

Sustainable Tourism Action Group

Wednesday 6th February 2008

South West Tourism Office, Woodwater Park, Exeter

Present:

Emma Whittlesea (Acting Chair)	South West Tourism
Alastair Mumford	Envision/Global Action Plan
Charlie Plowden	East Devon District Council
Emma Richardson	Devon Wildlife Trust
Leanne Crawford	DRN (Secretariat)
Lynn Gibbons	Future Footprints
Michelle Taylor	Teignbridge District Council
Rachel Mildon	Devon County Council
Robin Head	Devon Farms Accommodation
Sarah Holder	Devon County Council
Sarah Streecher	South Hams District Council
Victoria Hatfield	Exeter City Council

Apologies:

Alistair Handyside	Higher Wiscombe
Lise Hunter	Peninsula Enterprise
Lyn Winter	West Devon Borough Council
Cllr Mark Walker	Ivybridge Town Council
Mishka Lossky	North Devon Marketing Bureau
Richard Drysdale	Dartmoor National Park Authority

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Introductions around the table were given, with a brief introduction given from each member.

2.0 Scene Setting

A brief recap of the STAG workshop held in October and subsequent report was given for those who had been unable to attend. The workshop developed a series of priorities based on the work of STAG, the DRN and the outcomes of a Destination Management Organisation (DMO) workshop held during January 2007. The October workshop attempted to pull all this work together to try and reduce duplication, identify and map ideas and action that is already happening in terms of the identified priorities and provide the foundations for an Action Plan. It was agreed the action plan now needs developing, should be SMART and it was suggested that the format of the Tourism Workforce Development Plan document is used.

The emphasis of STAG will be on action and delivery of this action plan for sustainable tourism (in its widest sense, i.e. environmental, social, and economic). Although STAG will continue to be supported by DRN in a secretariat and facilitation role, the new STAG will be responsible to Destination Devon (the name of the DMO) and will be expected to report to the Stakeholder Operational Executive. Aside from STAG there is currently one other working group operating under the DMO – focussed on Skills and Training.

It was confirmed that each county are developing a DMO with 9 in the South West region, but they are all developing very differently. Devon's DMO structure recognises and links into the local Area Tourism Partnerships (ATPs) who are working and delivering at ground level. Marketing will form a component of the DMO role, but it will also have wider destination management responsibilities such as sustainability, quality and branding.

It was suggested that a representative from each of the ATPs is invited to sit on STAG's core group as they will be performing the main local delivery role. It was also suggested that as some ATPs already meet, one person could sit on the core group and then feed back to all ATP's via their own dedicated meetings. It was agreed that STAG could really add benefit by working on the gaps that exist within the priorities, with ATPs performing the main delivery role. It was identified that there is potential for conflicts and misinterpretation of roles and action, especially when using the term 'delivery'. However this should be minimised by a clear Action Plan and

diagram of roles.

Action: Rachel to circulate the structure chart of the DMO to illustrate how ATPs will link in, and to clarify roles.

3.0 Refining the Action Plan (mapping exercise)

An exercise to draw together thoughts on existing action, resources and indicators using the previously circulated proforma's was completed.

Action: Any further delivery, resource or indicators that were not noted during the meeting to be input in proforma and sent to Leanne. A reminder to be issued to all those unable to attend the meeting. DEADLINE 22nd FEBRUARY

It was questioned how TICs will fit into the DMO structure and take sustainable tourism responsibilities on board, due to their self funding nature, and how they could be assisted. It was agreed that TICs will need incentives in terms of resources, and there may be potential for the Devon TIC network to be reinvigorated. It was suggested that TICs could be made more technologically astute to reduce the reliance on printed materials. It was suggested that Envision could provide support here through some training as TICs may be eligible and that the DMO Skills group could address this. It was stated that TICs have been mentioned specifically within the Tourism Workforce Development Plan Report 2007-2009, which Neil Ryder of TACSS is leading on.

It was stated that Rachel is able to offer her time to pull together the action plan on agreement with the group. All agreed. It was stated that £40K is being sought for STAG from Devon County Council, however this is dependant on pulling the Action Plan together and prioritising the workload to enable an estimation of costs. These will both be presented to Destination Devon's Stakeholder Operational Executive for approval.

A brief update on South West Tourism was given in terms of the current review and achievements across the region and within other DMO areas.

4.0 Measuring Success (agreeing indicators)

A copy of the Destination Devon monitoring framework was distributed, highlighting the sustainability indicators. These have been devised from the South West Tourism regional indicators and it was suggested that they could be used as a baseline for Devon.

It was suggested that the research role of SW Tourism could be strengthened as a result of its current review, DMOs can link into this research and it may be possible to conduct some surveys more frequently, e.g. level of car free travel.

It was agreed that quality as well as quantity needs to be assessed, e.g. through extrapolating carbon footprints and the actual impact GTBS is having. South West Tourism is using REAP an ecological footprinting tool, which could be used to analyse different types of business, and it was agreed that Envision figures could also be fed into this. It was suggested that the Centre for Rural Policy Research (University of Exeter) may also be able to provide alternative data. It was agreed that basic indicators, such as pollution levels, would also be relevant for STAG, using data that is already routinely collected. The Environment Agency and South West Observatory were suggested as a starting point for this.

It was suggested that some indicators could tie in with climate change groups like the SWCCIP, who may have other datasets available, such as rainfall and flooding, and renewable energy.

It was agreed that a detailed set of measurable indicators and achievable targets will be needed for the Action Plan.

Possible presentations for future meetings could include ATPs to highlight work in local areas.

Action: Suggestions for other possible indicators and known data sets to be forwarded to Leanne by 22nd February

5.0 Communications

It was stated that it will be Destination Devon's role to communicate with ATPs, and that STAG should be able to link in with these mechanisms.

It was questioned whether there should be a separate green newsletter or whether the DMO newsletter could have a "green" page. It was stated that the communication format of the DMO has yet to be agreed.

It was confirmed that not all ATPs have newsletters and relied on members to disseminate information.

It was agreed that a database of contacts is needed, and that existing Devon-wide communication channels need mapping, however these actions should be resolved by Destination Devon.

It was suggested that as DRN have dedicated STAG pages within its newsletter and website, these could be used in the interim until a decision is reached by Destination Devon. Any information could also be sent to Leanne for circulation to STAG, for dissemination by members. All agree.

It was stated that PR has been covered within the Action Plan priorities; however it needs to be considered how these can be realised. Use of existing models and good practice could be used to give a local focus, e.g. South Hams Green Tourism Advice.

It was agreed that sustainability needs to be presented and sold in terms of business interest by looking at tangible outcomes, i.e. financial savings and carbon foot printing, with powerful *positive* messages that allow people to see clear benefits. It was agreed that a baseline for tourism businesses needs to be established for this in Devon so we can measure progress.

6.0 Next Steps and Terms of Reference

It was stated and agreed that the eventual role and focus of STAG will be dependant on the executive group, which has strong private sector involvement.

The Terms of Reference presented were agreed to be suitable for the interim and until the DMO is fully formed.

It was agreed that the core group membership may change depending on the action plan and final DMO structure, and it was suggested that there should be smaller working or task and finish groups set up to tackle specific issues as they arise.

It was suggested that the Action Plan should have a countywide remit clearly illustrating added benefit to all, with a core STAG group needed to drive and enable action. It was agreed that core group members should be consistent and active doers. There could then be a wider STAG group that could meet periodically to engage other agencies and partnerships. It was agreed that there should be clarification on the wider STAG and its role, however this can only be provided once the DMO has established its own purpose.

It was also stated and agreed that any communications should make it clear that the work is Destination Devon led, and not led by the County Council.

Action: Draft Action Plan to be circulated electronically for comment and refined by task group, to meet during March

Action: Next STAG meeting to be held in April after DMO launch and date to be circulated

It was agreed that the STAG Chair should be elected at the April meeting once the DMO decision on Chief Executive has been made.

7.0 Any Other Business

A number of suggestions were made, including:

- It would be useful to invite speakers to meetings to increase the knowledge base
- Could invite a member of the Somerset DMO sustainability group to give a presentation at the next meeting
- Meetings should be held at private sector premises
- The Action Plan should be linked to Environment Devon, with a possible presentation from this group. It was agreed that Charlie Plowden can provide the link top this group
- Linkages to be made with other DMO subgroups as they develop

Meeting Closed. Date of Next Meeting to be confirmed for April