



# Starter Pack

An introduction to Hidden Britain

# Contents

Introduction	3	What now?	13
About this guide	3	The handbook	13
<b>About Us</b>	<b>4</b>	The website	14
What is Hidden Britain?	5	The development officer	14
How does it work?	5	Contact us	14
Why is it needed?	5	Further support	15
Who is behind it?	6	Ingredients grid	16
When did it start?	7		
Where has it happened?	7		
What do projects achieve?	7		
Who does what?	7		
What do we offer?	8		
Membership	8		
Hidden Britain works!	9		
<b>Getting Started</b>	<b>10</b>		
Identify key issues	11		
Getting a group together	11		
Create a vision	12		
Set your objectives	12		

# Introduction

People have a strong affinity with Britain's countryside, appreciating it not only as a way of life but also for its many different assets including farming, natural beauty, heritage, wildlife, leisure pursuits and social well-being.

The countryside is a vibrant, living place and the government is supporting measures to stimulate greater use of the countryside for recreation. Visitors bring vitality and both wealth and employment generation opportunities to rural areas in return for the unique recreational possibilities that our countryside offers them.

As they are often the first point of contact with visitors, these rural areas play an important role in supplying a supportive visitor infrastructure, providing information and resources, welcoming visitors to the countryside and promoting local built and natural attractions whilst encouraging sustainable behavior.

Many issues can be addressed at a local level through visitor management.

## **About this guide**

This guide has two purposes:

Firstly to introduce the concept of Hidden Britain to prospective rural community groups.

Secondly to provide these groups with the information and tools they need to get started in making the most of their tourism assets in a sustainable manner.

It should be seen as initial guidance that leads you through steps to build a base for developing your own tourism potential.

It's up to you whether you undertake these steps independently or whether you would prefer assistance from a Hidden Britain development officer.

# About Us

Our countryside and rural way of life is changing.  
Tourism offers huge potential as a catalyst for positive change, fresh  
ideas, opportunities and a vibrant future.

# About Us

## **What is Hidden Britain?**

Hidden Britain is an initiative with the twin aims of encouraging tourists to go off the beaten path, exploring the more secluded areas of our countryside, and ensuring rural communities get the best return from this tourism by giving the decision-making power to the community as a whole.

Hidden Britain has two main guidelines: what we offer must be authentic, and provide a genuine experience of the area; and it must be locally created and run. This is summed up in our strap line: authentic experiences created locally.

Hidden Britain provides the guidance, advice, support and experience to help realise your vision of the people who know the area best. Because of this Hidden Britain can be as flexible as necessary, providing exactly what is needed in any area at any time.

## **How does it work?**

Many rural areas remain largely outside of people's perceptions of visitor destinations, despite having a wealth of attractions, history, culture, landscape and wildlife. In this sense are certainly hidden gems.

By uncovering and linking together all the things that make these areas distinctive, they can be made into attractive, colourful, and enticing destinations. Sharing them with a wider audience can put them on the visitor map, which will encourage interest, appreciation and increased visitor spend in the local economy.

Of course the focus here is on 'community owned and led', so it is the local people we are looking to for the inspiration, information and innovation needed. A typical Hidden Britain project is therefore a network of local people, organisations and businesses within a specific community, working together to promote their area in a sustainable way for visitors.

All the benefits return to the community and can be used to help address the issues of most concern in the local area. Therefore this initiative seeks to help rural communities by getting the communities to help themselves.

## **Why is it needed?**

In modern Britain the shift away from Agriculture as a primary industry has left many rural areas declining economically. Often local businesses struggle to survive, which has an impact on not only the day to day life of residents but also reduces an areas visitor potential. Rural areas are also vulnerable to

# About Us

other issues such as skills gaps, social exclusion, poor planning, poor transport infrastructure and lack of services.

Tourism presents a massive potential to be a catalyst for new ideas, opportunities and directions, which can all be of benefit to rural communities. However much of today's tourism revolves around large urban destinations, honey pot attractions, or particular themes highlighted by major players. This approach often leaves smaller destinations on the sidelines.

A further issue for many rural communities and businesses is a lack of both communication, and awareness of resources. Quite often an enticing visitor experience is already in place, but by working separately it is underused, or not exhibited to its true potential.

- \* Tourism is worth £85 billion to the UK economy and sustains over 2 million jobs in the UK.
- \* £10.8 billion spent on overnight holidays and day trips in the countryside and on the coast every year.
- \* Britons make 36 million overnight holiday trips to English villages, the countryside and seaside as well as 151 million day trips.
- \* 39% of known accommodation capacity in England is in the countryside - some 25,000 establishments. Most rural holidaymakers stay in self-catering accommodation, with 32% using touring caravans and camping, 17% static caravans and more than a quarter choosing rented accommodation.

(Source: Visit Britain)

## Who is behind it?

Hidden Britain is part of the Arthur Rank Centre, a charity serving the rural community and its churches.

The Board of Directors is composed of representatives from organisations who can provide a national overview, an understanding of rural tourism, and are practised in community development.

A National Executive provides national marketing and visibility for the brand, and develops national resources available to all groups.

## **When did it start?**

The Hidden Britain concept was originally inspired within the Arthur Rank Centre in 2000, as a wish to help bring about rural regeneration and economic development, to encourage local communities to be more welcoming to tourists and address the fact that many visitors would like to engage more with local people and their culture and traditions.

The name for the initiative was taken, with permission, from the British Tourism Authority's 'Hidden Britain' marketing campaign.

A 2 year pilot project was introduced in 2002 as a response to the effect of foot-and-mouth disease on Cumbria's rural economy and communities. Ten Hidden Britain centres were set up as a result and the project was declared a success by an independent DTI evaluation.

## **Where has it happened?**

Hidden Britain is growing all the time as new projects join the movement. In July 2007 there were 30 projects in the North West, West Midlands, East of England, Wales and the South East, with others at the development stage.

## **What do projects achieve?**

The size and scope of the project will depend on the time, expertise, budget, and manpower you have at your disposal. It is important not to overstretch yourselves, and to only take on something well within your means. Some groups have taken on a phenomenal scale of project, whilst others have kept theirs more modest.

Many of the existing Hidden Britain projects have undertaken activities such as: construction of a local website, walks guides, information leaflets, interpretation boards, maps, information points, marketing campaigns, branding, promotional events, recipe books, multimedia guides and visitor centres.

## **Who does what?**

In most cases a regional development officer provides localised support in the development of the projects. They guide, support and advise on all stages of the project from initial consultation, to forming a group, planning, funding, implementation, marketing and evaluation.

In areas of the country where Hidden Britain is new, once enough groups have expressed an interest, funding will be sought for a new development officer.

The key role in any Hidden Britain project comes down to the role of the community and volunteers. There will need to be a good amount of continuing local involvement for the project to be successful and more importantly

# About Us

sustainable. In each case a local management board will be set up to oversee the project to take key decisions and be responsible for administering any funding.

It is important to stress that, while the project will incorporate volunteers, it is preferable to engage professionals to produce the end results if skills are not locally available.

## **What do we offer?**

Whilst many communities are embarking on similar collaborative approaches to visitor management, Hidden Britain projects have the advantage of being part of a wider network in which a central national organisation provides support services, branding, and marketing opportunities.

We offer our members many services, some of which are listed below:

- Best practice guidance, support and advice.
- Provision of corporate identity and trademark logo.
- Marketing at national level.
- A national Hidden Britain website.
- Advice for groups on legal and constitutional issues.
- Public Liability Insurance arrangements through NFU Mutual.
- Staff and volunteer training.
- Network support.
- Network database of groups and their activities.
- Data and statistics collation and collection.
- Access to development advice.
- Provision of regional and national network meetings.

## **Membership**

For the first year you will have access to these services for free. We advise you to buy a copy of our Hidden Britain Handbook, which is essential reading if you are thinking of starting and running a successful, sustainable project (more on this later).

After the first year your membership fee will be £300 per year. The funds raised through membership are used to support and develop the services and benefits provided by the national Hidden Britain organisation. In particular they fund the ongoing marketing initiatives, the maintenance and development of the national website, and provision of support materials.

The membership fee can be raised in many ways, and we certainly would not expect one single business or organisation to foot the whole bill themselves.

# About Us

Many of the existing projects have included the first three years' membership fees as part of their bids for development funding.

Alternatively you could approach your Parish Council, Chamber of Commerce, Traders Association, tourism businesses or others for donations, or fundraise yourselves as a community.

Remember the national company is also a charity and exists only to serve the needs of the members of the network – not to make a profit!

\* Find more about existing Hidden Britain projects by visiting our website: [www.hidden-britain.co.uk](http://www.hidden-britain.co.uk). Each destination has a page with visitor information, a photo gallery, contact details and links.

## Hidden Britain works!

'Very successful community development and sustainability has taken place in some of the HBC projects in which I was involved, with the overall project providing a wealth of ideas and funding.'

*HBC Pilot Project Evaluation Report, Lake District Peninsulas Tourism Partnership Officer*

'It worked, in terms of rural regeneration... We need more of it.'

*HBC Pilot Project Evaluation Report, CREA*

'The project has been incredibly effective in terms of rural regeneration.'

*HBC Pilot Project Evaluation Report, Voluntary Action Cumbria*

'All groups have achieved tangible outputs and there has been a clear impact on the rural economy in a number of areas in terms of increased visitor numbers and job development.'

*HBC Pilot Project Evaluation Report, Elspeth Godwin, Voluntary Action Cumbria*

'We received tremendous help and support from the HBC Cumbria project. It has been a lever to a number of other grants, enabling Low Furness HBC to gain substantial sums of money for further projects. We feel the HBC is now fully sustainable and there is a genuine focus for the partnership between church, community and school.'

*Hidden Britain Low Furness, founding member*

'Hidden Britain has helped us to bring all our disparate attractions together into one cohesive whole, has given our group focus and has led to a strong community network of people dedicated to celebrating and promoting our area.'

*Hidden Britain Millom and Haverigg, founding member*

# Getting Started

By using this pack to guide you and through harnessing the support of local stakeholders, your community could benefit from careful planning and management of tourism development.

# Getting Started

## Identify key issues

The first step is often not as difficult as you may think. In many rural areas the key issues around visitors are often fairly easy to identify: lack of visitors, too many visitors, not enough paying visitors, one-sided visitor offer, short visitor stay etc. However it is important to have hard facts to back these up with.

The best place to start is to discuss with the local tourism stakeholders and businesses, they are often the ones who stand to gain or lose the most from the visitor experience. They will often also have relevant data easily available.

An open public meeting to invite views from the community is also useful here, as there are often issues outside of the economic realm that can be dealt with as part of a visitor management project.

If your community has undertaken a Parish Plan or Market Town Healthcheck then contact the local partnership for a copy of the final document. These processes are often an excellent way of determining key social, environmental and economic issues occurring in your community.

Contact your local authority or regional tourist board. They may well have data available or be aware of key issues already. Being aware of what other organisations are doing will help avoid duplication in work later on.

You may at this point want to embark on some data collection yourself, or this can also form part of your project later on as well.

Identify the factors that make your place special and establish the scope of what you can offer visitors. A useful exercise is to complete the 'ingredients grid' at the end of this document.

All of this information builds a picture of what is happening now, and provides a baseline from which to set goals, visions, and objectives.

Useful Tourism Statistics Websites:

[www.tourismtrade.org.uk](http://www.tourismtrade.org.uk)

[www.staruk.org.uk](http://www.staruk.org.uk)

## Getting a group together

The cornerstone of a Hidden Britain project is the local management group. Start by considering who might be interested in getting involved. You will need committed people who have the enthusiasm and drive to help the project meet its aims.

# Getting Started

However in tourism related projects there is no substitute for having the involvement of the local businesses, by having them on board it lends credibility to your group as well as providing key experience from the sharp end of the visitor market. Try to engage accommodation providers, attraction owners, pub landlords etc.; in short anyone with a stake in the visitor economy.

It is also worth thinking outside your community itself, representatives from local conservation or land management organisations for example may have an interest in being involved. Again they can bring key experience to the project.

Try to involve as wide a cross-section of the community as possible in the planning and implementation. By getting peoples views early you can be sure that you are delivering something for the benefit of the community as a whole, and also avoid issues with local politics later on.

Try to ensure you have a group of dedicated people so that the work load will not fall onto one or two individuals. Everyone should play a role.

Your local Rural Community Council has a wealth of expertise in community consultation techniques, forming partnerships and encouraging community involvement, and will be happy to offer advice and guidance.

To find your local Rural Community Council please visit the ACRE website at: [www.acre.org.uk](http://www.acre.org.uk)

## **Create a vision**

Once you have your group set-up try and determine a vision for your community - where do you want to be in 5 years time?

Try to make this vision useful, achievable, and attractive. Be optimistic, but also keep it grounded in reality! The vision should be a reflection of your hopes and aspirations and also provides the base for your objectives.

## **Set your objectives**

By now you know where you are now and where you want to be. The next stage is to think about how you are going to get there. What targets can you set that will help reach the vision you have decided on?

# Getting Started

All objectives should be SMART.

**SMART**  
Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and set within a Timeframe.

An example of a good objective could be: 'To increase visitors to the local museum by 25% by the end of next year'.

Objectives are also important as they help to provide measures of success for the initiative. Therefore at this point think about how you will be able to tell if your objectives have been reached. In the example above you could use the visitors' book, ask the curator to keep a head count, look at till receipts from the gift shop etc.

It's important to look critically at your objectives and weed out those that require manpower, time and budget that you cannot deliver. That doesn't preclude ambitious projects, but don't bite off more than you can chew early on! Community led projects often require much longer timescales than commercial ones, and often suffer from a lack of manpower.

## What now?

By now you should have a group set-up, a vision determined, and have identified some key issues and objectives.

Congratulations you have laid all the necessary ground work for a Hidden Britain project!

At this point, if you haven't already, you should get in contact with Hidden Britain who can help you to move things on to the next stage.

## The handbook

We strongly advise you to obtain a copy of the Hidden Britain Handbook which will guide your project in detail. It contains vital information about setting up and running a successful project such as:

- Techniques for involving people
- Important information on legal structures for HBC groups
- How to write a project plan, a funding bid and a marketing plan

... And much more besides.

# Getting Started

## **The website**

At this point you qualify to have a free entry on the national Hidden Britain website as a 'coming soon' destination. Visitors will be able to see details of your destination and read about your project.

## **The development officer**

Hidden Britain will arrange for your regional development officer to come and discuss the project. In areas where we have not yet appointed a development officer, your support will come directly from the national office.

## **Contact us**

Hidden Britain may be contacted at:

David Long  
Hidden Britain National Officer  
The Arthur Rank Centre  
Stoneleigh Park  
Warwickshire  
CV8 2LZ

Tel: 02476 853067

Email: [davidl@rase.org.uk](mailto:davidl@rase.org.uk)

Web: [www.hidden-britain.co.uk](http://www.hidden-britain.co.uk)

# Getting Started

## **Further support**

If you need further help or support here are some organisations that may be able to help:

Your local authority tourism or economic development officers; to find details of your local authority please see:

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

Rural Community Councils; to find details of your local RCC please see:

[www.acre.org.uk](http://www.acre.org.uk)

If your community falls within the boundary of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty contact your local AONB unit:

[www.aonb.org.uk](http://www.aonb.org.uk)

Your regional development agency; to find details of your regional development agency please see:

[www.englandsrdas.com](http://www.englandsrdas.com)

Your regional tourist board; to find details of your regional tourist board please see:

[www.tourismtrade.org.uk](http://www.tourismtrade.org.uk)

# Getting Started

## Ingredients grid

The grid below is indicative of the range of possible 'ingredients' of a Hidden Britain Centre. They are not in order of importance. Some are expected to be found in most HBCs; each HBC will assemble its own 'ingredients'.

	Main ingredients	Secondary ingredients	Supporting ingredients
Food and Drink	Farm visit Local produce on sale Farm walk	Local food in restaurants Farmers / WI market	Allotments being worked Pubs Local food shops (bakery)
Accommodation	B&B / guest houses / self catering within settlement	Hotel Hostels Camping / caravan	Accommodation within 10 miles
Transport	Taxi Good public transport Car parking	Bike hire Stabling Canal / marina	Travel information
Culture	Church building Historic re-enactments	Village trails Arts and crafts	Privately owned momentos Other historic buildings Local music or singing group Morris dancing Bell ringing
Environment	Footpaths Natural features accessible by public Nature trails	Public toilets	Clean public spaces Natural features not normally accessible by public
Events	Festivals Country fair	Ploughing match Steam rally Sheepdog trials	Open gardens Coffee mornings Concerts
People	Famous village people Churchyard characters	Church welcomers School children's presentations	Memories of older people Parish councillors
Leisure	Fishing Pony trekking Bird watching	Off roading Swimming Canoeing Clay shooting	Leisure centre Golf