

Tourism provision by RMTG members. January 2024

- A number of RMTG members include tourism within their strategic priorities.
- A small number employ a member of staff with specific responsibilities for tourism (eg Corsham Town Council, Totnes Town Council, Swanage Town Council)
- Ross on Wye Town Council have developed a [dedicated tourism strategy](#) and [Ledbury Town Council](#) have a tourism working party who are drafting a tourism strategy for the town.

Tourist Information Centre

- Managing a Tourist Information Centre (TIC) is a common activity for local councils. Some have paid staff (eg [Appleby in Westmorland Town Council](#)) while others rely on volunteers (eg [Southwell Town Council](#)). A number have taken on the management of the TIC following a withdrawal of funding from the principle authority.
- Some councils support voluntary groups to operate a TIC. For example, [Kington Tourist Information Centre](#) is run by a voluntary group, supported financially by the Town Council and the [Herefordshire County Destination BID](#). The Town Council also appoint a councillor to this group.
- Whilst some TICs have closed, others are thriving. [Wells TIC](#) had a significant increase in both footfall (+7,000) and income last year. [Cirencester Local Information Centre](#) receives over 20,000 visitors a year. [Saffron Walden Town Council](#) attribute the success of their TIC to strong local support, with residents accounting for over 80% of users, visiting the TIC for transport and community information, event tickets and gifts.

Further Information Provision

- Many local councils maintain information points throughout the town with leaflets displayed in shops, accommodation, pubs, council office etc. [New Alresford Town Council](#) have converted a red telephone box into an information point.
- [Cricklade Town Council](#) have installed 8 map boards throughout the town. [Ross on Wye Town Council](#) recently installed two digital information points in the town centre which provide 24 hour access to information. [Shepton Mallet Town Council](#) are in the process of installing a touch screen information portal into the town library.
- Many local councils produce information leaflets, including What's On Guides, town maps and walking trails. [Wells Tourism](#) is producing a new accommodation guide which enables property owners to create their own online listings with associated pictures and QR codes.
- [Warwick Town Council](#) and [Wells City Council](#) have volunteer ambassadors, who meet & greet visitors on the street. Warwick also use these volunteers to undertake regular visitor surveys.

Tourism Marketing

- A number of towns fund dedicated websites and social media pages for visitors eg. [Visit Clare](#), [VisitTotnes](#), [Virtual Swanage](#). (Totnes Town Council cover the cost of both their town map and website through advertising). [Warwick Town Council](#) also uses a local PR company to promote the town.
- Many proactively promote local events. [Shepton Mallet Town Council](#) produce an events leaflet twice a year which is distributed to every household and 10,000 copies are sent out to visitor destination leaflet holders across the South West. The Council also hang promotional banners at roadsides and in high footfall locations.

- Many local councils pay to take part in broader destination marketing campaigns organised by their local DMO eg [Shakespeares England](#), [Visit Wiltshire](#)). Some have targeted specific markets. For example, [Corsham Town Council](#) advertises in the group travel press and are working towards 'Coach Friendly Status'. [Clare](#) is an accredited [Walkers Welcome Town](#).

Tourism events, attractions and infrastructure

- Some local councils own and manage tourism and heritage attractions directly. For example, Abingdon on Thames Town Council manage the [County Hall Museum](#). [Wisbech Town Council](#) operates two historic buildings and participates in Heritage Open Days.
- Many have developed walking trails throughout their towns. ([Holt Owl Trail](#), [Cricklade Heritage Trail](#)).
- Many councils organise regular events. ([St Annes on Sea Music Festival](#))
- A number are involved in town centre or heritage regeneration schemes. ([eg Destination Lydney Harbour Project](#))
- A number provide financial support for voluntary groups delivering tourism services. Thame Town Council support a local group running [Midsomer Murders Walking Tours](#) in the town.
- A number sell merchandise in their TICs or online (eg [Visit Warwick](#), [Visit Saffron Walden](#))
- Support for local retailers and town markets benefit residents and visitors alike, as do improvements to car parking, signage, local parks, public toilets, street furniture and planting schemes. [Langport Town Council](#) have installed four pontoons providing access to the river.

Partnership working

- Some local councils are involved in tourism working groups within their towns/parish. For example, the Cranbrook Tourism Group includes representatives from local tourist attractions as well as [Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council](#).
- Some also work in wider partnerships with their principal authorities, DMOs, business networks and neighbouring towns on tourism development and marketing.
- Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) can play a role. (eg [Herefordshire County Destination BID](#), [Saffron Walden BID](#)). [Okehampton Town Council](#) is working with West Devon Borough Council and other stakeholders on the feasibility of a BID in Okehampton which could take on the marketing of the town, alongside other things.

Visitor feedback.

- [Ross on Wye Town Council](#) and [Warwick Town Council](#) undertake their own visitor surveys and others draw on visitor data from other sources.
- A number seek regular feedback from local tourism businesses. [Corsham Town Council](#) have run workshops for local tourism providers to identify local priorities and marketing USPs. [Totnes Town Council](#) organise a Tourism Partnership meeting with local businesses twice a year to identify what support they need.
- Holding Councillor surgeries in public places can encourage direct feedback from visitors. For instance, Newton Abbot Town Council set up a stall in the town centre and often talk to visitors in the town.
- One respondent commented that drawing solely on feedback from local residents can lead to tourism being given low priority by the council.