

## **TOURISM UPDATE**

### **Overview**

1. Tourism not only directly supports the local economy, but also helps to raise the district's profile. It showcases our towns and villages; can lead to new business creation through enterprise and inward investment; improves business confidence and contributes to a sense of shared community. Increasing the use of under-utilised employment sites in the canal corridor and the rest of the district increases the physical attractiveness of the area, thus creating a virtuous circle of visitor numbers and vibrant businesses.
2. The Council has two tourism officers who undertake the 1 FTE post on a job-share basis within the Regeneration section. The Tourist Information Centre at the Subscription Rooms in Stroud is a separate service which responds to queries from tourists, visitors and residents as well as providing accommodation booking and ticket selling services, while we invite visitors to discover the 'Undiscovered Cotswolds'.
3. Recent business rate figures for the Stroud District show that £18,870,666 of income is generated through the service sector (which includes campsites and hotels as well as licensed premises, markets, restaurants, shops, museums, clubs and community and sports facilities). This represents 28% of the total revenue for the district. (VOA, Statistical Analysis of Numbers and Rateable Values of all Hereditaments, November 2015).

### **Research**

4. The district of Stroud is an important area for tourism. The most recent Economic Impact of Gloucestershire's Visitor Economy 2015 Study (South West Research Company, October 2016) shows tourism is worth an estimated £1.01 billion to the economy of Gloucestershire each year and **£148 million** to the Stroud District itself. 2.7 million visitors to the district are day visitors and, together with the 0.28 million people staying overnight, they generated 13% of the county's tourism spend. The 3 million visitors spending £148 million in the area supports an estimated 3,067 jobs.
5. VisitEngland has just published a new report on domestic visitor satisfaction and perceptions of the Cotswolds, online at <https://www.visitbritain.org/destination-satisfaction-and-perceptions>  
The research reveals that visitors to the Cotswolds are most likely to want to stay in a hotel. They are also likely to want to stay in 4 or 5 star accommodation, which indicates they are looking for quality. While we do have some high quality B&B and self-catering accommodation, there is a lack of 4 or 5 star hotels in the district. It could be beneficial to think about creating an environment to attract property developers to build 4 or 5 star hotels in the district.

Sara Chardin and Shirley Wood, Regeneration Officer - Tourism  
Tel: 01453 754307

Email: [sara.chardin@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:sara.chardin@stroud.gov.uk) and [shirley.wood@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:shirley.wood@stroud.gov.uk)

The research also suggests the Cotswolds could be considered a destination for older visitors, scoring significantly lower than the rest of Great Britain on the “for the young” statement. This is something we need to consider, whether to concentrate on our core markets or adopt a strategy to promote the district to a younger audience.

6. T-Stats research is undertaken by Cotswolds Tourism on behalf of the area. It allows individual tourism providers to collect and process a variety of information including: occupancy and revenue; festival and events attendance; retail and tourism information centre footfall, and even the weather. The results depend on the amount of information input by businesses on a voluntary basis. We are trying to encourage more businesses to take part in the Stroud District to gain more robust data.

### **The Cotswolds Tourism Partnership**

7. Research has consistently shown that The Cotswolds is an important brand, enjoying international recognition and a reputation for quality on a par with ‘Land Rover’ and ‘Barbour’ in terms of prestige. The Stroud District inhabits a significant part of the Cotswolds AONB, along with its hinterlands which include the internationally important Severn Vale and Severn Estuary.
8. By positioning ourselves within The Cotswolds for tourism marketing purposes, the district remains an integral part of the tourism offer for the wider area and is able to take advantage of international recognition and promotion. While we do not generally regard this as an area with the traditional ‘honeypot’ villages of the north Cotswolds, the district has a diverse tourism offer which encompasses an impressive range of destinations, attractions and experiences. To take advantage of this link to the Cotswolds, we have used the strapline ‘The Undiscovered Cotswolds’ to promote the Stroud District.

### **Promoting the Stroud District**

9. With the growth of YouTube and the huge increase in consumer interest in viewing video clips online and via social media, we commissioned local filmmaker Nick Turner, in 2016, to produce a 3-minute promotional film of the Stroud District. Our aim is to entice visitors from far and wide, and encourage people to live, work and play here. The film can be viewed at [www.visitthecotswolds.org.uk/film](http://www.visitthecotswolds.org.uk/film)
10. We organised a premiere night in February 2017 to launch the film with around 400 people attending. Our key message on the night was to ask the attendees to like and share the film on Facebook and Twitter. As a result of the power of social media, we now have almost 270,000 views of the film on Facebook and YouTube (directed from our website and Twitter). It has been viewed all over the world, drawing positive comments from as far afield as California and New South Wales. This highlights the power of social media.

Sara Chardin and Shirley Wood, Regeneration Officer - Tourism  
Tel: 01453 754307

Email: [sara.chardin@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:sara.chardin@stroud.gov.uk) and [shirley.wood@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:shirley.wood@stroud.gov.uk)

We will continue to promote the film and are encouraging local businesses to add it to their websites.

11. We promote the district using social media and have over 3000 Facebook followers and almost 4000 Twitter followers. We will continue to build on our engagement and increase followers. Follow us on Facebook [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and Twitter [www.twitter.com/DiscoverStroud](http://www.twitter.com/DiscoverStroud)
12. Our new website [www.visitthecotswolds.org.uk](http://www.visitthecotswolds.org.uk) was built in-house and launched in December 2016. It features accommodation, attractions and things to see and do in the district. Because it is a new website, it will take time to build up the number of page views. However, there was a noticeable spike in page views on the day after the film launch, with most based in the UK, but some as far afield as the USA, Australia and Japan. It is proven that adding video content to websites increases search engine optimisation (SEO).
13. We receive regular media requests from journalists direct, as well as working with our partners at Visit Britain and Cotswolds Tourism, who both assist with organising press trips from journalists from Britain, as well as from overseas. As a result, we've had features written or images featured from the Stroud District in all sorts of magazines, newspapers and online blogs. It is important to have a bank of high quality images, as well as up to date information from businesses so that we can feed these to journalists.
14. We are working on a new illustrated map of Stroud and the Five Valleys in response to visitor demand. One of the aims of this project is to assist staff at Stroud TIC and the Museum in the Park in showing visitors what else there is to do in the area.

21 March 2017