



Chilham

“
Lying high above the valley of the River Stour in the picturesque Kent Downs, the village of Chilham and its medieval square offer a real taste of history, beautifully complemented by some of the finest countryside in the South East.
”



Need for the Project

Chilham was initially identified as one of six communities across the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in a Leader + project managed by the sustainable tourism officer at the KDAONB. The Project focussed on supporting and encouraging sustainable rural tourism in areas across the Mid Kent Downs that needed it most.

Following the Leader + project Chilham participated in various KDAONB initiatives culminating in the Intereg IIIA Transmanche sustainable tourism project. At that point consultation was held with all the businesses which identified:

- A Lack of visitor information on the village and its attractions
- A Lack of cohesive working amongst the businesses
- Chilham was dependant on outside agencies to promote the village

Key Facts	
County:	Kent
District:	Ashford
Population:	1600
Project Started:	2008



The Process

As a result of identifying these issues the KDAONB and Hidden Britain worked to support the establishment of the CTRG group, encouraging businesses and community members to work more closely together and manage Chilham as a destination. Research was gathered for a tourism

product audit to identify the businesses and key features of the area for visitors, from this a group was encouraged to form.

In order to get things moving the Intereg project funded the publication of the Chilham Leaflet as a quick win. With this under their belts, the group identified a series of key actions that would put in place the basic building blocks to support the development of tourism.

In the initial stages the group retained a fairly loose structure with only a nominal chair and secretary. However despite this there was plenty of volunteer input into developing and sourcing the content for the 2008 leaflet, with decisions being taken by the group as a whole. With the construction of the website and the ongoing costs that entailed, the group took the decision to formally constitute themselves, open a bank account and charge membership fees in order to provide for ongoing costs.

With the most recent projects the group have assigned specific committees to undertake tasks, thereby speeding up the process. The wider group is still regularly consulted but the decisions are taken by a smaller group.

What is Hidden Britain South East?

Hidden Britain South East offers support to rural communities to help them uncover the fascinating wealth of landscape, history and culture within Britain's countryside. What's really special is that the local communities themselves, develop truly unique and distinctive experiences for people who visit their towns and villages.

Hidden Britain has been working in the South East since 2004 to encourage tourism at a locally managed level. The project aims to facilitate rural regeneration and community development where it is needed most. The project is funded by SEEDA through the Rural Development Programme for England.



Hidden Britain

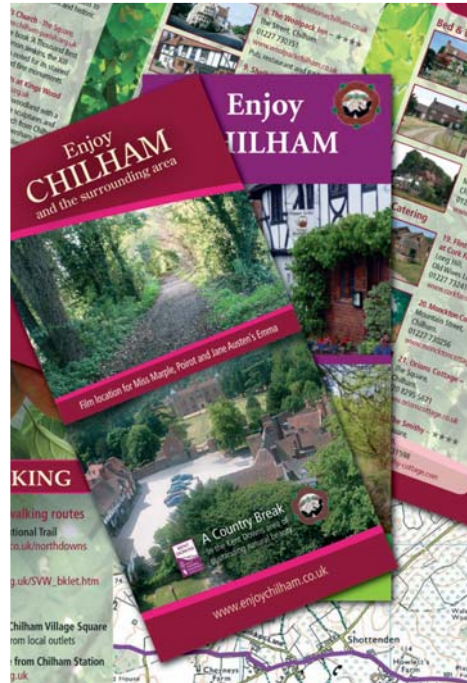
Progress to date

Who is Involved?

The Chilham Tourism & Retailers Group comprises 25 members drawn from local businesses and representatives from the community and local government.

This is a very active and well attended group with many members getting involved in direct implementation and planning of initiatives, as well as contributing financially to the work the group undertakes.

The current committee consists of; Peters Higgs (Chair), Tom Reed (Secretary) and Andy Mclean (Treasurer). The group has been supported by the KDAONB and Hidden Britain South East.



Project Outputs

- ▶ The Chilham Tourism & Retailers Group has been set up as a properly constituted membership organisation, that functions as a social enterprise to lead on and manage tourism for the village.
- ▶ The group have produced 2 incarnations of the “Enjoy Chilham Leaflet” an A3 folded to DL publication detailing the businesses and countryside activities available in and around the village.
- ▶ The Chilham logo was developed to use on their products
- ▶ The Enjoy Chilham website at www.enjoychilham.org.uk has been developed and is currently maintained by local volunteers.

Status of Funding

£2,000 was originally sourced through the Interegg IIIa Transmanche Sustainable tourism project to develop the 2008 Chilham Leaflet.

A further £2,000 was provided through the Kent Downs & Marshes Leader fund, which was matched by £500 for Ashford Borough Council, £250 from Chilham parish Council and with £500 raised from the businesses. These funds provided for the redesign and reprint of the leaflet in 2010.

Group Members contribute £15/year each which covers the ongoing running costs (web hosting for example) as well as providing for new opportunities as they arise.

The group has also held several fundraising events.





Project Achievements



► Businesses engaged (32)

The group represents and encourages participation from all the businesses (tourism or otherwise) in and around Chilham. Of these perhaps 15 are regular participants in group projects. The group's chair and treasurer both run local businesses.

► No. of volunteers involved (est. 25)

The majority of group members have volunteered their time and efforts at some point in the process, whether that is involvement in proofing publications, supplying copy and images, undertaking research, distribution, representation at events or hosting meetings.

► Skills & training accessed

Whilst no formal training has been arranged as part of the project, volunteers have gained skills and experience in various areas, most particularly in; obtaining funding, project management, destination management, commissioning and working with designers and printers, and research.

► Marketing support provided

HBSE has assisted Chilham in development of content for several destination websites, Through Hidden Britain the Chilham group also participated in the Flora pro-Activ promotion, receiving a double page spread in the Pro-Activ magazine.

► Other

The CTRG has set up as a functioning social enterprise, and providing the level of voluntary input does not drop is sustainable as a group for the foreseeable future.



Hidden Britain Input

Hidden Britain became involved via a recommendation from Tourism South East, and initially worked in conjunction with the KDAONB sustainable tourism officer to support the group and deliver the first leaflet (including creating some of the maps) and the logo.

Following on from this HBSE designed and built the Chilham website (with input and content provided by the group) which has now been handed over to a local volunteer to update. Hidden Britain worked with and advised the group on how to draw up their constitution and implement the group structure, as well as supporting the CTRG to develop the content for Ruralways and other destination sites.

Hidden Britain helped develop the funding bid for the new leaflet project and has been assisting in planning distribution and evaluation of the initiative, as well as continuing to assist with ongoing action planning.



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Going Forward

- ▶ The group is currently distributing the new leaflet widely across Kent and the South East, they have divided up the task amongst the members to spread the load.
- ▶ They have planned and developed a visitor survey they plan to implement between May and September this year to ascertain who Chilham's visitors are and why they come, and also judge the impacts of their work so far.
- ▶ They are considering preparing a Chilham press pack containing publications and information on all the businesses which they can use for PR purposes as well as attracting special interest groups.
- ▶ The group are also involved in one of the bookable products in the Kent Downs portion of the South East Protected Landscapes Project



Lessons Learned

- ▶ Small amounts of funding can make a big difference.
- ▶ Taking decisions as a large group can be unwieldy, tasking smaller sub-groups with responsibility greatly speeds up the process.
- ▶ Formalising a group with a constitution isn't difficult and with dedicated volunteers does not create too much of a burden on the workings of the group.
- ▶ Levying a small membership charge goes a long way towards allowing small projects to happen without having to always look for external funding.
- ▶ Having a large base of volunteers and group members means the work of any task can easily be spread.



The guidance from Hidden Britain that enabled us to drive our projects to fruition has been invaluable. We look forward to a continuance of the relationship, without which our group would be facing enormous difficulties in achieving its goals.

Peter Higgs, Chairman

Chilham Tourism & Retailers Group



This case study forms part of a series evaluating the impacts and benefits of the Hidden Britain South East Project across the region. The Project is managed by the South East Rural Community Councils (SERCC) in partnership with Tourism South East. The Hidden Britain South East Project is funded by SEEDA through the Rural Development Programme for England



Further Information
www.enjoychilham.org.uk
www.hiddenbritainse.org.uk
www.sercc.org.uk
www.tourismse.com
www.seeda.co.uk/rdpe

