



Review of Tourism with Specific Reference to Tourist Information Centres

**Report by the Tourism
Review Group
February 2008**

**For presentation to the Community
Services Scrutiny Committee on
-18 April 2008**

...Putting people first
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...Protecting our future

Quality life in a quality county

Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Review of Tourism With Specific Reference to Tourist Information Centres

1. Introduction

1.1 At its meeting on 20th December 2006, the Community Services Scrutiny Committee resolved to add a review of tourism to its work programme. The review was to focus on how tourism is managed in the County with particular reference to the operation of the Tourist Information Centres (TICs). However, the committee agreed to delay the review until the new Destination Management Partnership (DMP) had become more fully established.

1.2 In May 2007, an Audit Commission inspection report on the Council's Cultural Services included the following:

1.2.1 The Council does not always know the extent to which its initiatives to promote access in Cultural Services are effective, local indicators and performance measures being insufficiently developed;

1.2.2 Value for money (VFM) was not fully integrated into the delivery of Cultural Services;

1.2.3 Accordingly the Council should institute a means of measuring the effectiveness of tourism

1.3 In response to this report, the Council adopted an Action Plan which included examination of the cost of TICs, linked to the Scrutiny Review of Tourism and a potential remodelling of TICs.

1.4 The scoping statement for the Scrutiny Review (Annex 1), including terms of reference, was approved by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 2nd July 2007. It was agreed that the Review Group would comprise five Members: Councillor TM James (Chairman); Councillor MAF Hubbard; Councillor B Hunt; Councillor PM Morgan and Councillor RH Smith.

1.5 The review was undertaken between 4th September and 17th January 2008. This report summarises its findings concluding with its recommendations to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

1.6 The Review Group would like to express its thanks to the many people who have presented verbal evidence to the Review Group, the providers who responded to the survey questionnaire and those who have provided further information and/or data analysis as required.

2. Method of Gathering Information

2.1 The Review Group agreed a calendar of meetings in order to collect the evidence to complete the review. Evidence that was considered included the following:

2.1.1 Face to face interviews. A series of interviews took place with key local and regional tourism representatives, tourism providers in the County, representatives of the DMP and relevant Council officers. The list of interviewees is at Annex 2. Members of the Review Group proposed and agreed questions for each of the interviewees

based on the issues raised in the scoping statement and linked to the key outcomes of the review.

2.1.2 Survey questionnaire. The Review Group was anxious to gather as many views as possible in relation to tourism in the County. In consultation with the Council's Research Section a brief questionnaire (Annex 3) was devised and distributed to approximately 1,500 tourism providers in Herefordshire in the quarterly newsletter distributed on 22nd October 2007. A total of 63 completed questionnaires were returned. The Review Group accepted that no conclusions could be drawn from such a small percentage return. Nevertheless the completed returns provided some interesting comments which have been passed to the DMP and officers.

2.1.3 Visits to local and neighbouring TICs. Members of the Review Group were already acquainted with the majority of the County's TICs. In order to ascertain at first hand what the County was offering in terms of the other TICs, individuals from the Review Group paid visits to the Bromyard, Kington and Leominster offices; for comparison purposes, members also visited Ludlow TIC and the award winning Shrewsbury TIC in Shropshire.

2.1.4 Financial details. The Directorate budget is required to reduce by 5% (£0.5M) over the next three years, but the scrutiny review was neither cost-driven nor required to deliver specified savings. Instead, it was tasked to identify realistic improvements in cost-effectiveness and hence VFM.

2.1.5 Written Evidence. The Review Group considered a wealth of written evidence to assist their deliberations including relevant local and regional strategies, best practice information and comparison information.

3. Tourism: the Wider Picture

3.1 Drawing upon an invaluable assessment of the future of tourist information services in England and the Region¹, which confirmed the continuing need for local TICs but also underlined the importance of an effective system for handling telephone and e-mail enquiries, the Review Group had the benefit of a long discussion with the Cluster Manager, Tourism West Midlands.

3.2 He provided a copy of an assessment of issues facing TICs in the Heart of England region and confirmed the following broad themes:

3.2.1 Visitors are increasingly doing their research and booking before arrival and therefore are less likely to use a TIC. However, the recent decline in numbers of visits to TICs ("footfall") does not invalidate the TIC model and appears to be stabilising;

3.2.2 Accommodation bookings through TICs are decreasing, as are visitor numbers generally;

3.2.3 Customers now consulting a TIC expect more detailed and more authoritative information extending for example to dietary issues and disabled access;

3.2.4 Tourism service providers need to focus upon the provision and updating of web site information, with links to attractions, destinations and supporting services. TIC staffs need to be able to respond promptly, effectively and comprehensively to telephone and e-mail enquiries;

¹ Source: Tourist Information in England, A National Partnership: Visit Britain February 2007 and West Midlands Tourist Information Study, Part 1, 2005

3.2.5 Herefordshire had done well to establish the Destination Management Partnership (DMP), which was well-regarded;

3.2.6 Tourism West Midlands were in the process of developing key performance indicators to measure tourism volume and value throughout the region. Data collection was scheduled to start in December 2007

3.2.7 Council officers are currently working on similar performance indicators based on the Cambridge Economic Impact Assessment model 2004. The annual Visitor Economic Impact study is well established and gives the Council an insight into the effectiveness of its initiatives to improve tourism services.

4. The Value of Tourism in Herefordshire

4.1 The tourism industry in Herefordshire is worth £291 million to the economy of the County². The industry is primarily made up of small/medium size operators who between them employ approximately 6,000 people in the County.

4.2 The Councils current budget for tourism services is summarised at Annex 4. Relating these data to the value of tourism in the County, the Review Group concluded that current expenditure was both moderate and justified.

5. Previous Management of Tourism in Herefordshire

5.1 The erstwhile County tourist association - the Association for the Promotion of Herefordshire (APH) - and Herefordshire Council's tourism team had historically provided the tourism service jointly. This partnership enabled the private and public sectors to work together to obtain funding to assist in delivering the best possible tourism service in the County. APH published the main County tourism guide and Herefordshire Council undertook all the marketing activity, promoted and distributed the guide, operated the tourist information centres and developed the tourism product in the County.

5.2 In 2002 a bid for European Funding was successful and Herefordshire Tourism, in partnership with APH, delivered a £1.3 million tourism project until March 2005. This project included the identification of new markets to promote the County; re-branding as a 'Green Sustainable and Active County'; developing specific products e.g. walking with a Walking Festival; food tourism with the Flavours of Herefordshire scheme; and the conference, travel trade and international markets. The funding also enabled the partnership to offer training and business support to the operators in the County by providing funding and up to date research on trends and marketing opportunities.

6. The Destination Management Partnership – Visit Herefordshire

6.1 In 2004, Advantage West Midlands launched a Visitor Economy Strategy which suggested that each sub region of the West Midlands should set up a formal Destination Management Partnership (DMP). This was in essence already being done in Herefordshire but there was no formal Board of Directors and Service Level Agreement with the Council. During the following 18 months a consultation process was entered into with all of the tourism operators in the County to find out whether they would be prepared to work with such a partnership and in March 2006 the new DMP, 'Visit Herefordshire' was launched.

6.2 The Visit Herefordshire Board has 15 members: 7 from the private sector, all nominated and elected by the different sectors, and 7 from the public sector nominated by Herefordshire Council and including 2 Councillors plus representatives from The National

Trust, English Heritage, Farming Union, Community Sector and the Chamber of Commerce. There is an independent chair of the Board who is neither Councillor nor a current tourism operator.

6.3 During the first year the Board has been involved in a number of projects including:

6.3.1 Production of the main visitor guides;

6.3.2 Development of a membership organisation;

6.3.4 Fund raising through sponsorship and grant aid – in 2006 a grant of £30k was received from AWM for a 'Green Herefordshire' project and £60k from Leader + for the Food Festival and Flavours of Herefordshire;

6.3.5 Product Development including the cider route; Green Tourism Awards; Food Festival and Walking Festival;

6.3.6 Marketing activity both domestic and overseas raising the profile of the County; and,

6.3.7 Cross County marketing with the Forest of Dean and Shropshire.

6.4 In financial terms Herefordshire Council contributes £106,000 into the budget of the DMP together with staff costs for 4 full time and 2 part time officers together with office costs. The income generated through membership and advertising in 2007/8 amounted to £105,000 from the private sector. Council officers work in close liaison with the DMP and this should continue.

6.5 The Chairman, Visit Herefordshire, was content with the DMP's progress to date and felt that marketing was going in the right direction. The Review Group agreed. Membership of VH was currently 340 and expected to rise to about 500 in due course.

6.6 The Scrutiny Review Group noted the possibility of further integrating the Council's delivery of tourism services into the DMP structure. The Review Group came to the view that whereas marketing could and should be primarily a matter for the DMP, financial and logistical factors as well as public accountability required the management and delivery of TIC services to remain under the Council's direct control. However, close contact should continue between the DMP and the Council's Cultural Services officers.

6.7 Discussions with a variety of tourism providers suggested that there was scope for yet closer coordination of marketing in general and for more finely focused concentration on specific destinations, attractions and services.

6.8 The Review Group saw three broad categories for marketing priorities and budgets:

6.8.1 Destinations: e.g. the Cathedral, Hereford City, Queenswood Country Park, the Market Towns, the Marches, the Black and White Village Trail, historic churches and castles.

6.8.2 Activities and Interests: e.g. the University of the Great Outdoors; food and drink; The Three Choirs Festival; Edward Elgar; Herefordshire's twinned towns and city; established local events e.g. Bromyard Folk Festival, Ledbury Poetry Festival; green/sustainable tourism, and myths and legends.

² Source: 2007 Visitor Economy Survey

6.8.3 Supporting Services: parking and coach access e.g. to the cathedral; signage and signposting; fully-serviced public toilets (at a price); touch-sensitive window units for

TICs. The policing of town centres in the evening is another issue.

6.9 The Council should discuss with the DMP a joint approach to developing and improving linkages between marketing information, the TICs and their respective local attractions including supporting services such as pubs, hotels, B&Bs, restaurants, clubs and societies.

6.10 The existing Web site(s) should be developed by the DMP so that each TIC has its own area with links to local and County attractions (including the cathedral, the Courtyard Centre for the Arts, Halo, cinemas and Flicks in the Sticks) together with local lists – updated monthly and with a print friendly facility – of what’s on, eating out, and what to do on a wet day. Web sites should include improved provision for the visually impaired and incorporate international–standard facilities for alternative language selection, including Polish, Russian and Portuguese.

7. Tourist Information Centres

7.1 In addition to the funding for marketing and product activity, Herefordshire Council funds and operates Tourist Information Centres in Hereford; Ledbury; Leominster; Ross on Wye; Queenswood Country Park (Dinmore) and in a joint facility in Bromyard. The Tourist Information Centres currently open all year, with the exception of Dinmore TIC which closes from late December to March. Kington has a part time TIC in an ideal location, which is run by local volunteers and operates from a building owned by Herefordshire Council. Detailed financial data on the TICs in Herefordshire are at Annex 5; at Annex 6 is a list of the Council officers involved in the delivery of tourism services; and footfall trends are illustrated at Annex 7.

7.2 The Review Group takes the view that although a TIC is another public face of the Council, it is not the same as the ‘Info in Herefordshire’ concept. Where it may be practicable, the two might with advantage be co-located but they should not be combined, the TIC should invariably be staffed by appropriate specialists.

7.3 The Review Group was impressed by the evident enthusiasm and expertise of the TIC staffs, including two supervisors who provided invaluable insights. Premises were generally bright, well laid out and attractive if sometimes somewhat cluttered, not least with brochures etc relating to destinations beyond the County boundary. The Review Group believed the performance of the TICs to be very good.

7.4 The most pertinent and current information likely to be of interest to visitors would be made more readily accessible and comprehensible by the relegation of more distant destination information to a centralised facility – co-located with one of the principal TICs - where it could most easily be maintained and updated. Such a centralised facility could also offer a cost effective means of dealing – at least in the first instance - with remote enquiries whether received by letter, telephone call, e-mail, or text. It should aim to offer a central resource facility for the TICs and also, coincidentally, represent an exemplar TIC able to stand comparison with the best in the Region.

7.5 The cost and VFM of TICs has been highlighted as an issue by the cultural services inspector. The cost per visitor average is £1.06. It is felt that salary costs have been driven down as far as possible without compromising quality of service and the health and safety of staff. Dinmore has relatively higher staff costs per visitor due to lower visitor numbers per

hour open. Despite an improving situation this probably makes Dinmore uneconomic, although the total cost per visitor is about average. Further savings can only be made by reducing accommodation costs. It should be remembered that TICs are very location sensitive, so this is not without risk of affecting performance. TICs also generate some income to help offset costs. A move which reduces this earning potential could negate the cost savings.

7.6 The excessive property costs for Ledbury and Leominster TICs are currently being addressed. As a general principle TICs should be located in Council owned property provided this is near the centre of the town/city and demonstrates value for money. Further:

7.6.1 Retention of the current TIC premises in **Hereford** should be revisited as a matter of urgency with a view to relocation where and when possible. It is essential that any such site relocation is close to the centre of the historic city core, i.e. environs of High Town, not within the Edgar Street Grid (ESG).

7.6.2 As plans and proposals for the **ESG development** are brought to fruition, it may well be that some form of additional but subsidiary tourist information facility should be included.

7.6.3 Accepting that the **Leominster** TIC must vacate its current premises shortly whilst refurbishment work is undertaken, and that in the short term the library was the only readily available alternative location, the Review Group makes a strong recommendation below that the Leominster TIC be re-housed in a central location as soon as possible in time for the 2008 tourist season. For example urgent consideration should be given to the provision of a temporary building on Etnam Street car park.

7.6.4 In the course of the Review Group's work, the decision was announced to move **Ledbury** TIC to the Masters' House, Ledbury. The Review Group supports this decision but emphasise that the TIC must retain its separate identity.

7.7 The Review Group also noted the following current ongoing difficulties with particular TICs:

7.7.1 **Ross** – the limited duration of the lease suggests that a new location may have to be found within the next 2 years. In terms of a suitable alternative, the Review Group would not support a move to the Heritage Centre even though this is an ideal central position. The Review Group would be in favour of locating in the library or to a retail unit in the town centre if either was practicable.

7.7.2 **Dinmore** – this TIC is co-located with a significant tourist attraction, thereby meeting modern criteria for TICs, but it is markedly different in nature from other TICs in the County. However, the Review Group felt that officers should investigate reducing the number of paid staff and developing the recruitment of volunteers provided this would not contravene the Council's Volunteering Policy.

7.7.3 **Bromyard** – the Review Group was impressed by the modern, attractive and integrated facilities offered by the Bromyard Centre. However, the space allocated to the tourist information point is neither large nor prominent, though the latter deficiency could be addressed by better internal positioning and signage. The Review Group discussed at length the feasibility and implication of providing the tourism facility with paid full time staff but regretfully concluded that this would not be a cost effective use of resources. Facilities should be improved by making the point to point telephone link more obvious and in particular by the introduction, as a trial for Herefordshire, of a touch- sensitive information screen in the window.

7.7.4 **Kington** – this TIC is unique in the County in that it is staffed by volunteers. The location could not be bettered and, thanks at least in part to the supervisory services rendered by the Council, it appears to provide an excellent and highly cost effective service in a prime tourist area. The Review Group feels strongly that current efforts to re-house this TIC should be discontinued and efforts be made to bringing the fabric and decoration of the building up to Council standards, providing this can be done from within existing budgets.

8. Conclusions

Tourist Information

8.1 The Council is fortunate in the high standards of commitment and professionalism of the staff and volunteers who deliver tourism services.

8.2 TICs remain the primary and essential means of delivering tourist information and thus maximising the effectiveness and economic benefits of tourism. The principal factor in the effectiveness of a TIC (measured by the number of visitors - "*footfall*") is its location which must be as close as possible to the centre of visitor activity.

8.3 The management and delivery of tourism information services should remain under the Council's direct control. A TIC may be co-located with an 'Info in Herefordshire' office but the two should never be combined. A TIC requires permanent specialist staff and signage.

8.4 Visitors' lifestyles are changing, their expectations are increasing and they are becoming more independent and self reliant and more likely to use modern means of communication. These factors, particularly the latter, are reflected in a general decline in the number of visitors to TIC premises, a marked increase in the use of websites and e-mails, and a demand for increasingly comprehensive, detailed and authoritative information. The County's current TIC structure should be revised to respond more promptly and effectively to these new demands.

8.5 It would be to the County's advantage to establish at least one exemplar TIC able to stand comparison with the best in the Region, provided that this could be achieved at no additional cost.

8.6 The Review Group therefore came to the view that the TIC structure should be changed to a 'hub and spoke' concept. Such a structure would neither reduce nor increase costs but the Review Group hoped that it would offer significant gains in efficiency and hence VFM.

8.7 The central hub should be co-located with the TIC at either Hereford, Ross, Leominster, Ledbury or Dinmore - as space etc considerations may dictate – and should be staffed by 2.25 full time equivalent (fte) staff plus the TIC supervisors. It would:

8.7.1 Offer the most cost-effective means of dealing centrally with all remote enquiries whether by letter, telephone, email or text message – and to common higher standards of promptness, comprehensiveness and professionalism

8.7.2 Enable the removal from TICs of brochures etc relating to destinations beyond the County boundary, thus facilitating the updating of this information whilst eradicating multiple holdings and, most importantly, freeing valuable storage and display space at the TICs for local information.

8.7.3 Provide an opportunity for the centralisation of some peripheral TIC functions such as accommodation, bus and theatre etc bookings.

8.7.4 Act as a central resource facility for the TIC/TIPs.

8.7.5 Lastly, its co-location would also constitute an exemplar TIC.

8.8 Of the 'spoke' TICs proper:

8.8.1 Kington should remain in its present location, staffed as now by volunteers with advice and support from the TIC hub. The building fabric and decoration should be refurbished.

8.8.2 The remaining 'spoke' TICs should each be staffed by 2.5fte paid staff plus any available volunteers. The TIC supervisors should review, in consultation with respective TIC staffs, the nature and extent of retail and booking services and whether any centralisation of the latter would be sensible.

8.8.3 Hereford TIC should be moved from its current inordinately expensive location as soon as possible, to new and less costly premises as close as possible to the historic city centre. The Review Group found no other viable scope for cash savings in tourism services without serious prejudice to tourism's economic benefits to the County.

8.8.4 The Review Group notes and endorses the intention to move Ledbury TIC to the Masters' House, Lebury.

8.8.5 Leominster library is not a suitable location for this thriving and invaluable TIC. It should be rehoused in a central location as soon as possible.

8.8.6 If or when Ross TIC has to move, it should be to the library or to a retail unit in the town centre if one should become available at acceptable cost. The Heritage Centre is ideally located but unsuitable both in itself and in terms of displacement of current use.

8.8.7 Bromyard TIC should become a TIP benefiting from improved telephone signage and touch-screen technology.

8.8.8 If in the future it is judged appropriate and affordable to establish a TIP within Hereford's Edgar Street Grid development, this should be subsidiary to the city centre TIC.

The Value of Tourism

8.9 In 2005, tourism in Herefordshire contributed £291m to the County's economy.

8.10 Key performance indicators are being developed by Tourism West Midlands to measure the volume and value of tourism throughout the Region and are due to be rolled out, effective from December 2007.

8.11 Council officers are currently working on County performance indicators using the key driver templates of the Cambridge Economic Impact Assessment Model 2004, e.g. average accommodation occupancy, visitor numbers to the County's attractions etc

Marketing and Planning

8.12 The Review Group was impressed by the progress made to date by Visit Herefordshire, the County's Destination Management Partnership (DMP).

8.13 Council officers are working in close liaison with Visit Herefordshire and this should continue.

8.14 Visit Herefordshire should continue to take the lead in all aspects of the marketing of tourism in and to the County. Discussions should extend to the development and improvement of linkages between marketing information. Particular attention should be paid to the improvement to, links both inward and outward, and regular updating of website information.

9. Alternative View Expressed by Review Group Member

9.1 Councillor B Hunt wished it to be recorded that while he supports the principles set out in the recommendations from this review he is strongly of the opinion that Bromyard should be treated the same as the other market towns in that it should have a fully staffed TIC.

10. Next Steps

10.1 The Review Group anticipate that, if approved by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee, this report will be presented to Cabinet for consideration.

10.2 The Review Group anticipates that if the report is approved, the Council and Visit Herefordshire would act in concert upon the recommendations and suggestions made in the report.

10.3 The Review Group would also expect the Cabinet to report back to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee in six months time with a detailed action plan reporting on activity taken upon the Review Group's recommendations.

11. Recommendations

11.1 Continue to provide TICs at or close to the main centres of tourist activity in the County, notwithstanding reductions and changes in patterns of use. Utilisation and effectiveness to continue to be monitored via footfall and cost per visitor data.

11.2 Retain direct control over tourism information services. Never combine the functions of a TIC with those of an 'Info in Herefordshire' office.

11.3 Meet the challenges posed by rising expectations and modern means of communication, and the drive for greater VFM, with a new 'hub and spoke' structure for the delivery of tourist information.

11.4 Establish a central hub, co-located with a principal TIC, staffed by 2.25 fte staff plus the TIC supervisors. Its functions to comprise:

- 11.4.1 The centralised handling - to common higher standards of promptness, comprehensiveness and professionalism - of all remote enquiries.
- 11.4.2 The formation of a centralised facility for the maintenance and provision of brochures etc relating to destinations beyond the County boundary, thus facilitating the updating of this information whilst eradicating multiple holdings and, most importantly, freeing valuable storage and display space at the TICs.
- 11.4.3 The potential for centralisation of some peripheral TIC functions such as accommodation, bus and theatre etc bookings.
- 11.4.4 The provision of a central resource facility for the TICs.
- 11.5 Constitute the central hub and its co-located 'spoke' TIC as an exemplar facility.
- 11.6 Bromyard Centre to become a TIP with better internal and external signage, a more obvious telephone for enquiries and, as a trial the installation of window mounted touch-screen information facility.
- 11.7 Enable the Kington TIC to remain in its present location and refurbish the building's fabric and decoration providing this can be done from within existing budgets.
- 11.8 Complement each of the other 'spoke' TICs with 2.5fte paid staff plus any available volunteers.
- 11.9 Move Hereford TIC from its current location to new and less costly premises as close as possible to the historic city centre.
- 11.10 Find alternative accommodation for Leominster TIC in a central location as soon as possible.
- 11.11 Agree with Visit Herefordshire that the latter will take the lead in all aspects of the marketing of tourism in and to the County.
- 11.12 Explore with Visit Herefordshire how best to develop and improve the linkages between marketing information.
- 11.13 Seek to make improvements to the contents, user-friendliness and updating of website information.
- 11.14 The proposal for a hub and spoke structure should be monitored closely and a review and report prepared after the first year of operation.

List of Annexes

Annex 1	Scoping Statement.
Annex 2	List of Interviewees.
Annex 3	Survey Questionnaire.
Annex 4	Current Budget for Tourism Services.
Annex 5	Financial Analysis – Tourist Information Centres.
Annex 6	Council Officers involved in Tourism Services.
Annex 7	Footfall Trends.

REVIEW:	Review of Tourism with specific reference to TIC	
Committee:	Community Services Scrutiny Committee	Chair: not confirmed
Lead support officer:	Not confirmed	

SCOPING

Terms of Reference

This review will cover:

- **Address recommendations and comments of the Cultural Services Inspection in relation to tourism and specifically TIC spend**
- **Investigate the TIC model in relation to national trends and customer demands**
- **Consider budget allocations in relation to other pressures within Cultural Services and the council's priorities in relation to improvement plans**
- **To review delivery of marketing and strategic planning in terms of tourism**

Desired outcomes

- Forecast future delivery of TICs based on the priorities of Visit England
- Consider the best options for investment in TIC linked to delivery arrangements of the service, corporate priorities and service needs
- An understanding of marketing and strategic priorities
- Establish performance indicators to measure the value of tourism

Key questions

- What are the national trends in delivering TICs and trends in customer use?
- What is the cost in relation to use?
- What are the future options in utilising new technology and joining with other facilities / services?
- Where is the growth market for tourism in the county?
- How is the value and volume of tourism measured and how performance is measured against other areas in the West Midlands?
- What are the key products for tourism?
- What are the marketing plans and strategic direction?
- Where are the pressure points in terms of delivery of the wider cultural service?

Corporate Plan Priorities

Economic Development, community well being and enterprise,

Timetable (some of the facilities are only open seasonally and will influence the time table)

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
Agree approach, programme of consultation/research/provisional witnesses/dates	End of July 07
Collect current available data	August 07
Analysis of data	September 07
Final confirmation of interviews of witnesses	Beginning of August 07
Carry out programme of interviews	September 07
Final analysis of data and witness evidence	October 07
Prepare options/recommendations	September 07
Present Final report to Economic and Community Scrutiny Committee	October 07
Present options/recommendations to Cabinet	November 07

Cabinet response	December 07
Implementation of agreed recommendations	January 08 onwards
<i>Members</i>	<i>Support Officers</i>
Councillors: TM James (Chairman); MAF Hubbard; B Hunt; PM Morgan; RH Smith.	Penny Jones, Social and Economic Regeneration Manager (Lead Officer for the review) Jane Lewis, Cultural Services Manager Andrew Tanner, Interim Change Manger Geriant Pritchard, Principal Tourism Officer Paul James, Democratic Services Officer

Annex 2

List of Interviewees

Jay Brittain	Small Breeds Farm Park and Owl Centre
Peter Hands	Chairman of Visit Herefordshire, DMP
Dominic Harbour	Communications and Marketing Manager, Hereford Cathedral
Lindsay Heyes	Wye Valley Butterfly Zoo and Maze
Geoff Hughes	Director of Adult and Community Services
Jane Lewis	Cultural Services Manager
Chris Lilly	Cluster Manager, Tourism West Midlands
Clare O'Reilly	Senior TIC Supervisor
Geriant Pritchard	Principal Tourism Officer
Sally Ann Roberts	Visitor and Promotions Officer
Silvia Silvers	The Falcon Hotel, Bromyard
Alan Simpson	Senior TIC Supervisor

Tourism in Herefordshire: Your View

Herefordshire Council would like to find out what people who provide accommodation or attractions to visitors think about the county's marketing of these services and the help provided by the Tourist Information Centres. This information will help in our planning of these services. We would be grateful if you would spend a few minutes completing this survey. All responses are anonymous. We will publish a summary of the findings in a newsletter in the New Year. If you have any questions or need help in completing this survey, please contact Geriant Pritchard at gpritchard@herefordshire.gov.uk or 01432 260 608.

Q1 Which of the following best describes your business

- B & B Guest House Hotel Holiday Let
 Caravan Park Visitor attraction Other, please specify

Q2 How effectively do you feel that your business is marketed as part of the county tourism product?

- Very effectively Reasonably effectively Not very effectively Don't know

Q3 How, if at all, does "Visit Herefordshire" help in marketing your business?

- Advertising in the Visitor Guide Advertising on the County web site
 Specialist campaigns Not at all
 Other, please specify

Q4 How do you feel the county tourism marketing has changed over the last three years?

- Got better Stayed about the same Got worse

Q5 How many of your guests / visitors do you think use the Tourist Information Centres (TICs) in Herefordshire?

- Most About half A few None Don't know

Q6 If you are an accommodation provider, what proportion of this season's bookings came via the TIC?

- Most About half A few None Don't know

... and how does the number of bookings that came via the TIC compare to last year?

- Increased About the same Decreased

Q7 What do you feel should be done in the future to market Herefordshire as a tourism destination?

Q8 Are there any other comments that you would like to make regarding tourism marketing or this questionnaire?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

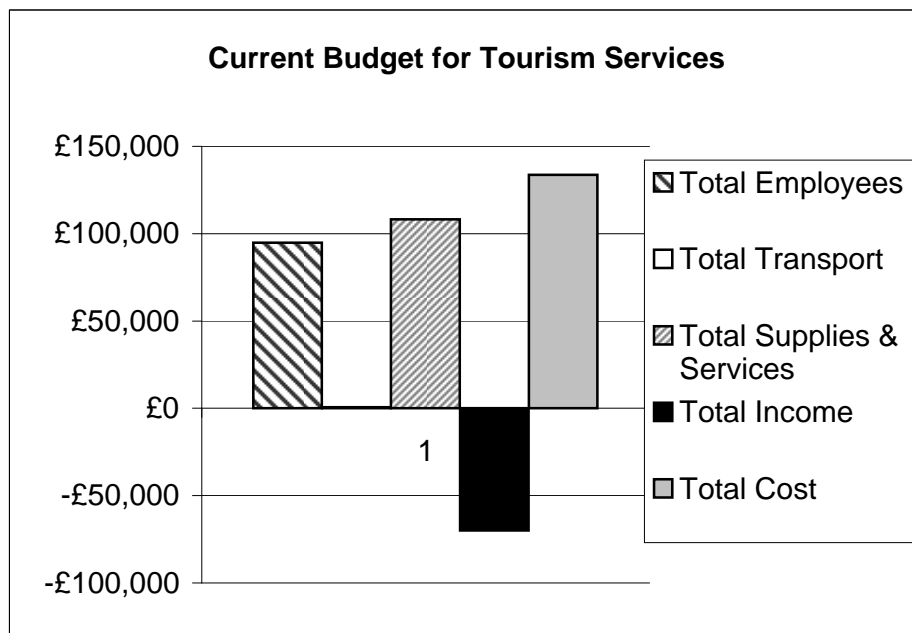
Please return it in the envelope provided by 16th November.

If the envelope has been mislaid, please post to Herefordshire Tourism, PO Box 4, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0XH, or drop in at your nearest Tourist Information Centre

Current Budget for Tourism Services

Annex 4

Remaining	Annual
Operational Staff Basic	£75,890
Operational Staff Ni	£5,050
Operational Staff Superan	£13,810
Total Employees	£94,750
Mileage General-Inc Car Park	£640
Total Transport	£640
Printing & Photocopying	£500
Postages	£8,000
Conference Expenses	£500
Promotions And Events	£99,300
Total Supplies & Services	£108,300
Awm Main Pot	-£60,000
Conts From Private Sector	-£10,000
Total Income	-£70,000
Total Cost	£133,690



Financial Analysis – Tourist Information Centres

- Following review of budgets and user numbers, some high level analysis can be drawn in regard to the TIC;s. These are demonstrated in tabular and graphical format as follows:

Table 1 - Average Unit Costs for all TICs

	05/06	06/07	07/08 est to date
	£	£	£
Salaries	265,288	276,300	187,350
Other Expenditure	217,343	249,358	196,972
Income	170,350	206,100	149,636
Total	312,281	319,558	234,686
Visitor Numbers	306,917	302,144	
Average Unit cost	1.02	1.06	

Table 2 - Unit Costs for each TIC 2007/08

Approximate to Period 8

	Visitor Numbers	Unit Cost per visitor £
Bromyard (No data)		
Hereford	68916	1.03
Ledbury	60,031	0.74
Leominster	34,858	1.18
Dinmore	33,066	1.02
Ross	52,114	0.82

- Although Dinmore is a comparatively high cost operation at the moment, its unit costs will reduce over time as it has increasing user numbers. The development of new attractions at Queenswood will help sustain this growth.
- Leominster has low unit costs as it has a large number of volunteer staff which help minimise salary costs. The following tables further analyse salary costs:

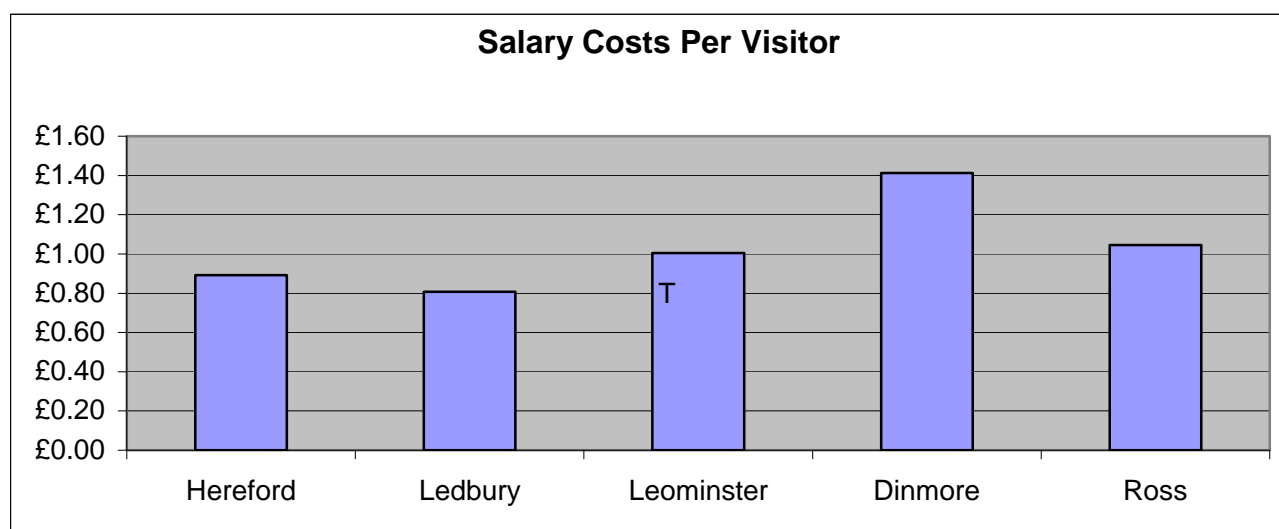
Table 3 - Salary Breakdowns

	Salary Costs	Full time equivalent (fte)	Cost per FTE (£)
	£		£
Hereford Tourist Information	69,006	3.60	19,168
Ledbury Tourist Information	63,106	3.61	17,481
Leominster Tourist Information	37,640	2.06	18,272
Dinmore Tourist Information	46,932	2.50	18,773
Ross Tourist Information	59,615	3.39	17,585
Totals	276,299	15.17	18,213

Table 4a - Salary costs per visitor

	Salary Costs	Visitor Numbers	Cost per visitor (£)
Hereford	69,006	77,368	0.89
Ledbury	63,106	78,192	0.80
Leominster	37,640	37,451	1.00
Dinmore	46,932	33,220	1.41
Ross	59,615	56,996	1.04

Table 4b



4. This analysis shows a degree of consistency in salary costs per visitor in the four main towns and also supports the relatively high unit cost of TIC provision at Dinmore.

NB. Queenswood Tourist Information Centre is operational 7 days per week from 1st March to 24th December, whilst the other centres are open approximately 10 Sundays per year, with the exclusion of Leominster.

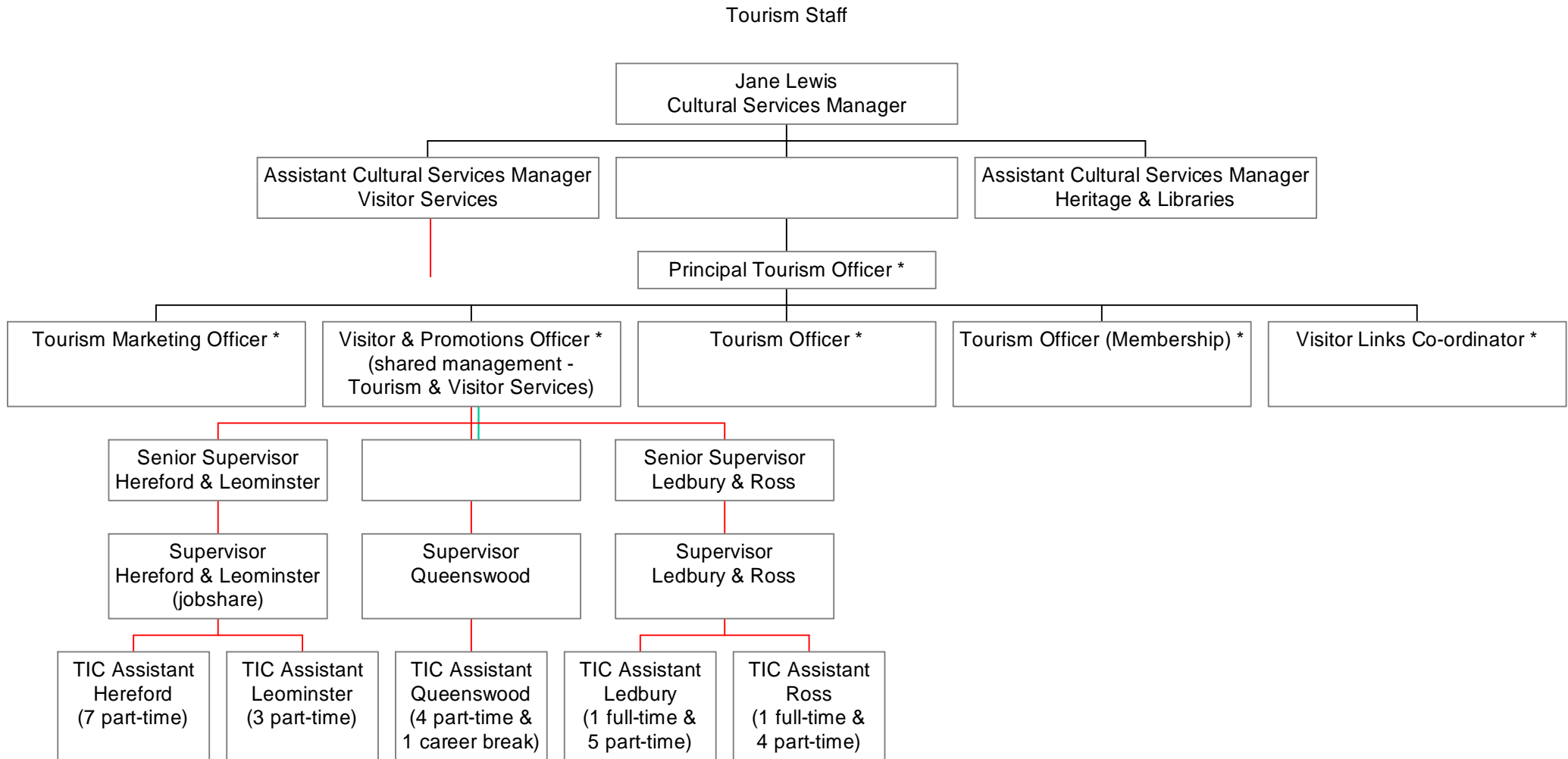
5. Queenswood also acts as the booking office for the Herefordshire Walking Festival and the Food Festival which together generate approximately £7k income per annum. However, this income is not recorded into Queenswood's individual cost centre code but is allocated to a Tourism code.
6. Lease costs are the other major cost component for TICs and any decisions made on future provision will need to take this into account, particularly on long-term leases acting as a constraint. Table 5 summarises the lease position:

Table 5 - TIC Lease Information

	Lease length	Lease expiry	Annual rent	Next review	Break clause	Notes
Leominster	9 years	31/08/2010	£ 9,600		Early exit after 1/9/07	
Hereford	25 years	31/01/2019	£33,250	25/12/08	No break clause	The upper floors are let as flats.
Ross-on-Wye	5 years	28/2/2008	£8,100			Part of Swan House leased, rest used by other Council services therefore annual rent figure is only part of rent paid.
Ledbury		Expired	£21,000			Council in the course of handing back the property and will vacate late February 2008.

7. The following summary conclusions can therefore be made:

- a. The cost effectiveness of TICs is reducing year on year with the exception of Dinmore (Queenswood). This has the advantage of having increasing numbers of visitors being on a 'tourism site' and is also Council owned.
 - b. There is limited flexibility within the lease arrangements for the Hereford site and early surrender of the lease would be prohibitive in terms of cost, unless an alternative Council service can be placed in there.
 - c. An early surrender of the Leominster lease would be financially more attractive and this sum could be written off in the first year. However the landlord is under no obligation to accept an early surrender.
8. There is flexibility within the Ledbury and Ross TICs for a move to Council owned premises although consideration will need to be given to the impact on access by the public and the extent to which fixed costs are retained, ie: salaries. It needs to be noted that the Council leases the whole site at Ross and would be liable for any remaining costs.



* Working in conjunction with the DMP

TIC FOOTFALLS 1995 - 2006

	Hereford	Ross	Leominster	Ledbury	Dinmore	Bromyard
1995	155,963	74,212	33,579	43,287	13,692	10,020
1996	173,047	84,582	38,147	53,870	8,982	9,474
1997	164,846	83,392	36,223	62,151	8,327	8,216
1998	153,541	76,213	34,358	61,480	14,499	6,342
1999	125,948	70,670	34,774	46,108	21,332	6,452
2000	82,642	63,510	34,623	50,777	19,890	6,945
2001	98,608	58,572	38,707	72,295	21,566	7,499
2002	104,553	60,011	42,333	79,815	24,378	5,036
2003	89,544	62,768	43,664	84,664	27,117	5,360
2004	80,633	63,496	38,227	78,906	32,929	12,726
2005	76,433	59,540	34,665	80,534	33,205	19,056
2006	77,368	56,996	37,451	78,192	33,220	18,917