

The Malverns

Visitor Economy

A Visitor Economy Action Plan
for the Malvern Hills 2009-2012



Content:

Action Plan Executive Summary

1. Introduction
2. Tourism Product and Marketing
3. Setting Priorities for Malverns Visitor Economy
4. Action Plan
5. Appendices

Malvern Hills District Council
Economic Development Department

August 2009



Malvern Hills Visitor Economy Action Plan 2009-2012 Executive Summary



Tourism in the Malvern Hills is a serious business. We are one of the most visited districts in Worcestershire with around 1.7 million visitors spending £80 million, supporting 1,909 jobs, and with national and international brands, the area has a strong product offer to visitors from local to overseas.

At a time of popular support for 'British tourism' during the tough times of a recession, there is a strong feeling that tourism to the Malverns, from Tenbury Wells to Upton upon Severn, can grow. Through a partnership based approach, the Visitor Economy Strategy for the Malverns seeks to strengthen key areas of activity that can make a difference to the Visitor, Industry, Communities and Environment.

Overall Aim of the strategy is to:

Increase visitor spend, local retention of this income and recirculation of money by tourism businesses, supporting local employment and businesses

The **Key Strategic Objectives** of the Visitor Economy Strategy are to:

- Build better partnerships to effectively promote, manage and invest in tourism.
- Raise the market profile of the Malverns with better targeted and focused promotion, to include web based technologies.
- Enhance the built environment of the three main towns as key visitor destinations and centres of economic activity
- Improve the quality of the district's tourism offer particularly its accommodation and attractions
- Increase the skills and training of those working in the visitor economy to deliver a top quality service.

The **Key Priority Areas** in the Action Plan are for those aspects that can make a significant contribution to increasing the volume, value and employment supported through the visitor economy of the district.

These Priorities are;

- **Marketing & Information**
- **Enhancing the Visitor Experience & Product**
- **Quality & Business Support**
- all underpinned by **Building Partnerships & Sectors involved with the Visitor Economy.**

The Action Plan also recognises that there are many areas of 'Ongoing' Visitor Economy Management, services that are provided on a continuing basis, particularly by the Town, District and County Councils, as well as by others, including the Malvern Hills Conservators.

Key aspects that the Action Plan will influence and deliver upon include reducing duplication in marketing (print and web) and increased participation by local businesses in quality accreditation, business promotion and local networking. Clearer communications between strategic organisations such as Malvern Hills District Council tourism team and Destination Worcestershire with local geographical and sector groups will be encouraged.

Opportunities to make more of the countryside with external funding and better packaging of product (accommodation, activity, event, booking) will be important to assist the area compete against other destinations. The key market towns will be crucial points of information, visitor services and locations of economic activity.

Whilst Malvern Hills District Council, through the Economic Development team, will lead the delivery and monitoring of the Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan, it is an approach for the district, for all involved in tourism activity to grow the opportunities for the next few years.

1. Introduction



101 Tourism Means Big Business for the Malvern Hills

For a relatively small rural district, tourism is a significant contributor to the local economy, accounting for around 5% of employment:

- Malvern Hills is one of the **most visited districts in Worcestershire**.
- **In 2007, some 1.7 million visitors** spent **£80 million**, supporting **1,909 jobs**
- Almost nine out of ten visitors are on a day visit; **1.5 million day visitors**, with **0.2 million overnight visitors** spending a total of **0.5 million nights**
- The **Three Counties Showground** generates around **430,000 people** attending 200 days worth of events during the year
- Outstanding countryside means the Malvern Hills recently featured in **AOL's** international 'must see' list of top ten visitor destinations, ITV's **Britain's Favourite View** and **The Ramblers** top walking routes
- New businesses such as **Malvern Spa** are raising the destination's profile as a short break destination for wellbeing; while **Heritage Lottery Funding** has supported the restoration of many water spouts and fountains
- Investment into the market towns of **Upton upon Severn** and **Tenbury Wells** is bringing back confidence following the floods of 2007.
- For a relatively small rural district with only 74,000 population¹ and 35,000 people in employment², tourism is a significant contributor to the local economy³.

¹ Office of National Statistics, 2007 Mid-year population estimates

² Office of National Statistics, 2008 Annual Business Enquiry/NOMIS

³ Malvern Hills Local Area Economic Impact Assessment 2007, The Research Solution, 2008

The **tourism sector is the fifth largest provider of jobs** in the district, behind; Public administration, education and health (6,500), Banking, finance and insurance (5,900), Manufacturing (3,900), Distribution and retail (4,000+). Tourism activity generates far more employment in the district than agriculture and other land based industries.

Trip spend per head varies significantly by the type of visitor, from £29.77 for a countryside day visitor to £198.50 for an overseas leisure holiday visitor.

Underlining the importance of the breadth of businesses that benefit from tourism activity; the major receiving sector of all tourism spend is catering £28 million (35%). Other key sectors are; retail £23 million (30%), attraction/ entertainment £10 million (14%) and accommodation receives £7.9 million (10%).

Of the estimated 1,661 actual direct tourism jobs, 662 are in catering, 381 in retailing, 304 in attractions/entertainment and 203 lie in accommodation businesses. Research around the country has shown that destinations with high levels of local businesses, purchasing services and goods locally, tend to have a greater re-circulation of expenditure into the local economy, with less 'leakage' of spend out to national chains beyond the region. This multiplier effect is likely in the Malverns area, implying that visitor spend has a high value in supporting the local economy.

102 Understanding the Local Visitor Economy

In promoting the Malvern area to visitors, we must present the best that Malvern Hills district has to offer to all types of visitor. In doing so, the local community should benefit from visitor activity. The broader role of the "visitor economy", rather than simply "tourism" is seen as a key driver of economic growth; the variation in definitions being:

- **Tourism** - a tourist visits somewhere that is outside their usual environment, i.e. coming from beyond Malvern Hills district. Thus it is *where you are* and *where your purchasing* takes place that defines you as a tourist. Tourists are considered as day visitors or those staying overnight, for leisure, visiting friends and relations, or for business. Around 90% of visitors to the Malverns are on a day trip. However, economic growth opportunities lie with the short break market as overnight visitors deliver higher spend per head.
- **Visitor Economy** – there will be consumers taking part in a leisure visit *within their regular local economy* – such as Tenbury Wells residents at the Upton Jazz Festival. When considering *all visitors or customers* within a destination, whether 'outside' tourists or local residents, the 'Visitor Economy' is described. This encompasses the aspects that affect the visitor experience: all the elements that attract people to the place, the quality of public places, parks, transport systems, architecture, gateways, parking, cultural activity, etc. These all require management for communities and tourists. The district

has a strong and varied product with many unique features attracting visitors. This is a leading destination for tourism in Worcestershire:

- The Malvern Hills are a focal point, forming part of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Great Malvern with its high quality Victorian architecture acts as the main centre of the built visitor infrastructure
- At the northern end of the district lies Tenbury Wells, a market town nestled amongst hop fields and orchards and a base for the environmental attractions of the Teme valley
- Around the Abberley – Great Witley area lies a cluster of accommodation, attractions and dining facilities with views of and from the Abberley Hills
- To the south of the district lies riverside Upton upon Severn, steeped in history, with the marina and riverside area a hive of activity, popular for boating and festivals
- Between these towns can be found tranquil countryside, colourful villages, and many cultural attractions and event venues
- Lying around the fringes of the district are associated tourism destinations and attractions at Ledbury/Eastnor Castle, Bromyard, the riverside towns of Bewdley and Stourport-upon-Severn, and the historic city of Worcester.

103 Tourism in Changing Times

Nothing stands still, and the visitor economy of the Malverns does not sit in isolation from regional, national and world wide events. Looking back, the 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak demonstrated the importance of tourism to the countryside, with closures of footpaths, rural attractions and the public shying away affecting all manner of rural accommodation, attractions, pubs, etc. Again, the 2007 summer floods devastated riverside towns such as Tenbury and Upton, followed up by profile raising with post-flood publicity campaigns and street infrastructure improvements funded by Advantage West Midlands, the Regional Development Agency.

Over the past few years, many changes affecting visitor behaviour and attitudes include:

- **recent national/ regional changes** – the creation of Destination Worcestershire joined up Destination Management Partnership, increase in availability of no frills flights to and from regional airports, 3G internet mobile phones, BBC Gardeners World annual Malvern Spring Show coverage, Malvern AOL 'must see', public awareness of impact on climate change/carbon footprint, River Severn floods
- **investment in the local area:**, Three Counties Showground equestrian amenities, Heritage Lottery Fund Malvern spouts, Tenbury/Upton Market Towns Initiative funding
- **new local tourism products** – National Trust Croome Park and House, The Fold, Arriva rail services linking Malvern to Bristol, Geopark status and walking route, MalvernSpa hotel and wellness centre
- **changing social demographics** – increasing divorce rates, second families, people choosing to live alone, role of grandparents supporting grandchildren in working families, healthier older population – all affect how leisure time and tourism activities are spent
- **growth in experience based short breaks** – markets are tending towards fewer long holidays, and more short breaks based upon 'self-fulfilment'. This can mean a person may take short holidays or day trips throughout the year based upon differing styles - adrenalin, wellness, relaxation, learning based or cultural - sometimes with friends, other times with partner, family or alone.

This Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan is set **at a time of transition** – with the country and world in the midst of a major recession following a decade of growth. This strategy identifies that domestic tourism can maximise the opportunities presented by changes in attitude, lifestyle and economics. If national forecasts are correct⁴, we are entering a period of increased UK domestic visits, 'downsizing' of holiday and short break taking, increased seeking out of authentic experiences, with greater value for money expected, still with high service standards. Shorter lead in times to bookings, with customer expectation of keener pricing and packages will affect promotions.

⁴ Visit Britain, World Travel and Tourism Council, etc

2. Tourism Product & Marketing



201 Accommodation

The following stock assessment includes all known accommodation including National Accommodation Scheme as well as eligible and non-eligible establishments. The council operates quality control around graded accommodation, only promoting through Destination Worcestershire the accommodation that is graded by the AA or Quality in Tourism for VisitBritain. It is estimated that around nine out of ten properties are graded, however, there are two or three larger hotels outside the scheme that account for nearly one fifth of all the available serviced bedspaces in the district which are not promoted through the Council or Destination Management Partnership.

Accommodation Stock in Malvern Hills 2008	
Hotel / guesthouse/inns	1,100 bedspaces
Bed & Breakfast/Farms	380 bedspaces
Self Catering	86 units
Touring caravans/tents	25 pitches
Static vans	25 pitches
Group accommodation	237 bedspaces
Second homes	200 units
Marinas	324 berths

Source: *The Research Solution, 2008*

The monthly occupancy levels achieved in the serviced hotel, guest house, and B&B sector in Malvern Hills in 2007 are above the county averages, with 44% bedspace occupancy (Worcestershire 40%) and 53% bedroom occupancy (Worcestershire 51%).

Attractions and Events

Attractions and facilities reporting attendances, which include both residents and tourists, include:

	<u>2007</u>
Three Counties Showground	428,000
Three Counties Show	90,000
Spring Gardening Show	92,000
Autumn Show	60,000
Malvern Theatres	260,000
Witley Court and Gardens	43,000
Eastnor Castle (Herefordshire)	38,000
Croome Park	37,500
Great Malvern Priory Church	30,000
Upton Folk Festival	3,000

Tourist Information Centres

There are currently three TICs in the district:

Malvern - fully networked TIC with full-time and part-time staff, managed by MHDC, 80,000 visitors per year

Upton upon Severn - networked TIC with full-time and part-time staff, managed by MHDC, 40,000 visitors per year

Tenbury Wells - Volunteer led, some financial support from MHDC, 11,000 visitors per year.

202 Tourism Activity Delivered Through Destination Worcestershire

Malvern Hills District Council, and the local authorities of Worcestershire jointly support, albeit to differing financial degrees, **Destination Worcestershire**, the Destination Marketing Partnership (DMP) for the county. This sub-regional partnership works with stakeholders from the public and private sectors, a board of directors and a three-year initial commitment from local authorities to provide a base level of funding and resources. Funded through a mix of Regional Development Agency grant, local authority budgets, officer time and private sector membership and advertising, the DMP aims to raise the profile and delivery of tourism services across the county. Destination Worcestershire's Vision is that by 2012 Worcestershire is firmly on the tourism map, recognised by a range of consumers as offering excellent day visits and short breaks.

Destination Worcestershire's strategic priorities are:

- raising awareness of Worcestershire as a destination, and generating visits
- strengthening the tourism offer of Worcestershire by creative product presentation, networking and packaging
- Reducing seasonality by strengthening out of season promotions & products
- Capitalising on Worcestershire's accessibility and the "attract and disperse" regional strategy
- Developing private sector support, engaging them in the marketing activities
- Ensuring that local authorities remain fully engaged as key players and as providers of tourism functions and initiatives at a local level.

Collaboration is seen to be the best way for the districts and county councils to produce economies of scale particularly with marketing, in order to have better 'reach' into the national and international market places with larger funded joint campaigns.

Destination Worcestershire has an anticipated budget of £1.3 million over three financial years 2008/9 to 2010/11, with a limited staffing base, to undertake; business and leisure tourism development campaigns, marketing, visitor servicing, quality and skills development, place branding, media relations, research, publications, the development and operation of databases, and servicing the national "England.net" marketing web presence.

For the Malvern Hills, the DMP forms the cornerstone of delivering the above services to the benefit of local businesses. Malvern Hill's Economic Development team service the DMP through financial annual budgets, data input via the Tourist Information Centres, and representation on the DMP Board.

203 Current Marketing of the Malvern Hills District

Marketing activity for the district, provided through Destination Worcestershire, has taken the form of representation within a dedicated County guide (Visit Worcestershire). This has been produced on an annual basis with a print run of 80,000. This publication is distributed regionally, nationally and internationally and is self-funding through paid advertisement. Online, the www.visitworcestershire.org website provides the major presence that includes the Malverns area. Both print and web support quality assured, inspected only accommodation businesses.

The main guide is also supported by an Attractions Guide and a Group Travel Guide, which is distributed to coach operators and travel groups.

From 2009/2010, the DMP will become a membership organisation providing a web based service, there will be no specific county guide. This will have some short-term implications on servicing visitor enquiries for print, for those who do not wish to, or have access to internet and downloadable files. It is anticipated that there will be a slow transition towards total web provision by 2012. There will be opportunities for businesses to distribute their own marketing materials and the introduction of a Bedroom Browser.

Separate promotion of the district is provided by the Malvern Hills District Guide. In addition Upton and Tenbury have their own dedicated guides. MHDC also provide an accredited accommodation guide covering the district.

Tourism websites

Web presence promoting tourism across the Malverns district is broad ranging, but arguably not comprehensive, and indeed confusing with several official organisations and other private commercial individuals producing tourism websites that cover the area.

Whilst Malvern Hills Council provides a significant series of web pages through the corporate website under 'Tourism', with updating managed through the TIC, there is no overall district guide in print or pdf format, as part of the joint arrangement made with the DMP. Full links are provided to the Destination Worcestershire website. Online lists are provided of accommodation, places to visit, eat and drink, held by a mix of MHDC lists and via the Destination Worcestershire hosted database.

At the individual Tenbury and Upton level, the tourism trade partnership websites provide focal information. The Tenbury Wells TIC website is serviced by a member of the volunteer staff.

Information

Malvern, Upton and Tenbury all have their own individual town guides. A series of factsheets and what's on guides are also produced by the District Council on walks, drives, features and personalities connected with the towns. These are distributed from the TICs and accommodation establishments.

204 Working in Partnership

Clearly, many individual businesses in the visitor economy contribute to the wellbeing of the Malverns area as a visitor destination. There are a number of partnership organisations that specifically have an interest in the development and promotion of the Malverns as a place to visit. These include; Destination Worcestershire, Worcestershire County Council, High Street Malvern, Great Malvern Association of Traders, Malvern Hills Conservators, Malvern Hills AONB Partnership, Malvern B&B Consortium, the Malverns Experience, Upton Tourism & Trade Association, Tenbury Area Partnership, and various festival organisations throughout the towns and villages.

All these organisations, and other businesses present the opportunity for improved connectivity and efficiency of communication. In many cases, there are overlapping members and priorities sharing the same core beliefs in the quality of the district and its tourism offer. Harnessing this passion, and providing cost effective promotion,

training and business support will contribute to growing the local economy. Hence, building partnerships is seen as crucial to growing the local visitor economy.

Conclusions

The Malverns receives good coverage in national media, having been recently voted as a top destination to visit by a leading internet tourism site. However, there are still some obstacles to overcome in getting the district recognised as a premium visitor destination:

- The small number of larger hotels in the Malverns area that are not quality assured and do not show up on the Destination Worcestershire/ Malvern database, imply that the area has limited large quality establishments. This weakens the area's image, when competing destinations, such as the Cotswolds have private sector led marketing of the premier accommodation establishments through the 'Cotswolds Collection'
- Alternative brochures and websites based around search engine enquiries for 'visit', 'tourism', 'Malverns' and 'Malvern Hills' tend to be weak, and several web links are to poor quality sites
- Web based information about the Hills and AONB is comprehensive, through the Conservators and AONB Partnership, however, it is provided to cover specific organisational areas and purposes, and whilst there is plenty of tourism information, the purpose of the overall sites are not 'visitor-led'
- There are issues of the inclusion of non-accredited accommodation in the Malverns guide produced by High Street Malvern that cause problems for the Council and Destination Worcestershire in stocking or distributing the guide. 'Inspected only' is an essential factor in most public/private sector databases that ultimately link to national quality based VisitBritain databases and promotional campaigns
- A number of the current print and web based marketing outside of the DMP lacks sufficient quality, market focus and comprehensive coverage that is appropriate to the positioning of the Malverns area as a premier destination.

Moving forward with an effective delivery of marketing for Malvern Hills through the various primary web and print channels will be a priority for this strategy to support the area's visitor economy.

3. Setting Priorities for Malvern's Visitor Economy



301 Introduction

In developing this new Visitor Economy Strategy, led by Malvern Hills District Council, there has been initial consultation with the industry, with a district wide Tourism Forum held in spring 2009 to air opinions. The key issues and emerging priorities have been used to develop the headline action plan. Overwhelmingly, businesses and organisations perceived that communication and localised marketing are the two aspects that require greatest intervention, and which can deliver increased tourism activity to the Malvern Hills area.

302 Key Objectives

- Build better partnerships to effectively promote, manage and invest in tourism
- Raise the market profile of the Malverns with better targeted and focused promotion
- Enhance the built environment of the three main towns as key visitor destinations and centres of economic activity
- Improve the quality of the district's tourism offer particularly its accommodation and attractions
- Increase the skills and training of those working in the visitor economy to deliver a top quality service.

The Action Plan recognises that there are many areas of **'Ongoing' Visitor Economy Management**, services that are provided on a continuing basis, particularly by the Town, District and County Councils, as well as by others, including the Malvern Hills Conservators.

These are identified under; Infrastructure, Facilities, Information, Lobbying and influencing, Business support, Market intelligence, and Funding and resources

Malvern Hills Visitor Economy Priority Activities

Underlying Ongoing Visitor Economy Activities		
Theme	Activities	Partners
Infrastructure	Public realm, clean streets environment, public toilets, car parking, signage, Britain in Bloom, Christmas lights etc	Town, District, County Councils, MH Conservators
Facilities	Tourist Information Centres, Theatres, Heritage Centres,	Town, District, County Councils
Information	Provision of excellent information, widely available, e.g. Tourist Information Centres, internet, libraries	Town, District, Councils, Destination Worcestershire
Lobbying and influencing	Represent the District's tourism interests to regional, sub-regional and local partnerships and other bodies	Town, District, County Councils, Destination Worcestershire
Business support	Provide and signpost to training and business development opportunities	District, County Councils, Business Link, Colleges
Market intelligence	Commission and communicate market research	District, County Councils, Destination Worcestershire
Funding and resources	Seek external funding for projects and programmes	Town, District, County Councils, Destination Worcestershire
PRIORITY ACTIVITIES		
Marketing & Information	Enhancing the Visitor Experience & Product	Quality & Business Support
Building Partnerships & Sectors Involved with the Visitor Economy		

This Visitor Economy Strategy also recognises that resources available from the public sector in terms of staff and finances are limited. Rather than developing a '101 things to do checklist', the Action Plan aims to achieve a number of key successes across a manageable range of priority actions.

303 Key Priorities

- **Marketing & Information**
- **Enhancing the Visitor Experience & Product**
- **Quality & Business Support**

- **Underpinned by Building Partnerships & Sectors involved with the Visitor Economy.**

The **Key Priority Areas** are set out in the Action Plan to progress those priority areas that it is felt can make a significant contribution to increasing the volume, value and employment supported through the visitor economy of the district.

304 Priority: Building Partnerships & Sectors Involved with the Visitor Economy

This Priority underpins all others, strengthening relationships across the district, to better understand and influence those involved in the district's visitor economy. Previous weak communication and engagement will be improved on.

Link to Key Strategic Objectives

Build better partnerships to effectively promote, manage and invest in tourism

Key Issues

- Need to improve communication channels between Destination Worcestershire/ Malvern Hills District Council tourism to and from other local tourism bodies to ensure clear and simple leadership and communication
- A need for more linkages, avoidance of duplication, communication and better working relationships between organisations from individual towns (Chambers of Trade, etc), sectors (B&B consortium, etc) up to county Destination Worcestershire
- Provide more information on accommodation and attraction accreditation schemes and have good practice/feedback from participants that it is worthwhile
- The opportunity and role for local organisations to have a representative on a district wide tourism group that can communicate with Destination Worcestershire
- Broaden the relationships with other organisations that influence the visitor economy, such as DEFRA, Natural England, public transport providers, etc.

Actions

- Build a Malverns area tourism network, strengthening the three town tourism partnerships and encouraging more local wide ranging participation, representing accommodation, attraction, retail, catering, hospitality, event organisers and other providers of products within the visitor economy
- Develop a district wide Tourism Forum to provide the opportunity for flows of up to date information, best practice, etc. with the function to feed representative views into Destination Worcestershire. To meet bi-annually, in early spring before the main visitor season and in autumn. The Forum will be supported by Malvern Hills District Council, providing Secretariat services.
- Highlight more success stories of local businesses to encourage others to sign up to schemes, memberships, campaigns, etc
- Encourage more proactive participation by businesses in Destination Worcestershire and other visitor economy organisations
- Engage more effectively with retailers, catering businesses, public houses, etc. as key businesses in the visitor economy, to encourage more participation in events, promotion etc.

304 Priority: Marketing & Information

Targeted and appropriate marketing is key, with the existing partnerships to work together to agree the content, design, and distribution of a quality, comprehensive and updateable web and/or print based guides to the Malvern Hills area.

Link to Key Strategic Objectives

Raise the market profile of the Malverns with better targeted and focused promotion

Key Issues

- Overcome lack of a focused single marketing approach to maximise coverage and to engage all visitor economy businesses in the Malvern Hills area
- Improved presence needed of the Malvern area tourism businesses within Destination Worcestershire print and web
- Generate comprehensive and high quality print, brochure and web based services
- Improve tourism packages – linking accommodation, events, attractions, travel – in order to make it easier to buy Malvern area themed packages

- Need for businesses to see proven success from marketing campaigns to justify return on investment and encourage taking part in marketing activity
- Avoidance of duplication with data entry for events, what's on, accommodation availability – need an effective link into the DW Destination Management System

Actions

In the short term optimise the existing websites to bring Malvern Hills and tourism promotion to the fore

- Strengthen relationship of MHDC and local businesses with Destination Worcestershire DMP – influence from within, as already key members
- Task group to be set up bringing together MHDC, High Street Malvern, Destination Worcestershire and other members to agree the format for a new and fully supported Malvern guide – web/print as agreed
- To include comprehensive business listings in www.visitworcestershire.org/ in order to provide cover where paid advertising/ links are not purchased
- Develop, local rural based marketing activity that can seek funding support from the Rural Development Programme England's Tourism scheme
- A need for increased information of walks, places to visit, things to see and do at gateways, eg rail stations, and links to key tourism websites
- Continue to support tourist information provision across the towns and district at key visitor destinations
- Maximise opportunities presented by the key local brands and specialist organisations to raise profile of the area, including; Malvern Water, Morgan, QinetiQ, Three Counties Showground and the independent schools.

305 Priority : Enhancing the Visitor Experience & Product

Link to Key Strategic Objectives

Maintain the heritage and landscapes that underpin the district

Enhance the built environment of the three main towns as key visitor destinations and centres of economic activity

Key Issues

- A need for further improvements to elements of infrastructure – signage and car parking, provision of maps, online, print and physical information between organisations such as the Malvern Hills Conservators and MHDC
- A need to make more of the sustainable countryside aspects of the district – for instance cycling, routes and trails
- There are fairly poor links between the district's three towns by anything other than car. Rail packages to the district from Birmingham or London are limited
- Overcome weak links and access from Great Malvern onto and off the Hills
- Make more use of 'water', 'spa' and 'wellness' as a product and marketing opportunity
- A need to extend the length of activity and spending opportunities for day visitors beyond 5pm into the early evening
- More to be made of packages based on 'culture', rural tranquillity, and physical activity

Actions

- Make use of organisations such as Malvern Theatres, rugby clubs, non-tourism businesses with international customers, and independent schools as channels to link with different markets – provide product familiarisation
- Improve connectivity and signage between the Malvern Hills, car parks, bus stops, and town centre in order to encourage more cross-movement of visitors and gain economically
- Extend the season, building on the strong calendar of events and activities to attract visitors through the year with off-season and mid week packages
- Develop stronger links between Arts/Culture, Tourism, Economic Development and Countryside teams in local agencies, e.g. MHDC, WCC, etc develop cross funded projects using budget areas linked to external bids
- Submit marketing and product development bid into Rural Development Programme England (Tourism) for an area wide investment into Cyclist Welcome & Walkers Welcome accreditation and grant aid towards facilities (e.g. secure cycle stores, drying rooms, marketing)
- Increase links with Geopark status, and middle distance walking route

- Encourage hospitality and catering businesses to link up with events, key attractions and town centres to promote early evening dining offers to retain day visitors and spend
- Develop 'stay on longer and discover' packages after major events (e.g. at Three Counties, Big Chill, etc).

306 Quality & Business Support

By supporting the growth in quality, professionalism, up to date skills and training, the Visitor Economy Strategy seeks to assist businesses to become stronger, more customer focused and more sustainable.

Link to Key Strategic Objectives

Improve the quality of the district's tourism offer.

Increase the skills and training of those working in the visitor economy to deliver a top quality service.

Key Issues

- Need for more knowledge about our visitors, through visitor research and segmentation; limited customer feedback gathered or used by businesses
- Businesses need to add value to their products, build packages and flexibility to suit different customer types
- A need to increase participation in accommodation quality accreditation scheme to enable the district's comprehensive presentation of its range of accommodation. Particularly to include the larger establishments with greater bedstock
- Increase awareness and take up of Green Tourism Business Scheme – as this fits the product and clientele of this area
- Limited profile of food catering quality and 'scores on doors' scheme
- A lack of networking and product familiarity between many tourism business across the district

- A need to improve the product familiarity for many new/ young employees and businesses - to better know and cross-sell the area
- Business support is available but take up rate could be higher; e.g. subsidised quality inspection accreditation for accommodation businesses

Actions

- Encourage businesses to improve standards, making use of online peer-to-peer reviews (eg Tripadvisor, feedback on lastminute.com, EnjoyEngland etc.)
- Build support between businesses in area, sharing best practice and providing mutual mystery shop/advice between operators to increase quality of more businesses
- Build advice sharing local networks within the local 'tourism associations'
- Encouragement of accommodation businesses, particularly the larger businesses, to participate in the quality assurance scheme
- Host events and provide signposting to businesses for local training providers, Business Link, suppliers to grow the skill sets and develop staff
- Provide 'Welcome to Excellence' style customer care training to new range of 'ambassadors' across retail, taxis, Wardens, etc businesses to improve customer focus

4. Action Plan

Malvern Hills Visitor Economy Action Plan 2009-2012

The four key areas of activity are set out on the following pages as key actions, with indicative lead body, partners, and timescale for implementation.

Key to Partners:

AONB	Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership	AWM	Advantage West Midlands
DW	Destination Worcestershire	HMS	High Street Malvern
MHC	Malvern Hills Conservators	MHDC	Malvern Hills District Council
WCC	Worcestershire County Council		

Activity	Action	Lead	Partners	Timescale
Develop Malverns area Tourism Network	Share info/ liaise with representative groups.	MHDC	Farmstay Upton Town Partnership/ Upton Town Tourism Association/ High Street Malvern/ Tenbury Area Partnership/ B&B Consortium	Start 2009-10 Ongoing
Develop bi-annual Tourism Forum	Organise, invitations, speakers, venues	MHDC and emerging Tourism Network	Existing tourism/ own consortia	Start 2009-10 Ongoing
Hold familiarisation meetings	Develop these sectors awareness of	MHDC and	GMAT/ UTTA/	Start 2009-10 Ongoing

with retail, catering, sports, arts etc businesses/ organisations	their role and opportunity through tourism	emerging Tourism Network	Tenbury Chamber Sports Partnership	
Encourage more proactive participation by businesses in Destination Worcestershire		Destination Worcs DW	MHDC	Start 2009-10 Ongoing
Develop product familiarisation for local businesses and independent schools	Support local economy by using intermediary businesses to encourage business visitors/families to stay and visit. Letter/ e bulletin.	MHDC		Start 2009-10 Ongoing
Optimise existing websites	Bring keywords, such as Malvern Hills, visit and tourism to higher optimisation/ranking	MHDC DW	HSM	Immediate 2009
Set up marketing task group to develop single marketing focus for area	Agree the format for a new and fully supported Malvern web/ print	MHDC	HSM, DW and others	Set up 2009-10 Deliver 2010-11
Produce comprehensive business listings in www.visitworcestershire.org/	Provide line entry, if not full web listings and links covering district	MHDC, DW		2009-10
Evaluation of business conversion/ bookings through DW and High Street Malvern guides	Generate conversion analysis to then prove sales value to encourage industry take up – E Sources/ Forum	MHDC, DW High Street Malvern		2010-11
Develop local rural based marketing linked with product development	To build funding support from the Rural Development Programme England's Tourism programme –	MHDC AONB		

	Tourism West Midlands			
Seek new linkages of key local brands, eg Malvern Water, Morgan	Explore with AWM greater use of regional distinctive products in marketing	MHDC	DW Product companies Tourism West Midlands	2010-11
Develop new accredited accommodation list	Distribute from TIC's and mail out to public demand	MHDC		2010/11
Improvements to infrastructure	Signage, car parking, provision of maps, online, print and physical information between organisations	MHDC MHC WCC	Town Councils	2010-11
Improve connectivity and signage between the Malvern Hills and town centre	Improve gateways, links, car parks, bus stops, signage and footpaths to make flows clear	MHDC MHC WCC	Town Council	2010-11
Develop off-season and mid week packages to extend the season	Build on the strong calendar of events and activities and use niche products and themes	MHDC DW/ Local Industries	MHDC DW	2010-11
Develop stronger links between Tourism, Economic Development, Arts and Countryside teams	Use local agencies to creatively package and link across funding programmes Events	MHDC WCC		2009-10 ongoing
Submit marketing/ product development bid into Rural Development Programme England (Tourism)	Package bid for area wide investment into say, Event driven promotion	MHDC WCC	AONB	2009-10
Encourage hospitality and catering businesses to promote early evening economy	Link up with events, key attractions and town centres dining offers to retain day visitors and spend	MHDC	Town consortia	2009-10

Develop 'stay on longer and discover' packages	Work with major events (e.g. Three Counties, Big Chill, etc) and businesses to extend stay	Tourism network MHDC	Town consortia	2010-11
Hold workshops for businesses to improve standards in response to customer feedback	Make use of peer-to-peer reviews and encourage businesses to actively seek feedback and know how to deal with it	MHDC Business Link		2010-11
Build self-help support between businesses in area, sharing best practice and providing mutual mystery shop/advice	Encourage local businesses to be 'critical friend' to each other	Tourism network	Town/sector consortia	2009-10
Seek full participation in quality assured accommodation schemes	Encourage through grant programme leading and larger businesses not in scheme to join, and improve district coverage in promotions	MHDC DW		2009-10
Encourage participation in Green Business Tourism Scheme/ Inform tourism businesses on ways to save energy	Link with RDPE packaging and encourage businesses, to make sustainability a USP for area. Work with external agencies to support and inform tourism businesses	DW MHDC Marches Energy	AONB MHDC	2009 2010-11
Support business skills development events and training	Work with Business Link, Sector Skills Councils, etc to promote training opportunities	Business Link, Training schemes	MHDC	2009-10 ongoing
Provide 'Welcome to Excellence' style customer care training	Promote scheme to broader visitor economy businesses – taxi drivers, Wardens, retail	Business Link MHDC		2010-11

Appendix A (SWOT) Analysis - Malvern Hills District Tourism Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Analysis of the district's tourism product, resources and positioning assists in developing the priorities for development. Key Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats include:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malvern Hills AONB/environment • Three Counties Showground/major events • Malvern Theatres • Independent Schools with family visitors • Quality connotation and reputation • Morgan cars/factory • Malvern Water • Location – access to motorway • International businesses and business tourism (Malvern in particular) • Good TV/media coverage – essential England/Spring Show, etc via DW • Rivers Severn and Teme • Variety of products • Heritage/architecture • Peace and tranquillity • Good walking country • Edward Elgar • Music and arts festivals/events • TIC coverage in all three market towns • Character of people/'alternativeness' • Strong independent businesses – few national chains • Local distinctiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a definitive promotional guide • Limited/poor internet marketing presence and optimisation outside of DW site • Duplicated 'Malverns'/ 'Tourism' presence • Maps and downloadable information • Major hotels not Quality Accredited, do not appear in local/county databases • Town centre Malvern empty at night • No passing footfall in towns • Malvern town centre car and coach parking – availability and awareness • Blurred geographical location – part of Worcestershire / Herefordshire • Negative media coverage during floods • Limited budget for tourism activity • Mixed awareness and support for Destination Worcestershire • Not enough child/family friendly focus in the area • Some limitations in communication from tourism organisations to businesses and between tourism businesses • Rail link, timetabling limited • First impressions arriving in the towns are weak

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make more of events and calendar at the Three Counties Showground • Social networking to promote to more & younger audiences • Eastnor Castle growing in profile • Croome Court National Trust – a developing regional asset • The cross-border links allow promotion with Herefordshire • Evenings and ‘café society’ street environment • Better partnerships with tourism, arts, countryside and market towns organisations • Make more of the three market towns events and festivals • Improved future rail links (dual-ing Cotswolds line) • Geopark status and middle distance walk route • Coach excursions group travel market • More reliable Sunday opening in the towns • Increased business/conference tourism • Make greater linkage between the key ‘attractors’ and rest of the destination • Green Business Tourism Scheme/ eco-accreditation appropriate to the area • Increasing UK domestic tourism • Bring retailers and caterers better into tourism promotion • Increase local residents’ pride and awareness of what is here to see and do • Develop a ‘buzz’ to the streets of Malvern • Developing University population in Worcester – attract visiting friends/ family • High Street Malvern activities • Increasing quality and reputation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor co-ordination of events/clashes with other county/regional events • Weather – as significant outdoor activity/environment based attractions • Potential reduction in tourism support/ budgets by Malvern Hills District Council • Other competing destinations spend more and increase their profile ahead of the Malverns • Further riverside floods affecting more than just Upton • Loss of entrepreneurs and innovators to other destinations • Skills and changing labour market • Affected by local and regional funding cuts • Business rents • Fragile nature of voluntary sector tourism provision

