong image for Thame and enhancing what the town already has to offer. This will include the development of a web portal and an iPhone application for Thame, which will have the capability to provide information direct to smart phones.



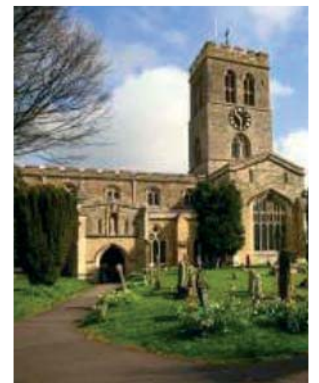
This case study forms part of a series evaluating the impacts and benefits of the Hidden Britain South East Project across the region. The Project is managed by the South East Rural Community Councils (SERCC) in partnership with Tourism South East. The Hidden Britain South East Project is funded by SEEDA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

### Lessons Learned

- ▶ If possible try to take on projects that are not only relevant and useful for addressing the local issues, but also are something there is real local enthusiasm for.
- ▶ When looking for funding always take time to discuss your ideas with your local authority, they may be able to help with funding or perhaps with expertise and advice.
- ▶ Almost everywhere has a historical story to tell, with a little digging you can find plenty

of information of real interest to a visitor.

- ▶ Remember to keep your interpretation manageable and relevant thematically, a series of linked publications is often better than one huge rambling one.



Further Information  
[www.21stcenturythame.org.uk](http://www.21stcenturythame.org.uk)  
[www.hiddenbritainse.org.uk](http://www.hiddenbritainse.org.uk)  
[www.sercc.org.uk](http://www.sercc.org.uk)  
[www.tourismse.com](http://www.tourismse.com)  
[www.seeda.co.uk/rdpe](http://www.seeda.co.uk/rdpe)

