



Hidden Britain

...Leading the way in discovering and developing responsible rural tourism

HB Article - Funding in tough financial times

Although there are plenty of great ways of developing tourism and promoting your destination, many will require money to make them happen. Printing, developing and maintaining websites, staging events, experiential marketing like samplers and free visits can all require funding. So how do community groups source the required funds to make this happen?

Until now the answer has often been public funding. Whether from the lottery, the Regional Development Agencies, Local Authorities, Parish Councils or Europe, funding has been available. Providing you had a good idea, could justify the need and demonstrate you could deliver it successfully it was relatively straightforward to access. But as the media constantly reminds us, we are living in uncertain times



Finding the funds...

The nett result of the credit crunch, the resultant recession and spending cuts is that in a time when visitor income is needed more than ever, funding to provide the impetus to attract these visitors is disappearing fast.

So what can be done? Bottom-line, communities need to be more resourceful, savvy and economical in order to fund projects. It's time to think a bit more specifically about what you need to do or deliver and how you go about doing it. Public funding is still available but is a lot scarcer, with a tighter window to access it, and available in smaller amounts. This means a different approach, breaking your project down into discreet activities or programmes and looking for funding to deliver these stages specifically. The community partnership in Steyning, West Sussex, made this approach really work for them, sourcing funding from various bodies like Awards for All, Interegg and the Chanctonbury Local Committee.

All of these awards were small and were directed to a specific end, for example: walking guides, the touch-screen visitor information kiosk in the post office, signage or visitor research. By taking a measured approach and looking at one piece at a time they successfully made the funding game work for them.

But what if public funding is unavailable? How can you source the funds you need locally? One option is to look to your businesses to contribute. However this comes with a distinct health warning, every man and his dog is pushing businesses to pay to be involved in this or that at the moment. You will therefore have to do plenty of groundwork on engaging and enthusing them in what you are doing.

They have to see the value in order to contribute, in their terms. This means outlining specifically how many extra visitors you are hoping to attract, the resultant increases in customer numbers and therefore revenue etc. At the very least you should be outlining the costs in terms that they can easily relate to. Over in St.Margaret's in Kent, they have done exactly that, by building a business group from day one and engaging them in the process, when it came time to reprint their promotional leaflet they were able to entirely fund the costs with business contributions.

Another solution is to develop a business group with an annual membership fee. This doesn't have to be very large but can store money away for when you really need it. Chilham (Kent) follow this model, with each member of the Chilham Tourism and Retailers Group contributing £15 annually to the group. These funds are then available if they choose to undertake tourism or promotional activity, or as matched funding if the possibility of public funding does come along. In line with the above point, this is presented to the businesses as an investment less than the cost of one meal, 25% of

one night's accommodation, half a pair of trousers or whatever is relevant currency to the business. They can then evaluate the potential benefits very easily.

Of course not having to pay at all is a vastly superior option, so look critically at what you plan. Are there any volunteers locally who would offer their time free to do it? Alternatively are there any businesses locally who would offer the service Pro Bono as a way of marketing themselves and raising their profile?

The community group at Westerham (Kent) have done exactly this; their website was constructed and maintained by volunteers (including the databases behind it), and Helen Brown a local designer was kind enough to offer to deliver their logo on a Pro Bono basis.

Just be sure that the quality of free work done for your group is high and represents you positively and in the right way to your target audiences.

Lastly, many communities organise fundraising events to support their projects. The list of possibilities is huge but some of the most successful include holding community fetes, organising raffles with prizes donated by local businesses, hosting a boot fair each weekend for a month with proceeds supporting the community programme. This kind of fundraising activity is a skill in itself and for more ideas on how to be successful, we recommend you look at the Institute of Fundraising's free [How 2 Fundraise](#) resource.

If you have a project you are looking to deliver then why not talk to us here at Hidden Britain, we have plenty of experience of fundraising at all levels and in a variety of ways. Our experts can give you the benefit of their knowledge and expertise to ensure you don't waste time and money developing ideas or plans that may not be effective.

What is Hidden Britain?

Hidden Britain helps businesses, residents, community groups and local authorities come together and work as a team to identify and develop the tourism potential within their community.

We help groups understand and develop what they have to offer visitors and working with them, turn these ideas into effective business and marketing activities. Then we help them to deliver the plan, attracting visitors who will really value the experiences and want to return.

Essentially, we help people share what they love about where they live to ensure long-term economic and social benefits for the whole community.

Get in touch to discuss how Hidden Britain can help your community realise its tourism potential.

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